



MISSION COUNCIL

13 – 15 MAY 2013



CWM Mission Support Programme Phase 3 Proposal for Consultation

Introduction

In 2001, the General Assembly affirmed the importance of evangelism for the church and its ministry at every level. It directed the Life and Witness Committee to initiate discussions with other committees, so that together they might recommend ways for people to exercise their ministry as evangelists, and suggest ways of supporting them in their ministry. Since then a number of things have happened in the area of evangelism: a TLS module on evangelism was developed, the Vision4Life process was started with a strong focus on evangelism in its third year, and Mission Council in 2009 agreed to use the Special Category Ministry scheme to enable Synods or a grouping of churches to pilot the use of Ministers of Word and Sacrament as evangelists, by dedicating three posts to this particular ministry. Furthermore, in 2010 General Assembly accepted vision2020, with evangelism and church growth as part of its key statements and in 2011 a significant evangelism conference was held. Feedback from Synods and local churches shows that churches engage in evangelism in a variety of ways, be it through activities they organise themselves or existing initiatives they join (e.g. Back to Church Sunday or HOPE). Many indicate that even when they do not engage actively with faith sharing activities, they feel that this should be a priority and something they could do more.

For the last few months the Mission Committee has been thinking about the focus for the next phase of CWM's Mission Support Programme funding. The fund was set up as a 'gift of grace' for CWM member churches with the specific purpose to enable them to develop their priorities/programmes for mission in a way that is appropriate for their context. The mission programme applied for should be that of the entire denomination and should fit with CWM's overall strategic focus for developing missional congregations. In the past MSP funding for the URC has supported the setting up of the Belonging to the World Church programme and the development of Radical Welcome/ZI. Now is the time to make an application for the next phase of the funding (MSP3), which runs from 2014 to 2017. The amount available to us is just under £144,000.

Encouraged by the Assembly decisions outlined above and in particular by the churches' response to Vision4Life, the Mission Committee thinks that MSP3 offers us an opportunity to engage more intentionally with evangelism focused on how to equip people for this task, within the broader context of discipleship. It is a fact that, despite past decisions and programmes, we struggle with evangelism. MSP3 would enable us to develop something that will help us engage with evangelism or faith sharing in a way that is appropriate for the URC and that will capture the imagination of people in our church. It would need to build on the enthusiasm engendered by Vision4Life and would fit within the vision2020 framework. It would be a way of saying that for a specific period of time we concentrate the extra resources that are given to us on a particular and essential part of vision2020.

A small group from the Mission Committee (comprising Louise Franklin, Janet Sutton Webb, Andrew Willett, Francis Brien, Michael Jagessar and Wayne Hawkins of CWM) has started work on a proposal and this has been discussed by the Mission Committee.

The next stage now is to discuss this with a number of other groups, committees and networks in the URC, so that when a final proposal is submitted to CWM, it comes with the broad support and ownership of the church. So here it is: a basic proposal, with some detail already added, but by no means finished. There is much more to be done. And for this, we need your views and your ideas.

Consultation questions

Would you please take some time at your next meeting to look at the proposal (on pages 3 and 4 of this document) and to give us your views? We have three questions in particular:

1. Would you support the suggestion that evangelism (a vision2020 theme) should be a focus for the United Reformed Church in the coming years? Is there another theme which you prefer to be such a focus?
2. What excites you about this proposal? What would you wish to change or add to it?
3. In what ways and to what extent is the evangelism theme relevant to your work as a committee, group or Synod? And what from your point of view would need to be included in the proposal?

You may have other comments to make, of course, and these are most welcome too. What we hope you will do is give us feedback that will help us to develop this into something that will genuinely further the church's life and mission. ***Please let us have your feedback by 12 June 2013 at the latest.***

If you would like someone from the group that wrote the proposal to be present at the discussion in your group or committee, then please contact the Secretary for Mission on francis.brienen@urc.org.uk.

Further information about the consultation process

Part 1: 1 March – 12 June: consultation with key groups and committees.

These include:

1. Synod Moderators
2. Synod Clerks
3. Assembly Committees: Ministries, Education & Learning, Youth and Children's Work, CRCW management committee, Communications & Editorial, Faith and Order, Finance
4. Assembly staff
5. Resource Centres for Learning
6. The Networks of Mission Enablers, Training and Development Officers, Children and Youth Development Officers, Church Related Community Workers
7. Black and Minority Ethnic ministers and church related community workers
8. FURY
9. Group for Evangelism and Renewal and Free to Believe
10. Selected world church partners
11. Ecumenical Partners, especially the Churches Group for Evangelisation and Fresh Expressions
12. The meeting of Committee conveners prior to the May Mission Council
13. A conversation at the May Mission Council about evangelism.

Part 2: A special day meeting on 13 June, at Lumen URC, London.

An opportunity to hear what has been said by the groups in the first part of the consultation and for those who missed out on the first stage altogether to give their views on the proposal.

