This booklet describes just a few of the many projects receiving grants from FHM (The Methodist Church Fund for Home Mission) and MAP (Mission Alongside the Poor).
The Calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God’s love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

Worship – the church exists to increase awareness of God’s presence and to celebrate love.
Learning and Caring - the church exists to help people grow and learn as Christians through mutual support and care
Service – the church exists to be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice.
Evangelism- the church exists to make more followers of Jesus Christ.

Conference 2004

**Priorities for the Methodist Church**

In partnership with others wherever possible, the Methodist Church will concentrate its prayers, resources, imagination and commitments on this priority:

To proclaim and affirm its conviction of God’s love in Christ, for us and for all the world; and renew confidence in God’s presence and action in the world and in the Church

As ways towards realising this priority, the Methodist church will give particular attention to the following:

Underpinning everything we do with God centred worship and prayer

Supporting community development and action for justice, especially among the most deprived and poor- in Britain and worldwide

Developing confidence in evangelism and in the capacity to speak of God and faith in ways that make sense to all involved

Encouraging fresh ways of being church

Nurturing a culture in the church which is people-centred and flexible
Mission in Britain

The following activities come under the umbrella of Mission in Britain:

- Evangelism training and resources
- Planting new congregations
- Prison and industrial chaplaincy
- Chaplaincy in further and higher education institutions
- Media relations
- Mission in rural areas
- Urban mission
- Cliff College
- Relations with people of other faiths
- Mission Alongside the Poor
- Mission to local churches and circuits
- Public issues
- Support for children’s and youth work
- Political and parliamentary affairs

Cover image: Revd Don Messer, Professor of Practical theology, Iliff School of Theology, United Methodist Church USA, visiting England to launch his new book ‘Breaking the Conspiracy of Silence – Christian Churches and the Global AIDS Crisis.’
Circuit Minister for Youth and Young Adults-
Nexus Project
Circuit 19/01: Manchester

Manchester City Centre is home to 15,000 residents and more than 150,000 people per day visit the centre for work and leisure. Not all, but a large majority of these people form the Church’s ‘missing generation’, those in their 20s and 30s.

The Methodist Church has had a presence in the city centre for many years, and has faithfully served the city centre in a variety of ways. But as Manchester has developed into a dynamic European Centre, how is the Church rising to the challenge of a post-modern generation?

As a bold and innovative response on behalf of the Manchester Circuit, the Rev Cris Acher has been appointed Circuit Minister for youth and young adults.

His appointment began in September 2004, part funded by Home Missions. The focal point of his brief is to challenge young adults to consider faith, spirituality and personal worship in a relevant way. After exploring the city culture and creating a partnership with Sanctus1 (an Anglican fresh expression of Church), the Nexus concept was born. Nexus is an active urban realisation of the gospel message, accessible to a modern generation through meaningful media.

Nexus, with an opening date of June 2005, will fill the space of the basement at Central Hall. It offers a place of encounters, a space in which to encounter creativity in the arts, one another in community, and God in church.

During the day Nexus will host community arts groups, offering music workshops, at the weekends it becomes a night café. Working closely with the City Centre Management, it will provide an alternative place to be staying open well past the 2am closing time of the local clubs. By also providing a taxi service it is envisaged that the night café will help cut down on street crime, and provide a
place of safety for those who feel vulnerable. From the music workshops and the night café people are invited to explore a fresh expression of Church.

A community is already beginning to gather, spanning different backgrounds and experiences. No hymns, no pews, no preaching, instead they share their stories, engage with Christian spirituality and worship through contemporary music, meditation and silence. A regular film night will be another place of contact where people will be invited to share in discussion about the issues raised in the film. In doing this Nexus will provide space for alternative worship, recognising that God is within all the fibres of our lives and thereby using popular music, films and art to aid in worship.

