

Minutes of the Methodist Council held on 16-17 February 2009 at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon

Present: The President, the Vice-President and 48 voting members

Norman Mann (Audit Committee), Peter Phillips (Faith and Order Committee), Sarah Malik (Youth President) as participating observers.

Apologies: Ward Jones, Andy Fyall, Angela Evans, Richard Vautreay, Gareth Hill, John Best

In attendance: Jane Bates (Minutes), Anna Drew (Media Officer),

Prayers were led by the Chaplain, the Revd Ian Bell.

It was agreed to send letters to John Best, Trevor Durston and Neville Johnson.

It was noted that Andrew Moore was attending in place of Gareth Hill; and Malcolm McCall in place of John Best.

09.1.1 The Minutes of the Methodist Council held on 13-14 October were agreed and signed as a correct record, with the following amendments:

08.3.5 add the name of Russell Buley to the Scrutiny Group

08.3.12 insert sentence as follows:

The Assistant Secretary indicated that a future area of work concerned the relationship with the Council of those groups which are directly accountable to the Conference.

09.1.2 Matters arising from the Council Minutes [MC/09/01]

Ken Howcroft presented MC/09/01, which the Council noted. In updating the Council on Minute 08.3.10, John Ellis reported that 91% of Team staff have now been appointed. In particular, the Development and Personnel team is now complete. Ron Calver updated the Council on the situation relating to the financial market situation (minute 08.3.16). He reported that the results have been better than expected in the area of property sales, and noted the effect of that on the Connexional Advance and Priority Fund.

09.1.3 Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 25 November 2008 and 14 January 2009

Ken Wales, Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC), presented the minutes to the Council, noting that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2009 had not yet been approved by the SRC. Many of the major items on the SRC's agenda were to be found separately on the Council's agenda. It was asked whether the Council could receive the paper prepared by Mark Wakelin, which had been the main item on the agenda of the SRC held on 25 November. The SRC agreed to consider this request.

09.1.4 Chair's Business

There were no items under this heading.

09.1.5 Connexional Leaders' Forum report [MC/09/02]

(i) Report from meeting held 6-7 January

Martyn Atkins presented the report from the recent meeting of the Connexional Leaders' Forum (CLF). The Council noted that issues relating to Local Preachers were to come as a separate agenda item. It was also noted that more information about progress with

Extending Discipleship, Exploring Vocation (EDEV) had been supplied after the CLF meeting, and this was shown in italics in the report. The Council noted the report.

(ii) Mapping a Way Forward

Martyn Atkins reported that, in its discussion of the Mapping a Way Forward process, the CLF had felt that considering the pattern of circuits without looking at the configuration of districts was an artificial separation. Ken Wales asked that, as this is taken forward, the ‘district patterns and structures’ are understood in the widest sense so that the discussions are about functionality rather than just structures, and that the broader context is taken into account. It was felt that this should not hold up decisions about circuit boundaries.

The Council agreed the following resolution:

The Council authorises the Connexional Leaders’ Forum to include in the Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission processes the review of district patterns and structures, retaining a clear focus on the mission of God and continuing to explore and implement ways in which contemporary Methodism might be reshaped to play an ever greater part in God’s mission.

09.1.6 Feedback to the Council (MC/09/03)

Martyn Atkins presented MC/09/03. This followed a request from the Rural Strategy Group that it report directly to the Council. The response of the Connexional Team to this request was noted.

It was felt that this raised a more generic issue about reporting to the Council, and in the light of this, the Council agreed the following resolution:

The Council requests the Strategic Leaders to provide a brief report of any matter arising in the course of their work deemed to be relevant to the business and interests of the Council and which is not found in any other report to the Council.

09.1.7 Job Titles (MC/09/04)

Ken Wales presented MC/09/04, and explained that it is the view of the SRC that there are issues that need addressing, but the timing of this and what the resolution might be needs more reflection.

The Council noted that there is a working party considering the role of the President and Vice-President, and suggested that this group could be asked for a view on how these matters could be taken forward.

The Council agreed the following resolution:

The Methodist Council accepts the recommendation of the SRC that for the time being no further action be taken in respect of the job titles for the three team secretary posts and that this matter should be reconsidered in due course in the light of experience and with the benefit of further theological reflection on aspects of the oversight of the church in general and the connexional team in particular.

09.1.8 Southlands (MC/09/05 and 05A)

MC/09/05A, which provided additional financial background information, was tabled. John Pritchard (Chair of the Southlands Governors) and Peter Briggs (Principal of Southlands) were welcomed to the Council.

Mark Wakelin presented MC/09/05, and invited the Council to consider whether the situation had changed sufficiently for the Council to revisit its previous decision to approve the Heads of Terms.

