

Report from the Connexional Team

MC/23/65

Date of meeting	19-20 October 2023
Contact name and details	Doug Godfrey-Swanney, Connexional Secretary, swanneyd@methodistchurch.org.uk
Action required	To note
Resolution	65/1. The Council receives the report.

Summary of content

Subject of aims	To provide the Council with an update on work in the Connexional Team that relates to <i>Our Calling</i> .
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Introduction

- 1 At each meeting of the Council the Connexional Team presents a full report on a number of areas of its work. Through this report it is hoped that the Districts and the wider Connexion are able to keep abreast of all that the Team is undertaking on the direction of the Council.
- 2 Elsewhere in this agenda is the overall Workplan from the Conference which contains all the various agreed pieces of work that are underway. Each of these reports from the Team need to be read in conjunction with that workplan in order to obtain a full view of the work of the Team.
- 3 Each of the Committees of the Council also have workplans that also contain work undertaken by the Team.
- 4 The Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) receives a regular report from the Senior Management Group (SMG) which details its work and decisions. At a recent meeting of the SRC time was spent thinking about the next few years (particularly as we approach the transfer of oversight to the Connexional Council) and the overall strategy for the work of the Team.
- 5 In the light of that conversation the following introduction to the report from the Connexional Team is offered as a partial aide memoire but also as a change in the way that the Team reports to the Council.

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

- 6 We continue to be shaped by and committed to this vision which was reaffirmed as the strategic driver of the Church's work in 2021.
- 7 The Church does this through: Worship, Learning and Caring, Service, and Evangelism.
- 8 A Methodist Way of Life (MWOL) provides a further level of detail to the four aspects of Our Calling by elaborating aspects of each. Within the overall framework of Our Calling, and alongside the Conference statement on the nature of the Church, Called to Love and Praise, A Methodist Way of Life aims to provide a clear, detailed, and practical framework for what Methodist discipleship can look like in the 21st century. A Methodist Way of Life seeks to connect the diverse work of the Church in the world and to communicate it clearly to the world.
- 9 **A MWOL commits us as people to;**
Worship
We will pray daily. We will worship with others regularly.
We will look and listen for God in Scripture, and the world.

Learning & Caring

We will care for ourselves and those around us. We will learn more about our faith.

We will practise hospitality and generosity.

Service

We will help people in our communities and beyond. We will care for creation and all God's gifts.
We will challenge injustice.

Evangelism

We will speak of the love of God.

We will live in a way that draws others to Jesus. We will share our faith with others.

- 10 Alongside this, our Strategy for Evangelism and Growth (2020) recognises that we can only hope to fulfil our calling if we are an **inclusive, evangelistic and justice-seeking** Church.
- 11 The Conference affirmed that with these guiding principles we would be able once again to become a growing Church: growing spiritually, growing in terms of our outreach and influence, growing in the depth of our commitment, and growing numerically.
- 12 What we seek is to be the 'best' version of ourselves in 2028 by encouraging all who come into contact with us to live a Methodist Way of Life.
- 13 The Methodist Council Objectives have been an evolving story and since 2020 have consisted of the following headings;
 1. Proclaiming the Gospel through worship/ The ministry of the whole people of God in the life of the World
 2. A Church for all people/ The Inclusive Church
 3. God's Church in God's world/ Striving for Justice and Peace
 4. Evangelism / God For All
 5. Resources for the Church: the use of God's gifts (including Oversight and Leadership)
 6. Responding to the Gospel in partnership
- 14 Going forward, and in keeping with our ongoing work, it is now suggested that the Council be regularly informed and updated about how the Team and the policies of the Council specifically support the four headings of Our Calling;

WORSHIP - Ensuring our worship and ministry is effective, relevant and gives glory to God.

LEARNING & CARING - We are an inclusive Church

SERVICE - We are a justice-seeking Church

EVANGELISM - We are an evangelistic people

(In all four of these areas we seek to ensure we are making best use of the resources we have been entrusted with and look to work in partnership wherever it is possible.)

- 15 These four headings will therefore be the way the Connexional Team reports to the Council in the year ahead, enabling a synergy between our previous way of reporting and our desire to ensure that Our Calling and a Methodist Way of Life are kept before us all.

