

## Connexional Team Update

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<b>Status of Paper</b>	Final
<b>Action Required</b>	Note
<b>Draft Resolution</b>	6/1. The Council receives the report

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	This paper offers the Council an update of work undertaken by the Connexional Team since the Council last met in October 2015.
<b>Main Points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EMC response to Refugee Crisis</li> <li>• Work that is going on in the clusters in the Team</li> </ul>

- 1 This paper offers the Council an update of work undertaken by the Connexional Team since the Council last met in October 2015, some of which involves engagement with Methodists across the globe, as well as the work going on in the clusters of the Team.
- 2 Building work has continued in Methodist Church House and the forbearance of the staff, tenants and those using the building needs to be acknowledged. Working on a live building site has brought many challenges but as each week goes by the end of the overall programme becomes closer.

### **EMC Response to Refugee Crisis**

- 3 Following the European Methodist Council (EMC) in Ruse, Bulgaria, 12-15 September 2015 a pastoral letter was sent to all member churches. It ended with the words:
 

*“We believe that God also calls us to welcome those who arrive as our fellow pilgrims. We commit ourselves to immediate actions and the long-term perspectives that the issues raised by migration require. With a united voice, the European Methodist Council calls on our fellow citizens across the continent to join us in reflection and action.”*
- 4 The European Methodist Council set up a working group and asked the European Methodist Children and Youth Council to send representatives to that group. The group ‘meets’ once a month via phone call in order to share best practices of migrant ministries and seek to support one another as Methodists in Europe. A newsletter is also issued to inform and encourage the people in our Connexion to reach out to our new neighbours throughout Europe.
- 5 The EMC included in this newsletter that Methodists in Great Britain have been reaching out to the refugees and engaging with politicians and people who put their emphasis in protecting the country from refugees instead of protecting those who flee war and conflict.
- 6 A few of the examples listed include:
  - Birmingham Methodist Churches & Citizens UK successful campaign to win promise of 50 homes for refugees from the local council;
  - Wesley Hall Methodist Church, Blackburn’s Asylum and Refugee Community centre, set up 11 years ago, continuing to offer support through the asylum application process and afterwards ;

- Fleet Methodist Church receives donations to be sent to the Calais refugee camps – a typical involvement;
- Growing solidarity with Syrian refugees in the Shetland Islands churches, raising money, awareness and an openness to welcome people ;
- York Methodist churches will also offer to house a refugee family.

7 Since the Council's affirmation of the work on refugees, the Team has been able to engage a short term consultant with expertise in this area to supplement the work of the JPIT team. This will enable the Team to engage on the issues on a wider stage as well as offer more support to churches who are wishing to respond to this ongoing situation. Through our work with Citizens UK we have been able to register an interest in the National Welcome Board's private sponsorship of refugees initiative on behalf of the Church.

8 With regard to the wider European Methodist Council work, the Conference of 2015 welcomed the possibility of new partnerships in mission and service overseen by the EMC and directed the Council to explore, in conjunction with the Connexional Grants Committee, what level of resources can be made available to enable the development of such work. . The resourcing of the EMC was discussed at the September gathering, and more work will be carried out in the year ahead before any application is made.

#### **Engagement with the United Methodist Church**

9 Positive engagement continues with the United Methodist Church, and initial work towards planning celebrations for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the concordat which will take place in 2018.

#### **Further working with All We Can**

10 Following All We Can's paper to the Council in October 2015 (MC/15/73), further discussions have since taken place with them to consider the best way forward about how we work together. David Matthews, member of the Council, and Helen Woodall, member of the SRC, are working with the Connexional Secretary in this area. This work will dovetail with the Partnership, Focus and Evolution paper before the Council.

#### **Updates from the Connexional Team:**

##### **Discipleship and Ministries**

11 3Generate took place between 20 -22 November in Swindon, which was exceptionally well attended, and some very good feedback about the event was received. Tim Annan was elected as Youth President for 2016/17.

12 Development of the Worship Leading and Preaching course continues as the final amendments to Module 2 have been made. The Ministry Development Team has begun working with the new Local Preacher and Worship Leader Studies Board on the final versions of modules 3 and 4, with the Board meeting for the first time in February 2016. The editorial group continues to meet to review the content of modules and feedback from pilot groups. The Ministry Development Team and Regional Learning and Development Officers have put in place a process to oversee the connexional moderation of portfolios which will be discussed with the Board. The team is immensely grateful to the numerous people across the Connexion who have gone the extra mile to support the development of the course.

13 In response to Notice of Motion 204 (2015), research into the impact of *Regrouping for Mission* has begun. Questionnaires have been sent to all Chairs, and to a random sample of

Superintendents and Circuit Stewards (approx 130). Statistical analysis on the impact on membership of circuits whose boundaries have been changed through the *Regrouping for Mission* process is being considered. Other questions arising from *Statistics for Mission* including average Sunday attendance and changes in ministerial staffing will also be considered, as is what might define 'small', 'medium', 'large' and 'very large' circuits. Three or four case studies will be undertaken between January and February 2016, and a second phase of this research is planned for 2016-17 which will complement the initial phase.

