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General Assembly Moderators' Think Tank

For discussion and decision

1. The budget.

Elsewhere in the Mission Council papers there are details of some of the issues raised by our current financial situation. These cannot be ignored but as General Assembly Moderators we consider it is better for us all to concentrate our initial thinking on our priorities. We would like everyone to remember the Catch the Vision strap line "God's people, transformed by the gospel, making a difference for Christ's sake". In our discussions about resources we must not lose sight of why we are here. We are not here to serve ourselves, to build our structures or to despair at the state of our finances. We are here to worship and serve God, our generous, grace giving God, the God of hope and justice. We are here to ask how we can model for our unjust and hurting world a new and different way of being, built on faith in the power of the God who came into the world as a baby and built on hope underlined by the experience of resurrection. It is God who calls us and challenges us and it is to him we are answerable. So with that in mind we hope to begin to answer the question 'What are the priorities to which God calls us?'

2. Resources

There are different ways in which we can think about resources. Some resources are needed so we can operate within the legal framework set down for us. Some of them are so we can provide centrally such things as ministries and training. Some of them are related to the local church. The first thing we want to say is that we recognise the importance of the local church. This is where we worship and serve our God, where we can model for our damaged world a new and different way of being, where we answer God's call and meet his challenge. So in thinking about priorities the first question to ask is:

- What does the local church need from the centre (whether 86 Tavistock Place or Synod) to enable and advance its mission?**

3. Further information

It is our intention to provide some more detailed financial information to assist in the discussions at our meeting in November. Meanwhile, we ask you to start considering prayerfully how your local church might the answer the question above.

Val Morrison and Kirsty Thorpe

Appendix 1

Feedback from Mission Council – May 2011. We received 9 responses to our presentation in May. We were grateful for these and they have informed our thinking in the subsequent months. The following is what was said:

Question 1 – How do we tackle this as a God-guided process?

- We believe we are tackling it as a God guided process.
- We had hoped CtV, V4L, LMMR etc was 'it'.
- What is needed is to become a God guided MOVEMENT i.e. a living organism to be revived, not an Institution to be organized.
- If the Think Tank is to be the answer it MUST be filled with Prophets, Dreamers, Visionaries rather than bureaucrats (although some continuity is probably needed).
- The top of our agendas should ask – 'How is this making Jesus known?'
- Potential in the consensus process – ask a good question then trust the answer to evolve in an open prayerful discussion.
- Have at least one session at each Mission Council and General Assembly with no agenda except discernment.
- Define what is the first question – the overarching goal.
- In a climate of 'we can't do everything' define the things that are essential to our ongoing being as a church.

Question 2 – Is there anything we have left out?

- Challenge to the church with an ecumenical dimension is key.
- Encourage a 'can do' attitude.
- Encourage the use of spiritual advisors to make the culture more spiritual.
- Rather than new reports, seek ways to draw local churches into themes, issues, insights and policies that Assembly and Mission Council are familiar with but remain 'new' to many local churches.
- Youth and Children's Work Strategy (but linked into V2020)
- Diaconal Ministry – order of deacons involving CRCW's linked with Methodists Diaconal Order? Ordination of CRCW's?
- At the end of their two years VM and KT use their authority and experience to propose a slightly longer Strategic Planning Group (but with a better name) to develop the pulling together of the resources issues in the context of the Assembly's policies.
- Do we gather information which is never used? E.g. baptism numbers. How do we gather information?
- How does listed buildings/churches in conservation areas affect our approach?
- The Marketing Campaign.
- We should use V2020 as a framework for review.

General

- This is the time for the Think Tank but it needs to be time limited – 3 years – to 2014 Assembly.
- There will be hares set amongst us from other areas e.g. pensions etc so we must not set off any more!
- Initiatives are never reviewed before the next one is launched. We need to 'bed in' initiatives with a suggestion that there should be a moratorium on all new initiatives until 2018.
- Don't change LMMR until we have done it.
- We need to be completer/finishers.
- Why hasn't the SCM, CRCW programme produced entrepreneurial results?

- We should clarify the relationship between General Assembly and Mission Council and the issue of where and what decisions are made.
- There is a need to communicate more effectively and in particular regarding the issues relating to General Assembly and Mission Council.
- We should look again at Synod boundaries including making a decision to form a London Synod.