

Working party on the roles of President and Vice-President

Basic Information

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Status of Paper	Update
Action Required	Information
Draft Resolution	The Council notes the report
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	Progress report on the Working Party's work since the discussion of the draft report MC/10/18 at the February Meeting of the Methodist Council
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substitute title 'Presidency' for 'Presidium' • Options for 2-person Presidency included in the report to the Conference • Timetable for any Deed of Union changes • Replacement paragraphs re (a) presbyteral President; (b) relationship of Presidency to General Secretary and Connexional Team Secretaries • Estimates of costs
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	MC/10/18
Consultations	Council; Law and Polity; Faith and Order; and others

Summary of Impact *As in February report*

Standing Orders	
Faith and Order	
Financial	
Personnel	
Legal	
Wider Connexional	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	
Risk	

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Progress report

At its meeting on 2 February the Council considered the Working Party's report *Leading and Presiding: developing the presidency of the Conference* (MC/10/18). Since then the Working Party has considered comments and advice received, in particular from the Faith and Order Committee, the Law and Polity Committee and the Council itself and has amended its report at various points. Rather than burden members with the full report in its revised form, much of which remains unchanged, this progress report lists the principal changes and attaches in appendices the text of those passages where more extensive revision has been undertaken.

1. While it is prepared to defend its use of 'Presidium' as the title for the collaborative group of President and Co-Presidents in the light of contemporary usage, it is clear that some people are uncomfortable with it and the term 'Presidency' has been substituted for it.
2. The Working Party has followed the Council's advice and included a further set of options to be put before the Conference alongside its original set of proposals for a three-person Presidency. These further options would be for a two-person Presidency, comprising a presbyter and either a lay person or a deacon. This would either be for a single year of office or for a two-year term of office, with one of the two officers to be elected each year. A three-year term of office would leave one year in three without an election at Conference, and four years would have a similar disadvantage of no election every other year, and would also be subject to some of the objections to a five-year term rehearsed in the report.

It should be noted, however, that these options for a two-person Presidency are not the same as the status quo. The report's proposals for a Presidency that is a single corporate entity whose constituent members work collectively and collaboratively whilst having some distinctive powers and roles, still stand and are a major step forward from the current position.
3. Because of the extra complications in voting on the additional options, and the danger that a vote for one alternative, secured by 50+%, might fail to secure the 75% vote required to change the Deed of Union accordingly, the Working Party will offer no amendments to the Deed this year (but indicate in outline what they might be). Instead the Working Party will recommend that the Conference treat its resolutions on the report as provisional resolutions to be sent to the Synods and Law and Polity Committee for consideration before coming back to the Conference in 2011, when Deed of Union and Standing Order changes can also be presented. These, if adopted, would come into effect from the Conference of 2012, with the first elections under the new system in 2013.
4. The Working Party has substantially revised its paragraphs on the reasons for a presbyteral President and the time commitment that might be involved, and has expanded its paragraphs on the relationship of the Presidency to the General Secretary and Team Secretaries. These revisions are attached as appendices 1 and 2.
5. An estimate of costs has been made for each option, and these are included as appendix 3.

Brian E Beck (*chair*)

Kenneth G Howcroft (*convener*)

Appendix 1

Revised paragraphs concerning the President

In section 7 on the Presidency:

7.10 We believe that there is benefit to the Church in the present practice by which both President and Vice-President continue during their year of office to be rooted in the everyday life of the Church, in the case of the Vice-President by keeping contact both with his or her local church and circuit and with his or her everyday employment or other activities. For the President day to day contact is generally less possible and most of the duties of his or her normal station are covered, either by the appointment of a President's Assistant or by colleagues between them sharing the coverage. Nevertheless the President is always listed on the stations in the appointment where he or she normally serves, and maintains as much contact with it as is possible. We are keen to see this rootage preserved in the future, although we recognise that if a three-year term of office is adopted for the Presidency it will be more difficult. We resist the notion that any of these offices should become by definition 'separated' or set apart full-time to the exclusion of previous responsibilities. Any potential conflict of interest between local and connexional responsibilities should be dealt with by delegation.

