

## One Connexion: Many Nations and Jurisdictions

### Basic Information

<b>Contact Name and Details</b>	Jenny Easson jennyeasson@care4free.net
<b>Status of Paper</b>	<b>Draft 2</b>
<b>Action Required</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Discussion and Comment</b></li> <li><b>2. Clear guidance on any future work and timescale</b></li> </ol>
<b>Draft Resolution</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the Council considers the following issues raised in the report: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1. Whether the word “Connexion” should primarily be used to refer to the geographical and jurisdictional spread of the Church, or whether a wider historical and theological understanding should be retained; and whether the term “Connexional Team” invites expectations about the roles and responsibilities of the staff at Methodist Church House that might not be altogether helpful and whether a different designation should be used.</li> <li>1.2. Is the time is right for Conference to debate whether the word “Movement” would be a better description than “Church” for the common life and witness of the Methodist people in Britain.</li> <li>1.3. How to determine the best balance of connexional resources between work aimed at forwarding the church’s mission and that aimed at sustaining and supporting the faithful.</li> <li>1.4. Where does the responsibility lie for engaging with unreached language and culture groups within the Connexion?</li> <li>1.5. How best to determine where the responsibilities lie (and therefore the expense absorbed) for new work e.g. translations of new material, given the options of such work being initiated either from connexional or district level; and how to ensure that there is a fuller involvement throughout the Connexion when making and implementing such decisions.</li> <li>1.6. The Church of England is the Established Church in that country and so receives an annual invitation to be represented at Conference. Should an equivalent argument be made for the recognised ‘national church’, in other nations within the Connexion (i.e. the Church of Scotland) to be similarly entitled to annual invitation? What is the appropriate procedure for selecting people to represent the whole Connexion to other ecumenical and civic bodies and also for inviting others to Conference?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. That the Council agrees the following recommendations raised in the report: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1. In most parts of the Connexion, Districts are defined geographically; the exception to that general rule is Synod Cymru, which is intertwined with The Wales Synod and also has churches in England. The Group believes that it would be right to consider whether this model might apply to other language groups and fellowships in the Connexion, and recommends that this matter be addressed by the ‘Belonging Together’ Partnership and that a further report be brought to the Methodist Council in due course.</li> <li>2.2. That further work is done on the concept of membership of the Methodist Church, to see whether membership requirements may take more account of the complex and frequently-changing patterns of people’s</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

	<p>belonging to Church groups as well as to other bodies in society.</p> <p>2.3. The Group is not clear whether the members of different language fellowships are regarded more as passing visitors, or as permanent family members, and recommends that there should be further focused conversations between representatives of these fellowships and members of the Connexional Team on whether the members of different language fellowships are regarded more as passing visitors, or as permanent family members.</p> <p>3. That the Council gives clear guidance on any future work and timescale, and whether a report should be prepared for the Conference.</p>
<b>Alternative Options to Consider, if Any</b>	<b>N/A</b>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	This is the initial report of the One Connexion: Many Nations and Jurisdictions working Group which was set up by Council in 2008. The Group seeks feedback on the report and further guidance from the Council on how to proceed.
<b>Main Points</b>	<p>Group offers a vision of a Church that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledges fully the different legislative and regulatory frameworks that hold sway within the Connexion;</li> <li>• Affirms and celebrates the different languages that are used by its members;</li> <li>• Supports the mission initiatives that become possible through this increasingly diverse communication;</li> <li>• Encourages its members to grow in their understanding of their belonging together in one Connexion;</li> <li>• Takes steps to ensure that all nations, jurisdictions, and distinct language and cultural groups are represented appropriately in the governance of the Church.</li> </ul>
<b>Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Called to Love and Praise</li> <li>• The Nature of Oversight: Leadership, Management and Governance in the Methodist Church in Britain, Report to the 2005 Conference.</li> <li>• Brian E. Beck, Some Reflections of Connexionalism (1) &amp; (2), Epworth Review, May &amp; September 1991</li> <li>• David M. Chapman, Koinonia and Connexionalism, Epworth Review, April 1999</li> <li>• David Carter, Some Methodist Principles of Ecumenism – a discussion article, Epworth Review, October 1998</li> <li>• Brian E. Beck, The Elusive Methodist Identity: Who are we?, Epworth Review, October 2000</li> <li>• Philip Drake, 'Joining the Dots: Methodist Membership and Connectedness', Unmasking Methodist Theology, Continuum, 2004</li> </ul> <p>These and other reflections are summarised in a paper on Connexionalism prepared by Research Officer Liz Clutterbuck (available on request).</p>
<b>Consultations</b>	Wales, London, Bradford-Leeds, Scotland and Shetland Districts; Malta and Gibraltar (representatives attended the South East District Synod). Unfortunately, plans made by two different Group members for visits to the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands had to be cancelled.

## Summary of Impact

<b>Standing Orders</b>	SO 427 (use the term of “Methodist Church in Scotland”) may need further refinement.
<b>Faith and Order</b>	Initial input has been received from the Faith and Order Committee, and further work may be needed.
<b>Financial</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Personnel</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Legal</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Wider Connexional</b>	The report addresses wider connexional issues, and several aspects which Council is asked to discuss could have a wider impact.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	The report recognises the varying ecumenical relationships in the different nations.
<b>Risk</b>	The conclusions of the report are broad in scope of a general nature. <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. There is a risk that this will have little impact until further work is done to develop more detailed recommendations.</li><li>2. There is also a risk that little will be achieved if recommended changes in awareness and inclusion are not properly monitored and deficiencies followed through.</li></ol>

