

Building closer relations between the Methodist Church and All We Can

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Discussion / decision
Resolutions	92/1. The Council receives the report. 92/2. The Council supports the direction of travel set out in paragraphs 4.1.1 to 4.1.3 and requests the preparation of a new Memorandum of Understanding with All We Can, for approval at a future meeting.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	This paper responds to the instruction of the Council in October 2016 for discussions to take place between the Connexional Team and All We Can (AWC), to review AWC's relationship with the Church and how this might be brought closer.
Main Points	Consideration has been given to an organisational merger between the World Church Relationships team and All We Can. For reasons set out in the paper, this is not felt to be a useful way ahead. However, our discussions have led to a much better level of mutual understanding and have indicated a range of ways in which the organisations can work more closely together. In receiving this paper, the Council is asked to approve that general direction of travel. In addition, approval is sought for the drafting of a new Memorandum of Understanding between the Church and All We Can, to underpin our future relationship.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	MC/16/81 All We Can Minutes of the Council meeting of October 2016 MC/09/31 Memorandum of Understanding with the Methodist Relief and Development Fund
Consultations	Internal only

Summary of Impact

Wider Connexional	Over time, the proposals in this paper seek to embed the work of All We Can more closely in the wider Connexion, in support of the vision of One Mission.
External (eg ecumenical)	None

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 Paper MC/16/81, discussed by the Council in October 2016, contained proposals for changing the legal status of All We Can (AWC). The minute of the meeting shows that the Council declined the resolutions in that paper and directed that further conversations should take place about the relationship between the Church and AWC. The Council expressed a view that these conversations should consider:
- the relationship “in the broadest sense”
 - our commitment to One Mission and to the development of a Global Relationships strategy
 - “the desire of the Council to see the work of All We Can more clearly embedded in the life of the wider Connexion”
- 1.2 Over the past year, discussions have taken place on several occasions and at multiple levels. Those involved have included (for MCB) the Secretary of the Conference, the Connexional Secretary, the Head of Mission and Advocacy and the Team Leader for World Church Relationships (WCR); and (for AWC) the Chief Executive, Deputy CEO, Finance Director and Programmes Director. The bulk of the conversation has however been between Maurice Adams (CEO of All We Can) and Martin Ashford (Head of Mission and Advocacy).
- 1.3 The purpose of this paper is to provide the Council with an update on the progress and outcome of those discussions and seek agreement to the proposed direction of travel.

2.0 One Mission ... expressed in different ways

- 2.1 The Methodist Church’s strategy for mission continues to be driven by the affirmation of the Conference in 2012 that “mission is one: holistic, integrated and, at the same time, both local and global”. The vision of *one mission* sits behind the strategy for global relationships adopted by the Council in 2016 (MC/16/8) and the integral nature of mission is fully embraced by both WCR and AWC. There is nothing that prevents the work of both teams being regarded as two aspects of working out a common vision.
- 2.2 At an early stage in the recent discussions, the theory of change adopted by AWC was compared to the aims of WCR. AWC has an explicit vision for its work: “Every person’s potential fulfilled”. An equivalent for WCR can be taken from the one mission statement: “A world transformed by the love of God”. While different, there is nothing incompatible about these visions and consideration was given to creating a single vision statement embracing both. We share a commitment to social action (both long term and emergency relief) as an expression of the Church’s one mission, and in our discussions sought ways of working closer together particularly in that area of shared response.
- 2.3 This paper focuses on the relationship between WCR and AWC but it is important to note that One Mission is expressed through many aspects of the Church and consequently AWC is not only engaged with MCB through WCR but has developed constructive and fruitful partnerships with other MCB functions including activities at various conferences and committees, President and Vice President visits, collaboration with other parts of Mission and Advocacy and the Discipleship and Ministries cluster and engagement with Methodist individuals, churches and districts.

