

Action for Hope – A Path to Net Zero Carbon Emissions for the Methodist Church

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Action Required	For decision.
Resolutions	84/1. The Council receives the report. 84/2. The Council approves the approach to developing a Methodist Faith Plan, as outlined in the body of the report.
Methodist Council objective that this paper supports	God's Church in God's world/ Striving for Justice and Peace

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To establish a task group and specific aims relating to MCB's commitment to becoming a net-zero carbon emission organisation.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and background • An outline of "Faith Plans" • Proposed beginnings of a Methodist Faith Plan • Establishing a task group to continue developing a Methodist Faith Plan
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<i>Hope in God's Future</i> Memorial M6 to the 2020 Conference MC/21/8 Memorial M6 (2020) Global Climate Emergency Methodist Council, part 1 report to the 2021 Conference
Consultations	The Senior Managers' Group The Director of Property Support The Chair of the Central Finance Board Audit Committee

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	None
Faith and Order	Future work (timeline tbc) on reviewing and updating <i>Hope in God's Future</i>
Financial	In the short term the development of a plan is being covered from existing resources. However, this limits the pace at which the project can progress and there is likely to be considerable pressure to move more quickly. Work is underway to explore this.
Personnel	None
Legal including impact on other jurisdictions	None
Wider connexional	Extra questions incorporated into the annual returns.
External (eg ecumenical)	Conversations are underway with ecumenical partners, especially as Local Ecumenical Partnerships will be affected.

"Hope is thus a reason for bold action in the world in accordance with God's will for creation, not an excuse for inaction" – Hope in God's Future

Introduction

1. The 2020 Conference received Memorial M6 “Global Climate Emergency” and referred it to the Council. The 2021 Conference adopted as its reply to the memorial, the response recommended by the Council. See appendix 1 for a copy of the memorial and adopted response.
2. Notably, the response stated that “a ‘one size fits all’ plan would not be beneficial” and that a range of partnerships should instead be cultivated to help the Methodist Church meet the ambitious target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030.
3. One of these partnerships is with Faith Invest, who run the Faith Plans programme (formerly “Faith Long-term Plans”).

Faith Plans

4. The Faith Plans programme is a global interfaith initiative run by FaithInvest and the World Wildlife Fund. It works to help faiths – as the biggest organised sector of civil society in the world – to use their assets, investments and influence to drive practical action to benefit people and planet.
5. It involves each religious group developing a long-term action plan to determine how they will manage their assets and resources over the next seven to ten years. As well as providing moral leadership through example, the Faith Plans will focus attention on the importance of profound and urgent action to address the climate and ecological crisis ahead of COP26 and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
6. The Faith Plans cover seven areas:
 - (i) Faith-consistent use of assets – including their investments, purchasing power, buildings and land
 - (ii) Education and young people – in both formal and informal settings
 - (iii) Wisdom – including theology, liturgies and prayer
 - (iv) Lifestyles – including traditions of simple living, pilgrimage
 - (v) Media and outreach – including influence, advocacy and guides
 - (vi) Partnerships, eco-twinning and creating faith environment departments
 - (vii) Celebration – including festivals and traditions
7. It is advised that groups initially focus on between one and three of these areas, in order to provide impetus for change early in the process. The decision to focus on some areas does not prevent important progress being undertaken and celebrated in other areas.

The beginnings of a Methodist Faith Plan

8. The Methodist Church in Britain (MCB) needs to create a written Faith Plan (suitable for sharing with the general public) by May 2022.
9. It is proposed that MCB should focus on “Faith-consistent use of assets”, “Wisdom” and “Lifestyles” for the foreseeable future. These areas are proposed for the following reasons.
 - (i) Faith-consistent use of assets – a focus on this area will contribute the most toward MCB’s aim of net zero carbon emissions by 2030. It also aligns with the proposed changes to property management outlined in the Conference’s response to memorial M6 (2020).
 - (ii) Wisdom – the Conference’s response to memorial M6 (2020) references Climate Sunday, the Methodist Way of Life and Hope in God’s Future, clearly demonstrating that worship,

discipleship and theological reflection are at the heart of a Methodist response to the climate crisis.