# One Connexion: Many Nations and Jurisdictions Group Initial Report to Council

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. In March 2007, a report to the Methodist Council invited the Council to appoint a group “to formulate a vision of how the Conference can oversee in one connexion the vocation to worship and mission in the several nations and jurisdictions, and among ethnic and foreign language groups.” The reasons for recommending that this work should be undertaken at that particular time were set out clearly in the report to the Council. (See Appendix 2, Sections 1-7). The terms of reference are shown in Appendix 1.
- 1.2. The Group was appointed in February 2008 and held its first meeting in May 2008. Noting the requirement that they should ‘consult widely’, the Group prepared a paper that was sent to all Districts and to every linguistically defined community they could identify that was part of the Methodist Church in Britain (See Appendix 2).
- 1.3. Believing that it was important to meet people in their different settings where possible, arrangements were made to hold meetings of the whole Group in Wales, London, Bradford-Leeds and Scotland District; two members of the Group visited the Shetland District; two members of the Group met representatives from Malta and Gibraltar who were attending the South East District Synod. Unfortunately, plans made by two different Group members for visits to the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands had to be cancelled – in each case because of emergencies, but it was possible to consult with representatives from the Channel Islands by means of telephone conferencing.
- 1.4. In addition to ensuring a reasonable geographical spread, the meetings were planned to allow the Group to take into account a range of ecumenical perspectives; to enable them to meet representatives of Fellowship Groups whose members are from various African and Asian countries; and to help the Group to become more aware of the challenges that the Church faces in relating to governance bodies at a national level in Wales and Scotland and at a regional level in England.
- 1.5. The Group is grateful for the hospitality they were shown and for the way in which a significant number of people gave their time freely and generously to engage with the Group and to share their insights. The picture that emerged is a complex one and the Group found themselves challenged to find ways, not only of affirming the richness and diversity that was so evident in their encounters, but of showing how the whole Church could respond creatively to those differences and be truly One Connexion.

## 2. The Connexion

- 2.1. It has become evident that there are a number of difficulties associated with the use of the term ‘Connexion’.
  - 2.1.1. Lack of Clarity.

People have very different understandings of the body being referred to when ‘Connexion’ is mentioned:

    - Connexion is sometimes equated with London, without much recognition of the distinction between Methodist Church House and the London District;
    - Connexion is sometimes used to refer to members of the Connexional Team;

- Connexion is thought of by some people as the main governance bodies of the Church – Conference or the Methodist Council;
- In a curious conflating of these first three views, Connexion becomes shorthand for ‘the place where all the decisions are made’;
- In other cases, Connexion is regarded more generally as ‘the organization’. This is a particular hazard in translating *Connexion* into Welsh, as the word used “y Cyfundeb” also means “union” or “organization”.

#### 2.1.2. Otherness.

Very few people saw themselves as (part of) the Connexion; the Connexion was ‘them’, not ‘us’. This sense of ‘otherness’ becomes one of remoteness and isolation in some parts of the Connexion, including the Island Districts and some language Fellowships, with a corollary that the Connexion did not understand their distinctiveness.

#### 2.1.3. Abstract, perhaps obsolete.

People seemed to have real difficulty in conjuring up a picture of the Connexion. While they could sometimes grasp the theoretical concept and understand its historical significance, the word could not be related to their experience.

2.2. However, these difficulties associated with the word Connexion did not mean that it was always seen negatively. Wherever it was located, and regardless of how it was comprised, the Connexion was given credit for ensuring and sustaining some key aspects of Methodist life:

- The training and stationing of Presbyters and Deacons;
- Financial resourcing of mission;
- Expertise in legal and property matters;
- Resources for nurturing discipleship.

2.3. It is perhaps timely to have a reminder of the theological basis of Connexionalism and the Group draws attention to the report “Called to Love and Praise” and the documents, on which it is based, as helpful material. There are still questions raised in that report and other work, which the Council needs to address. A useful paper prepared by Research Officer Liz Clutterbuck summarises these reflections on Connexionalism and is available on request

2.4. In the past two years, the Church has been seeking to express even more clearly the vision that undergirds and inspires its ecumenical development. There is a different understanding of developing ecumenical relationships in Scotland and Wales for example, and the partners involved in discussions are not necessarily the same as those fostered by the Connexion in England. Scotland’s history, and therefore ecumenism and cultural context, are her own and it is important that this is recognised both in the general approach to all ecumenical work and in contributions to and details of reports. Account should thus be taken of the extent of the ecumenical cooperation in the sphere of public civic life, especially but not exclusively exercised by the Connexional Liaison Officer. It is therefore extremely important to ensure that the understanding of Connexion that emerges is compatible with all the forms of ecumenical relationships that are being shaped and, conversely, that all those ecumenical relationships take account of what is intended by the term Connexion.

2.5. The Group has asked itself whether the term Connexion has run its course and if it would be now appropriate to use a different word to describe the things that remain important about Connexion.

### 2.5.1. Connexion or Church.

- a. Methodists decided long ago that it was acceptable to refer to themselves as a Church. (The situation is different for Baptists, who would use the words 'congregations' and 'Union' to refer to the different bodies that are part of that strand of the Christian family.) The Group is of the view that most people would see practically everything contained in 'Connexion' as being at least implicit in the general understanding of 'Church'.
- b. The Group believes, nonetheless, that there could be some merit in continuing to use the term Connexion. However, the Council may wish to consider whether the term should primarily be used to refer to the geographical and jurisdictional spread of the Church, or whether a wider historical and theological understanding should be retained.

### 2.5.2. Church or Movement.

- a. There remains a desire in some quarters to retain something of the provisionality and fluidity that was part of the historic understanding of Methodism and it is thought that this might be possible if there was more use of the term 'movement'. This could also convey a greater sense of openness and dynamism, quite different from some of the more institutional associations of 'Church'.
- b. The Group believes that the place in Methodism of the different nations, jurisdictions, languages and cultures could, at present, be accommodated more readily within an understanding of Methodism as movement, rather than Methodism as Church.
- c. It would clearly be a major decision to choose 'movement' in preference to Church: it would say something quite different about Methodist ecclesiology and would have profound implications for ecumenical conversations. The Methodist Council is asked to consider whether the time is right for Conference to debate this matter, not only in the light of this report, but against the background of '*Mapping a Way Forward; Regrouping for Mission.*'

## 3. Nations and Jurisdictions

3.1. The background section of the report presented to the Methodist Council in 2007 summarised some of the challenges that are arising in relation to the different nations and jurisdictions within which the Methodist Church is active, as follows:

- 1) *The British Methodist Church covers England, Scotland, Wales, the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands (Jersey and Guernsey), Malta and Gibraltar... Each of these territories has a distinct status within a discussion of nations and jurisdictions.*
- 2) *In recent decades the issue of identity has become sharper, though in varying degrees, in each of these areas. Some of the pressures towards this come from a self-definition (as in the case of the Channel Islands) derived from not being part of the EU; some come from the devolution decisions of the Westminster Parliament within the UK, leading to the reconvening of a Parliament for the nation of Scotland and an Assembly for the nation of Wales.*
- 3) *The Conference has always been required to comply with the distinct legal systems, as appropriate, in the different areas (so that, for example, the remit of Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) covers England, Scotland and Wales, but not the Isle of Man, Jersey or Guernsey, for which separate custodian trustee bodies report to the Conference).*
- 4) *The Conference has always been sensitive to the significantly different ecumenical situations in the several nations and jurisdictions, and has given special attention to the possibilities of co-operation in Scotland, in Wales and in England.*

