

The Inclusive Methodist Church: Report of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee

Contact Name and Details	The Revd Stephen J Poxon, Chair of the Committee stephen.poxon@btopenworld.com
Resolutions	52/1. The Council receives the report.

Introduction and Background

The Council-appointed EDI Task Group has been helpful in refocusing the work of the EDI Committee and the affirmation that EDI must be embedded within every area of the Church's life.

Building on the Council-affirmed EDI Task Group document MC/19/87 this EDI report 'The Inclusive Methodist Church' brings together the vision of the Task Group and the recommendations stemming from the EDI Committee residential (14-15 February 2020).

An implementation Action Plan is attached with time scales and costings, as requested by the 2018 Conference.

The Inclusive Methodist Church Statement of Faith

The Methodist Church affirms that there is one race, the human race, made in the image of God. As believers in Jesus Christ, we affirm that we are all members of the body of Christ, and with all our immense and wondrous diversity we are one in Christ. The Methodist Church believes that any form of discrimination is sinful and unacceptable and is committed to being a truly inclusive Church where all are invited into full participation of the Church.

Background

1. The Methodist Church has had a long history of being an advocate for social justice and challenging injustice. Work on gender justice was first brought to the Wesleyan Conference in 1928, and the first women presbyters were ordained in 1974, a year before the passing of the Sex Discrimination Act (1975). Work on racial justice was brought to the Conference in 1962, long before the Government's introduction of the Race Relations Act (1976). These are just a few examples, however, underpinning all this work is our firm belief that all are created in God's image and all are one in Christ Jesus.
2. Following on from those years of work, as a Church we have made significant progress across all protected characteristics as stated under the Equalities Act 2010 and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). However, today the issue of race, sexuality, gender and disability discrimination is still a major challenge for the Church, and in becoming an "Inclusive Church" there will need to be a significant transformation, which will include organisational, structural and cultural changes.
3. At the heart of these changes, the Council has recognised that EDI must move beyond being "one of many priorities competing for scarce resources and finance", to being viewed as an essential and integral part of the Church's life. A way to facilitate this is to embed the themes of EDI across the Connexion.

Inclusive Methodist Church Definition

1. **Welcomes: The Methodist Church** welcomes **in safety** all who would come to be part of the life of the church whether that be through worship, learning and caring, service or evangelism. In accepting all, no-one should feel any less welcome than anyone else on account of their age, social or economic class, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic.
2. **Upholds the discipline of the Methodist Church in the face of discrimination:** with no room at all for behaviours which are discriminatory or belittling. Any transgression of this will be challenged and could lead to sanctions, including the privilege of holding office or membership in the Church being withdrawn. Support of the victim in that situation must always be paramount.
3. **Celebrates diversity** in the variety of God's creation seen fully in the Trinity so that its worship and life is fully inclusive of the contributions of those of different backgrounds and abilities. The Church is the body of Christ, every part needs every other part and a full expression of our unity is only possible when we love and enjoy the different approaches each of us brings to our corporate life.
4. **Represents the diversity of the Methodist Church throughout its life and structures and affirms that there is no place for** discrimination in our processes of selection, discernment and appointment. The leadership therefore reflects the diversity of its membership and the wider community with full participation at every level of the Church's structures.

5. We will achieve this by implementing the following workstreams:
 - a. **Attitudinal and cultural change:** With a sustained and long-term commitment to winning hearts and minds, using the most effective methodology to achieve this transformation.
 - b. **Building trust and confidence:** through support of the victims of discrimination and making the systems and procedures of the Methodist Church clearer and more accessible. In addition the Methodist Church will create safe spaces within which to hear with intense listening the voices of those who have suffered discrimination and to have the difficult conversation, with a view to learn and as a result transform as a Church.
 - c. **Minimum Standards:** Developing and implementing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Minimum Standards for the Connexion to ensure the adherence and embedding of EDI across the Connexion.
 - d. **Positive Action:** Developing and implementing 'Positive Action' initiatives to address the issue of under representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people within leadership roles across the Church.
 - e. **Scrutiny and Implementation:** Scrutinising all planned connexional policy and practice to ensure adherence to EDI minimum standards and to action or remedy omissions or poorly implemented standards.

Implementation Action Plan

The above workstreams will be detailed in an action plan and progress measured quarterly with opportunities to amend the plan should this be necessary during each monitoring cycle. However, it is recognised that this plan is an organic document and will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis.