Transformation and Change

- 16 Over the next year the SMG in consultation with stakeholders and the SRC will begin the process of 'right sizing' the Connexional Team. This is not a one off restructure but an evolving process of ensuring that the Connexional Team is undertaking the most important work which enables the whole Church to be as safe, efficient, and effective as it can.
- 17 This is an ongoing process of transformation and change; we will see an increased utilisation of resources for a limited period (both inside and outside of the Connexional Team) which will look to ensure the Church of 2028 is as well placed as it can be to meet the challenges before us.
- 18 A priority is that that the Connexion effectively shares in God's mission whilst trying to ensure that we do not overburden already busy people. We must respond to the increasing demands being placed on volunteers by ensuring the Connexional Team is bearing the load on the most appropriate of tasks.
- 19 As always, we shall need to be people of prayer, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discern what we must, what we can, what we might, and what we need not do.

Changes to the Team

- 20 The SMG has fully engaged with the SRC over the last year about the structure of the Team and some changes have been implemented from the start of this connexional year which the Council may be helped to have an overview of:
- 21 The roles of Head of Ministries and Director of Learning and Development have been merged into a new Head of Ministries & Learning. This post will be filled by Richard Armiger and we are delighted he is taking on these new responsibilities. Richard will continue to manage the Learning Network and will now also manage roles previously managed by the Head of Ministries. We can see many opportunities for these two work areas to continue to support one another as we move forward. The role of Director of Ministry Development has been readvertised following an unsuccessful first attempt at recruitment, and it is hoped that interviews will have taken place before the Council meets.
- 22 The roles of Assistant Secretary of the Conference (ASC) and the Connexional Ecumenical Officer (both held together in one post previously) have been separated in order to ensure there is the space for the ASC role to undertake all the critical work that is before us. The work relating to Ministries processes (MCPOC, candidating, stationing) is all in the portfolio of the ASC and no longer in the Ministries Team. The role of Connexional Ecumenical Officer has been readvertised following an unsuccessful first attempt at recruitment, and it is hoped that an appointment will be made before the end of the calendar year.
- 23 We have enlarged the role of Director of Finance and Resources and added into that role the management of the Property function. This role will continue to manage the existing areas but will now be titled Executive Director of Finance and Resources – working closely with the new Resourcing Committee created by the Conference this year.
- 24 We have further created two new roles – Director of Transformation & Change and Director for Inclusion both of which will report to the Connexional Secretary. These roles are an exciting step forward in work in critical areas as we look to the future of the work of both the Team and the Church. The Director for Transformation & Change role has been advertised and we hope to interview shortly after the Council meets. We are pleased that Bevan Powell has been confirmed as the Director for Inclusion which is a new focus for his work.
- 25 An updated high level diagram of the Team is available to any member of the Council who wishes to see it.
- 26 All these changes have been delivered in the Conference agreed budget and we believe they will further help all of our mission and ministry together.
- 27 The following is the work of the Team since the last report to the Council MC/23/31.

WORSHIP - Ensuring our worship and ministry is effective, relevant and gives glory to God.

- 28 The Learning Network in partnership with the Ministries team will be supporting and delivering the new *Explore* programme. *Explore* is an opportunity for any member of the Methodist Church in Britain to take a breath, step back, and consider how they are called to respond to God's call through worship, learning & caring, evangelism or service.
- 29 The Ministries Team has continued deepening connections and work with the Singing the Faith Plus website, including resources for Creationtide, connecting to work on Action for Hope. The team also continues to work on revision of Worship: Leading and Preaching moderation and training materials, as well as developmental work on renewing the Circuit LPWL Meeting as a focus for formation and continued development.
- 30 The Communications Team has launched the Christmas 2023 campaign *Out of the Ordinary* which includes resources for churches and groups to use throughout Advent and Christmas. The team is currently doing pre-production on the film that will be released to support the campaign. The team is sending out regular communications to local media ahead of visits by the President and Vice-President

and has arranged several BBC local radio interviews on visits. The team also supported media around the induction of the new Youth President Tom Hart who did an interview with his BBC local radio station about his new role.

