

Belonging Together - leaving a legacy, embedding the ethos

Basic Information

Contact Name and Details	Katei Kirby Belonging Together Partnership Officer
Status of Paper	Update on the <i>Belonging Together</i> Project
Action Required	The Council is asked to discuss the legacy of the project and make recommendations to be included in the final report.
Draft Resolutions	n/a
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	n/a

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	Update on 12 specific aims of the 3-year project plan.
Main Points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Progress on each of the 12 specific aims 2. Initial recommendations from the Steering Group 3. Key questions to consider for the legacy of the project
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Tree God Planted (1985) • Towards An Inclusive Church (2010) • Belonging Together Partnership Document (2010-2013)
Consultations	Senior Leadership Group of the Connexional Team

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	
Faith and Order	Part of this outcomes of this project is linked to theological statement being developed through Equality and Diversity's Resource Group
Financial	Financial resources for Belonging Together end in August 2013; any recommendations for new work will need new resources
Personnel	(As financial implications above)
Wider Connexional	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	This journey of 'belonging' has been shared with colleagues in the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Church of England, United Reformed Church and other denominations engaged in developing multi-ethnic congregations and ministries.

Belonging Together - leaving a legacy, embedding the ethos

1.0 Introduction

“From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” Ephesians 4:16 (New International Version)

- 1.1 In January 2011, the Council had the opportunity to engage with Belonging Together :a vision for the Church to fulfil its vocation of worship and mission through its richly diverse membership.
- 1.2 Using the prayer of Jesus in John 17, the passion for unity that King David recognised as ‘good and pleasant’ in John 17, and the powerful image of the body that the Apostle Paul used in his letter to the church at Ephesus, the Council was given the opportunity to dream about what ethnic inclusion could look like, an indeed should look like. The reflections of small group discussions of the Council were creatively collated to form a ‘wheel of belonging’. This was placed in the Chapel of Methodist Church House and was used as a prayer point for the first year of the 3-year project. Now in its final year, this is an opportunity for the Council to engage with Belonging Together, and to creatively explore how the ethos of belonging can be embedded in the life and witness of the Church.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Methodist Church has a history of commitment to issues of racial justice. In 1985, a working group published the seminal report *A Tree God Planted*. The title came from a conversation in the research for the report, where an immigrant woman aptly recalled: ‘I said to my friends: “I am like a tree God planted. I’m in and I’m not coming out”.’
- 2.2 In 1986 the Methodist Conference noted and commended the report, which used qualitative and quantitative research to capture the experiences and expectations of Black people and Methodism. It also directed the then Division of Social Responsibility to prepare recommendations for discussion in the Methodist Conference of 1986 on how the Church could respond faithfully to the call for people from all backgrounds to receive ‘equal opportunity and treatment’.
- 2.3 In 2010, some twenty-five years after *A Tree God Planted*, the Methodist Conference adopted the report *Towards An Inclusive Church*, which included the broad scope and resources for Belonging Together, a 3-year window of opportunity to ‘affirm, bring together and celebrate the whole people of God’. Against the backdrop of the review of committees, of grant funding streams and central budgets, Belonging Together was set up to help the Church achieve two things:

- The affirmation of culturally diverse churches, groups and individuals within the Connexion, and creating an environment in which they can be themselves, enjoy meaningful interactions, and take full advantage of Connexional structures and resources; and
- The creative interaction within the Connexion of groups and individuals of culturally different backgrounds, whereby they can contribute positively to the ministry of the whole people of God, locally and connexionally, and receive gifts and experiences from each other.

2.4 Recognising the good practice and effort put in by previous groups, committees and past initiatives, the project planning group identified five areas of concern which remained:

1. The lack of sufficiently diverse representation within the Church's ordained and authorised ministries, and the Church's insufficient capacity to recognise, nurture and utilise the gifts and graces of all who are called to ministry
2. The lack of sufficiently diverse participation within the Church's decision-making and leadership structures
3. The lack of adequate induction processes for ordained ministers transferring from other Conferences or Churches
4. An under-developed awareness and understanding across the Connexion of its ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity
5. Outstanding questions regarding the structural incorporation within the Connexion of ethnically-/linguistically-/culturally-distinct congregations

2.5 These concerns gave scope to the project and momentum to 12 the specific aims that emerged. A Partnership Steering Group was set up to oversee the delivery of these project's aims, and lead staff were recruited to co-ordinate the work of the Partnership (see Appendix 1).