Section 8 re-cast as follows:

8. The President

8.1 Even within the Presidency there will be need for one member to be identified as the lead figure for legal and practical reasons. We recommend that the title of 'President' be retained for the lead figure. The Methodist Church Act 1976 and other legislation refers to the President, and there is a practical necessity to ensure that the person upon whom responsibility ultimately falls should be identified. In addition the title has a long history, deriving originally from John Wesley's Deed of Declaration in 1784, was used by all the branches of Methodism that eventually reunited in 1932 and is known in ecumenical and wider public circles.

8.2 We further recommend that the President, as the lead figure, should continue to be a presbyter. The principal reason for this is theological. Our doctrinal standards in the Deed of Union, while affirming that there is no exclusive priesthood pertaining to the presbyterate and that Christ's ministries are shared by both ordained and lay, nevertheless assign a 'principal and directing part' to those who are ordained as presbyters. This principle is observed in local church, circuit and district alike, and should be the case with the Conference also. As we have argued in 3.2, the Conference is more than a business meeting: it is a gathering of the Church and should express that fact in the way it is ordered. This is not to deny the value of other ministries, lay or diaconal, but to affirm the distinctive character of each. In the report *What is a Presbyter?* adopted by the Conference of 2002 it is made clear that the particular calling of a presbyter (as of a deacon) can only be understood within the general calling of the People of God to worship, mission and service, and serves to focus, express and enable it. To this end presbyters are ordained to a ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral responsibility, and to elect a presbyter to the Presidency would be an authorisation to exercise that ministry in the context of the Conference and the Connexion at large.

8.3 There are also practical considerations. We have argued in 7.10 above against making the Presidency in principle a 'separated' appointment, and a genuine sharing of responsibilities, particularly in visits to the districts and other public engagements, should ensure a lighter work-load than that currently carried by President or Vice-President. Nevertheless the balance will inevitably shift from year to year, depending on individual availability. We make it clear in 10.3 below that it is unrealistic to expect full-time service of a deacon because of the specialised nature of each diaconal appointment, which would make it virtually impossible to arrange for an assistant to cover for the deacon's absence. The amount of time a lay person could offer would depend on that person's other commitments. A retired

person is likely to have more time available than one still in employment. The consequence is likely to be that in some years more will be demanded of the presbyter than in others, and where this is the case an assistant can be more easily appointed than for a deacon.

8.4 As a presbyter the President's particular ministry should therefore be essentially presbyteral. It should focus on a ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral responsibility. In the Conference that would include presiding at an ordination and at the Conference service of Holy Communion. Additionally we think that the person who presides in the name of the Conference over the reception of others into full connexion should be one who is himself or herself in full connexion. During the year also it is desirable that the President should be given opportunities to preside at Holy Communion, and to share in baptisms and confirmations. It is appropriate too that the President should be available as a pastor, especially to presbyters and deacons, and to have time for those who seek help and advice.

In section 14 [arguments for a one-year term and against three years]

14.2 While at present districts and circuits are able to make arrangements for one year to cover the work the President or Vice-President does, this would be much more difficult over three years, even with the reduced work load envisaged for members of the Presidency. The likelihood is that over time the need would be felt for a separate station to be provided both for the presbyter and for the deacon, with consequent stipend and manse costs. They would thus come to be regarded as full-time appointments, and each would then feel obliged, and be expected, to fill their time. They would no longer be 'rooted' in the way advocated in 7.10 above. The lay Co-President would in most cases be unable to match that time commitment, and employment legislation alone would rule out the possibility of a salaried appointment, because security of tenure would be involved. The dynamics of relationships within the Presidency would be changed for the worse, making the lay partner an adjunct to the others.

14.4 is deleted and the following paragraphs re-numbered

Appendix 2

Relationship of the Presidency to the General Secretary and Team Secretaries

Revised or expanded paragraphs

1.4

.....

