

## NoM 2015/204: Mapping A Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission Suggested Research for the Council to Consider

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<b>Status of Paper</b>	Final
<b>Action Required</b>	For decision
<b>Draft Resolutions</b>	96/1. The Council receives the report.  96/2. The Council agrees the process and reporting timescales as set out in the report.
<b>Alternative Options to Consider, if Any</b>	None

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	To suggest research to meet the intentions of NoM 204 from the 2015 Conference
<b>Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)</b>	NoM 204(2015) Larger than Circuit Working Group Council papers (eg MC/15/12) Larger than Circuit Working Group Conference Reports (eg 2013) District Development Enablers Project Review (2011)
<b>Consultations</b>	Lorraine Mellor, DMLN Lead Staff, Stephen Lindridge, Susan Howdle, David Hinchcliffe, Stephen Wigley, Former DDEs

### Summary of Impact

<b>Standing Orders</b>	N/A
<b>Faith and Order</b>	N/A
<b>Financial</b>	N/A
<b>Personnel</b>	Implications for the workplan of the Discipleship and Ministries Cluster
<b>Legal including impact on other jurisdictions</b>	N/A
<b>Wider Connexional</b>	N/A
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	N/A

## NoM 2015/204: Mapping A Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission Suggested Research for the Council to Consider

### 1. Introduction

1.1 This paper suggests a response to Notice of Motion 2015/204 from the 2015 Conference. The paper provides some background information to place the Notice of Motion (NoM), highlights how this engages with previous and current research and suggests a way to proceed. From the outset it should be stated that this paper is in regards to large circuits and is not intended as any comment upon the “Larger than Circuit” papers or processes. It should also be noted that as yet no definitive exists as to what constitutes a “large” as opposed to a “small” circuit.

1.2 NoM 2015/204 from the Methodist Conference 2015 says:

*“Notes with appreciation the significant impact the initiative of Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission has had on the life of the Methodist Church for almost a decade – helping Circuits to review their readiness for mission and the structures needed to facilitate that mission.*

*Notes that a significant consequence of this work has been the reconfiguring of many Circuits.*

*Recognises that there are many anecdotes as to the perceived positive and negative effects of such reconfigurations for both large and small Circuits.*

*However there has never been any quantitative or qualitative research into the impact and effect of Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission for the mission of the Church. Given that the process has now been underway for almost a decade the Conference is of the view that the time for a formal research project examining the evidence would be extremely helpful to the Church as it continues to reshape for effective mission in the twenty-first century.”*

### 2. Background

2.1. Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission (MaWF: RfM) was a task that arose from number of pieces of work in the Methodist Council in 2006/7 and 2008/8. The then Secretary of the Conference and General Secretary, the Revd Dr David G Deeks, following discussions with the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) and the Connexional Leadership Team submitted paper MC/06/103 entitled “Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission” to the Methodist Council at their meeting on 31 October-1 November 2006.

2.2. The 2007 General Secretary’s Report stated that the task was for each District, over the following five years or so to encourage holistic and wide ranging circuit reviews in light of ‘Our Calling’ and ‘Priorities for the Methodist Church’, with a focus of discerning and developing:

*“Sustainable and relevant circuit structures which will serve and oversee the mission-obligations of the Church in the early decades of the 21st century; New ways for Circuits to*

*fulfil their responsibilities and purposes in line with Standing Order 500: 'The Circuit is the primary unit in which Local Churches express and experience their interconnexion in the Body of Christ, for purposes of mission, mutual encouragement and help'."*

