

## Review of Training

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1. The 2015 Conference received the following Memorials:

**M2, M3, M4      Review of ministerial training**

*The East Anglia District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 152; Voting: 146 for, 2 against):  
The Northampton District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 147; Voting: 139 for, 2 against):*

*The York and Hull District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 103; Voting: unanimous):*

- *is grateful for the direction given by the 2013 Conference to the Methodist Council that, in consultation with the Ministries Committee, it shall initiate an appropriate process through which a review of ministerial training shall be conducted to ensure that the vision outlined by the Ministries Committee in the Fruitful Field Report is delivered;*
- *welcomes the statement in the Methodist Council's interim report to the 2014 Conference (Agenda pp. 293-294) that a review will be initiated, to report to the 2017 Conference;*
- *believes that such a review must include further consideration of the premises upon which the current provisions were proposed and adopted in 2012 in the light of subsequent developments and practical experience.*

*The Synod therefore asks the Conference to direct the Methodist Council to:*

- (a) agree the terms of reference of the review; and*
- (b) appoint an independent panel of not more than five persons to undertake the review which the Council shall itself consider no later than January 2017 in preparation for a report to the 2017 Conference.*

**M5      Review of ministerial training**

*The South East District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 133; Voting: 126 for, 7 against):  
This memorial was received with the same text as M2, with the exception of replacing the words "an independent panel of not more than five persons" in point (b) with "a panel of not more than five persons independent of the Ministries Committee".*

**M6      Review of ministerial training**

*The Cumbria District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 98; Voting: 83 for, 0 against):*

- *values the direction given by the 2013 Conference to the Methodist Council to initiate, in consultation with the Ministries Committee, an appropriate process for a review of ministerial training to ensure that the vision outlined by the Ministries Committee in the Fruitful Field Report is delivered*
- *values the statement in the Methodist Council's interim report to the 2014 Conference (Agenda pp. 293-294) that a review will be initiated, to report to the 2017 Conference.*

*The Synod therefore asks the Conference to direct the Methodist Council to:*

- (a) agree the terms of reference of the review and include:*
  - further consideration of the premises upon which the current provisions were proposed and adopted in 2012 in the light of subsequent developments and practical experience*

- evaluation of how well current training is preparing ministers for the breadth and variety of circuit ministry
  - the training and discernment process leading up to and including the candidate's portfolio
- (b) appoint an independent panel of not more than five persons to undertake the review which the Council shall itself consider no later than January 2017 in preparation for a report to the 2017 Conference.

The Conference adopted the same reply to all five Memorials.

### **Reply**

*The Conference thanks the East Anglia District Synod for this memorial.*

*The proposal endorsed by the 2014 Conference (Resolution 32/16) was in response to a memorial (M6) of the 2013 Conference which sought an urgent review to reconsider how ministerial training should be configured. By resolution 32/16 the Conference subsequently agreed the timescale of the review noting that the Ministries Committee, on behalf of the Methodist Council, would put in place a review process.*

*Whilst this memorial goes beyond the view of the Methodist Council (Agenda 2014, p. 294) that the Ministries Committee should act on its behalf, the memorial helpfully sets out the responsibility for both determining the terms of reference of the review and appointing the membership of a panel to undertake the review. The Conference notes the concern implicit in the memorial for the independence of any process and accepts the memorial.*

*The Conference, noting that the Ministries Committee is accountable to the Conference through the Council for matters of policy and process relating to ministerial training (Standing Order 32A1, clauses (2) and (3)) directs the Council to consult the Ministries Committee in the drafting of the terms of reference of the review.*

2. The 2015 Conference also received:

### **M7      Review of Fruitful Field**

*The 2013 Conference directed the Methodist Council, in consultation with the Ministries Committee, to initiate a review of ministerial training in order to consider how the original vision of Fruitful Field was being developed. The 2014 Conference was informed that after only a year of implementation, it was too early to initiate a review. The 2014 Conference therefore agreed that the Ministries Committee should initiate a review process to report back to the 2017 Conference.*

*The 2014 Conference was also informed that there was anecdotal evidence to suggest that a number of people were put off candidating because of the uncertainties surrounding training provision (Conference Agenda, p. 237). The review process should therefore also consider the impact of the new training arrangements on candidating, to see if there is empirical evidence to support this view.*

*The Manchester and Stockport District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 105; Voting: 104 for, 0 against) believes that three years after the Conference adopted the Fruitful Field proposals, it is now time to initiate that review process.*

*The Manchester and Stockport District Synod asks the Conference to direct the Methodist Council to:*

- (a) Agree the terms of reference for the review which should include:
- the wider implementation of Fruitful Field (not just ministerial training)

- the provision of resources for lay training
  - the impact of the new training arrangements on candidating.
- (b) Appoint an independent Review Group to report back to the Conference no later than 2017.
- (c) Request an interim report from the Review Group to the Methodist Council by April 2016.

