

## Action for Hope interim report

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<b>Action Required</b>	For discussion
<b>Resolution</b>	19/1. The Council receives the report.
<b>Methodist Council objective that this paper supports</b>	God's Church in God's world/ Striving for Justice and Peace

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	An update on the work to create a 'Faith Plan' – a ten-year plan to net zero carbon emissions for the Methodist Church in Britain.
<b>Main Points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultations</li> <li>• Assets-based aims and work</li> <li>• Wisdom-based aims and work</li> <li>• Lifestyles-based aims and work</li> <li>• Future areas of work</li> </ul>
<b>Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)</b>	MC/21/84 Action for Hope – A Path to Net Zero Carbon Emissions for the Methodist Church
<b>Consultations</b>	See the 'consultations' section.

## Action for Hope interim report

### Introduction

- 1.1 The October 2021 meeting of the Council approved the approach to developing a Methodist Faith Plan outlined in report MC/21/84. This approach included:
  - a. Focusing on three key areas: assets, wisdom and lifestyles.
  - b. Appointing a task group of Connexional Team members to take the work forward.
  - c. Requiring the task group to report to the January Council on progress.
  - d. Requiring a final draft of the Faith Plan to be submitted to the April meeting of the Council for scrutiny and approval, prior to its public submission in May 2022.
- 1.2 This report aims to fulfil point 'c' and provide an update for the Council on work towards building a ten-year 'Faith Plan' to net zero carbon emissions for the Methodist Church in Britain (MCB).

### Consultations

- 2.1 A number of consultations have already been undertaken to ensure MCB's Faith Plan is well informed, and more are planned in the coming months.
- 2.2 The Head of Mission has met with representatives from Chapel Aid and the Central Finance Board to discuss options for green funding. It is anticipated that meetings will take place with representatives from the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes and Methodist Insurance in the coming months.
- 2.3 The District Chairs of the Channel Islands, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, Cymru, Isle of Man, Scotland, Shetland, South East, and Wales Districts have been invited to suggest someone from their district to act as a 'geographical advisor' to the Action for Hope task group. The aim is for these people (who live in the Channel Islands, the Isles of Scilly, Wales, the Isle of Man, Scotland, Shetland, Malta and Gibraltar) to 'sense-check' any resource or guidance produced by the task group, as it relates to their area. It is not envisioned that there will be any meeting of this group, but simply that they are available to respond to telephone and email enquiries from the task group. At the time of writing, four geographical advisors (from Wales, Scotland, the Isle of Man, and the Isles of Scilly) have volunteered.
- 2.4 Many districts have already begun to work towards net zero goals, an Eco District award, or other aims in caring for creation. The task group has made liaising with and learning from these districts a priority. The Chairs of eight districts whose District Mission plans included environmental concerns or aims were invited to have a one-to-one meeting with a member of the task group, so that their wisdom and experience can be incorporated into the Faith Plan. At the time of writing, four such meetings have taken place and two more are planned before the end of January.
- 2.5 A meeting has taken place with the Director of the Susanna Wesley Foundation (SWF) to discuss areas of overlap and mutual support. The theme of the 2022 SWF Conference is "Sustainability: sharing values, creating communities – equity, economy, environment"; a member of the task group has been invited to join a panel discussion at this event. A further meeting will take place in January to continue to explore how SWF may contribute to this work, especially the 'wisdom' strand.
- 2.6 Two meetings have taken place with representatives from the grassroots "Methodist Zero Carbon Group" (an informal group of over 100 activists across the Connexion) to discuss how they might participate in, support and advise on the work. A follow-up meeting is planned for 2022, after which activists who have experience in one of the three focus areas will be put in touch with the task group member leading on that area.

- 2.7 Planning has begun for a consultation with children and young people via the Agents of Change and Youth Representatives programmes.
- 2.8 The task group has mapped the connexional committees whose work overlaps with net zero planning. The task group plan to write to these committees' chairs to consult with them.

### **Assets**

- 3.1 Four asset-based aims were proposed and agreed at the last meeting of the Council, via MC/21/84. Below is an outline of progress in each of these areas. In addition, two possible new aims are outlined in section 6.

