

Review of the Mission alongside the Poor Programme

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Decision
Draft Resolutions	<p>6/1. The Council receives the report.</p> <p>6/2. The Council recommends that the Conference directs that a review of the Mission Alongside the Poor programme be undertaken by the Council, with the terms of reference as outlined in this report.</p> <p>6/3. The Council directs that the review should be funded out of the budget of the grants team within the Connexional Team, and that a report should be made to the Conference no later than 2016.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	A review of the Mission Alongside the Poor (MAP) Programme is needed to enable the Council to determine whether and how it needs to be developed to suit current circumstances.
Main Points	<p>The MAP Programme is a key way in which the Methodist Church is committed to standing alongside people in poverty – both financially and spiritually.</p> <p>The Connexional Grants Committee seeks to improve the operation of the MAP Programme to bring it into line with current ideas about the nature of poverty.</p> <p>A review of the Mission Alongside the Poor Programme (MAP Programme) is needed to enable the Council to determine whether the Programme is still fit for purpose in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the changed nature of poverty in Britain; - the Council and the Conference’s response to contemporary poverty; - the availability of funds to resource the MAP Programme.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<p><i>SO 351, Mission Alongside the Poor</i></p> <p><i>Of Equal Value: Poverty and Inequality in the UK</i>, report to the 2011 Conference http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf2011-pc-11-poverty-and-inequality-0812.doc</p> <p><i>The lies we tell ourselves: ending comfortable myths about poverty</i>, report to the 2013 Conference : www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/truthandlies <i>Follow up to the 2011 Methodist Conference Report on Poverty and Inequality (MC1341)</i></p>
Consultations	Joint Public Issues Team

Review of the Mission alongside the Poor Programme

1. Standing Order 351 Mission Alongside the Poor

- 1.1. Grants for the Mission Alongside the Poor (MAP) Programme are awarded by the Connexional Grants Committee (CGC) in accordance with the terms of SO 351. The Standing Order outlines the type of grants that may be made under the programme.

2. The changed nature of poverty in Britain and the response of the Methodist Church

- 2.1. Poverty is on our doorstep. Severe short term poverty is an increasing problem caused by changes in the benefit system. Unlike the poverty of the 1980's, which was largely a phenomenon of those who could not find work or were unable to work, the majority of people in poverty are now in working families.¹
- 2.2. UK poverty is predicted to rise until at least the end of the decade with children being particularly badly affected. The Institute for Fiscal Studies² predicts child poverty to rise from 3.9 million today to 5.1 million by 2020. That means well over a third of the UK's children are predicted to be growing up in poverty by the end of the decade.
- 2.3. Churches across the Connexion will seek to find their own ways of responding to this set of increasing and changing needs. The Methodist Conference and Council have also expressed a desire to address poverty and inequality in British society. For example, the 2011 Conference received the Report "Of Equal Value, Poverty and Inequality in the UK," which stated: "Concern for the poor has been central to the message and ministry of the Christian Church. This concern for the poorest was a key part of John Wesley's ministry, and the ministry of his followers in the years after his death." In April 2013 the Council also received a Report outlining the progress that has been made in response to the 2011 report. Neither the Conference nor the Council have been asked to review the Mission Alongside the Poor Programme in light of the reports. This report asks the Council to recommend that the Conference directs that a review of the Mission Alongside the Poor programme be undertaken, by the Council, with the terms of reference as outlined in section 5. This work will review the framework for making grants from the MAP Programme in order to consider its effectiveness in encouraging churches to respond to people and communities living in poverty in appropriate ways.

3. The implications of statements on poverty from the Methodist Conference and Council for the Mission Alongside the Poor Programme

- 3.1. One of the themes of reports to the Conference and the Council, and discussions of them, is the importance of speaking (and writing) accurately in relation to poverty. For example, in its receipt of the Report MC/13/41, 'Follow up to the Methodist Conference Report on Poverty and Inequality' the Council has urged churches to challenge the inaccurate narrative that is

¹The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's annual [Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion report](#) states that just over half of the 13 million people in poverty - surviving on less than 60% of the national median income - were from working families,

² <http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/6668> "Child and working-age poverty in Northern Ireland from 2010 to 2020"

pervasive in contemporary media; that poor people themselves, rather than society as a whole, are responsible for their poverty.

Ironically, the MAP programme is couched in terms that are now seen as anachronistic. The CGC proposes that the Council review the programme in order to address this.

- 3.2 In receiving the Big Society Report, the 2011 Conference observed that the MAP programme did not seem to be inspiring churches across the Connexion to respond to the commitment that has been expressed. This report therefore asks the Council to review the framework for making grants from the MAP programme in order to create a programme that resonates with churches and inspires them to respond to the needs they are likely to encounter over the next decade.
- 3.3 The Conference and the Council have consistently expressed the Methodist Church's commitment not only to meet the needs of people and communities living in poverty, but also of demanding justice so that many more are not driven to need. This report therefore asks the Council to review the framework for making grants from the MAP programme in order to consider its effectiveness in encouraging churches to respond to people and communities living in poverty in a way that expresses solidarity with them, and demands justice for everyone living in poverty.

4. Funding the Mission Alongside the Poor Programme

- 4.1 SO 213B defines the role of the Connexional Grants Committee in awarding grants (including for the MAP Programme) from the Mission in Britain Fund. The SO requires the CGC to operate within an annual budget set by the Council. Since 2010 the budgets available to the CGC have reduced considerably. This is largely due to other calls on the Connexional Priority Fund – eg Pension Reserve Fund, Venture FX, Fresh Expressions, the Learning Network etc. From having been about £3.5M/yr in 2008 the budget available for grant-making in support of mission in Britain is now less than £1M/yr. The Conference decision that the CGC should support ongoing Chaplaincy and Methodist Heritage projects has left a relatively small amount available for grants as part of the MAP Programme which in turn has meant that individual grants are capped at £30k. This report therefore asks the Council to review the framework for making grants to the MAP programme in order to consider ways of ensuring that the programme continues at a meaningful level in relation to the actual and potential demand.

5. Terms of Reference of the proposed review

- 5.1 The CGC suggests that the Council should recommend to the Conference that the Council be given authority to establish a small group to review the Mission Alongside the Poor programme under the following, seeking to bring proposals to the Council no later than January 2016.
 - (i) To review the aims and objectives of the Mission alongside the Poor Programme in terms of the Conference's clear commitment to supporting churches across the Connexion in responding to the needs of people and communities experiencing poverty.
 - (ii) To review the scope and scale of MAP to ensure that its aims are in line with the issues being faced by churches across the Connexion.
 - (iii) To review the name and nature of the programme.

- (iv) To consider the scale of financial resource available to the CGC for supporting MAP and the sources of funding from which grants to the MAP programme are made.
- (v) To consider the size and nature of grant support in order to ensure that the programme continues at a meaningful level in relation to the actual and potential demand.
- (vi) To consider the Conference and the Council's previous reports in relation to poverty and inequality in order to ensure that the Mission Alongside the Poor Programme reflects and is congruent with the Conference and the Council's previous commitments.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

6/1. The Council receives the report.

6/2. The Council recommends that the Conference directs that a review of the Mission Alongside the Poor programme be undertaken by the Council, with the terms of reference as outlined in section 5 of the report.

6/3 The Council directs that the review should be funded out of the budget of the grants team within the Connexional Team, and that a report should be made to the Conference no later than 2016.