

57. Leading and Presiding: Developing the Presidency of the Conference

Basic Information

Title	Leading and Presiding: Developing the Presidency of the Conference [Report to the Conference of 2011]
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Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	Further recommendations of the working party in the light of responses to the consultation following the decisions of the Conference of 2010.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction ● Terms of Reference ● Summary of the 2010 report ● The Consultation Process ● The Anglican-Methodist Covenant ● The Next Steps ● Resolutions
Background Context and Relevant Documents	2010 Conference Report with the same title 2010 Daily Record 7/8/1-6
Impact	Deed of Union and Standing Order changes required

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1. The Conference of 2010 received a report on this subject, adopted some of its recommendations and referred other issues to the Synods and Youth Assembly for consideration and report in 2011 (Daily Record 7/8/3). This report summarises the main points of the 2010 report, lists in Appendix A the responses received, and proposes resolutions to take the issue further.

2. Terms of Reference

- 2.1 The working party was set up by the Methodist Council in response to a direction of the 2007 Conference with the following terms of reference:

to examine and report upon all aspects of the roles of President and Vice-President and how they work together and relate to the senior leadership of the Church, including:

- i) how the roles might be further developed;
- ii) how they might work more closely with the General Secretary of the Church/ Secretary of the Conference to present a shared vision and to enliven the Church;
- iii) the length of office of each;
- iv) the title of Vice-President. (2007 Daily Record 7/20/3)

- 2.2 The membership of the working party is given in Appendix B.

3. Summary of the 2010 report

The report can be summarised as follows.

- 3.1 The President and Vice-President are the chief officers of the Conference and represent its authority both within the Methodist Church and in the wider world. For that reason they are elected by the Conference, and their full title is 'President/Vice-President of the Conference'.

- 3.2 They are called to offer leadership to the Conference itself while it is in session, and to the wider Church throughout their year of office. While in some respects that leadership is parallel to the leadership expected of the General Secretary – to hold before the Church a vision of its calling and challenge and encourage it to respond to it – there are important differences. The General Secretary is directly responsible for the Connexional Team, for the coordination of connexional initiatives through the Connexional Leaders' Forum and for the delivery of agreed programmes. The President and Vice-President have no management responsibilities. They have an ambassadorial role and are free to travel widely in the Connexion, giving a sense of the wholeness to the parts and feeding back to connexional counsels their sense of local concerns. The President has authority when invited to do so to assist at any Synod and to enter any circuit, inquire into its affairs and recommend appropriate action. The President and Vice-President on the one hand and

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the General Secretary on the other have complementary ministries in the leadership of the Church. It is essential that there is collaboration between them.

- 3.3 One of the working party's principal recommendations was that the offices of President and Vice-President should be made more genuinely collaborative, thereby exemplifying a model of leadership for the whole Church. There is much collaboration at present, but it depends entirely upon goodwill and there is little explicit provision for it in Standing Orders. For example, the Vice-President regularly presides at the Conference, but technically only when permitted to do so by the President. The working party recommended that there should be constitutional provision for collaboration in a wide range of duties.
- 3.4 The report's recommendations that the Presidency should embody the collaborative nature of leadership and exercise a ministry complementary to that of the General Secretary were adopted by the 2010 Conference. Other recommendations, as already noted, were referred to the Synods and the Youth Assembly for consideration and report in 2011. Broadly, they address two issues: who should be members of the Presidency, and for how long should they serve?
- 3.5 The report was quite clear that for theological reasons primarily, but also for practical considerations, the

President should continue to be a presbyter. Our Doctrinal Standards in clause 4 of the Deed of Union make it plain that although gifts of ministry are shared by all the Lord's people, and presbyters do not have an exclusive title to the preaching of the gospel or the care of souls, they do have a principal and directing part in them. This is reflected throughout our polity, in districts, circuits and local churches. It is proper that this should also be the case in the leadership of the Conference. The distinctive contribution of the President to the Presidency, in the Conference and throughout the year, should be presbyteral, focusing on the ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral responsibility.

