

# Report from the Connexional Team

MC/23/31

Date of meeting	25-27 March 2023
Contact name and details	Doug Swanney, Connexional Secretary, <a href="mailto:swanneyd@methodistchurch.org.uk">swanneyd@methodistchurch.org.uk</a>
Action required	To note
Resolution	31/1. 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 the Methodist Council Objectives.
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- 1 This report provides the Council with an update on work in the Connexional Team that relates to the Methodist Council Objectives since the last report in January 2023.
- 2 The work of the Connexional Team towards the Methodist Council Objectives is shared under the headings below.
- 3 The Team has now successfully moved into our interim office space at Church House Westminster. The office became open to staff on 8 February 2023. The official handover of 25 Marylebone Road took place on 14 February 2023. Work continues with the Project Management team on the work at 25 Tavistock Place and the SRC received a report on the budget aspects of this work and this is reported elsewhere in the Agenda.

## Proclaiming the Gospel through worship/ The ministry of the whole people of God in the life of the World

- 4 Ministers, Local Preachers and Worship Leaders and Pioneers have been asked to complete the mandatory EDI training during 2023 and to apply the learning to their ministries. The Senior Managers have been made aware of concerns about the length of the training and those have been fed back to the EDI training group, whilst noting that this was a requirement of the Conference under the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy.
- 5 The Local Preachers and Worship Leaders team (including some Learning Network colleagues) have revised much of their work in the light of the Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity including guidance around SO 566A Welcoming Preachers from Other Traditions, which can be found here: [https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/27711/welcoming-lay-preachers-from-other-traditions\\_guidance-on-so566a-dec-2022.pdf](https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/27711/welcoming-lay-preachers-from-other-traditions_guidance-on-so566a-dec-2022.pdf)
- 6 In response to the creation of the Wales Synod Cymru and a growth in confidence as a bilingual Synod, resources have been produced to help churches introduce the Welsh language in worship. The aim is to engage with Welsh speakers and learners in the community and those who use the church buildings. These include some 'basic phrases' posters for using the Welsh language within church services and videos/audio files on 'how to' pronounce regularly used prayers.
- 7 A Bible Month training day focusing on this year's book Revelation took place on 11 March, organised by members of the Learning Network working with others from across the Connexional Team. Information on Bible Month 2023 can be found here: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/the-bible/bible-month/>
- 8 Work continues to implement the new candidating scheme agreed at the Conference. Accompanists for candidates, a key new role in support for the discernment of call, have now been interviewed and the first cohort appointed. Work on the Explore component of the scheme continues with the writing

phase.

- 9 Work also continues on support for continuing ministry development, with recent courses including the first 28-30 years in ministry course in a shared venue since the pandemic.

## A Church for all people/ The Inclusive Church

- 10 Equality Impact Assessments are beginning to be used in relation to mission and ministry in the Connexional Team and across the Connexion.
- 11 EDI Guidance for Responding to Support Needs is being finalised and this will be available for the 2023/24 connexional year.
- 12 The EDI Training Group has now been established. The group's purpose is to co-ordinate, develop, promote, and quality assure EDI training across the Methodist Church. The group is co-chaired by a Chair of the JDS Committee and the Director of Learning and Development and consists of:
  - 2-3 Representatives from the JDS Committee
  - 1-2 District JDS/EDI Officers
  - The EDI Adviser
  - Representatives from the Learning NetworkThe group will meet four times a year (September, December, February, and May) with additional meetings as required when engaging in specific items of work in smaller working groups.
- 13 Positive Working Together: there are additional resources now available focusing on the Shared Commitments that help to guide how we behave together, as Methodists, in the lives of our churches. Positive Working Together means we commit to:
  - treating every person fairly, equally and with dignity and respect
  - listening carefully to each other
  - speaking and acting respectfully at all times
  - being courteous in all communication
  - encouraging openness and honesty
  - never using verbal or physical intimidation
  - relating positively with one another even when we disagree

There is a poster for churches to download, print and display as well as a Shared Commitments card which can be edited and printed for each member of the Church. Alongside these resources, there is also a study/training resource that enables church groups to reflect together on shared commitments:

- To explore good working relationships in the Church.
- To look at effective ways of managing conflict in the Church.

