

## Releasing Money for God's Mission Working Group

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<b>Status of Paper</b>	Final
<b>Action Required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft Resolutions</b>	52/1. The Council appoints the working group as set out in the report.

### Background

The 2013 Conference received three memorials (M15/16/17) 'Releasing Money for God's Mission'. It adopted a single reply, detailed below, to all three and instructed the Methodist Council to form a working group to consider the issues that were raised, and to report back to the Conference no later than 2015. This paper proposes the names of members of the working group.

The text of the Memorials and the reply is shown below.

### Aim of Working Group

The 'Releasing Money for God's Mission' working group will consider and propose to the Council guidelines to ensure that churches 'release money for God's mission'.

### Memorials 15-17

#### M15 Releasing money for God's mission

The Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District Synod (R) (Present: 131; Voting: 127 for, 4 against), mindful of the warnings found in Matthew 25:14-30 and Acts 5: 1-6, and enthused by the *General Secretary's Reports* to the Conferences of 2011 and 2012, with their call to reshaping for mission, renewing focus on being in connexion and to the responsible use of resources, believes it desirable to increase openness and transparency regarding monies held within church and circuit funds. Such transparency will help to create confidence in the Circuits within the Connexion in their ability to engage in ongoing ministry, mission and growth.

The Synod notes that every church is already required to submit a standard form of accounts, together with a reserves policy, for circuit approval annually by 31 March 31. The Synod therefore believes that the information thus obtained should be made good use of by the following means:

- (a) Circuits should compile in one document a list of all the funds, however described and wherever held, and reasonable, agreed reserves of each church in the Circuit, and present it to the Circuit Meeting. This will make transparent to the meeting the funds available for ministry, mission and growth in the Circuit and help to dispel the myth that there is insufficient money to engage in new work.
- (b) A conversation should be held annually between appropriate people in each church and the Circuit, prior to 31 August to develop and plan for the ways in which funds that are in excess of such reasonable, agreed reserves may be used for ministry, mission and growth in the Circuit (or local mission area in a large Circuit). Details of such plans, accompanied by the aforementioned circuit document and the circuit accounts, should be submitted annually to the

District Policy Committee, or equivalent, by 31 December of the same year. This will enable Districts better to fulfil the requirements of Standing Order 955(7) to fund mission initiatives across the District.

The Synod urges the Conference to enact, as soon as possible, such procedures as would give effect to this memorial, thereby giving greater effect to the responsible use of resources across the Connexion.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent Synod for highlighting the need for churches, Circuits and Districts to ensure that the funds that they hold are maximised for use in God's mission. It reminds District Policy Committees of their responsibility under Standing Order 955(7) to review the state of Model Trust funds held by each Circuit at least every three years and to propose to Circuit Meetings that they transfer money to support projects elsewhere within the District.

The Conference also reminds trustees of all Methodist money that it should be held in accordance with regularly reviewed reserves policies, which should ensure that trustees do not allow their reserves to be inappropriately high.

Each church is required to submit its annual accounts to the Circuit Treasurer and each Circuit to the relevant District Treasurer. There are no rules which prevent Circuit Treasurers from compiling a summary of the funds held by each church in the Circuit and forwarding them to District Treasurers, or for District Policy Committees to request such information. Such a practice may be seen as embodying the Methodist Church's connexional nature.

However, the Conference also recognises that a coherent approach across the Connexion may be of maximum impact in releasing money for mission so it instructs the Methodist Council to form a working party to consider the issues raised by memorials M15, M16 and M17 and to report back to the Conference no later than 2015.

### **M16 Releasing money for God's mission**

The Birmingham District Synod (R) (Present: 121; Voting: 112 for, 4 against) has taken notice of the 2011 and 2012 *General Secretary's Reports* to Conference and believes it is desirable to increase openness and transparency regarding the funds held within individual churches and Circuits. Such transparency will help to create confidence in the Circuits within the Connexion in their ability to engage in ongoing ministry, mission and growth.

The Synod notes that every church is already required to submit a standard form of accounts, together with a reserves policy, for circuit approval annually by 31 March. The Synod therefore believes that the information contained in these accounts should be used as follows:

- (a) Circuits should compile, and disclose annually to the Circuit Meeting, a schedule showing a list of all the funds held, however described, and the amount of reserves (and the reserve policy) of each church in the Circuit. This will assist the Circuit Meeting in using the funds available for ministry, mission and growth in the Circuit.
- (b) These Circuit schedules should be submitted annually to the District Policy Committee, or equivalent, by 31 December of the same year. This will enable Districts better to fulfil the requirements of Standing Order 955(7) to fund mission initiatives across the District.

### **Reply**

The Conference adopts the same reply as M15.

**M17 Releasing money for God's mission**

The York and Hull District Synod (R) (Present: 93; Voting: 81 for, 12 against) requests that consideration be given by the Methodist Council to enabling and encouraging the principle of releasing unallocated monies from unrestricted funds held by churches, Circuits and Districts for the purpose of encouraging mission within the respective Districts. This would be an expression of common commitment to sharing in God's mission and in line with biblical imperatives (remember the servant who buried his master's treasure). In accordance with our teaching, the Methodist Council is also asked to consider ways in which the Church is enabled to enter into a deep and meaningful conversation on the way in which it uses its future financial resources at all levels.

**Reply**

The Conference adopts the same reply as M15.

**It is proposed that the working group be appointed as follows:**

Diane Hardwick

District Treasurer, Bolton and Rochdale

Sue Haworth

Former Consultant to Finance Office, CFB Council member

Ian White (Group chair)

Retired Solicitor, Member of the Methodist Council from the Chester and Stoke District

Michael Richardson

District Treasurer, South East and Chair of Accountancy Support Group

**\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

**52/1. The Council appoints the working group as set out in the report.**