3.2. The Group found that there were six broad areas of concern that needed continuing attention.

### **3.2.1. Different statutory regimes.**

- a. The report that came from all parts of the Connexion outside of England was that there seemed to be, among most Methodists, a lack of awareness of the significant differences that existed between specific regulations for England and those that applied in other parts of the Connexion. Guidelines seemed to be formulated on the basis of an English norm that was then adapted for other parts of the Connexion, rather than requirements of all parts of the Connexion being taken into account from the beginning.
- b. The Group was given examples of people in Scotland requesting forms from members of the Connexional Team and being sent ones that were applicable only in England and Wales. Though this might have been a case of simple administrative error, to the person receiving the forms it was another sign of ‘them’ not understanding ‘us’. In developing Connexional guidelines concerning *Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults*, for example, it was discovered that regulations in Wales or Scotland were not identical to those produced at Westminster. Or again, the comment, ‘That does not apply here’ will be heard from Methodists in the Channel Islands, Gibraltar, the Isle of Man, Malta, Scotland or Wales – and often in relation to different pieces of regulation.

### **3.2.2. Different Languages.**

- a. The Welsh Language Act (1993) set the legislative framework for Wales as a bi-lingual country, and whilst it is not mandatory for the Church at present to conform fully, it is recognized as good and helpful practice. Methodists in Wales are represented by two Synods. The Wales Synod represents mainly English speaking Methodists whereas the less numerous Welsh speakers belong to Synod Cymru. The work and mission of both Synods are co-ordinated by a body called “Y CYNGOR”. The Methodist Church has recognised and affirmed the commitment to furthering the use of the Welsh language in the provision for Synod Cymru and the Welsh medium work. In the past there have been careful negotiations in the Church about where responsibility lay for translating into Welsh, not just policy documents and reports, but just as importantly, the Worship Book and other resources. There needs to be continuing conversation about the cost of translating and printing connexional material into Welsh and other languages and where those costs should appropriately be borne. The Group has heard, for example, that Synod Cymru bears the cost of translating minutes and documents into English as well as the cost of simultaneous translation at meetings.
- b. Welsh medium work in the Methodist Church is now seriously at risk; there are very few ministers in the active work who are able to speak Welsh, and services in Methodist Chapels are often led by Welsh speakers, ministers or lay people from a number of different denominations. One answer has been the development of Area Ministries, merging congregations of different Welsh medium denominations under the leadership of an R&R minister. In practice, this proved more acceptable to the majority of Synod Cymru than trying to join with English Methodist churches.
- c. The one thing that would do most to persuade Methodists in Synod Cymru that they were truly part of a connexional Church, would be for that Church to provide people who could take forward the Welsh medium work. Whether such provision is feasible and the impact that there might be on existing members are matters will be referred to later in this report.

- d. Issues raised by reflection on the Welsh medium work apply in different ways to other language and fellowship groups also. The desire to pray and worship in 'the language of the heart' is leading to ever increasing diversity in the languages used in Methodist worship around the Connexion:
- Gatherings of Methodists from Ghana often have to make provision for the use of three languages in the course of one service;
  - People of Zimbabwean origin use two;
  - At a service Hinde Street, the sermon delivered by the former General Secretary was translated into both Mandarin and Cantonese for the benefit of the congregation gathered from the wider Circuit;
  - There is a history of work and worship in Urdu communities in London and Cardiff, and Urdu is said to be the second language in Newport.
  - More recent involvement has been with people whose first language might be Tamil, French, Parsee, or one of the other languages listed in Appendix 2.
- e. It is not clear where responsibility now lies in a connexional Church for ensuring that there is appropriate resource material available, so that language-based groups are able to engage in worship and ministry that takes account of their present settings as well as their histories and/or places of origin.
- g. There is, furthermore, a cluster of related questions to be addressed, concerning the selection, preparation and deployment of people who will engage in authorised ministries in these language-focused fellowships and groups. "Authorised ministries" should be taken as including more than the ordained: issues relevant to Local Preacher training were specifically noted during one of the Group's visits. It is hoped that the 'Belonging Together' Partnership will indicate some ways forward for the whole Church.

### **3.2.3 Cultural Issues.**

- a. In some areas visited, the Group heard of apparently seamless integration of Methodists from different cultural backgrounds within an existing congregation. In other areas, cultural traditions such as dance as part of worship caused discomfort to existing congregations.
- b. We heard that in some areas, overseas Methodists re-vitalised a local church with their differing cultural practices.
- c. Much of the growth that has taken place in the different language Fellowships has been 'transfer' growth, rather than conversion growth. The Fellowships depend for their survival on the refreshing of the national and ethnic pools through continuing migration and the more fluid life patterns of people in Britain today, who may spend part of the year in the these islands and the remainder in other places around the world – not even necessarily their places of family origin. For some members of Fellowships there can be tension between the cultures of "home" and "here".

### **3.2.4. Identity and Mission.**

- a. There is sometimes a tension between the desire of a group, on the one hand, to affirm and sustain its identity and, on the other, to engage in mission and service to the community.
- b. So in the case of the Welsh medium work, for example, there are changes that would be required if the Church is to relate to Welsh learners, or to younger people for whom speaking Welsh is an important part of their national and cultural identity, but who are not able to relate to traditional Church life. The Group could see little evidence that the

changes that were implemented 1.9.09 (see Appendix 4) are primarily mission oriented, nor that they will do anything more than buy the institution a little more time; and yet, it was recognised that “sustaining and supporting the faithful” is part of the responsibility of the Church in many parts of the Connexion.