- 31 Work continues to digitise sections of the *Methodist Worship Book* and to make liturgies available in Word, PDF and PowerPoint, to support local churches. The most recent sections published are the 'Entry into the Church' section (baptism and confirmation services) and 'Admission, Commissioning and Welcome' services.
- 32 The JMA Commissioning Service online worship resources went live in May 2023, followed by the publication of the Rainbow magazine, autumn 2023 edition in August. A winter edition of Rainbow for January 2024 is in the planning stages.
- 33 Ecumenical conversations with the United Reformed Church (URC) continue, the last meeting took place just after the URC General Assembly 2023 this Summer.
- 34 At the time of writing, the team is supporting a group of young people from the Methodist Church in Britain who were invited to travel to Rome at the end of September with the Secretary of the Conference to participate in an ecumenical event of prayer, learning and service organised by the Taizé Community along with Pope Francis.
- 35 The Methodist Conference in 2024 will be held at the Royal Armouries and New Dock Hall, a conference venue located in Leeds. The representatives and staff will be staying in several nearby hotels. For the Conferences of 2025, 2026 and 2027, the Connexional Team has managed to secure a three-year contract with Telford International Centre.

LEARNING & CARING - We are an inclusive Church

- 36 The Learning Network continues to provide support locally across the Connexion including:
 - Working with Circuits in Ayrshire & Renfrewshire to pioneer new work in coastal communities to plant a new Christian community in a Methodist Church. This centre will be a Community Hub to explore and enable engagement across a wide range of areas, seeking to be intentionally inclusive of all ages and to serve the local community in a variety of ways. Includes a community coffee house as a place for hospitality and gathering.
 - Working with Paisley Methodist Central Hall, the last remaining Central Hall used by worshipping Methodists in Scotland, and established a new intergenerational congregation called Bouncy Church.
 - Supporting the development and work of many EDI officers/teams across the Connexion. This support has recently included the enabling of new learning opportunities for the Connexion in the form of online, conversation-based events that explore specific aspects, challenges and celebrations of EDI in contemporary Church and society, in safe online spaces.
 - Mission & Vision Support: This is an increasing area of mission for the Learning Network; circuits and districts continue to invite the Learning Network into their spaces to support them in their discernment, resourcing and often reimagining for Methodist mission; for how they can better evolve to be more inclusive, justice-seeking communities. In some districts, this has occurred in all circuits and has been reflected on as 'transformational' for the missional direction of the district.
- 37 The Communications team is sharing resources for Black History Month in October which is planned to be opened with a prayer from Norman Mullings MBE who is part of Harlesden Methodist Church in North London. He arrived in Britain from Jamaica in 1958, aged 18 and his prayer marks the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the ship Empire Windrush to the UK. At the time of writing, the Team is preparing also to mark Inclusion Week in October by sharing shared several stories online and on social media.
- 38 The Ministries team continues to support Superintendents through a 12-month Induction programme for new Superintendents. The team also facilitate two connexional Superintendents' Conferences at Oxford. Both pieces of work draw on expertise from other Connexional Team members and the Learning Network to resource and support Superintendents as they lead circuits in mission and ministry.
- 39 We have also agreed scholarships towards research projects for Methodist students and there have also been two Research Conferences to support continuing students. The Ministries team also

continues to lead on Reflective Supervision by continuing training and resourcing as well starting to look towards research needed for the next iteration of the policy.

- 40 The Connexional Safeguarding team has been working on the following:
 - The Theology of Safeguarding study materials are now ready to use. They are designed for use across the church and work is now underway to look at a specific version for use with children and young people.
 - The fully revised Safeguarding Advanced Module course is now available and work is beginning to revise the Foundation Module which will be launched in 2024.
 - A brand new senior leaders' safeguarding module is also being written with the assistance from the Church of England and the materials that they have developed.
 - The revised LEP safeguarding guidance has been completed and will be made available shortly.
 - The new case work management system that will enable District Safeguarding Officers to store case records on the same system is now being implemented and records will start to be migrated across imminently.

- 41 We had 14 global partners attending the Pre-Conference Consultation, including three observers from Indonesia and one of the global United Methodist Church reps. The Pre-Conference Consultation reinforced the value of facilitated Cross-Partner conversations with priorities identified as Migration, Climate Change and Inclusion. After the Conference, there were three partner visits to Districts and two visits with fellowship groups. The district visit from the Argentinian representative and spouse to Cumbria in particular was building on a long term twinning partnership. From the World Mission Fund, we continue to honour our commitments to the existing Nationals in Mission Appointments (NMA) and Scholarship and Leadership Training (SALT) programmes.