### **Assets – travel**

- 4.1 One of the asset-based aims is, "All travel directly funded by MCB to have net zero emissions by 2030." The task group have divided this into Connexional Team travel, connexional-volunteer travel (eg volunteers attending committees, 3Generate, the Conference, etc), district-financed travel and circuit-/local church-financed travel.
- 4.2 Connexional Team travel is divided into travel booked via Diversity Travel and 'other travel', ie that which is not booked via Diversity Travel. Most 'other travel' is travel via personal vehicles, taxi and bus, but it may also include other modes.
- a. The Purchasing Manager is currently exploring options for recording the carbon footprint of, and offsetting, journeys booked via Diversity Travel.
  - b. The Connexional Team staff travel and expenses policy is in the process of being updated to clarify the limited set of conditions under which car use is acceptable. This update will be publicised at the February Connexional Team meeting to raise awareness. It is hoped the new and more robust wording will discourage unnecessary car use.
  - c. Conversations are underway regarding an amendment to the expenses claim system to ensure the mileage of all journeys not booked via Diversity Travel is recorded, to allow for carbon footprint calculation and offsetting.
  - d. Due to the nature of the role, the Learning Network Officers and Coordinators undertake much more travel than the average Connexional Team member. Most of this travel is undertaken by car. Conversations are ongoing with the Director of the Learning Network to explore if and how the travel (by car) of the Learning Network could be reduced.
- 4.3 Connexional-volunteer travel is usually booked by the volunteer themselves and the costs are reimbursed on submission of a completed volunteer expenses claim form with associated receipts.
- a. However, travel is occasionally booked by a Connexional Team member on behalf of a volunteer. In this case, it would be booked via Diversity and the monitoring and offsetting would be undertaken in the same manner as Connexional Team travel (see above).
  - b. There is currently no guidance given to connexional-volunteers regarding preferred means of travel. The task group plans to draft guidance to encourage public transport use. In addition, the task group plans to draft an updated version of the volunteer expenses claim form to enable the mileage of all journeys to be captured, regardless of the mode of transport, to ensure accurate measuring and enable offsetting.
- 4.4 Work on district-/circuit-/local church-financed travel will begin in January 2022, in collaboration with districts and circuits. However, conversations have begun with the Connexional Allowances Committee (CAC). The CAC have been made aware of the work of Action for Hope. They are receptive to looking at how the policies and funds under their control can be aligned with the Church's net zero commitment. In particular, this may include supporting 'greener' travel options.

### **Assets – electricity and gas**

- 5.1 Two of the asset-based aims are, "All electricity directly funded by MCB to have net zero emissions by 2030," and, "All gas directly funded by MCB to have net zero emissions by 2030."

5.2 The task group has ascertained that all electricity used at Methodist Church House is from 100% renewable sources.

5.3 More detail around these aims, along with guidance and resources to support work, will be produced, in collaboration with districts and circuits, in early 2022.

#### **Assets – other**

6.1 The final asset-based aim is, “Methodist members and leaders equipped with other resources to reduce the carbon emissions related to Methodist properties and activities, including but not limited to: guidance on listed buildings, new property projects and use of other fuel sources (eg oil, coal).”

- a. Some guidance is currently offered relating to historic buildings. It is proposed that this is reviewed in 2022 and amended or updated as necessary. [www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/conservation-listed-buildings/historic-places-of-worship-and-climate-change](http://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/conservation-listed-buildings/historic-places-of-worship-and-climate-change)
- b. A Rocha offers guidance on Sustainable Building Projects. It is proposed that this is reviewed in early 2022 to understand if any supplement is necessary. [www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/resources/buildings](http://www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/resources/buildings)
- c. Guidance on the use of other fuel sources will be produced in 2022.
- d. Resources relating to reduction of carbon emissions from church buildings are available via the Methodist website. These include guidance for small, medium and large churches on lighting, insulation, energy management and more, with accompanying case studies: [www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/environment-and-climate-change/take-action-carbon-reduction-tips](http://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/environment-and-climate-change/take-action-carbon-reduction-tips)
- e. Resources relating to green energy purchasing, consumables, heating, campaigning, encouraging wildlife and more are available from A Rocha: [www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/resources](http://www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/resources)
- f. God’s World, Our Home, is a resource specifically designed for children and young people, to equip them for climate action: [www.methodist.org.uk/gwoh](http://www.methodist.org.uk/gwoh)

6.2 One possible new asset-based aim is around the investments made by MCB. The Joint Committee on the Ethics of Investment and the Central Finance Board have already begun excellent work in this area, in particular, with the total divestment from fossil fuels in spring 2021 and the addition of the ‘Climate Stewardship Fund’, also in 2021. Conversations are planned between the CFB and the Director of Finance and Resources to discern how to best make use of this new fund and encourage churches, circuits and districts to also use it.

