

Belonging Together Project

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Discussion and further direction of work clarified
Draft Resolution	n/a
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	n/a

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	Further update on Belonging Together Project
Main Points	The Background to the Final Project report of the Belonging Together Project. Recommendations from the Project Officer Response from the Partnership Group Including questions for discussion) Notes from the Connexional Team Research in leadership findings
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	MC 13/43
Consultations	Belonging Together Partnership Steering Group Senior Leadership Group

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	n/a
Faith and Order	n/a
Financial	n/a at this stage but future work will need to be allocated funding
Personnel	n/a
Legal	n/a
Wider Connexional	Importance of the achievements of the Project around the Connexion
External (e.g. ecumenical)	n/a
Risk	Work needs to be taken forward after 3 years of intensive focus

Belonging Together Project

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The April 2013 Council received an update on the 12 original aims of the Belonging Together (BT) project from the Project Officer and had discussion in small groups about the legacy of the Project from September 2013 onwards.
- 1.2 The Council's reflections, along with those of the Partnership Group who were scheduled to meet in August 2013 were to be incorporated into a final Project report to be brought to the Council in October 2013.
- 1.3 At the 2013 Conference the desire for the Council to engage with the outcomes of the Belonging Together report was reaffirmed through the adoption of Notice of Motion 202 which directed the Council *'to consider, in consultation with the appropriate bodies, the findings and recommendations of the 'Belonging Together' project and to report to the Conference of 2014 on how any recommendations may be implemented.'*

2.0 Final Project Report

- 2.1 The final project report from Belonging Together took the form of 'recommendations' written up against each of the 12 project aims by the Project Officer. These recommendations were then shared with the Partnership Steering Group at their final meeting in August of 2013. The purpose of the meeting in August was for the Partnership Group to comment upon the recommendations which could then be considered further elsewhere.
- 2.2 The Partnership Group and the Senior Leadership Group welcome the work that was undertaken by the Project Officer throughout the life of the Project and in drawing up a desired list of recommendations for discussion.
- 2.3 What is now presented to the Council is therefore a document which captures the following –
 - Part A – The BT Project Officer's recommendations at the close of the Project
 - Part B – A response to those recommendations from the non Connexional Team members of the Partnership Group
 - Part C – some notes from the Connexional Team perspective to aid Council conversations
 - Part D – The research referred to under Aim 2 for information to the Council

Part A – The BT Project Officer's recommendations

Specific aim	Led by	Final update	Recommendations
1 Develop policies that reflect a clearer understanding of the pathways by which ordained ministers join the Methodist Church	D&M in close cooperation with D&P, WCR and Queen's Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues in D&M are liaising with Governance and with Ministries Committee on the revisions to criteria • Positive feedback has been received from those 	1 Governance and Ministries Committee to receive the 'confidential' report, and take steps to implement the criteria 2 Consultation outcomes to be used to improve the

in Britain from partner Conferences, and improve their induction and training support		<p>ministers and circuits involved in the revised induction programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A consultation event was held in May 2013 and the outcomes captured will be used to inform policy development 	<p>experiences of ministers transferring in the future</p> <p>3 Improved induction programme be held in the Learning Network, and developed in line with Notice of Motion 209: One Mission Statement</p>
2 Research and map the experiences of people from under-represented backgrounds coming forward for leadership	Research in close collaboration with D&M, Birmingham and other districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus groups held at Methodist Conferences, and key Connexional events Listening and learning tools developed for EDI toolkit Findings collated for information and sharing on request and as appropriate 	<p>1 Listening and learning continues as part of the core Research function</p> <p>2 Applications to the new Director of SRI for grants for research contributing to ethnic inclusion be supported</p> <p>3 Analysis and reports be made available to SLG, committees and policy makers</p>
3 Improve support for culturally distinct congregations, fellowships, and the ministers serving them, and explore how we celebrate identity in the life of the Church	D&M in close cooperation with districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on the major cultural groups collated; handover notes to be produced Information on the fellowship groups and language congregations has been mapped electronically A 'confidential' report is being produced for Ministries Committee 	<p>1 The 'confidential' report be shared with co-chairs of the project ahead of the presentation to Methodist Council</p> <p>2 Establish a Connexional forum / resource group to advise on key issues and shape policy to develop opportunities for culturally distinct congregations / groups</p>
4 Put in place a model of sustainability for events and networks which support culturally distinct congregations and ministers from under-represented backgrounds	E&D supported by those responsible for racial justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A fringe event and 'Ubuntu' held in 2013 sponsored by Belonging Together Race Stakeholder Forum functioning and established with measurable contributions to the E&D Resource Group and Belonging Together project Constitution and remit of Belonging Together Ministers Group reviewed 	<p>1 Fringe event/Ubuntu be used as a model or template for Connexional, district and local events to recognise and celebrate ethnic inclusion, and those who contribute to the journey</p> <p>2 Continue to build confidence of ministers by providing sustainable support for meetings and activities</p> <p>3 Develop a permanent structure for ethnic diversity issues as part of the equality, diversity and</p>