Senior Leadership in the Methodist Church (2007) was primarily concerned with the role of General Secretary and the way that role relates to other strategic leaders in the Connexional Team (the three Connexional Team Secretaries) and in other parts of the connexion (Chairs of District etc.). It again reviewed the term of office of the President and recommended that it should continue to be annual. No serious attention was given to the Vice-Presidency. It was in the context of this report that the Council's current remit was adopted. In adopting the report the Conference affirmed that 'the President of the Conference is the leader of the whole Church' (2007 Daily Record 7/20/1), and amended Standing Orders 110, 114 and 300 to reflect this and clarify the role of the Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary. It is clear however that the Conference was not satisfied that the last word had been spoken.

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4.4 It was in that context that the report proposed some refocusing of the General Secretary's remit so as to relate to all areas of senior leadership in the Church (para.54), 'holding together strategic management skills with the traditional pastoral and prophetic skills of the presbyter' (para.60). Those areas of senior leadership include, as indicated in paragraph 1.4 above, both the three strategic leaders in the Connexional Team (the Connexional Team Secretaries for Internal Relationships, External Relationships and Team Operations respectively) and the other leaders (such as the Chairs of District) who together constitute the Connexional Leaders' Forum. In proposing some refocusing, however, the report left open the question of the role of the President and Vice-President, beyond saying that their leadership 'is best expressed in such terms as the representative embodiment of the authority of the Conference', and that they do not exercise executive leadership, but have an ambassadorial capacity, to affirm and encourage (para.32). At the same time it recommended that their roles be reviewed and developed 'so that they work together more closely with the General Secretary/Secretary of the Conference to present a shared vision and energise the Church' (para.33). The Conference, however, in receiving the report, and adopting the remit for the current working-party, also affirmed that 'the President of the Conference is the leader of the whole church' (2007 Daily Record 7/20/1). That however has left the nature of Presidential leadership unclear.

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11. Relation of the Presidency to the General Secretary and other senior leadership

11.1 The office of General Secretary was begun in 2003 following the 2002 report *Leadership in the Methodist Church*. In 2007 the description of the role was expanded to ensure that it was seen to relate to all areas of senior leadership in the Church, while being released from day to day management of the Connexional Team, although retaining overall responsibility for it.

The office thus combines inspirational leadership in developing a shared vision of the Church's calling with executive responsibility for developing leadership structures, co-ordinating initiatives and giving oversight to their implementation. This is clearly stated in Standing Order 300:

he or she 'shall be the executive officer responsible for leading the mission and strategy of the Church. He or she shall play a part in the oversight and leadership of the Church, and in particular shall be responsible for developing strategic management and the Church's vision of unity, mission, evangelism and worship.'

11.2 To ensure that the General Secretary is indeed released from day-to-day management of the Connexional team whilst retaining overall responsibility for it, the 2007 Report entitled *Reconfiguring the Connexional Team: Team Focus 2005-08* (hereafter '2007 RCT'), to which the 2007 *Senior Leadership* report (hereafter '2007 SL') cross-referred, stated that 'The Team shall have three "Secretaries" working together under the direction of the General Secretary to lead the Team' [para 2.39.2 2007 RCT]. These Secretaries are described as three 'strategic leaders in the Connexional Team' [para 56 2007 SL]. Concerns that they 'would be leading but without having any tasks that grounded them in everyday reality, or that they would be a form of connexional inspector interfering in responsibilities that properly belong to the districts' were met by a careful definition of the particular responsibilities of each Secretary in relation to the Connexional Team and the way it interacts with others.

Thus the Secretary for Team Operations is to 'oversee the management of the Connexional Team and the development of policies in the Team which will enable the Team to fulfil its purpose according to best practice; ensure the Team's compliance with all statutory and regulatory requirements in the employment of staff and the performance of its tasks; and promote a strategic approach to the development of good practice in the working relationships between the Team and the Districts'. This involves managing all the Cluster Heads in the Team with whom the other two Secretaries also interact. The role also includes working collectively with the other Secretaries and the General Secretary to address strategic questions affecting the delivery of the day-to-day work of the Team to high standards and agreed timetables. Similarly, the Secretary for External Relationships is to 'oversee the development of all the Church's strategic partnerships, in Britain and world-wide, and to stimulate and promote new ones; represent the Methodist Church in ecumenical and mission-focussed consultations with partner organisations, both church-based and others, in Britain and world-wide; and ensure good communication between the Church and its partners'. The Secretary for Internal Relationships is to 'oversee a strategic approach to the development and delivery of policies and procedures which will enhance the Church's worship, ministries (lay and ordained) and mission; facilitate effective collaborative working relationships among the members of the Connexional Leadership Team; develop good communications throughout the Church; and ensure co-operative relationships between the Connexional Team and the Districts'. [paras 56-7 2007 SL].

