

# ***Team Focus: Project 1***

**Convene a consultation to draw out a wide range of imaginative suggestions, appropriate to a diverse Church, of what could be entailed by *‘evangelism and speaking of God and faith in ways that make sense to all involved.’***

**And then discern what the Team can best contribute.**

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# Section 1: Background and remit of the project

## A priority for the Methodist Church

Arising initially from one of the four major strands of *Our Calling*, this project relates to one of the key consequential priorities for the Methodist Church adopted by Conference (2004), after a consultative process across the whole 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: ...

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

Part of the remit of this project is to help the Church develop an understanding of what is meant by evangelism and how it links to speaking of God and faith in ways that make sense to all involved, and to promote a wider ownership of the work of evangelism and speaking of God and faith in the whole Church.

A long-term planned strategy for re-building confidence in God, in our faith in God and in our ability to share our faith in God appropriately is the single most important contribution that is needed for the *Priorities of the Methodist Church* to become a reality.

## The core project group

Members of the core group:

- Peter Sulston (Coordinating Secretary for Unity in Mission)
- Keith Davies (Chair of Manchester and Stockport District)
- Peter Hancock (Superintendent minister of Huddersfield Pennine circuit, member of the Evangelism Strategy Group)
- Janet Morley (Secretary for Adult Learning, convenor of the Discipleship and Church Membership Task Group)
- Viv Morrissey (Training and Development Officer in the Yorkshire districts, member of the Evangelism Strategy Group)

The group was assisted by John Nelson and Ken Kingston of the Policy Support and Research Unit. Jonathan Kerry (Coordinating Secretary for Church Life) attended some meetings and received the papers of the group.

## **Scope of the objectives and recommendations of this project**

The terms of reference of the project suggested the following outputs:

- A wider ownership of the diverse understandings in the Church of the terms used;
- A shared understanding of what is expected of Team, Circuits, Districts and individuals;
- An implementation plan for the Team (in partnership with other stakeholders);
- A statement of the priority of this work in terms of budget and other resources;
- A longer term vision: where do we hope to be by, say, 2010 or 2015.

## **Process of consultation**

- Written contributions were solicited from a wide group of Methodist stakeholders who met for a day consultation on 4 July 2005. Many of the quotations in this document come from this day meeting.
- Staff employed by the Connexional Team, along with District Evangelism Enablers were invited to respond to a questionnaire, which asked about work currently in hand or planned, which relates to the priority. (The responses to the questionnaire are available on request.)
- The core group met five times, including a residential.
- Individual conversations were held with the Secretary for Evangelism and Church Planting, the Principal of Cliff College, the Chair of the Evangelism Strategy Group, the Discipleship and Church Membership Task Group, Rob Frost, the Secretary of Interface and members of the Connexional Team responsible for Children's Work, Youth Work and Racial Justice.
- An interim draft of the report, with rationale and objectives, was circulated widely for consultation and comment, including by those invited to the 4 July meeting and to those who contributed to the survey. The draft was discussed with the Evangelism Strategy Group and with ecumenical contacts.

## **Existing work relating to this priority, in the Connexional Team and the districts**

The Connexional Team currently employs or has appointed to it the following staff with an explicit brief for evangelism and speaking of God and faith:

- Evangelism and Church Planting Officer
- Evangelism Enablers Coordinator (p/t)
- Evangelism Resources and Training Officer (p/t)
- Secretary of Interface (p/t)
- Member of ecumenical Fresh Expressions Team
- Principal, Cliff College (ex-officio of the Connexional Team)

Also employed by the Connexion, 19 Training and Development Officers work closely with District Evangelism Enabler/District Mission Enabler colleagues. The TDO job description is written so that their skills and functions are generic (consultancy, facilitation, brokering between training need and training resource). This means that actual changing emphases in priorities within districts can swiftly be incorporated into their working objectives. Where districts are prioritising evangelism and developing confidence in speaking of faith and where

circuits are seeking assistance in reviewing their mission, this is reflected in the work plans of both TDOs and DEEs/DMEs concerned.

Employed by the districts, there are currently 22 District Evangelism Enablers/Mission Enablers. These appointments operate under a variety of terms, conditions and job descriptions, there is still considerable uncertainty about best practice with these appointments. They are offered support and coordination by a member of the Connexional Team. Increasingly now there are some Circuit Evangelism Enablers coming on stream.

However, a range of other staff consider this priority to be one of the key drivers of their own work.

## Section 2: What is...?

*'Will you come and follow me  
If I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know  
And never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown,  
Will you let my name be known,  
Will you let my life be grown  
In you and you in me?'*

John Bell

This popular contemporary hymn has a deceptive simplicity, but this single verse succinctly summarises what we are called to as Christian disciples. It is straightforward, but enormous in its scope. It will cost us everything, but it comes to us as a love-song. It reminds us:

- We are personally called to be a follower of Jesus
- We have to give up being in control and let the Spirit guide us
- This will completely transform us
- Social action (*let my love be shown*) evangelism (*let my name be known*) and personal holiness (*let my life be grown*) are all to be combined in a compassionate, articulate and holy life of discipleship rooted in Christ.

Methodists in recent years have felt much more comfortable with engaging in social action than in evangelism, or in speaking of God and faith and of the life of committed discipleship. But there is a new wave of interest in how we can tell the story, as well as live the Christian life together. The consultation process which gave rise to this report sought to explore questions such as:

- What does this priority mean throughout the Church and beyond the Church?
- What things are currently being done to 'develop confidence in evangelism and in the capacity to speak of God and faith in ways that make sense to all concerned'?
- What in our present context gives pointers to the future?
- What obstacles to more work or greater confidence do we need to remove?
- What, specifically, would engage the prayers and imagination of the Methodist people for 'evangelism and speaking of God in ways that make sense to all involved'?