The resources can be found on the Methodist Church website here: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/positive-working-together/shared-commitments/>

- 14 Reconciliation and Mediation Team (RMT) pilot project and Positive Working Together (PWT): A separate report is presented to Methodist Council on the work of the RMT pilot project and the work of PWT with a proposed integrated way forward continuing to work in partnership with Place for Hope.
- 15 One of this year's cohort doing the One Programme: Leadership, Georgia Day, is placed as LGBTQ+ Community Link Worker for The Gathering, an ecumenical queer church in Cardiff. They are currently working on a Queer Theology 101 course which will be running in the New Year, designed for anyone – queer folk and allies – to learn more about queer theology and its liberative framework. Georgia is also involved in running social events and working with schools and churches to make sure the queer people in them have quality support and pastoral care. A long-term project is in the works that will create a resource pack for churches that want to be more affirming but are not sure where to start. There will be events within the community designed to be a safe and neutral place for LGBTQ+ people to talk about their experiences with the Church: their fears, questions, and hopes.

## God's Church in God's world/ Striving for Justice and Peace

- 16 As part of the JDS strategy, the first phase of the Truth and Reconciliation listening process has been conducted and a longer process has now been proposed.

- 17 The Discrimination and Abuse Response Service is being piloted and is under review in March.
- 18 We have responded to several major news events over the past few months including the earthquake in Turkey/Syria and the first anniversary of the war in Ukraine providing specially written prayers and resources. We also highlighted the Methodist Church's involvement in the Warm Spaces project which has been covered by the Methodist Recorder and in a film recorded in Epsom. We marked LGBT+ History Month with a series of prayers and blogs and are planning material for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the murder of Stephen Lawrence.
- 19 Media appearances over the past few months include: the Revd David Hardman on the BBC's Sunday Morning Live, talking about the language around asylum seekers and refugees, and interviews on Premier Christian Radio, UCB and BBC local radio stations on our Church at the Margins work.
- 20 The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) is continuing the work of building an Anti-Poverty Movement; at the end of February a meeting with key partners from faith groups and anti-poverty charities sought to expand the core group. Alongside this momentum-building meeting, we have continued to explore a partnership with Greenbelt; the festival is keen to focus on poverty in the UK as an opportunity to promote the Anti-Poverty Movement to churches. This work is committed to putting lived and learned experience at the centre and JPIT continues to work closely with Church on the Margins to enable the voice of those with lived experience to feed into the planning and the implementation of this work.
- 21 The Cost of Living Crisis and the economic system are the focus of a six-week lent course produced by JPIT: Just Economics. The course encourages people to reflect theologically at what the goal of economics should be, how can we talk about flourishing when the cost of living crisis is biting and can the economy help us to challenge the Climate Crisis?
- 22 One year on from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, JPIT produced an internal briefing for the JPIT denominations, and shared with the United Methodist Church. A webinar was held for representatives from each denomination to reflect on the briefing and input to revisions. This document formed the basis for each denomination to write statements to mark one year of the war. This briefing document will form the basis of a discussion document to be produced in April to assist churches to think deeply about the war and responses from governments around the world. The Ukraine briefing is part of our ongoing work promoting a world that actively works for peace and sits alongside the work being prepared on the 'Future of Arms' (AI and warfare) and continuing work with partners around disarmament. The Mission Committee discussed a JPIT resolution asking the Methodist Church to support the call for a Special Session of the UN Security Council on disarmament, this resolution forms part of the Mission Committee report to the Council.
- 23 As the Methodist Conference approaches, JPIT have booked the speaker for the annual Beckly Lecture. Rabbi Nava Hefetz is a member of Rabbis for Human Rights and spoke to a delegation from the Methodist Church of Britain who visited Israel and Palestine in October 22 to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem. Rabbi Nava will speak on 'Human Rights in the light of the Jewish Tradition - Responsibility towards Humanity'. Her voice will bring a different perspective to our debates on the issue and a timely chance to reflect on the direction of travel of the new Israeli government.
- 24 JPIT has formally launched the pilot scheme of Constituency Action Network (the new title for what was called Church in Every Constituency). Eight churches from the different JPIT denominations have agreed to take part in the pilot. Church were carefully chosen to represent a wide diversity. A launch webinar was held and representatives from each church are now working in their churches to embed the project, before the work of building (or deepening) a relationship with their MP. Learning from this pilot will help tweak the project before a full role out.
- 25 JPIT, working alongside the Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) and the Methodist Communications team, is promoting the Church of Sanctuary programme following a memorial to the 2022 Conference. Resources for churches will be on the website: there will be focused communications around good examples of work with refugees during Refugee Week as well as worship resources. The Brighton Circuit has been awarded the first Circuit of Sanctuary award.

