

Team Focus Project 1

The following paper is the executive summary and main report of the project management group of Project 1, on **Evangelism and speaking of God and faith in ways that make sense to all involved.**

It includes the thinking of the group arising out of its remit to convene a wide consultation on this Priority of the Methodist Church, and it is now offered to the Methodist Council as a key element of that consultation process.

In Section 6 it includes some broad objectives and some more detailed initial thinking about what the realisation of such objectives would look like in different parts of the Church, and the attention of the Council is specifically drawn to this section for comment.

It does not include detailed recommendations from the management group about the implications for the work and staffing of the Connexional Team. These are still being worked at, and will be presented to Council at a later date as part of an integrated set of recommendations arising out of a number of Team Focus projects.

This paper is offered:

- for a full, open-ended discussion in Council
- to enable exploration as to how far the project management group has been successful in articulating the current mind of the Church in this area
- to enable different parts of the Church to identify what needs to happen distinctively and appropriately in their context.

This paper is *not* offered:

- as a report to the Methodist Conference for reception or adoption
- as an opportunity to pre-empt any specific recommendations for the Connexional Team that may arise out of other work not yet completed.

Project 1 final report: Executive Summary

Status of this report

An interim version of this report was discussed with the Joint Secretaries' Group and the Evangelism Strategy Group, and it was made available to all Connexional Team staff and to a wide range of District personnel and ecumenical contacts. 38 responses were received overall (from individuals and groups), and the quality of comment was high. We have sought to reflect several points raised in the responses (which are available on request), but it is important to note that the discursive part of the report is not intended as a major conference document which should include everything the Methodist Church wishes to say about evangelism. The purpose of the report is to establish a rationale for the recommendations we will bring about the work of the Connexional Team in this area.

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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 in the light of the range of understandings expressed in the whole 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 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.