

Report from the Connexional Team

MC/22/70

Date of meeting	17-18 October 2022
Contact name and details	Doug Swanney, Connexional Secretary, swanneyd@methodistchurch.org.uk
Action required	To note
Resolution	70/1. 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.
-----------------	---

- 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 April 2022. The Council is also provided with an update of the work of the Conference Office including the contribution of the Team in delivering the Methodist Conference in the summer of this year, and a brief update on moving out of Marylebone Road.
- 2 The 2022 Conference took place in Telford and was the first Conference to be held wholly in person since 2019. As always, the Conference Office staff worked hard in the run-up to, during and after the Conference to ensure all went smoothly. Despite some staff absences due to post-Conference illness and holidays, the Minutes of Conference and Directory and 2022 edition of CPD (Volume 2) were all delivered on schedule in August.
- 3 The Conference Office has been pleased to welcome a new in-house Legal Counsel and Connexional Data Protection Officer, Laura Kent, who is working with the Connexional Secretary and other colleagues to implement the recommendations of the internal auditors and update the Team's internal Data Protection policy and resources. Team members have received refresher training on the importance of data privacy and general data protection awareness.
- 4 The Legal and Constitutional Practice staff in the Conference Office continue to manage a full and varied workload advising the Council and Connexional Team on a wide range of legal issues and providing guidance to managing trustees around the Connexion on matters of charity registration, interpretation of Standing Orders, same-sex marriage registration and church mergers under Standing Order 605A. Legal staff have recently undertaken an audit of the governance pages on the Methodist Church website with a view to removing/updating information which is out of date.
- 5 It has been announced that the final report of the five-year Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse will be released on 20 October and we are preparing ourselves for what might be expected of the Church. Our response to the earlier report into Religious Organisations and Settings can be found on our [website](#).
- 6 The Council should also be aware that the move out of 25 Marylebone Road will now take place over the winter. At the time of writing it is anticipated that the move will take place in the earlier part of January 2023. Preparations for the move continue to take place, and significant progress with clearing the building has been made over the summer. There is still much work to do over the coming months and the Council should be aware that members of the Team are having to prepare for the move in addition to their regular workloads.
- 7 The work of the Connexional Team towards the Methodist Council Objectives is now shared under the headings below.

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

- 8 The Communications team provided resources and worship material after the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II was announced in September. As well as a statement from the President and Vice-President, we provided a prayer vigil and prayers throughout the week, along with a specially recorded podcast and other material. The Signpost for Ministry proved a particularly useful way of sharing these resources and provides those who sign up with regular updates when the page has had material added to it.
- 9 Officers in the Ministries team have been working to begin the implementation of the Candidating Review agreed at Conference. This work includes delivery of an Explore phase which will enable people to reflect deeply on their vocation and calling to ministry and will involve the production of new vocational exploration materials, recruitment and training of accompanists, and communicating and consulting with the church on new processes.
- 10 Materials to explore the Ministerial Covenant, which was agreed at the Conference, will be made available. This will involve intentional conversation between ordained and lay office holders about mutual expectations and commitments that will enable mutual support and upbuilding.
- 11 The competencies for local lay-pastors, which were also agreed at the Conference, will involve work by the Ministries team to embed this significant new office in the life of the Church.
- 12 The Learning Network worked closely with the Ministries team to organise and deliver another successful Worship: Leading and Preaching (WLP) Summer School at Cliff College which ran from 1 to 5 August 2022. Work continues in support of WLP Explore Online Modules 1-8 with dates set through 2022-23.
- 13 The Learning Network has a programme of dates in place for supporting WLP Tutors and Mentors along with dates for induction for new WLP students during 2022-23.
- 14 The Learning Network, Ministries and Mission teams are working together on Bible Month for this year developing the resources and engagement opportunities for use within worship and other settings. Alongside Bible Month the Learning Network is offering a number of other opportunities for developing theological and biblical literacy including Theology Book Club, Theological Reflection in Practice, Thinking Theologically, Manna and Mercy course and a Biblical Literacy Webinar with Professor Robin Baker.
- 15 A new set of Global Relationships Worship Resources based on the Presidential Theme have been produced for the 2022-23 connexional year; they include materials for a service to be led by an authorised preacher, and a stand-alone service for use in a Local Arrangement Service, and can be found here: [Resources \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://resources.methodist.org.uk)

