

Paper M1

Mission and Discipleship
Missional Discipleship
– next steps

United Church 2016
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Basic Information

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Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council (A) endorses the report in Paper M1 of March 2016, (B) requests the General Secretariat and the Missional Discipleship task group to make an application for funding to CWM, and (C) agrees to the establishment of a steering group as proposed in the paper

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Emerging plans and proposals for making a Missional Discipleship resource available to the Church
Main points	Title and structure of the resource. Timing and potential of the development programme. Plans for a launch in autumn 2017
Previous relevant documents	Report to last Mission Council meeting
Consultation has taken place with...	Task Group, Mission Council, education and learning and mission committees

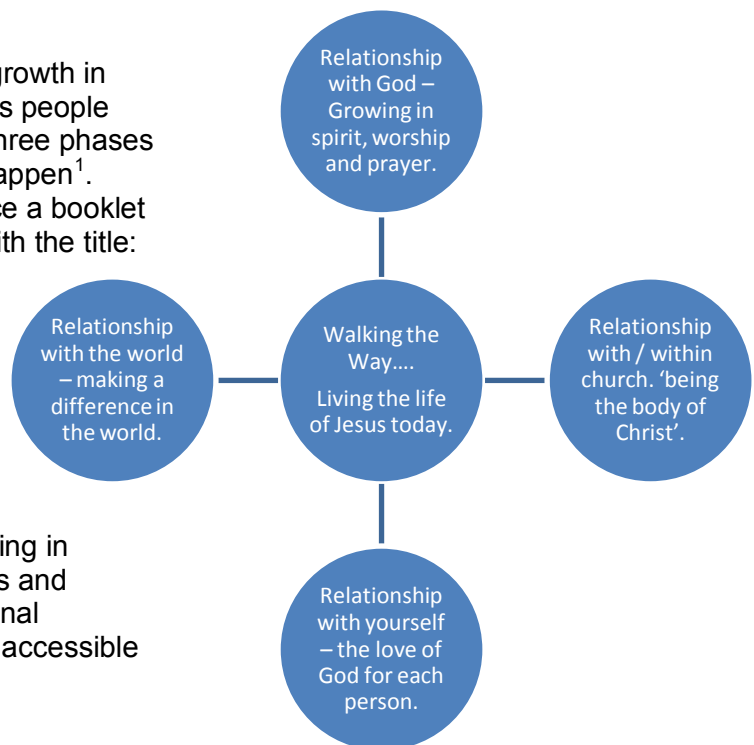
Summary of Impact

Financial	Detailed projections will follow in a future paper. This project has been devised with the intention that it draw on funding from CWM's Mission Support Programme. Plans are now at a stage when we can apply for this money to be made available to us
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The current proposals will strengthen our contact with CWM and with the Methodist Church, and possibly also with other ecumenical partners.

Missional Discipleship – next steps

1. Since the decision of the November meeting of Mission Council to endorse papers M1 and M2 and approve the emphasis on Missional Discipleship, the task group has met from 11 to 12 January and will have met on 11 February 2016. Many conversations have been held: with the Resource Centres for Learning as they contributed their thoughts, with Wayne Hawkins of the Council for World Mission, with Mike Moynagh (Fresh Expressions) acting as an external theological consultant, with Andrew Roberts and Richard Andrew of the Methodist Church concerning *Holy Habits* (a soon to be published resource on discipleship), with Lynne Ling and Mark Howard of Shoreline Consultancy and with Neil Hudson of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity.
2. At our January meeting we received papers relating to principles of evangelism, culture change, discipleship development in Fresh Expressions, and adult learning. We recognised that our task was to encourage in every local church an understanding of Church as a community of disciples who are looking outwards to the communities within which they serve and witness to the love of God. The second part of our task was to provide an environment in which every local church can find appropriate materials to enable such an emphasis to be resourced.
3. We discussed the resourcing of people as enabling the growth of Christian faith leading to different forms of service and witness. We were helped by the image of a tree in which the trunk represents the broad growth of the whole people of God, the discipleship maturity out of which other ministries grow like branches. Thus we divided into two groups: one to consider how the trunk/the whole people of God might grow, the other to consider how recognised ministries (or branches) might be identified, encouraged and resourced.

4. The group considering how the growth in missional discipleship of all God's people could be encouraged identified three phases or 'rooms', by which this could happen¹. The first step would be to produce a booklet for use by local congregations with the title: *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*. The booklet would include four invitations to explore the relationship between life and Christian faith/witness. As depicted in the diagram:



The emphasis would be on growing in confidence, having conversations and encouraging faithfulness. Additional resources would be added to an accessible web resource.