Attitudinal and cultural change: With a sustained and long-term commitment to winning hearts and minds, using the most effective methodology to achieve this transformation. This workstream is detailed at appendix 'A': **Draft Concept Note for Cultural & Attitudinal Change workstream.**

Building trust and confidence: through support of the victims of discrimination and making the systems and procedures of the Methodist Church clearer and more accessible. In addition the Methodist Church will create safe spaces within which to hear with intense listening the voices of those who have suffered discrimination and to have the difficult conversation, with a view to learn and as a result transform as a Church.

The ability of the Church to build trust and confidence in the 'Inclusive Methodist Church' vision is essential in ensuring full engagement and participation of all members. Through this process, the Church would seek to give assurance that barriers inhibiting full participation in the life of the Church will be identified and removed. One of the objectives here would be to create an environment where all member of the Church can say 'I can see me' in images and stories of the life of the Church, reflecting their own experience.

Minimum standards: Developing and implementing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Minimum Standards for the Connexion to ensure the adherence and embedding of EDI across the Church.

The aim is to provide a consistent level of approach, quality and delivery of EDI for all aspects of church life, these standards would ensure a consistent approach for the delivery of EDI and the adherence to legislation, and more importantly facilitate the embedding of EDI across the Connexion. This approach would bring to life EDI at district, circuit and church level. Minimum standards would provide a framework for enhancing current structures and processes, assessing performance and ensuring continuous improvement. It will be essential to establish guidelines setting out expectations across the Connexion.

These standards would provide an opportunity for regular (biannual) structured self-assessment and continuous improvement via improvement plans within Districts and connexional teams. These standards

would provide a mechanism for sharing best practice and mutual support. This model would also provide a vehicle for enhanced competence within EDI skill sets for lay and ordained members of the Methodist Church.

The approach would also provide for more efficient use of connexional resources including the time of the EDI Adviser.

Every area of church life would undergo an initial EDI audit or assessment against agreed standards, which in turn would drive improvement and change programmes across the Connexion. Similarly reports of every level of the church should be subject to an EDI scrutiny. It is recommended that the EDI Committee explore and research the existence of similar tools that might already be in use within the Methodist Church, a starting point would be to consult with the Learning Network.

An essential element of the embedding process would be to ensure all senior leaders and lead staff take responsibility for EDI within their area of work. A training needs analysis would have to be undertaken followed by the commissioning and delivery of appropriate training.

Positive Action: Developing and implementing 'Positive Action' initiatives to address the issue of under representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people within leadership roles across the Church. Under the Equality Act 2010 Positive action provides a range of measures which can be lawfully undertaken by the Methodist Church to encourage and train people from under-represented groups eg Black Asian and minority Ethnic communities (BAME), to achieve greater representation at leadership levels. Positive Action can assist in overcoming disadvantage in competing with other applicants and help facilitate increased applications/ expressions of interest from BAME communities for leadership roles.

Scrutiny and Implementation: Scrutinising all planned connexional policy and practice to ensure adherence to EDI minimum standards and to action or remedy omissions or poorly implemented standards. Scrutiny will be an ongoing process whereby the Methodist Church will monitor its policies and practice to ensure adherence to agreed EDI minimum standards.