Timetable for consultation and submission of the proposal to CWM

1. March – June 2013: mission consultation process
2. July – September 2013: revise and finalise proposal
3. October 2013: consideration of final proposal by Mission Committee
4. November 2013: consideration of final proposal by Mission Council
5. By 16 December 2013: submission to CWM Europe Regional Secretary
6. February 2014: decision by CWM.

The Proposal

| <u>3-Stage Plan for an Evangelism Strategy for the United Reformed Church</u> | |
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| Overall Aim: | To create and nurture a culture of evangelism in the United Reformed Church. |
| <u>Objectives:</u> | |
| Stage 1: | 1. To develop a shared understanding of and vision for evangelism in the church leadership. |
| Stage 2: | 2. Based on point 1, to build/nurture a vision for evangelism across the Synods and provide training for local congregations. |
| Stage 3: | 3. To equip local churches for and support them in active engagement in evangelism. |
| Stage One: | <p>a. Initiate research which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mapping what local congregations are doing in terms of evangelism, • looking at the structures of the church and its training of those who are called to a ministry of evangelism and the space to release their potential, • exploring what is currently being offered on evangelism and mission through the resource centres for learning, with a view to developing this exploration further later on in the process. <p>This research would also include looking at changing an organisation's culture and this would be incorporated into the later stages of the process. The research could be funded from the remainder of the MSP2 funds or a CWM scholarship and would inform stage 2 of the process. This would also enable us to harness the enthusiasm of those already involved.</p> <p>b. Consultation with senior leadership of the whole church, including the Trustees, General Secretary, Assembly staff, Mission Council Advisory Group, Synod Moderators, FURY leadership and other key people, with the aim of transformation for change. This could take the form of a consultation day (or more) or a longer process. The focus would be to create a culture of evangelism and it would include analysing the current mindset about evangelism and what it means to be 'successful' in evangelism. The day/consultation process would be for strategic development and prayer.</p> <p>The starting point would be that not everything in church can or should be about evangelism, but everything we do must have an evangelism and outward focus. Connect with existing work and especially vision2020. The key areas to be covered in the process might include, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a shared understanding of evangelism, as distinct from mission. • Developing a sowing, reaping and keeping attitude to evangelism by understanding the processes by which people come to faith. • What is attractive and connecting. • Changing the culture of church. • How leadership matters. <p>This process could be resourced/facilitated by people both from within and from outside the URC (with experience/'authority' in this field) who can help us reflect on who we are.</p> <p>This stage might also include conversations with Moderators (and Ministries and Education & Learning) about evangelism as a vocation and the deployment of people with these gifts.</p> |

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| | <p>c. Conversations with Synods focused on roadshows on evangelism in the Synods and the setting up of Synod evangelism funds. The conversations would need to involve Synod Mission/Evangelism Enablers and others.</p> |
| Stage Two: | <p>a. Replicate part b above at Synod level, involving Training and Development Officers, Mission/Evangelism Enablers, Synod Evangelists (where appointed), and interested people from across the Synods. The aim would be both vision building and planning training/identifying trainers. (In reality these groups would already be involved in stage 1.)</p> <p>b. Training the trainers in how to deliver evangelism ‘courses’ (or other form of training) (see below). Trainers could be identified from the mapping exercise in stage 1. (A and b happen at the same time/event.)</p> <p>c. Synod roadshows on evangelism focused on advocacy.</p> <p>d. Training of local churches for evangelism. This could build on the learning and use the materials of the Radical Welcome campaign.</p> <p>e. Establishing points of contact in each Synod (e.g. the Mission Enabler or A N Other) who are Evangelism encouragers – available at the end of the phone, text/email/Facebook to give ideas of resources, signposting on, etc.</p> <p>f. Development of materials for stage 3. These will be resources specifically by/for the URC.</p> |
| Stage Three: | <p>a. Every church (not just those who have been trained!) is provided with material that can be picked up and used. This could include, for example, a specially produced URC evangelism training kit that could be run in house in each local church (with an enabler and a DVD player). This could cover an introduction to evangelism, communication and the gospel, sharing your story, handling peoples objections, leading someone to faith, first steps and what to do next, discipleship etc. Other materials (especially written for the URC) would be leaflets to give away/posters, ideas on evangelism, a guide to other resources, a booklet to hand out to people explaining the key aspects of faith in accessible language.</p> <p>b. Then move on to a season of first base evangelism events, changing perceptions and making connections. People who are starting to say yes. Give people opportunity to run events, Alpha, Christianity Explored, Reason To Believe, Lyfe Series, the Journey... or something typically URC.</p> <p>c. Each church feeds back what they have done via the church returns at the end of the year or via the Synod Evangelism Enablers.</p> <p>Then churches do what works again.... or try something new and carry on! By 2016 every church has evangelism resources and training.</p> |
| Stage Four: | <p>a. Evaluation.</p> <p>b. Start of MSP4 on deepening discipleship, the development of which will run alongside stage 2 or 3 of MSP3.</p> |

We are aware that there are a number of elements of the proposal that need further thinking through. These relate to deployment, communication, funding and others.

We envisage that these will be further developed as a result of the consultation process.