- 2.3. The 2007 General Secretary's Report went on to identify a process whereby the Methodist Conference was to be the overseer of the process, as the Methodist Conference articulates the vision for the whole Connexion in an authoritative way.
- 2.4. The Methodist Council directed the Connexional Leadership Team (CLT) to take the lead on developing the task (as detailed above in Para 2.2).
- 2.5. District Development Enablers (DDEs) were employed or appointed in districts from 1 September 2008 onwards and were anticipated to need five years to do the task. Their role was to assist the districts and the District Chairs on their leading of MaWF: RfM in their individual districts.
- 2.6. The DDEs and members of the CLT were to network and confer to assist in the sharing of experiences, insights and good practice.
- 2.7. The CLT were to bring together perspectives and outcomes emerging from the circuit reviews in all the Districts and liaise with the SRC on the form that a summary overview might take and on appropriate forms of accountability for the individual Districts.
- 2.8. At the time the Methodist Council proposed that the pattern of Districts was to be sustained as it was for five years, following this the Methodist Conference would be invited by the Methodist Council to review the district pattern and structures and to discern what would be needed for the following decades.
- 2.9. At the 2007 Methodist Conference an additional paper was submitted entitled "Resourcing the Districts – District Development Enablers" which went into further detail about the introduction of the DDEs.
- 2.10. The DDEs were to be financed from the part of the connexional budget that was earmarked for new initiatives and projects and the arrangement was to be supported for five years (2008-2013), pending the review of Districts that was to take place in 2012.
- 2.11. The main role of the DDEs was to assist the Districts (and the Circuits within the Districts) in developing the 'Priorities of the Methodist Church'. In particular this was to include a major role in taking forward the MaWF: RfM process.
- 2.13. At the 2010 Methodist Conference, the General Secretary's Report affirmed the commitment to pursuing the contextual implications of MaWF: RfM.
- 2.14. The report noted that there had been three developments:
  - i. The initiative was now referred to as "Regrouping for mission", as this acknowledged and marked that the initial 'mapping' stage had been undertaken and that the process was now more engaged with the reconfiguration and implementation.
  - ii. That there had been a joint meeting of the Connexional Leaders Forum with the DDEs in January 2010, which had enabled progress to be assessed, different emphases and models of implementation to be shared and further plans to be made.
  - iii. That initial thought and planning had begun in applying the Regrouping for mission initiative at a District level.

### **3. Previous Reflection.**

- 3.1 In the Larger than Circuit Working Group Council paper (MC/15/12), Larger than Circuit Working Group Conference Report (2013) and District Development Enablers Project Review (2011) some consideration has been given to the perceived impact of the MaWF: RfM process. In any research it will be necessary to consider the full range of relevant reports to better capture and interpret insights gained to date.
- 3.2 A *District Development Enablers Project Review* was carried out in 2011. The insights from this could perhaps be disseminated more widely but it is considered that this review substantially covered the role of the DDE and concluded 'The evidence of this review is that the DDE role, when undertaken as envisaged, has succeed in achieving the primary aims' (7:18). In 8:8 the review pointed to ongoing research that could be undertaken to ascertain how successfully the transition from DDEs to the implementation of the DMLN will have been.
- 3.3 A number of other research documents cover areas that may be relevant. For example *Snapshot Report- Regrouping for Mission; A retrospective survey of gains* (February 2014) offers some subjective insights but has a research basis that could be reconsidered as to whether it offers more evidence based insight. Research from a London District *Superintendency Sustainability Survey* (2012) could be reconsidered to offer insight from larger and small circuits. *Circuits Working in Federation: A Report for the Southampton District* (2009) provides some insight from a related but distinct development. Part of any research should include a review of all relevant research already completed.

### **4. Scope of Task**

- 4.1 The MaWF: RfM process has a number of strands. These include consideration of circuit size, of districts and the role of Chair, and the role of DDE. The NoM focuses on the reconfiguring of circuits. A definition of what makes for a "large" circuit could be constructed and its characteristics mapped. It is possible to review this as a discrete task.
- 4.2 To do this as a quantitative exercise may risk excluding other areas of the process that are considered to be related to each other. A process which enables the definition of the role and responsibilities of a "circuit" to be made clear and then a degree of impact analysis carried out to ascertain the efficacy of large circuits would give added value to this work. Therefore it is proposed that the research be phased to ensure the immediate requirements of NoM 2015/204 are met in the timeframe and subsequently to offer broader reflection and suggestions for action.

### **5. Ongoing Reflection.**

- 5.1 The Larger than Circuit working party is currently engaged in ongoing work on the role of the District Chair and whether a structure other than the current district structure is appropriate. Research has been undertaken including an online survey which elicited 1700 responses. Any review will helpfully engage with the insights from this working party and perhaps reconsider the raw data for further insight. However, it is important that work already accomplished is not redone, and important also to note that the NoM required research at circuit level, not at the level larger than circuit.
- 5.2 There is related work in a number of areas, some of which will report to the 2016 Conference. This includes the Resourcing Leadership working party and in particular work

on superintendency and other issues of leadership. Insights from the Releasing Property for God's Mission developments are likely relevant. Again it is important not to duplicate research, but also not to ignore related insights.

