

Paper I1

Mission committee

Update on current work

Church 2018
United
Church 2018
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Church

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Update on current work

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Bernie Collins bernie.collins@thecrocker.net Francis Brien francis.brien@urc.org.uk
Action required	For information.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Update on the work of the mission committee.
Main points	Update on Legacies of Slavery, Commitment for Life and staffing. Information about Brexit workshop and Israel/Palestine denominational educational visit in 2019. A new resource for Methodist-URC United Areas.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Committee's report to General Assembly 2018, especially 4.12, 4.13, 4.13.3-7 (visit to Israel/Palestine); 5.3.3.1 (Legacies of Slavery).
Consultation has taken place with...	Christian Aid (about Partnership Agreement); Council for World Mission partners (on Legacies of Slavery); CWM Europe (to plan Brexit, Borders and Belonging conference); Partners of the Israel/Palestine task group (to plan the visit); the Methodist Church, and our law and polity advisory group (re United Areas).

Summary of impact

Financial	Costs to Assembly of the various items in the paper are covered by funds held by mission committee.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	All of the items in this paper are about increasing awareness, understanding and partnership to help our members and partners to participate more effectively in Christ's mission in the world.

Mission update

1. Legacies of slavery

Mission committee have begun the process of how to respond to the Legacies of Slavery hearings sponsored by the Council for World Mission which have taken place in Jamaica, Ghana, USA and the UK. Alan Yates gave a presentation at the September meeting of mission committee and at the February 2019 meeting Michael Jagessar will continue the discussion with particular regard to the theme of 'white privilege'. Mission committee believe this is an extremely serious issue which will require a measured and thorough approach by the denomination.

2. Commitment for Life

A new partnership agreement has been drawn up between the URC and Christian Aid, which confirms our continued partnership and takes account of Christian Aid's new ways of working, but without making any major structural changes to the Commitment for Life programme. The full agreement forms part of an appendix to this paper as a reference document for Mission Council.

3. Response to Brexit

In partnership with CWM, URC Mission are holding a Brexit, Borders and Belonging workshop which will take place at Queens Foundation, Birmingham from 12 to 15 December. URC Secretary for Church and Society, Simeon Mitchell will deliver a keynote address. The workshop takes place at what will be a crucial time in the Brexit process as churches consider how to respond.

4. Israel/Palestine

An educational visit to Israel and Palestine is planned for 18 to 28 September 2019, which stems from the work assigned to mission committee at General Assembly in 2016. The aim is for one person from each of the 13 synods along with two representatives from URC youth to take part and application forms for the visit are now available. Successful applicants will be expected to raise £500 and commit to sharing their experience at local and synod level.

5. Staffing

Linda Mead retires at the end of November after 13 years of dedicated service. Her role at Commitment for Life has been reconfigured, made possible also by the departure of Eve Parker earlier this year. Dr Kevin Snyman will take up the role of programme officer for global justice and partnerships (a joint Commitment for Life/GiM post) on 1 December. Suzanne Pearson joined Church House in October as part-time administrative assistant for Commitment for Life. Roo Stewart joined in September as programme support officer for Church and Society.

6. Methodist/URC United Areas

There have been several requests from United Areas for a constitution which is robust enough to register with the Charity Commission and which complies with both the Structure of the URC and Methodist Constitutional Practice and Discipline (CPD). After considerable work, the Methodist/URC Liaison Group has now finalised a document which has been approved by the law and polity groups of the URC and the Methodist Church. For those United Areas who are seeking to update their constitutions this is now the only version which is endorsed by both denominations. Anyone wishing a copy may contact Philip Brooks at Church House.

Appendix to paper I1: Commitment for Life Partnership Agreement

An agreement between Christian Aid and the United Reformed Church

Part I

This partnership agreement is an affirmation of our past relationship and an investment for the future to work more closely in bringing God's kingdom here on earth through life giving faith, defiant hope and generous love.

Principles of partnership

The United Reformed Church has a history of being involved in justice. This comes from the gospel imperative of care for the poor and vulnerable. It takes its inspiration from Jesus' mission and ministry of breaking down social barriers and bringing hope and love. They seek to build a new earth where everyone lives in justice, peace and plenty.

Christian Aid's theology is based on the idea of relationship between God and humans. As we are all invited into a relationship with a God of love, community and justice, it follows that our relations with each other should reflect this. We love because God first loved us and are all equal in his sight. Poverty robs people of their dignity, freedom and hope. Christian Aid sees poverty as an outrage against humanity so its mission is to bring an end to it by giving hope for tomorrow.

These common understandings of God's concern for justice and love of all people is the basis for this partnership between Christian Aid (CA) and the URC in Commitment for Life (CfL).

History of Commitment for Life

The late 1960s was a time when churches and the voluntary aid agencies were realising that the problem of poverty and underdevelopment overseas could not remain simply a matter for charitable response. Problems needed to be tackled at government level. The United Nations made recommendations that developed nations should make available 1% of their Gross National Product for overseas aid. This influenced the World Council of Churches meeting in Uppsala in 1968.

Both the Congregational Church and the Presbyterian Church came to the same conclusion that an appeal should go out to churches recognising from the start that the Appeal was for 1% of annual take home pay 'until such time as the government of the day reaches the 1% target for overseas aid'. It was recognised from the beginning that the appeal needed a strong political stance. Remembrance Sunday 1969 saw the start of the appeal with Christian Aid as the principle vehicle for dispersing the money. In 1972 the newly formed United Reformed Church continued the appeal. The World Development Movement, to become

Global Justice Now, emerged at the beginning of the 1970s as a further focus of the political challenge of poverty and came into the appeal.