A Church for all people/ The Inclusive Church

- 16 Work continues on the implementation and development of recommendations from the Justice Dignity and Solidarity strategy. A full update report from the JDS Committee will be before the October Council.
- 17 The interview process for the recruitment of new members for the JDS committee has had a number of setbacks, however, it is hoped that the process will be completed before the Council meets, with nominations and reasoned statements tabled at the meeting.
- 18 The EDI Adviser represents the Methodist Church on the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) Racial Justice Advocacy Forum (RJAF), which seeks to provide support and practical advice to churches on issues of racial justice. A key area is that of Criminal Justice and police race relations. The recent fatal shooting of Chris Kaba by armed officers of the Metropolitan Police, has increased community tensions. The RJAF is working with local churches close to the vicinity of the shooting in the South London area, to help reduce tensions and ensure pastoral support. The group is also developing a national strategy to support churches with their engagement with the police and other agencies during critical incidents such as this or other serious events which have the potential to increase tension between police and local communities.

- 19 Work on the Reconciliation and Mediation Team project continues to develop with additional practitioners being trained and the number of case referrals increasing across the three pilot Learning Network regions of Eastern, London and North West & Mann. The project is currently on track to meet its aims and objectives. The project is due to be reviewed during 2022-23 with the potential to extend the work across the Connexion subject to the outcome of the review and decisions on increased funding.
- 20 The Learning Network has worked hard to produce the mandatory Unconscious Bias and EDI modules with the aim of these being launched from October this year. These have been developed by working closely with the Inclusive Church Implementation Officer, the Equality and Diversity Adviser, and the JDS Committee.
- 21 The Learning Network is offering a number of webinars working closely with Urban Saints, The Torch Trust, and MHA, to focus on three areas where the Church can move forward in support and provision for individuals and families with additional needs:
 - a. Children, youth and families with a range of additional needs,
 - b. Those who have sight loss,
 - c. Support for individuals and families with dementia.
- 22 The Communications Team continues to support colleagues in EDI and has commissioned a series of films, to be shared during the autumn, which feature people and groups from a range of diverse backgrounds. The Communications Team is also supporting with the rollout of the mandatory EDI training which goes live later in the year and preparing material for Black History Month in October.
- 23 There is ongoing work in the Ministries team around a “voices of identity” project which has gathered the voices of ministers in specific contexts and situations, to reflect on learning for the church. The Ministries Committee received a report, which will lead to further thinking, reflection and action, on the experience of British-born people of colour within the candidating process.

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

- 24 In response to the Cost of Living Crisis, JPIT produced a briefing, which led to work with former Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, and Donald Hirsh (Loughborough University), highlighting that the support from government did not help people living in poverty. The report was released on 7 August and thanks to the Communications team, a large amount of press coverage was received nationally and locally. We produced a media pack, social media assets and coordinated media interviews with the President of the Conference and others. The story was picked up by many media outlets including BBC Radio 4's Sunday programme, Sky News, BBC local radio stations and independent stations and featured across all the main daily newspapers. In the build up to the report's release, the JPIT team coordinated a 'coalition' of over 50 faith groups, anti-poverty charities, politicians and front line organisations who signed the report and called on the government to act. The release of the report was followed up with two 'round table' webinars attended by the vast number of signatories to discern ways forward to continue to press the government for a targeted response to the Cost of Living crisis for those in poverty. This work will continue in the autumn with the Communications team and JPIT working closely together as the impact of the Cost of Living crisis is more fully known.
- 25 The Walking with Micah project continued its Justice Conversations programme and ran a social media campaign, #MyJusticeJourney, together with Methodist Heritage, to help people share their personal stories of their faith justice journeys. Members of the Methodist Conference took part in workshops looking at emerging themes from the project, and gave their feedback. An update report is provided elsewhere in the Council papers.
- 26 The Methodist Church has entered into a partnership with Citizens UK to mobilise and support the Methodist people to provide homes for Ukrainian refugees. A 'Homes for Ukraine Support Officer' has been appointed to oversee the process of recruiting hosts and matching them with refugees. More information will be available on the Methodist Church website soon.
- 27 In June the JPIT conference took place online and onsite at the Oasis Academy London. 'From the Ground Up – Unearthing Hope and Seeking Justice' explored what it looks like to build a movement