General Implementation

Action	Cost	Lead	Time Frame
<p>1) Council agrees to appoint the EDI Committee as presently constituted for a final year to 2021, to facilitate the completion of recommendations of the EDI Task Group and the Implementation Action Plan.</p> <p>2) Agree theological underpinning for the 'Inclusive Methodist Church' definition</p> <p>3) Establish EDI minimum standards for Connexion, Districts/ Circuits and local Church</p>	<p>Training Lead Staff & District Chairs: Assumption 100 people</p> <p>a) Workshop: 5 *£2000 = £10,000 Venue hire: 5 * 1500 = £7,500 Grand Total: £17,500</p>	<p>Faith and Order, EDI Committee</p> <p>EDI Committee, learning Network, EDI Adviser</p>	<p>March – August 2020</p> <p>March 2020 -- August 2021</p>
<p>4) Establish EDI Officers in each District and encourage the appointment of Circuit EDI reps to achieve the following:</p> <p>a) Implement EDI Minimum Standards</p> <p>b) Embed the goals of the 'Inclusive Methodist Church' in each church community</p> <p>c) Identify and address local EDI needs.</p> <p>d) Provide local advice on EDI issues.</p> <p>e) Provide support and assistance to district and circuit committees.</p> <p>f) Share best practice.</p> <p>g) Implement connexional EDI priorities and objectives.</p> <p>Associated tasks include the production of EDI Officer Guide and Job Descriptions.</p>	<p>Training Cost District EDI Officers:</p> <p>a) Venue Hire 2* £1500 =£3000 b) Workshop: 2 * £2000 =£4000</p> <p>Annual Expenses:</p> <p>c) Expenses per year: 40 people (assume £100/month /person) = £48,000</p> <p>Annual residential gathering: £10,000 Grand Total: £65,000</p>	<p>EDI Task Group & EDI Committee, EDI Committee, EDI Task Group, Learning Network Led by EDI Task Group representatives</p>	<p>March – September 2020</p> <p>March – September 2020</p> <p>March 2020 – August 2021</p>
<p>5) Review the current EDI Committee structure with a view to creating a more appropriate long term structure to support the support the 'Inclusive Methodist Church' model</p>			

<p>6) To review training and resource materials with a focus on the 'Inclusive Church', identifying additional resources that may be required.</p> <p>7) Create safe spaces within which to hear with intense listening the voices of those who have suffered discrimination and to have the difficult conversation, with a view to learn and as a result transform as a Church.</p>			
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Welcomes

Action	Cost	Lead	Time Frame
<p>a) Develop a Welcome strategy for all churches and Circuits</p> <p>b) Encourage local worship leaders and ministers to include themes stemming from 'Inclusive Church' within sermons and worship.</p>		<p>Ministries Team, EDI Committee, EDI Adviser Ministries Team, EDI Committee, EDI Adviser</p>	<p>March – August 2021 March – August 2020</p>

Is Disciplined in the Face of Discrimination.

Action	Cost	Lead	Time Frame
<p>a) Relaunch of the EDI Toolkit</p> <p>b) The Methodist Council (MC/19/76) has directed the EDI and Safeguarding Committees to undertake a joint review of Safeguarding Procedures to explore possible opportunities for expanding existing safeguarding procedures to encompass incidents involving hate, unlawful discrimination, and abuse or bullying. In addition, the Council has directed the above to produce a best practice guide. Training resources to be identified</p> <p>c) Identify appropriate anti-racism training and resources for rollout across the Connexion</p> <p>d) Continue to take forward work on 'Sexual Harassment'</p>	<p>Promotional Material: £2500</p> <p>Training for District Safeguarding Officers: Venue hire: £1500 Expenses * 30 = £300</p> <p>£500</p> <p>Production of Best Practice Guide</p>	<p>EDI Adviser, EDI Committee, Media Team</p> <p>EDI Committee, EDI Adviser, Safeguarding Team</p> <p>EDI Adviser, EDI Committee, Learning Network</p> <p>Jill Baker leading</p>	<p>March – August 2020</p>

Celebrates diversity.

Action	Cost	Lead	Time Frame
<p>The EDI Adviser is working alongside colleagues from CTBI to mark the 25th anniversary of Racial Justice Sunday. A service is planned to take place at St Pauls Cathedral in October 2020. Additionally the publication of an ecumenical book looking back on 25 years of racial justice across denominations. Other opportunities for celebrating diversity across the Connexion to be identified.</p>		<p>EDI Adviser, EDI Committee, CTBI</p> <p>Mission Team, Ministries Team, EDI Adviser, Media Team, EDI Committee, District Chairs</p>	<p>March – Oct 2020</p> <p>March 2020 – August 2021</p>

Represents its diversity throughout its life and structures.

Action	Outcome	Cost	Lead	Time Frame
<p>a) The rollout of Unconscious Bias Training to selection and recruitment panel members</p>	<p>Exploring online resources and classroom based delivery Online License £10,00 Classroom based Training Venue Hire: 3* £1500 = £4,500 Expenses: 60 * £100 = £6000 Grand Total: £20,500</p>		<p>Learning Network, HR, EDI Adviser,</p>	<p>March 2020 – Aug 2021</p>
<p>b) Using Positive action provisions under the Equalities Act 2020, to identify/ develop Coaching, Mentoring and Role shadowing opportunities for underrepresented groups (initially from BAME Communities) to increase representation at leadership levels across the Church.</p>	<p>Ordained Participants * 6 Assuming a programme of 3 months away from circuit – reimbursement of stipend to circuit: £39000 Expenses: £7200 (assuming £400/month per person) Grand Total: £46,200</p>		<p>EDI Adviser, EDI Committee,</p>	

