

## All Partners Consultation: Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June - Remember yesterday, today.

### Joining in the heavenly banquet

Preaching at the morning's communion service, the President of MCB – Revd David Gamble – used Luke 14: 15-23 to invite us to our foretaste of the heavenly banquet in the form of bread & wine. He emphasised that this banquet is for **all** – all Christians; young and old; male and female; all ethnic groups; poor and rich; and, all the people who aren't on our guest list. Most importantly, we need to remember that we, despite our own faults and insecurities, are invited. Quoting the famous Wesley hymn 'And Can it Be':  
*"Amazing love, how can it be, that thou my God shouldst die for me."*

### Re-imagining, practically – Ivan Abrahams (Presiding Bishop, MC Southern Africa)

The session after communion marked a change in focus for the consultation. From this moment onwards, the group would be looking at key issues in our working relationships to facilitate future planning and policies. Ivan covered three key themes of: money, people exchange and church-to-church relationships.

#### Money

Although the subject of money is often taboo within our church and society, it is a common subject in both Wesley's writings (36 of his sermons) and the Bible (mentioned in every 16<sup>th</sup> verse). Ten Biblical principals were highlighted, from 'everything belongs to God – we own nothing' to 'generosity born in God's generous image'. Change is required in our attitudes and two forms of change were identified:

1. Change as conviction, conversion – Ivan shared a vision of a new paradigm, with Exodus 16 1-26 and 2Cor 8:13-15 as its basis and the values of equality, freedom and justice.
2. Change as contrition – A new world is possible if we turn from 'what is' to 'what can be'. In groups, the following questions were considered: *What do we need*

*to give up from our experiences of sending and receiving? Can the church be a prophetic community of covenant, love and accountability rooted in the belief that if one member suffers, all do? Is there a possibility of working towards a world Methodist bank or credit union – what would it look like?*

#### People Exchange

People are the church's most important resource. They are the real agents of church's mission; migration and globalisation have brought huge changes to the way in which people move around the world. Again, two questions were looked at: *How are churches in the North responding to the challenges of migrant communities? How are Churches in South dealing with the flight of skills and human resources?*

#### Church-to-Church relationships

Using a nautical illustration, Ivan compared a power boat with a sail boat. The power inside the first boat is modern, powerful, noisy and expensive; its destination is known; and it goes where directed – this is the epitome of high control. On the other hand, a sail boat has less control; is dependent upon the wind; the journey is as important as the destination; and realises that flexibility is its greatest resource – this is the less controlling example. The group were challenged as to which metaphor most reflected their own church's attitude and what the implications are for its relationships with others? Continuing the theme, examples of what could be included in a 'Code of Good Practice for Partnership' were given, e.g. making relationships primary and valuing greater mutuality. Finally, groups were asked to consider what they would include in such a code.

### **Shaping a practical way forward**

Following a visit to Wesley's Chapel (or a viewing of a rare English football victory), groups were formed along the three themes from the morning session. Feedback from these groups will be received on Thursday morning. We then heard two 'good news stories' to have already come out of the consultation:

### **Latin American Statement**

A Statement from the Council of Latin American and Caribbean Methodist Churches (CIEMAL) was read by Bishop Moises Valderrama (President) - you can read it in Spanish on the All Partners blog (see below) English translation to be posted 'asap'.

The statement presented their dreams for the transformation of mission for 2020. It gave thanks for the generous and faithful history of Methodist mission and also recognised the impoverishment of colonialism. The challenges and consequences of the 2008 financial crisis in the entrenched global system have brought misery and we face other military, environmental and governance challenges. We must continue the reading, re-reading and sharing of our theological and other resources as equals in this uncertain world. We must read the signs of the times:

1. We must transform ourselves to express real concern for our people according to the kerygma of the good news. It requires us to change our mentality and recover our ability to overcome challenges as we have before;
2. There needs to be transformation of our ecclesiology. It has too often become over institutionalised and minister-centred;
3. Methodist ecumenism must be emphasised to respect the diversity of Wesleyan thinking and make us a more effective body of Christ;
4. We must recover the essence of Methodism, its orthodoxy, orthopraxis, and

orthopathos (rightness of compassionate feeling?); not just to start new churches but to transform existing ones and spread scriptural holiness;

5. We must follow Wesley out of the church walls and recover the charisma of the movement; the institution at the service of the movement. We need each other and must seek unity that the world may believe.

### **Landmark visits a result of Consultation**

Bishop Kumar (Moderator of CSI) shared with us the inspirational story of how the time at the Consultation has provided church leaders from the Church of South India, Church of North India, Church of Pakistan, Church of Bangladesh and Methodist Church of Sri Lanka with the opportunity to meet together and re-imagine their future in their locality.

As a result, a visit to Pakistan by the Indian churches is now planned for November, with a return trip by those from Pakistan in early 2011. To illustrate what a landmark occasion this will be, Bishop Kumar shared that Bishop Samantaroy (Bishop of Amritsar) is just 40km from Bishop Azariah – yet they can never meet. Hopefully, this initiative will help the churches bring their divided communities together in peace and reconciliation.

At the same time, the Church of South India and Methodist Church of Sri Lanka have agreed to work together on issues of rehabilitation and restoration since the tsunami and civil war. Sharing resources in this way is a practical outworking of many of the visions we have shared in recent days.

**Follow the day's events as they unfold on the consultation blog:** [www.allpartneronemission.blogspot.com](http://www.allpartneronemission.blogspot.com)

**Download the sessions' papers:** [www.methodist.org.uk/apc](http://www.methodist.org.uk/apc)