- 42 The Engagement team continues to tell the story of the use and impact of the World Mission Fund, with stories featured in the *Methodist News*, Methodist Church social media, Global Relationships newsletters, blogs and webpages, and with regular articles in *the connexion* magazine, as well as hosting the *Radiate* webinars for the Global Relationships team. This webinar is an opportunity for people who have an interest in our global relationships and global mission to join us for a time of storytelling by Mission Partners and to learn some more about the most recent work funded by the World Mission Fund. The webinar format was transferred to the 2023 Conference as a fringe event, also called *Radiate*; an interactive magazine event with global partners sharing about the concerns and joys from their own parts of the world.

- 43 Ministry Essentials: as part of the pathway for equipping those who want to be involved with of the development of Children, Youth and Family ministry, Ministry Essentials for children's and family/intergenerational ministry is almost complete. More than 30 writers from a range of organisations and denominations have contributed to the 20 brand new modules that provide a foundation for ministry in these areas. In collaboration with Cliff College, these courses will be created on Theology X in the coming months, with content filmed during week long filming retreats. Children's Ministry Network (CMN) plan to launch the courses in the summer of 2024 and start the full roll out of delivery in the autumn.

- 44 Youthscape Essentials: we now have 20 people on the list of trainers for Youthscape Essentials Youth Ministry training (a mix of local workers, Connexional Team and District Ambassadors) available to deliver the Youthscape Essentials training course. The first Connexional online course is currently underway (being delivered collaboratively by a number of trainers) and Southampton District have been running a local offering. There are also plans for another Connexional course starting January 2024 and some other local courses, including in Cumbria, Solihull and Enfield. Online Taster Sessions (session one) of the course are also being offered in October. More information can be found here: www.methodist.org.uk/cyfessentials

- 45 Flourish Schools: Following the fringe event that the team hosted at Conference, plans are underway to continue raising the profile of this ministry through the autumn of 2023 and into next year. A simple pathway for churches to explore when looking to grow their connection and ministry with local schools can be found at this web page: www.methodist.org.uk/flourishschools

- 46 A Methodist Way of Life: As part of the development of the new toolkit, the Children, Youth and Family team has contributed to various elements, including ideas to be used in intergenerational settings and encouraging children, youth and family practitioners to explore and offer the resources in their ministry too. The whole resource was grounded on participation principles and wanted to ensure people of all ages could engage and grow their faith together.

- 47 In partnership with the Learning Network, the Children, Youth and Family team continues to deliver three Youth Mental Health First Aid sessions a year, training up to 48 people in these essential skills annually. There are also plans to pilot a family wellbeing event with Harrogate Circuit and Yorkshire North & East District next year. More information can be found here: www.methodist.org.uk/youthmhfa
- 48 Thirteen young adults from across the Connexion completed the final Leadership Year weekend in July. Of those who have finished the One Programme in August 2023, two have continued to be employed by their project, with one hoping to find funding to continue at their project, and one has just started the degree course at Cliff College. This connexional year we are offering 12 funded places for the Leadership Year. We have received 11 applications.
- 49 3Generate: At the time of writing, preparations for this year's event (6-8 October) continue to take place. In January 2023, there were facilitated conversations with children and young people to explore potential topics for sessions at 3Generate. At the time of writing, 1290 children and young people have booked to attend the event, with 220 volunteers and team, and 450 leaders. The provision for 4-7 years to attend for a day has expanded. The Engagement team and Global Relationships team are working together to deliver part of the programme at 3Generate and to coordinate the overseas visit and district visit for a group of young people from the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas to attend 3Generate 2023.
- 50 The Heritage team has been supporting the re-establishing of:
- Regular online and in-person meetings for the managers of the connexionally-funded Methodist museums, to promote better communication and cross-pollination of ideas and resources.
 - Regular meetings for Heritage, Property Support, and the Evangelism & Growth teams (Mission & Community Engagement and Rural Mission & Ministry) to promote a cross-departmental approach to supporting and advising the managing trustees on developing historic spaces for mission and, if necessary as part of that process, supporting them in the event of a church building closing.
- 51 The Methodist Heritage and Methodist Modern Art Collection (MMAC) Management Committees had an engaging, shared, interactive exhibition stand at the 2023 Methodist Conference in Birmingham, which sparked enthusiastic responses and interest about our Methodist treasures.
- 52 The Director of Engagement has been representing the Heritage Committee in the group set up to explore the impact of the 18th Century transatlantic trade in enslaved people on early Methodism and its legacy for racial justice and consider the response of the Church. This is part of a wider piece of work by the Heritage and MMAC Management Committees on contested history across the Church, which will result in the development of a policy proposal to support churches where there are, for example, memorials to contentious historical benefactors or artworks by controversial makers.
- 53 We are continuing to search for a new permanent base from which to tour the Methodist Modern Art Collection. Three potential institutional partners have all now decided to withdraw. Although all have declined to take this opportunity further, we remain in ongoing dialogue of other, more modest ways of working together, to curate local exhibitions or develop related projects in the future.
- 54 The World Methodist Council's President, the Revd Dr J C Park visited MCB exploring the theme of Peace and Disarmament. J C Park also met with Rabbi Dr Frank Dabba-Smith, of Leo Baeck College, and discussed plans to develop the World Methodist Council work of peace now and beyond his present mandate.
- 55 There was a record number of participants at the September 2023 All Ecumenical Officers (EOs) Conference. The theme for the Conference was, 'low hanging fruit in church-unity initiatives'. This is also the start of a new series of the All EOs Conferences. Ian Rutherford, Manchester City Centre Minister, was invited to contribute and shared the experience of working across Manchester City, in conjunction with the Council and the Mayor, with ecumenical and interfaith partners.
- 56 With facilitation from the newly appointed Global Communities Officer, the Revd Dr Reynaldo Leao-Neto, the Chaplains, coordinators and leaders of cultural and language congregations continue to meet. The Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, Ms Rachel Lampard and the Revd Matt Finch led sessions at the last residential meeting, on 'Where are we and where we are going?'; 'A Justice-Seeking Church', and 'Resource for the Fellowships and Language Congregations' respectively.