for social justice and peace by beginning with the local. 140 people attended the conference approximately 45% of whom were Methodists.

- 28 The Beckly Lecture: 'Global Britain: Great Power or Good Neighbour?' was delivered at the Methodist Conference by the Rt Hon Lord Paul Boateng. Lord Boateng challenged the Church to 'step up and step out', to make enough noise for politicians to hear and respond. He majored on the principle of 'Ubuntu': we are what we are because of others.
- 29 Three new JPIT interns have started in the team with two interns placed in Parliament – one with a Conservative MP and one with a Labour MP, and the third intern working full time with the JPIT team. One of their responsibilities is the oversight of the Politics in the Pulpit Podcast, which continues to be a valued resource for preachers as they seek to relate lectionary readings to current social and political events, each season has a different host from one of the JPIT denominations.
- 30 Monthly webinars have taken place with the Church at the Margins and the JPIT team exploring issues of social justice and action, including the most recent on Warm Spaces, as a response to the energy crisis, which attracted 400 people. Consultations with local community leaders from disadvantaged areas continue; these are a real chance to hear lived experience from those living in poverty, which is essential to inform our continued political dialogue.
- 31 JPIT prepared and launched the 'Just Desserts' season of creation resources and the 'Net Zero in My Neighbourhood' campaign aimed at helping people work with locally and hold their Local Authorities accountable to their climate action plans.
- 32 A letter has been written to the Minister for the Middle East about Israel's plans to build on the E1 settlement area. Other work has included liaising with the World Methodist Council on disarmament issues, feeding into an Alternative Security Review undertaken by Rethinking Security, signing up to, the 'Right to Boycott' campaign and we have continued to analyse responses from High Street Chains to the China and Cotton campaign.
- 33 The President of the Methodist Conference has written to the Archbishop in Jerusalem, regarding the raid in August 2022 by Israeli forces at St Andrew's Anglican Church in Ramallah, The text of that letter can be found on our website here: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/latest-news/all-news/raid-by-israeli-forces-on-st-andrews-anglican-church-in-ramallah/>
- 34 Two of the global COP26 Workers attended the World Council of Churches Assembly and, alongside a member of the JPIT team, ran a workshop on the global programme initiated by MCB and adopted by the World Methodist Council. A report is on the [Global Relationships pages of our website](#).
- 35 The Heritage Conference; *Transformed Lives Transforming Lives*, was hosted by the Methodist Heritage Committee in May. The conference focused on the history and legacy of social justice within Methodism. The Heritage Officer managed the delivery of the conference in partnership with Englesea Brook Museum, as part of their celebrations for the 250th anniversary of the birth of the co-founder of Primitive Methodism, Hugh Bourne.

Evangelism / God For All

- 36 The *God for All* strategy continues to be a priority of the Communications Team and during the summer we have commissioned several films which highlight the work being done by Eunice Attwood and Matt Finch (Church at the Margins and New Places for New People). The Methodist Church's YouTube channel has all these resources which are available to view and use more widely. Examples of films commissioned recently include: A project in Manchester tackling homelessness, lunchbox kits being provided for local families at Bermondsey Mission, a Memory Worship group in Essex and a church in Hertfordshire supporting Ukrainian refugees. The communications team is also working closely with colleagues in Evangelism and Growth and Publishing Services on the 2022 Christmas campaign, *There is Room*, which will be launched in the next few weeks.
- 37 It has been two years since *God for All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth* launched in September 2020. The Evangelism and Growth Team notes the following updates in each of the God for All streams:

Centred in God

A Methodist Way of Life: At the Conference, representatives and guests were invited to take an adventurous train journey from the *God for All* Junction through the A Methodist Way of Life network. They reflected on their 'home-station' – the place where they most spent time with God – and where God might be inviting them or their church / circuit to journey to next. Similar presentations occurred at the Superintendents' Conferences. The interactive, flexible and adventurous nature of this discipleship framework has been exceedingly well received and work is now underway to work with a number of pilot churches, the Learning Network and District Missioners to create a 'toolkit' to support local churches in utilising the framework in their churches for the benefit of flourishing cultures of deep discipleship. As well as encouraging engagement with A Methodist Way of Life, the project supports the rest of the *God for All* strategy by encouraging Methodists to consider areas such as worship, evangelism, and mission. Further information can be found at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/mwol/>

Prayer: *Sunshine and Showers* is a new prayer course exploring the beautiful messiness of prayer and six paradoxes that can be barriers to thriving prayer lives. The first zoom course with 50 places was fully booked within a couple of weeks of advertisement. A church pack is also in development so that local churches can run the course in their local communities, and we hope to add an asynchronous digital course for individual users in due course. This course will encourage the *God for All* aim that churches are "rooted in prayer... ensur[ing] that everything flows from God's initiative and is empowered by the Spirit of God".

Theology for All is a project which seeks to bring together representatives from across Methodist churches and institutions in a common goal to deepen Methodist's "understanding of the Christian faith and seeing its relevance to discipleship and mission" and the "development and promotion of different models of theological reflection for use across the Connexion" (the Theological Depth strand of *God for All*). A first gathering of representatives occurred in July 2022, including Ministries, Children Youth and Family, Faith and Order, Queen's Foundation, Learning Network, and church practitioners. The group discussed the barriers that everyday Methodists find in engaging in theology, and new ways that might help. A number of projects are currently in consultation in order to advance this work.

Everyone An Evangelist / Digital Evangelism / Young Evangelists

Evangelistic engagement: The Evangelism and Growth Team has focused on equipping churches to become more evangelistic by actually doing evangelism. Using the Hope & Anchor space in different ways from festival to festival, we have led Connexion-wide teams at The Fringe and Greenbelt, Cliff Festival and 3Generate. We are thrilled that churches are using Connexional Evangelism & Growth resources to plan their own evangelism at agricultural fairs, arts and music festivals, Pride, and other events.

Christmas campaign: The Evangelism and Growth Team has collaborated with Ministries, our Director of Digital Engagement, and Publishing Services to produce a pack of digital and print resources to support our Christmas campaign, 'There is Room.' Webinars taking place at the end of September will offer churches training on the ways in which digital and print resources could be used in worship, evangelism and community engagement.

Hope & Anchor podcast: The Hope & Anchor Facebook Live series from autumn 2021 is morphing into an exciting, experimental podcast dropping in autumn 2022 with a goal audience of unaffiliated, "spiritual but not religious" people groups. Hope & Anchor is an inclusive space for real conversations that change things.

Digital basics training: A collaboration between Evangelism and Growth, Communications, and the Learning Network, this series of 24 basic training videos – aimed at equipping beginners on their journey into digital mission and ministry – has been filmed and will be available in early 2023 on TheologyX and the Methodist Church's YouTube channel.

Young evangelists: The Young Evangelism Officer has spoken at Cliff Festival, ECG, Greenbelt, and a number of youth clubs and young people groups across the Connexion, building the relational groundwork for the Young Evangelists movement, which will be launching in the year ahead.

Transformational Leadership

The Transformational Leadership Learning Community is seeking to expand, following very encouraging feedback from teams who have participated recently. One individual says TLLC has 'changed their life;' senior leaders have noticed positive transformation taking place in circuits over which they have oversight. Further information can be found here: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/lead-churches-into-growth/develop-transformational-leadership/transformational-leadership-learning-community/>

New Places for New People (NPNP)

District tranche design process: Every district is now committed to the NPNP design process. Nearly all of the Tranche 1 districts have submitted their projects for Connexional funding. Funded projects can be seen at www.methodist.org.uk/nnpndistrictprojects. Tranche 2 districts will be submitting during this connexional year. Conversations with Tranche 3 districts are taking place now. The tranches can be seen here: www.methodist.org.uk/nnpnptranches.