Working with other churches in the city enables more opportunities for mission. Together they work on providing DJ’s and visuals to create an atmosphere in a club where Christians can invite their friends. Around the club people are sharing their stories of faith in a modern environment that they relate to and feel comfortable with.

In October, the city centre churches will share a stall at the annual psychic fair, nestled amongst new age spiritualities, offering Christian prayer. Those who are interested will be invited to form a group accessing spirituality. Nexus provides an accessible venue, where people with no church experience find it non-threatening. The hope is that in everything Nexus does the bridge between the church and modern culture will be provided.

www.nexusonline.org.uk (launching soon).
Touchstone’s urban interfaith work was featured in last year’s home mission booklet. Since that time, the staff and volunteers working at Touchstone have continued to develop their projects and networks across the city through a shared commitment to Jesus and his call into action.

A major new development this year was the organisation of a group of Christian and Muslim women in the immediate neighbourhood of the Touchstone Centre. The centre is located in an area with a large amount of cultural diversity. The group was formed in response to the command “love your neighbour” and in doing so the women were given the opportunity to enjoy one another’s religious and cultural values both through learning from one another and in celebration of festivals.

This kind of close interaction with members of different faiths or cultures is vital in modern society in order to reduce prejudice and fear within our communities. Marian Sharp, Touchstone’s Community Chaplain (also the University and College chaplain) serves on the Religious Diversity group with other faith advisors. She states:

“This work has gathered momentum this year - oiled with the activity of the Holy Spirit. We have seen a 120% increase in students connected with Touchstone this year, including a Methodist student from India. Students share simple hospitality each Wednesday and they have shared with me in leading worship.”

However it is not only a cultural network that Touchstone is developing. It is also recognised that in achieving the full potential of the programme, ecumenical links need to be maintained across denominations in the local area and beyond.

It is in its approach to fellowship and worship that Touchstone is most unique. It is not a conventional church building or congregation. It explores new ways of being church.
“This year as chaplain I have experienced the flexibility that Touchstone offers and God given opportunities have been identified. I am convinced that Touchstone, with its distinctive model of church, its discipline of prayer and theological reflection, its regular evaluation of collaborative ministry, and working in partnership with others in a transparent and hospitable way, has a vital contribution to make to urban mission in Bradford and beyond.”

Marian Sharp (Touchstone Community Chaplain)

“Until a few weeks ago, Touchstone was a Methodist Centre in Bradford about which I’d heard and read. Now it has become a place where I experience a sense of belonging and value as one of its newest volunteers.

The commitment and faithfulness of its staff is inspirational, making Touchstone all that it is – a haven of peace, a house of prayer, a Resource Centre, a meeting place and so much more.”

Sr Mary Horan (Sister of Mercy)

Touchstone is featured in the new Creative Arts DVD ‘Beyond the Wood and Stone’. This exciting resource will be available from July onwards. To order your copy contact Methodist Publishing House on 01733 384180 or visit their website at www.mph.org.uk
Lozells Methodist Church
Circuit 05/05: Birmingham (Asbury)

Lozells Methodist church is located at the heart of one of the most disadvantaged areas of the city of Birmingham. The worshipping community is at the centre of the Church’s life and this community is striving to create an environment which will accommodate the wide variety of members the local area provides.

However, what is most noticeably different about this Church is its deep roots within the local community outside of regular Sunday worship. As Methodists it is our calling to move outside the boundaries of the church walls and support “community development and action for justice”. In this case Lozells has embraced its urban, multi-ethnic location and now works under the slogan ‘A church in the community for the community’.

For the youth, the Gerrard Street After School Club provides after school activities and supplementary school learning opportunities in a Christian context for children from 4 to 11 years. This in turn has spawned activities like the annual Summer Activity Holiday. The church also maintains a Youth Club, a football team and sports training.

The Cross Cultural Web Project aims to bring young people from different cultural backgrounds together, especially African Caribbean and Asian youth, to learn about their separate and joint heritages. Support is offered to individuals through providing study resources and help with job and college applications.