- 14 In response to an initiative from the Secretary of the Conference, a new post, *Local Preacher, Worship and Liturgy Officer* (a reworking of an existing vacant Ministry Development Officer post), will be advertised shortly. The main tasks of this role will include vocational exploration, and initial and continuing learning and development, of the ministry of worship leaders and local preachers; and to encourage the development of excellence in liturgy and worship in the life of the Methodist Church.

### **Mission and Advocacy**

- 15 Jo Hibbard was appointed as Director of Engagement. The posts of Heritage Officer and Marketing Officer are currently being advertised. A new Legacy Pack was trialled with three synods in the autumn and a final version should be rolled out this spring. The Engagement Team are working alongside the Communications Team on the project to revamp the Methodist Church website and are seeking input from every part of the church as we proceed in this work. Preparations are well underway for celebration of the "Asbury 200" anniversary in Dudley on 9 April 2015. New and very colourful children's booklets for the heritage sites have been produced with support from Publishing.
- 16 Further to the decision of the 2015 Conference (Resolution 57/1) to direct the Council and the Heritage Committee to liaise with the Cornwall District on the possible development of Methodist Heritage opportunities in Cornwall, Jo Hibbard engaged with the District and has recommended two elements of scoping work for which a connexional grant application might be the appropriate route. Clear objectives will be required for these applications. The Revd Ward Jones, on behalf of the Heritage Committee, is to meet with the representatives of the District to explore with them the link between heritage and mission.
- 17 The "Enough" report was written and circulated widely, highlighting the impact of the Government's welfare and benefits changes. Separately, JPIT lobbied on changes to tax credits and can claim some of the credit for the change announced by the Chancellor. Other work has included briefings and statements on the environment (ahead of the COP 21 meeting), human rights and Syria (with a blog piece that attracted a very high number of hits).
- 18 The inclusion of the Church of Scotland in JPIT on a "trial" basis has been valuable and constructive and enabled work to be undertaken that would have been beyond the capacity of the smaller team. The JPIT Strategy and Policy group will be recommending that the 'success' measures having been met for all concerned that it would be beneficial to all that the membership of JPIT was permanently expanded to include the Church of Scotland.
- 19 Andy Jackson joined the Team as Director of Publishing and Communications. Michael Ivatt and Viv Wickham have also joined recently as Lead Media Officer and Publishing Coordinator respectively. Issue 3 of *the connexion* was distributed at the start of the new connexional year and issue 4, the first to be edited by the Revd Dr David Parry, will have appeared well before the Council meets. Communications responded quickly to the Cumbria floods in

December by putting out an appeal for financial support through the web, email and social media.

- 20 The World Church Relationships (WCR) Strategy paper (Partnership, Focus and Evolution) also features on the Council agenda. WCR worked closely with colleagues in the cluster to ensure that churches had a route for financial responses to the refugee crisis in Eastern Europe, channelling money to Methodist churches in various countries. They have also been working very closely to support the "Mediterranean Hope" in Italy, and we are planning to have both young interns and mission partners in Italy this year to assist.
- 21 Methodist membership of the Interfaith Relations Reference Group (joint with the URC) has been strengthened; the Methodist chair is now the Revd David Musgrave. We have engaged with other faiths in different ways on specific topics: Christian, Muslim and Jewish leaders met to discuss nuclear weapons (with JPIT involvement) and groups from all faiths have come together to register interest in the "sponsorship" initiative for refugees led by Citizens UK.

### **Support Services**

- 22 Tim Carter has joined the Team as Connexional Safeguarding Adviser. We would like to thank Hilary Walker for the way that she has carried the work as Interim Adviser – she has now reverted to her half-time role, and will work mainly on matters arising from the Past Cases Review over the coming year.
- 23 The Finance Office has been praised by the auditors for its work preparing the consolidated accounts that will be presented within the Council's January papers. Significant work is now underway involving staff from Finance, HR and Development, IT and Procurement in designing and selecting a new payroll system to be implemented during 2016.
- 24 Property and facilities staff have been heavily involved in the continuing refurbishment work at Methodist Church House, and also in moving forward the redevelopment project at 24 Somerset Road.
- 25 In January the redefined Reception roles will become part of the Admin Support team, with work underway to embed new ways of working in providing an efficient service to those within the building, visitors and those contacting it by phone.

### **The Conference Office**

- 26 We have welcomed Tim Cooper to the Conference Office as Governance Advisor and will work under the direction of the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice with a focus on data protection compliance issues and assisting the churches and circuits with advice.
- 27 The Conference Office Team is enjoying working in a re-configured way with the Secretary of the Conference, the Assistant Secretary, and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice all located within the Conference Office.

### **\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

- 6/1. **The Council receives the report.**