			inclusion (EDI) programme
5 Facilitate and support engagement with cultural diversity through ministerial training programmes through learning resources for Connexional churches	D&M in collaboration with learning institutions and regional training networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal and informal training opportunities completed as invited, and in a range of settings with positive feedback Opportunities being explored to embed this aim the activities of the Learning Network 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Resources (books, presentations, notes etc) be made available or recommended to the Connexion Learning Network include the good practice and learning in the training and resources offered and made available to the Connexion
6 Increase the diversity of people coming forward for lay and ordained ministry, and improve support offered during candidating, preparing and stationing	D&M, D&P with support from Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Membership of committees reviewed and revised, and significant changes made to the profile Recruitment messages and tools improved using new technologies and inclusive language Strategy paper not produced, but the preparation and training of committee members enhanced for the interviewing process 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Keep the profile of committee members under review to better reflect the diversity of the Church Review the recruitment strategy and processes to ensure that key opportunities are better promoted and provided, particularly to encourage participation in earlier stages of training Continue to enhance the preparation and training for committee members
7 Develop strategies to spread more widely the spiritual, theological and practical understandings discovered or developed in London, Birmingham and other Districts	ES&D in close cooperation with districts and the Communications, D&M and Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications messages and tools reviewed and advice sought on development of new tools Ecumenical links maintained and shared 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Communications mechanisms be monitored and reviewed for reach, effectiveness and impact Ecumenical relationships be maintained and opportunities for joint initiatives with a range of other churches be explored/budgeted for
8 Build capacity for children and young people to engage with cultural diversity	D&M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efforts made to engage all youth in the participation strategy saw increased numbers at key annual events, and the first female African/Caribbean Youth President appointed for 2013/14 E&D is now part of the key training for those on the 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sustain efforts to maintain an encourage participation of young people of all backgrounds in children/youth events across the Connexion Continue to engage with those leading ABMY and give clear leadership for long term integration in

		<p>ONE programme, and ad hoc training offered to those working with children and youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short term support for long term integration of the Association of Black Methodist Youth (ABMY) is ongoing 	<p>the core children/youth programme</p> <p>3 Make and maintain connections with young people in fellowship groups or language congregations, and share learning with those working with / among culturally distinct groups</p>
<p>9</p> <p>Promote the flexibility of CPD and demonstrate how CPD embodies an ethos of inclusion and participation within the Methodist Church in Britain</p>	<p>E&D supported by OoSC, Faith and Order, Law and Polity and Communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework agreed for developing tools accessing and understanding CPD • Support given to BTMG and Race Stakeholder Forum to improve access to CPD, Methodist Conference/ Council papers and connected processes • Principles adopted by Methodist Conference 2012 as a framework for the theological statement 	<p>1 Governance Support to lead on overseeing the development of CPD access tools</p> <p>2 Support key groups to encourage access and understanding of governance processes</p> <p>3 Work closely with Faith and Order to complete the theological statement by 2015</p>
<p>10</p> <p>Map the current diversity of the Church</p>	<p>Research in collaboration with D&M and E&D</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundworks commissioned to develop the infrastructure to map statistical data on ethnic diversity online • New staff recruited with expertise to develop and implement mapping tool • Statistics for Mission data collection forms improved to capture relevant data 	<p>1 Maximise online facilities to tell the story of the ethnic diversity across the Connexion</p> <p>2 Retain expertise (staff) to record, and verify date, and to promote the tools at district and circuit levels</p> <p>3 Continue to review the way that data is collated and made available</p>
<p>11</p> <p>Research and map the diversity of those coming forward for ministries</p>	<p>Research in close collaboration with E&D, D&P and D&M</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised form piloted for collating diversity data of those coming forward for ministry • A report has not yet been produced or presented 	<p>1 Mapping the diversity of those coming forward for ministries be a key responsibility of the new Director of SRI role in the Learning Network, working in collaboration within the Connexional Team / D&P</p>
<p>12</p> <p>Evaluate the project and disseminate lessons learnt</p>	<p>Projects Cluster</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection and reflective practice was encouraged and used throughout the project to embed learning • Update reports and presentations were 	<p>1 The update provided for the Steering Group be made available to the Steering Group and SLG as a record of the learning and outcomes of the</p>

