

## Methodist Conference: Definition of Marriage to be Re-considered

At this year's Methodist Conference, the Church has agreed to reconsider its understanding of marriage. This does not necessarily mean that there will be a change of definition, but the Church wishes to re-examine its understanding through a period of theological and scriptural reflection. The marriage of same sex couples in Methodist churches *could* then become possible, following the Conference of 2018.



Many supporters of Outcome took part in conversations held in Circuits and Districts earlier this year which informed the Task Group's report to Conference. (It is thought that around 8,000 Methodists have taken part in these conversations).

The report also included new guidance on homophobia and a commitment to do more work on the full inclusion

of transgender people within the Church. The full report can be accessed via the Methodist Church website. [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk)

Outcome's stall in the exhibition space at Conference was busy throughout the week with a wide range of enquiries and a number of new people signed up to our mailing list. Friends and supporters also caught up over a pint at an informal fringe meeting held on the Monday evening. Copies of our '2020 Vision' strategy leaflet were distributed to all representatives through the Conference 'goody bags.'

## Strategy Update

Our Co-ordinating Group met earlier this month to take a fresh look at our '2020 Vision' strategy. We are now updating our immediate priorities for the coming year – a piece of work which will take us a few more weeks to complete. We are discussing a more regionally-based approach to developing our supporter base around the Connexion and also creating links with the Discipleship, Ministries and Learning Networks (DMLNs). We are considering a more formal constitution for the group to put our work on a surer footing and a refresh of our website. A fuller update will be provided in our next newsletter.



## Public Meeting

Around 20 people gathered at Park Methodist Church Bristol on 29th May for our annual study day and AGM. Our day was titled: 'Of Sacred Worth'.

We were led in worship by Rev Steve Wild, President of Conference and Rev Jonathan Pye, Chair of the Bristol District.



Steve preached about the 'in-between times'. He reflected on a number of experiences he had as he was travelling, often by train, between his official appointments. He spoke of people he met on his travels who touched him. Some whom he met were able to accept a small cross, made by someone in his District. He spoke of the presence of God in so many places as he travelled around the Connexion.

Following lunch, a series of workshops were held, including an art and craft workshop, creating things on the theme of 'Sacred Worth' and another exploring the theology of 'coming out.'

Finally, our AGM took place. We discussed a variety of things, including our need for better communication around the Districts, the variable experiences of people who had been engaged in the Marriage and Relationships conversations and how we can best be a supportive and challenging organisation within Methodism.

Our Co-ordinating Group was elected for the year ahead: Barbara (Convenor), Roger (Finance), Peter (Secretary), Leonora, Karl and Phil (Communications).

## Open Church: Towards an Inclusive Future

Members of our Co-ordinating Group attended the 'Open Church' event organised by Oasis at the end of June. The Conference was held to explore how churches can become safe havens of welcome and healing for LGBT people. The gathering addressed issues around exclusion and mental health and looked at how theology and scripture can be used as tools of inclusion. Keynote speakers included Ruth Hunt (CEO, Stonewall); Steve Chalke (Oasis Founder) and Sally Hitchener (Founder of Diverse Church).

## Events: Save the Date

We are currently finalising both the dates and facilitator for our **Annual Retreat**. We hope that this will be held in Manchester at the end of January or the start of February. We will send a separate communication about this in the coming weeks.

**Yorkshire Regional Event:** 'Pride in Diversity' Conference. Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May in Harrogate.

**Public Meeting with the President of Conference,** Rev. Roger Walton, Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June in Harrogate. If there are particular workshop themes you would like us to facilitate during the afternoon, please let us know.

## Donations

In the past year we have incurred more costs related to events and communications. Consequently, our finances are a little depleted. Any donations are always gratefully received. Account name: Outcome. Sort code: 60-17-27. Account number: 50602578.

## LGBT+ Retreat

Christ In The Rainbow: an Advent Retreat for LGBT+ people. Led by Urs Mattmann, 16-18<sup>th</sup> December 2016. Full details available at [www.hollandhouse.org](http://www.hollandhouse.org). Alternatively, email [outcomeonline@outlook.com](mailto:outcomeonline@outlook.com) for a copy of the flyer.