### Evangelism

*'The Church exists to...make more followers of Jesus Christ.'* (Our Calling)

*'The purpose of evangelism is to initiate people into the kingdom of God.'* (William Abraham)

*'To evangelise is to share with others the good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ ... An authentically Christian evangelism reflects the nature of God. It will be vulnerable, patient, loving.'* (Called to Love and Praise, 3.2.2)

*'The Church needs to be re-shaped as a community of seekers.'* (David Deeks)

*'The Methodist doctrine of prevenient grace reminds us that God is at work in all sorts of ways ... One of the hardest tasks of the evangelist is continually searching for signs of the Holy Spirit at work in the strangest places and most unexpected people and joining in appropriately.'* (Graham Horsley)

Our lifelong Christian journey is one of 'faith seeking understanding.' This means that, whatever stage of that pilgrimage we are on, we are all continually seekers, people who wait upon God. We have experience of God, faith that we can articulate – the joy of finding God, knowing Christ, and being graciously invited into a relationship which grows ever deeper as we journey in faith. We also have struggles, questions and doubts – these too are part of the journey of faith, in which God can be found. The Holy Spirit is at work in us in all sorts of ways, and is not finished with us yet. We are on this journey because we have been loved, listened to, respected, and addressed in language that makes sense to us. We have found in the Christian communities that have touched us a safe place to become who we truly are in the sight of God. We aspire to be a community who can speak of faith while we are still seekers, and who go on seeking even as we speak about our faith.

There should not be rigid boundaries between 'us' and 'them' in the evangelistic enterprise, but a real engagement with each other's culture and understanding. Graham Horsley describes a helpful model of evangelism, developed by Andrew Jones from the sending out of the seventy-two in Luke chapter 10:

- Go (v. 3) – *go to people where they are; don't expect them to come to you;*
- Enter (v. 5) – *enter the homes and lives of those who are receptive;*
- Stay (v. 7) – *listen for a long time to understand, before speaking;*
- Eat and drink (v. 7) – *receive from their culture, do not impose your own;*
- Heal (v. 9) – *pray for them with compassion, and faith in the power of God;*
- Tell (v. 9) – *the last part of the progression, not the first. And Jesus' way of telling is usually more provocative than proclamatory.*

Those in Methodism who have been most engaged in evangelistic endeavours have reflected on their practice and have largely moved on from simplistic, 'pre-critical' forms of evangelism. There has been critical reflection on religious experience, the nature of conversion, the ethics of seeking to change someone's mind in a pluralistic culture, and so on. But Martyn Atkins pleads for what he calls 'a second naivety' – a 'post-critical' recovery of certain aspects of evangelism, which we may be in danger of losing:

- Missionary congregations, or fresh expressions of church still require the ministry of evangelism.
- The stress on evangelism as a process does not do away with the need for points of 'crisis' and decision-making.
- Contemporary 'churchless' spirituality require a rediscovery of the sense of the mystery of God's dealings with us.
- The need for community requires means by which people are clearly invited to belong and appropriate shared values.

## **Confidence**

*'I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.'* (Romans 1:16)

*'The nature of "average" Methodism is the most profound source of a lack of confidence in the gospel. Confidence begins with ownership and a belief in the veracity and authenticity of Christianity in our churches.'* (Martyn Atkins)

*'We need to reclaim a mood of confidence in the purpose of the Church within the mission of God ... we must find ways in which the challenges of our age and culture(s) can be seen as opportunities as well as threats.'* (Jonathan Kerry)

*'Many people in different ways already talk of God with confidence, and don't want to be sold a new package ... Others don't really appreciate the difference between "discussing" concepts, and making themselves vulnerable by talking of their wrestling with faith. Others compartmentalise religion and the rest of life and don't want to muddy the waters. Many are afraid of making themselves vulnerable, and there is a universal impetus to find ways round the subject, rather than into it.'* (Jenny Ellis)

Are we seeing confidence 'in the gospel' or 'in evangelism' or 'in the purpose of the Church in the mission of God' as primary? Do not all of these point to the more profound question of our confidence in God? This is primary.

What has attacked our confidence in God? Ann Morisy has pointed out that we live in a very anxious culture, in uncertain and unpredictable times. The hedonism and voyeurism that we see are partly coping mechanisms in an anxious culture, and the Church is affected by this. For a variety of reasons many churchgoers may be low in self-esteem and fearful of taking risks. Yet we trace our heritage from John Wesley, who was so affected by the fearless witness of the Moravian Christians in a storm at sea, who said to him 'We are not afraid to die, and our children are not afraid to die.'

Mike Seaton affirms that, among Christian young people, there is a confidence in God and the gospel, but not in the Church as it is now, where the model of leadership may be experienced as disempowering, and some of the language of worship likely to lower young people's confidence in their own authentic voice.

Paradoxically, true confidence is perhaps most evident in those who are 'willing to make themselves vulnerable by talking of wrestling with their faith.' The confident Christian is not one who can be relied on to assert certainties, but one who is willing to wait upon God even in times of uncertainty, and to engage in the kind of sharing of personal stories and questions that exposes the nature of the authentic journey they are on. If a Christian is imbued with the life of Christ, their communications will be shot through with the character and grace of the Lord, and they will not come over as arrogant.

## **Making sense**

*'We are in a different place in this culture – there is a strong spiritual awareness that doesn't use the language I use. It is fascinating but difficult to engage with ... we need to learn new languages.'* (Peter Whittaker)

*'The Church needs to hear from children what the kingdom of God should be like.'* (Susan McIvor)

The phrase 'making sense' is specifically linked to 'finding ways of speaking of God and faith' that are 'appropriate to a diverse Church' and recognises the diversity of the audiences who may hear: what is said must 'make sense to all concerned'. We need to ask what weight we give to that last phrase: does it mean all sorts and conditions of people or is it restricted to those who have a concern, and therefore presumably will listen or share in the conversation?

Yet in order for a conversation to be possible, we in the Church have to become aware of how most of the religious language we find meaningful can be experienced as impenetrable to those who have never been bathed in it. We need to find ways of articulating our faith in the languages of the various contexts and cultures we participate in beyond the Church. We have much to learn from work with children and young people here. Children are a gift to the Church – they do not let you get away often with opaque language from a world they do not inhabit. Wherever possible, we should include children and their readiness to be spiritually open.

‘Making sense’ is a multi-layered phrase. It should probably include the need to put the emphasis in some of our speaking on being reasonable. Life does not ‘make sense’ in a simple way. It connects with the traditional understanding of apologetics and the importance of an adequate theodicy. We have to be prepared to address the intellectual challenges that will be asked (while recognising that the gospel, when prophetic and countercultural, can seem ‘foolish’ in the eyes of the world – 1 Corinthians 1). It is important in this media dominated age that we should have compelling and respectable speakers who can represent Christian faith in the public domain in ways that don't make you wince - people who manage to be attractive, memorable communicators without ‘dumbing down’ the message, and can explain the gospel in ways that make sense and put the Christian perspective into current events.

