**MEMORIAL TO 2024 CONFERENCE**

TheYorkshire North and East District Synod requests the Methodist Conference to direct the Global Relations Committee and the Strategy and Resources Committee to provide a full explanation of the rationale by which the Ordained Mission Partner Programme was chosen to be continued and the Lay Mission Partner Programme was chosen to be closed.

This should include amongst other relevant factors and documents:

1. The mission theology which was used to make this distinction;

2. A copy of the advisory mission-theological paper, which was submitted to the committee to help make this decision;

3. An identification of the ‘place’ in the financial decision making process where the action was taken to set aside reserves for the continuation of the Ordained Mission Partner Programme but not to set aside reserves for the continuance of the Lay Mission Partner Programme;

4. Whether that decision making ‘place’ was a committee, an executive individual or some other body;

5. The financial projections of reserves and future programme costs, which was used for the decision;

6. Any other relevant material.

**Background to this Memorial**

In 2010 the World Church Office of the Methodist Church organised a Conference to help the Church work out the future of our relationships with our partner countries.

The 2010 Conference received the report of the All Partners Consultation (APC) and directed the Secretary for External Relationships to set up a working party with clear terms of reference, to report back to the 2012 Conference.

The Conference directs the Secretary for External Relationships to set up a working party to:

i. Explore how best to take forward and build upon the conversations initiated at the Consultation (at local, national, and international levels of the Church).

ii. Make specific recommendations regarding the future of the Methodist Missionary Society in the light of those conversations.

iii. Consider how the Methodist Church in Britain might explore with partners the best structure through which our ongoing and future mission partnerships might develop.

In 2012 the report which came before the Methodist Conference concluded

This report embodies and expresses the belief that the Methodist Church in Britain is called to participate in God’s mission to the world. It asserts the understanding that this mission is one in which work at home and overseas is essentially the same mission. It expresses the intention to work with partners, at home and across the world, to engage with God in this mission. The work of the APC in 2010 took the Methodist Church in Britain further in our thinking about mission in the twenty-first century than we had dared to hope. The Consultation was an oasis on our journey together; it is only as participants returned home that the work began. We now have to embody the outcomes of the Consultation in the life of the Methodist Church in Britain. In so committing ourselves, we acknowledge that some aspects of our work will need to come to an end in order that others can be brought to birth.

Given the vision this report proposes for mission in the Methodist Church in Britain in the twenty-first century, the group believes that this is an opportunity for the whole Church to be motivated and confident in sharing God’s love, both locally and globally. As Methodists we celebrate being part of a worldwide family. Together, we are confronted by an awe-inspiring vision that knows this world is transformed by God’s love. We accept that the time is right to embrace a new future for our Church, in mission, with hope and anticipation.

So World Church Relations were ready for changes but no one envisaged that these changes would include the making redundant of lay mission partners, who are involved in amazing work across our needy world.

**The Work of Lay Mission Partners**

There are currently only nine lay Mission Partners listed in the Prayer Handbook but there is no doubt they all make a significant contribution. Among the LMPs there is considerable hurt, dismay and disquiet about the way this is being done and the brevity of the time-frame which has serious implications for their futures in many ways – employment, pensions etc.

 Two examples:

Our District has a link with Zambia where **Rev Malcolm Oliver and Gina Siatwinda-Oliver**are serving as an Accompanying Volunteer and Mission Partner, with their daughters Luyando and Chipo.  Since September 2021 Gina has been working as the Health Secretary with the United Church of Zambia and as a joint Mission Partner with the Church of Scotland. Gina’s work includes administering and visiting an increasing number of UCZ supported hospitals and clinics.

It is iniquitous that our own NHS is recruiting many nurses from countries like Zambia but by sending people like Gina to work in the beleaguered health system of a poor country like Zambia, it is a small way in which we are addressing the balance.

**Another example of lay mission partner work is that of Fiona Kendall in Italy** who works with Mediterranean Hope. Mediterranean Hope (MH) is the refugee and migrant programme of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy, funded in large part by the Otto Per Mille tax allocation of the Waldensian Evangelical Church – Union of Methodist and Waldensian Churches, and by other Italian and foreign Protestant churches and donors, such as the British Methodist Church, where we have a lay Mission Partner, Fiona Kendall. MH was established in the aftermath of the shipwreck of 3 October 2013 when, a few miles from the island of Lampedusa, 368 people died in the attempt to reach Italy across the Mediterranean Sea.
MH aims to support migrants with their right to migrate, applications for protection, self- determination, solidarity activities, reception, implementation of safe and legal pathways, advocacy, and awareness-raising on issues of social justice, rights and discrimination. MH operates in various border areas working with local communities, churches, civil society and institutions. It is a project from which there is much to learn. It does not have an obvious place for an ordained person. But a classic site for mutually helpful partnership for a lay person which addresses one of the most important issues facing Europe and the rest of the world as authoritarian nationalism increases and migration, already huge, increases even more under the influence of climate change.

**At Conference 2023 it was decided that**

The Methodist Council agreed the following changes to the mission partner programme:

• The Mission Partner programme should continue for ordained persons of the MCB and MCI.

• The Mission Partner programme should phase out the employment of

lay Mission Partners and explore the potential of other pathways for

lay people to serve overseas in the future (see below). All lay MCB and

MCI Mission Partners solely employed by MCB should be put at risk of

redundancy before August 2024. This should be done in consultation.

with receiving churches and Mission Partners to provide prayerful and

appropriate care.

• Where we jointly send lay Mission Partners with other Churches or

organisations, conversations will be initiated or continued regarding the

viability MCB’s future support of the role.

• The GRC will explore pathways for lay people with a vocation as Mission

Partners and continue to work with partners to share opportunities that

provide pathways for lay people to serve overseas.

• Mission Partners, as far as is possible, should receive an equal stipend to their colleagues in their placement when in placement. Partner Churches and Organisations should be asked to confirm that someone from outside the country would have the means to live on such an income (without land/ family support in the country of placement), and, upon advice from the Partner Church or Organisation, a supplement could be paid. When in Britain or Ireland on furlough, in training, or on authorised leave, Mission Partners should continue to receive the basic MCB ministerial stipend.

• Partner Churches and Organisations who receive ordained Mission Partners should, where appropriate, be asked if they are prepared to pay for, or contribute towards, the Mission Partner’s stipend and other costs when in placement.

• Mission Partners will continue to receive the benefits that are currently

accorded to them, including but not limited to medical costs, authorised

flights, and furlough accommodation support.

**The Concerns**

1. What is the rationale for this decision?
2. If it is financial, then where in the process did the decision to set aside reserves for the continuation of the Ordained Mission Partner Programme but not to set aside reserves for the continuance of the Lay Mission Partner Programme;
3. In a church which also adopted the Justice Seeking Church report , how can it be just to make lay people redundant ?
4. In a church which upholds the priesthood of all believers, how can we be treating lay people differently from ordained people?