

Basic Information

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| Title | Women's Network: Methodist Women in Britain |
| Contact Name and Details | Gillian Pengelly Gillian.pengelly@ntlworld.com |
| Status of Paper | Final |
| Resolution/s | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Conference receives the report. • The Conference welcomes the proposal that Women's Network be renamed as Methodist Women in Britain and act on behalf of the women of the Methodist Church in Britain as the British unit of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church women • The Conference authorises the Methodist Council to approve the Foundation document when completed. • The Conference amends Standing Orders |

Summary of Content

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| Subject and Aims | Information on current position of Women's Network following Team Focus. |
| Main Points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current position of Women's Network • The proposed changes to "Methodist Women in Britain" as a continuing and active network within the Methodist Church operating independent of oversight from the Connexional Team. |
| Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function) | <p>April 2008: Council Paper MC/08/31: Report to the Council concerning the future of Women's Network</p> <p>July 2008: Conference Paper 37 (Team Focus Report) and Paper 38 (Methodist Council Report)</p> |
| Impact | SO 350 will need to be changed to reflect the new situation. |
| Risk | While much has been done to enable women throughout the Connexion to understand the changes which Team Focus brought about, there are many who still struggle with these, or express concerns about how it will work out in the long term. The Connexional Committee has worked very hard to consult and inform the Network, but there is a risk that some women will be demoralised if the Network cannot communicate its vision and establish its new ways of working quickly enough. |

Introduction

1. Women's Network is a movement for women within the Methodist Church. Following Team Focus and the decisions of the Methodist Council and Methodist Conference in 2008, it has significantly moved forward in organising its own affairs and preparing to work without relying on a Connexional Team officer to provide support.
2. The expectation among Women's Network supporters was that the movement would continue to follow its mission statement to encourage, enable and equip women to participate fully in the life of the Church and in society, supporting the Church to become truly the whole people of God. That mission statement has affirmed that in order to make a difference to the life of the Church, Women's Network will:
 - 2.1. encourage, by prayer, meditation and study, the strengthening of relationships, the sharing of experiences, and the building up of one another in faith;
 - 2.2. enable growth by the challenge of vision and stewardship, by enriching commitment, by receiving the insights of others, and by offering information and resources;
 - 2.3. equip women for mission, by deepening understanding, by recognising and linking gifts and needs;
 - 2.4. operate in a manner that is flexible, vibrant, transparent, creative and participative.

The Present Situation

3. Women's Network has for 23 years been a source of nurture for many women who have offered for leadership within the Methodist Church. The movement has also encouraged women to take practical steps to understand and confront issues affecting women across the world.
4. The annual Easter Offering Dedication Service is written by the Past President and often highlights women's issues and offers insights. It is also a very comprehensive worship resource, offering creativity visually and through music, drama, dance and stories. The Easter Offering is widely distributed and the substantial financial support to the World Mission Fund (approx £400,000 a year) is a testimony to the commitment of supporters of Women's Network. Currently this amount is matched by other undesignated giving to the World Mission Fund through Women's Network.
5. In recent years, Women's Network has highlighted issues such as Domestic Violence and Trafficking. These issues have been taken up both nationally and locally and the movement has gained credibility with other denominations and also with politicians.
6. Women's Network has empowered women to take on issues and find solutions on many fronts. There are hundreds of projects undertaken in districts, circuits and local churches every year offering practical support and finance in the fields of education, training, health and human rights. Many of these projects are not officially recognised, but they are all undertaken in the name of Women's Network in the Methodist Church.

Planning for Change – working together

7. The Women's Network Connexional Committee has looked at ways in which the movement could organise its own affairs without relying on a Connexional Team officer to provide support, while at the same time continue to be effective and proactive within the Church.
8. The Connexional Committee considered closer working with the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW). All three British Unit Officers were invited to join the Connexional Committee (previously, only the British Unit President had been invited). WFMUCW invited the President designate to join the President and Connexional Secretary of Women's Network on the British Unit Executive. This gave greater understanding about the aims and objectives of both movements and it became clear that Women's

Network had much in common with WFMUCW.

9. Both organisations jointly participated in consultation days during 2009 and their Officers were visibly supportive of each other both at the Women's Network Swanwick Conference in April and the WFMUCW Joint Areas European Conference in Glasgow in May. To take this closer working further, a joint Conference event was held in Wolverhampton.
10. All of these events were well supported and the opportunity was taken to discuss the future of Women's Network and closer working with WFMUCW. A very successful joint residential conference was held in April 2010 at Swanwick for 180 women where the theme was "Moving and Travelling On".
11. The Officers of both organisations have consulted and prepared a paper on new ways of working which incorporates the aims and objectives of both Women's Network and WFMUCW. The basic proposal is that Methodist Women in Britain be clearly established as a body, under the aegis of the Conference and accountable to the Conference, which acts on behalf of the women of the Methodist Church in Britain as the British unit of WFMUCW.
12. The paper was presented to district officers and supporters who attended the consultation days in June 2009 in Manchester and London. The Connexional Committee worked on feedback to the initial proposals in September 2009 and a second paper has been widely circulated. Districts and Circuits were asked to comment. Feedback has been positive and in January 2010, the decision to pursue the proposals in the paper on new ways of working was made by the Women's Network Connexional Committee. The official launch of the new movement will take place at the Methodist Conference in 2011 in Southport. A draft Foundation document has been produced and nominations/applications sought for new officers.
13. One of the suggestions from within the constituency is that if the organisations unite the new movement should have a new name. The Connexional Committee considered all suggestions made to name the new movement, following the consultation and "Methodist Women in Britain" is the most popular choice.
14. A main feature of a united movement would be that the movement will be owned, directed, supported and nurtured by Methodist women in the districts, with district representatives forming a Methodist Women in Britain Forum. The initial meeting of the Forum will be held in May 2011 when the Foundation document will be agreed.

