

Connexional One Mission Forum

In the beginning or from the beginning, there was Mission & it was divided into Home or in Britain & Away or the rest of the world. And there were enthusiasts & fun raisers for both & it was good!

But now it is even better, for we as Methodists acknowledge what we always knew, that as God is one so is God's mission. Where God is, then there is God's Mission & God invites each of us to join in. Worship & mission are indivisible; if we do both then we respond to God's grace freely offered & allow it to change us & the world.

The stories will continue to be told as well as information & education offered, to aid our praying & giving. AND we can still realise our particular enthusiasm by giving to Home or Away or both!

Representatives from across the Connexion & from the Irish Methodist Church brought their enthusiasms for evangelism, the world church, MWiB, chaplaincy work, including chaplains to the racing community & a casino & Methodists for World Mission to the first ONE MISSION FORUM. Conversation was based squarely around Our Calling & Priorities as Methodists.
(a reminder of this at the foot)

Migration provided a focus. We travelled via Skype to Lampedusa, where we met Roy Crowder (Partnership Co-ordinator Europe.) & the Rev'd Ashley Cooper alongside Presidente Alessandra Trotta of OPCEMI, (Italian Methodist & Waldensian Church) & many volunteers who were welcoming & supporting immigrants.

Lampedusa, is an island off Sicily, with a population of approx. 5,000, that has received around 26,000 migrants in the past year.

Here is "Mediterranean Hope" where Methodists in cooperation with other people of faith make these visitors welcome beginning in Lampedusa & now extending throughout Italy.

Read more: <https://mediterraneanhope.wordpress.com/english-version>



In October 3rd, 2013 368 migrants drowned a few metres from the coast of Lampedusa. This was a turning point that converted our perspective about intervention towards a broad ranged coordinated advocacy. We started:

- *Recognising the neighbours instead of fearing the stranger*
- *Caring about people instead of statistics and speaking of migrants rather than migration;*
- *Starting from what we can do*
- *Offering our churches as points of reference for every person & association willing to contribute*
- *Supporting & connecting churches that accept being involved*
- *Promoting a policy of integration able to involve whoever arrives in a new democratic covenant of citizenship & to look at strangers as a resource for the development of our country & for Europe instead of a problem; asking for a new policy & new juridical tools to face the new extraordinary situation.*



The Church is the largest transnational organisation on a migrant's journey, how can we respond?

After the 'Skype' conversation we spent some time hearing what the church in Britain is doing. It is proposed that ONE volunteers from MCB to spend time in Lampedusa.

Feed back included: Church bodies are putting pressure on politicians – information & advice is available from the Joint Public Issues Team, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Conference of European Churches, Churches Commission on Migrants in Europe.

Churches in many areas have contacted local councils offering support with migrants/refugees being housed; Circuits or ecumenical groupings collecting & transporting supplies to Calais; Church members working with local asylum seekers & refugees groups or cities of sanctuary.

Many autumn synods had spent time sharing local information & initiatives.

Birmingham Methodist Churches & Citizens UK successfully campaign to win promise of 50 homes for refugees from the local council

<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/your-church-stories-birmingham/>

Wesley Hall Methodist Church, Blackburn's Asylum and Refugee Community centre, set up 11 years ago, continuing to offer support through the asylum application process and afterwards

<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/your-church-stories-the-asylum-and-refugee-community/>

Fleet Methodist Church receives donations to be sent to the Calais refugee camps – a typical involvement.

<http://www.gethampshire.co.uk/news/local-news/refugee-crisis-fleet-collection-held-10026816>

Growing solidarity with Syrian refugees in the Shetland Islands churches, raising money, awareness and an openness to welcome people

<http://www.shetnews.co.uk/news/11451-growing-solidarity-with-syrian-refugees>

York Methodist churches will also offer to house a refugee family

http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/13771876.York_churches_offer_property_to_refugee_family

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The forum also discussed our "Mission in a district/local context"

Topics included: Partnerships throughout the world; refugees & migrants, hospitality; bringing people on to church premises; finding opportunities/potential to engage/hear & share stories.

Opening up space, time to engage with people: making buildings fit for the purpose, inviting people in/ letting out property seen as mission! –but do the know "where they are" – making a focal point – to fit the incomers.

Church on margins/edge – what difference does it make/ passers-by not aware what building is?

Dementia friendly communities. Dementia Friendly Church MWiB/MHA partnership – Circuits give one pack free to every church. MHA Live-at-home scheme. Holiday at home – local churches;

Church hospitality tents at fairs, free tea and coffee & toilets!

Tea and coffee at cemeteries at Christmas.

Job Club in partnership with CAP & Job Centre.

Chaplaincy Everywhere – training.

Our final task was to consider how we might Communicate One Mission

We have the chance to do things differently- to 'think outside the box' !

We meet again in April.

Elaine Robinson

Our Calling

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

Worship

- The Church exists to increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love.

Learning and Caring

- The Church exists to help people to learn and grow as Christians, through mutual support and care.

Service

- The Church exists to be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice.

Evangelism

- The Church exists to make more followers of Jesus Christ.

Priorities for the Methodist Church

In partnership with others wherever possible, the Methodist Church will concentrate its prayers, resources, imagination and commitments on this priority:

- **To proclaim and affirm its conviction of God's love in Christ, for us and for all the world; and renew confidence in God's presence and action in the world and in the Church**

As ways towards realising this priority, the Methodist Church will give particular attention to the following:

- **Underpinning everything we do with God - centred worship and prayer**
- **Supporting community development and action for justice, especially among the most deprived and poor - in Britain and worldwide**
- **Developing confidence in evangelism and in the capacity to speak of God and faith in ways that make sense to all involved**
- **Encouraging fresh ways of being Church**
- **Nurturing a culture in the Church which is people-centred and flexible**