**The Report of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Task Group [MC/20/51]**

***51/1. The Council received the report.***

***51/2. The Council affirmed the four elements of the statement, ‘The Inclusive Methodist Church’.***

***51/3. The Council thanked the EDI Committee and the Task Group for their work.***

***51/4. The Council appointed the EDI Committee as presently constituted for a final year to August 2021.***

***51/5. The Council mandated the EDI Committee and EDI Task Group to work together on a final wording of the ‘Inclusive Methodist Church’ statement in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee and an implementation plan and to bring a final report to the Council in April 2021.***

***51/6. The Council agreed to ask the Conference to suspend SO 336 for the year 2020/2021.***

**The Inclusive Methodist Church - Draft Definition:**

1. Welcomes in safety all who wish to be part of the life of the Church whether through worship, learning and caring, service or evangelism. In creating places of acceptance for 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. Rejecting and resisting all behaviours which are discriminatory or belittling. All unacceptable behaviours and attitudes must be challenged quickly and could lead to sanctions, including the right to hold office or membership in the Church being withdrawn. Support of the victimised and protection from further harm in these situations must always be paramount.

3. Celebrates diversity in the variety of God’s creation, a reflection of the life-giving relationship of diversity and unity seen most fully in the Triune heart of God. Only when worship and service, and life and mission include fully the contributions and participation of those of different backgrounds and abilities, will it truly bring glory to God.

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 will therefore reflect the diversity of its membership and the wider community, and the Church must embrace honesty, openness and transparency as expressions of the truth that sets us free to ensure full participation in decision-making at every level of the Church’s structures.

**We will achieve this by implementing the following workstreams:**

1. **Attitudinal, Cultural and Systemic change:** With a sustained and long-term commitment to winning hearts and minds, identifying where change is most needed, raising levels of self-awareness and using the most effective methodology to achieve this transformation. Taking seriously attitudinal change means that the Church needs to review the way that it works, a way that is still determined by the privilege and power dynamics of an earlier generation. Put bluntly, the Church in too many places still operates with patterns devised by and for educated white men.

Systemic change must be explored alongside any cultural and attitudinal change. Whilst cultural change can include elements of the systemic, it is important to emphasise the need to explore fully systemic issues to ensure a critique of existing models which assume that present systems and policies impact on or enable all peoples equally . Systemic change would see the diversity of the Church reflected across all aspects of leadership.

1. **Building trust and confidence:** through leadership from the victims of discrimination and by making the systems and procedures of the Methodist Church more accessible, transparent and accountable. In addition, the Methodist Church will empower the voices of those who have suffered discrimination to ensure that they are heard in the life of the Church and inform its decision-making, with a view to real and lasting transformation.

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 members of the Church can say ‘I can see me’ in images and stories of the life of the Church, reflecting their own experience.

1. **Minimum Standards:** Minimum 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 currents structures and processes, assessing performance, providing opportunities for improvement and sharing best practise and facilitate mutual support. Further minimum standards will provide a vehicle for enhanced competence within EDI skill sets.

The process of implementation of the standards would require every area of church life to undergo an EDI audit or assessment against the standards, which in turn would drive improvements and change programmes across the Connexion. Written reports should be subject to EDI scrutiny. The EDI Adviser will produce a series of tools that enable ‘EDI proofing’ by those producing documents for discussion or publication in the life of the Church.

1. **Positive Action:** Developing and implementing ‘Positive Action’ initiatives will address the issue of under-representation 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, to achieve greater representation at leadership levels. Positive action would assist in overcoming disadvantage in competing with other applicants and help facilitate increased applications from under represented groups for leadership roles. Positive action would include initiatives that facilitated coaching, mentoring and role shadowing. An example would be to facilitate shadowing and coaching opportunities to work alongside District Chairs for a fixed period of time to gain exposure to the day to day duties and challenges of the job.
2. **Scrutiny and Transparency:** Developing and publishing EDI scrutiny methods and guidelines to be used for all future connexional policy and practice development and to audit current policies with a view to action or remedy where needed. Such scrutiny would, whilst ensuring adherence to EDI minimum standards, also encourage and guide best practice.