

Paper M2

Mission & Discipleship

Missional Discipleship

A supplement to Paper M1

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015



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Missional Discipleship – A supplement to Paper M1

Basic Information

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Action required	This paper extends and adds detail to the information in Paper M1. It should therefore be considered when Mission Council is asked whether it 'endorses the direction of travel' in Paper M1.
Draft resolution(s)	See Paper M1

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	This paper gives information about a survey that has been taken within the Church, and about what has been learned from it. It outlines some possible themes and plans for going forward.
Main points	See paragraph 18 below
Previous relevant documents	Paper M1
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Council is the first point of consultation for this material, which only became available recently.

Summary of Impact

Financial	As Paper M1
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None

Missional Discipleship

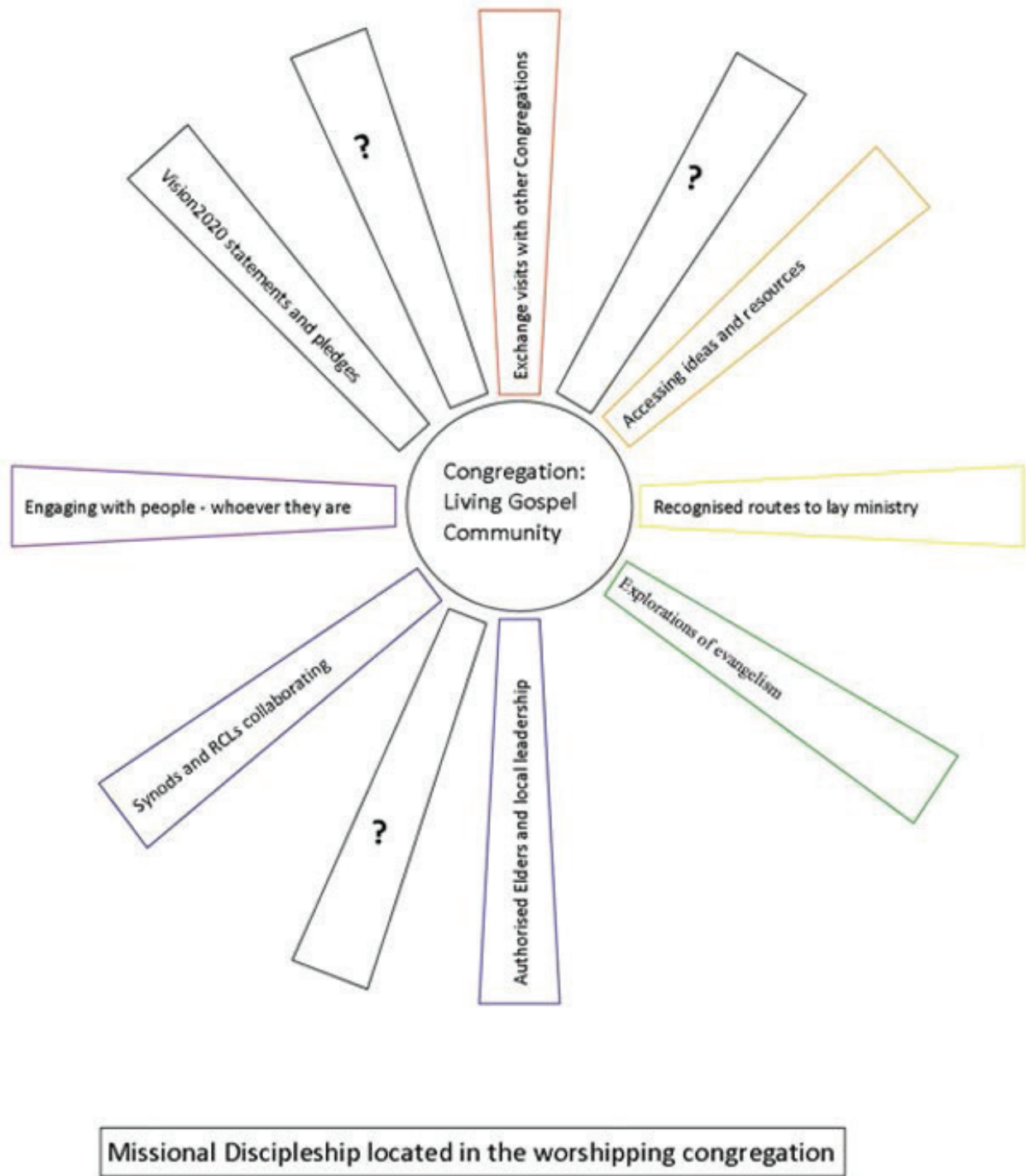
A supplement to Paper M1

The Missional Discipleship Task group met on 30 October and identified a number of issues that it wished to report to Mission Council to enable the Council's consideration of this emphasis within the denomination.

17. Survey results

- 17.1 A survey had been distributed to a number of groups in the denomination. By the deadline 53 people had filled out the questionnaire, which represents a response rate of between 10 and 15%.
- 17.2 The survey provided us with useful information about what informs people's personal faith journeys with Bible study and prayer, the example of other people/family, the fellowship of the church and small groups, and theological exploration through writers, conferences, sermons etc. being the factors most often mentioned.
- 17.3 Asked how discipleship finds its expression in daily life most people answered 'in all of it', meaning their personal attitudes and choices. Serving and helping others, prayer and Bible study, involvement in the church and in community activities were also highlighted.
- 17.4 Worship is the main aspect that sustains and nurtures the corporate life of the local church/Christian community, closely followed by opportunities for prayer and Bible Study. Fellowship and small groups are further important ways in which corporate life is nurtured, as are opportunities for Christian service both within the church and in the community.
- 17.5 Asked in which ways people would like to see their church make a difference in the community, many talked about becoming an open and welcoming church where people can reflect on faith and life in a safe way, and a church that offers community facilities (often involving offering food and drink), and practical help to people in need.
