

Configuration of initial ministerial training Response of the Ministries Committee regarding Memorial M6 (2013)

M6 Configuration of initial ministerial training

The Darlington District Synod (R) (Present: 104; Voting: 83 for, 3 against) draws attention to the contents of the report MC/13/38 to the April 2013 Methodist Council on the implementation of the recommendations of The Fruitful Field Project report to the Conference of 2012, from which it is clear that some of the key objectives set out in The Fruitful Field Project and adopted by the Conference will not be achieved. Specifically:

- *There will not be a unified staff team for the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network because tutors at the Queen's Foundation will not be employed as part of the Network.*
- *The control of Methodist training at the Queen's Foundation will continue to be indirect, because its existing governance structure will remain in place.*
- *Cliff College will also continue to employ its own staff and (as originally envisaged) will not offer initial ministerial training.*
- *In consequence, there will be no single Network and no centre under direct Methodist control which provides initial ministerial training.*

It is the Synod's understanding that the advantages intended to flow from the substantial dismantling of existing ministerial training arrangements and their replacement by the proposed Network arrangements therefore cannot be achieved. This calls into doubt the assessment that the adverse consequences of such dismantling, which were noted in The Fruitful Field Project, are a price worth paying for those advantages.

The Synod therefore requests the Conference to set up an urgent review to reconsider the issue of how ministerial training should be configured with the aim of establishing an alternative, robust configuration for Methodist ministerial training, building on existing strengths and partnerships, rather than by dismantling them.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Darlington Synod for its memorial and notes the Synod's concerns.

The Conference directs the Methodist Council, in consultation with the Ministries Committee, to initiate an appropriate process through which a review of ministerial training is conducted in line with the request of the memorial, to ensure that the vision outlined by the Ministries Committee in the Fruitful Field Project is delivered.

The Conference directs the Council to bring a report to the 2014 Conference.

Response of the Ministries Committee

The Ministries Committee has noted the reply to Memorial M6 (2013) regarding the configuration of initial ministerial training and its referral to the Methodist Council in consultation with the Ministries Committee.

The Ministries Committee has discussed this and wishes to assure the Methodist Council that it has confidence in the provisions put in place for the training of ministerial students from 2013 and the excellent work taking place at the Queen's Foundation in this regard. The committee notes that these provisions will, as a matter of routine, be inspected this connexional year by the Quality in Formation panel (an ecumenical inspection process) and by an inspection as part of the validation by Durham University for the Common

Awards process. The committee notes that it would be helpful to locate the proposed review of initial ministerial training within the wider context of provision relating to candidating and probationer studies and other developments in the field of formation in order to ensure that the focus of the review is on the provision of training, rather than specific institutions. The committee also notes that the first cohort of ministerial students studying on the Common Awards will begin their studies in 2014 with students on a part time pathway completing initial studies in 2017.

The Ministries Committee wishes to recommend to the Methodist Council that:

- a) The Memorial should be read in the light of previous discussions held and decisions confirmed at the 2013 Conference;
- b) A review of ministerial training at this time would be both difficult to undertake and might be unproductive in the light of the major changes that are taking place at this time;
- c) A report is made to the 2014 Conference that the Ministries Committee, believing in the importance of reviewing all processes, will on behalf of the Methodist Council put in place a review process to report to the Conference in 2017 once the new processes are fully established.

*****RESOLUTION**

11/1. The Council receives the report and adopts the recommendation of the Ministries Committee.