In addition to these youth projects a social club and a women’s club reach out to those members of the community who seek companionship.

The Church Premises are also home to a number of independent community ventures with their roots in the Lozells community but their reach touching all parts of the City.
Black Educational Arts Training [BEAT]
BEAT is a leading provider of education through dance to the black community.

Electronic and Audio Research Training House [EARTH]
EARTH has over 15 years track record in providing the music-media industry with qualified and confident audio/media engineers.

SISTER TREE
Their aim is to develop artistic skills, promote self-awareness and self esteem via the Arts

Handsworth and Lozells Electronic Learning Publishing House Ltd. [HELP]
HELP is an independent community enterprise business developing interactive learning materials particularly for use by young black children.

BANGLADESHI YOUTH FORUM
Voice of the new generation
The Bangladeshi Youth Forum has been based in the Lozells premises since 1997 offering to Bangladeshi young people an advice centre that values and nurtures their heritage in the multi cultural context that is Birmingham and the United Kingdom.

This grant is for the support of key personnel in the circuit. It is only through the dedicated work of the staff and volunteers at Lozells that these projects can take place. Through these kinds of projects we find the means to show the love of God to those around us and nurture a ‘flexible” and “people centred’ church.
Whiteway Southdown Community Support Project
Circuit 07/13: Bath

This is a programme of committed community support in an area of Bath recognised by National Government as being of particular deprivation and social need. The Southdown & Whiteway estates are amongst the worst 10% in the UK in terms of social deprivation, family breakdown, drug dependency and physical abuse. The Methodist Church priorities state that the Church exists to “Be a good neighbour to people in need” and encourages fresh ways of being church. This is reflected in the mission statement of the project – “To seek to offer support, help, friendship and the love of Christ to those who need it most.”

The success of this project is a result of the fact that it looked at what the local community was in greatest need of and then sought ways of meeting that need. The area has many people on low incomes in a range of circumstances including large families, single parents and the elderly. The range of activities on offer at the centre reflects this community. By looking at ways to help on a practical level it has at the same time found ways of meeting the local community’s spiritual needs. For example, at the Care & Friendship lunch, there is a short act of community worship once a month and every week there is a quiet room set aside. Deacon Joan Nicholson has recently completed her first year in Bath as project manager. She describes how struck she was by the “happy and cooperative spirit” that she encountered at the weekly lunches and the “spirit of care for others” that was evident in times of both celebration and sadness.

The centre’s Nearly New Shop aims to provide good quality, nearly new clothes and household goods at a reasonable cost. As a result of a link with the Genesis Furniture Project, it has recently been able to offer nursery items. The opening times of the shop are designed to coincide with other activities, such

Customers in the ‘Nearly New’ Shop
as the toddler group, baby clinic and Care & Friendship lunches. The shop also enables the project to help other groups within the community, including local schools and the Southside Youth Centre and Family Centre.

The Care and Friendship Lunch and Wednesday Fellowship both provide older members of the community with an opportunity to meet new people. One regular at the Wednesday Fellowship says, “it was an answer to a deep longing. It is such a happy, friendly time, with interesting speakers and lively cross-talk. I owe so much to the kind friends, they a very special blessing to us all.”

For families with young children the centre offers a weekly Toddler Group, catering for around 30 families each week. There are strong links between the group and the local Baby Clinic that also meets at the centre as well as local health visitors. The deacon also makes regular visits to the First Steps Nursery which some of the children go on to attend, creating a degree of continuity and friendship.

A key aspect of this project is that it looks to build links and relationships with other organisations and individuals working in the area. The Southside Inter-Agency Group seeks to encourage mutual support and to work together the good of the community as a whole. It enables groups to share experiences and resources and can act as one voice when needed. “That was a good, lively, interesting meeting, with good networking going on” was the reflection of one group member following a meeting.