- 17.6 Many churches do not seem to have formal patterns of learning and most learning/formation takes place through Sunday worship and in Bible study and prayer groups. Where churches offered courses these mostly included TLS, Advent and Lent courses or church membership classes. In some places, other ecumenical courses are used, such as mission-shaped introduction from Fresh Expressions.
- 17.7 We also asked what people would like the wider Church to consider when reflecting on ways to enable growth in missional discipleship. The common themes that arose from the responses included: providing resources that are accessible, flexible and informal; such responses should be focused on learning by doing; taking our demographic (mostly older) seriously; focusing on engagement with people outside the church, especially young people; helping church members to be a community of followers rather than an institution; relating faith to life in the 21st century; worshipping at other times than Sundays; being a resource for churches to engage in mission.

17.8 As the task group considered the challenge of working towards a church which is more confident in the making of disciples, it became clear that resourcing the congregation was key. We have tried to depict this in the diagram below:



17.9 It will be noted that this emphasis makes links with much of the journey upon which the URC has embarked in recent years. There are other areas of work with which the task group will seek to link, such as the work of the Faith and Order Committee and the 20-40 Task Group.

18. Reflection on the survey results

Issues arising out of our reflections on how discipleship can be resourced in the context of God's mission to the world include:

- a) The importance of welcoming small groups as a context in which Christian discipleship can be deepened. These groups may have a focus which is social, biblical, or on prayer.
- b) Developing discipleship can be enriched by a mentor/coach and spiritual direction.
- c) Pursuing a quality of worship which naturally flows into service and witness.
- d) Following Jesus may mean for some becoming a member of their local church.
- e) Facilitating online sign-up to receive tool kits for ministers/worship leaders.
- f) Providing inspiration for fresh ways of community engagement e.g. dementia-friendly churches.
- g) Encouraging open conversations with humility.
- h) Offering practical ideas which can resource people in their local context.
- i) Flexibility of access – suited to people's circumstances.

19. Conclusion and continuation

We offer this paper to indicate the development of our thinking to date. We have scheduled a residential meeting in January at which we hope to draft an outline of what might be offered to the Church. A report will be made to the next Mission Council. In the event of the two Mission Council meetings affirming these plans, the task group would transition after March 2016 into an implementation group and work would be commissioned to ensure that the Church would be properly resourced in this area from 2018.

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