Research, learning, and reflection: Multi-year NPNP action research project planned with Cliff College to track learning in real time. This research has now been commissioned and will begin in early 2023.

Church at the Margins

Networks: New Church at the Margins advocates and practitioner online networks for Coastal, Rural, and Urban contexts have been set up. There will be regular webinars throughout the 2022-23 connexional year. Details and bookings are available here: www.methodist.org.uk/camnetwork.

Community Organising: Three Introductory courses on the core practices of Community Organising are planned onsite at Cliff College. The first course is full already.

Fresh Expressions: A renewed partnership with Fresh Expressions has been set up and includes supporting coaching and online ecumenical gatherings exploring fresh expressions of Church at the economic margins www.methodist.org.uk/freshexpmargins.

Warm Spaces: Over 400 people attended a September 2022 webinar exploring the setting up of 'Warm Spaces' to get people through the coming winter. This was a collaboration between Evangelism & Growth, JPIT, and the Newcastle District. A webpage has now been published, pulling together helpful links and resources: www.methodist.org.uk/warmspaces

Every Church Growing

Rural mission and ministry network: The new Rural Hope network continues to grow and strategically shape the rural content of all work. This autumn offers a variety of online webinars collaborating with Learning Network regions to deliver Dreaming Beyond & Positively Rural gatherings, plus a rural mission stream with the Arthur Rank Centre and Fresh Expressions Rural.

The ecumenical Rural Ministry Course offered through the Arthur Rank Centre and co-sponsored with the Methodist Church continues to develop. We had our most successful course yet in June 2022 and have scheduled an extra course in October 2022 to accommodate the increased interest. Any Methodist lay or ordained leader in a rural context is encouraged to attend; bursaries are available.

The Queen's Foundation Rural Placements: All final year, full-time Queen's students have returned from their September 2022 rural placements, where they were hosted in

four rural districts and encouraged to spend time reflecting upon New Places for New People and growing churches in rural contexts, as well as considering whether a rural appointment is something to request for stationing.

Mission planning alignment: Evangelism & Growth and the Learning Network are exploring ways to build on the shared work around mission planning across the Connexion.

Review and Embedding

As we begin the third year of *God for All*, the Evangelism and Growth Team has begun a review and evaluation of the impact of the Church's engagement of the strategy thus far. With two goals: (1) to gather feedback – celebrations, challenges, and big questions – from across the Church, in order to embed learning; and (2) to prepare for a potential second major season of *God for All* (2025-2032) – not a simple extension of the current strategy but, if Conference welcomes it, an integration of the evaluation and energy of the first five years towards a refreshed and refocused strategy through to the centenary of the Deed of Union in 2032.

- 38 All the works in the Methodist Modern Art Collection have now been recased into new, more robust, bespoke travelling cases. For the 60th anniversary of the collection, six works (in celebration of six decades) are currently on display in various venues around the Connexion where they are the focus of local interpretation and activity programming. In addition, Roper's *Stations of the Cross* have been placed on long-term loan with Woodhouse Grove School and are on show in the chapel. A group of young people chose six works from the collection to be exhibited at 3Generate, where participants were encouraged to explore what they could see of God in those paintings.