- 3.6 Another element in the provision proposed was a change in title from Vice-President to Co-President. There has been unease about the present title for some time. To many, especially outside Methodism, it implies that the Vice-President will become President in the following year, which is never the case. Suitable alternatives are not easy to find. 'Lay President', often canvassed, could imply that the officer is president only of the laity, whereas, like the President, he or she represents the whole Conference. Moreover 'Lay President' would automatically exclude deacons from holding the office. The working party therefore proposed the title 'Co-President'.

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3.7 There are many who feel that it is anomalous that the office of Vice-President should be open to deacons as well as lay people. It is often spoken of as 'the highest lay office in the Church'. It was for this reason that the report proposed that there should regularly be two Co-Presidents, one a deacon and the other a lay person, thus affirming both diaconate and laity, although it allowed that some might consider this inappropriate, either because of potential cost, or because of doubts about the number of candidates the Diaconal Order might be able to offer over time, or because it effectively reduced the lay contribution to Presidential leadership from one half to one third. The report therefore offered the Conference a choice between a three-person Presidency (presbyter, deacon and lay person) and a two-person version (presbyter and either a deacon or a lay person). That choice was referred to the Synods and Youth Assembly.

3.8 There have often been calls for the President to hold office for longer than one year (significantly the effect on the Vice-Presidency has rarely been considered in such calls). The report pointed out that one of the chief arguments for this – continuity in leadership – has been largely met in recent years by the introduction of the General Secretaryship. It also insisted that the hope that the media would take more notice of a longer-term President was unrealistic. It argued that whatever was decided

for the President should also apply to the Co-President(s). It laid out the arguments for and against a longer term and invited the Conference to decide. That choice was also referred to the Synods and Youth Assembly.

4. The Consultation Process

4.1 There have been protests that the time allowed for the consultation, one connexional year, was too short. The Conference of 2010 itself set the date for reporting back, and was presumably aware in doing so of the pressures that would be created for synod agendas. Synod Secretaries were alerted on the day of the 2010 vote that the item would be coming before the Synods, and a digest of the report was in print and available for distribution within two weeks. Some Synods in fact voted in the autumn, most delayed it to the spring. The working party has done its best to complete this report in the very short time remaining before publication.

4.2 The resolutions, as originally numbered, which the Synods and Youth Assembly were asked to report on are these, 8/3 and 8/4 being alternatives, as are 8/6, 8/7, and 8/8:

8/3 The Conference adopts the recommendation that the current offices of President and Vice-President be replaced by a Presidency as set out in section 7 of the report, consisting of a presbyteral President, a lay

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Co-President and a diaconal Co-President.

- 8/4 The Conference resolves that the current offices of President and Vice-President be replaced by a Presidency as set out in section 7 of the report, but consisting of a presbyteral President and a Co-President who may be either a lay person or a deacon.
- 8/6 The Conference resolves that each member of the Presidency shall hold office for three years, with one member being elected each year.
- 8/7 The Conference resolves that each member of the Presidency shall hold office for two years, with one member being elected each year.
- 8/8 The Conference resolves that the members of the Presidency shall each hold office for one year.

- 4.3 The results of the consultation are set out in Appendix A. It is clear that the majority of the Synods prefer a two-person Presidency, with the office of Co-President open either to a lay person or a deacon. It is also clear that the majority prefer the office to be held for one year as at present. The working party have therefore prepared resolutions to give effect to these preferences, and the Conference is invited to adopt them.
- 4.4 Some Synods raised other issues, such as whether the President need be a presbyter, which have been dealt with above. One asked why the Youth

President had not been included in the Presidency. There is no reason why a Youth President should not be nominated from time to time for election as Co-President, or if elected, hold office. But the members of the Presidency represent the whole Church, not a particular constituency, and are elected by the Conference. It would therefore be inappropriate for the Youth President to be *ex officio* a Co-President.

