

One Mission Forum report

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Note
Resolutions	67/1. The Council receives the report. 67/2. The Council expresses its gratitude to the Revd Ken Howcroft for his contribution to the work of the One Mission Forum.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	Annual report of the One Mission Forum to the Council as required by Standing Order 1001.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on meeting of the Forum in October 2016. • The One Mission Forum has a new Chair. Gratitude is expressed to the outgoing Chair for their contribution. • Plans to 'relaunch' the Forum in September 2017 to fulfil its role of supporting the wider Church in taking forward One Mission.

- 1 The One Mission Statement (as contained in the 2015 Conference report) called the Church to this vision:
**A world transformed by God's love;
a confident Church motivated to share God's love;
a people celebrating being part of a worldwide family.**
- 2 This vision is now contained in Part 10 of standing orders entitled 'The Church in Mission' and was the outcome following reflection on the nature of mission for the Methodist Church today, a mission which brings together both the local and the global aspects.
- 3 Part of that vision was the creation of the One Mission Forum which was given the following responsibilities as outlined in Standing Order 1001:
 - i. to develop and support a network of people committed to mission both local and global;
 - ii. to challenge the Church to learn from and keep constantly under review its place within the world Church;
 - iii. to share insights and develop vision;
 - iv. to confer about how the vision and policies for mission adopted by the Conference might be implemented in the Church.
- 4 The Forum met in October 2016 in Methodist Church House (MCH) for a day to confer on the developments undertaken by various groups engaging in God's mission. The day featured four themes:
 - Mission in Britain
 - God's People conferring in Mission (included reports from the World Methodist Council/Conference, Methodist Women in Britain, Methodists for World Mission, and One Mission fund raising strategy)
 - Holiness and Justice for people on the Move (a discussion on the response to the plight of refugees/asylum seekers/displaced people and a call to consider what is going on in each District/area of work)

- God's people around the world (reports from World Church Relationships team and the youth president)
- 5 At this meeting it was noted that attendance from some of the District representatives had started to wane and there was a feeling for some that the purposes of the Forum were not as clear as they had hoped. This feeling was discussed around the same time that the Chair of the Forum was asked to take on the role of Chair of the Marriage and Relationships task group.
 - 6 The Forum is deeply grateful to the energy and effort of its former Chair and the invitation was made for reflections to be shared by him as part of moving forward. Those reflections are contained in Appendix 1.
 - 7 The Council at its January meeting appointed Dr Jill Barber to take on the role of Chair and conversations have already begun with her about how to harness the views of the existing members as to the future of the Forum.
 - 8 It is hoped that with some reflection and a 'relaunch' this coming September the Forum can fulfil its role of supporting the wider Church in taking forward the heart of One Mission which is to enable the people called Methodist to:
 - i. Worship the God who loves us
 - ii. Talk confidently about the Gospel; [ie apologetics, evangelism]
 - iii. Act imaginatively both to spread that message and to live it out; [ie evangelism, social gospel]
 - iv. Be connected to others doing the same, worldwide and at home; [ie mission education]
Providing resources and support that enables and equips Methodists to engage and respond as part of God's mission through evangelism, social justice actions, worship and imaginative outreach will contribute to the growth and vitality of the Church.
 - 9 It is crucial that the links between apologetics, evangelism, global/home mission, discipleship and worship are not lost. The very history of Methodism shows its people spreading the Gospel through an understanding of the intrinsic links that exist between a personal discipleship which leads to spreading the gospel in all places and in all contexts. Methodism is a global and broad communion, and by continuing to journey with partners we can all be stronger in a world which often does not want to hear our witness.
 - 10 The One Mission Forum is a critical place for these strands to come together and the work ahead is to ensure it is best equipped to do this.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

67/1. The Council receives the report.

67/2. The Council expresses its gratitude to the Revd Ken Howcroft for his contribution to the work of the One Mission Forum.

Appendix 1

ONE MISSION FORUM REFLECTIONS

It has been an immense privilege to have served as the first chair of the One Mission Forum. The vision of "One Mission" is an exciting and vital one for the life of the body of Christ in the world. As I leave the role for other tasks that I have been asked to undertake, I am grateful for this opportunity to share some reflections on the journey so far.

The Vision

Mission is 'one' because the God we all worship is one. Mission and worship are inextricably linked. As we 'give worth' to God, we experience God loving, forgiving and, in a sense, 'giving worth' to us. As we receive God's love and allow it to prompt us to love God in return, we find ourselves drawn towards loving the other people and things that God loves (ourselves; our neighbours as ourselves; each other as Christ has loved us; the whole world). So our worship should be shot through with the concerns of mission, and our mission shot through with the dynamics of worship.

In particular, mission is 'one' because God's love is one in creating, re-creating or redeeming, and bringing all things to their fullness. Similarly, mission is one because the Church (the people of God, the body of Christ) is one.

