

Notice of Motion 2015/215 Pornography Statement

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	For decision
Draft Resolutions	93/1. The Council receives the report. 93/2. The Council adopts the terms of reference of the working group as set out in the report. 93/3. The Council appoints the following to serve as members of the working group: <i>(names to be supplied in an additional paper)</i>

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	Response to the 3Generate report to the 2015 Conference and Notice of Motion 2015/215 on pornography which directed the Methodist Council to set up a working Group on pornography.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	1. Background 2. Way Forward 3. Budget 4. Proposed Terms of reference
Consultations	The Revd Andrew J Lunn, proposer of the Notice of Motion Mr Craig Gaffney, Youth President

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	N/A
Faith and Order	Possible liaison on resources
Financial	Cost of the meetings and administrative support of the Working Group. Plus a potential proposal could be made to the Editorial Group for the funding of any new resources created
Personnel	Administrative support to the Working Group
External (eg ecumenical)	Recommends that the Working Group works ecumenically and in partnership with other groups such as ROOTs

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Background

1. The 2014 3Generate Methodist Children and Youth Assembly Report to the 2015 Conference highlighted a number of issues that the 18-23s age stream had raised, one of which was pornography.
2. The report stated the following:
 “Pornography: What should our response as Christians be to the pornography industry? What about the Sun’s page three? 50 Shades of Grey? How can we encourage respect for the different sexes?” (Agenda 2015 p68)
3. The report made suggestions about how the Church “could help young people feel more comfortable and confident talking about sex and adult things and recognise that it is a normal and acceptable subject to talk about and that sex is not necessarily a bad thing.”
4. Through the report, 3Generate asked for sessions on sex education in youth groups by external and Methodist experts on the subject, and asked that the Methodist Church be involved in wider discussions about providing improved education in schools on sex, relationships and pornography.
5. They asked that the Church continue its support of the “No More Page 3” and similar campaigns.
6. They also highlighted the need of the Church to educate young people and involve them in conversations about the use of pornography as well as recognising the effect this industry has on people’s esteem.
7. Notice of Motion (NoM) 2015/215 on pornography was adopted by the 2015 Conference having been proposed in light of the reference to pornography referred to in the 3Generate report. The Conference directed:
 - i. That the Methodist Council appoint a Working Group to prepare a draft Conference statement and discussion materials appropriate for different age groups on pornography and to report to the 2017 Conference.
 - ii. That the Working Group has expertise in sexual ethics, psychology and the nature of digital media, as well as representatives from the 3Generate age group.
 - iii. The Terms of Reference be agreed by the Methodist Council in consultation with the 3Generate representatives to the Methodist Council.

The Way forward

8. NoM 2015/215 asked for a draft Conference Statement. Concerns have been raised that the preparing of a Conference Statement would be a lengthy process that would not elicit the outcomes envisaged by the NoM or 3Generate, in terms of resourcing and educating people. A Conference Statement is defined in Standing Order 129 as a document intended, if adopted by the Conference, to be a considered Statement of the judgment of the Conference on some major issue or issues of faith and practice, and framed with a view to standing as such for some years. It was also felt that the production of a statement intended to last for a decade might not be desirable, or possible, in such a fast changing digital world. Therefore, on reflection and in consultation with the proposer of the NoM, it is felt that the resources of the Church could be better used in the production of a short report and resources.

9. Therefore it is recommended that a Working Group is appointed to produce resources and materials for use by churches and groups. These resources should be made available by the time of the 2017 Conference, and a short report should be brought to the Conference outlining the process and the resources available.
10. These resources would enable the Church to ensure that conversations are rooted in reality, as well as helping people to reflect on the challenges around pornography but also around the issue of the misuse of sexual power posed in the context of the digital age.
11. It is therefore proposed that the terms of reference of the Working Group focus on enabling people to understand the realities and challenges and resource them to be able to have informed and reflective conversations. Appropriate resources may already exist and these will be signposted as well as producing any additional resources where necessary. The United Methodist Church, Church of England as well as other Christian denominations have done work around the issue of pornography. Therefore it will be particularly important to work ecumenically and in partnership with others.
12. The NoM also asked that the Working Group should include members from the 3Generate age group. Obviously it would only be appropriate to include over 18s on the Working Group itself. However, only having one or two young people on the Working Group may not necessarily be the best way of hearing the concerns of young people more generally and therefore not be the most helpful model of engagement. Therefore in addition to having some young people on the Working Group it is proposed, following discussions with the Youth President, that the following are also undertaken:
 - i. That the Working Group ensures that advice is taken from facilitated conversations of young people throughout the process.
 - ii. A specially convened session of the Youth President's Advisory Group (YPAG), expertly facilitated, considers the matters raised by the Working Group and any of its reports before the final report to the Methodist Conference in 2017.

Budget

13. No additional budget was identified during the NoM process. However, the Conference Office holds a budget to fund working groups and would allocate a maximum of £3,750 to cover the cost of the meetings of the Working Group. If the group wishes to produce any resources it will need to discuss a publication plan with the Editorial Group responsible for assigning such resources.

Proposed Terms of Reference

14. The Working Group will work to produce appropriate discussion material aimed at:
 - i. enabling different age groups to understand the realities and challenges of pornography
 - ii. resourcing informed and reflective conversations on these issues
15. It may choose to: identify existing resources; work with others, eg ROOTS, to produce resources; produce resources from amongst its own membership; or co-opt others from outside the Working Group with particular skills, bearing in mind the constraints on budget identified.

The Working Group will undertake some initial theological thinking on pornography, in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee; and may choose to make recommendations

as to how the Methodist Church might best theologically resource its involvement in wider conversations.

16. The Working Group will consist of members with a range of relevant expertise, including those with expertise in sexual ethics, psychology, the nature of digital media, informal education and theological reflection.
17. It will take advice from the convening of a special session of the Youth President's Advisory Group, facilitated by a member of the Working Group.
18. It will also be able to draw on the Families Ministries Development Officer and a member of the Joint Public Issues Team as advisers/corresponding members of the group.
19. In its work the Working Group will take into account:
 - i. Methodist and ecumenical theological reflection, statements and resources on pornography
 - ii. Current developments in digital media, sexual ethics, public policy and relevant regulation
 - iii. Current safeguarding policy and practice
20. The Working Group will ensure the resources are available in time for the 2017 Conference.
21. The Group will receive administrative support, an agreed budget of £3,750 for meeting costs, and will be able to submit project proposals for the production costs of resources to the Editorial Group.

Proposed membership of the group

22. A supplementary paper will be brought to the Council containing proposed members of the working group together with reasoned statements.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

93/1. The Council receives the report.

93/2. The Council adopts the terms of reference of the working group as set out in the report.

93/3. The Council appoints the following to serve as members of the working group: *(names to be supplied in an additional paper)*