



# Follow-up to ‘buildings opportunities’

[work commissioned by the October 2010 joint meeting of the Methodist Council and URC Mission Council in response to the report of the Church Buildings Think Tank]

## Introduction

- 1) The 2008 Methodist Conference resolution 62/2 and Resolution 16 of the 2008 URC General Assembly directed the governance bodies to find out how the Methodist and United Reformed Churches could work more closely together to use resources more efficiently. This resulted in the Better Together joint meeting which took place in October 2010 between the Methodist Council and the Mission Council
- 2) In order to take the 2008 Conference resolution forward regarding buildings, the URC-Methodist Strategic Oversight Group commissioned a Think Tank which consisted of three representatives from each denomination with local and national experience in property matters to do work on:
  - how church buildings may best fulfil their role as places of worship and centres of mission;
  - how we can ensure our buildings are fit for purpose, especially in light of ‘Hope in God’s Future’; and
  - how we may become better stewards in handling the complex resourcing issues involved.
- 3) The buildings Think Tank began its work, and prior to the report being presented at the Methodist Council in October 2010, the URC reaffirmed its commitment to working closely with the Methodist Church, in particular on property matters, by instructing officers at the July 2010 URC General Assembly with the resolution:

*‘...to explore the possibility of collaboration in the area of property advice to local churches’*
- 4) The *Better Together* joint Council meeting received ‘Building Opportunities – Report of the Church Buildings Think Tank’ in October 2010. The two Councils agreed the resolution requesting the formation of a follow on group. This paper proposes that resources should be dedicated to set up the follow on group and sets out terms of reference for the group.
- 5) The resolution agreed by the Councils read:

*‘The Councils call for the formation of a follow on group to facilitate the next stage of this work, following the dissolution of the Church Buildings Think Tank’.*

## Strategic Oversight Group

- 6) At the Strategic Oversight Group meeting in January 2011, the SOG agreed that a brief should be written for the buildings group following on from the buildings report for the April 2011 Methodist Council and May 2011 URC Mission Council for decision.

## Terms of Reference & Membership for Buildings Follow on Group

### 7) **Aim**

The aim of the follow on group is to combine URC and Methodist expertise, creativity and resources to address issues concerning the use for the whole Church's mission of church buildings, recognising that they represent a major investment of capital, running costs and time.

### 8) **Vision**

In cases where a Christian community needs a building, it should serve effectively the Christian mission in the locality by being attractive, accessible and flexible, as well as being sustainable and efficient in terms both of financial and environmental implications.

### 9) **Objectives**

- Offer advice on joint mission audits as a way of preparing for possible sharing of resources locally, including the gathering of demographic and contextual information relevant to the mission potential of a church building and community partnerships that might be appropriate
- Explore a joint approach to property advice, including for Listed buildings and churches facing conservation area issues
- Resource volunteers locally to assist churches to see the potential in their buildings and to recognise when expert help is needed
- Provide material to assist good endings for buildings which have served their mission purpose
- Establish fora within the two denominations for collective discussion of current issues and best practice, drawing on the experience of the Methodist Resourcing Mission Forum
- To bring recommendations as necessary to the Methodist Council and the Mission Council
- To report to the two Councils in Autumn 2012

### 10) **Personnel**

- Members of the follow on group should consist of three individuals from each denomination with expertise in property, theology, research and project management from each denomination. The proposed URC members are Robert White, Peter Rippon and Fergus Urquhart.
- Administrative support would be provided from the existing staff teams of the two denominations.
- A three-year fixed-term Executive Officer post to support the group would be funded on an equal basis by the two denominations.

### 11) **Recommendations**

- 11.1 The Council accepts the Terms of Reference for the Buildings Follow-up Group.
- 11.2 The Council approves the principle of funding half of the three-year fixed-term Executive Officer post to support the Group.

## Methodist Council Update

- 12) The Methodist Council met in April and considered a paper parallel in content to paragraphs 1-11 above.
- 13) A Resolution based on Recommendation 11.1 was passed.
- 14) Recommendation 11.2 presented more difficulty partly because at this stage little detail was possible but more particularly because at the same meeting the Methodist Council was reviewing once again the staffing at the Connexional Team office in Manchester that has historically dealt with property matters. After discussion it was agreed to support 11.2 but stressing the “in principle” nature and on the understanding that exactly how this commitment would be implemented in relation to the future Methodist staff posts would have to be subject to further discussion after the 2011 Methodist Conference has met in July.

## Resolution

**Noting the decisions of the Methodist Council at its April 2011 meeting, Mission Council:**

- (i) **accepts the Terms of Reference for the Buildings Follow-up Group;**
- (ii) **approves the principle of funding half of the three-year fixed-term Executive Officer post to support the Group.**