Planning for Change – finance

15. During this period of consultation and working closer with WFMUCW, the Women's Network Project Officer and President have been in the process of seeking grants through the Methodist Church Connexional Grants Committee to fund the transitional costs for the new structure, including those of a part-time Administrator. Currently a grant has been awarded for the administrator for 3 years and she started work in November 2009.
16. Finance has been one of the main concerns within the constituency. Reports from districts advise that women want to maintain the current high-level of support for the World Mission Fund while at the same time funding administrative costs for the movement.

Planning for Change – communication

17. Women's Network issued its Autumn Newsletter via the Connexional Link Mailing and to District and Circuit Officers and supporters. An insert in the February 2010 Connexional Link Mailing described the growing collaboration between Women's Network and the British Unit WFMUCW in the context of a commitment to discipleship and social justice. An article detailing the agreed changes appeared in the *Methodist Recorder* in March 2010. The newly appointed

Administrator keeps the Connexional Committee up to date with national issues. She is in the process of updating all the District and Circuit contacts and the website. Area Representatives give regular updates from their Areas. Following each Connexional Committee Meeting a briefing paper is issued to all Districts.

Conclusion

18. The proposals set out above about the renaming of Women's Network as Methodist Women in Britain, its changed status in relation to the Connexional Team and its proposed links with the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women require amendments to the Standing Orders about the nature of Women's Network and its representation in the Conference. These are presented below.

19. Although there is still much to do, we in Women's Network are confident about the future. We know we need to be prudent about administrative costs, and carefully plan events on a self funding basis. But we are ready to take on the challenges of organising our own affairs, so that we continue to encourage, enable and equip women to participate fully in the life of the Church and in society, supporting the Church to become truly the whole people of God.

***RESOLUTIONS

33/1. The Conference received the Report.

33/2. The Conference welcomed the proposal that Women's Network be renamed as Methodist Women in Britain and act on behalf of the women of the Methodist Church in Britain as the British unit of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church women

33/3. The Conference authorised the Methodist Council to approve the Foundation document when completed.

33/4. The Conference amended Standing Orders as follows:

~~S.O. 350~~ **SO 242 Network.** *Methodist Women in Britain* (1) There may be carried on within the purview of the Connexional Team at connexional, district, circuit and local level, under the general title of 'Women's Network of the Methodist Church' (or simply 'Network'), **shall be a body known as Methodist Women in Britain which shall encourage and support** activities primarily but not exclusively by and among women which are within the purposes of the Methodist Church, subject to any Standing Orders applying to such activities.

(2) Without limiting the generality of clause (1) above the activities of ~~Network~~ **Methodist Women in Britain** shall include the furtherance of fellowship and training and of mission at home and overseas.

(3) **Methodist Women in Britain may report to the Conference through the Methodist Council.**

~~(3)~~(4) There shall be a president of ~~Network~~ **Methodist Women in Britain**, chosen ~~annually~~ **biennially** by consultation among district representatives of **Methodist Women in Britain** during the year next but one before the year of **taking** office and recognised by the ~~Methodist Council~~. The president shall hold office as such for ~~one~~ **two** connexional years and during the ~~preceding~~ year **before taking that office and also the year after leaving it** is the vice-president.

~~The president is an ex officio member of the Conference (S.O. 102(1)(i)(v)).~~

(The Conference noted that the above sentence was an editorial note rather than part of a Standing Order).

(4)(5) ~~Network~~ **Methodist Women in Britain** shall **act on behalf of the women of the Church as the British unit of** ~~relate to the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women, on behalf of the women of the Church and a Connexional Team member~~ responsible for Network shall have the responsibility for the nomination **and through the Methodist Council shall nominate** to the Conference of the representatives to the assemblies of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women.

SO 102 Representatives of Connexional and Other Bodies. (1) The connexional committees, funds and institutions to be represented in the Conference pursuant to clause 14(2)(x) of the Deed of Union and the representation of each shall be as follows, any representative not otherwise identified being appointed by the body in question:

| <i>Body</i> | <i>Representation</i> |
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| (i) | |
| (vii) Women's Network of the Methodist Church Methodist Women in Britain | The president of Network One representative. |