		<p>provided to the Steering Group and 'big issues' discussed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration was both encouraged and modeled by project / lead staff throughout the process • A range of articles were published internally and externally 	<p>project</p> <p>2 Collaboration be encouraged to embed the legacy of the project, both in activities and resources</p> <p>3 Resources produced for and by the project be made available for wider use</p>
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Key to acronyms:

D&P – Development and Personnel

D&M – Discipleship and Ministries

E&D – Equalities and Diversity

ES&D – Evangelism, Spirituality and Discipleship

F&O – Faith and Order

GS – Governance Support

L&P – Law and Polity

SRI – Scholarship Research and Innovation

WCR – World Church Relationships

Part B - – A response to those recommendations from the non Connexional Team members of the Partnership Group

Background:

At the time of the final meeting of the Belonging Together (BT) partnership on 21 August 2013 the recommendations attached to the Final Report were tabled for brief discussion, but the draft of the Report itself was not available. We understand that, in the course of its production individual members of the connexional team with particular responsibilities for aspects of work relating to the project were consulted, but other members of the partnership had no opportunity for direct involvement.

This document therefore represents a gathering together of some reflections from those members of the partnership who are not connexional team members¹ and is offered to the Methodist Council alongside the Final Report as consideration is given as to how the work should move forward towards the 2014 Conference.

1. The group fully endorses the final report and its recommendations in the terms presented and is grateful to the BT officers for the commitment, colleagueship and energy demonstrated throughout the project. The honouring of that work will now depend on the adequacy of the implementation and monitoring processes.

¹ The Revds Bill Anderson, Stuart Jordan & Roger Walton (Chairs of Birmingham, London & West Yorkshire); Albert Gayle (Belonging Together Ministers); Sylvester Deigh (Faith & Order rep) and Femi Cole-Njie (Race Stakeholder Forum).

2. Understandably, the final report is shaped in terms of the 12 original aims of the project and is a proper exercise in accountability by and for members of the connexional team. As such it cannot capture the full significance of the project's scope, the range of issues highlighted beyond those 12 aims or the expectations created that this significant initiative might help change the ethos of the wider connexion in relation to issues of racial and cultural inclusion.
3. The Report is also diminished in that it lacks the input from one strand of the project which appears to be being reported separately to the Ministries' Committee in the form of a confidential document about which the steering group has no knowledge.
4. As part of its work the project commissioned a piece of research relating to the experience of those from ethnic and cultural minorities who had offered for, or are already exercising, leadership in the life of the church. We believe these testimonies should be read alongside the report to illustrate the range of pain and struggle that still exists in the life of our church. Unless this is included in any analysis solutions are likely to lack credibility and effectiveness.
5. We wholeheartedly endorse the statement that 'Belonging Together is not an additional task but an ethos that needs to be evident in every activity and on every agenda of the church' – alongside the key question as to how that is to be achieved. We believe this is now the core challenge as the Council determines how to build on the work done and respond to Notice of Motion 202.
6. In particular we offer a number of questions which might help shape a more proactive strategy as the work moves forward:
 - a. How can the opportunities highlighted by the BT project be celebrated and the concerns addressed across the connexion, 'from grass-roots to governance' ?
 - b. Are there specific mechanisms - training modules ? standing items on agendas ? effective monitoring procedures ? - that can and might need to be employed ?
 - c. How do we enable members of the Methodist Church to be confident in talking about issues of inclusion, naming the blockages that inhibit and addressing instances of local injustice? (To this end we commend the production of a new ED&I tool-kit for the church and trust that sufficient energy, resource and imagination will be invested in advocating this as a resource for all).
 - d. How and where can the central issues of the Belonging Together project be held in the life of the Church to ensure that the learning is disseminated, the legacy embedded and the momentum sustained ?