3.0 Resourcing the project

3.1 From the outset, expectations of Belonging Together were understandably high both of the project outcomes and of the recruited lead staff. A number of committees and groups were keen to engage with the lead staff to help shape ethnically-inclusive policy and practice across the Church. Circuits, Districts and the Connexional Team provided opportunities for engagement both with the specific aims as well as with the general agenda of inclusion. To meet the demands on the project, Belonging Together had specified personnel and financial resources. Two members of staff were recruited in 2010 and an overall operating budget of £500,000 was allocated for three years; staff time has been maximised and the budget is under-spent.

4.0 Communicating the specific aims

4.1 The specific aims have been the 'working' part of the Belonging Together Partnership Document. Significant work was done by the project staff to ensure that consistent and inclusive language was used throughout. The Steering Group approved changes or

additions to the working document, and the document has been available on the Methodist Church website throughout. A printed leaflet summarising the project has also been widely used and circulated, along with posters (various sizes) and postcards. All publications communicating the aims of Belonging Together were designed in-house and produced cost-effectively by approved suppliers.

- 4.2 Ownership of the specific aims and an emphasis on collaboration and co-operation were identified early on as hallmarks of the success of Belonging Together. In some cases, this presented new ‘ways of working’, and these working relationships were supported by establishing a frequency of Steering Group meetings and encouraging sub-group meetings as needed. This gave deeper meaning to the Partnership Steering Group and strengthened the working relationships of the Steering Group. It also demonstrated the need for – and value of - structured opportunities for shared-thinking and joint working in other project / work areas that are not part of Belonging Together.
- 4.3 The focus of each aim and the part of the Team leading on each aim is summarised on the following table.

Specific aim	Led by	In collaboration / co-operation with
1. Welcome	D&M	Development & Personnel(D&P), WCR, Queen’s
2. Experience	Research	Discipleship & Ministries(D&M), Districts
3. Identity	D&M	Districts
4. Sustainability	E&D	Those responsible for racial justice
5. Learning	D&M	Learning institutions
6. Ministry	D&M	Project staff
7. Strategies	ES&D	Communications, districts, D&M Project staff
8. Youth	D&M	
9. Flexibility	E&D	OoSC, Faith & Order Committee, Law & Polity Committee, Communications
10. Mapping	Research	D&M, Equality & Diversity
11. Diversity	Research	E&D, D&P, D&M
12. Reflection	Project staff	Steering Group

- 4.4 The ‘headline’ milestones and progress made are summarised on the following slides produced for the February 2013 meeting of the Steering Group. Comments on the progress of each individual aim are detailed in Appendix 2 – The Specific Aims.

Belonging Together – the milestones

Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Recruitment of Belonging Together staff completed•Review of indicators / success criteria completed•Recording of experiences and review of processes commenced•New tools developed for candidating / stationing process
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Training for work with children / young people implemented•Strategies for sharing learning from Districts developed•Mapping of church membership diversity commenced•Mapping of those preparing for authorised ministry begun
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Induction, training and support for ministers improved•CPD / theological statement presented to Conference•<i>Diversifest</i> planned and hosted successfully•Evaluation of <i>Belonging Together</i> completed

BELONGING TOGETHER

The **Methodist** Church 

Belonging Together – the progress

Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Lead staff retained and new partners inducted / engaged•Specific aims, indicators / success criteria reviewed and agreed•Focus groups held at key events and data being analysed•New tools developed for candidating / stationing process
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Improved participation in MYA and Youth summits planned•Ethnic inclusion demonstrated in discipleship tools developed•Stage 1 of interactive online mapping tool launched•Candidating process and committee selection reviewed
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Induction being piloted and training review being supported•Cross-cluster group improving accessibility of CPD•Sustainable events being developed and shared ecumenically•Reflective practice to be introduced and used by all Partners

BELONGING TOGETHER

The **Methodist** Church 

4.5 As at the time of compiling this discussion paper, Belonging Together is on target with its 12 specific aims and their associated milestones. Only in two cases have adjustments been made to the timeline of the agreed milestones:

- the date for presenting a finalised theological statement to the Conference is now 2015, and
- the plan to host an event to celebrate the diversity of the Methodist Church is being reviewed.