- 26 JPIT continues to keep a watching brief on proposed government policy and up and coming bills to Parliament. Currently it is focusing on bills that cover topics from the right to disinvest, immigration policy, human rights and public order. JPIT continues to work in coalition with other denominations and special interest groups to add our voice to campaigns that speak out against any policy or rhetoric we believe is contrary to our gospel values.
- 27 JPIT has produced a 'Manifesto' outlining policy that it would encourage political parties to include in their own manifestos as they prepare for the next general election. Under each of the six hopes, the Manifesto suggests key policy initiatives that would help bring these hopes closer to reality. The briefing is also available for church members as guide to conversations they can have with sitting and prospective MPs in the next 18 months or so.
- 28 As the two-year *Walking with Micah* project draws to a close, the Mission Committee is bringing a draft report to the Council proposing principles, priorities and practices for justice, and outlining ways in which these might be embedded in the life of the Church.
- 29 Action for Hope:
- Following a successful recruitment process, an Action for Hope Implementation Officer has been appointed to co-ordinate work on the strategy within the Connexional Team, learn from good practice throughout the Connexion and liaise with partner organisations and groups.
  - A process is underway to understand the current situation and to establish a baseline for data to ensure robust monitoring of progress.
  - Conversations are being undertaken with environmental advocates around the Connexion. This includes eco-districts, grassroots activists and those areas undertaking environmental projects.
  - Property resources have been created to guide local churches in steps they can take towards becoming net zero. A new Connexional Team travel policy is in place, and the guidance for volunteer travel has been updated to include low carbon guidance.
- 30 The Legal and Constitutional Practice Team assisted the Methodist Church in Scotland in drafting and submitting a response to the consultation on the Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Bill, and co-ordinated the arrangements for a representative of the Methodist Church in Scotland to give evidence (at very short notice) at a meeting of the Scottish Government's Social Justice and Social Security Committee on 2 March 2023 to discuss the Bill.

#### Evangelism / God For All

- 31 The JDS and EDI team is supporting events with the Evangelism and Growth Team, such as: Methodists at Pride webinar, Methodists at Carnival conversations, and the EDI rural webinar.
- 32 Christmas 2022 Campaign: The Director of Digital Engagement, Ben Hollebon has shared some of the statistics around the Christmas 2023 Campaign *There is Room*. Our specific Methodist Church social media content reached more than 575,000 people, with all social content reaching around 1.4m people. The video content was viewed more than 250,000 times with 5,660 people clicking through to our website as a result of watching it. More than 181,000 free printed resources were distributed by Methodist Publishing (some had to be re-printed to cope with demand). Work has started on the Christmas 2023 campaign with the aim being to share the materials earlier in order to help churches incorporate the content in their plans. The reach of this campaign was astounding and our video was shortlisted as Finalist at the Christian Media Awards.
- 33 In the third year of *God for All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth*, the Evangelism and Growth Team notes the following new updates in each of the *God for All* streams:

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

- Discipleship Pathway Pilot: We are working with around 30 churches to pilot a Methodist Way of Life Discipleship Pathway project. This will provide guidance and resources for local churches to use MWOl to provide an introduction to faith for enquirers, and to create pathways for existing members to deepen their discipleship. Some pilot churches have selected prototype resources to creatively pilot in their own context, and four churches and circuits are engaging in a more

structured programme, with hands-on visits from the discipleship officers. Through conversations and group workshops, stories will be shared from this piloting so that best practices can be learnt and applied to a new toolkit, released later this year.

- Theology for All: The July 2022 'Theology for All' consultation -- in conjunction with the Learning Network and Faith -- highlighted the importance of story sharing. Since then work has begun to explore how we can encourage conversation, both in gathered worship and small-groups, about our encounters with God as we live out the MWoL practices.