- 2.4 There are however considerable differences in the way that AWC and WCR express the vision of One Mission through their work and through the approaches taken to deliver their respective objectives. Some of the differences are perhaps obvious but also sometimes overlooked:
- WCR holds relationships on behalf of the Conference with some 60 partner churches in as many countries across Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas, plus over 30 partner organisations linked to those churches. AWC works in a more focused way in twelve or more countries at any time, largely confined to Africa and Asia, with a total of around 45 partners;
 - For its development work, AWC rigorously selects the partners with whom it believes it can best work to create positive, long-term change. While some are churches, many are not. WCR does not have the same freedom to choose its partners and relates primarily to the worldwide Methodist family;
 - The primary focus of AWC is on engaging in social action or emergency response programmes with its partners, ie the work of relief and development (as reflected in the officially registered name of the charity, which remains the Methodist Relief and Development Fund [MRDF]). WCR arguably has less clarity of focus because of the diversity of needs of our partner churches which it supports in a multiplicity of ways including formation, evangelism and church growth. Where AWC works with churches (through its Church CAN [Community Action for Neighbours] programme), the focus is clearly on social action as part of the local church's overall Christian mission.
 - While it might be tidy to suggest that all development work should be left to AWC while WCR concentrates on evangelism and outreach, that simplistic view does not reflect the reality of our partner churches, nor the integral nature of mission. The priorities for grant-making set out in section 4.4 of MC/16/8 properly allow for a more holistic view.
- 2.5 Because AWC is a separately registered charity with the implied legal obligations, it has adopted a rigorous planning and accountability management model to monitor all programmatic and financial activities and those of its partners. Control of expenditure on WCR programmes and grants is subject to the management processes of the Church, including approval by the Connexional Grants Committee of all grants made from the World Mission Fund.
- 2.6 The discussions that have taken place over the past year between WCR and AWC have enabled us to explore honestly these points of difference as well as the areas of similarity and overlap. To both WCR and AWC, the concept of **partnership** is of vital importance and underpins all that we do. Both agree that the focus of a partner relationship has to be on people rooted in their communities who understand local needs: the needs to which we then both seek to respond. However, it became clear that our respective understanding of those partnerships is also very different:
- 2.6.1 For AWC, there has to be a purpose for each partnership as AWC exists to support partners to fulfil their missions. The mandate of AWC, as a relief and development agency, means that its focus is to support the social action and emergency relief programmes of its partners. Therefore, a partnership with a local Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) or church cannot be separated from its related social action programmes because support for a partner also means support for the partner's capacity and organisational development, as well as the provision of a grant for programmatic work. AWC is legally obliged to take this stance as it (MRDF) is a separately registered charity with the Charity Commission. Having made this point, AWC has relationships with many other organisations for purposes of learning, networking, resourcing and advocacy. However, these are not considered partnerships unless there is agreement to 'do' something together.

2.6.2 For WCR, holding relationships on behalf of the Conference with our partner churches is important in itself, and the existence of a partnership does not imply support for programmes. WCR invests on behalf of MCB in contacts, visits and consultations with partners with whom there may be no programmatic involvement at all. As MC/16/8 states (para 3.1) “being in partnership with MCB does not in itself imply that we will provide grant funding, which is only one way in which the relationship can be expressed”. Where such funding is indeed provided, WCR’s involvement might be described as relatively hands-off compared to AWC’s approach.

3.0 Thinking radically

3.1 Responding to the Council’s instruction to consider our relationship “in the broadest sense”, and challenged by the Secretary of the Conference to “think radically”, consideration was given to the possibility of merging WCR and AWC under a single management team. Such a merger could in theory take place in either of two ways:

- by bringing AWC into the Connexional Team, its processes and structures;
- by taking WCR out of the Team and absorbing it into AWC’s separate structure; WCR would then become the “church” arm of an enlarged mission agency.

3.2 Information was exchanged on team structures, etc, and various alternative models were sketched out and discussed. Simplifying a complex discussion, the conclusion was that a merger of the two teams was not felt to be helpful or desirable for a number of reasons, including:

- Organisational separation from the Church (in terms of charity governance and operational and structural arrangements) is important to AWC for reasons including its ability to select the “best” partner in a given context, take quick decisions, and bid for potential funding from organisational donors;
- Taking WCR outside of the Connexional Team makes little sense when a key part of its role is to express the relationships of the Methodist Church in Britain with the worldwide Methodist family. That task is closely bound up with the work of the Connexional Secretary and others
- While the Church is still learning what it really means to embrace One Mission, creating an enlarged unit exclusively for “overseas” mission would appear to be a backward step, heading in the wrong direction;
- The different views that WCR and AWC hold of partnership and its purpose are reflected in significant differences in our organisations and teams: AWC has no direct equivalents to WCR’s Partnership Coordinator roles, and WCR has no equivalent to the programmatic expertise of AWC. AWC employs Programmes and Partnership Managers with responsibilities for both. While there is potential for cross-learning, which we are keen to pursue, the process of integrating two such different teams and their approaches would not be easy;
- The process of making grants from the World Mission Fund, controlled by the Connexional Grants Committee and supported by WCR, is incompatible with the approach to grant making taken by AWC, which works on the basis of directly-managed budgeting and control of its work. Considerably more work would be required to examine how these approaches could be reconciled.