- c. The challenge is seen most starkly as language and fellowship groups seek ways of engaging meaningfully with the ‘second generation’. In the Chinese Fellowships they have even given a name to this group, ‘The BBC’s – British Born Chinese’.
- d. There are some aspects of Methodist identity and character which will inevitably be influenced by the context in which the Church operates. The Group recognised some of the ways that being part of the only Church in the Reformed tradition in Malta (a Church of Scotland / Methodist Local Ecumenical Partnership) has affected the position and the perception of the Methodist Church in that nation where the Roman Catholic Church is so predominant. In Gibraltar, on the other hand, the Methodist Church occupies a place that allows it to be a bridge between the Anglican Church, the Pentecostal Churches, and the Churches ‘over the border’ in Spain.
- e. The situation of the Methodist Church in Gibraltar and Malta, both parts of the one Connexion, led the Group to reflect on the similar questions that should be put to Methodists in those places, as well as to the language and cultural groups in the United Kingdom: how alert are they to the danger of their becoming ‘clubs’, rather than missionary communities? Given the different flavours that will characterise their worship and witness, how will they be still Methodist in their essence?
- f. The Methodist Church needs to ensure that in every consideration within the Church of matters of nationality, jurisdictions and languages, there is a central emphasis on the place of Mission. It is not the purpose of the Church to nourish and sustain different national or regional or ethnic or linguistic identities for their own sake: the aim in giving encouragement and support to such movements and initiatives must always be missiological – a means of sharing in and furthering God’s mission.
- g. There are significant mission opportunities within language and culture based communities, but there is often not the capacity in the most proximate Methodist groups to respond. For example, Methodists in the Channel Isles have not been able to take up the opportunities for ministry and mission among people of Portuguese origin who are becoming more numerous there. The Methodist Council is asked to reflect on the Church’s mission strategy in relation to unreached language and culture groups within the Connexion and to indicate where the responsibility for engaging with such groups now lies.

### **3.2.5. The Principle of Subsidiarity.**

- a. It is an accepted principle in many complex organisations that responsibility should be held and resources deployed as close to the grassroots as is compatible with the efficient fulfilment of purpose.
- b. This may be seen as one of the principles which has helped shape the composition of the new Connexional Team, as the question has been asked repeatedly, “What is it that the Team might uniquely and best contribute to the mission of the whole Church?” The change in respect of the Connexional Liaison Officer Scotland from being a member of the Connexional Team to a District-based officer, albeit with extensive responsibility to represent the Connexion to national and civic bodies, has produced some questioning about the appropriate locus for this post. The post itself is much valued by Scotland Methodists and also by ecumenical partners and representatives of civic

bodies with whom the post-holder engages on behalf of the Methodist Church as a whole within the context of the nation of Scotland.

- c. The plea that the Group heard, for 'the Connexion' (who, precisely, was not made clear) to be 'serving and facilitating rather than controlling' seems to be entirely reasonable and fully in tune with the principle of subsidiarity. However, it is necessary sometimes for a measure of control to be exercised connexionally, so that the essential character of the Church is not lost, or its mission compromised.
- d. The Consultation on '*Holiness and Risk*' that took place in 2009 has opened up a debate within the Church on how boldness and creativity in mission can be combined with a commitment to good order and responsible stewardship. The group believes that where the risk has been recognised and yet there is confidence that initiatives are Spirit inspired, then it is appropriate for the principle of subsidiarity to be applied.

### **3.2.6. Consultation and Representation.**

- a. There was a ready acceptance that the Methodist Church was having to come to terms with a much more complex picture in terms of nations, jurisdictions and languages than it had dealt with in the past.
- b. Various suggestions of ways in which the Church could address this new reality were offered:

#### **For the Connexional Team.**

- i. Before changes are introduced (for example in relation to Safeguarding or Property) there should be much fuller consultation to establish how the proposed changes applied in the different jurisdictional areas.
- ii. For good practice to be truly Connexional, the question should be asked routinely when preparing policy documents, Does this apply, and if so how, in all parts of the Connexion? Where different rules apply, the credibility of the team is enhanced when they show sensitivity and offer guidance that takes those differences into account.
- iii. Delineation of the responsibility for funding work carried out on behalf of the Connexion in the name of the Methodist Church in the nations and jurisdictions has proved a difficult area in which to achieve clarity and agreement within reasonable timescales. There is still need for clear agreement between all involved as to where the distinction lies between work which properly pertains to each or any District, and that which is exercised on behalf of and in the name of the Methodist Church as a whole. This necessitates awareness, early consideration and appropriate consultation in initiating and developing policy, and also in forming Connexional budgets, to cover a variety of areas of church work. The situation is likely to expand with changes in the political devolution process. It should be noted that some aspects of devolved activity and responsibility are easily identifiable (eg lobbying of legislatures), others less so (areas of civic concern and social action).
- iv. Examples used in connexional materials should attempt to reflect more of the breadth of the Connexion, as it can be truly alienating to be always presented with references and images that do not seem to apply to one's own national, or linguistic, or cultural group;
- v. While it was accepted that the visits of the President and Vice-President to the Island Districts was helpful in fostering a sense of Connexionalism, it was also suggested that there would be greater practical benefit if there were repeated

visits by a Team member who could build up a relationship with these Districts, rather than their having to start afresh with a new President each time.

**For the Methodist Council.**

- vi. Guidelines are needed to determine when it is appropriate for the responsibility for engaging with different legislative bodies is to be met through the Connexional Team centrally, or through the provision of resources, including appropriate agreed financial allocations, to bodies such as the Synods or ecumenical instruments in Wales, Scotland and the Island Districts.
- vii. The Group recognises the recent redistribution of CPF financial resources from connexional to district level, and is also aware of the church's current financial constraints. Council is invited to discuss how best to determine where the responsibilities lie (and therefore the expense absorbed) for new work (e.g. translations of new material) given the options of such work being initiated either from connexional or district level; and how to ensure that there is a fuller involvement throughout the Connexion when making and implementing such decisions
- viii. There should be a re-examination of the procedures for appointing ecumenical representatives to various bodies and of the expectations linked to such appointments. For example, how might the ecumenical representation at the Methodist Conference affirm the various partnerships that are significant in different parts of the Connexion; and, more specifically, how might Anglican representation at the Methodist Conference reflect the complexities of the situation, where the (whole) Methodist Church has entered into a Covenant with the Church of England, but the Methodist Synod in Scotland, Synod Cymru and the Wales Synod have separate Anglican partners through agreements reached in those places?
  - Consideration still needs to be given as to whether the wording of SO 427 is, as yet, worded to give a clear picture of the relationship between Districts 31 (Scotland) and 32 (Shetland) and of appropriate use of the title "The Methodist Church in Scotland". Both Districts within the nation of Scotland recognise the need to balance the realities of geography and finance (for instance in representation to national bodies) with the acknowledged fact of there being two Methodist Districts with, in certain respects, quite distinctive cultures and, at times, different views on Methodist policy. The devolution context and relationships between the two Districts continue to evolve and it may be helpful to give consideration to such aspects as the continuing usefulness of the names hitherto applied to both Districts in the light of the scope of the work undertaken by each.
  - The Church of England is the Established Church in that country and so receives an annual invitation to be represented at Conference. The Group invites the Council to consider whether an equivalent argument may be made for the recognised 'national church', in another nation within the Connexion (ie the Church of Scotland) to be similarly entitled to annual invitation?
- ix. The Council should consider whether the term Connexional Team invites expectations about the roles and responsibilities of the staff at Methodist Church House that might not be altogether helpful and whether a different designation should be used.