6.3 Another possible new asset-based aim concerns MCB’s long-standing partnership with A Rocha and their “Eco Church” initiative. A parallel scheme, called “Eco Congregation” runs in Scotland. There are currently over 300 Eco Churches or Eco Congregations in the connexion. This represents approximately 8%. It is anticipated that conversations will take place in early 2022 with the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), A Rocha and Eco Congregation to discuss the setting of aims to increase this number.

6.4 Offsetting of activities is a crucial part of MCB’s assets-based aims. Exploration of offsetting options will be undertaken in 2022, with the hope that a single method could be recommended for use across the Connexion.

#### **Wisdom**

7.1 It is important to recognise the wealth of material and resource already in existence that informs and enlivens our work in this area. Biblical and theological insights from throughout the Christian tradition and the voices of those with lived experience of the impact of the climate crisis inspire and

undergird our efforts. The challenge is to distil and focus these resources, insights and voices in a way that is accessible, and an engine of ongoing change and continued mission.

- 7.2 The Council has already stated its intention to “appoint a Resource Group to review and recommend updating *Hope in God’s Future*.” *Hope in God’s Future* is a Conference Statement, but also a report and resource shared with other ecumenical partners. It was last updated in 2020, when the final section of ideas and suggested further reading was expanded. It remains a helpful, urgent and wide-ranging document, and one that it is hoped will continue to receive attention and promote action. The task group hopes that any revisions to the report will include ongoing reflection with global, ecumenical and interfaith partners, perhaps especially among the Abrahamic faiths, from whom we have much to learn and whose wisdom should be brought to bear on our conversations. Given that hope, and the need to allow for time for the Faith and Order Committee properly to ponder any revision, it is proposed that the revision not be brought until 2023, and that the names for a new Resource Group might be offered to the Council in October 2023. Conversations are already under way with the responsible team members of the JPIT and the Faith and Order Committee about this work.
- 7.3 Action for Hope follows on from a long history of Methodist engagement with environmental issues, most recently the Climate Justice 4 All project leading up to COP26. One of the major learnings from this project was the value and importance of listening to, working with and learning from those with lived experience of the climate crisis, and especially those from the global south. We will continue to actively seek the guidance of these voices throughout the Action for Hope wisdom work.
- 7.4 In the meantime, the task group has begun to assess the depth and breadth of the available wisdom, and to take counsel about finding ways to re-present it to the Methodist people, bearing in mind the need always to articulate what wisdom we hold as distinctively Methodist in this area. It will be helpful to begin to ponder this using the framework of *Our Calling*, and including these and other questions:
- a. Worship – How might we work to ensure that the conclusions we have already reached and the thinking we have already done permeates our worship? We have excellent worship resources: how do we better share them? The task group is exploring with colleagues how to work with the *Singing the Faith* Reference Group and the Local Preachers and Worship Leaders staff in the Ministries Team to ensure that worship material and training resources for those leading worship, perhaps in the form of some continuing local preacher development modules, are made available.
  - b. Learning and Caring – it may be time to promote *Hope in God’s Future* again, with its outlines and suggestions for small group reflection and whole-church conversation. Among them, we find particular importance in the doctrine of Creation, and on the witness of the Bible to the goodness and interconnectedness of all God has made. The theology and practice of good stewardship is something that should inform many connexional priorities, from our work on Oversight and Trusteeship, to the emphasis of the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy on the need for a fairer approach to Christian life together. Our place in and responsibility for Creation is another vital element of this work and ongoing reflection.
  - c. Service – At the heart of all Christian thinking about climate change and creation care must be a notion of mutuality and interdependence: the biblical notion, echoed by prophets, mystics and theologians, that at their heart all living things bear the stamp of their Creator and depend on one another for life and sustenance. We therefore owe a deep attentiveness and generosity to all Creation, including one another, regardless of circumstance, geography or culture. As we emerge from COVID-19, we have new and compelling evidence of this, for instance in the costs for all humanity of wealthier nations hoarding available vaccines to themselves, with devastating results in the global mutation and spread of the virus. We must learn from this, as well as from the current impact of

climate change on communities of all kinds, to begin to learn that how we act really does affect the lives of our sisters and brothers on the other side of the world.