5. The Anglican-Methodist Covenant

- 5.1 The working party was grateful to have sight of the near-final draft of the report of the Joint Implementation Commission to the Conference and welcomes its comments on the working party's proposals. The working party did not set out to formulate proposals which would ease the introduction of personal episcopacy into Methodism (it was not part of its remit), but to propose a development of the Presidency consistent with Methodism's own traditions. It is confident however that its proposals would not make the introduction of episcopacy more difficult, if the Conference at some time should decide to take that step. It is glad to see that the Joint Implementation Commission believes the proposals can form the basis of future developments.

6. The Next Steps

- 6.1 If the Conference adopts the working party's current recommendation

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certain legislative steps need to be taken.

- 6.2 Changes are required to the Deed of Union. They are set out in resolution 57/3. If adopted it will count as a Special Resolution as defined by Standing Order 126, be subject to review in accordance with the advice of the Law and Polity Subcommittee and come back to the Conference of 2012 for confirmation.
- 6.3 The Conference of 2012 will also need to adopt extensive changes to Standing Orders. The advice of the Law and Polity Committee already given is that it would not be appropriate simply to have a blanket provision (of the kind, 'for "President" read "President and Co-President"') but that every reference to the President and Vice-President should be appropriately amended. Work on this is already in hand. But some changes are of greater substance, because they embody the working-party's chief proposals, and they are therefore offered to the Conference in draft in Resolution 57/4 for information. The Conference is invited to refer them to the Law and Polity Committee for any revision that may be required before being presented to the Conference of 2012.
- 6.4 The orders of induction currently used for the President and Vice-President will require revision so that they reflect the expectations of the revised

offices. Resolution 57/5 provides for this.

- 6.5 The question also arises whether the Co-President should not have the same opportunity of reflecting with the Conference on his or her year of office as currently exists for the President in the Ministerial Session. This would mean delaying the induction of the new officers to a later point in the Conference, possibly at the end. The matter was last considered in 1997 in the report *Senior Officers of the Conference* but was not proceeded with. Resolution 57/6 provides for this to be reconsidered.
- 6.6 In its 2010 report the working party suggested that the Co-President, while not a member of the Ministerial Session, should be invited annually by that Session to attend its meeting (apart from any closed session for disciplinary business) with authority to speak but without vote. The Ministerial Session has adopted this practice in the past, in order to benefit from the advice of lay connexional officers. Resolution 57/7 provides for this.
- 6.7 Finally in the legislative process following on the adoption of this report, the Conference of 2012 will need to determine the date at which elections for the new office of Co-President will be held and the other changes proposed will take effect.

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***RESOLUTIONS

57/1. The Conference receives the Report.

57/2. In the light of the discussions in the Synods and the Youth Assembly on resolutions 8/3, 8/4, 8/6, 8/7, and 8/8 of the 2010 report 'Leading and Presiding: Developing the Presidency of the Conference' the Conference resolves that the current office of Vice-President be replaced by the office of Co-President and that constitutional provision be made for the President and Co-President to work collaboratively according to the model of Presidential leadership set out in section 5 of that report and endorsed by the Conference of 2010.

57/3. The Conference amends the Deed of Union as follows:

14 (2) Membership. The Conference in its Representative Session shall comprise:

- (i) the persons who when it commences its sitting hold office as the President, ~~the Vice-President~~ **the Co-President** and the Secretary of the Conference;
- (ii) the persons who last held office as the President and ~~the Vice-President~~ **the Co-President**;
- (iii) the President-Designate, the ~~Vice-President-Designate~~ **Co-President-Designate** and (if any) the Secretary-Designate nominated by the last preceding Conference. [*other heads not amended*]

25A [Diaconal Committee]

- (b) [membership] (i) The President **and Co-President** of the Conference;
- (d) At every meeting of the committee the President **or the Co-President shall preside, or, if both are absent** if present shall preside. If the President is absent from any meeting, he or she shall appoint the Vice-President or a former President or Vice-President to preside, failing which the Warden or such other person as the committee may choose, shall during the **their** absence of the President preside.

26 The President. The President of the Conference shall be a minister and shall be elected by the Conference by a clear majority of the votes cast. He or she shall be designated at the preceding Conference by ballot and by a clear majority of the votes cast.