John Wesley appealed to those of ‘reason and religion’ Our speaking must connect to the sense of spirituality that people have. It must be relevant and resonate with their experience, in its variety, its secularity, and, for many, its darkness and irrationality. We must speak to the heart as well as to the head and engage the emotional, intuitive, aesthetic faculties as well as the rational. (For some art, music, drama, film and literature do this.)

Most people today define their spirituality primarily by experience. If we wish to ‘make sense’ to the world outside the Church, experience must come before explanation. This is not to minimise the importance of explanation, rather to set it in a proper context. If we seek to explain what others are not experiencing, they will not listen. Of course, what people experience and how it ‘makes sense’ to them is mediated by the surrounding culture, and this is no longer explicitly permeated with Christian resonances or markers.

So our speaking must appeal not only to ‘sense’ but to ‘sensibility’. It must ‘add up’, enabling people to do the reckoning: yes, I will take a calculated risk (cf: Paul in Romans 8:18: ‘I consider that the sufferings of this present time are nothing compared with the glory about to be revealed to us.’). Not all communication is about speaking or presenting reasoned intellectual arguments. We need to be willing to be alongside people in their pain and suffering, and to be honest about what our own struggles are. Making sense includes being ‘realistic’ as well as ‘truthful’ Part of that is constantly doing ‘reality checks’ - what is ‘gospel’, how does faith become ‘real’ in this or that immediate context, be it personal, communal, national or global?

The recognition of ‘diversity’ does mean that we should resist the kind of synthesising approach that tries to take all the diverse ingredients of our histories and experiences and weave or blend or stir them into some glorious mix. For most individuals, life is composed of fragments, bits and pieces: we work across cultures, we inhabit different worlds, we live our lives within different communities of practice (ie: different groups of people in and through whom we become whom we are and in relation to which we discover and make meaning), we do not always feel internally self-consistent. Yet we believe that integration is available to those who choose to let an overarching Christian story contain and interpret their own story.

## Section 3: The context in society

Social trends and the changing position of the church urge us to prioritise the goal of evangelism. Our twenty-first century context has many opportunities and new challenges. The way we live now requires very different approaches to the task of sharing the gospel.

### A primary missionary context

*'We have reached what I can only call a "tipping moment" ... We are no longer "recalling" people to faith, but challenging engagement with latent spirituality giving it form and content based on Jesus.'*  
(Peter Whittaker)

It is problematic to describe twenty-first century Britain as a Christian country. Although over 70% of the population (National Census 2001) identify themselves with Christianity, this does not necessarily reflect personal practice or belief. We can no longer assume any residual knowledge of the Bible, the basics of the Christian faith, or familiarity with Christian practice among the population at large. The major Christian festivals have become secularised and for many their meaning has been lost, even though our calendar is still structured around them. For many years the most productive area in evangelism has been with the 'dechurched', calling people back to a faith with which they have lost contact (but this is now a fast declining group). Children, on the whole, no longer receive Christian formation within their families. Assumptions, approach and language of evangelism must change and the challenge to the church is to embrace risk in moving into new forms of cultural engagement.

Spirituality fascinates people today, but institutional Christianity doesn't. 'Spiritual Intelligence' is being promoted in the business world as an addition to the seven types of intelligence already identified, and big businesses are exploring ways of meeting the 'spiritual' needs of their staff. Many people today do not seek answers in integrated systems of belief; they are attracted to a spirituality that involves all or many of their senses, as exemplified by various New Age expressions.

However, there are also Christian believers with a good grounding in the Bible, who have been formed and raised in other countries, who have migrated to Great Britain. Through their presence in English speaking congregations, and through congregations worshipping in other mother tongues, they bring an alternative dimension. However, the challenge and potential influence they bring has often been ignored or resisted, because of the perception that Asian and Black Christians have no significant leadership to offer, or that western views and approaches to worship, discipleship and evangelism are the only ones worth considering.

### A multi faith and multi cultural society

*'The relationship between the Christian faith and the many, richly-varied cultures of the world calls for careful work and sensitive cooperation.'*  
(Called to Love and Praise, 3.2.8)

*'We need to hear the voices of all and to include their perceptions and experiences as we model new ways of being Church and society.'*  
(Naboth Muchopa)

Society is enriched by diversity and some Christians find the challenge to their beliefs a stimulus to deeper exploration. However, when religion, misconstrued in the public mind as fundamentalism, is perceived as a source of division and conflict in society, this may have the effect on some Christians of dimming confidence in Christian faith. There is growing unease about fundamentalism across the faiths. Christians rightly engage in promoting dialogue, understanding and harmony between people of different faiths but need help to find a comfortable model of sharing their faith in this context. However, our religiously plural society can be a resource as well as a problem. We can grow in faith and we can work with people of other faiths to speak meaningfully of God in the public domain.

In our plural society, there are voices urging secularisation. In the world of education, the faith schools debate typifies the tensions between those who see valuing diversity as the way forward and those who see secularisation as the only answer. It is not only a question of how Christianity is taught in schools, but how the local churches engage in partnerships with schools. There are also new opportunities to work with children in partnership with local authorities, eg in extended schools. These require a willingness to work in an open way, being alongside children in their lives, activities, exploration of the world, building community and encouraging the development of maturity and character.

The Church finds itself with a new apologetic challenge within these tensions and a call to demonstrate the gospel of love in practical action. It finds itself called into partnership with other faiths for the sake of the poor, and called to hold in balance the new learning and insights of reflective practice with the faith sharing imperative.

## **The network society**

*'An increasingly mobile society means that the place where people live is decreasingly of importance to them – the important part of their lives, and important friendships and experiences, are elsewhere.'*  
(Mission-Shaped Church (2004))

This impacts on the appeal of the local church. People need community but find it in special interest groups, or on the internet. However, there is also a trend away from the commitment of joining any sort of group as members. People prefer shared activity and interconnectedness without responsibility or permanence. Affiliation is transient. This presents a challenge to the Christian faith which ultimately requires lifelong commitment and the embracing of a new community. 'Speaking of God and faith' needs to happen in the places where people are, using their networks. Evangelism needs to be an enterprise owned by the whole Christian family as they interact with, and within, these networks. The Church needs to nurture and equip all Christ's people in these interactions.

