**Notes from the Mission Committee Meeting held at Luther King House, Manchester on 7-8 June 2018**

1. **Opening worship** was conducted by Martin Haywood
2. **Mission**
3. Mission Work Update – This included an update on the following areas:
* Walking the Way – films are to be produced by Kevin Snyman, Minister’s Gathering at Yarnfield Park looked at Walking the Way, two steering group meetings have been held. Simon Peters produced a report to Mission Committee
* Follow up from the Centenary of the ordination of Constance Coltman conference.
* Fresh Expressions – consultation has taken place on the future of Fresh Expressions.
* Networking meetings between Mission Enablers and Pioneer ministers
* Writing of reports for General Assembly.
* International Work.
1. Hope Update – A News Update report was presented on areas of the country that are engaging with Hope. These include Bristol, Coventry, London and Peterborough. Hope are looking for other Good News stories of towns engaging with Hope.
2. Rural Mission Update – It was highlighted that 25% of URCs are rural and many are struggling. A useful document that has been produced is “A Discipling Presence”. This was written in conjunction with the Methodist Church. Its aim is to help small rural churches to think about their mission and ministry. The magazine Country Way is looking for stories of good practice and rural churches doing mission. The Rural Strategy Group (URC/Methodist Group) continues to look at the challenges facing rural churches. Church House would welcome comments back from Synod rural advocates about what support they would like to receive from Church House.
3. Programme Officer for Church and Society – a proposal to create such a post was accepted.
4. Fresh Expressions Update – Phil Potter from Fresh Expressions talked to various papers in relation to:
* A Fresh Expressions Update
* A Fresh Expressions Embedding task group report – A proposal in the report was accepted. This agreed to launch a new and broader initiative that is founded on the values of reaching new people in new places in new ways, committed to creating new Christian communities that are missional, contextual, formational and ecclesial, but recognising and embracing the Church’s broader aim to create a ‘mission-shaped’ future.
* The future of Fresh Expressions

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1. **Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations**
2. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations work update – by Philip Brooks. He highlighted the following areas of work he has been engaged with:
* Ecumenical contact – many meetings he had attended that has led to contacts being created.
* Annual Assemblies – attended by Moderators of General Assembly.
* Bi-lateral Dialogues that have taken place between: URC/ Roman Catholic, URC/ Church of England and Methodist/ URC
* Work with URC Synods – Philip had visited several Synods to attend Ecumenical meetings.
* European Links – Assembly of the Council of European Churches at Novi Sad, Synod of the German speaking congregations in the UK, World Council of Reformed Churches in Europe held in Budapest.
* Palatinate Partnership -2018 will see exchange visits from German churches to the UK.
* Interfaith Relations – Philip attended the Church of England’s residential gathering for Interfaith Officers at Swanwick.
* Israel/ Palestine – The Task Group had met on several occasions. In addition, members of the group had attended other related gatherings. A tour of Israel/ Palestine is planned for October 2019. The group will include representatives from each Synod. The meeting agreed that an independent enquiry on Gaza should take place in line with the resolution from the United Nations.
1. Interfaith Enabling Group – The Interfaith Enabling Group has been created which moves on the work of the previous Methodist/ URC Interfaith Reference Resource Group. The terms of reference for this group were agreed.
2. **Commitment for Life**

A review had taken place on the future of Commitment for Life. A meeting had taken place with Christian Aid in May to share concerns and achievements. This was a positive meeting that will lead to a new working document being produced between the two organisations.

1. **Church and Society**
2. A Church and Society report was received on the work being undertaken by the team Some of the highlights were:
* JPIT Conference in Manchester entitled ‘Brave New World’ Conference.
* Betting machines success – with the Government announcing that they would be significantly reducing the maximum stake on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals from £100 to £2.
* A photo petition supporting the Nuclear Ban Treaty was presented to the Home Office.

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* JPIT has been campaigning, with others, for government to measure levels of food poverty.
* JPIT has been researching a report and campaign on ‘the Hostile Environment for migrants’. This was triggered with the treatment of the ‘Windrush generation’.
1. Environmental Task Group – The group has been meeting every two-three months, usually by video link. Contacts have been made with Eco Church and Synod Green Apostles.
2. **Global and Intercultural Ministries**
3. The team highlighted two pieces of advocacy work that have recently taken place:
* The response to the Windrush Generation Debacle.
* Brexit, Borders and Belonging will be a subject for a panel conversation at General assembly 2018.

Conferences, opportunities and partnerships and visits were also highlighted.

1. An excellent report by Revd David Grosch-Miller was brought to the meeting on the URC’s involvement with groups from North and South Korea.
2. Another excellent report had been received from Michael Jagessar and Timothy Clarke on their visit to the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon. Despite overwhelming difficulties, the group continues to do valuable work in both regions.
3. Council for World Mission – A report was received from the European Regional Assembly held at Swanwick from 12-15 March 2018.
4. A report was received from the World Council of Churches Conference on World Mission and Evangelism held in Arusha, Tanzania from 8-13 March 2018.
5. A report was received from a meeting of the European Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches held in Budapest from 12-13 April 2018.
6. **Staffing**

Discussions took place on a proposal for a new Commitment for Life/ Programme Officer and the future of the Fresh Expressions post.