27 The Vice-President. Co-President. (a) There shall be a Vice-President **Co-President** of the Conference who shall be a lay member of the Methodist Church or deacon and shall be elected by the Conference by a clear majority of the votes cast. He or she shall be designated at the preceding Conference by ballot and by a clear majority of the votes cast.

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- (b) ***The Co-President shall be the Vice-President of the Conference for the purposes of the 1976 Act and any other Act or legal instrument.***

- 28 Who presides at the Conference.** (a) ~~At every meeting~~ ***The function of presiding at meetings of the Representative Session of the Conference is one to be shared between the President and the Co-President if present shall preside. While one only of them is present that one shall preside, and while both are present they shall preside alternately.*** ~~save that the President may at his or her absolute discretion, without leaving the Conference, invite the Vice-President to preside for such period as the President may determine.~~
- (b) If the President ***and the Co-President are*** ~~is~~ absent from any meeting of the Representative Session ***then the person who shall during such absence preside shall be:***
- (i) ***the person who has most recently held the substantive office of President or Co-President or Vice-President*** ~~the Vice-President shall during the absence of the President preside and if both are absent the ex-President, failing whom the ex-Vice-President, who has most recently held the substantive office and who is present and willing to act, and if two such persons are equally qualified the one whom the Conference may choose,~~ and
- (ii) ~~failing any such person then such other member of the Conference as the Conference may choose, shall during the absence of the President preside and act as President of the Conference and in each such case with all the powers rights and duties of the President.~~
- (c) ***At every meeting of the Ministerial Session the President shall preside. In the absence of the President*** ~~If the President is absent from any meeting of the Ministerial Session the ex-President who has most recently held the substantive office and who is present and willing to act, and failing any such person then such other member of the Conference (being a minister) as the Conference may choose shall during the~~ ***such*** ~~absence of the President preside and act as President of the Conference and in each such case with all the powers rights and duties of the President.~~
- (d) ***The person who presides over the Conference under the provisions of sub-clauses (a) to (c) of this clause shall during the period of such presidency act as the President with all the powers rights and duties of the President.***
- 29 The President and the Stations** (c) . . . a note thereof shall be entered in the current Journal kept under the superintendence of the Conference and shall be signed by the President, ***Co-President*** and Secretary . . .

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- 29A Exercise of Presidential Powers.** (a) *In order to ensure that so far as possible the powers and duties of the presidency are exercised collaboratively by the President and Co-President the Conference shall have power to direct by Standing Order that all or some, as specified, of the powers rights and duties of the President or a former President conferred by sub-clause (i) of clause 23, sub-clauses (b), (c) and (i) of clause 25A, clause 29 and (excepting the last sentence of sub-clause (c)) clause 42 of this Deed may be exercised from time to time by the Co-President or a former Co-President.*
- (b) *The exercise by the Co-President or former Co-President of any of the powers rights and duties of the President or former President under the provisions of sub-clause (a) of this clause shall be taken for all purposes as acts of the President or former President as the case may require.*
- 31 Duration of Office.** (a) The President, and ~~Vice-President~~ **Co-President** of the Conference shall take office upon election, and subject to the provisions of this clause shall continue in office until the election of their respective successors.
- (c) A casual vacancy arises in the office of President, ~~Vice-President~~ **Co-President** or Secretary of the Conference if the holder of the office dies or becomes incapable of acting or unfit to act or ceases to be a minister or member (as the case may be) of the Methodist Church and a prospective casual vacancy arises in the office of Secretary of the Conference if the Secretary-Elect dies or becomes incapable of acting or unfit to act or ceases to be such a minister.
- (e) Subject to sub-clauses (b) and (d) any such casual vacancy shall be filled by the substitution as President, ~~Vice-President~~ **Co-President** or Secretary of the Conference (as the case may be) of the person who has most recently held the relevant office and is qualified, able and willing to act.
- (i) If the President-Designate or ~~Vice-President-Designate~~ **Co-President-Designate** has died or is for any reason not appointed President or ~~Vice-~~ **Co-President** respectively the Conference shall determine its own procedure for the purpose of making the relevant appointments.
- (j) In relation to the provisions in sub-clause (c) concerning the incapacity or unfitness of the President, ~~Vice-President~~ **Co-President**, Secretary or Secretary-Elect of the Conference . . .
- 33 Meetings.** (b) In the case of great emergency, so judged by the President of the Conference, the Conference shall notwithstanding sub-clause (a) meet at such place and shall commence its sittings on such date in the year beginning on the 1st September next following the last preceding ordinary meeting of the Conference as the President of the Conference may, after consulting the ~~Vice-President~~ **Co-President** and Secretary of the Conference, direct.