### **3.3. In Summary**

It is clear, then, that the Methodist Church faces significant challenges as it tries to find ways of expressing its common life of witness and service in such diverse contexts and among different nations, jurisdictions and language and cultural groups. However, the Group believes that there can be a shared vision that will allow the Church, both to embrace its diversity and to remain true to its calling.

## **4. Re-conceiving the Connexion**

- 4.1. It has become a truism in the Methodist Church that, despite our Connexionalism, one size does not fit all; but what has not been offered hitherto is any indication of the areas in which this flexibility may be applied, nor equally importantly, where it would be possibly damaging to allow such flexibility.
- 4.2. The Group believes that it would help the whole Church if there were people appointed and procedures established, that would make possible the careful evaluation of proposals for changes to Methodist practice or Standing Orders, especially where such proposals arise in the context of the Church's engaging with the challenges and opportunities of its operating in so many different nations, jurisdictions and language and cultural groups.
- 4.3. In most parts of the Connexion, Districts are defined geographically; the exception to that general rule is Synod Cymru, which is intertwined with The Wales Synod and also has churches in England. The Group believes that it would be right to consider whether this model might apply to other language groups and Fellowships in the Connexion; it recommends that this matter be addressed by the 'Belonging Together' Partnership and that a further report be brought to the Methodist Council in due course.
- 4.4. Images are often important and the Group found that one of the difficulties the Church faces in seeking to sustain Connexionalism, is that there is not a commonly accepted picture of the Connexion. While there is no single image that could do justice to the complexities and nuances of 'Connexion', two pictures emerged which were quite evocative for the Group and often seemed to allow the people being consulted to see their own place in the Connexion more clearly.
  - 4.4.1. Journeying as Pilgrims.
    - a. The Connexion can be viewed as a diverse collection of people who are walking the same path and who have appointed marshals to watch over the pilgrimage and ensure that the company keeps together – more or less. The pace of the pilgrimage will vary and people may choose to walk in different groupings and clusters, but the direction is consistent and there is an explicit commitment to being part of this particular pilgrimage.
    - b. This picture fits well with the understanding of the Methodist Church as a movement: the focus is not on sustaining an institution or maintaining buildings, but instead there is an encouragement to be flexible and to travel light.
    - c. There is also less emphasis on uniformity: people may come and go and are welcomed as part of the pilgrimage while they are there; they may come on their own, or as part of a group; they may change the group to which they belong, but there will always be care and companionship on the journey – they are connected.

- d. The Group recommends that further work be done on the concept of membership of the Methodist Church, to see whether membership requirements may take more account of the complex and frequently-changing patterns of people's belonging to Church groups as well as to other bodies in society.

#### 4.4.2. Members of one Family.

- a. Though there are obvious limitations in this picture, it seemed worth presenting nonetheless, as there are several features of a family that are seen as helpful in developing a shared understanding of Connexion.
- i. Blood is thicker than water. True connexionalism acknowledges that there is something more than institutional convenience that holds the unit together; there is a sense of kinship. Members of a family can work their way through disagreements and support each other in times of tension and stress. The Group heard evidence of local solutions to diverse problems.
  - ii. Hospitality. Members of the same family are welcome in one another's homes and they eat with one another. While it might be resented if members of the extended family who are passing through were to suddenly move the furniture around, such action might be a matter for negotiation between those who lived there.
    - The Group is not clear whether the members of different language fellowships are regarded more as passing visitors, or as permanent family members.
    - That distinction is important, as it might have implications for the way in which the accreditation of prior learning and training is dealt with in the Connexion;
    - The Group recommends that there should be further focused conversations on this matter between representatives of these Fellowships and members of the Connexional Team.
  - iii. Members of a family can turn to one another for help. Being connexional would imply, for example, that when Methodists in Malta see the opportunities for working with young people all around them and they acknowledge that they do not have the means of responding to the needs, then young people from other parts of the Connexion might be encouraged to find ways of working with these family members in Malta.
- b. The Group believes that a less organisational understanding of Connexion would be helpful at this stage of the Church's life and that such an understanding would allow different groups to see themselves as fully included.

## 5. Conclusion

The vision that the Group offers, therefore, is the vision of a Church that:

- Acknowledges fully the different legislative and regulatory frameworks that hold sway within the Connexion;
- Affirms and celebrates the different languages that are used by its members;
- Supports the mission initiatives that become possible through this increasingly diverse communication;
- Encourages its members to grow in their understanding of their belonging together in one Connexion;
- Takes steps to ensure that all nations, jurisdictions, and distinct language and cultural groups are represented appropriately in the governance of the Church.

## **6. Resolutions**

### **6.1. That the Council considers the following issues raised in the report:**

- 6.1.1. Whether the word “Connexion” should primarily be used to refer to the geographical and jurisdictional spread of the Church, or whether a wider historical and theological understanding should be retained (ref. 2.5.1. b); and whether the term “Connexional Team” invites expectations about the roles and responsibilities of the staff at Methodist Church House that might not be altogether helpful and whether a different designation should be used (ref. 3.2.6. b ix)
- 6.1.2. Is the time is right for Conference to debate whether the word “Movement” would be a better description than “Church” for the common life and witness of the Methodist people in Britain (ref. 2.5.2. c)
- 6.1.3. How to determine the best balance of connexional resources between work aimed at forwarding the church’s mission and that aimed at sustaining and supporting the faithful (ref. whole of section 3.2.4.)
- 6.1.4. Where does the responsibility lie for engaging with unreached language and culture groups within the Connexion (ref. 3.2.4. g)
- 6.1.5. How best to determine where the responsibilities lie (and therefore the expense absorbed) for new work e.g. translations of new material, given the options of such work being initiated either from connexional or district level; and how to ensure that there is a fuller involvement throughout the Connexion when making and implementing such decisions (ref. 3.2.6. b vii)
- 6.1.6. The Church of England is the Established Church in that country and so receives an annual invitation to be represented at Conference. Should an equivalent argument be made for the recognised ‘national church’, in other nations within the Connexion (i.e. the Church of Scotland) to be similarly entitled to annual invitation (ref. 3.2.6. b viii bullet 2)? What is the appropriate procedure for selecting people to represent the whole Connexion to other ecumenical and civic bodies and also for inviting others to the Conference?