- 57 By the time the Council meets, we will have welcomed the Prelate from the Methodist Church in Nigeria who travelled to the UK in early October. The visit will include signing the Memorandum of Understanding between the two churches, which the Council approved during the summer.

SERVICE - We are a justice-seeking Church

- 58 The Walking with Micah process came to an end as the Justice-Seeking Church report was presented to the Conference. The Justice-Seeking Church report was published in a number of formats to help promote it as widely as possible to different audiences within the Church, including an audio version for the first time. The Conference adopted the report giving a framework of Principles, Priorities and Practices for justice-seeking for the Methodist Church. A short film introducing the report as well as a free printed summary of the report with questions for reflection and discussion are available at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/justice>. A further report will be brought by the Director of Social Justice, Rachel Lampard, in January.
- 59 The Communications team's work to highlight the good work going on in churches and groups has seen some lovely stories being shared over the summer. Our team has visited several districts to cover projects such as Discussing Death at Glasgow's Death Café, Online Recovery Church, The Tea and PV Project in Yorkshire North & East and Cardiff Methodist Community Choir Singing for Social Justice.
- 60 The Learning Network development of the Circuit Stewards' programme now includes the invitation to a monthly, connexional, community of practice (CoP). Each CoP will be relationally led by a different member/s of the wider Connexional Team, from their specialist area of mission, with the aim to better resource, inform, inspire and equip circuit stewards in their missional, justice-seeking roles.
- 61 The productive partnership between the Learning Network and Place for Hope continues, with recent developments including the invitation to the Learning Network from some districts to support them in designing a district conflict-transformation strategy. Work has begun on the five-year integrated programme, commencing from October 2023, that was approved by the Conference in 2023.
- 62 The Ministries team facilitated various ministerial gatherings for reflection on vocation for those from a range of contexts and with diverse characteristics ("Voices of Identity") and residentials for those with specific years of service. The team also continues the support of chaplaincy across the Connexion in a variety of contexts.
- 63 In April, the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) coordinated a three Churches response to the Government's Gambling White Paper: [Response to the Government's White Paper on Gambling \(jpit.uk\)](#), and in September put out a statement to respond to the Prime Minister's announcements on net zero policies: [Church leaders respond to net zero announcement \(jpit.uk\)](#)
- 64 The Methodist Church and United Reformed Church have submitted evidence with respect to the Economic Activities of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill to the Parliamentary Public Bills Committee outlining our two Churches' objections around the unjustified curtailment of freedom of speech and action. This blog from JPIT gives background to the Churches' concerns: [Banning boycotts and divestments – have we not learned anything from South Africa? \(jpit.uk\)](#)
- 65 JPIT has also released a briefing, *The Russian Invasion of Ukraine*, to support reflection, prayer, actions of solidarity, discussion and debate as this devastating conflict and resistance to occupation continues: [Ukraine \(jpit.uk\)](#)
- 66 *Let's End Poverty* was formally launched by Rt Hon Gordon Brown at the Greenbelt Festival, where events were organised in tandem with partners the Trussell Trust, Church Action on Poverty and Christians Against Poverty. *Let's End Poverty* is a movement of individuals, communities and organisations working together for a UK where poverty can't keep anyone down. Churches and individuals are invited to sign up here <https://letsendpoverty.co.uk>.
- 67 All of our global partners were invited to discuss the outcomes of the CREAS consultation for online global topic network conversations. A pilot conversation led by partners will take place in this connexional year.
- 68 This year, the Children, Youth and Family Team worked with a number of districts (London, Sheffield,