## **How is the practice and understanding of evangelism influenced by post-modernism?**

*'Countless people other than Christians have a deep concern for spiritual matters. Some, professing no religion, hunger for a different life-style. Aware of an emptiness which material possessions cannot satisfy, they protest against the aimlessness of much of modern life, and the increasing devastation of the planet.'*  
(Called to Love and Praise, 3.2.9)

*'What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.'*  
(Acts 17.23)

In a society which emphasises consumption as a major element of our human identity, we now face the reality of mass customisation. The individual is king. The famous pick and mix metaphor sums it up. We require products - cars, holidays, chocolates, to be tailor made. Some have envisaged the church of the future as a multiplex cinema presenting various worship options to suit different tastes. Beliefs and ideologies also offer a wide spectrum of choice. People regard their spiritual needs in the same light, rejecting 'packages' or systems of belief but cherry-picking aspects that appeal to them from diverse sources. Spiritual longing and the search for meaning or fulfilment are as acute as ever, but the 'market place' presents an ever wider range of options. Truth is perceived to be personal rather than corporate, and all encompassing narratives of faith have lost their appeal. However, for some of the younger generations, values are shared across peer groups.

In such a context, Christians need to address what we believe to be at the heart of the Gospel, and what is 'non-negotiable' within Christian belief. On the one hand there must be a genuine respect for, and knowledge of the strongly felt spiritual impulses within our culture. Any 'speaking of God' has to be in terms that people understand and are attracted by. St Paul, preaching at Athens, commended the Athenians for their interest in religion, and took as his starting point their altar to the 'unknown god' Anything that does not seem to be part of the culture, or seems simply dated, will not come within people's radar of possible choices. A credible contemporary 'branding' of what the Church has to say is essential.

On the other hand, belief in God's saving work in Christ, and commitment to the path of being a disciple of Jesus are not just one choice among many – they will ask of us 'not less than everything' This is a matter of commitment and not just 'sampling'. But to choose to follow Jesus, and to take on all that this means, is not often a 'once for all' decision. Most of us struggle throughout our lives to grasp how the Gospel calls us to be transformed in its service.

In this context the way of evangelism is enabling and empowering. It is about being alongside the individual learner. The skills of facilitation are key to encouraging exploration that leads to faith and to continuing to grow and mature as Christians. We need to offer opportunities openly to explore different theological and doctrinal options, and different experiences of discipleship (including mission and evangelism), so that people can make informed choices. This is ongoing work, as people are on a journey and may change their views along the way.

## **Demography, family patterns and personal relationships**

Over 10% of the adult population is divorced or separated. 22% of children live in single parent families, and more than 10% of the remainder live in stepfamilies. For many children, weekends, including Sundays, are taken up keeping contact with the non-custodial side of the family. There is a steep rise in the number of single people, due to later marriage trends and alternative relationship patterns. However young single adults are on the whole conspicuously absent from our Church life profile. Demographically, British society is an ageing population – a trend which is vastly over-represented in Methodist Church life. These factors present new opportunities and challenges. They call us to re-examine our methods of reaching the younger generation. School assembly work and religious education are points of contact with children and young people. Pioneers (and followers) are needed with particular skills of relating to today's fast moving, high tech, instant communications culture. However, front edge evangelism is never the whole story. By the Church embracing change, learning to be more welcoming to explorers, and providing a safe place of acceptance where Christian love can be experienced, whatever a person's lifestyle, there will be possibilities for growth.

## Section 4: The context in the Church

### Patterns of church attendance

Across the country, church going has become a marginal activity, with only an estimated 7.5% of the population attending regularly on a Sunday. Between 1979 and 1998, the rate of decline in Church attendance increased from 13% to 22%. In particular the Church has experienced a drastic drop in the involvement of children, young people and young adults.

The Methodist statistics are well known and do not need repeating. Although we have seen a recent slight rise in the annual number of people being newly brought into membership, this is against a backdrop of decline where loss of members through death and transfer out has regularly been twice the total number of members gained. However recent research shows that when churches and ministers prioritise making new members, it is possible.

At the same time, we have in the 2002 *Methodist Church Life Profile* a statistically reliable survey of congregational attitudes, compared with those of other denominations. Methodists come over as being loyal, sociable, very involved in the activities of Church life, caring, community-minded and eucharistic. However, compared with other Churches they report themselves to be not very conscious of God's presence, not that keen on prayer groups (they are more likely to be found in a social group), not particularly aware of 'vision' in their church, and reluctant to talk about their faith.

Of course, not every Methodist church looks like this. Some churches really enjoy their young people and attract more. The experience of black majority churches is often a quite different picture, both in terms of growth rather than decline, and in terms of the willingness to talk about faith and to share it with others. However, in some congregations where positions of authority have not been shared with black people, there may be untapped potential and less ownership of the church's mission.

Acknowledging this present reality, we must ask ourselves to what extent we can continue servicing the institution whilst aspiring to move towards something more closely resembling a movement once more. The measures which need to be taken are probably far more radical and pressing than we are comfortable imagining but if they are not taken we may find ourselves swimming (or drowning) in a lake of the last of the summer wine with very few new vineyards planted. Given our limited resources strategic planning is vital in this area!

### A growing intention?

*Sharing in God's Mission* (1985) spoke of that mission falling into three broad categories: evangelism; social caring; the struggle for justice. In doing so, it went some way to clarifying the relationship between the words 'mission' and 'evangelism'. It went on to speak of churches having 'missionary dimensions' (aspects of their life which could be vehicles for mission) but needing 'missionary intention' to drive those vehicles forward.

The recently published resource, *Time to Talk to God* (2005) has picked up on this theme of intentionality and applied it on a personal level. It has been widely welcomed as a stimulus for enabling Christians to verbalize their faith within and then beyond the Church. Other pieces of work which are in the process of production within the Connexional Team are also aimed at

facilitating 'intentional Christian conversation' (*Let's Talk* initiative to facilitate conversation; personal faith-sharing resource; inter-faith and evangelism resource). So intentionality, at a corporate or personal level has been on our agendas for 20 years. Is this evidence of progress or of a persisting and un-met challenge?

