

# Paper B2

## The Five Marks of the Faith in Action Team

### Faith in Action Committee

#### Basic information

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<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Resolution 6</b> <b>General Assembly commends this paper and encourages next steps to be taken in developing this work within the Faith in Action Team and beyond, as appropriate.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Initially this is proposing a framework for the new Faith in Action team, to support its work and help to set priorities.
<b>Main points</b>	Using a framework based on the Five Marks of Mission and adapting it for the work of the Faith in Action team, helping the team to ensure coverage of all areas related to discipleship and mission.  Possibly leading on to seeing how other teams or groups could adapt this framework to prioritise their work.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The Faith in Action Committee and Team The Senior Leadership Team The Director of Strategy and Programmes

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	None beyond current budget allocation
<b>External (eg ecumenical)</b>	As it is a development of the Five Marks of Mission, which are ecumenical in their offering, there may be the chance to share this way of working in the future.

**The Faith in Action Team came together in September 2025, following the restructure of the Offices of the General Assembly, combining the work of the Mission and Discipleship Teams.**

**This paper proposes exploring building on the Five Marks of Mission as a shared framework for the Faith in Action (FiA) Team, drawing together our current work in a coherent, holistic way, helping us set priorities, creating the Five Marks of the Faith in Action Team.**

## **Background and context**

Over recent years, the URC has engaged in multiple vision and review processes, programmes and initiatives (Vision4Life, Vision 2020, Walking the Way, the Theos Report and its outworkings, including the Church Life Review and Church Life Fund). Alongside this, the FiA Team is responding to a wide range of General Assembly resolutions (e.g. Legacies of Slavery, ecumenism, Church at the Margins, new Communities of Discipleship and Worship, the environment and Net Zero, children and young people, Discipleship Development).

There is a need for a broad, descriptive framework to clarify the work of the Faith in Action Team and how we speak about it. This need is endorsed by the Faith in Action Committee.

## **Key insights on mission and discipleship**

- Joining in with God's life-giving activity is a journey, not a destination
- Worship is the central expression of our church life
- Evangelism and witness are key to our calling as followers of Jesus
- Discipleship is understood as growth and lifelong learning through participation in God's work on earth
- We are called by God to address issues of social action and injustice
- Authentically welcoming churches can transform communities

## **The Five Marks**

- The Five Marks of Mission were adopted by the URC in 1999 (*Growing Up*).
- In 2024, the Worship, Faith and Order Committee noted this history and explored the Revd Dr Graham Adams' ecological and liberationist reworking, including through Mission Committee discussions and Daily Devotions
- Further work is underway to make the language more explicitly URC-friendly, though this is not yet finalised
- In practice, the Marks (often summarised as Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform, Treasure) are a memorable, helpful, accessible tool, especially when presented holistically rather than as a hierarchy

## **Proposal**

The Faith in Action Team is already working across all five marks.

The proposal is to use the Five Marks as:

- A unifying framework through which existing and future work is decided and described
- An evaluative lens to ensure breadth of coverage across the team's activity

- A way to encourage holistic, ecumenical, and contextual thinking
- An integrated tool, among others, for governance, operations, and communications

### **Why this matters now**

- There has been a tendency to split our work into Mission and Discipleship. This framework leads us to unpack the words and work more collaboratively
- Since the restructure and the creation of the new Faith in Action team, there has been a desire for clarity around the priorities of our work and this framework offers this
- Research suggests particular strengths in *Tend* and *Transform*, with relative weakness in *Tell* and *Teach*, leading to challenges for local churches in connecting social action with explicit Jesus-centred faith
- We are looking to carry out a consultation around Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging, and engaging with Church with people at the Margins, and this all feels part of the journey