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

- Evangelism resources: The rewritten Evangelism for Leaders course is now running for the first time. The new Methodists at Pride resources, support network, and video have all been released. Conversations Against Mundanity, a card game to equip people for deeper, more meaningful conversations, is currently going through the publications process. This will be available for purchase in June 2023 and will be used at festivals and events this summer.
- Festival Presence: Planning is underway for Hope and Anchor (the festival venue) to be present in 2023 at: Flourish in Scarborough, Cliff Festival, Solas Festival, Greenbelt Festival, in Liverpool for Eurovision week, and 3Generate. We are also planning an evangelistic presence in Edinburgh during the Festivals and at Silverstone during the Grand Prix F1 weekend. Each of these iterations of evangelistic witness is being planned in partnership with teams of Connexional colleagues and volunteers - both local to the event and recruited from around the Connexion.
- Digital evangelism: We celebrate the launch of Getting Started Online, a 24-video course helping people get to grips with skills, strategy and knowledge of social media. This is followed up with online and in person facilitation sessions. The work on digital New Places for New People has progressed with beginning scoping and bringing practitioners and stakeholders together. Planning for the third season of the Hope and Anchor podcast is well underway with some exciting developments for the release in the spring.
- Young Evangelists: The Young Evangelism Officer has joined up with colleagues across MCB, working alongside Children Youth and Family Ministry to deliver an event called Frontline, a residential at Cliff College for young adults interested in sharing their faith. This is part of the young adult work outlined in the Children & Youth Strategy agreed by the Mission Committee and forms part of the Mission Committee report to the Council. The next phase will be to gather a community of young adults online, to receive training, coaching and support as we explore evangelism in their contexts.

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

- Funding: The NPNP funding process has been a success and all of Tranche 1 districts have had their projects approved by the Mission Committee, two projects from Tranche 2 have also been approved. The district projects recently approved are from Southampton and Yorkshire West, we have also had our first Circuit project approved (West Durham in Darlington district) demonstrating that the process is starting to impact beyond district level. Descriptions of funded projects are being added to this web page [www.methodist.org.uk/npnpdistricts](http://www.methodist.org.uk/npnpdistricts)
- Superintendency and Pioneering: We held two webinars, attended by over 60 people altogether, which were aimed at resourcing and supporting Superintendents in enabling NPNPs to begin in their context. The webinar titles were: What is the role of the Superintendent in an NPNP? and How can Superintendents be pioneers too?
- Church Planting Intensive: this course is now in its second year and being run for the third time in March.
- Coaching: Over 100 pioneers, transformational leaders and GFA influencers are being coached in their ministry. After the March training coaching training course more than 20 Methodist leaders



will have trained to be a coach to resource our coaching strategy, this will further enable the ongoing matching of pioneers to coaches.

- Starting Churches at the Margins: A revised 'Beginning a Church at the Margins' resource incorporating the insights of the online course is being developed with Publishing Services. This resource aims to gather small groups, to develop organising practices, which people learn and repeat consistently to develop a new Christian community amongst economically marginalised people. Alongside the regular Church at the Margins advocates and practitioners online meetings, three regional in person gatherings are being planned (Durham, Manchester and London) to promote and nurture a movement of new Christian communities at the margins.
- Faith-Rooted Community Organising: Our work on Faith-Rooted community organising continues with a second and revised course at Cliff College in March, alongside exploratory conversations to develop this work in partnership with JPIT, particularly how starting Church at the Margins new Christian communities in economically marginalised contexts is a crucial dimension of the larger emerging Anti-Poverty movement.

Every Church Growing and Transformational Leadership:

- Rural mission update: Working collaboratively with Fresh Expressions we have hosted two online conversations around pilgrimage and pioneering, and have established a smaller termly learning community. March sees the launch of a second strand around the theme of forest church, also with the aim to develop and grow leaders in these contexts around the Connexion.
- Mission planning: A Connexion-wide digital mission planning day has been scheduled for 8 July 2023, and will be delivered in partnership with the Learning Network and District Missioner Community. This will include workshops exploring issues such as merging churches and circuit-level mission planning as well as opportunities for bespoke coaching-style interventions for teams.
- Transformational Leadership Learning Community (TLLC): The 2023 cohort is up and running with ten teams participating and approximately 60 leaders involved. We have also opened up the monthly Leading into Change digital check-in webinars to allow any interested leader to attend. This will enable more people to benefit from the sessions. Learning and development opportunities for TLLC coaches are also underway.

## Resources for the Church: the use of God's gifts

- 34 The MOCC (Ministers of Other Conferences and Churches) scheme has been partially reopened for applicants with UK passports or with the right to work in the UK. The Council will note that this remains an area of risk for the Church, both in relation to finance of visas as well as ensuring the right support is in place for this important undertaking.
- 35 The remit of the Stationing Review Group is to carry out a root and branch review of all processes related to the stationing of ministers (presbyters and deacons) in the Methodist Church in Britain. The Group will present a final report to the 2024 Conference with recommendations for changes to those processes. The first meeting of the group was held in January 2023 and they plan to meet approximately every two months. The Group will consult widely with both lay and ordained Methodists alongside input from our ecumenical partners.
- 36 An Accessibility guidance resource is currently being prepared for both the Property and Communications Teams.
- 37 The Communications team continues to support with Conference mandated work including the Theology of Safeguarding resources, God for All, a Methodist Way of Life and our work around Net Zero. We have been delighted to welcome Rachel Dalby into the team who has taken over as editor of the connexion magazine and look forward to Madeleine du Boulay joining us during March as Communications Assistant.