The fact that the godhead, God's love, the Church and mission are each 'one' does not mean that there are not different embodiments or expressions of them. Conversely, the fact that there are three 'persons' in the godhead does not mean that there are three distinct or separate gods. Again, the fact that there are different expressions of God's love does not mean that there are distinct or separate divine loves. Or again, with regard to the Church, there are local expressions of it for worship, fellowship and mission; area or regional structures for the sharing and provision of resources; national denominations; world-wide communions; and the heavenly communion of saints. But that does not mean that there are distinct or separate peoples of God or bodies of Christ.

So, similarly, the fact that there are different emphases and activities in mission (eg in Britain and overseas; evangelism in word and deed, and service through works of mercy and works of justice) does not mean that there are distinct and separate missions.

We are being called to a place where in each aspect of our life as a church, from local church to the whole connexion and beyond, things concerning Mission in Britain, World Mission, Public Issues, Evangelism, and Aid and Development are constantly interacting in our worship, our praying, our thinking, our acting.

Gradually this idea that mission is 'one' is entering our consciousness, and starting to be embodied in our practice. But it is a slow process. It needs to be addressed, intentionally and more urgently.

Connexional issues

Members of the Connexional Team have been very helpful in trying to set up and run the One Mission Forum, and I am very grateful to them. But it is interesting that thinking of their own areas of work as expressions of 'one mission' is only slowly entering what they say and do; as is the question of with which colleagues they speak and act. There may be lots of informal contacts between, say, Joint Public Issues Team members and World Church Relationships staff about the effects of climate change on ourselves and our partner churches. Or, again, there may be lots of informal contacts about the trans-national refugee crisis between JPIT, WCR and those responsible for grant making as part of Mission in Britain. But even if there are lots of informal contacts about those or other issues, the benefits and fruits of the contacts need to be articulated much more openly. Working in a "One Mission" way needs not just to be done, but to be seen to be done - and then consciously described.

In 2014-15 I spent a day acting as a consultant at a meeting of some staff from All We Can and some from the World Church Relationships part of the Connexional Team reflecting theologically about

their work and looking for the natural synergies. I think it was a profitable exercise, and that we need more of that kind of thing – and not just between those parties.

The 'Mission Matters' publication has been retitled as 'One Mission Matters' but there is not yet much sign of articles paying attention to the links between different aspects of mission, or how they might be brought together practically in local, circuit, district, connexional, ecumenical or world-wide expressions of the church.

Mission in Britain needs an overview

One of the issues that the One Mission Forum has faced is that it is relatively easy to get high quality input about World Church issues. The Partnership Co-ordinators have specific responsibilities, areas of expertise and contacts on which they can draw. They work to a Team Leader, which means that there is also someone who can be turned to when seeking an overview of World Mission.

The same is not true when we look at Mission in Britain. Things are much more fragmented. To mention but a few, there are people responsible for grant-making; for fresh expressions, pioneer work and evangelism; for various forms of chaplaincy; for the use of our heritage; and for the use of property. It is unclear whether they interact or consider themselves to be a coherent grouping.

Above all, there is no point of reference to provide an over view of Mission in Britain. It would make a lot of difference if there were. Such a person would then complement the leader of World Church Relationships, with both of them accountable to the Head of the Mission and Advocacy cluster.

All We Can

The situations in the world concerning migrants are a good example of how the different aspects of mission interlink. Our sister and partner churches exist in many, possibly most, of the countries from which people are leaving. They exist in the countries through which people are travelling or being trafficked. They (and, in the case of the UK, we) exist in the countries to which people are attempting to go. Churches are the largest trans-national organisations in the world. That means that if we hold together the links between Overseas Mission, Mission in Britain, and Public Issues, we can be effective tools of the Kingdom of God.

As soon as we say that, it becomes obvious that another key element of the mix is the knowledge, expertise and work of All We Can. I am aware of conversations about how All We Can can relate more effectively to the Connexional Team, and connexional structures more generally and, of course, vice versa. I would want to encourage those conversations. I also think that how All We Can becomes part of One Mission thinking and practice in local churches, circuits and districts needs to be worked on.

Communicating with Districts and Circuits (and, through them, local Churches)

The One Mission Forum has, as a major component of its membership, one representative from each of the districts. These representatives are potentially a wonderful channel of two-way communication between local churches, circuits and districts on the one hand; and connexional bodies and partner churches and agencies on the other. Yet the district representatives have often not known to whom to pass information in and through their districts; or how to collect information about what is happening in the districts in order to contribute to the Forum.

It would help enormously if each district clarified for its representatives where and how discussions of and decisions about priorities in mission are made, and how information can be fed into and drawn from them. There is a danger that when mission becomes part of everyone's *raison d'être* and is assumed to be visible everywhere, it ends up being seen nowhere.

Ken Howcroft 27 February 2017