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

- 39 Following considerable discussion regarding the level of lay employment support provided by the Connexional Team to the wider connexion, the SRC determined that the Team could not provide additional resources on top of what it is already offering, but that clarity be provided on the services that are currently available. In accordance with SO 438A, the Connexional Team are required to provide guidance on people management and legislation, Standing Order 329 would also be applicable. The current resources offered by the Connexional Team to fulfil this responsibility include:
- a) An online lay employment resource available on the Methodist Church website. The resource is reviewed periodically and additional information is provided where necessary,
 - b) The provision of XpertHR services for District Lay Employment Secretaries. XpertHR is a paid online subscription resource aimed at HR professionals that provides direct access to a wealth of resources relating to employment law and HR practice, this includes regular legal updates and briefings, as well as access to case law, templates, webinars, checklists and other tools, the information is presented generically to be adapted by the employing body. The number of licences for this service has been increased and incorporated within the Connexional Team budget to enable the service to be available to a number of District Lay Employment Secretaries,
 - c) Online employment law updates facilitate by an external employment lawyer,
 - d) Line management training promoted and facilitated by the Learning Network, online sessions are run throughout the year,
 - e) Advice and guidance is provided, as needed, by Connexional Team HR Advisers via email and phone when needed. The service is utilised by District Chairs, District Lay Employment Secretaries and others who have people management responsibility across the Connexion. Calls are sometimes received from lay employees though these are only received on occasion.
- 40 Work continues towards Oversight and Trusteeship:
- A questionnaire was sent out to members of the Conference to complete throughout August.

The feedback was collated and two sessions on Zoom have been arranged for members of the Conference to attend to offer any further thoughts into the process. The information collected will be shared with the CLF.

- Work has begun on the nomination process in which the Conference directed the Secretary of the Conference to work with the co-chairs of the JDS Committee, the Chair of the SRC, the Youth President and two other persons to oversee a robust open recruitment process for an interim Nominations Committee.
- Work is also being done on the review of Standing Order 111(3), the breakdown of a minister's marriage.

41 Various parts of the Connexional Team continue to provide a range of resources and services for the church as described in the following paragraphs.

Safeguarding

42 Another very well received webinar was hosted on the subject of financial abuse and vulnerable people (especially some who are elderly). This was approached from a variety of perspectives and offered practical suggestions as to how churches can become more observant and reactive to preventing abuse. A recording of this webinar and associated presentational materials is available here: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/webinars/financial-abuse-webinar-13-june-2022/>

43 The Safeguarding team have continued to develop awareness of domestic abuse following last year's approval of the church's policy on domestic abuse and related webinars (also available to watch on the Safeguarding pages of the website). Posters highlighting the Church's stance on this subject and offering sources of support have been sent to all churches as well as stickers that can be attached to the back of toilet doors offering direct support to anyone who maybe experiencing abuse in this way.

44 We are very pleased to announce that a new training course focussing on spiritual abuse will soon be ready to be used in the Methodist Church. This has been developed with Dr Lisa Oakley from Chester University and the 'Thirty-One Eight' Christian consultancy organisation.

45 We now have a working group looking at the follow up materials to assist all members of the church to gain a greater understanding of the Conference report on the Theology of Safeguarding and it is intended that these will be available for group study in the second half of 2023.

Communications

46 We continue to support our colleagues in Safeguarding and regularly offer advice to DSOs when cases are taken to court and churches needs statements to read to their members. The Director of Communications is also supporting with work on the Theology of Safeguarding and the Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse which will publish its final report in the autumn.

Learning Network

47 The Learning Network continues to develop a number of its work areas that can be offered across the Connexion, with staff from across the regional teams working in collaboration to deliver online learning and development opportunities in a consistent and effective way. Work has been underway to gather information on these opportunities into a pdf booklet for this connexional year, this will be developed further during the year. The booklet will enable information to be effectively shared on how to engage with these opportunities. Some of the work this year includes:

- Circuit Stewards Training with dates planned through the year
- Exploring calling and vocation through the Encounter course and RSVP: Responding to God's Call course working with the Ministries team to further develop this work
- Line Management training and Lay Employees orientation linking the work up with Ministries and HR
- Leadership Essentials and Lay Leadership Skills
- Positive Working Together through delivery of our Scripture, Spirituality and Conflict course,

Growing through Change and Conflict course and our responding to Bullying and Harassment course, working in partnership with Place for Hope.