Yorkshire North & East) to pilot some new Agents of Change resources and activities at district events. These resources help children and young people to explore how they all have power to make a change. There are plans to use these resources in 2024 at events hosted by the Birmingham and the Northampton District.

- 69 The Children, Youth and Family team has been working with the Action for Hope Implementation Officer to find ways of bringing the voices of children, young people and families into the Methodist Church's plans to go net zero by 2030. Action for Hope will have a presence at this year's 3Generate and, in November, two online events for children and young people will take place. Plans for a webinar and a re-launch of the God's World Our Home resource, in-line with Action for Hope aims, are also being explored.
- 70 Flourish Schools: work has been focused on schools in marginalised areas where there is significant poverty and hosting a webinar in November 2023 with social justice as its theme. It aims to respond to how churches and schools can help communities to flourish. More information is [available here](#)
- 71 Members of the team have been revitalising communications around the Heritage work and the Methodist Modern Art Collection, working with connexional staff and committee members to develop a communications strategy, content plan and work towards delivery. We shared the first new style Heritage e-newsletter to a great response from a network of more than 2,500 subscribers.
- 72 From the World Mission Fund, a total of £3.1million in Regional Grants have been approved and dispersed to partners across four regions in 2022-23. Also and in response to immediate needs, 16 Solidarity grant totalling £197k were approved during this last year.
- 73 We continue to support the Interfaith Network UK. The Methodist Church contributes with the highest annual subscription expected of members.
- 74 The role of JDS Implementation Officer has been reviewed, and will be replaced by the new JDS Programme Coordinator role. A selection process is currently underway to fill this position. The JDS committee requires four additional members, and a recruitment process for volunteers is also underway.
- 75 On 22 June 2023, a national Service of thanksgiving and commemoration was held at Southwark Cathedral to mark the 75th anniversary of the arrival of people from the Caribbean to the UK (known as the Windrush generation). The event was organised by the Racial Justice Advocacy Forum (RJAF) under the umbrella of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). The service was recorded and broadcast on Radio 4 the following Sunday. Prominent speakers included the Revd Arlington Trotman and Ivan Weekes from the Methodist Church.
- 76 Organised by the RJAF, a national conference entitled 'Hope for Justice' will take place on 4 November 2023 at Bloomsbury Baptist Church, London. The conference will explore issues of police and criminal justice reform from a Christian and racial justice perspective. Speakers/panel members will include representatives from the National Church Leaders Forum, MP Bell Rebeiro-Addy, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime Sophie Linden, and Mina Smallman

EVANGELISM - We are an evangelistic people

- 77 The Evangelism and Growth team continues to work on the *God For All Strategy* and reporting of work in progress is provided under the four headings below:

Centred in God: Discipleship and a Methodist Way of Life:

- Discipleship Pathway: The Methodist Way of Life / Discipleship Pathways toolkit launched in September 2023 after a successful year of piloting. This is a suite of resources to help individuals and church communities to use MWOL as a framework for their discipleship based on Our Calling. The toolkit includes 40 new webpages with guidance and interactive activities, two animations, and a range of physical resources including Pocket Guides and floor mats. www.methodist.org.uk/discipleship
- The new prayer course: Sunshine and Showers launched in August 2023. It is a way for groups to explore and discuss prayer by considering six paradoxes. The resource includes a series of animations, conversation videos, and a booklet for journaling. The initial print run of 1000

booklets sold out in less than a month, and more were produced. www.methodist.org.uk/sunshine

Everyone an Evangelist: Evangelism, Digital Evangelism, Young Evangelists:

- Conversations Against Mundanity: A card game to equip people for deeper, more meaningful conversations is now available for purchase after an extraordinarily successful sell-out launch at Greenbelt festival.
- Festival Presence: This events-season the pop-up space the Hope and Anchor has been present at: Flourish in Scarborough, Cliff Festival, Solas Festival, Greenbelt Festival, in Liverpool for Eurovision week, and will be at 3Generate. A team from across the Connexion also ran an evangelistic outreach project at Edinburgh Fringe called Lost In Wonder, resourced by God for All. The team had over 250 meaningful conversations in the week, creatively inviting people into moments of encounter and reflection.
- Evangelism resources: We continue to promote and deliver the Evangelism for Leaders course and the Everyone an Evangelist materials (recently sold out and reprinted) across the Connexion to equip all Methodists for confident, authentic faith sharing.
- Digital evangelism: A learning community of six pioneers have been discerning a vision for beginning a digital NPNP. So far, four have received funding to launch this year. The NPNPs will seek to plant in online spaces such as YouTube, Discord, gaming platforms and address issues such as wellbeing in young adults. There will be opportunity for more digital pioneers to join the learning community in January 2024.

New Places for New People (NPNP) and Church at the Margins:

- Funding: 12 districts have launched their funded projects and three circuit projects have started with the support of second phase funding. The Mission Committee will receive another five projects in September. Approved projects are being added to this web page www.methodist.org.uk/npnpdistricts
- The new circuit funding process, developed in response to a request from the Mission Committee, is now live. The Circuit-based NPNP Guide is available here methodist.org.uk/circuitnnpfunding/ It is designed for circuit leaders wanting to understand the funding process, as well as offering an introduction to the theology and core practices of beginning a NPNP that will support the discernment of a vision for a new community.
- NPNP Fruitfulness Research: Dr Heather J Major was appointed to the jointly funded post of Research Fellow in New Places for New People. The role will seek to unearth the hidden treasure of the funded NPNPs that the whole Methodist Church to learn from and build upon.
- Faith Rooted Community Organising: A key part of fruitful new Christian communities is the ability to be listen and connect with its context. Fifty people attended the two courses and a further 28 have signed up to the October 23 course.
- Starting Churches at the Margins Resources: 'A Beginning a Church at the Margins' resource (on this page methodist.org.uk/cam-training has been available since April 2023. It was developed by experienced CaM practitioners and will supporting those seeking to develop new Christian communities amongst economically marginalised people.
- Superintendency and Pioneering: The Superintendent's role remains vital in the wider vision for a NPNP in every circuit. There will be four more of the popular webinars aimed at the Superintendent community over the next year. The first in October 2023 will launch the Circuit-based NPNP Guide.
- Church Planting Intensive: In its third year of delivery, all pioneers employed in a funded NPNP have or will attend the course, as well as other pioneers and their teams from across the Connexion seeking support for fruitfulness in their new communities. Sixty-four people have signed up since it began.
- Methodist Pioneering Pathways: The community of over 100 pioneers continues to meet locally as the number of NPNPs increase in districts, and online twice a month. Once for mutual support and once for theological reflection led by a pioneer leader or influential thinker. The growing community is made up of over 100 diverse pioneers, ordained and lay.

Every Church Growing and Transformational Leadership:

- Rural mission update: All Queen's full time final year students were generously hosted this year by the Plymouth & Exeter District for their 'Rural Visit'. In a change to previous years, they were joined by the Rural Officer and local Learning Network Officer for a full range of rural mission and ministry experiences across four days in the District, including speaking at a vocations workshop at synod. Prior to stationing, this visit is designed to help rural ministry discernment.
- Mission planning: A Connexion-wide digital mission planning webinar took place on 8 July 2023, delivered in partnership with the Learning Network, Ministries Team and District Missioner

Community. Over 80 registered and around 45 attended. The flurry of last-minute registrations, suggests that there is an appetite for hosting this again.

- Team coaching programme (formerly Transformational Leadership Learning Community): The Transformational Leadership Learning Community 'offer' has been simplified to team coaching, with a newsletter, monthly webinars, annual action learning away days and an annual residential as optional extras. We are now inviting teams to join at any time of the year. These changes will make the programme more flexible and therefore, we hope, more appealing. Two more teams have joined in September 2023, with others considering it.
- Coaching: Over 100 pioneers, transformational leaders and GFA influencers are being coached in their ministry. Two more cohorts of Methodist leaders will be trained as coaches and the current coaching community will be offered opportunities for continual development of their skills.
- Advent and Christmas resources: Officers from Evangelism and Growth once again worked closely with Communications and Publications on the Advent and Christmas resources. The worship resources and invitation postcards were devised by team and a webinar on 7th Sept to introduce the resources was attended by 178 people. A video entitled 'How to engage with your community this Christmas' was created in partnership with Communications to support the Advent and Christmas resources.