### **6.2. That the Council agrees the following recommendations raised in the report**

- 6.2.1 In most parts of the Connexion, Districts are defined geographically; the exception to that general rule is Synod Cymru, which is intertwined with The Wales Synod and also has churches in England. The Group believes that it would be right to consider whether this model might apply to other language groups and fellowships in the Connexion, and recommends that this matter be addressed by the ‘Belonging Together’ Partnership and that a further report be brought to the Methodist Council in due course (ref. 4.3)
- 6.2.2. That further work is done on the concept of membership of the Methodist Church, to see whether membership requirements may take more account of the complex and frequently-changing patterns of people’s belonging to Church groups as well as to other bodies in society (ref. 4.4.1. d)
- 6.2.3 The Group is not clear whether the members of different language fellowships are regarded more as passing visitors, or as permanent family members, and recommends that there should be further focused conversations between representatives of these fellowships and members of the Connexional Team on whether the members of different

language fellowships are regarded more as passing visitors, or as permanent family members (ref. 4.4.2. a. ii)

**6.4 That the Council gives clear guidance on any future work and timescale, and whether a report should be prepared for the Conference.**

**Appendix 1:** terms of reference of the One Connexion: Many Nations and Jurisdictions Group

Note: sections 1-7 of Appendix 1 formed the background section of these terms of reference

1. The Council appoints a group representative of the connexion, approximately 6 in number, with the requirement that they consult widely, to formulate a vision of how the Conference can oversee in one connexion the vocation to worship and mission in the several nations and jurisdictions, and among ethnic and foreign language groups.
  - 1.1 The group to be chaired by a former President or Vice President of the Conference
  - 1.2 The group to be appointed by the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) in May
  - 1.3 The group to consult the General Secretary as its work proceeds, so that its vision coheres with evolving connexional strategy and structures
  - 1.4 The group to report to the Council no later than Spring 09
  - 1.5 Council members to recommend names for membership of the group to the General Secretary by 21 April

DGD/16.03.07

---

Revd. David Deeks met with the Group in 2008, and clarified that they should concentrate on the overview and not go into excessive detail in their recommendations.

The following were appointed to the group by the Council in Feb 2008.

The Revd. Ian White (chair)  
The Revd. Ermal Kirby  
Mrs Jenny Easson  
Dr Philip Davies  
The Revd Donghwan Kim  
Ms Margaret Best

The Revd. Ian White resigned from the group in July 2009 for personal reasons. The Group members expressed their sincere appreciation for all he had done in leading the group thus far, and deeply regretted his decision to step down. The General Secretary requested Mrs Jenny Easson to take over as chair, and she agreed to this.

**Appendix 2:** the briefing paper sent out prior to consultations as a basis for conversations during the Group's Visits.

## **One Connexion: Many Nations and Jurisdictions**

### **Background**

1. The British Methodist Church covers England, Scotland, Wales, the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands (Jersey and Guernsey), Malta and Gibraltar. [Currently it includes also The Gambia, but arrangements are well progressed to achieve autonomy for this overseas district]. Each of these territories has a distinct status within a discussion of nations and jurisdictions.
2. In recent decades the issue of identity has become sharper, though in varying degrees, in each of these areas. Some of the pressures towards this come from a self-definition (as in the case of the Channel Islands) derived from not being part of the EU; some come from the devolution decisions of the Westminster Parliament within the UK, leading to the reconvening of a Parliament for the nation of Scotland and an Assembly for the nation of Wales.
3. The Conference has always been required to comply with the distinct legal systems, as appropriate, in the different areas (so that, for example, the remit of Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) covers England, Scotland and Wales, but not the Isle of Man, Jersey or Guernsey, for which separate custodian trustee bodies report to the Conference).
4. The Conference has always been sensitive to the significantly different ecumenical situations in the several nations and jurisdictions, and has given special attention to the possibilities of co-operation in Scotland, in Wales and in England.
5. There have been earlier enquiries into how to honour our being one connexion operating in several nations and jurisdictions (e.g. Agenda 2000, pp. 698-701) and debates in the Methodist Council on how to express our connexional identity in, say, Scotland and Wales; these have led to:
  - a protocol for consultation in the preparation of Methodist positions on public issues presented to the Scottish Parliament;
  - the allocation of resources and the deployment of personnel for ecumenical work and for public issues and civic life, in Scotland and Wales, as part of the Connexional Team serving the whole connexion.
6. What now suggests the wisdom of a project to look at these issues afresh?
  - (i) In England there has been a complicated development of regional government. This has taken a particular form in London, to which the Church has responded in the interests of its mission – by creating in 2006 a London district, led by 3 co-Chairs. In no other region in England is there an equivalent to the Greater London Authority (GLA), nor is there likely to be in the foreseeable future. But regional thinking and the deployment of considerable public resources have been part of the UK government's policy for England. The Churches, working together (and in some cases working also in partnership with other faiths) have developed different responses and systems in the various regions for engaging constructively with the organs of regional government.
  - (ii) The 'ecumenical architecture' review has been completed, so that CTBI has become an agency, which supports and enacts collaborative work across the nations of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, alongside the work done in the constituent

nations through the relevant ecumenical instruments (Churches Together in England (CTE), Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS), Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN) and the Irish Council of Churches (ICC)). These new arrangements are taxing for a Church like ours which sees itself as one connexion covering several nations and jurisdictions.