- d. Evangelism – Pope Francis, in his encyclical on climate change and creation care, talks of the “ecological conversion” that is needed if Christians are to act faithfully and justly in the present moment. There are, simply, many habits of mind and heart from which we must be weaned if we are to undergo the fullness and truth of the Gospel and find newness of life in Christ. We must learn to give ourselves away that others may live; we must discover an antidote to our myths of self-sufficiency and cultural superiority; we must begin to value all life and all people as beloved by the God who made them; we have to inhabit and seek to create an economy predicated upon grace and not upon greed or gain. Francis’s predecessor spoke in a similar vein of the ways in which the world’s deserts are growing rapidly, because of the growth of the deserts within the human heart, which need to be irrigated by God’s love afresh<sup>1</sup>. This is surely our task too: one of the evangelisation and re-evangelisation of God’s people.

7.5 Work is continuing under these headings, and to ensure that there is linkage between ‘wisdom’ and ‘lifestyles’ in the work of the task group. We are engaged with Methodist-related learning institutions, and the resources of the Learning Network, and with ecumenical and interfaith partners, in seeking to ensure that we mine the best of our current thinking, training and practice.

## **Lifestyles**

8.1 No aims were proposed at the last meeting of the Council and only one aim is proposed now, as follows:

For Methodist members/adherents to reduce their carbon footprints, particularly via the three key areas of energy, travel and diet (the biggest contributors to personal emissions).

We will be able to make this aim more specific after our first year of measuring.

8.2 The following measurement system is proposed for this aim:

- a. There are 4004 churches (also called societies) in the Connexion, 3% of which (120 churches) constitutes a statistically significant sample.
- b. Select 120 churches from across the Connexion that are representative of the range of contexts within MCB, (ie including rural/suburban/urban, poorer/more affluent, right-/left-wing politically, all of the countries/dependencies, etc)
- c. Once a year, ask individuals in the congregations of each of these 120 churches to calculate their personal carbon footprint, and/or complete a short survey (fewer than ten questions) relating to their energy, travel and diet.
- d. Track the responses from these 120 churches over the next 10 years to confirm the extent to which Methodist members/adherents are reducing their carbon footprint.
- e. Work with the grassroots “Methodist Zero Carbon Group” to recruit at least 30 volunteers who will each monitor approximately 4 of the 120 churches, ie facilitate the surveying, gather the responses and send the data to the Connexional Team for processing and reviewing.

8.3 In light of Notice of Motion 2021/112: Looking to the Future, and concerns about increasing the workload of ministers, staff and volunteers who are already under considerable pressure, the task group does not propose any new activities to equip, encourage and empower Methodist members/adherents to reduce their carbon footprints. Instead, conversations are ongoing across the Connexional Team to consider how current activities, programmes and projects might be amended and adjusted to focus on changing lifestyles and care for creation.

## **Future areas of work**

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’: On Care for our Common Home* (Encyclical Letter, Catholic Truth Society, London 2015) pp.102-3

- 9.1 A number of future areas of work is proposed, which will help support work on the aims outlined above.
- 9.2 The grassroots “Methodist Zero Carbon Group” is proposing to source a volunteer climate advocate for each district from their network, in consultation with District Chairs. Noting that some districts have paid staff in place with this remit, this volunteer community would be a point of contact for advice and information in districts without paid staff and a support to those with them. This advocate group would be drawn together virtually for regular progress reports and sharing of best practice.
- 9.3 An avenue of external funding is currently being explored which may enable the recruitment of a Connexional Net Zero Implementation Officer to support this work.
- 9.4 Conversations are ongoing with Faith Invest to explore the possibility of MCB becoming a ‘multiplier’. This role has been created in recognition that most faith communities have a number of sister organisations. In becoming a ‘multiplier’, MCB would commit to using its influence with sister organisations<sup>2</sup> to encourage them towards net zero.

**\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

**19/1. The Council receives the report.**

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<sup>2</sup> See ‘Methodist-related Organisations’: [www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/connect/other-methodist-websites](http://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/connect/other-methodist-websites)