## **6. Timing**

- 6.1 NoM 2015/204 'The Conference therefore directs the Methodist Council to make arrangements for and oversee such research and report its findings to the Conference of 2016.' This is a short time frame that gives a window for research and reflection from approximately mid October to mid March to enable a paper to be considered by the April 2016 Methodist Council and then to the Methodist Conference 2016. Research proposals that follow are developed to meet this time frame in a phased manner.
- 6.2 Two phases of the research are presented in this paper. It is suggested that the Methodist Council considers phase 1 that meets the requirements of NoM 204, and report to the Methodist Conference in 2016 but then builds on this in phase 2 to enable the Methodist Council to reflect further on the findings of research that is broader and more in depth, allowing for the Methodist Council to receive a report which, to borrow phrases used by our Anglican colleagues, moves us from 'anecdote to evidence' and furthermore from 'evidence to action'. Enabling clarity around what works/does not work about big circuits and how is mission accomplished as a result? The resulting report would offer a holistic understanding rather than isolated insights from one part of the MaWF: RfM process. Before measuring impact, clarity is required around what success looks like and what key outcomes can be measured. Phase 2 would allow for the development of a theory of change that clearly shows the key outcomes to be measured to assess whether goals are being achieved. Furthermore recommendations can be made as to future actions to be undertaken in the light of the outcomes.

## **7. Capacity to Deliver**

- 7.1 Phase 1 can be carried out by the Strategic Research Team (SRT). It should be noted that this may mean that parts of planned work for 2015-16 will have to be rescheduled or supported by external bodies but the SRT will oversee this readjustment to workplans and budgets as directed by the Connexional Secretary. A report can be brought to the April 2016 Methodist Council.
- 7.2 Phase 2 will require further work by the Director of Scholarship, Research and Innovation (SRI) that may require the commissioning of an external body to work with the SRT and/or the enlisting of a wider group of Methodist researchers to bring more detailed qualitative information to the Methodist Conference of 2017. Input should be sought from a wider reference group appointed by the Methodist Council of 2-3 people who can bring a deeper wisdom.

## **8. Budgetary Implications**

- 8.1 NoM 2015/204 noted that 'The Connexional Treasurer considers that reviews of this kind require more staff time and effort than actual budget resources: The budgetary implications are expected to be small unless external resources are required to meet the 2016 deadline.'
- 8.2 Phase 1 will work within the parameters of this advice. Phase 2 will require some management decisions to be taken to re-allocate work and adjust other budgets and timelines from the 3 year budget presented to the Methodist Conference, but the details of this will be included in the budget presented to the 2016 Methodist Conference.

## **9. Research Proposal**

9.1 The suggestions below contain a number of elements that are considered to be important but are not exhaustive. For phase 2 a detailed research document will need to be developed between the Director of SRI, and representative/s of the Methodist Council, taking into account the rich wisdom of the reference group established by the Methodist Council.

9.2 In Phase 1 It is proposed that a review of aspects of the Mapping the Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission process be undertaken to include the following:

- i. Engagement with Statistics for Mission to gain a factual understanding of how many circuits have changed sizes, the range of these changes and what correlating membership with other statistics reveals.
- ii. Questionnaire research to all current Chairs, to all who were Chairs in 2008-2013 as appropriate, and a sample of superintendents and circuit stewards from each district, to ascertain their subjective understanding of the impact of circuit changes and the mission of the church.
- iii. Case study reviews of a range of circuits ranging from the largest new circuits to one minister circuits to gain a broader understanding of the impact of changes.

Phase 1 will enable a clear definition of “large” circuit and identify how many exist over the Connexion. It will plainly set out the amount of reconfiguration that has occurred and where it has occurred geographically and contextually and point to some of the consequences of that reconfiguration.

9.3 In Phase 2 it is recommended that a deep review be undertaken of the impact of the Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission process. In particular this will seek to gain insight regarding any positive or negative factors involved to help inform future policy and practice, and include those circuits which have significantly changed their size and those which are working in a loose federation with other circuits.

It would include the following:

- i. Engagement with the research completed in phase 1 and a further review all relevant Conference and Council reports, and related documents to capture and reflect on existing insights,
- ii. Engagement with existing research relating to the role of District Development Enablers,
- iii. Engagement with existing research on the place of districts and Chairs
- iv. Development of the questionnaire research undertaken in phase 1 to include all superintendents and all circuit stewards,
- v. Development of the case study reviews undertaken in phase 1 [9.2 (iii)] to engage with additional circuits,
- vi. Consideration of relationships with Fresh Expressions/VentureFX within circuits,
- vii. Consideration of relationship with deacons within circuits.
- viii. Reflection on what is impactful in large circuits and what is not allowing for recommendations to be made that positively impact on the mission of the Church.

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

**96/1. The Council receives the report.**

**96/2. The Council agrees the process and reporting timescales as set out in the report.**