Part C – Notes from the Connexional Team

1. The Senior Leadership Group had a brief discussion about the Project Officer's recommendations on 23rd September 2013 and would wish to make the following points to the Council for information –
2. The SLG was not consulted on the recommendations of the Project as it was felt these needed to come fresh to the Council from the Partnership Group for further discussion before any action was taken

3. The 'confidential' report mentioned in the recommendations is not a confidential report; it is simply a report that will be made to the Ministries Committee from a small task group on particular aspects of process. Once the Ministries Committee has seen the report it will be reporting back to Council on this subject.
4. Any recommendations around staffing, groups, or future work is not currently in the workplan or budget and would need to be weighed up alongside other demands from the Conference.
5. The SLG believes that the questions posed by the Partnership Group are the key questions in the ongoing work and follow on from similar questions asked of the Council in April. In answering some of these the Council can give a steer to what it would like brought back to it at its next meeting to enable a report to Conference in 2014.

Part D – The research referred to under Aim 2 for information to the Council

Research and map the experiences of people from under-represented backgrounds coming forward for leadership

1. This summary report is the result of research conducted for Aim 2 of Belonging Together; it is intended to highlight the issues raised by respondents and to inform future work. Although this marks an important point in the research, it should not be seen as its conclusion. The research will play a role in ongoing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work including the 'Toolkit', and this report will be available to the Senior Leadership Group. It is envisaged that the results of the research will be made widely available, in order that the issues raised can be engaged with by the whole Church.
2. A range of experiences were recorded and analysed through interviews, focus groups and participant observation. A total of 32 interviews and 19 focus groups were conducted. Alongside these data, written submissions and the output of conferences and workshops were analysed. This analysis was put into historical and social context through the use of documentary sources.
3. Potential respondents were identified and contacted with the help of the Belonging Together partner districts, the Belonging Together Ministers' Group and others working in this area. Due to the sensitive subject matter individuals and groups were invited to respond in the manner with which they were most comfortable, and care was taken that no one feel pressured into taking part. Throughout the process those involved were allowed to raise the issues they felt were important - there was no pre-conceived list of factors discussed. The factors addressed below are, therefore, those identified by respondents.
4. **Importance of Leadership**
 - 4.1 **Decision Making:** Without access to leadership, individuals will have no input into decisions which directly affect them. This is amplified where a group is excluded, and with minority groups excluded from decision making it is very difficult to move towards integration and belonging.
 - 4.2 **Discipleship:** The research has highlighted the importance of leadership in spiritual growth. Growing and being nurtured in leadership are important factors in discipleship and restricting access to leadership is, therefore, inhibiting an individual's discipleship.

- 4.3 Pastoral Care: Where a person comes from a group which is under-represented in the leadership of their church this can adversely affect the pastoral care they receive.

5. Nature of Leadership

- 5.1 Importance of role: Named leadership positions are important within the Church, but power and influence can be exercised outside this. Even where individuals are afforded specific roles, it is possible for them to be excluded from meaningful leadership.
- 5.2 Separation of Leadership: Some respondents pointed to a separation of types of leadership: administrative/organisational and spiritual. In this way individuals can be in leadership positions with little or no say in decision making.
- 5.3 Numbers in leadership: For the reasons outlined above, viewing diversity of leadership purely in numerical terms can, in some instances, obscure greater underlying problems.

6. Culture of the Church

- 6.1 Explicit Discrimination: It was felt that explicit discrimination still exists with the Church. The research has highlighted examples of individuals feeling excluded from leadership or prevented from undertaking specific roles or tasks based on their ethnicity. Assumptions are made about the skills and abilities of individuals based on race, and instances were found of existing leaders refusing to work with people different from themselves. Where those in a position to make decisions regarding potential leaders are those who have behaved in a racist way, this will inhibit people from under-represented backgrounds coming forward for leadership.
- 6.2 Resistance to change: Respondents argued that there is a high degree of attachment to the inherited, culturally specific understandings of Church, and that any change is often strongly resisted. This can serve to exclude groups who do not connect with British church tradition, and can give the impression of prioritising structure and tradition over inclusiveness and welcome.
- 6.3 Assimilation and Integration: Where this resistance to change is experienced, respondents reported being expected to assimilate into the church rather than a process of integration taking place. This results in members of under-represented groups feeling like outsiders in a church which 'belongs' to an established group. Respondents pointed to an expectation of losing their identity and assuming the existing one of 'British Methodists', rather than forming a new common identity.
- 6.4 Assumed familiarity with church: There was often found to be an assumption that those within the Church will already be familiar with its language and culture. This is increasingly untrue, and a lack of explanation will prevent people from feeling part of the Church and exclude people from under-represented groups.
- 6.5 Importance of acceptance and welcome: Although equality goes far beyond acceptance, people will not come forward for leadership in a church to which they do not feel they belong. Belonging is a crucial first step in making leadership positions available to all.
- 6.6 Lack of knowledge: White British Church members tend to lack knowledge regarding the cultures of those entering the Church from overseas. Respondents reported anxiety regarding

asking questions, but this was actually found to help build relationships and further understanding.