### **The Five Marks** (revised for our use, by the Faith in Action Team)

TELL – the good news of Jesus

TREASURE – the whole of creation

TRANSFORM – unjust structures

TEND – to the needs of others

TEACH – faith, hope and love

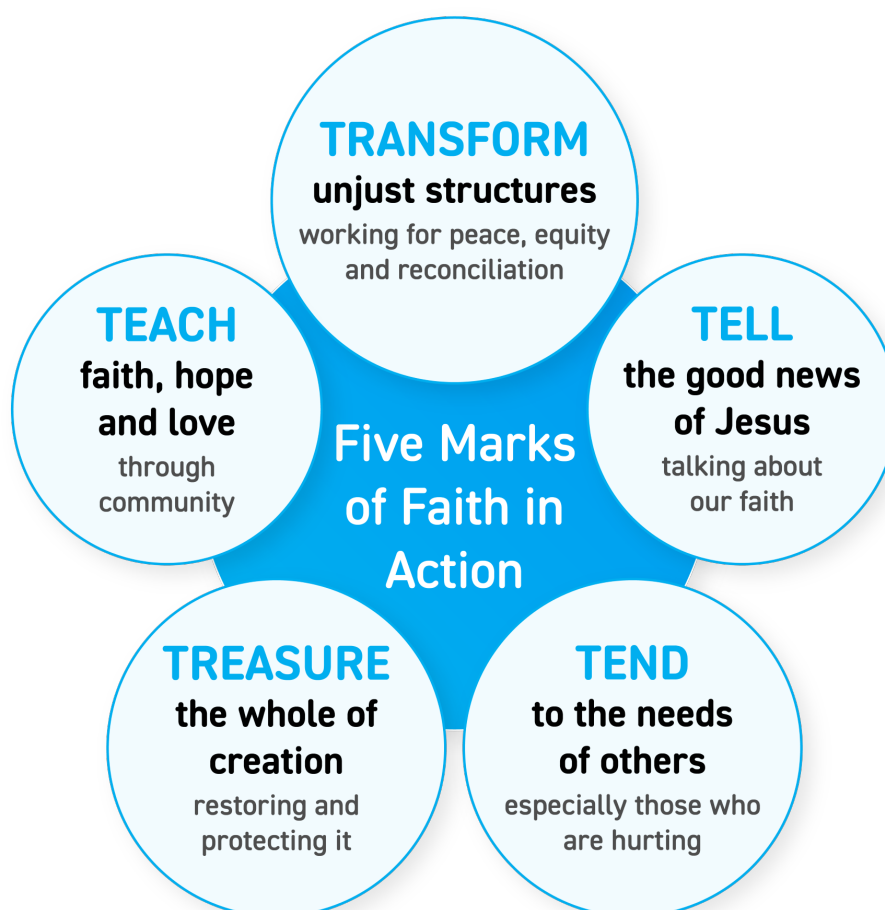
*TELL – talking about our faith*

*TREASURE – restoring and protecting it*

*TRANSFORM – working for peace, equity and reconciliation*

*TEND – especially those who are hurting*

*TEACH – through community*



## Next steps for consideration

- Further conversation within the Faith in Action Team and Committee to develop this thinking, and map the current work onto the Five Marks. This would particularly support the Team in deciding what to stop doing, what to continue and what new work to begin
- Exploring whether this approach could underpin work over the next five years
- Wider URC consultation with other committees around the application of the Five Marks way of working and the framework, to see if it has a wider application.

## Future suggestions

- A shared framework offered out more widely could help synods and churches “join the dots” as they engage in ministry and mission, without introducing a new strategy or initiative
- Develop a distinctively URC resource to support local congregations in engaging with the Five Marks
- Create or commission improved visual resources to support this approach.
- Encourage a shared language and joined-up approach to mission and discipleship across the Offices of General Assembly, synods and congregations, while remaining open to ecumenical, organisational, and intergenerational learning
- Review the framework within Faith in Action Team after a year to see if it achieves the focus and clarity anticipated

**The Faith in Action Team brings the resolution commending and encouraging this work to General Assembly as it continues to develop.**

## **APPENDICES 1-4**

### **Appendix 1**

There was a lot of discussion about Mission while we were preparing this paper and the Revd Dr John Bradbury, our General Secretary, fed this into the discussions and we thought it worth sharing.