Thus each of the Team Secretaries exercises a ministry of leadership in the area for which he or she is responsible, not only in relation to the Team but in and on behalf of the wider Connexion. One of the General Secretary's responsibilities is to co-ordinate their work.

11.3 The 2007 *Senior Leadership* report also stated that there 'is great value to be achieved by having an interaction between strategic leaders in the Connexional Team and strategic leaders in the districts [para 56]...'and elsewhere. The three Connexional Team Secretaries therefore support and work as strategic leaders with the General Secretary not only in his or her role of responsibility for the Connexional Team but also in that of working with other senior leaders in the Connexion such as the designate, current and past Presidents and Vice-Presidents, the Chairs of District, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, and the chairs of governance bodies. All these senior leaders have a role along with the General Secretary in developing the church's vision, but relate to him or her in a variety of different ways depending on their own responsibilities. The General Secretary therefore has a specific responsibility that is particular to his or her role, namely to 'lead and direct the Connexional Leaders' Forum' (which consists of the Connexional Team Secretaries and the other senior leaders mentioned above) in its task of conferring and developing vision [SO's 300(2A) and 230]. To underline the importance of this, the 2007 Conference recommended that the General Secretary be asked 'to give special attention to the development of the leadership capability of the Church at all levels' [2007 SL para 53 and recommendation 5].

11.4 The office of General Secretary therefore offers great potential for the Church, not least in the developing and co-ordinating of leadership and in the strategic management of the mission of the

Church. Inevitably in the exercise of such responsibilities the General Secretary will be identified from time to time with controversial issues, as unpalatable measures are taken to implement necessary but painful change.

11.5 The responsibilities we have sketched for the Presidency, which reflect expectations Methodism has long held for the presidency, have a different emphasis. It has no management responsibilities. The emphasis is upon sharing a vision of God's calling, and inspiring the Church, locally as well as nationally, to embrace it, and upon the Presidency as the representative embodiment of the Conference's authority between its annual meetings being available as an impartial reference point when difficulties arise in local situations or connexionally.

11.6 At the same time there are similarities between what is to be expected of the President and Co-Presidents on the one hand and what is to be expected of the General Secretary, supported in particular by the three Connexional Team Secretaries, on the other. Both groups need to visit widely to strengthen the bonds of the Connexion. Both need to be available as listeners, learning both about good practice and about difficulties and disappointments. Both need to share what is learned, so that others may profit from what works well and difficulties may be addressed. Both may share in discussion about possible solutions to problems and the development of policy in times of change. But it will be the responsibility of the General Secretary (supported again in particular by the three Connexional Team Secretaries), not of the Presidency, to develop the mechanisms for the delivery of change and for ensuring that policies are carried through. Conversely the Presidency, being released from management responsibilities, will be free to devote more time to a listening role, in order that local concerns may be fully appreciated and appropriate responses considered. This in turn can assist the General Secretary and Team Secretaries in their role of formulating policies for the Connexion.

11.7 These responsibilities need to be spelled out, however briefly, in Standing Orders, and we offer drafts of a Standing Order for the Presidency and an addition to Standing Order 300 relating to the General Secretary in Appendix 2. If our recommendations are adopted these will be presented to the Conference of 2011. Their effect is to identify the distinctive ministry of the President and Co-Presidents and stress the importance of their working in conjunction with the General Secretary and he or she with them. In addition the General Secretary's relation to districts and circuits as well as to connexional structures is made clear.