5.0 Raising concerns and finding solutions

5.1 In its quarterly meeting, the Steering Group used its agenda to share progress and challenges of the journey, to identify and explore 'big issues' and to include the voices and input of those not part of the Group. This proved vital for highlighting areas of concern for the Connexion, where the driving forces of lack of contribution, representation, access and participation were initially identified as acute. A number of concerns raised on the journey of Belonging Together have been addressed as part of the specific aim(s), including:

- complaints about insensitive or poor handling of people from different backgrounds
- explanations of unclear/unfamiliar processes
- advice on recruitment/retention of people from ethnically diverse backgrounds to key committees
- making contact with fellowships groups and language congregations

5.2 These have been addressed or re-directed as they have arisen, encouraging colleagues in the Connexion to think of 'belonging together' as intrinsic to their own role, and not just as the domain or responsibility of the project staff. The effort to do this well and consistently has been significant for project staff, and the energy invested in building bridges to strengthen relationships should not be under-estimated or lost.

5.3 It has been heartening to see some of the formal and informal structures of the Church engage with the agenda of Belonging Together, to work through uncomfortable issues or misunderstandings and to journey to a place of mutual acceptance and inclusion of ethnic diversity. For those who engaged with the vision, Belonging Together gave people across the Connexion the space and opportunity to address the 'lack of' in their own context and to come up with strategies for making changes and/or improvements. Solutions and ideas have come from members and presbyters, young and old, and people from the diversity of backgrounds. They have ranged from thoughtful individual acts of kindness to 12-month plans for a whole circuit, and from personal testimonies of change to Connexion-wide policies to be intentionally inclusive.

6.0 The initial recommendations

6.1 Finding solutions to be better together has been at the heart of the meetings, workshops, conferences, seminars, lectures, presentations, and the range of external

(ecumenical) events that Belonging Together has engaged with since 2010. That said, at the time of this overview two key broad concerns remain:

- The extent to which the nature and culture of the Connexion has (or has not) changed to become more ethnically inclusive as a first-thought and not an after-thought
- The will to identify resources needed to continue ‘belonging together’ as an ethos and not as a project, making it the way the Connexion works and is served by the Connexional Team.

6.2 The project still has over four months to run, so its final report and recommendations will not be available until August. However, as the start of the process of embedding the legacy of Belonging Together, the following initial recommendations were presented and discussed at the February 2013 meeting of the Belonging Together Partnership Steering Group:

1. Ensure that resources and learning tools developed during the 3-year project are fed into the development of the Learning Network
2. Contribute to the development of policy and/or clear guidance for the funding criteria used by Connexional Grants Committee
3. Build capacity of the E&D Reference Group using expertise and momentum from the Belonging Together Partnership Group
4. Support the review and development of the Belonging Together Ministers Group into an accessible and purposeful network for the Connexion
5. Identify point(s) of contact within the Connexional Team for:
 - developing and maintaining the relationship with the diverse communities of Methodists in Britain
 - Monitoring and regularly reviewing the ‘driving forces’ identified in the Belonging Together project and the improvements made / needed

6.3 These initial recommendations were welcomed by the Group and, along with the ongoing report of the progress made on each of the specific aims and the concerns /questions raised, form the basis of a ‘next steps’ conversations with the Senior Leadership Group of the Connexional Team in March 2013, and this opportunity for engaging with the Methodist Council in April 2013. Lead colleagues and key stakeholder groups have been encouraged to provide further recommendations relevant to their areas of work or ministry so that these can be included in the embedding process and published in the final report.

7.0 Leaving a legacy, embedding the ethos

7.1 Each of the specific aims have produced new ways of working, new resources, and/or new information that is already being used to help inform and include all God’s people. It is a credit to all those who have been around the Belonging Together Partnership Steering Group table for all or some of the duration of the project. However, from 1

September 2013, issues of ethnic inclusion and diversity can no longer be passed to Belonging Together as a project. While the window of opportunity for the Belonging Together Partnership Steering Group to oversee key areas of work for the Church is closing, the door for continued progress is still open.

7.2 What Belonging Together has demonstrated is that ethnic inclusion cannot be left to chance or choice, nor indeed be reduced to quotas or compliance. This agenda will need to be owned and championed at all levels of Church governance and leadership, and of fellowship and meaningful interaction across the Connexion.

7.3 The core questions that remain are: how can the Methodist Church do this meaningfully and intentionally? And what would meaningful/intentional inclusion look like? Using the example of Joshua 4, the Methodist Council is asked to explore ways in which the impact by made the specific aims can be embedded in the life and witness of the Church, so that the learning from the project is not lost and that the Church does not simply return to what has been referred to as 'business as usual'.