Measures taken over this period would certainly give evidence of a sharpening of focus. The *Our Calling* process has offered four headings summing up the totality of what the Church is about and gives 'Evangelism' a category all of its own.

In the more recent formulation of *Priorities for the Methodist Church* there is a further sharpening of focus. Up to this point 'New ways of being Church' or 'Fresh Expressions' would have come under the heading 'Evangelism'. Now, however, 'New ways of being Church' is a priority in its own right, albeit inextricably linked to the priority of 'Evangelism'.

On the evidence of this we may say that our connexional intention towards evangelism and speaking of God and faith has increased. On the other hand, the very need for a sharpening of focus on evangelism and for the production of a resource such as *Time to Talk of God* may suggest that that intention has not yet worked itself out to any significant extent in the life of the Church at large.

## **A deepening commitment?**

Having acknowledged a growing intention towards this priority connexionally, we need to examine how this is matched by a commitment of resources to support it. When churches, circuits and districts have placed the *Our Calling* template over their existing work, 'Evangelism' has appeared with striking regularity as the area to which it is most difficult to attribute existing activity. Over recent years we have given ourselves 'dimensions' via which an evangelistic intention may express itself. The extent to which this is happening is variable.

- Vocational discernment has formed part of the initial stages of training for ministry. The pathway of identification, training and deployment for those with evangelistic gifts is, however, not as clearly worked out as that for those with other, more traditional, giftings and callings.
- Conference adopted the report on evangelism and the 'Service for the Commissioning of Evangelists'. This has been used to some extent but the infrequency of its use is symptomatic of a Church which is still moving towards an understanding and acceptance of this role.
- We often speak of the need to stimulate and sponsor imaginative, new ventures in mission but the annual round of stationing is predicated upon an understanding of Church in institutional mode with circuits looking for ministers to look after churches. Whilst it may be said that ministers only account for a small percentage of God's people and that lay people will be the ones through whom our priorities are achieved, the fact is that what a Church models through the deployment of its leaders speaks loudly to all its people about its priorities.
- The initial deployment of DEEs/ DMEs following the 1993 Conference was uneven and uncertain. In recent years, however, good work has been done in setting up a large number of appointments. A more recent phenomenon is that Circuit Evangelism

Enablers are coming on stream. This is evidence of a desire at local level to engage with this priority.

- Strides have been made towards releasing money for mission and one helpful side-effect of decline is that millstone-like buildings can be recycled into more fluid resources with less and less resistance than has been the case hitherto. More of this previously-tied-up money could be used for investment in imaginative, pioneering, movement-like work, risky though this may be.

## **A widening ownership**

The setting of this priority gives an invitation to those of differing theologies and practical experiences of evangelism to move closer together with a common aim. Celebrating our unity within diversity is at the heart of being the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In a broad Church the differences characterised by terms such as 'evangelical', 'liberal' etc. are inevitably present and there can be tensions or simply non-engagement as a result. Clive Marsh makes the point in a provocative way:

*'Those that speak a lot of evangelism in the Church aren't often aware of the theological diversity of Emerging Church. Those into Emerging Church sometimes aren't aware that things that seem new are like the liberalism of yesterday. Those who have been/are into liberalism sometimes aren't aware of the post-liberal critiques ... This is a massive educational exercise.'*

Achieving a widening of ownership whilst at the same time keeping all on board will be difficult and will require willingness to be flexible from all parties. Any acquiescence in and perpetuation of the old divisions of decades past should be firmly resisted. The tone of the recent Conference debate on sexuality should give us encouragement here. Are we glimpsing the beginnings of a future reality of a Methodist Church in Britain in which many members (especially newer ones) are ignorant of such divisions and operate all along the spectrum of theology and practice at the same time?

## **Evangelism and 'fresh expressions of Church'**

*'Our practice of evangelism continually challenges our understanding of Church ... Sometimes we unwittingly reject the linkage of faith-sharing and church membership because we intuitively realise that our particular Christian community is inappropriate to the spiritual development [of seekers], but do not go far enough and ask the question, "What kind of Christian community will help these people to truly enter the kingdom of God?"'*

(Graham Horsley)

We can only do certain types of evangelism within the churches we have. Fresh expressions of Church are intentionally new ways of being Church, as springboards to evangelism among a wider group of people, and to explore faith and discipleship in fresh contexts. 'Fresh expressions' are not an alternative to the whole Church engaging in evangelism, rather they offer complementary ways of doing evangelism more effectively. It is important not to use 'fresh expressions' as the only model for evangelism, because that could lead to a sense that it is only for pioneers (and therefore, for many churchgoers, something for someone else to address).

Indeed, any renewal movement has the potential for making the mistakes of previous renewal movements, and becoming introverted. But they also have the potential to be a fresh opening for new people into the kingdom of God.

## **‘This is the new evangelism that we can all do.’**

*‘In many places evangelism is not an owned activity of the whole church. It is marginalised as a specialist preserve. Those who engage in it are perceived as either peculiarly gifted, nutty, or just natural extroverts. The idea that every Christian can be an evangelist doesn’t register with many people.’*  
(Viv Morrissey)

We see that the ‘old’ evangelism is no longer as effective as it once was, and we need to be encouraged to be creative and to try new models, to see the embodiment of what works. Modern expressions of evangelism are far more messy – evangelism and discipleship are wonderfully confused. People can experience worship without knowing it’s that. It’s legitimate to belong before you believe.

Many who have always championed evangelism now have a greater security and breadth in their approach. There may be places in the Church where the need to make a bigger priority for evangelism is resisted. But the mindset *is* changing. People are glad if the local leadership is on board with the priority, and they recognise that to enable this is going to mean releasing people to focus on this. It is about identifying and mobilising gifts, shifting priorities.

To bring about change, we need accompaniment, mentoring, and practical places to ‘have a go’. We need to share stories – but they need to be stories that take the form, ‘We prioritised this and devoted £XXX to it per year.’ Experience suggests that it takes five years to reap a harvest. There is a need for serious intentionality.

In developing a Methodist approach to evangelism, it’s important to build on the strengths of our denominational ethos. We have a tremendous record of community involvement (Methodists are twice as likely as the ‘average’ Christian to be involved in community action). This has gained us a real credibility in the communities we serve. We can build on this with an appropriate evangelistic strategy.