- 6.7 Ignorance: A lack of awareness of the difficulties which exist was identified as an important factor in stopping problems being addressed. Problems can also be further obscured by efforts to increase participation without addressing underlying causes, with the suggestion that problems have been solved.

7.0 **Leadership Structures**

- 7.1 In-group bias: Church leadership is seen to rely on small, insular groups which it can be difficult for outsiders to break in to. Where new leaders are needed, those most familiar with the group are brought in. This was identified within churches, but also throughout the connexion. In this way, without conscious or deliberate discrimination, groups which are under-represented continue to be excluded from leadership.
- 7.2 Length of time in role: Respondents reported instances of individuals remaining in leadership positions for decades and indeed some cases of individuals remaining in leadership roles in order to retain control and status. This serves to limit the leadership opportunities available to others and heightens problems concerning the in-group bias.
- 7.3 Preconceptions of leadership: Where churches base leadership structures on preconceived, culturally specific notions of leadership, this is seen to inhibit people from under-represented groups coming forward for leadership. This approach to leadership does not allow for an individual's gifts and talents to be identified and used, and this will be particularly problematic for those who have not grown and developed within the British Church.
- 7.4 Organisation: Timings of meetings, the scheduling of learning and development opportunities and the way in which training is delivered can all favour groups which are currently represented. Respondents suggested that these factors favour those who are retired or have established work patterns; who have high levels of literacy and who communicate well in English.
- 7.5 Lack of knowledge: Outside the small existing leadership communities, there is little understanding of the structures of the Church or of leadership opportunities beyond the local church. This effectively limits access to positions to those already in leadership, and further reinforces the in-group bias.
- 7.6 Co-operation: Positive change within a church is important for its members, but without cooperation between churches there will still be factors inhibiting participation. Where a leadership role requires interaction beyond the church, fear of the reaction of others was identified as an inhibiting factor.

8.0 **Identifying and Nurturing New Leaders**

- 8.1 Advertising: Although some suggested advertising leadership roles as the best way to reach everybody, it was widely acknowledged to be ineffective in encouraging people from under-represented backgrounds to come forward. With the influence of factors outlined above, and the reticence of those who have been met with repeated refusals and hostility in the past, advertising leadership roles was seen to perpetuate an in-group bias.

- 8.2 Approaching: Argued to be more effective in encouraging people from under-represented backgrounds was making a personal approach. With personal knowledge and affirmation, someone who is reluctant or who had not considered that leadership positions were aimed at them can be nurtured into leadership. Care must be taken, however, and if those in leadership do not have relationships with, and knowledge of, all members of the church community this will perpetuate in-group bias.
- 8.3 Job descriptions: Having something which details the role and responsibilities of specific leadership positions can be important in encouraging those from under-represented groups to come forward for leadership. A lack of understanding of leadership roles, particularly those outside the local church, inhibits individuals from coming forward. Care must be taken, however, that these reach all members.
- 8.4 Representative roles: Some success has been achieved by making people leaders based on their belonging to specific groups within the congregation, but it is important that this doesn't simply obscure the problem. These roles can become tokenistic, creating difficulties for the individual and providing no real benefit to wider groups.
- 8.5 Support: The support given to those entering leadership is crucial. Opportunities given without support can be counter-productive and, indeed, individuals can be set up to fail. Without support in place, where difficulties are encountered individuals will be discouraged from continuing in leadership, and this can further discourage others from coming forward.

9. Ordained Leadership

- 9.1 The role of the minister: The minister was found to play a very important role in challenging attitudes and instituting change. Alongside this, the minister was seen to be crucial in creating and sustaining dialogue and mediating disputes. For this reason, and due to the important role the minister can play in approaching new leaders, it is important the minister develops relationships with all members and groups within the church community.
- 9.2 Support: The role envisaged for, and expected of, a minister requires great strength and expertise, as well as specific skills. For this reason appropriate training, as well as support at circuit and district level, is critical in allowing ministers to fulfil this function. For a number of ministers who took part in the research this support was found to be lacking.
- 9.3 Expectations of the minister: Respondents acknowledged that different cultural groups have different expectations of their church leaders and interact with them in different ways. Problems can be created where ministers and groups lack a common understanding and dialogue is lacking between parties.