### **Reply**

*The Conference thanks the Manchester and Stockport District Synod for its memorial and notes the reply to memorials M2, M3, M4, M5 and M6. In accepting these memorials the Conference noted their concern for the independence of any process and the timescale for reporting.*

*The Conference directs the Methodist Council to ensure that the review raised in section (a) of the memorial takes place and to determine the most effective means of undertaking this review.*

*The Conference recognises that ongoing review and evaluation of the Learning Network continues to take place and that the 2014 Conference welcomed the outstanding inspection report of the Queen's Foundation by the Churches Quality in Formation Panel. In the course of the next connexional year the Network Committee will continue to review and monitor the Learning Network. Part of the internal audit processes of the Council have been allocated to this area of work.*

*The Conference therefore accepts point (a) of the memorial.*

3. It is clear that the Council must appoint a review group and that in light of the acceptance of point (a) of M7 the terms of reference should include:
- the wider implementation of Fruitful Field (not just ministerial training)
  - the provision of resources for lay training
  - the impact of the new training arrangements on candidating.

### **4. Background**

- 4.1 It is clear from the Memorials and the responses of the Conference that a comprehensive review of all aspects of training is intended.
- 4.2 In undertaking this review it is initially important to draw a distinction between a review of the principles established by the Conference when it accepted the Fruitful Field Report and the well established and routine method of inspection which is in place at the Queen's Foundation. Such inspection, undertaken by an ecumenical Quality in Formation panel where the Methodist Church and the Church of England work in partnership, covers all aspects of residential and non residential training as provided by the Queen's Foundation. That inspection rightly belongs to a process that scrutinises what an institution provides, having been entrusted with the responsibilities of training people for ordained ministry.
- 4.3 The Memorials, and resulting direction by the Conference, are about something much broader than inspection. What the Council is asked to do now is to review some of the more foundational elements of the decisions of the 2012 and 2013 Conferences as well as to review the structure whereby the Council and the Conference make provision for the training and equipping of the whole people of God. This is not simply financial and neither is it only about training institutions, or Centres. The Council may indeed have to make some difficult decisions about the funding of training and other opportunities for learning in the life of the whole connexion. That is not new and the economic realities of connexional life require vigilance on that point. However, it should not begin a consideration of training from a purely financial perspective. A spirit of imagination and an attention to the needs of the whole church, as well as the context in which people will minister, play an important role here. Such attention will

inevitably offer a broad basis for any review that is concerned with the equipping of the whole church. To ensure that the concerns raised in the memorials are addressed it is important that the terms of reference (set out below) reflect the points raised in the memorials while also enabling those appointed to listen to the experiences of all those involved in learning and training.

4.4 M6 referred to 'the training and discernment process leading up to and including the candidate's portfolio.' It should be clarified that there is no formal training process in place for those who may be considering or who are preparing to candidate for ordained ministry. (Any training prior to a person candidating would take place under the provisions established by the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network, that is lay training.) Therefore the terms of reference in relation to the candidating for the ministry refer explicitly only to discernment processes.

## 5. Terms of Reference

The Review Group shall:

1. Review the premises and principles upon which the current provisions of training were proposed and adopted in the light of subsequent developments and practical experience.
2. Review the provision of ministerial training.
3. Review the provision of resources for lay training.
4. Review the impact of the post 2013 pattern of training on candidating.
5. Evaluate how well the post 2013 pattern of training is preparing ministers for the breadth and variety of ordained ministry.
6. Evaluate the discernment process in candidature leading up to and including the candidate's portfolio.

### **\*\*\*RESOLUTIONS**

**87/1. The Council receives the report.**

**87/2. The Council approves the terms of reference for a review of training as set out in the report.**

**87/3. The Council appoints the following persons to undertake the review for consideration by the Council no later than January 2017; Names to be circulated prior to the meeting of the Council**