(iii) Lifestyles – this work will dovetail with work on discipleship and A Methodist Way of Life. It is hoped that the Walking with Micah work might also give direction to this aspect.

10. Within the focus area, “Faith-consistent use of assets”, the following aims are proposed:

- (i) All travel directly funded by MCB to have net zero emissions by 2030. This will involve reducing travel, choosing forms of travel that have lower associated carbon emissions, and carbon-offsetting travel.
- (ii) All electricity directly funded by MCB to have net zero emissions by 2030. This will involve reducing electricity consumption and choosing electricity from renewable sources (eg wind, solar, tidal, etc.)
- (iii) All gas directly funded by MCB to have net zero emissions by 2030. This will involve reducing the amount of gas used, choosing ‘green gas’ (biomethane), and carbon-offsetting gas used.
- (iv) Methodist members and leaders equipped with other resources to reduce the carbon emissions related to Methodist properties and activities, including but not limited to: guidance on listed buildings, new property projects and use of other fuel sources (eg oil, coal).

11. Within the focus area, “Wisdom”, the following aim is proposed:

- (i) The Methodist Council to appoint a Resource Group to review and recommend updating *Hope in God’s Future*.

Continuing development of a Methodist Faith Plan

12. Members of the Council will note that four aims are proposed relating to “assets”, only one relating to “wisdom” and none at all relating to “lifestyles”. This reflects a need for further consultation with colleagues in the Ministries Committee, Faith and Order Committee, the Queen’s Foundation, Cliff College and the Learning Network, and with District Chairs and Methodist people across the Connexion before further aims can be discerned.

13. It is proposed that this discernment, and other related work, including the creation of resources, production of guidance, measurement of progress against aims, etc, be undertaken by a task group of Connexional Team staff, advised by individuals with specialist knowledge from within and beyond the Connexional Team (eg the Rural Mission and Ministry Officer, a District Chair, a Superintendent, a Property Steward, a member of the Faith and Order Committee, a member of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, ecumenical colleagues, and Methodist members who represent marginalised groups).

14. It is proposed that a Connexional Team task group should be convened for the connexional year 2021/2022 and that the Council review their work and whether there is an ongoing need for this group, or if work could be managed in a different way, at their October 2022 meeting.

15. It is proposed that the task group should consist of the Head of Mission, the Mission Team Projects Officer, the Property Support Officer, the Procurement Manager, a member of the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), a member of the Communications Team and a member of the Ministries Team. The task group should consult and collaborate with experts by experience in the wider Connexion and beyond wherever possible.

16. It is proposed that the purpose and activities of the task group should be:

- (i) to discern the aims that will form the MCB Faith Plan, building upon those outlined in paragraphs 9-11, and submit a draft of the Plan to the April Council for approval before final submission,
- (ii) to identify how to measure progress against the aims and ensure that measuring is undertaken, particularly with reference to the Annual Property Checklist (as directed by the Conference's reply to memorial M6 (2020)),
- (iii) to create resources and guidance to support progress against the aims, particularly building on resources already available via A Rocha, the Climate Coalition, JPIT and the Methodist website,
- (iv) to meet with representatives from the Central Finance Board, Chapel Aid, Methodist Insurance and the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes to explore options for green funding,
- (v) to report to the January Council on progress,
- (vi) to support each of the districts and the Connexional Team in using the Plan and associated resources in their context, particularly encouraging Districts to incorporate progress towards net zero carbon emissions into their District Mission Plan (as requested by the Conference's reply to memorial M6 (2020)).

It is important to note that many districts have already begun to work towards net zero goals, an Eco District award, or other aims in caring for creation. The task group should make liaising with and learning from these districts a priority.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

84/1. The Council receives the report.

84/2. The Council approves the approach to developing a Methodist Faith Plan, as outlined in the body of the report.