1. **Various Other Business**

This dealt with the following items:

* Buildings Forum Paper
* Churches Funerals Group report
* General Assembly Update
* Minutes of last meeting

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1. **Dates of future meetings**

27-28 September 2018: Hinsley Hall, Leeds

7-8 February 2019: Woodbrooke, Birmingham

6-7 June 2019: Focalare Centre, Welwyn Garden City

26-27 September 2019: Hinsley Hall, Leeds

**Feedback and Action List for Synods**

1. Mission Committee encourages engagement with HOPE ([www.hopetogether.org.uk](http://www.hopetogether.org.uk)) and in particular with Remembrance 100, which starts on 4 August. Check out the excellent website for resources. ([www.remembrance100.co.uk](http://www.remembrance100.co.uk))
2. Note that excellent resources are available for Rural Churches, e.g. A Discipling Presence, Rural Mission Sunday (15 July) and the resources of the Arthur Rank Centre (<http://germinate.net>). The National Rural Officer is also available to support synods and local churches in their mission in a variety of ways (elizabethc@germinate.net). Please invite her.
3. Mission Committee agreed that the Administrator for Church and Society post will be changed to Programme Support Officer for Church and Society. Recruitment will start immediately. Closing date: 2 July 2018 Please spread the word!
4. Mission Committee considered the next phase of Fresh Expressions Ltd, starting in March 2019 and considered options for the shape of the future partnership. These will be considered by all the partners in Fresh Expressions Ltd at a special meeting on 24 September, with a view to implementing what is decided in the following six months.
5. The Mission Committee is looking for a volunteer to be part of the URC/Roman Catholic Dialogue Group, which is entering its third phase. If anyone in your synod would like to take part in the work of this group, please contact Revd Philip Brooks, the Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations (philip.brooks@urc.org.uk).
6. The Mission Committee accepted the terms of reference for a new Interfaith Enabling Group. Unlike its predecessor, the Methodist/URC Interfaith Reference and Resourcing Group, the IEG will be a URC only group, though the group will include observers from other ecumenical partners. This group is available as a resource to the synods too, for advice and support.
7. Mission Committee received a report on the ongoing work with Christian Aid in relation to Commitment for Life. A partnership agreement is being drawn up, which will come back to Mission Committee for agreement in September. The committee also took note of the resignation of the Programme Officer for Global and Intercultural Ministries and the intended retirement of the Programme Coordinator for Commitment for Life (November 2018) and agreed that a new post of

Programme Officer for Global Justice and Partnerships be created to continue the work of both programmes (Commitment for Life and Global Partnerships).

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1. Mission Committee heard a presentation on the work the Joint Public Issues Team are doing to produce a report and develop a campaign on the Hostile Environment. The report will be available soon, so please let your synod and local churches know, and encourage them to study it and join the campaign. There will be a private members resolution to General Assembly about the Hostile Environment, which was endorsed by Mission Committee.
2. The Secretary for Church and Society is also available for speaking, preaching, advising on Church and Society/Public Issues (simeon.mitchell@urc.org.uk). Please invite him.
3. Mission Committee received an interim report from the Environmental Task Group, which was established following the acceptance of the new environmental policy at the General Assembly in 2016.
4. Mission Committee received three excellent reports of international visits and asked that these be made more widely available through the Global and Intercultural Ministries webpages and in other ways. They included a report by David Grosch-Miller from a consultation organised by the National Council of Churches in Korea on ‘Cultivating Peace, Proclaiming Hope’; a report from a partner’s consultation organised by the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (by Michael Jagessar and Tim Clarke) and a report on the World Mission Conference in Arusha, Tanzania by Simon Peters.
5. Mission Committee received with regret the decision of the Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to sever formal relationships with the URC, in terms of representation at each other’s Assemblies. The committee thanked the Moderator, Kevin Watson, for representing the URC at the PCI Assembly with sensitivity and grace.
6. Mission Committee received a report from the Buildings Forum outlining how it would relate to the Mission Committee. The Mission Committee accepted this as a good basis for future linking and cooperation.
7. On pages 140-160 of the Book of Reports for General Assembly 2018, anyone interested can read about the work of the mission committee and staff team to resource, stimulate and help to coordinate local mission efforts, as well as to bring our combined influence to bear, with partners, on national and international issues.
8. There will be a good range of opportunities for synod representatives at General Assembly to engage with current concerns and issues in society and mission, in special sessions with our mission staff and invited guests from partner churches, and to gather information and ideas to share with their churches. The new Chief Executive of Christian Aid, and the General Secretary of CWM, will both be speaking to the whole Assembly.

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