February 2020

Appendix 'A': Embedding the Inclusive Methodist Church Model

EDI Formation Programme

Draft Concept Note for Cultural and Attitudinal Change workstream

Context and purpose of this concept note

While this proposal acknowledges all the valuable work that has been conducted by the Methodist Church in relation to Racial Justice, it also acknowledges (along with the EDI Task Group), that 'today the issue of race is still a major challenge for the Church, and in becoming an "Inclusive Church" there will need to be a significant transformation, which will include organisational, structural and cultural changes'¹. As is pointed out by the Task Group, quoting EDI Officer, Bevan Powell, 'at the heart of these changes there must be a recognition that EDI must move beyond being "one of the many priorities competing for scarce resources and finance" to being viewed as an essential and integral part of the Church's life. A way to facilitate this is to embed the themes of EDI across the Connexion'.

The EDI "Symposium Follow-Up Group"² has been mandated by the Task Group to advise on how to bring about the attitudinal and culture change required to embed the themes of EDI. The Susanna Wesley Foundation (Roehampton University) has been providing ongoing technical expertise to support this work. This concept note outlines a formation programme that brings together the methods and tools relating to equality, diversity and inclusion, and explores what it means to bring these to life in the context of a broader transformational journey. We are proposing that we offer this programme in a number of districts and circuits which have already embarked on the process of embedding EDI in the context of their work, or have indicated a desire to do so. This programme addresses the need for cultural and attitudinal change and is part of the proposed EDI action plan, which has been put forward by Bevan Powell, and which details five avenues of development to realise the characteristics (or marks) of a 'welcoming church'.

We believe that this bringing together of methods and tools in the context of a broader transformational journey in local contexts is what will enable the move away from a compliance-based approach to EDI to embedding of the 'Inclusive Methodist Church' model, as we learn together what it means to be an inclusive, diverse multi-cultural community of faith. The following statement of belief, which emerged from the EDI Committee gathering on 14 and 15 February, is the foundational understanding that informs this programme.

Statement of Belief in Relation to Diversity, Justice, and Inclusion

The Methodist Church affirms that there is one race, the human race, all made in the image of God. As believers in Jesus Christ, we affirm that we are all members of the body of Christ, and that with all our immense and wondrous diversity, we are one in Christ. The Methodist Church believes, therefore, that any form of discrimination is sinful and unacceptable, and is committed to being a truly inclusive Church where all are invited into full participation of the Church.

Organising principles for a transformational programme

A programme which is intended to embed the 'Inclusive Methodist Church' vision and to have a transformative impact for both participants and for the communities, organisations, circuits & districts of which they are a part, has the following features:

¹ Resolution 87/1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Task Group

² This group was established after the Symposium in February 2019: Bevan Powell, Ermal Kirby, Katie Deadman, accompanied by Megan & Sue Miller Seneque (Susanna Wesley Foundation)

- place-based and incremental: people are transformed where they are through direct engagement with the issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion relevant to their local contexts;
- inquiry-based and learning-oriented;
- problem-based (rather than knowledge/input based);
- participatory and experiential in order to enable full engagement and contribution;
- a learning environment that enables both personal conversion and insight into systemic transformation through engaging in innovation in local contexts. The **being** piece is critical for enabling different kinds of transformative action. This means that participants will use their own contexts as 'learning laboratories' in between sessions;
- systemic inquiry and practice as core. This will enable participants not only to understand the underlying causes of racial and other forms of injustice, but also to understand the 'systems' of which they are a part and which they are seeking to impact in order to bring about transformational change. These systems could be at group, community, organisational, institutional levels.

This means that the EDI tools and content do not provide the organising framework. The content supports the transformational journey that we will take participants on. Such content includes the substance around equality, diversity and inclusion (in all its dimensions, including theological understandings); the human and social sciences and systems science around the practice of systemic intervention³.

Who will be involved and what will participation enable?

It is intended that this programme will be a combination of face-to-face and on-line work and will run over a period of 24-36 months.