A second strength is that there is a liberality about Methodism which encourages questioning. This liberality and ability to live with doubt is a strength if it is not over-emphasised, and is a key part of our Arminian tradition.

## **The ecumenical dimension**

*‘Your report resonates with much that is already familiar territory for us. Confidence building, permission giving, networking and interaction, intentionality, priority and risk-taking, new ways of being Church, releasing, enabling and empowering people, the spirit of the age...’*  
(John Steele, URC)

*‘The analysis in this report could reasonably be applied to most historic denominations.’*  
(Roger Whitehead)

*'For me in the circle of churches where I am involved, the main issue is not whether a church is evangelical or non-evangelical, but whether they are creatively taking evangelistic initiative and encouraging their congregations in witness.'*

(Robert Freeman, Archdeacon of Halifax, Church of England)

*'Far more evangelists and youth workers are employed by Christian Agencies than denominations; far more money is spent on research by Agencies; far more focused work in specialist communities is undertaken.'*

(Roger Whitehead)

The initial process of consultation about this priority was a Methodist conversation, but a number of ecumenical partners were invited to reflect on an interim draft of this report. A number of themes emerged:

- the issues we are exploring are shared and recognisable across historic denominations, and are not specific to Methodism
- more could be done to share research, debate and national strategies, though the ecumenical Group for Evangelisation has been responsible for a number of initiatives where it is simpler and more effective to do things together (eg the ReJesus website, Mission21 Church Planting Conference)
- fresh expressions of Church at a local level are appropriately engaged in as ecumenical initiatives
- the need for evangelism is recognised across the range of traditional theological approaches
- churches already depend heavily on the work of Agencies committed to supporting evangelism, and many of these are ecumenical
- training for ministers that is focused on evangelism is being debated, eg the Ordained Pioneer Ministers proposal in the Church of England.

## Section 5: Key values and principles

In light of the understanding of evangelism articulated in section 2, and our reading of the contemporary context in society and the Church, we want to assert the following key values and principles.

### Incarnation

*'And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory ... From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.'* (John 1:14,16)

*'The Word of God dwells richly in the world, the whole world, and within experience, all experience, not just the experience we choose to label "religious".'* (Barbara Glasson)

In seeking to speak of God and faith within our culture, we in the Church need to embody and reflect the 'grace upon grace' that we ourselves have received, through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The encounter should have the qualities we find in the prologue to John's Gospel: creativity, illumination; challenge, empowerment, glory, truth and limitless blessing. For this to be true, we have to inhabit the real world and address the needs felt there and speak the language that makes sense. Just so, the almighty Word humbly entered our world and inhabited our flesh, so that we might see his glory and be touched by it.

### The culture of the whole Church needs to shift

*'We need a culture that incarnates a thoroughgoing, secure Christianity. But we don't actually learn how to be this without going into the space where we risk everything.'* (Peter Hancock)

There is a need for the whole Church to own and engage in a shift which gives a higher priority than has been the case to speaking to each other and to those outside the Church about God and faith. This will require all parts of the Church, with its diverse range of theological approaches, to embrace change. Those who have tended to see 'evangelism' as the task of only a special interest group must honestly address their reluctance in this area and explore their own clear calling to make more followers of Jesus Christ, learning from the contemporary wisdom that exists but also developing their own appropriate approach. Those who are currently enthusiastic for evangelism must recognise that 'liberal' theological approaches have integrity and can reach seekers who will never respond to traditional evangelistic teaching. There is risk for us all in this, but the potential for much creativity, mutual respect and growth. There will be real sacrifice and cost - resurrection does not come about without a process of dying and letting go.

### Methodism - a movement of lay witness

*'How can we create a more permissive environment in Methodism - to lay down the burden of what we have received and trust the Holy Spirit? To have confidence in ourselves - to be vulnerable rather than venerable.'* (Peter Sulston)

*'The cutting edge is lay.'*

(David Deeks)

*'We are an institution seeking to become a movement again.'* (Viv Morrissey/Jan Nendick)

*'While not being conservationists, we need to affirm Methodist heritage – assurance, openness to the world, incarnating in groups the values of faith.'*

(Peter Hancock)

There is a real paradox here. If a shift in church culture is to be achieved, there are ways of being church which we need to lay down – reluctance to speak about our faith, the undue priority given to the organisation of structures or business, and the monochrome style, time and place of worship. These are all unfortunate features of the Methodism we have inherited. At the same time, we should embrace afresh the founding, Spirit-led 'charism' of our movement 'in the providence of God Methodism was raised up to spread scriptural holiness through the land by the proclamation of the evangelical faith' (Deed of Union). Early Methodism was predominantly a lay movement, based on the belief that the missionary task belongs to the whole Church. This is also its future.

## **Confidence in our own spirituality**

*'What is it we stand for, what would we die for?'*

(John Nyota)

*'Confidence and belief are related: self-confidence and self-belief are the key to the ability to live out of our own questions.'*

(Barbara Glasson)

*'Our bland, nominal "default" does not persuade. It asks too little, not too much.'*

(Martyn Atkins)

*'Many Christians today lack a sufficient grounding in their faith to be able to speak about what they believe, and why.'*

(Viv Morrissey)

*'Evangelism is part of Black people's whole following of Jesus. It is their way of dealing with everyday life, family life, friendships, joys, sorrows and aspirations...to them, there are no 'conditions' to evangelism and neither should it be limited to a particular cultural expression...in love they want to reach out to all.'*

(Naboth Muchopa)

The response to *Time to Talk of God* suggests that there is a real readiness to encourage growth in discipleship, and to acknowledge and address a culture in the church that is hesitant about talking deeply about our faith. A priority for evangelism needs to be underpinned with a commitment to Christian nurture and mutually supportive (but demanding) accountable discipleship – 'the training and formation of faith-seekers' (Peter Whittaker). Fresh thinking about resources for spirituality can not only make our churches more attractive places for contemporary seekers, but also challenge long-term Christians go deeper on their own spiritual journey, as we 'listen and learn from the demand of popular spirituality for sacred space, silence, stillness and meaningful ritual' (David Emison). In this search, there are riches of holistic Christian spiritual traditions of prayer and contemplation on which we can draw.