3.3 While these and other issues could be explored further and solutions could potentially be found, the conclusion reached was that going further down this route, at a time when the Connexional Team is also heavily engaged in reflection on how best to respond to the missional priorities of the UK, would be a significant diversion for both teams and was unlikely to be fruitful in the short term. Attention was therefore switched to less radical options for improving the interaction of our respective teams.

4.0 Pragmatic ways ahead

4.1 The very fact of holding the conversation has helped encourage a better understanding between WCR and AWC and has suggested three areas, stopping short of full merger, in which the two teams can work more closely together. These are summarised below.

4.1.1 *Governance and strategy.*

- Following approval from Council (MC/09/31), a Memorandum of Understanding was signed some eight years ago between MCB and AWC (then MRDF), intended at the time to be one part of tripartite MOUs also including Christian Aid (which was never agreed nor completed). In response to the Council's concern that AWC might "drift away" from the Church, work will be done to draft a new and updated MOU to define the relationship for the future, subject to the Council's agreement. The revised MOU will reflect where AWC has already sought to build closer relations with MCB and all its parts as well as our shared desire to take this further.
- Changes are also being made to AWC's representation on the Global Relationships Strategic Oversight Sub-Committee (GRSOSC) where it is proposed that AWC should be represented by a Trustee, and to ensure that AWC is represented at the One Mission Forum. GRSOSC is charged "to oversee the implementation, development and monitoring of the Global Relations strategy" for MCB and needs to play a role as a bridge or link between the strategies of WCR and AWC in the context of one mission.

4.1.2 *Operational collaboration.*

- At the same time as these discussions have been underway, a separate conversation has led to agreement being reached for AWC and WCR to work jointly on capacity building with the Methodist Church of Sierra Leone. A specific MOU has now been signed for that work, which is intended as a pilot for other joint projects in the future.
- Both parties agree that, without organisational merger, there is more that can be done using a model of "buying-in" expertise and services in this way, encouraging learning and a sharing of skills. CGC and WCR might benefit from AWC's expertise in the monitoring and evaluation of projects and AWC would also like to be able to apply for grants from the World Mission Fund (following a proposal to be brought to GRSOSC).
- AWC has a designated unit that works with churches and their social action programmes: Church CAN has been successful in Haiti, Cameroon, Uganda, Burundi and Zimbabwe and now starting with WCR in Sierra Leone. This is one area where AWC and WCR probably have the most effective synergy.
- There is also a clear need to ensure that both parties coordinate their response to natural disasters to ensure a single appeal is presented to the Church. The recent East Africa Famine Appeal saw AWC and the MCB represented as one response for individuals and churches to channel donations and has raised nearly £500,000 for NGOs and Methodist churches responding to the crisis. AWC "led" with this, with WCR support, whereas the converse approach was agreed for our response to the Caribbean hurricane.
- To keep momentum on these opportunities for collaboration, management level meetings will be arranged to take place quarterly and specific solutions adopted to ensure a joint conversation happens very quickly in response to disasters.

4.1.3 *Mission education.* One of the most difficult challenges is to avoid the "confusion" that arises in the Church over the respective roles and work of WCR and AWC. It is entirely understandable that both parties wish to tell the story of their partners and their work, and also to use channels of communication to seek support and donations. However, this has created a degree of perceived "competition" in communications which is not helpful to the wider Connexion. No specific proposals have yet been developed to address this but we

hope that, as we work together in the other ways outlined above, this will encourage further engagement around the way we communicate with the Church in Britain and overseas.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

92/1. The Council receives the report.

92/2. The Council supports the direction of travel set out in paragraphs 4.1.1 to 4.1.3 and requests the preparation of a new Memorandum of Understanding with All We Can, for approval at a future meeting.