- 78** Other print and online resources for this year's Advent and Christmas campaign, *Out of the Ordinary*, were published over the summer. These include innovative scratch-off postcards encouraging recipients to 'scratch beneath the surface' to understand how in our ordinary lives, the world-transforming, extraordinary love of God shines through.
- 79** The Children, Youth and Family team (CYF) is working in partnership with the Girls and Boys Brigade to take the learning from the work of Flourish Schools and agree how this approach could be applied to work with uniformed organisations. The CYF Team will also work with the development officers from the Boys' Brigade and Girls' Brigade to agree a pathway for churches starting Brigade ministries from scratch.
- 80** The development of a new heritage website is underway, with a launch date of the beginning of 2024. This will incorporate and bring together the relevant documents and guidance from the previous site, plus new features that will highlight more of our 'hidden treasures' in the Methodist museums and archives, but also heritage buildings and stories throughout the Connexion; enabling us to share our stories.
- 81** The Engagement team is undertaking a pilot project, working with Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History (OCMCH), to digitise and get collections at Epworth Old Rectory online in a searchable collection that show cases highlights from the museum, and enables further research and engagement with their collection.
- 82** In 2022/2023, exhibitions comprising one to more than 20 works from the Methodist Modern Art Collection (MMAC) were shown at venues across the Connexion: at 3Generate at the NEC Birmingham; in six locations to celebrate the Collection's 60th anniversary; in Bristol at John Wesley's New Room and in a multi-faith presentation at Bristol Victoria Methodist Church, supported by the Royal West of England Academy; at Y Gaer (Brecon Museum, Art Gallery & Library), and at two Methodist Schools, Woodhouse Grove and Kingswood. At Kingswood School, paintings were chosen to reflect the theme of 'Transforming Lives' and exhibited to coincide with the IAMSCU international education conference of the same name. There are three exhibitions booked for 2023/2024 to date – at 3Generate; at the Focolare Centre (Welwyn Garden City); and for the opening of the newly built Emmanuel Church, Eastbourne.
- 83** We are working toward the placement of one Encounter Worldwide participant with the partner CEPALC in Colombia from the autumn.
- 84** The Global Mission Fellow (GMF) at Wesley's chapel successfully completed the placement and has returned to the USA to train as a minister with the UMC. After the withdrawal of a participant from Sierra Leone, we are now working to bring a Global Mission Fellow (GMF) from Malawi to take up a GMF placement at Wesley's Chapel.
- 85** A number of new resources have been produced to support Discipleship Pathways. These include a pocket map of A Methodist Way of Life, badges of the 12 MWOL commitment icons, postcards, coasters and more.

- 86 This past summer the Learning Network worked with the Evangelism & Growth team and district ministers/volunteers to effectively engage in evangelism and hospitality through the Solas festival in Perth, around the theme of 'Kindling Hope', and Lost in Wonder, a micro Sabbath in the midst of the Edinburgh Fringe.
- 87 The Ministries team has shared agreed priorities and ways of working with Cliff College for 2023-24, including those for shared work in Evangelism and Growth, and have been involved in the development of leadership resources through work at Queen's, preparing for new online leadership resources. The team is also involved in participation on cross-connexional-team 'Flourish' project to equip local churches in their engagement with their local schools.
- 88 In addition to the formation of Dunwell Methodist Church in Telford, two new Ghanaian heritage local churches have been inaugurated during the visit of the Presiding Bishop, the Rt Revd Dr Paul Boafo, in June and July 2023: the Freeman Methodist Church, Clockhouse, in the Bromley Circuit; and the Ebenezer Methodist Church in Glasgow, Strathclyde Circuit.
- 89 By the time the Council meets, the Communications team will have held an Exploring Digital online conference on 30 September. The day aims to connect Methodists from all over Britain to talk about the digital world, discuss how to connect and share the Gospel online and will feature keynote speeches, group discussions and an expert panel. Over 500 people registered to take part.

In Closing

- 90 As always the Council is invited to engage with the Team on any areas it has concerns about through the Connexional Secretary at any time.

***RESOLUTION

65/1. The Council receives the report.