



MILTON KEYNES MISSION PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of the Mission Partnership Assembly which took place on
Wednesday 25th November 2020 via Zoom

There were 52 Attendees:

Adrian Prisk <i>(MKMP Treasurer)</i>	Enid Chappell	Mike Davidge
Alison Drury <i>(MKMP Chair of Trustees)</i>	Hilda Kirkwood	Muriel Moffoot
Angela Miller	Irena Nickel	Nicola Martyn-Beck
Ann Beaton	Irene Farr	Paul Smith
Ann Harris <i>(Minutes)</i>	Jan Weatherley	Rod Ruston
Anne Jones	Jane Sellers	Ruth Iley
Ayo Audu	Janet Nelsey	Ruth Maxey
Barry Lotz	Jo Baker	Stephen Norrish
Beryl Spikings	John Robertson <i>(MKMP DEM)</i>	Stephen Roberts
Carolyn Marshall	Joseph Vinod	Stuart Kean
Carolyn Sanderson	June Holden	Sue Robertson
Catherine Butt	Kim Weston	Susan Gander
Chris Batten	Linda Kirk	Susan Jackson
Chris Linford	Lynn Castle	Wendy Carey
David Hart	Maggie Greaves	
David Miller	Maggie Prisk	
David Thom	Mary Borrett	
Douglas Sellers	Mary O'Neale	
Elisabeth Clarke	Matt Trendall	

Apologies:

Jenny Bond		
Mike Morris (Rev)		

1. **Opening Worship** was led by Matt Trendall

2. **Business** – Alison Drury

- a) Minutes of the last meeting held on 7th July 2020 will be approved at the next AGM in Summer 2021.
- b) Ecumenical Oversight News - John Robertson
Most of EOG's time recently has been spent on the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and work on this continues. A meeting took place with the LEP Leadership to obtain legal advice regarding the CIO. The main CIO document has been lodged with the Charity Commission and we are waiting for them to give approval. We are still working to the deadline date of 31.03.21.
- c) Date of next Assembly: The date of the next Assembly is to be advised (likely March 2021).

3. **Crisis, Challenge & Commitment.....responding to Covid 19** – John Robertson

There is no question that we are in a crisis: a crisis brought on by **Covid**, but also a crisis with a history apart from Covid.

In one sense, of course, there is light at the end of the tunnel: there are vaccines. But there is already loss of livelihood, loss of life. There is huge **disruption** not just to the economy, but to individual mental health. The legacy of debt, unemployment, loneliness is already clear. And on this day, White Ribbon Day, the international day for the elimination of violence against women, we should especially note the huge rise in domestic violence and the damage to lives that represents, not least here in Milton Keynes.

And be in no doubt, **resources are stretched** and will become more so. Not just the resources of the public purse, where the national debt is rising to significant levels, but the resources of the Church.

This is a major **challenge** for all of us. Not a challenge for someone else, the government, the Council, the Church, but for each one of us, each one of us personally. It requires us to step up to the plate. But if it is a challenge, it is also an **opportunity**. It is an opportunity to **focus on the core of our Christian faith**, to do those things which we have always known were central and important, but somehow we never quite attended to as we meant; to strip away the baggage that we carry, and draw on the true wellspring of our lives. It is an opportunity for what we might call intentional discipleship.

And that requires **commitment**, commitment which can be expressed in four serious questions:

- *What will you do to strengthen your roots?*
- *How are you going to develop your Christian character?*
- *Who will you work with?*
- *What will you do to bear fruit?*

We are going to look at each of these four questions in turn this evening in small breakout groups with the help of some short passages from the letter to the Colossians.

Passage 1:

*“My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.....
So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”*
Col.2vv 2,3,6,7

Question: ***What will you do to strengthen your roots?***

This is the first question of any intentional discipleship. Whatever you may have done or not done previously, what are you going to do **now** to strengthen those roots? It might be about a fresh commitment to pray, or about a deliberate attempt to understand faith more, to join a home group or even start something up. It could be about allowing others to hold you to your resolutions, it could be about naming the excuses which get in the way and refusing to hide behind them any more. It will always be about a deep desire to know Jesus.

The attendees were then put into breakout rooms to discuss Passage 1.

Passage 2:

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts.”

Col.3vv 12-16

Question: ***How are you going to develop your Christian character? Who will you work with?***

You will remember from our last Assembly that we unearthed some key values which could guide our life together. But those values don’t simply drop out of the sky: they have to be worked at, they have to become part of who we are, and they have to be worked at together in what we’ve called “a community of character”. We are not alone in our discipleship, we need one another. Only where we experience that personal support from one another will we be able to find the courage and the inner resources to keep our intentions in discipleship alive. How do we go about developing our Christian character, about allowing God to shape

us to be more like Jesus? And probably the key question to unlock that “Who will you work with?” and with that how will you be supportive of one another?

The attendees were then put into their breakout rooms to discuss Passage 2.

Passage 3:

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.”

Col.1 vv9-10

Question: *What will you do to bear fruit?*

You will remember where we started with the world around us in crisis. Nothing that we offer in terms of our discipleship is for ourselves alone, it only really makes sense if it is offered for the sake of those around us. We are called to bear fruit, to respond to the need that we see, to take the sacrificial steps towards addressing the problems. We focus on the core of faith that it may strengthen us for service. What will you do, in practical, real terms to make a difference?

The attendees were then put into their breakout rooms to discuss Passage 3.

Feedback

- It was fruitful to put attendees into the same groups for all three breakout sessions.
- “I felt encouraged, supported and strengthened.”
- The small breakout groups were very useful. They were the right amount of time, not too long.
- This allows you to build on what has been said before.
- Regarding who you will work with:
 - you will work with the people the Lord puts you with in the breakout rooms.
 - you will not work with people who are like yourself.

JR noted you can’t develop character without being with people who aren’t like you.

- We have a propensity to be impatient and unkind. We must cut others some slack.

JR noted it is important to hold one another to account over how we behave.

- It’s not about niceness. We can suffer from that in church.
- We are tired. We don’t have to pick up everything we used to do.

JR noted simplicity came out strongly at the last Assembly and the ‘Crisis What Crisis?’ coMPass course.

- The Archbishop of York has also been talking about simplicity.
- Working with the Muslim faith is taking place through Citizens:MK.

Next Steps

- We need to keep this conversation about intentional discipleship alive. Don't be shy about sharing.
- We have an offer of some reflections on Colossians on the website which you might like to use during Advent as part of that being rooted in Christ.
- Barry Lotz is going to be running a compass course on Colossians during Spring 2021.

These will be new inventive ways of looking at it.

- Is there an interest in developing what we have experienced this evening through being part of a collection of small groups = intentional communities? This could be an existing group, a new group within your church or a group across the Mission Partnership. If there is sufficient interest we will put time, energy and support into making that happen.
- We are looking to put on an event in January to follow up this evening.

A **poll** then took place asking: *Would you like to be part of a group for intentional discipleship?*

The results were:

Within my own church – 31%

Through Mission Partnership – 60%

I am already – 17%

John thanked everyone for their interest in this. Hopefully we can build on the warmth shown by those who spoke this evening.

4. Closing Prayer

The meeting closed in Prayer.