It is also not impossible for churches to attract and retain young people. When churches offer engaging, authentic worship, and operate as a community of love, young people find that attractive. We need to equip young Christians to be evangelists in their own setting, and provide ongoing encouragement. We also need to take care about negativity. Obsession with decline is unsettling to children and young people, who are fearful of the church not being

there for them in the future. It is not a matter of being in denial, but about making sure that positives are highlighted, to encourage them and give them hope.

If ordinary members are going to want to talk of God, then some personal renewing experience of God is usually necessary. Tom Stuckey speaks about a return to 'edge of Pentecost' activities as described in Acts 1:

- rediscovery of the promises of God
- radical change of our programme and recommitment to each other
- unceasing prayer and waiting
- some reorganisation and reappointment of responsibilities.

## Effective communication – real conversation

*'We need to remember that our faith story when it is told and celebrated in creative and imaginative ways has inherent power to communicate across all barriers of tradition, culture and age.'* (David Emison)

*'It is important that we listen to each other and not just to each other's ideas.'* (Steve Wild)

*'The pseudo-Augustinian "preach the Gospel – use words if you have to" is deeply rooted in Methodism, and its commitment to "presence" evangelism. The orality of Christian faith needs recapturing.'* (Martyn Atkins)

*'Yes, "walk the talk". But **do** talk.'* (John Nyota)

*'When mission moves from the centre to the edge, the mode of speech changes. Words of communication are not written but oral, statement becomes story, the verbal idea becomes a visual image, declaration becomes explanation, package becomes pilgrimage.'* (Tom Stuckey)

It has been too easy for us to conclude that there is no need to *talk* about our faith – our lives should suffice as a witness to others. However, it is not clear that these discreet but saintly lives have actually been submitted to the discipline of asking anyone else to hold us accountable for how our lives show forth our Christian commitments.

And it can also be an excuse for not trying to see how the claims of faith can be explained in a culture whose assumptions and language start quite elsewhere. Christian faith and the Bible are indeed 'strange' – we need to use our creativity in a whole range of ways to explore how to bring the stories of faith meaningfully alongside the realities of contemporary culture. We need to be *interested* enough in both the stories and the starting points of other to want to communicate.

Tom Stuckey points out that evangelism is often defined as 'outreach', which feels as if it must be a whole new project within desperately busy lives. He suggests that a more helpful term might be 'downreach', which is about 'allowing the Holy Spirit to deepen our everyday conversations'. This requires no extra time, but it does demand vulnerability. But this is consistent with following a saviour who made himself vulnerable to reach down to us.

We do have to be willing to listen and be changed ourselves. And we need to be able to undertake that active listening which can help people to become attentive to the signs of the kingdom of God. 'Explaining' is not the only model of intentional evangelism. We need to

think what message our church buildings are communicating, to be aware of the potential of attractive, 'sacred' space and of the various art forms in stimulating conversation about faith. 'Speaking about faith was much easier with a painting as a focus than it seems to be on a doorstep or in the street' (*Buzz*, November 05, reporting on the Methodist Art Collection exhibition at Norwich Cathedral, 'A Brush with Faith'). The parables of the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price show us that the kingdom can be sought for deliberately or 'tripped over' accidentally – but it has to be recognised.

Talking and listening in an inter-faith situation involves engaging with people who already have a deep faith in God, and Christians often find their own faith enriched in the process.

## **The power of the Bible**

*'I do believe we need a good dose of the living Word to trigger our own words. Silent witness is no longer enough.'*  
(Tom Stuckey)

*'We need to work creatively to bring the Bible alive to ourselves and our contemporary world.'*  
(Methodist Council discussion on the Priorities)

*'Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.'*  
(Hebrews 4.12)

One of the key contributions being made by this year's President of Conference is to challenge us to engage in Bible study as a way of 'going deeper' in our speaking of God and faith. It is alarming that for many people, the words 'Bible study' have the capacity to sound boring and off-putting. But the dialogue that we need to have with scripture is a crucial resource for nurturing discipleship and equipping us for evangelism. However, the Bible is not a source book for mission or a tame instrument to wield or use in the service of our own agenda. The stories we are asked to engage with are transformative for us and remind us that we and our world view stand under judgement.

It is of key importance to find accessible ways in which ordinary lay people can have the confidence to read and interpret the Bible together, without feeling that they must depend on the preacher alone to open up the Word.

## **Commitment to good practice**

*'A church that doesn't engage in any activity is not likely to develop personal spirituality. We are talking about reflective practitioner training. Don't let's go back to a passive model where action comes last. Let's use active involvement as the basis for training and reflection.'*  
(Martyn Atkins)

It is important to get away from dated stereotypes about evangelistic methods that some people dread being asked to engage in, and to work with a model of being 'reflective practitioners' as disciples. Every lay person lives out their discipleship not primarily in the Church, but in the ordinary life of the world, and it is in doing this that they need support. We need to be ourselves, with our own style of engaging, not to deliver a programme but to 'empower people to fall in love with God' (Steve Wild).

We need to overcome the idea (as deeply rooted in the Church as the secular world?) that Christianity has been tried and found wanting. The contribution of new Christians with their vibrant excitement about faith in God is vital in this process.

We need people who are confident about the core of their faith, so that they are able to talk about their own story. But it is in trying to speak about the area in which they have confidence that they grow and learn as a result of the dialogue. This leads to reflection and to greater maturity, and sometimes the experience of seeing people come to faith. This, in turn, increases confidence. This can be called 'the evangelistic cycle'.

The Methodist Church would not endorse or encourage any evangelistic methods which are emotionally manipulative, discourage questions, imply that the life of faith is problem-free, or in any way leave people feeling unfree to make their own choices. At the same time, we do not want to encourage people to take refuge in the gospel as an escape route or a cloak for low self-esteem.

## **Face to face encounter – people not programmes**

*'For goodness' sake let us have no more training courses. We should be feeling it, led by the hand to go on and do it.'* (Rob Frost)

*'We do not need more evangelistic programmes, but how to facilitate.'* (Peter Whittaker)

There are no simple, programmatic ways to 'do' evangelism that are guaranteed to work. The only appropriate method is for people to be, do and say what is authentic to them and the context. The major way in which we will support the priority is through the releasing, enabling and empowering of actual people, rather than in developing programmes of content. The practice and skills of facilitation (including facilitating Christian conversation) are key, as well as enabling opportunities for encounter through events.

Any published resources that are produced need to support people in engaging with the primary face to face context.