- 38 The Connexional Property Team continues to provide a balance of support and input into both central and wider connexional property projects. The last few months have seen a greater diversity in types of support offered, including - property leases 15%, development schemes 15%, development with a new church 15%, mission and development led projects 8%, property and portfolio reviews with Circuits 15%, re-ordering projects 8%, property management support 4%, health and safety advice 4%, and property sales 16%. A proportion of this support is delivered alongside TMCP and other Connexional colleagues, and discussions are ongoing as to how this can be better coordinated and can link with wider connexional initiatives. This support has been improved since the last Council meeting through the recruitment of a new Property Development Manager to work alongside the Director of Property Support.
- 39 Since the last Council meeting, the Property Development Committee (PDC) has met once and has received update reports on the guidance which the team is completing this connexional year. The property focused guidance and information will complement the two connexional initiatives of the JDS Strategy and the Action for Hope initiative – to ensure that both initiatives are embedded into all the property team’s work. This includes continued research into ways to reduce energy costs for churches through bulk purchasing of energy through brokers, with the support of procurement colleagues. The team is also leading on the production of a new Circuit Property and Property Stewards Handbook to give greater proactive guidance to those at local levels managing property. Work is now nearing completion on the updates to the Closing Church Property guidance prior to presenting to the PDC at its next meeting. Property Matters, the team’s monthly online newsletter is becoming an increasingly important means of communication and is being reviewed and developed during this year to ensure it remains relevant and engaging.
- 40 The Digital and Publishing Services teams are collaborating to improve how we join up our work and streamline our messaging across the Team. In particular, a new online Connexional Team Resource Planner has been launched to manage requests for new resources from both teams and co-ordinate their production and release to best promote and support the work, from social media posts to online training courses or printed handbooks.
- 41 A new Heritage and Collections Officer joined the team on 1 March. This role has been reconfigured to recognise the missional work undertaken with all the Methodist Church’s collections: the records, art and artefacts in our local churches, the connexional archives and museum collections, and the Methodist Modern Art Collection.
- 42 As part of training and equipping those in Children Youth and Family Ministry, we now have a licence to train trainers in delivering Youthscape Essentials training for Ministry with young people. We are looking for people across Districts and Circuits that would like to be trained as trainers who can deliver this material locally. If you have staff or volunteers in your District or Circuit teams who you would like to be trained as trainers, please contact the Children, Youth and Family Ministry for more information here: [Meet the team \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://methodist.org.uk)
- 43 There are 13 people serving as Youth Reps on our Youth Rep Programme. The breakdown on these roles is Council Reps (3), Conference Reps (3), Agents of Change Reps (4), Global Reps (2), and Digital Rep (1). They are looking for opportunities to be involved in their Circuits and Districts or invited to Synods to listen to Children and young people across the Connexion. If you would like to connect with the Reps in your area, please email [childrenandyouth@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:childrenandyouth@methodistchurch.org.uk)
- 44 The *Thriving Families* online event takes place on 23 March and is an opportunity for anyone working with families and households to learn together and be equipped for their ministry. The focus is on ways to start ministry from scratch and supporting family wellbeing, including marginalised families and those who may be particularly struggling right now. There is also an opportunity to discover new resources and share expertise. Thriving Families is delivered by members of the Learning Network and partners from ecumenical Children’s Ministry Network More information and how to book onto the event can be found here: [Thriving Families Tickets, Thu 23 Mar 2023 at 11:00 | Eventbrite](#)
- 45 The grants system designed to best support global Partners as the World Mission Fund is brought down to reserve level is in operation. Eighteen Mission Initiative Fund applications totalling over £157k for Partner Churches and Organisations in the Americas and Asia have successfully been considered and approved. Expression of Interest proposals for Europe, Asia and the Americas have been

reviewed and discussed by the grants committee with agreement on 33 applications in total to be followed up.

- 46 The Learning Network (LN) continues to offer a range of learning and development opportunities across the Connexion. Information on these events can be found on the Methodist Church website at: [Learning Network Courses](#).
- 47 Following a committee of the Council under SO 316, the appointment of the LN Coordinator in the Southern and Islands Region has been curtailed.
- 48 A new Handbook for Ministers has now been approved for use by the Ministries Committee.
- 49 Work continues on discernment for senior leadership. The Ministries Committee approved new leadership learning resources which will enable and resource those called to senior posts in the Church.