With the contributions increasing, it was felt that churches needed to understand how and where the money was being used. A new programme called Commitment for Life was introduced to the churches. In partnership with Christian Aid four areas were chosen where there were Council for World Mission (CWM) and World Council of Churches (WCC) links. In those early years, Commitment for Life did not progress as planned and so was restructured ready for a relaunch in 1992.

In that year, General Assembly stated: 'Commitment for Life is offered to the Assembly, congregations and members of the United Reformed Church as a challenge and an invitation, one way of expressing our obedience to the words of Jesus as we follow in his way, our solidarity in the Spirit with our partners and the poor with whom they are striving for justice, and our faith in the God of hope, of peace, of love.'

Vision, mission and aim for Commitment for Life

Commitment for Life's **vision** is to see the United Reformed Church play a full part in working for justice in the world, recognising that change starts with each of us.

Its **mission** is to encourage all United Reformed Churches and Local Ecumenical Partnerships to take action and pray for people across the world so that we can make a difference in the lives of some of the world's poorest people.

Its **aim** is to deepen the response of congregations through education, worship and action for long term development.

Aims and objectives for partnership

To build a strong relationship between the URC and Christian Aid to develop a greater understanding of justice and development in the world and a deeper relationship with supporters in URC congregations.

To provide individuals and churches with opportunities to respond to the injustice in the world through prayer, actions and gifts as part of their spiritual life.

To forge a long-term partnership between Christian Aid programmes and URC churches which helps them to deepen understanding of the process of sustainable development and address systemic injustice.

To enable Christian Aid partners and beneficiaries to feel a connection of solidarity through the commitment, prayers and gifts from Commitment for Life supporters.

To ensure Commitment for Life is the strongest, fullest and recommended way for United Reformed Churches to support Christian Aid.

Part II

Structure of Commitment for Life

The programme is managed by a URC staff member, supported by a volunteer reference group, who reports to the Mission Committee. Additional support is provided by a network of synod and global advocates and church link people across England, Scotland and Wales.

Finances

- Contributions are received by the programme officer. The URC has responsibility for processing all contributions
- Of the money raised, currently Christian Aid receives 75% of the total. Global Justice Now receive 5% and the remaining 20% is used for education and administration of the scheme by the URC
- Christian Aid's allocation is divided evenly across the four country areas
- The cost of resources produced by Christian Aid will be divided equally between CfL and CA
- Any additional resources are the responsibility of CfL.

The URC's responsibilities

The URC will be responsible for:

- keeping records of church and individual donations
- managing the mailing of resources to churches
- working with volunteers to promote and encourage participation in synods and churches.
- having stories checked for 'fact and tact' by Christian Aid
- coordinating the signing of CAW endorsement letter by moderators of General Assembly for mailing
- working closely with the Christian Aid link person on design and content for resources
- sending the CA share each month.

Wider Church/denomination commitments

Recognising the importance of this partnership agreement and the unique role of CfL, the URC will promote Commitment for Life beyond just the supporting churches by:

- Sending worship resources to all churches and synods every year
- Organising Commitment for Life slots at the Councils of the Church
- Using media and social media platforms to regularly promote Commitment for Life news, stories, updates and resources
- Promoting Christian Aid Week and Christian Aid Campaigns to wider churches.

Christian Aid's commitments

Staffing

Christian Aid will provide a dedicated staff member with responsibility for Commitment for Life. This will be, as far as possible, a long-term project or role to allow for good working relationships which help Commitment for Life to flourish. As part of their role they will:

- Attend reference group meetings and produce such updates and reports as may be required
- Oversee the writing of content and production of resources
- Develop the relationship with Commitment for Life staff
- Maintain the working relationship with CA Country Programmes on CfL
- Promote and support CfL within Christian Aid
- Resource regional staff to engage and support United Reformed Churches with CfL resources
- Organise visits from/to partner countries as appropriate.

Country programmes

Christian Aid's country programmes in Bangladesh, Central America, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Zimbabwe are stakeholders in the Commitment for Life partnership. Their responsibilities include:

- Budgeting to spend their share of the Commitment for Life money on programmes. This is a code one offset and can be spent on any part of the partner programmes which need funding. This should be planned each year according to estimates provided by the Commitment for Life staff member in Christian Aid
- The country programmes will provide information and updates on the country programme three times a year for scheduled updates to churches. This will include case studies and photographs as well as general programme information
- Country programmes will be prepared to send extra information on emergency appeals within the programme or campaigns specific to the country programme when applicable in order to provide updates to CfL churches.

Joint responsibilities

- Share useful data on Commitment for Life in line with GDPR guidelines
- Work together on Christian Aid campaigns by promoting campaign resources and encouraging churches and individuals to take action
- Develop a new legacy campaign
- Strengthen the relationship between URC Youth and the Christian Aid Collective.
- Provide a joint communications plan between CA and URC media teams to promote CfL
- Meet every two years to recognise successes and share concerns between senior staff
- It is the joint responsibility of Christian Aid and the URC to consider Commitment for Life when planning promotion of other appeals and communications, particularly denominational letters and media advertising. Commitment for Life staff should be consulted about any such promotions in good time.

Review

This agreement will be reviewed every two years at the senior staff meeting. If necessary, changes can be made in the time between these review meetings with agreement between the relevant URC and Christian Aid staff.

Linda Mead – URC

Charlotte Scott – Christian Aid

Started May 2018

Approved by Christian Aid directorate September 2018

Approved by Mission Committee September 2018

Seeking Approval by CforL reference group October 2018

Seeking approval by Christian Aid Country managers

Recognised by Mission Council, November 2018