1 Mike Moynagh uses the concept of rooms to explain different stages of discipleship growth, with an exploration room, a listening room and an engagement room, thus leading the church from withdrawal to engagement.

5. The next phase or room would involve the use of *Holy Habits*. This is a resource which encourages growth in ten habits of faithfulness which are derived from Acts 2. It offers Biblically based reflection, communal and thought provoking engagement with its themes and is about developing practice ... 'holy habits' ... with the aim of growing in confidence and creating faith and life connections. We can partner with the Methodists in the remaining stages of development and then offer this material to churches for their on-going journey.
6. The third phase or room would be an encouragement to move on or 'dig deeper'. It was recognised that there are lots of discipleship courses and materials available and that within the URC there are different churches with a broad range of theological understandings. At this stage, when churches and individuals have started to develop their discipleship practice and confidence, a range of options would be offered. These could include the successor materials to TLS/TLS Lite, Fruitfulness on the Frontline, Encounter, Dunamis discipleship materials, Living the Questions....and more! This third room would encourage people to ask how we might love and serve Jesus more in this particular context.

The group noted the emphasis on Feasts and Festivals during 2017 and felt that the celebratory nature of that theme might be helpful in introducing and encouraging people to engage with *Walking the Way*, with a view to launching the initial material in September 2017.

7. The *Walking the Way* booklet will need to be prepared with careful attention to development of the next stage. Vision4Life materials, ecumenically produced resources and TLS module and courses will be reviewed as part of carrying forward the most appropriate into this new emphasis. Communications with all existing providers will be key over the next 18 months.
8. The group dedicated to looking at the branches of the tree recognised the different forms through which growth in discipleship expresses itself. Not only in currently recognised forms of service but also emerging forms of service such as pioneers, family, youth or children's workers, evangelists, chaplains, supervision, and teaching/adult education.
9. Whilst recognising the many courses which are available ecumenically, there remains a need to develop our own material for those embarking on service within the Church. This will build on the strengths of TLS and adopt the best of its methodology. The United Reformed Church is indebted to the many people who have given, and continue to give, so freely of their time and abilities over the years to offer TLS as a vehicle for faith formation and lay education.
10. There will be a transitional period of two years from summer 2016 during which people wishing to explore their faith further for purposes including Assembly-Accreditation and Synod recognition will be encouraged to use a strengthened form of TLS Lite. This will be supplemented by the existing TLS one-year courses, and supervised practice under the guidance of relevant Synod personnel such as Training Officers. Work is being started to assess ways in which other courses such as Mission Shaped Ministry can also be used to support those wishing to develop their discipleship.

11. During our residential the task group discerned several threads in our planning. These included:
- a) to think through the booklet, develop the next stage (with its link to *Holy Habits*) and help in its online development. Foundational to this would be to look again at the evaluation of Vision4Life and reviewing existing resources;
 - b) to commission work on the successor to TLS in consultation with TLS personnel, Resource Centres for Learning and synods;
 - c) to look at advocacy focussed on communication/consultation/collaboration with Training and Development Officers, Children and Youth Development Officers, the Mission Enablers network, Assembly committees and Mission Council;
 - d) to think through how the staffing/financing will take place and seek funding from the Council for World Mission;
 - e) to identify people resources needed across the broad theological spectrum of the URC.
12. The February 2016 meeting of the group will have focused on some of these tasks as a matter of urgency. It is evident that this is a complex project with a time pressure and there is real concern from some that we do not have the resources to undertake this task well in the time available. Recognising the need for focused attention to the work, the task group wishes to suggest the appointment as soon as possible of a project manager to ensure that there is continuity, clearly defined tasks, and co-ordination of people to undertake the many different roles needed to deliver this fresh emphasis in a timely way.
- To this end, it is proposed to make an application to the Council for World Mission for funding such a post from its Mission Support Programme (Phase 4). We hope that Mission Council may be minded to enable the General Secretariat working with the task group to draw up detailed terms of reference and submit an application to CWM on their behalf.
13. The continuation of the process will also need the appointment of a more permanent steering group to oversee the work and to support the project manager. It is therefore proposed that a steering group is appointed, comprising those members of the current task group who are able to commit themselves to continuing, plus one member from the mission committee and one member from the education and learning committee. The current task group members are Francis Brien and Richard Church (co-conveners), Graham Adams, Peter Ball, Michael Jagessar, Tracey Lewis, Kathryn Price, Fiona Thomas and Philip Wall. The membership of the group, as it then stands, will be reported to Mission Council in October. We propose that their term of service run until Assembly 2018.

M1

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