

City Centre Churches – Review Group

Contact Name and Details	The Revd D Paul Wood Coordinator, Ministry Development woodp@methodistchurch.org.uk
Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Decision
Draft Resolutions	100/1. The Council receives the report. 100/2. The Council adopts the recommendations laid out in paragraph 15. 100/3. The Council directs the DMLN Ministry Development Team to develop guidelines for City Centre Churches and to work with districts, alongside the MCCN, in reviewing the City Centre List. 100/4. The Council commends the paper to the Stationing Committee for further consideration. 100/5. The Council directs that the new City Centre list be presented to the Council in 2018.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	A review of City Centre Churches A clarification of the definition of City Centre Churches and how their ministry might be better supported.
Main Points	A review of practice related to SO 440.1
Consultations	City Centre Practitioners from the Methodist City Centre Network

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	No change – provides guidance on practice related to SO 440.1
Faith and Order	n/a
Financial	Potential loss of Capital “protection” for Churches that do not meet the revised criteria
Personnel	n/a
Legal including impact on other jurisdictions	n/a
Wider Connexional	Consultation with districts on a revised city centre list.
External (eg ecumenical)	n/a

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Background

1. Following an approach to the Stationing and Ministries Committees from the former Coordinator of the Methodist City Centre Network (MCCN), the Revd Martin Turner, the Ministries Committee asked the Coordinator for Ministry Development (the Revd Paul Wood) to convene a group to review the work of City Centre Churches. The group consisted of the Revd Ian Johnson, the Revd Dr Stuart Jordan, Ms Susan Kirika, the Revds Dave Martin, Stuart Wild, and Paul Wood.
2. The group looked at background material from the Ministries and the Stationing Committees and at Standing Orders from 1994 to present (including any changes).
3. The group discussed policy issues, strategy and support, financial liabilities, and the current Standing Orders and recommends that further work needs completing on the role and mission of City Centre churches within the Methodist Church.
4. The review group makes a number of other specific recommendations which are outlined below.

The City Centre List

5. Standing Order 440(1)(a) indicates that the Connexional Team shall maintain an official list of churches (and circuits – 440(1)(b)) designated as city centre churches.
6. Reviewing the records it became clear that the lists held by the Connexional Team and the MCCN did not tally. Questions were asked about the purpose of the list and whether it was a helpful tool or not. For some it seemed that the purpose for being on the list was financial ie for the avoidance of a levy rather than a symbol of a recognised missional emphasis within a district.
7. The group concluded that a single redrafted, connexionally held, list would be useful in helping districts review the mission and ministry of each City Centre Church. In order to enable districts to identify whether a church should remain on the City Centre List, or apply to be added, the group sought to offer some definitions of a City Centre Church.

Definition of the dominant features and characteristics of a City Centre Church

8. The group agreed that a City Centre Church is defined by certain dominant features and characteristics of context. The group recommended that to be included on the City Centre List at least 4 out of 5 of these features should be obvious. These dominant features are a modification of those historically used by MCCN. They are as follows:
 - The features of the environment are retail, civic, leisure, judicial, commercial and educational institutions serving a dense population.
 - The significant population is transient.
 - There are obvious extremes of power and powerlessness, wealth and poverty.
 - There are obvious changes of community between the daytime and night time economies.
 - The City Centre church acts as a magnet to various groups of people.

Distinctive features/characteristics of a City Centre Church

9. It was noted that these dominant features lead to city centre churches having some distinctive features to their ministry and mission:
 - A wide range of demands and opportunities – with a pressure to respond to everything.
 - Working collaboratively is expected – local teams, secular agencies and ecumenically.
 - The magnet effect brings a higher proportion of the poor and vulnerable to the church's door.
 - Consistency of presence gives the church greater impact in the community.
 - The Minister of the City Centre Church is often required to speak on behalf of the Methodist Church.
 - The Ministers often live in a different area to that in which they minister.
 - Engagement with city life is central to the calling and mission of the church.