#### *A Little Bit of Theology from our General Secretary*

Mission is a complicated word, and one we should use with care. It is superficially odd that the Latin translation of a Greek word in the New Testament primarily concerned with the procession of the Spirit from the Father, has become a Church term which can mean almost anything to do with the life of the Church. A word that can mean anything, can come to be meaningless if we're not careful. It has complex origins in life outside of the Church. In the early colonial period, countries had 'missions', which were essentially political colonial enterprises that they located in foreign countries they were colonising – one can see the Church use following that political colonial use, and not the other way around. There is a danger in using the word mission that we sideline other great words that call us to various aspects of the Christian life: being Apostolic, being Disciples, Evangelism, Witness and so on. It is also a word which tends to sideline Worship in popular usage. The first task of the Church is to glorify God in worship. One way of trying to diversify our use of language is to talk of the vocation of the Church being to: Worship, Witness, Evangelism and Service – but whilst this can be helpful, there is still a rich vocabulary bequeathed us in Christian history that we should enjoy and be challenged by.

### **Appendix 2**

#### **Education and Learning Committee. The Way Forward Paper**

#### **General Assembly 2020**

#### **Discipleship Development Strategy**

#### **Strategy summary**

*As God has loved you, so love the world and its people as you encounter them, with all the imagination, energy, wisdom and resources available to you.*

There are four intertwined aspects to this strategy, each of which have defined objectives and implementation tasks endorsed by Mission Council:

- Accounting for hope
- All are pilgrims on the journey
- Ask, seek, knock: God-given senses in the service of learning
- Bread for the journey, shared and replenished

#### **Accounting for hope**

Creating opportunities to encounter, develop a relationship with and enjoy a dynamic prayer life with, the living God.

#### **All are pilgrims on the journey**

Intended to address the realities of inequality (due to vocation, age, specific learning differences, economic or time poverty, culture, geography, etc) by emphasising equitable access to resources and opportunities.

#### **Ask, seek, knock: God-given senses in the service of learning**

Developing the necessary gifts, skills and aptitudes, as educators and learners, in order that we all continue to grow in our own vocation and discipleship.

### **Bread for the journey, shared and replenished**

Evolving our strategy to develop people and congregations through the continued equipping of all in leadership as facilitators of learning, identifying strengths and needs, and advocating policies to share resources in a spirit of generosity.

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Vision2020**

In 2010, the United Reformed Church adopted a ten-year strategic framework for mission called vision2020. Its aim was to encourage and support mission planning at every level of the Church: local, synod and Assembly. Vision2020 included ten priorities for mission and offered them to local churches to help them identify one or two mission priorities that were particularly relevant to their context.

We felt that this also speaks into this conversation, and we note here the ten priorities for mission:

#### **1. Spirituality and prayer**

We will grow in our practice of prayer and spirituality, nurturing strength for our witness to Jesus Christ, and developing our discernment of where God is and what God is calling us to do by reading and studying the Bible and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### **2. Identity**

The URC will be a Church where every local congregation will be able to say who they are, what they do and why they do it.

#### **3. Christian Ecumenical Partnerships**

We will be more confident in our identity, valuing the treasures of our tradition, discerning when to seek ecumenical partnerships, and when and how to seek the further unity of the Church.

#### **4. Community partnerships**

We will be a Church that is more active in the life of local neighbourhoods.

#### **5. Hospitality and diversity**

We will be a Church committed to becoming even more welcoming and hospitable, and embracing all people equally.

#### **6. Evangelism**

We will be more confident to engage in evangelism, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God with friends, families and strangers, through story and action.

#### **7. Church growth**

We will be a growing Church with an increasing membership.

#### **8. Global partnerships**

We will be a Church that is an active partner in God's global mission with other Churches around the world.

#### **9. Justice and peace**

We will be a Church committed to peace making and reconciliation that keeps faith with the poor and challenges injustice.

### **10. The integrity of creation**

We will be a Church that has taken significant steps to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

### **Appendix 4**

A Mission Creed was developed during the Vision 2020 work.

We have revised and adapted it for the Faith in Action Team in 2026.

### **The Faith in Action Team Creed.**

We believe in God's mission:  
breathing us into existence to delight in creation,  
reflecting God's diversity,  
intercultural, intergenerational and interdependent.

We believe in God's mission:  
bringing good news in person,  
reaching those on the margins,  
to co-create communities of faith, hope and love.

We believe in God's mission:  
righting injustice and putting faith into action,  
so that we might be at one with each other,  
and at peace in and with all creation.

We are commissioned  
by God: Creator, Saviour, Sustainer,  
source of the mission we seek to join,  
to be God's people in the world.