

Global Relationships Committee (GRC) Report

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Resolution	13/1. The Council receives the report.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To update the Council on the work of the GRC.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner Churches at the Conference • Safeguarding in the global relations context • The impact of COVID-19 • COP26 project • Mission Partners • The World Mission Fund • Other areas of work

Introduction

1. The Global Relationships Committee (GRC) has met on three occasions over the last year.
2. At each meeting the Committee received a report from the Director of Global Relationships (GR) and annually from the Partnership Co-ordinators. These included details of work and work plans, updates on HR matters regarding support and expectations of partners of Mission Partners, safeguarding issues, clarification of challenges faced by global partners, with particular reference to COVID-19 and proposals of ways in which those challenges might be addressed.

Partner Churches at the Conference

3. The Director of GR reported that a very successful online Pre-Conference Consultation was held with partner churches which included the provision of French and Spanish interpretation. This was a single, global gathering at a common time, which meant that some representatives of Partner Churches were making significant sacrifices to join. On the first day consideration was given to the impact of the pandemic, framing the conversation around these questions:
 - How is COVID-19 impacting your country?
 - How is COVID-19 impacting your (national) Church?
 - How is your Church responding to society's needs?
 - What can we learn from each other?

On the second day, consideration was given to re-imagining grants. The group was greeted by the Secretary of the Conference and each representative was offered a 'virtual tour' of Wesley's Chapel.

4. The Conference platform was committed to enabling the Conference to hear the voices of our Partners; if they had not pre-submitted their names, though, this was difficult to facilitate. Members of the GR team were on hand before, during and after sessions, to support the overseas representatives. Interpretation was possible online throughout.
5. The joint fringe event with Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) evolved into an online (Twitter/Website) conversation on 'What does Kingdom growth look like where you are?', with contributions from members of MWiB and our Partners.

6. Our Partners were represented in the worship live-streamed from Westminster Central Hall on Conference Sunday.
7. A video summarising the Pre-Conference consultation, with contributions from our Partners was prepared for the Methodist Church website, and can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=px7BNXrAjxQ&feature=emb_logo

Mission Partners

8. The Committee completed its review of recruitment and training of Mission Partners and is continuing to monitor its implementation. The role of 'Accompanying Volunteer' has been created, offering an alternative way of serving for partners of Mission Partners.
9. The Committee heard how the Mission Partner Survey Management Recommendations have been implemented.
10. The roll-out of Pastoral Supervision for all ordained Mission Partners is due this connexional year.

Safeguarding in the Global Relations Context

11. The Committee gave deep consideration to Safeguarding in the GR context, noting, in particular, the Audit Committee report regarding the need for a framework for monitoring safeguarding within grant-giving processes.
12. The Committee was pleased to hear that the Audit Committee accepted the 'Alternative Proposals' made by the GR and safeguarding teams on developing Safeguarding Principles that will provide a framework for monitoring (see the separate report to the Council). These are to be internationally agreed principles with our Partners, to be signed by themselves and the Methodist Council. From the beginning of August, our Partners were consulted about which high-level principles they would like to see as a part of those internationally agreed principles. These were formed into a draft document that was then sent to our Partners for initial approval and a chance for other comments.
13. The Alternative Proposals also enshrined current practice in the GR team, namely, that any safeguarding concerns relating to our Partners', or our, work overseas be reported to each GR meeting anonymously.
14. The Committee agreed that the International Safeguarding Principles, now complete, be approved and signed by the Council and our Partners.

The Impact of COVID-19

15. The pandemic has meant that all non-essential overseas travel for representatives of MCB has been suspended. Partnership Co-ordinators are using online methods to continue building relationships with Partners.
16. The Overseas Service Panel scheduled for 4-6 June was cancelled. In August, First Formal Interviews and the subsequent October Overseas Service Panel were moved online for the Mission Partner and Accompanying Volunteer candidates. The Committee was pleased to hear that four candidates were accepted to be Mission Partners in Training and two as Accompanying Volunteers in Training.
17. The Committee agreed that £550,000 could be added to the General Grant budget to help support Partners during the severe health and economic impact of COVID-19. Regional budgets were set for the rest of the 2019/2020 connexional year in order to ensure that those regions impacted later by the global spread of the virus could receive monies, if necessary, later in the year.
18. The impact of the pandemic and lockdown in societies with limited social welfare is intense, and our grants enabled us to show our solidarity for Partners as they provided food and medicines, paid wages and stipends, and provided PPE and sanitising equipment in their churches, institutions and communities.

Details of General Grants given as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic can be found on the GR pages of the MCB website.

COP26 project

19. The Committee was pleased to approve the setting up of the COP26 project. COP is the 'Conference of the Parties': the annual conference of the signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) from the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. It has a membership of 197 countries.
20. COP26 was postponed in 2020 due to COVID-19 and will now be held in Glasgow from 1-12 November 2021.
21. The COP26 Project has recruited young people from five countries to create a youth-led climate justice campaign. This has been undertaken in partnership with the Opera per le Chiese Evangeliche Metodiste in Italia (OPCEMI), The United Church of Zambia, The Pacific Conference of Churches and The Methodist Church in Britain, along with a young person from Latin America or the Caribbean, yet to be appointed. The project is also engaged with the World Methodist Council, the United Methodist Church and other MCB partners to create networks of young people to contribute to this campaign.
22. The COP26 steering group is made up of persons from JPIT, All We Can, Children, Youth and Families and Global Relationships, who meet regularly and report to the GRC.
23. The original commitment from the GRC on budgeting from the World Mission fund was to cover one British based worker and 4 global posts (one extra British based worker is funded separately). At its last meeting the committee agreed to extend the funding until December 2021. This will cover the period running up to and for 6 weeks after COP26. Funding this will ensure that the culmination of this work is seen through, that the global youth Methodist voice of this project can be heard at COP26 and that the team can prepare a handover and legacy work.

The World Mission Fund

24. The Committee reviewed the updated budgeted income and expenditure from the World Mission Fund (WMF) for the next six years. This shows an annual deficit occurring from 2024/2025 onwards following the completion of the policy to reduce the WMF to agreed reserve levels.
25. The GRC recognises that the Methodist Church in Britain will need to cut or cease work and grant giving at this point and has been developing strategies for managing this.
26. A Working Party was established by the GRC on 27 April 2020 to make recommendations on the future funding of Partners from the WMF. This working party met on 8 June and on 3-4 September. The Working Party resolved to refer itself back to the GRC, asking that, given the amount of money likely to be available in funds in the near future, it be reconstituted with a new remit.
27. At its last meeting, the GRC agreed a two-track model to address the issue of the oncoming projected deficit. It created a group to explore increasing income into the fund and a group to enable a consultation process with partners and stakeholders, to engage in dialogue and allow all involved to discuss the developing nature of our partnerships. It directed that these conversations should seek to find the best use(s) of the money and resources when funding available is much reduced. It requested that these conversations should go beyond grant giving to enable dialogue regarding the relative merits of grants (such as Nationals in Mission), mission partners, global theological education and People to People work. Both groups will report back to the February meeting of the GRC.
28. The committee also established a process for grant giving, given the disbanding of the Connexional Grants Committee.

Other areas of work

29. In addition this year the committee received and considered reports regarding the Methodist Liaison office in Jerusalem and the MEOR office in Rome, which it has designated as Multi-Partner Mission Hubs, to allow a more flexible form of management. The Committee reviewed the partnership with All We Can in particular its Church Can work, and considered the future of Global Theological Education.

*****RESOLUTION**

- 13/1. The Council receives the report.**