10. The consequences of these dominant and distinctive features are:
 - The demands and opportunities require constant theological and missional discernment – does the opportunity fit within the long term vision of the Church?
 - Being in a commercial environment the expectation is that everything we do has to be of a high standard.
 - City Centre ministry can be isolating.
 - The minister often needs to develop specialisms.
 - There is often an expectation that the minister manage a large site/plant or teams of people.
 - There is an expectation that city centre churches/circuits will take on interns/students/placements/probationers.
 - There are knowledge gains and expertise that might be shared across the Connexion, with city centre churches acting as potential centres for learning and sharing experience.

11. Acknowledging these dominant features, and the distinctive and consequential features of context, led the group to consider the following question: 'What are the things that might or should shape the work and ministry in that place?'. The group identified the following as significant:
 - A clear, vision led mission strategy.
 - The worship offered often has or needs a "Unique Selling Point".
 - The building and its location– or lack of one.
 - Intense demands require intense resourcing.
 - Often requires specialist professional advice.
 - Availability (or lack) of skills and expertise within the congregation.
 - Income stream: resources potential for letting.
 - Accessibility: transport links and location.
 - The "open door/24-7" nature of the work offers potential for reflective space and prayer.
 - Potential for mid-week worship.
 - Challenge of offering a spiritual opportunity /experience.
 - For some the demands of Methodist heritage.
 - Constant unpredictability.
 - Staff – training and proportion of lay and ordained.
 - Concentration of people leads to a variety of situations needing attention such as:
 - A disproportionate number of homeless and vulnerable
 - Legislation: Safeguarding and Health and Safety

What provision does the wider Connexion currently offer to better enable City Centre Ministry?

12. The Standing Orders pertaining to City Centre work were amended in 1996. The group noted that the Standing Orders were devised to enable regular review of the work and to enable capital, in the event of disposition of property, to remain in the relevant city centre. In reality little has been done to enable regular review and the protection of capital only protects capital when a building is sold rather than doing anything to keep it open. The group did note that the Standing Orders do offer a means of affirmation of City Centre work.
13. The group noted that other means of support are provided to enable the work, namely:
 - £2000 per annum is offered to the Methodist City Centre Network from the DMLN budget to support its work.
 - The Stationing Committee advises that special provisions can be made for city centre churches if the District identifies a particular need.
 - Ministers have been moved early to take up a City Centre appointment.
 - Chairs can opt to nominate the City Centre as their priority in the stationing process.

How could we better support the work?

14. The review group moved on to ask, "As a church could we do better? What provision might the wider Connexion offer to better enable City Centre Ministry?". The group noted the following areas requiring further work:
 - There is a need for the Stationing Committee more easily to identify and develop a pool of ministers who have the potential to serve in a particular appointment – regardless of whether they are currently in the stationing round.
 - How do we train and enable people to grow into City Centre appointments?
 - There is an advocacy role to be done for City Centre work. The MCCN does a good job in this and needs support from the Connexional Team and backing from those with oversight responsibilities.
 - The Church needs to resource and offer student ministers exposure to City Centre opportunities during initial ministerial training.
 - The group noted that City Centre Ministers are keen to enable Student Placements but struggle with the requirements of the training institution to offer detailed feedback.

Recommendations made to, and agreed by the Ministries Committee in July 2015

15. The review group recommends that:
 - The current Standing Orders should be maintained but the criteria in paragraph 8 should be used to define the features and characteristics of a City Centre Church.
 - Churches not meeting the new criteria, following a district review, should be removed from the list and those meeting the criteria should be added.
 - Districts should be offered support from the MCCN and the Connexional Team through the DMLN to identify and review churches meeting the new criteria (as required by SO 440(5)).
 - A new City Centre list should be compiled as part of the connexional database and maintained by the Ministry Development Team from submission from the districts by October 2017.
 - The Stationing Committee is encouraged to review the suggestions above.
 - Discussion should be held with the Queen's Foundation and MCCN to offer student ministers exposure to City Centre opportunities during initial ministerial training.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

100/1. The Council receives the report.

100/2. The Council adopts the recommendations laid out in paragraph 15.

100/3. The Council directs the DMLN Ministry Development Team to develop guidelines for City Centre Churches and to work with districts, alongside the MCCN, in reviewing the City Centre List.

100/4. The Council commends the paper to the Stationing Committee for further consideration.

100/5. The Council directs that the new City Centre list be presented to the Council in 2018.