The grants allocated to this project currently help fund a full-time Deacon and part-time Lay Worker. This enables the effective co-ordination of activities at the centre as well as a strong emphasis to be placed upon the pastoral needs of both groups and individuals.
Project Manager-
Beginagen Community Project
Circuit 05/06: Birmingham (West) and Oldbury

“We seek to serve the needs of local people in a way that embodies Christian faith.”

This is a Methodist Community Project based in two shops on Cape Hill. Beginagen, a charitable project, began in 1985 to meet the particular needs of the community. Presently, this is done through a charity shop providing clothing, books and household items, a drop-in facility for excluded youths and the unemployed, an after school junior youth club and a senior youth club. Our activities target those most disadvantaged in the community. This includes refugees, asylum seekers, unemployed and single parents, and families on low incomes.

Religious Education Resources Project
Circuit 05/06: Birmingham (West) and Oldbury

This project initiated by Revd Keith Underhill was created in order to provide high quality advice, resources and training for school staff, pupils and governors in the field of religious education in local schools of the London borough of Redbridge.

By working with both the LEA and individual schools, ‘Religious Education Resources’ have been developing new ways of working and teaching R.E in Primary and Secondary education. Church visits for students have proved popular as part of the locally agreed syllabus and among older students lessons covering important subjects such as “Love, marriage, sex, divorce and relationships” have been under discussion.

This project has provided extremely effective in creating partnerships with schools throughout the area as well as working with other organisations such as Beavers and Brownies and creating informal contacts with families.
The Saltley Neighbourhood Pension Centre was established over 23 years ago with the intention of providing the elderly or housebound with the facilities to get out of their homes and into the company of others. This service has proved invaluable to many. One member described her life as one of “loneliness and worry” until she joined the Pensioners Club which “was a revelation”. The centre like many others across the country encourages a large number of practical outings or activities that stimulate both the minds and bodies of the members. Unlike similar services, the members are involved in the running and directing of their centre.

Pottery, movement to music and gardening are some of the activities that Saltley’s members have been enjoying as well outings to places like Western Super Mare or the Severn Valley Railway.

Mission Alongside the Poor has provided the Saltley Neighbourhood Pension Centre with the funding to employ a Community Worker over the next five years, which will ensure development of the existing work and aims to achieve a greater integration among the local ethnic communities.
Mission Alongside the Poor-
Action Station Community Project
Circuit 20/21: South Shields

“Churches in the community working with the community” is the slogan under which Action Station operates. This facility was created by the churches of West Harton, springing from their desire to improve upon the quality of life for local residents. High levels of unemployment and financial hardship are the two main issues which Action Station currently addresses.

A team consisting of both volunteers and paid workers, which collaborates with other agencies, has produced education and training, counselling and advisory services, as well as support for health and social problems and the development of facilities in the local community. One resident described their situation as “desperate” due to a combination of debt and health problems. With support and financial guidance this individual said they had found hope that they “could never have achieved without the help of Action Station”.

This kind of initiative shows today’s Church to be vital as it reaches out in a new way to bring the presence of Christ to people in need.

This project features on the new Mission In Britain Poster

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New Mission in Britain Poster Available

This new double-sided poster features photographs and stories covering all aspects of the work of the Fund for Home Mission.

This resource is available free (plus P&P) from mph, 4 John Wesley Road, Werrington, Peterborough PE4 6ZP (Tel: 01733 325002, E-mail sales@mph.org.uk), quoting ref GA 324.
These are only a few of the projects supported in Britain. Articles are regularly included in the Methodist Recorder’s Breaking New Ground article, and in our quarterly newsletter, Mission Matters. If you would like to know more, or make a donation to the Fund for Home Mission, contact:

Mission Education,
Methodist Church House,
25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR.
Telephone: 020 7467 5116
E-mail: missioneducation@methodisrtchurch.org.uk

YOUR GENEROUS GIVING TO THE FUND FOR HOME MISSION FUNDS MUCH OF THIS WORK. THANK YOU