8.0 A Biblical example

The Biblical narrative of Joshua 4:1-9 (NRSV) says:

When the entire nation had finished crossing over the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua: ² 'Select twelve men from the people, one from each tribe, ³ and command them, "Take twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood, carry them over with you, and lay them down in the place where you camp tonight.'" ⁴ Then Joshua summoned the twelve men from the Israelites, whom he had appointed, one from each tribe. ⁵ Joshua said to them, 'Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, one for each of the tribes of the Israelites, ⁶ so that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, "What do those stones mean to you?" ⁷ then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off in front of the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the Israelites a memorial for ever.'

⁸ The Israelites did as Joshua commanded. They took up twelve stones out of the middle of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, as the LORD told Joshua, carried them over with them to the place where they camped, and laid them down there. ⁹ (Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had stood; and they are there to this day.)

8.2 Small group discussion questions

The 12 specific aims of Belonging Together (the project) focused the resources and energy available to the project for the past three years. What steps can the Methodist Council take to:

- **Ensure** that the learning from the review of key processes, policies and practices becomes the way that the Church operates?

- **Address** the recommendations offered by the Partnership and outstanding issues which still remain, and identify any potential resources required for them to be prioritised across the Connexion?

9.0 The outcome

9.1 The responses to this discussion paper will be gathered to form the 12 ‘stones’ of a legacy for Belonging Together. It will be included in the end-of-project report, marking a journey that has been travelled and which is continuing.

Appendix 1 - Belonging Together Partnership Steering Group

Role / representation	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
Chair(s)			
Co-Chair	Bill Anderson	Mark Wakelin	Mark Wakelin
Co-Chair	Stuart Jordon	Chris Elliott	Chris Elliott
Districts			
Birmingham	Bill Anderson	Bill Anderson	Bill Anderson
London	Stuart Jordan	Stuart Jordan	Ermal Kirby
West Yorkshire	Roger Walton	Roger Walton	Albert Gayle
Committees, forums and groups			
Belonging Together Ministers	Albert Gayle	Albert Gayle	Albert Gayle
Faith & Order	Sylvester Deigh	Sylvester Deigh	Sylvester Deigh
Race Stakeholder Forum	Femi Cole-Njie	Marc Verlot / Femi Cole-Njie	Marc Verlot
Connexional Team			
Discipleship & Ministries	Siôn Rhys Evans/ vacant	Siôn Rhys Evans	Siôn Rhys Evans
Equality & Diversity	Jennifer Crook	Jennifer Crook	Margaret Sawyer
Evangelism, Spirituality & Discipleship	Joanne Cox	Jenny Ellis	Jenny Ellis
Learning & Development	Lia Shimada	Lia Shimada	Nicola Quinn / Lia Shimada
Ministries, Learning & Development	Sheryl Anderson	Sheryl Anderson	Howard Mellor / Sheryl Anderson
Mission & Advocacy	Toby Scott	Toby Scott	Claire Herbert / Toby Scott
World Church Relationships	David Friswell	Bunmi Olayisade	Mike King
Project management			
Belonging Together	Katei Kirby	Katei Kirby	Katei Kirby
Project line management	Carmila Legarda	Carmila Legarda	Triumph Ayo- Isegun
Connexional senior leader	Doug Swanney	N/A	N/A

Appendix 2 – The Specific Aims

Specific aim	Indicators / success criteria	Led by	Update - February 2013
1. Develop policies that reflect a clearer understanding of the pathways by which ordained ministers join MCB from partner Conferences, and improve their induction and training support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review pathways Establish coherent and transparent strategies Induction courses designed for ministers/families and receiving Superintendents Facilitate on-going support for ministers/circuits Reflection on the experiences of transferring ministers 	D&M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pathways reviewed and to be streamlined Policy being drafted / proposed Induction course piloted Follow-up visits conducted for pilot cohort Feedback obtained and changes made
2. Research and map the experiences of people from under-represented backgrounds coming forward for leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiences recorded and analysed and key findings shared with partners / policy makers 	Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-depth interviews and focus groups in Partner districts and at key events; findings being analysed
3. Improve support for culturally distinct congregations, fellowships, and the ministers serving them, and explore how we celebrate identity in the love of the Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify/map culturally distinct congregations/fellowships Review support offered, explore approaches and clarify policy Develop revised strategy to promote engagement with wider Connexion 	D&M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact made with new/existing fellowships/ groups Approaches being explored and recommendations being made Wider engagement encouraged and relationships maintained/strengthened
4. Put in place a model of sustainability for events and networks which support culturally distinct congregations and ministers from under-represented backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual event which awards good practice and celebrates diversity developed Stakeholders forum established Race Stakeholder Forum included in E&D Resource Group Belonging Together is standing agenda item Framework for supporting ministers of 	E&D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idea being reviewed Forum established and meeting regularly Chair of Race Stakeholder Forum is a member of E&D Resource Group Belonging Together is a standing agenda