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36 (c) [Journal to be signed] . . . shall be subscribed by the President, Vice-President **Co-President** and Secretary . . .

37 Publications. All Standing Orders adopted or amended and all other general resolutions passed by the Conference held in any year and such other parts of its proceedings as the Conference or its President, Secretary and (with respect to the Representative Session only) Vice-President **Co-President** may direct shall as soon as may be after its close be printed and published.

57/4. The Conference directs the Law and Polity Committee to consider the following proposed amendments to Standing Orders and, in consultation with the Working Party on the Offices of President and Vice-President, to present them, with any appropriate revisions, additions or omissions, and a full list of consequential amendments required to Standing Orders and Guidance to the Conference of 2012:

(i) Replace SO 110 [President and Vice-President] by the following:

President and Co-President.

- (1) *The President and the Co-President shall preside at the Conference and act as the representative embodiment of its authority as prescribed by the Deed of Union and in accordance with Standing Orders.***
- (2) *They shall play a significant part in the oversight and leadership of the Church in responding to God's Spirit and developing prophetic vision, offering to the Church a pattern of collaborative ministry in which the distinctive gifts and callings of presbyters, deacons and lay persons are combined.***
- (3) *They are to strengthen the bonds of the Connexion by a ministry of visitation to Districts and Circuits, to connexional committees and institutions and to the Connexional Team, offering encouragement and support and sharing insights gained by such visits.***
- (4) *They shall work in conjunction with the General Secretary and support his or her ministry of strategic management and the development of the Church's vision. Through their membership of the Connexional Leaders' Forum they shall offer support and encouragement to its members in the exercise of their responsibilities and contribute to its discussions concerning the well-being and calling of the Church.***
- (5) *Pursuant to clause 29A of the Deed of Union any or all of the powers, rights and duties assigned to the President or a former President in clauses 23 (i), 25A (b), (c)***

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and (i), 29 and (except the last sentence of sub-clause (c)) 42 of the Deed of Union may be exercised by the Co-President or a former Co-President, as the case may require.

- (6) *Before each meeting of the Conference the Secretary of the Conference shall convene a meeting of the persons who are designated to hold office as President and Co-President at that Conference and in the year following, at which they shall agree upon their respective responsibilities for that year.*
- (7) *The ex-President and ex-Co-President shall meet together with the President, Co-President, President-designate and Co-President-designate for mutual support and encouragement. Through their membership of the Connexional Leaders' Forum and in other ways they shall contribute to the Church's reflection upon its calling, drawing upon the experience gained during their time in office.*
- (ii) In SO 113 [Support for the President and Vice-President] number the existing clause (2) as (2)(a) and add as sub-clause (2)(b):
- (b) *The provisions of sub-clause (a) shall apply to an application made in relation to a diaconal Co-President. The Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order may also initiate such an application, and shall be consulted about all other applications in respect of a deacon before the council comes to a decision.*
- (iii) SO 230 (2) (ii) [membership of the Connexional Leaders' Forum]:
The Presidency as defined in Standing Order 110(2) **The ex-President, ex-Co-President, President-designate and Co-President-designate;**
- (iv) SO 300 [The General Secretary] *add at the end of (2): To that end he or she shall be available for consultation in districts and circuits in order that insights may be shared and difficulties addressed.*
- add: (2C) The General Secretary shall work in conjunction with the President and Co-President and be responsible for advising them of developments in connexional policy, and ensuring that they are adequately briefed for the exercise of their public role and in general receive adequate support for the fulfilment of their duties. To that end he or she shall meet with them at regular intervals in order to share information, to co-ordinate activities and to develop a shared vision of the Church's calling.*
- (v) SO 752 [Convocation] (2) Subject to any invitation given under clause (3) below, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall preside at every meeting of the Convocation. If because of an emergency the Warden is unable to be present, then the members present shall invite the President **or Co-President**, if present, or, if the President declines **they decline**, one of their number, to preside.