11.8 By Standing Order the offices of General Secretary and Secretary of the Conference are to be held by the same person. The two offices are technically distinct and carry different responsibilities. Those of the Secretary of the Conference are nowhere comprehensively stated, although specific duties are identified in various contexts. Moreover, just as the three Connexional Team Secretaries support and work as strategic leaders with the General Secretary in his or her 'leadership' and 'executive role' with 'a strong, but not exclusive emphasis on developing vision and exercising strategic management' in 'the oversight of the Connexion', so officers of the Conference (e.g. the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and the Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice) support and work with the Secretary of the Conference who exercises a similar role but this time with 'a strong, but not exclusive, emphasis upon governance'. [Quotations in this paragraph are from para 31 of 2007 SL].

Essentially the office of the Secretary of the Conference is a role in the service of the Conference and in support of the President and Vice-President. The relationship to the President and Vice-President of the person appointed is thus subtly different when he or she is acting in the capacity of Secretary of the Conference than when acting as General Secretary. But we are convinced that the arrangement, which was confirmed when it was reviewed in the 2007 report on senior leadership, is fruitful and we make no recommendation to change it.

Appendix 3 Estimates of cost

21 Estimates of Cost

We do not believe that the Conference will wish to vote on the alternatives set out in the resolutions on the ground of cost alone, but the following estimates are included to assist the Conference to see the consequences of each alternative. For comparison current costs are also given.

STIPENDS/SALARIES

Current:	Nil for President or Vice-President but up to c. £27,000 (including on-costs) to support a President's Assistant when required
Proposals:	Three-person, One-year Presidency: no change but if on a rare occasion an Assistant were required for both President and Diaconal Co-President, up to £54,000 Three person, 2/3-year Presidency: as for one year but if 'rootage' in a normal appointment proved to be impossible and a separate station had to be arranged, £32,000 pa (including on-costs) each for a presbyter or deacon (but no costs for an Assistant). Two-person, One-year Presidency: no change from current, but if the two were to be a presbyteral President and a diaconal Co-President and on a rare occasion an Assistant were required for both up to £54,000 Two-person, 2/3-year Presidency: as for one year, but if the two were to be a presbyteral President and a diaconal Co-President and 'rootage' in a normal appointment proved to be impossible and a separate station had to be arranged, £32,000 pa (including on-costs) each for a presbyter or deacon (but no costs for an Assistant).

SECRETARIAL SUPPORT

Current:	average £5,000 p.a. each for President Designate and President, Vice-President-Designate and Vice-President = up to c. £20,000 p.a.
Proposals:	3 persons/one year £30,000 p.a. 3 persons/3 year £20,000 p.a. (3 Presidency members plus one designate) 2 persons/one year no change 2 persons/two years £15,000 p.a (only one Designate each year)

EXPENSES (travel, accommodation, overseas trips etc)

Current:	President up to £10,000 p.a. on average; Vice-President up to £5,000 p.a. on average = £15,000 p.a. total
Proposals:	Two-person Presidency as current Three-person Presidency £15,000 p.a. divided between President and 2 Co-Presidents (same work divided 3 ways rather than 2 ways) Or £20,000 if work increases.

MANSE COSTS

Current: Nil

Proposals: One-year Presidency: no change

2/3-year Presidency: if either a presbyter or a deacon required a separate station, c. £450,000 per manse initial purchase near M25 on commuter route plus c. £10,000 p.a. per manse Council tax, maintenance etc.

SUMMARY (annual costs)

	Current	3 person/1yr	2 person/1yr	3 person/3yr	2person/2yr
Stipends (or with manse)	£27-54k	£27-54k	£27-54k	£27-54k £32-64k	£27-54k £32-64k
Support	£20k	£30k	£20k	£20k	£15k
Expenses	£15k	£15-20k	£15-20k	£15-20k	£15-20k
Totals	£62-89k	£72-104k	£62-94k	£62-104k	£57-99k
Manse (if required)				£10-20k	£10-20k
				£72-124	£67-119k
Capital (one-off)				£450-900k	£450-900k