10.0 Education

- 10.1 Racism is a denial of the Gospel: Although the position of the Methodist Church in relation to racism is stated unequivocally, discrimination continues within churches. The issue must be tackled head on, and the message that racism is a denial of the Gospel must be preached and taught.
- 10.2 Churches: The unconscious factors and actions which discriminate (identified in this research) need to be highlighted, as often there is perceived to be no problem. This will be an important first step in addressing and tackling the damaging effects of racism.

10.3 Connexionally: Respondents clearly highlighted the benefits to the church of diversity, but there is seen to be a lack of understanding of this across the connexion. Education as to these benefits, alongside how to move towards diversity, will help those across the connexion to understand the importance of equality.

10.4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit: This research has underlined the role the EDI toolkit can play, and the importance of educational tools being used throughout all the structures of the Church.

11.0 **Ministerial Training and Support**

11.1 Importance: The role ministers are expected to play is a difficult one, and one which they are not currently seen to be prepared for.

11.2 Different theologies and world views: Current training is seen to focus too narrowly on dominant, British theology. Greater exposure to, and training of, other theologies and ecclesiologies would help ministers to relate to minority groups and build relationships.

11.3 Moderating dialogue: There is an important role for ministers in bringing groups into dialogue and helping to moderate and diffuse disputes. This role requires specialist skills, and training in these skills would help ministers to play this role successfully.

11.4 Support: For the minister to fulfil these functions successfully, support from colleagues in circuits and districts is important. It is important that superintendents and district chairs are aware of the issues being dealt with and are properly trained to support ministers.

12. **Approaches to leadership**

12.1 Using gifts: The current model of leadership within the local church was found to exclude those with gifts which do not equip them for specific pre-existing roles. As a result, many felt unappreciated by their church, and that they were not able to use their gifts.

12.2 Creativity: In common with recent discipleship research, a creative and inclusive approach to leadership was found to encourage diverse participation and enable discipleship.

12.3 CPD: Although respondents suggested that CPD has a reputation as a restrictive and unhelpful document, it was actually found to be a useful tool in implementing change and moving power from the hands of the few.

13.0 **Relationships**

13.1 Importance: The building of relationships underpins much that is outlined above. For individuals to be truly affirmed and encouraged a relationship must exist, and relationships between groups create belonging and allow integration. Some respondents, however, reported feeling alienated and dehumanised.

13.2 Building Relationships: Relationship building is based in communication, and arenas and fora need to be provided for groups and individuals to come together in conversation. This responsibility generally falls on the minister. There is often a nervousness to ask questions of background and experiences, but this can be a powerful tool in building relationships.

13.3 Power Dynamics: Although bringing groups together is crucial, it is important to be aware of the power dynamics at work. Bringing an under-represented group into long established structures and culture is not helpful - establishing neutral spaces which both groups must 'move' to is a powerful tool in relationship building.

13.4 Listening: Strong relationships allow leadership groups to undertake action 'with' under-represented groups rather than 'for' them – listening allows a greater degree of co-operation, ownership and belonging.

14.0 **Mentoring**

14.1 Modelling: Respondents pointed to the important role which can be played by seeing someone like themselves in a leadership position. By establishing a mentoring system, this can be achieved even in areas where there is currently little diversity in leadership.

14.2 Information: Where assumptions are made regarding pre-existing knowledge of the Church, it can be very difficult for those entering leadership who are not cradle members of the British Methodist Church. Having an individual of whom questions can be asked can be of great benefit to those coming forward.

15.0 **Action across the connexion**

15.1 Importance: Although respondents focussed on issues within the local church, there is an awareness of what goes on at national level. It is important that action across the connexion reflects the commitment to diversity and racial justice.

15.2 Connexional leadership: Respondents pointed to the important role which can be played by seeing diversity within the leadership of the national church and members of under-represented groups in national positions. Caution was urged, however, that these individuals should not become figureheads, and an argument that the problem had been solved.

15.3 Amnesia: Throughout the research, frustration was expressed by how little progress had been made in this area. Some respondents pointed to past work done by the Church in the area of racial justice and suggested that there was a sense of 'amnesia' where past findings and recommendations were not implemented.

16.0 **Conclusion**

The Council is therefore asked to focus on the questions raised by the Partnership Group with a view to directing what it wishes to come back to it in January to aid the reporting to the Conference in 2014.