However, we should not completely do away with the concept of an event that offers a challenge to follow Jesus. The primary influence on people deciding to become Christians is a long-term personal relationship with a Christian, but there are often some critical challenges that happen along the way.

## **The circuit as a unit of mission**

We need to move on from the common perception of the circuit as simply a number of 'preaching places', and from the 'chapel culture' which this perception leads to. Alongside its role in upholding Methodist worship, we need to bring alive the mission-centred purpose for which the circuit was created. While there is a range of on-the-ground understandings about what circuit is meant to do and be, many circuits are actively reviewing their mission and their spending plans, in order to spearhead necessary change, and this is to be encouraged. Circuit life can be re-enlivened, as an experience of being a Connexional Church. Methodism already potentially has a structure which can deliver change. Why not use it?

*'The Circuit is the primary unit in which local churches express and experience their interconnexion in the Body of Christ, for purposes of mission, mutual encouragement, and help.'* (S.O. 500 (1))

*'It is about structuring the church for evangelism and mission. Circuits are the natural, geographical areas of mission.'* (Martyn Atkins)

*'If I had my way ... I would make sure that in every circuit there was at least one member of staff, presbyter, deacon or lay-worker, who, having the gift of an evangelist, was released from pastoral charge and given responsibility for generating a "new form of church".'*  
(Tom Stuckey, Presidential address to Conference 2005)

## Section 6: Objectives for the Church

These objectives are seeking to express a renewed sense of explicit intentionality in engaging in evangelism and speaking of God and faith, and they should be read the light of the range of understandings expressed in prior sections of this report. Evangelism, apologetics and the nurture of discipleship and a culture of Christian conversation within congregations are strands that need to hang together as we seek to renew our confidence in God, in our faith in God, and in our ability to share our faith in God appropriately.

### **The Methodist Church is seeking:**

- to increase confidence in evangelism across the whole Church, not just the parts with a traditionally evangelical approach
- to enable more lay people who feel confident and empowered to speak about their faith to others while still being lifelong seekers themselves, and who are able to help others become attentive to the kingdom of God
- to discover gifts and release resources for evangelism and speaking of God and faith within a renewed movement in which lay people take a lead.
- to encourage churches (whether fresh expressions or mainstream) to become more welcoming and offer real nurture in discipleship as a lifelong journey for all
- to identify and appoint more people who are trained, equipped, deployed and supported for the work of evangelism and apologetics

In order that these objectives might be realised, we would like to see:

### ***Individuals who:***

- ask 'Could it be me?' when considering the work of evangelism
- offer welcome to newcomers and participate in programmes that nurture discipleship
- have the opportunities and the courage to 'have a go' at evangelism
- are enabled by presbyters and deacons to do this
- reflect theologically, connecting scripture and experience
- know how to key into networks beyond the church
- can connect culture and faith in authentic ways
- are confident enough to speak about their faith
- are supported and affirmed in witnessing in their daily life

### ***Churches where:***

- there are realistic whole-church programmes of evangelism, enabling gifts to emerge, shaping church life
- spiritual transformation is visibly a key priority
- there are opportunities to explore questions arising from current events and issues – locally and in the media
- there are opportunities to take seriously critiques and challenges to faith
- people are expected to be part of nurture groups

- space is made for deeper conversations by stopping some business meetings
- the physical space is attractive and warm
- there are opportunities for articulating faith
- people's gifts are spotted and they are told
- relationships are prioritised over tasks and administration
- there is help in keying into networks beyond the church
- there are opportunities to reflect theologically, connecting scripture and experience
- testimony is valued, encouraged and shared
- there are inspirational events to ignite passion
- there are meeting points for people from differing faith perspectives
- there is engagement with the local culture and context
- opportunities are sought to build partnerships with other denominations in the areas of evangelism and speaking of God and faith

### ***Circuits where:***

- circuit policy is driven by the priority of evangelism and speaking of God and faith
- circuit policy prioritises the development of gifts for evangelism and apologetics (ordained and lay)
- as part of its encouragement of vocational exploration there are 'talent scouts' to spot people gifted in evangelism and apologetics
- staff are stationed to be pioneers in the area of fresh expressions and evangelism
- presbyters, deacons, lay workers, local preachers and worship leaders all themselves model lifelong learning and committed discipleship
- the local preachers/worship leaders study days are a power-house
- there is an exciting range of nurture opportunities – across the age range
- lay people are trained to lead discipleship groups and in the skills of group facilitation
- local preachers and worship leaders are encouragers and enablers
- there are inspirational events to ignite passion
- there are opportunities to reflect theologically, connecting scripture and experience
- opportunities are sought to build/develop partnerships with other churches and/or agencies in the interests of evangelism and speaking of God and faith
- there are opportunities to explore questions arising from current events and issues – locally and in the media
- there are opportunities to take seriously critiques and challenges to faith

### ***Districts where:***

- district policy is driven by the priority of evangelism and speaking of God and faith
- District Advance Funds are used imaginatively in pursuance of this priority (which will include the deployment of staff and the improvement of worship and meeting space)
- the implications for the evangelism priority are worked out in the stationing process
- priority is given to key appointments which are created in response to this priority
- resources and training in evangelism and speaking of God and faith are offered
- there are opportunities to reflect theologically, connecting scripture and experience
- there are inspirational events to ignite passion
- networks are provided to empower people and give them confidence

- there are opportunities to explore questions arising from current events and issues – locally and in the media
- there are opportunities to take seriously critiques and challenges to faith

***A Connexion where:***

- the implications for the evangelism priority are worked out in the stationing process
- priority is given to key appointments which are created in response to this priority
- the stationing forms are re-worded to include *Our Calling* and the Priorities
- stationing policy includes the opening up of evangelistic and apologetic posts
- candidating and selection have evangelism calling/skills as key dimension
- Training principles and provision reflect evangelism priority
- CDIM provision reflects evangelism priority, and skills in adult learning
- Every communication conveys a clear branding – excellent quality and a commitment to evangelism, apologetics and discipleship
- the approach is coordinated and not ad hoc
- resources for nurture – all groups – children’s and young people’s resources – are up to date
- there are opportunities to reflect theologically, connecting scripture and experience
- there are inspirational events to ignite passion
- resources and training in this area are offered
- access to networks is provided, to empower people and give them confidence.