

28. Ecumenical Report

Contact name and details	The Revd Neil A Stubbens: Connexional Ecumenical Officer StubbensN@methodistchurch.org.uk
Subject and aims	An update to the Ecumenical Reports received by the Conference in 2016 and 2017, the first of which outlined the scope of the Methodist Church's ecumenical relationships.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. As the Methodist Church reaffirms *Our Calling*, it is appropriate to remember the vision statement for ecumenical work, *Our Ecumenical Calling: Making a difference together in the twenty-first century*; it was adopted by the Methodist Council and received (and slightly amended) by the Conference in 2009¹. Like *Priorities for the Methodist Church*, it talks of 'partnership', in particular of "living in ecumenical partnership". The forms of partnership, as well as the partners, are many and varied: worshipping with other Christians in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and on various occasions when visiting other places; learning and caring with other Christians as we engage together in Lent Groups and support the bereaved; serving with other Christians through foodbanks; sharing in evangelism with other Christians through *Thy Kingdom Come* and Hope 2018.
- 1.2. This report offers examples of ecumenical activities and activities carried out ecumenically that relate to, interact with, and resource those in local, circuit, and district contexts.

2. The World Council of Churches (WCC)

- 2.1. The WCC's Conference on World Mission and Evangelism took place in Arusha, Tanzania in March. Organised by the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, it was on the theme 'Moving in the Spirit: Called to transforming discipleship'. One of its features was the integration of worship into the conference. The Methodist Church sent five representatives and they are sharing the experience and stories they heard in various ways. The documents relating to the conference are available on the WCC's website, including the Arusha Call to Discipleship². There is a fuller report elsewhere in the *Agenda*.
- 2.2. The material for next year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has been produced by the Churches in Indonesia; its title is *Justice and Only Justice you shall Pursue* (Deuteronomy 16:18-20) and explores the call to be one amidst a world of injustice.

3. The Conference of European Churches (CEC)

- 3.1. The 15th General Assembly of CEC took place from 31 May to 6 June in Novi Sad, Serbia. The theme was, "You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8) and amidst the current ecumenical challenges in Europe, the Assembly explored the Christian values of witness, justice, and hospitality. The Methodist Church sent two representatives and, by the time of the Methodist Conference, it is hoped that reports of the Assembly will be available.

4. The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)

- 4.1. The CCME mission statement says that it "serves the churches in their commitment to promote the vision of an inclusive community through advocating for an adequate policy for migrants, refugees and minority groups at European and national level". The Joint Public Issues Team has included CCME resources in its work, including a collection of theological reflections on migration. The triennial General Assembly of CCME met in June 2017 and

¹ <http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/3039/ec-vision-our-ecumenical-calling.pdf>

² <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/mission2018/documents-related-to-the-conference>

agreed the work priorities for 2018-2020 to be Safe Passage, Europe and International Refugee Protection, Europe and International Migration, Upholding the Dignity of Persons, Addressing Discrimination, and Uniting in Diversity.

5. **Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)**

- 5.1. This past year, CTBI has provided, as usual, resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (*That All May Be Free*, which was adapted from material prepared by Churches in the Caribbean) and Lent (*40 Stories of Hope* for which CTBI partnered with Hope). Resources for Racial Justice Sunday (11 February 2018) were produced by both the United Reformed Church (on the theme 'Staying Power') and the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales (on the theme 'Belonging: All are welcome').
- 5.2. CTBI's Inter Faith Theological Advisory Group has completed a study guide *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*, which is a document from the WCC, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and the World Evangelical Alliance.

6. **Scotland**

- 6.1. Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) has been reviewed by the Theos think tank and the Trustees and Members' Meeting have started to engage with the report as they seek to discern possible ways forward.

7. **England**

- 7.1. Churches Together in England (CTE) now has 48 member Churches and its unity and diversity will be marks of the 2018 Forum in September, which has the theme, "I am with you always" – together in God's mission'. The Revd Ruth Gee is the Moderator. The Methodist Church is sending 12 representatives.
- 7.2. Theos has carried out a review of CTE, and the CTE Board and Enabling Group have engaged with it as they seek to discern the role of the national ecumenical instrument for England for the next five to ten years.

8. **The Free Churches Group (FCG)**

- 8.1. The work of the Free Churches Group continues to be focused on supporting the Churches' work in education, and healthcare and prison chaplaincy.

9. **Wales**

- 9.1. One of the continuing emphases in Cytûn's work is Europe: it hosted the annual meeting of the national ecumenical councils of Europe in Cardiff last year, its Wales and Europe Working Party has published an initial report, and Cytûn plans to work closely with CEC throughout this year.

10. **The Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission (MAPUM)**

- 10.1. MAPUM continues to consider items relating to the covenant with the Church of England (including, in the last year, 'Mission and Ministry in Covenant'), *A New Framework for Local Unity in Mission*, and local ecumenical partnerships. It has also discussed aspects of ecumenical hospitality, some of the issues about 'intermediate' ecumenical bodies in England, and details of ongoing ecumenical legislation in the Church of England.

11. The Methodist-United Reformed Church Liaison Group (MURCLG)

11.1. The Liaison Group has made available new guidelines on services of welcome and induction and hopes to publish four brief papers to increase mutual understanding, especially of those in single congregation local ecumenical partnerships involving both Churches. The Group has also spent a significant amount of time on producing a constitution for ecumenical areas involving the two Churches.

12. The British Methodist-Roman Catholic Dialogue Commission

12.1. This past year, the Commission has focused on the worship and praise of God; it has considered Roman Catholic and Methodist perspectives on liturgy, prayer, traditions of spirituality, and fresh expressions. To mark the end of the current five-year period of dialogue, the Commission is preparing a report that it is hoped will help to promote mutual understanding among Methodists and Roman Catholics and inspire others of both Churches to share together in various ways, including dialogue.

13. Methodist Ecumenical Office, Rome (MEOR)

13.1. The varied work of the Office continues to develop. Last October marked the 50th anniversary of the Joint International Commission for Dialogue between the World Methodist Council (WMC) and the Roman Catholic Church. The MEOR Stakeholders' Forum met in Rome, as did the WMC Steering Committee, and they were joined by the current members of the Commission and the President of the Italian Methodist Church at an audience with Pope Francis.

13.2. The appointment of another One Programme intern has, again, been a significant enhancement to the Office.

14. District Ecumenical Officers (DEOs)

14.1. In place of the annual Anglican-Methodist Ecumenical Officers' consultation, a good number of the District Ecumenical Officers attended a conference on 'Responding to the Reformation' last October; the papers have been published in the ecumenical journal *One in Christ*. In the spring meeting, attention was focused on the role of ecumenical instruments and other bodies in Britain and beyond.

*****RESOLUTION**

28/1. The Conference received the Report.