

# Paper Q1

Mission Committee

Joint Property Strategy Group  
and Church Buildings Forum

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



# Paper Q1

## Mission Committee

### Joint Property Strategy Group and Church Buildings Forum

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd David Tatem <a href="mailto:david.tatem@urc.org.uk">david.tatem@urc.org.uk</a> Clifford Patten <a href="mailto:cliffordpatten@btinternet.com">cliffordpatten@btinternet.com</a> The Revd David Skipp, the Revd Lucy Brierley
<b>Action required</b>	For information
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To report on the final JPSG meeting and on the development of the Church Buildings Forum.
<b>Main points</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Final recommendations from JPSG for continued Methodist-URC sharing of resources and promoting of visionary programmes for Church buildings</li> <li>2) Sharing the potential issues for consideration by the URC Church Buildings Forum.</li> </ol>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper Q1 at the November 2014 Mission Council
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	General Secretary, and the Mission Committee.

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	These recommendations could have major and beneficial financial impact
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Promoting closer work with the Methodist Church and encouraging a wider consultation.

# Joint Property Strategy Group and the Church Buildings Forum

## JPSG

1. For the origins and background information regarding the Methodist and United Reformed Church Joint Property Strategy Group please refer to our report to November 2014 Mission Council. Following a start which looked at a variety of property issues, the focus for the last two years has been a series of roadshows. These have encouraged building that is influenced by missionary vision and have offered advice on how to structure and support projects. Roadshows were held in six locations through the summer of 2015, and they mark the end of the part-time facilitator's appointment and the completion of the group's programme. A full JPSG report will be ready for issue at about the time Mission Council is meeting.
2. The roadshows were attended by 265 people, of whom 13 were from LEPs and 59 were URC members, elders and ministers with a few synod officers. Most of the remainder were Methodists, with a small number from other denominations. The events were generally well received particularly the stories of opportunities and mission projects based upon under-used or redundant buildings, such as the *Tubestation* 'surfers' church' in Polzeath. These examples were largely of Methodist origin, and we heard how Circuits and Districts were seeking such opportunities. We were not able to find good recent URC examples of new ways of using buildings and being Church, and we are interested in hearing of any examples which can be added to the website.
3. The website password protection has been removed, allowing access to some of the roadshow content. The site will not be managed after October 2015 and it is hoped that the content can be hosted in some form by one or both of the churches. Please visit the site [www.jpsg.org](http://www.jpsg.org)
4. After JPSG's earlier decision to move away from its original wider remit and concentrate on the roadshows, our final meeting was able to return to some issues that were set out by the previous Think Tank for consideration in both churches. The final report will recommend the following suggestions, which seek to continue the working relationship established in the roadshows:
  - a) Roadshow feedback suggested a significant need in both churches for support at the early stages of any significant project involving buildings, to help with vision, information, encouragement, and even critical friendship. The report will suggest finding about a dozen networked volunteers drawn from both churches to speak and act locally and regionally. It is hoped that this may encourage greater sharing of resources and buildings.
  - b) We also hope that the URC can be invited to the Methodist Resourcing Mission Forum when relevant, and that its convenor, Richard Farmery, could in return be linked into our Buildings Forum.

## Church Buildings Forum

5. At its November 2014 meeting Mission Council approved the establishment of a Church Buildings Forum with representatives from synods, General Assembly Committees and other parties to develop and share an understanding of (i) our relationship with buildings, (ii) the ways that they speak to us and the communities we serve, and (iii) the way they shape us, both as occupiers and in the wider context. This remit aims to continue and respond to the work started by the JPSG, and the URC members of JPSG will work with the Forum for the remainder of their term of appointment.
6. Since last November the Forum now has representatives from 6 synods. Gathering names has been a longer process than anticipated, but an initial meeting is now being arranged for February 2016. Discussions have been held with the PLATO group to ensure that there will not be an overlap in areas of work and the PLATO convenor has agreed to be part of the Forum to maintain a productive working relationship.
7. The Mission Committee has agreed that the work of the Forum should come under its umbrella, given the priority focus that the Forum will have on the missional use of buildings as well as the continuing ecumenical dimension. The Forum will also keep in touch with other areas of work such as the CRCW programme. The Mission Committee budget for 2016 now has a component to cover the cost of meeting.
8. It is expected that the Forum will report back to synods and to Mission Council in due course, offering more information about its structure and suggested remit. The earlier report set out some possible aims and objectives, now repeated in an updated form used in the invitation to synods. It will be for those who represent synods to share and determine particular needs and priorities.
9. This forum may assist and develop in the following ways:
  - a) It will create a means whereby synods, Assembly Committees and other parties such as the Listed Buildings Advisory Group can share information, programmes and best practice and promote a wider discussion and understanding of the way we support, use and relate to our Church buildings.
  - b) It will develop a more widely shared understanding of how our buildings speak for us and shape our understanding of who we are and what we can do.
  - c) General Assembly received a paper from the Faith and Order Committee which included a request that the JPSG assist in developing a strategic Church Building Theology. We feel that this initially needs to be a URC-focused exercise. The Church Building Forum is our recommended means of responding to this.
  - d) The Forum can function as a point of contact and even when agreed, the voice of the URC. This will improve the effectiveness of our work with the Methodist Church, with other denominations, with government and with national agencies, such as Historic England, CADW and Historic Scotland. This will enable our voice to be heard whenever Church building issues are debated, and will enable the sharing of good practice, expertise, advice and strategic planning.
  - e) It will create a means of responding to Church building issues raised by Assembly committees, and this may address the current lack of consideration of the part that buildings play in the success or otherwise of local and wider programmes.

- f) It will develop a resource to be used for local and synod-wide strategic planning and will inform the process of evaluating existing buildings and providing visionary and practical guidance for shaping new buildings and projects. The extent of this work will need to be agreed by the Forum.
  - g) It will address some repetition of work, and gaps in the advice that synods are able to offer.
10. It may be that a Church Buildings Forum website can be developed to share resources. If so, we hope that the JPSG resources can be incorporated.
11. If we are to progress the opportunities created by JPSG, to share visionary facilitators and plan further conferences and initiatives with the Methodist Church, then we need to offer a point of contact in the URC. Any programme that develops from this cooperation will depend on appropriate approval from synods, Mission Council or Assembly. But an individual or group must be able to speak and act for the URC in initiating and promoting projects. It was always the intention that the Buildings Forum would provide continuity in this task once the JPSG was disbanded, and the Buildings Forum will include this task within their remit from Mission Council.