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(3) The President **and Co-President** shall normally visit the Convocation and may preside at any sessions upon the invitation of the Warden.

(4) The Vice-President shall be invited to attend the Convocation.

57/5. The Conference directs the Methodist Council in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee to bring to the Conference of 2012 appropriate amendments to the existing Orders of Induction for President and Vice-President.

57/6. The Conference directs the Methodist Council to consider, and report to the Conference of 2012 whether a change in the timing of the induction of the President and Co-President is desirable to enable the outgoing Co-President as well as the outgoing President to report to the Conference on their year of office before handing over to their successors.

57/7. The Conference in its Representative Session invites the Ministerial Session to adopt the practice of annually inviting the Co-President to attend its sessions (apart from any closed sessions for disciplinary business), with the right to speak but without vote.

APPENDIX A

The results of the voting in the Synods received at the time of going to press are set out below. The resolutions are referred to below by number as set out in Paragraph 4.2 above.

District No.	District Name	Present	08/03		08/04		08/06		08/07		08/08	
			F	A	F	A	F	A	F	A	F	A
1	Cymru											
2	Wales											
5	Birmingham ¹											
6	Bolton & Rochdale	131	7		99		4		10		92	
7	Bristol ²											
9	Cumbria	85	25	59	64	7					55	26
10	Channel Islands*	11			10	1					10	1
11	Chester & Stoke-on-Trent*	13	0	13	9	4	0	13	0	13	13	0
12	Cornwall ³											
13	Darlington*	27	9	16	17	7			6	20	21	4
14	East Anglia	157	83		72		33		33		124	

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15	Isle of Man	49	10	35	39	2			34	9		
16	Leeds	145	2	135	140	1			3	142	139	3
17	Lincoln & Grimsby	111	34		76		55		55		56	
18	Liverpool	67	6	58	56	4			29	38	41	16
19	Manchester & Stockport	156	46		108		40		50		96	
20	Newcastle Upon Tyne	165	2		151		3		3		163	
21	Lancashire	37	1	36	36	1	10	23	10	23	30	5
22	Nottingham & Derby	165	1	150	149	4			10	152	157	8
23	Northampton	155	45	74	61	51			20	114	122	4
24	Plymouth & Exeter ⁴	145										
25	Sheffield	118	15	78	38	55			31	63	34	35
26	Southampton	184	8	173	173	6			4	175	176	3
27	West Yorkshire											
28	Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury ⁵											
29	York & Hull	135	14	93	117	18	12	47	57	54	75	36
31	Scotland	59	22		35		25		25		32	
32	Shetland											
34	Bedfordshire, Essex & Hertfordshire											
35	London											
36	South East	166	116	50			54	104			115	39

* Synod delegated responsibility for making a response to some other body

¹ Birmingham Synod voted in September that the vote be not put

² Bristol Synod believed it to be unwise to make changes to the current arrangements.

³ Cornwall Synod voted by 66 votes to 2 that the current system remain as it is

⁴ Plymouth & Exeter Synod had a series of votes which were not recorded to the effect that the Synod wanted there be two officers, a President and Vice-President (retaining those titles) each serving for a year.

⁵ Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury Synod did not vote formally, expressing the belief that “the options presented did not meet the current perceived needs of leadership within the Church”.

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APPENDIX B

Members of the Working Party

The Revd Dr Martyn D Atkins
The Revd Dr Brian E Beck (*Chair*)
Deacon Susan Culver
The Revd Kenneth G Howcroft (*Convener*)
Mrs Judy M Jarvis
Professor Esther D Reed
The Revd Dr Calvin T D Samuel
The Revd Alison Tomlin
Mr J Kenvyn Wales