Appendix 1

Memorial M6 (2020) Global Climate Emergency

Memorial M6 (2020) was referred to the Council by the 2020 Conference. The Council considered it at its meeting in January 2021, through discussion in a focus group and in plenary session. At its meeting in March 2021, the Council agreed to recommend to the Conference the reply shown below.

M6 Global Climate Emergency

The Gloucestershire (7/7) Circuit Meeting (Present 75; Voting: 74 for, 1 against), recognising that the global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation, and a fundamental injustice, and following the resolution of the Methodist Conference 2019 that there is a climate emergency:

- a) *calls upon all parts of the Methodist Church, at local church, circuit, district and connexional level, to work to achieve measurable year-on-year reductions in emissions and urgently examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030 in order that a plan of action can be drawn up to achieve that target;*
- b) *calls on each District to address progress toward net zero emissions every two years.*

Reply

The Conference thanks the Gloucestershire Circuit for this memorial which was referred to the Council for a full discussion. The Conference wholeheartedly agrees and affirms that 'the global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation and a fundamental injustice.'

The Conference recognises this is a crucial year for international climate commitments as the COP26 climate summit is held in Glasgow from 1 to 12 November. All nations will need to make new commitments that recognise the urgency of our situation. The Conference notes that alongside our partners, the Methodist Church has called on Her Majesty's Government to put in place plans to achieve net zero in a way that addresses social and economic inequalities.

In recognition of the Circuit's desire to call on all parts of the Methodist Church to work towards net zero the Conference invites Methodist churches to join with others in a oneoff celebration of Climate Sunday on, or before, Sunday 5 September. The Conference affirms it is the responsibility of us all, as God's people, to respond to this emergency in all the ways that we can, and by regarding this as an integral part of our Methodist Way of Life. The Conference further affirms the call to live lightly as an integral part of our mission and as such a vital part of all our mission planning.

The Conference recognises the Circuit's desire to encourage the Church to be methodical in measuring carbon emissions. The Conference therefore directs that the Annual Property Checklist is updated to enable some measuring of progress to be achieved. Furthermore it requests of Districts that ways that enable movement towards net zero are demonstrated in all District Mission plans and that these plans are reviewed every two years.

The Conference wishes to respond to the Circuit's request to draw up a plan of action, but feels that a 'one size fits all' plan would not be beneficial. It therefore proposes the development of partnerships with others who can help us meet our target. These include:

- A Rocha, with their well-established Eco Church programme and Eco-Congregation Scotland;
- "Faith Long Term Plans" – a coalition of faith groups;
- Ecumenical partners in the Church of England, and the United Reformed Church and elsewhere;
- The Climate Coalition – a coalition of 130 organisations across the UK that are mobilising support for action at the COP26 summit.

The Conference proposes that steps are taken to 'green' our processes with regard to property including:

- making representations to the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee to see ecofriendly adaptations as a priority;
- ensuring that all building schemes take seriously the need to reduce carbon emissions;
- updating the requirements of quinquennials to embrace factors that could reduce carbon emissions;
- updating SO 803 (with regard to Manses) to ensure that manses become as energy efficient as possible;
- supporting Circuits in finding ways to measure and improve their buildings' energy efficiency.

In recognition of the urgency of this emergency, the Conference agrees an aspirational target to become a net zero Church by 2030. By setting this target we will align ourselves with the Church of England and the Church of Scotland. The Conference recognises how ambitious this target is; its achievement depends upon all parts of the Church making a significant commitment of resources. It will require substantial work to many church buildings to achieve energy use reduction. This work will rest on the decision-making of our Managing Trustees.

The final section of "Hope in God's Future", 'Sending Out', describes our response to climate change as a journey of a whole community. In setting an aspiration of net zero by 2030 we want to encourage and inspire each other as the Body of Christ to all journey together. The Conference recognises, with thanks, the voice of 3Generate for their consistent and bold lead in this area, and again thanks the Gloucestershire Circuit for this memorial.

*****RESOLUTION**

3/2. The Conference receives the Report.

3/3. The Conference adopts the reply shown as its further reply to Memorial M6 (2020).