The online component would have a range of materials and tools that would be used to facilitate embedding of EDI themes within a localised context, and would provide a menu of options based on local need. The identification and commissioning of these assets would have to start almost immediately and would also be informed by the face-to-face sessions.

Conversations have already begun between Bevan Powell and Richard Armiger about potential collaboration with the Learning Network (LN) and Cliff College in regard to the accessing and hosting of an online learning platform.

The online approach provides the opportunity for consistency and greater reach across the Connexion.

The programme will be offered at a District and Circuit level, ideally with two regions participating in each programme. As indicated above, it will be initiated in Districts and Circuits which have already started on this path, or have indicated a desire to do so (for example, Southern & Islands Region & Cumbria; London & Wales; and other circuits who are seeking to embed themes in their regions). Since the LN is key to embedding EDI, there will be a process of identifying and gathering appropriate and committed people to be involved in this embedding process and beginning to build a network of 'EDI champions'. This would be part of a broader and long-term process of enabling the LN to integrate this approach across all areas of work, as part of the embedding process. The LN would be key to engaging District Chairs, Superintendents and local Circuit teams.

Participation will enable all those involved:

³ See Gerald Midgley (2000): *Systemic Intervention: Philosophy, Methodology & Practice*. Springer, NY.

- to deeply explore their local contexts (whether MCH or regional contexts): strengths that can be built on and what it is that blocks us from living the 'Inclusive Methodist Church';
- the development of locally relevant prototypes to help us flourish our vision of an inclusive, diverse, multi-cultural community of faith;
- to build a coherent response to what it means to embed EDI themes within Districts, Circuits & regions and across the Church;
- to integrate insights from other current initiatives and bring these to life in the context of 'being' the 'Inclusive Methodist Church';
- to test and further develop standards and policies that emerge from (and are responsive to) local contexts and therefore relevant to embedding and embodying EDI across the Connexion.

Proposed process for Phase 1 (co-design) & Phase 2 (co-delivery)

The EDI Symposium Steering Group would be centrally involved in both phases, supported by the Susanna Wesley Foundation

Phase 1

- gathering of materials relating to EDI embedding (including the EDI toolkit). Commissioning the developing of further materials if necessary;
- co-design of the formation programme, including decisions around core content (and content providers) in the context of the overall programme.

Phase 2

- detailed session design (including with content providers). Working with the on-line platform developers for on-line design and materials production
- co-facilitation of each session
- learning review after each session in order to inform the evolution of the programme and to remain responsive & adaptive.
- mentoring and support of participants as they embark on learning journeys in their own contexts between sessions

Timeline and Costings

See Appendix B.

EDI Symposium Follow-Up Group

February 2020

APPENDIX B

EDI Formation Programme Timeline and Costings

ACTION	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBLE	COSTINGS
1. Co-design of Formation Programme (<i>core content and providers</i>)	Apr-May 2020	MS; KD; BP; EK;	Supported by SWF
2. Identifying and Engaging Local and Regional partners	Apr-May 2020	EK with Admin support	Admin (15 hrs, approx?)
3. Gathering materials relating to EDI embedding; and commissioning additional resources as necessary	May-June 2020	EK, MS, KD, BP With Admin support	£250 Resource Design and Production £1,000
4. Appointment of Co-ordinator for EDI Programme Development (<i>part of expanded EDI Team</i>)	July 2020	EDI Adviser & Council	P/time role For 2 years £25,000
5. Detailed Design of Sessions	July-Aug 2020	MS; KD; BP; EK; + Coordinator.	1-day session £450
6. Working with Online designers and Producing materials	July-Sep 2020	Coordinator and Team	£2,100
7. Facilitating/conducting Workshops - 2 Regional; 3 local; <i>Subsidising Travel, refreshments, materials</i>	Oct '20 – Mar '21	Coordinator and Team	£6,000
8. Review and Forward Planning	Apr-May 2021	Coordinator, Team and Task Group	£550
9. Mentoring and Support of Participants	From Oct 2020	Coordinator and Team	£1,050
10. Repeat the Cycle of Workshops (New Places)	Oct '21 – Mar '22	Coordinator and Team	£6,200
11. Symposium / Celebration of Diversity	May '22	Coordinator and Team	£45,000
			£87,600

Bevan Powell (EDI Adviser):	BP
Katie Deadman (Learning Network):	KD
Ermal Kirby (Susanna Wesley Foundation):	EK
Megan Seneque (Susanna Wesley Foundation):	MS