	different backgrounds reviewed/developed as core		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> item Framework for Belonging Together Ministers' Group being developed / supported
5. Facilitate and support engagement with cultural diversity through ministerial training programmes and through learning resources for Connexional churches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning strategies that emphasise unity and diversity Revise learning outcomes for ministerial students Develop resources to support learning / development Strategies developed for diversity conversations 	D&M	(see developments for the Learning Network)
6. Increase the diversity of people coming forward for lay and ordained ministry, and improve support offered during candidating, preparing and stationing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review criteria and develop revised processes Review those who candidate over past three years Produce a candidating handbook with updates images Produce promotional video to attract people from under-represented groups Publish in the Methodist Recorder Candidating Committee – recruit new members, explore ways to support under-represented groups, develop training criteria for committee members and district candidating secretaries 	D&M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria reviewed and streamlined Possibility /sensitivity being explored 'Is God Calling You?' produced with images of people from different backgrounds 'Is God Calling You?' 12-minute DVD produced to compliment booklet Press releases issued / stories covered Review /recruitment and training commenced
7. Develop strategies to spread more widely the spiritual, theological and practical understandings discovered or developed in the London, Birmingham and other districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scoping exercise conducted Pilot material produced and promoted Areas of good practice shared ecumenically 	ES&D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publications (including web) reviewed Ethnically inclusive content in new resources Opportunities shared with CoE, BUGB and URC

8. Build capacity for children and young people to engage with cultural diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E&D included in youth events • E&D training for people working with children/youth • Short-term support to ABMY for long-term integration 	D&M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted involvement through PPMs • Training programme developed and being run • Relationships developed and significant improvement in participation at all levels
9. Promote the flexibility of CPD and demonstrate how CPD embodies an ethos of inclusion and participation within the Methodist Church in Britain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop access tools for CPD • Education process in place for on-going engagement • Theological statement on E&D presented to Conference 2012 	E&D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In development • In development • Principles presented in 2012, full statement to be presented to Conference in 2015
10. Map the current diversity of the Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop tools for collecting statistics • Develop infrastructure for mapping • Plans for collecting new types of data developed 	Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online format improved using feedback • Infrastructure commissioned and developed • New data requests added to Stats for Mission
11. Research and map the diversity of those coming forward for ministries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present report on diversity of people coming forward for ministry • Resources reviewed and revised for data collection • Develop sensitive process for gathering data on identity 	Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First year of data collected and report(s) available on request from key stakeholders • On-going (see 10) • On-going, in consultation with E&D, and D&M
12. Evaluate the Project, and disseminate lessons learnt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate Belonging Together against the Terms of Reference • Full report widely available • Benchmarking completed against similar initiatives with ecumenical partners • Framework for E&D explored for Methodism in a plural society • Reflective practice explored across the 	Project staff / Partnership Steering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be done in the last quarter of the project • To be published August 2013 • To be included in final report in August 2013 • To be part of the final report narrative

	Connexion	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective practice used as part of the Belonging Together process
--	-----------	-------	--

FURTHER INFORMATION ON REPORTS / DOCUMENTS:

A Tree God Planted: Black People in British Methodism

- Authors: Heather Walton with Robin Mark and Mark Johnson (1986), Ethnic Minorities In Methodism Working Group
http://www.amazon.co.uk/tree-God-planted-British-Methodism/dp/0948464003/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1362058612&sr=1-1

Towards An Inclusive Church

- Methodist Conference Report
<http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/confrep32-towards-an-inclusive-church-250510.pdf>

Belonging Together Partnership Document 2010-1013

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/pro-Belonging-Together-Partnership-Doc-2010-2013-Revised-220311-230811-241111.pdf>