- Support and training for Supervisors and Supervisees through a Being a Supervisee course and a library of 8 different courses that are offered for Supervisors as part of continuing professional development for Supervisors.
- Work supporting Rural Churches working with the Evangelism and Growth team
- Mental Health First Aid training events are currently being offered by the trained trainers with a regular programme of events planned during this year.
- The ongoing development of the Theology X online learning platform.
- The Safeguarding team and the Learning Network will once again be organizing and running a joint Safeguarding Conference during 2022-23.
- The Digital Training Officer continues to work on the delivery of digital training for churches, circuits and districts to develop their digital communications for mission and ministry.

Global Relationships

- 48 Almost £250,000 from the World Mission Fund was given in Solidarity Grants to Partners in the 2022-23 connexional year. During the previous two years, we increased the budget for Solidarity grants to help Partners in their response to the social, economic, psychological and physiological effects of COVID-19. This last connexional year we have stayed within the Solidarity Grant budget; however, we have still given grants towards providing food, medication, school equipment and wages to seven Partners responding to the ongoing impact of the pandemic. Other Solidarity grants this year have been for support in such things as floods in India and Pakistan, petrol tank fires in Sierra Leone and Haiti, the volcano eruption in Tonga, and the cholera outbreak in Cameroon.
- 49 A Mission Partner based in West Africa will work at least 80% of their time to offer global Safeguarding Support; he will support any Partners needing to produce Safeguarding policies, now required of overseas recipients of grants by the British Charity Commission, as well as responding to requests for further support from our Partners, such as for training.
- 50 A protocol for reporting global Safeguarding concerns and a methodology to guide responses by MCB has been produced and has been agreed by the Global Relationships and Safeguarding Committees.

Children, Youth & Family

- 51 In the 2022-23 connexional year, we have seven One Programme Leadership for Young Adults (OPL) placements across the Connexion in a diverse selection of projects, consisting of five fulltime placements and two part time. This roles this year are; Football and Faith Worker, Chaplaincy Worker, Early Years and Family, Engagement Worker, Pioneer Worker with Mother House, LGBTQI+ Community Link Worker, Community Faith and Sports Worker and Children and Families Worker/Youth and Young Adults Worker.
- 52 In 2022-23, we will have a cohort of 20 young adults for the Leadership Year programme. This course consists of young leaders from across the Connexion and this year's cohort includes people from a range of places including: a Global Fellow, young leaders from the Chinese Methodist Church in Brunswick, those doing the One Programme: Leadership, Cliff year students, the Youth President, and the Cliff College Student President. This is the third year we have run this programme and the first year it has been opened up across the Connexion.
- 53 Based on consultations with the Mission Committee, feedback and research carried out across the 2021-2022 connexional year, we have been developing a detailed five-year plan for equipping ministry with children, young people, young adults and families.
- 54 Youth Mental Health First Aid Training - we continue to provide three training sessions per connexional year and offer related training on topics such as understanding Trauma.
- 55 3Generate Children and Youth Assembly:

- We have exceeded our target for bookings for the 2022 event and have over 1100 children and young people attending this year.
 - We have an increase in diversity that covers different EDI categories at the event year on year and are working hard on ensuring this is represented across the event. This year we have a varied number of fellowship groups attending. We have introduced gender-neutral toilet facilities, provide accessible camping for young people and have added a dedicated Accessibility Team.
 - We continue develop the 4-7 year olds intergenerational section of 3Generate expanding the day event into the main venue.
 - As a part of equipping and developing our delivery and volunteer team, we continue to provide Unconscious Bias and Accessibility training to all. We also brief on Safeguarding and Mental Health First Aid.
- 56** This autumn we will be launching Ministry Essentials for Youth Work in partnership with Youthscape, and providing training for trainers of this course. As a part of this, we are currently writing a training Pathway for Children, Family and Intergenerational Ministry with an ecumenical Children's Ministry network and in partnership with Cliff College. This will be hosted on the Theology X platform and will initially be trainer facilitated. The Pathway includes insights into the child's world and life, skills, reflective practice and personal faith development. This will be launched in autumn 2023.