- (iii) The Methodist Church has signed a Covenant with the Church of England (November 2003); and has developed in complicated ways a range of relationships with other Churches in the several nations and jurisdictions.
- (iv) The Connexional Team has been reconfigured through the *Team Focus* process, requiring a root and branch review of everything it does, to discern what the Team can best or uniquely do in the service of the whole connexion, within reduced resources.
- (v) The districts in Wales developed a new pattern from '07 onwards: a Wales synod (with 2 co-Chairs) and synod Cymru (with a Chair) working together through Y Cyngor for the Methodist Church in Wales.
- (vi) Socially and culturally, the churches in the connexion are becoming increasingly diverse: within the Connexion there are several languages used for worship and administration; and there are congregations formed around ethnic and national identities. Some of the latter are linked closely to traditional congregations; others are not. Certainly the number of links between the British Methodist Church and Churches in many other parts of the world has increased greatly.

7. This presents an opportunity to do two things:

7.1 To state a vision of how the Conference can oversee in one Connexion the vocation to worship and mission in the several nations and jurisdictions, and among distinct ethnic and language groups;

7.2 To revisit the practical arrangements through which the Connexional Team will make its best and unique contributions to the ecclesiological challenge summarised above.

8. The Methodist Council appointed a Working Group, to undertake the task set out in 7.1:

Chair: The Revd Ian White

Former President of the Conference and former Chair of the Bristol District and of the Channel Islands District;

Members:

Miss Margaret Best

Member of Methodist Council - Representative of the Darlington District; newly appointed member of the Connexional Strategy and Resources Committee;

Dr Philip Davies

President of Y Cyngor;

Mrs Jenny Easson

Member of Methodist Council - Representative of Scotland District;

The Revd Dr Donghwan Kim

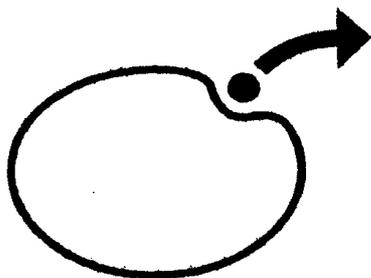
Korean Methodist presbyter serving in the Kingston upon Thames Circuit (London District), with a brief for multicultural ministry;

The Revd Ermal Kirby

Member of Methodist Council – Representative of Chairs' Meeting; Chair of London District; author of Paper on Diversity and Methodist Identity (MC/08/02);

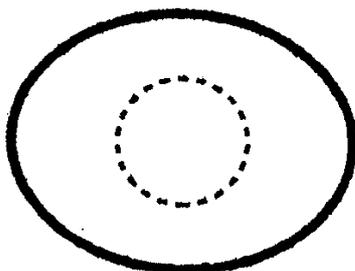
## Addressing the Task

9. The Working Party met for the first time on 22 May 2008 and offered different perspectives on the work they had been assigned. Having found that they could relate readily to the summary of different ways of engaging with diversity that is described below, the Group agreed that they should make this available to the various groups that they were planning to meet as part of the process of 'consulting widely', which was included in their terms of reference.
10. Responses to Encountering Difference (based on Models produced by the Zebra Project, in East London);



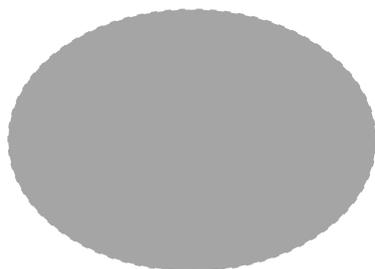
### 10.1 REJECTION

Differences are not allowed to remain within the sphere of activity; "That is not how we do things around here;" "I'm sure that you would be happier in...[another Group/place];"



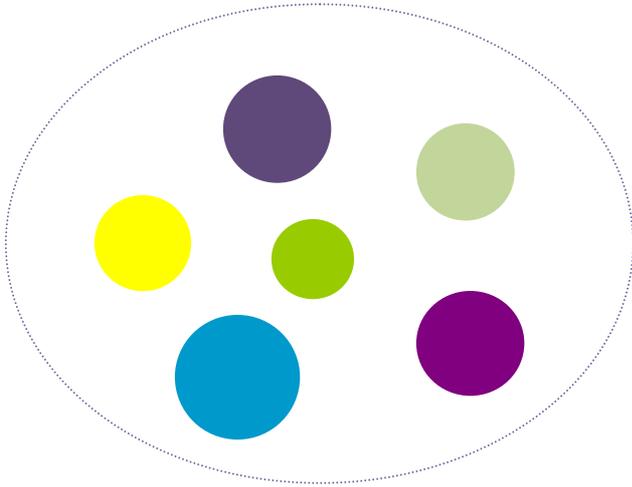
### 10.2 ASSIMILATION

Differences are accepted, provided they can be absorbed – the dominant group simply swallows up the less powerful and different group. The 'pigment' is lost in the dominant colour.



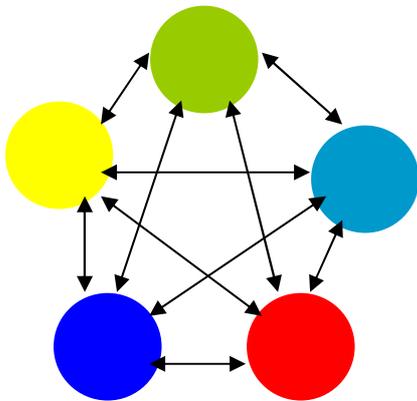
### 10.3 SYNCRETISM (MELTING POT)

Differences are too great to be simply absorbed, so everything is just mixed together: no black or white, just grey; no blue or red, just brown; no coffee, tea, or cocoa, just 'te-of-oa'.



#### 10.4 TOLERATION

Differences are allowed to exist (as in a salad) but no interaction takes place. Separate, parallel existence may be either a step towards fuller sharing, or towards greater separation or even segregation.



#### 10.5 ENRICHMENT (MUTUAL IRRADIATION)

Interaction and exchange is encouraged and differences are found to be mutually enriching - Music, food, worship.

11. The Working Party believes that most people will adopt one of these models, *either consciously or unconsciously*, whenever they encounter, or engage with, difference. Policy decisions in the Methodist Church can be seen to have been based on different assumptions about the underlying ‘model’ which the Church should adopt. In considering what it means to be one Connexion that comprises many nations, jurisdictions, languages and social identities, there needs to be greater clarity about where we are now and where we believe God calls us to be as we engage with our differences – which are real and undiminished.
12. While it may be possible to present a *‘vision of how the Conference can oversee in one Connexion the vocation to worship and mission in the several nations and jurisdictions, and among distinct ethnic and language groups’* it might be much harder to indicate the policies and practices that will help the Church to realise the fulfilment of that vision. For that we need the wisdom of the whole Connexion and are seeking to enter into conversations with a variety of people in different settings.

