

Belonging Together Report on Notice of Motion 202

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Status of Paper	Final.
Action Required	For decision.
Draft Resolutions	<p>61/1. The Council supports the recommendations for the implementation of the <i>Belonging Together</i> project contained within this report, and commends them to the Conference.</p> <p>61/2. The Council directs that the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network reports to the Council in April 2015 on the work relating to recommendation (iv) and, once formed, from the EDI Committee on the work relating to all the other recommendations.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	A report updating the Council on the progress made in relation to Notice of Motion 202
Main Points	<p>In responding to Notice of Motion 202 this paper explores:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Council's own reflections • the Partnership Group's reflections • recommendations for the future
Consultations	The Belonging Together Partnership Group

Belonging Together Report on Notice of Motion 202

Introduction

1. This report comes to the Council following the adoption of Notice of Motion 202 (2013) which directed the Council *'to consider, in consultation with the appropriate bodies, the findings and recommendations of the 'Belonging Together' project and to report to the Conference of 2014 on how any recommendations may be implemented'*.
2. At the October 2013 meeting of the Council, consideration was given to the final report of the Belonging Together Project Officer as well as two reports (one from the Belonging Together Partnership Group and the other from the Senior Leadership Group) which reflected on the recommendations that flowed from that report.
3. The Council engaged in group work in order to digest these reports as well as hearing from the Partnership Group and the Connexional Secretary.
4. After those group work sessions the Connexional Secretary met with the Partnership Group to enable reflection on what the Council had offered as well as offering some suggestions for the way ahead.
5. The group met twice and, as reported at the January Council, a change of direction was undertaken during those meetings. At the first meeting it was hoped that by trying to gather all the various recommendations and aspirations relating to Belonging Together in one place it might offer back to the Church the main threads of what was hoped for. Once this work has been undertaken the sheer volume of what was contained proved an impediment to moving forward. The group therefore reconvened and engaged in a more focused conversation about what was possible.
6. This report offers back to the Council its own reflection, those of the Partnership Group and recommendations for the future.

Council Reflections

7. The Council discussion can be summarised briefly under the following headings;

Learning, Training and Development

- The importance of training for circuits, churches, ministers and leaders in our Church.
- The significance of hearing stories and sharing experiences.
- The desire to ensure those we welcome from partner Churches are given positive introductions to British Methodism.

Institutional Practice and Change

- Examining the mechanisms for participation.
- The need for a greater representation on governance bodies – how are people encouraged to put themselves forward if the processes of the Church seem impenetrable? ¹
- The size of the task in relation to cultural change in the Church.

¹ SO103 (2) and SO 410 (5) both state that when the Conference and District Synods make their elections, they should consider their own current composition with regard to age, sex and ethnic origin.

Welcome, Inclusion and Integration

- We are one Connexion made up of many nationalities; this needs both celebration and nurturing.
- Circuits need to be able to address the issues in ways appropriate to their context.

Partnership Group Reflections

8. The Partnership group affirmed the general tenor of the recommendations that had come from the final report of the Project. However, they felt it did not go far enough in offering back to the Church the challenges that still needed, and would perhaps always need, attention.
9. These challenges could be looked at under two headings: ensuring that work already underway was being properly resourced and noticed; and how the long term imperative for us to value the whole people of God was being addressed.
10. Areas that needed to be covered under the first heading included;
 - The importance of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) toolkit being made ready to enable churches and circuits to look at their own practices and attitudes whilst recognising that engaging in the Toolkit should be a transformational process in itself.
 - The need for a Leadership Development programme to be taken forward through the Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network thus ensuring that Superintendents and other leaders in the lives of our Church are encouraged to think about how we worship and work together.
 - The Regional Staff within the Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network will need to be trained so as to train others.
 - The possibility of materials being prepared that could be used eg at Representative Synods to ensure that both EDI and the aspirations of *Belonging Together* are not lost.
 - The need for immediate, intentional and visible action in a variety of places which means some of the legacy of the *Belonging Together* project is carried forward and continues to be measured.
11. Under the second heading of how we learn to value the whole people of God there were a number of areas raised in the discussion:
 - Valuing all means enabling all to participate in the whole spectrum of activities and roles found in our Church. This may mean that in some areas the status quo will need to be challenged and that positive action may need to be taken to ensure the outcomes that give due respect to all in our communities.
 - The desire for the Church to be intentional in valuing all when undertaking development work.
 - Recognising that there are those in our Church who feel dispirited on behalf of the minority they feel they represent and the need for us all to work hard to keep our family together.

Recommendations for the future

12. From all the conversations that have taken place it is clear that there a number of key recommendations which now need to be carried forward. These are:
 - i. The production of the EDI toolkit as a priority for the Connexional Team.

- ii. The engagement of that toolkit as a necessity throughout the life of the Church.
- iii. The incorporation of EDI and the learning from *Belonging Together* into the developing pathways for training in relation to all ministries of our Church.
- iv. The ongoing work relating to ethnically distinct fellowship groups and congregations to be supported through the Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network.
- v. The role of the EDI Committee to include carrying on the Belonging Together legacy and further development of the work undertaken during the project where appropriate.
- vi. Drawing on the wealth of experience from the Belonging Together Partnership Group and the research that was carried out during the project.
- vii. Continuing support for the Belonging Together Ministers Group through the EDI Committee.
- viii. An examination of representation on various groups and governance bodies to be on the agenda of the EDI Committee.
- ix. Support for 3Generate as it continues to seek to be as diverse and representative of the whole Church as possible.
- x. Additional resources (people, finance and equipment) will be made available wherever possible.

Conclusion

- 13. *Belonging Together* is not an additional task but an ethos that needs to be evident in every activity and on every agenda of the Church. The steps outlined above are only a continuation of a journey that has been ongoing for many years. These steps will hopefully not only act as signs to the whole Church of what is desired, but will also be the means of transforming the Church into a place where all are welcome, are truly valued and are able to participate fully in the life of the Church.

*****RESOLUTIONS:**

- 61/1. The Council supports the recommendations for the implementation of the *Belonging Together* project contained within this report, and commends them to the Conference.**
- 61/2. The Council directs that the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network reports to the Council in April 2015 on the work relating to recommendation (iv) and, once formed, from the EDI Committee on the work relating to all the other recommendations.**