## Responding to the Gospel in partnership

- 50 The Connexional Ecumenical Officer continues to work with ecumenical partners both Methodist (eg European Methodist Council, World Methodist Council), and others (eg the Free Churches Group, CTBI) to promote Christian unity. Delegates attended the World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly in Germany last year and were able, as directed by the Conference, to make representations regarding the situation in Israel/Palestine, which contributed towards a redrafting of the WCC statement on reconciliation in the region.
- 51 Methodist representatives, including the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Conference recently attended a service of Vespers at Westminster Cathedral, marking the life of Pope Benedict XVI. *God in Christ Reconciling*, the eleventh report of the Joint International Dialogue between the World Methodist Council and the Catholic Church, has recently been published and the British Methodist Roman Catholic Dialogue Group is exploring ways to enable Methodists in Britain to engage with the riches of this resource.
- 52 The Life in Covenant group holds its first meeting at the end of February and will report annually to the Methodist Conference and the General Synod. This group's mission is to facilitate communications, learning, and mutual understanding of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant. They will meet at least twice a year and consult, as necessary, with key members of the national/connexional bodies, theological educational institutions in the two denominations and work in close collaboration with the Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission.
- 53 JDS Solidarity Circles are being appointed as partners in helping the Church to see how the Church's Good News can be experienced as Good News by more people. Coordinators were appointed in February and appointments for the membership of the Solidarity Circles will be made during March.
- 54 The Methodist Modern Art Collection is currently on show in Bristol. In addition to the previously advised multi-faith exhibition, *Articles of Faith: Where our paths meet*, on show at Bristol Victoria Methodist Church, *Death to Life* is a reflective exhibition, which brings together four depictions of the Crucifixion from the Collection at John Wesley's New Room. Further information can be found [here](#).
- 55 The President of Methodist Women in Britain has completed a successful visit, supported by the Partnership Co-ordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean, to the Methodist Church in Colombia. Significant highlights included meeting with Afro-Indigenous communities in northern Colombia, whose health has improved thanks to a Methodist health clinic that serves over 3000 people across seven rural communities and a vital, daily feeding programme coordinated by the local Methodist church. She also met with indigenous Zenu women who are now more empowered in the knowledge of their rights and in their ability to break free from patriarchal constraints and expectations thanks to the work of MCB's Partner CEPALC (The Social Ecumenical Centre for Media in Latin America promoting values of peace and justice).
- 56 Two Mission Partners who are presbyters have travelled to their location of placement to begin work, one serving the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka, the other serving the Free Methodist Church of Rwanda's Kibogora Polytechnic, whose work includes ministerial formation. Three mission partners have completed their service.



- 57 Two persons on Encounter Worldwide are currently in placement. One is with the Methodist Church in Namibia supporting pre-schools and community group work; the other is in Georgia with the United Methodist Church serving families fleeing from Russia. One young adult has been selected for an Encounter Worldwide yearlong placement in Latin America from Sept 2023 and will receive some bursary support.
- 58 A highly successful Living Christianity visit to the Holy Land visit took place in January 2023. The group numbers were at their maximum and bursaries were made available for five qualifying persons for the visit.
- 59 A recommendation to the Council has been made for the next Methodist Liaison Coordinator for the office in Jerusalem. The reasoned statement for this recommendation came before the Council electronically and was agreed. Training and preparation for this person will take place before their placement.
- 60 'The Last Taboo? Talking about dying' workshops that have been run with the Learning Network in partnership with MHA have been well received with positive feedback as we have been encouraging conversations on this important and sensitive topic. It is hoped that there will be further opportunities for shared work in the future.
- 61 The Connexional Secretary was able to attend the first in person meeting of the Connectional Table of the United Methodist Church. This is the UMC's version of Council/SRC and brings together the heads of the all the General Agencies, some Bishops, and representatives from the world-wide UMC. Being able to be in a room together again after three years of online meetings led to richer conversations as well as hearing of the future vision for the UMC as it approaches the General Conference in 2024.

## In Closing

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.

It is hoped that this report, along with the previous two Team Reports to the Council taken together, provides not only the Council, but the wider Connexion, with a snapshot of the spread of work undertaken by the Team on behalf of the Council and Conference.

### **\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

**31/1. The Council receives the report.**