Property

- 57** The Connexional Property Team continues to assist in providing technical input for the capital projects at Camden Town Methodist Church and 25 Tavistock Place alongside its support to Managing Trustees and Ministers in churches nationally. In the last four months it has provided property input into the following areas: 3% support to districts; 8% support to circuits; 22% support on connexional properties; 33% support to churches looking at mission and development or reordering; 14% support to churches looking at larger mission and redevelopment projects; 3% support to churches looking at property sales; 6% support to churches looking at new churches buildings; 3% support to churches with building alterations and technical issues; 8% support to churches looking at broader future plans in relation to property. Its work plan with the Property Development Committee for this year includes reviews of the Strategic Property Guidance and the Closing Churches Guidance, exploring more around understanding our property portfolio potential, and further work on our Net Zero Carbon response in the light of rising energy costs.

Responding to the Gospel in partnership

- 58** The Safeguarding team has continued to work closely with the Global Relationships team in relation to building safeguarding knowledge and practice with our partners. In August, two of the team were very pleased to be able to return to the Methodist Church in Southern Africa to lead training to children and young people's officers working in four of the member countries as well as over fifty ministers in training over a number of days. We continue to be in contact with colleagues in the Methodist Church in Southern Africa (MCSA) supporting them as they develop their strategic approach to safeguarding work across all six countries represented in the MCSA.
- 59** The Engagement team's Marketing Officer has planned two webinars to help identify and better engage with persons across the Connexion who might be able to advocate for Global Relationships in their congregations, Circuits and Districts.
- 60** Two new Mission Partners and one Accompanying Volunteer have taken up placements since April; two Mission Partners who have completed their training are awaiting visas to enable them to take up their placements; two other Mission Partners, having completed their training, are now in language school. Recruitment of Mission Partners remains suspended due to the projected financial concerns of the World Mission Fund post-2024.
- 61** The conversations with all MCB's global Partners on priorities for mutually supported global mission, hosted jointly with the Methodist Church in Ireland, and facilitated by CREAS, have now concluded. The CREAS report is with the Global Relationships Committee for consideration and recommendation on how its conclusions should be taken forward.

- 62 The first in-person Pre-Conference Consultation with global Church Partner Representatives to the Conference for some time was held this year and was viewed by participants as an excellent opportunity to discuss global issues with a cross-section of representatives from the global Wesleyan family, including from united Churches of which Methodists make up a part. The topics, chosen by Partner Churches and MCB were: Enhancing Global Relationships; cross-cultural mission; migration; Walking with Micah; Safeguarding; and preparation for the Conference.
- 63 The Global Relationships' Encounter Worldwide and Specialist Skills programmes have recommenced following the pandemic. Two persons have successfully applied to serve as volunteers under Encounter Worldwide in 2023, and a person specialist skills supported vital work in the Uganda mission of the Methodist Church of Kenya in June.
- 64 There are now nine established District Twinning links and three under consideration; other districts are being followed up with regular contact. Three twinned districts have expressed an interest in receiving visitors from their Twinning Partner. One district was also able to undertake their own visit of persons to the Partner and embed their Twinning links.
- 65 Nine young adults and a leader from The Evangelical Church of Spain are planning to participate in this year's 3Generate, reflecting closer bonds of co-operation with this Partner.
- 66 As mentioned in the last report to the Council, the Learning Network (LN) is working in partnership with Methodist Homes (MHA) to co-deliver a session entitled, 'The last taboo? Talking about dying'. The LN and MHA will be offering a number of sessions across the Connexion during this connexional year.
- 67 The fourth and final major transfer of Methodist Missionary Society records from Methodist Church House (MCH) to the SOAS Library took place on 20 September. The team have appraised, listed and transferred more than 1400 boxes of records in total. Shipments of connexional modern records from MCH are also being arranged; largely these are to be deposited with the John Rylands' Research Institute & Library, although due to their relatively recent creation, these records will remain 'closed' to researchers for now, as per Standing Order 015.

In closing

- 68 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**

70/1. The Council receives the report.