#### **So now it’s over to you**

13. Which of the ways of relating to difference (set out in section 10) best describes how members of your group see themselves at present in relation to the Connexion? What are some of the experiences and factors that lead to that conclusion? Is there another model which is not shown that best describes your situation?

14. What do you see as distinctive, or characteristic, about the way in which your gathering/fellowship fulfils the *vocation to worship and mission* which it shares with all Methodists?
15. What different form of governance, or ways of engaging within the Church, could you envisage that might make it easier for your gathering/fellowship to contribute more fully to the vocation of the whole Methodist Church?
16. How does your gathering/fellowship relate to bodies (locally/nationally/internationally) outside the Church?
17. Are there other things you would like to add, or matters you want to bring to the attention of the Working Party.

### **Appendix 3:**

A List of ethnic, language and cultural groups drawn up after a meeting of District Chairs in 2006, and a few additions have been made since then. However this is not an exhaustive list, but reflects what is known to the Group:

List of ethnic, language and cultural groups drawn up after a meeting of District Chairs in 2006:

1. Asylum seekers meeting for worship in Wales, Sheffield, and Walsall;
2. Chinese Groups in Kings Cross, Epsom, Birmingham;
3. Congolese Groups (French speaking) in Bolton and Sheffield;
4. Filipinos in the Isle of Man;
5. Ghanaian Fellowships in Radford (Nottingham) and Glasgow, as well as in several London locations, including Westminster Central Hall;
6. An Iranian Group (Parsee speakers) in Hexthorpe;
7. Koreans in New Malden, Wimbledon, Leeds, Bristol;
8. Punjabi speakers in West Yorkshire;
9. A Nepalese Group meeting for Bible Study in Sudbury;
10. A Somali Group in Stafford;
11. Tongan Rugby Players in Wales that met every Sunday for their own worship, with some of them also worshipping with the host Church;
12. Urdu speakers worshipping in Slough, Southall, Redhill, Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Wales;
13. Zimbabwean Groups in London, Southend-on-Sea, Sheffield, Leeds, North Lancashire, Liverpool, Birmingham, Coventry, Edinburgh;
14. Truly International Congregations in London, Manchester, Liverpool.

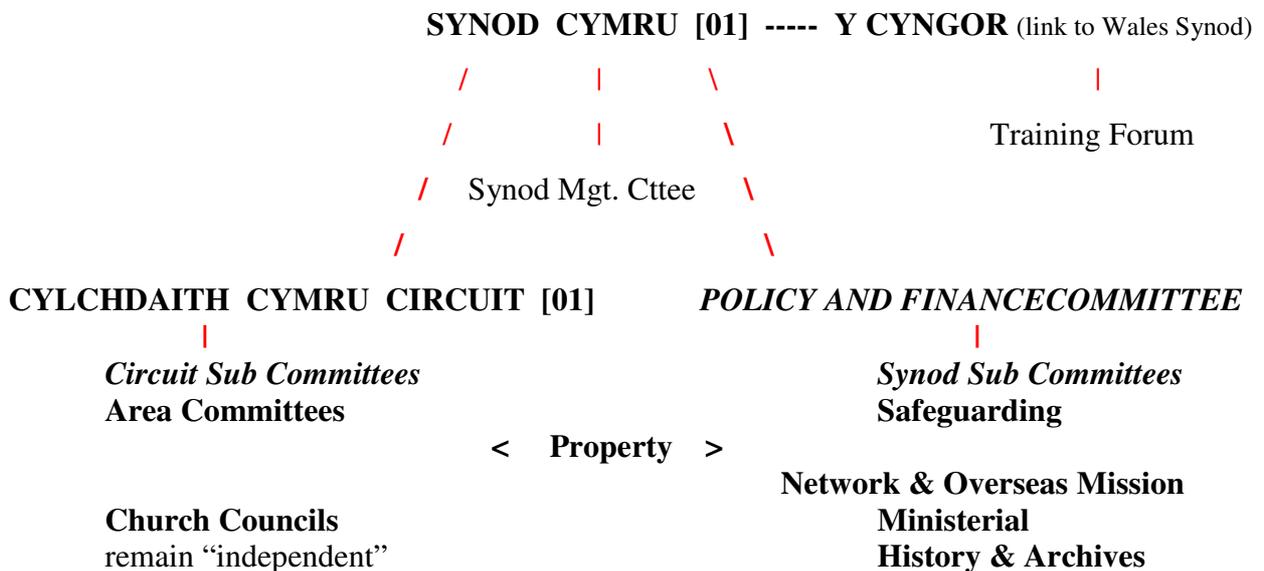
**Appendix 4: SYNOD CYMRU – a brief description of the new framework introduced 1.9.09**

*These notes focus on the framework rather than ideas being developed for mission.*

1. **Our Problem:** Only 2 active Welsh speaking ministers + 2 learners + 1 p/t English speaker; (Pilot of working with Synod Wales Superintendents had failed); Ageing members wanted to continue to worship IN WELSH; A new need to develop lay leadership; Research undertaken by visits to all 13 circuits in 2006; Two Synod conferences 08 & 09 to develop new structures and discuss new methods of worship and mission – grass-roots decisions led to draft documents & presented at each stage in Synod meetings;

2. **Our Answer:**

2.1 The New Structure



**13 “old” circuits merged into ONE new circuit for the whole of Wales;**  
**Geography restricts members from ALL chapels attending Circuit meetings – thus they are represented by Areas’ representatives (every chapel agreed in writing)**  
**New Circuit divided into 12 new geographic AREAS;**  
**Areas may be led by ministers, lay-people or supernumeraries;**  
**Shadow working Group was established to lead new circuit;**

- 2.2 Supporting the development of Area Ministries – Powys, Llanrhaeadr, Llandudno, Holywell, & use of R&R ministers as Superintendents in 2 other Areas;
- 2.3 Working locally with Wales Synod circuits in Ceredigion, Bro Hafren, Bangor & Holyhead;
- 2.4 Appointment of Administrator & establishing a Synod/Circuit office at Colwyn Bay;
- 2.5 Using and developing of Lay Leaders – leading Areas; charring meetings etc.