

About thirty representatives of a range of bodies and constituencies met at Cliff College from 26 to 27 October 2016 for a consultation on spirituality in the Methodist Church. The consultation was held under the auspices of the Methodist Church's Connexional Learning Network and was facilitated by Edel McClean, Learning & Development officer in the North West & Mann team, and previously retreat leader and spiritual director at Loyola Hall. In calling the consultation it was recognised that there is a great deal of significant work with spirituality which is happening within British Methodism but there is a need for communication and collaboration between those who are engaged in developing and deepening spirituality.

Over the 24 hours of the consultation there was a real sense of common purpose among the diverse range of the participants. The consultation agreed to adopt a working definition of spirituality as, 'The lived experience of God, present in our world, and active in our lives'. Practical courses of action were identified and were evaluated according to their potential impact and the amount of energy they would require in order to make them happen. The consultation then agreed on a set of priorities for action in order to achieve the aim of raising the profile of spirituality within Methodism (including, especially, prayer) and integrating it into all aspects of the life of the Methodist Church. These included,

- holding a conference to bring spirituality into focus, and establishing communities of practitioners who will address the development of spirituality in a concerted way;
- setting up a website and producing other promotional material to foster the development of spirituality;
- realising the simplicity and power of story by telling authentic stories of real people meeting God – and their continuing messy stories – as well as daring all to participate in sharing their stories;
- rethinking the assumption that people already know how to pray;
- spreading an understanding of what Methodist spirituality is;
- involving church leaders, local preachers, pastoral visitors, small group leaders, and others, in the agenda of promoting spirituality in the Methodist Church.

Amongst the participants in the consultation was Jill Baker, Vice-President-Elect of Conference. Jill will no doubt have a key role in taking forward the outcomes of the consultation. It is significant also that the President-Elect is Revd Loraine Mellor – someone with a strong commitment to mission – as one of the themes which was recognised in the consultation was the importance of the link between spirituality and mission.

Tony Moodie