John Pritchard and Peter Briggs responded to these concerns, asking the Council to defer a decision until April, by which time more information would be available. The Council declined that request.

The Council agreed the following resolutions:

The Council suspends its previous agreement to the Heads of Terms.

The Council appoints a group (Russell Buley, Andrew Gibbs, Graham Russell, Roger Smith, Helen Woodall) to meet alongside the Governors and Principal of Southlands College and appropriate Connexional Team staff to explore a way forward and come with outline proposals to the October 2009 Methodist Council.

An assurance was given that the Team member who would work with the group would ensure that this area of work be given due priority.

09.1.9 Update to Council on the Music Resources Group (MC/09/06)

The Council was informed that there was mutual agreement that it was appropriate that the Music Resources Group propose a delay in the timescale to the Conference. The Council noted the report.

09.1.10 Protocols for Representation (MC/09/08)

Christine Elliott presented MC/09/08, emphasising that the crucial element of this is that knowledge is shared and that the benefits of the representative roles are communicated more widely. The Council noted the report.

09.1.11 Ecumenical vision (MC/09/12)

Christine Elliott presented MC/09/12, noting that 1.4 f should read 'Church of England' rather than 'Anglican Church'. This was intended to be a short statement for use locally, rather than a long statement. The Council commented on the text and agreed that work should continue and a revised version be brought to the April Council and the Conference.

09.1.12 A Closer Partnership with the United Reformed Church (MC/09/13)

John Ellis presented MC/09/13, explaining that this work flowed from a Conference resolution and URC General Assembly parallel resolution.

The Council agreed the following resolution.

The Council, responding to Resolution 62/2 of the 2008 Conference:

- (i) welcomes the formation of a Strategic Oversight group as set out in the report;
- (ii) invites a representative of the United Reformed Church to be a regular observer at its meetings and wishes to appoint a Methodist observer to attend the Mission Council, with this arrangement being subject to review in 2010;
- (iii) welcomes the principle of a joint meeting with Mission Council in the autumn of 2010 and requests the Connexional Team to explore this further.

The strategic oversight group was asked to reflect on whether it would be helpful to it for each denomination to appoint a further member from a Faith and Order perspective.

09.1.13 Conference arrangements (MC/09/09)

The Council discussed the questions raised in the paper in groups. The notes from the groups were collated and summarised for the Council (these notes are attached to the minutes).

09.1.14 Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2007/08 (MC/09/10)

The report and financial statements had been reviewed in detail by the SRC Finance Subcommittee and the Audit Committee (concerned with financial controls) with the auditors present. Last year's accounts were qualified by the auditors, but those issues are now resolved.

Nick Moore, Head of Support Services, presented the report, noting that the categorisation has been improved.

Nick Addo, Finance Director, presented the financial statements to the Council. The amendments which had been made since the Council papers were printed were indicated as follows:

Page 84 – Paragraph above “Pensions:

Deleted

Page 85 & 89 – Change of signatories

Replace The Revd Dr Martyn D Atkins, General Secretary with The Revd William Morrey, Chair of Council

Page 88 – Incoming resources

Fundraising trading figures:

<i>Unrestricted</i>	<i>Restricted</i>
<i>187</i>	<i>433</i>

Key changes in these accounts are that the Aspinall Robinson Trust, Hunter Rowe Bequest, Southlands, and MRDF have been consolidated.

The Council adopted the accounts. It was noted that there are still some textual issues to be addressed in the report, and the Council gave permission for these to be corrected after the meeting.

09.1.15 Audit Committee (MC/09/10A)

Norman Mann, Chair of the Audit Committee, presented MC/09/10A. The accounts for 2006/7 had been qualified, the issues that had been raised by the auditors had been worked through satisfactorily. The Council received the report.

09.1.16 Pensions

Nigel Wrighton was present for this item.

(a) Methodist Ministers' Pension Fund (MC/09/11)

Ron Calver presented MC/09/11, noting that there is no pain free way of addressing a problem of this magnitude. There will be a further report at the April Council, with the views of the Connexional Allowances Committee and the Strategy and Resources Committee. The paper proposes that there is a debate next year about a possible review of the benefit structures.

Prior to the discussion and vote, those who are beneficiaries of this fund were asked to indicate this to the meeting.

There was concern about the impact of the proposals in section 3 on circuits. Section 4 was supported. There was a reluctance to be in a situation of planning for decline, however, responsible decisions have to be taken and the Church needs to be able to respond to the Pensions Regulator.

The Council agreed the following resolution:

Acting under SO 211(1), the Council authorises the statement on the 'Employer's Covenant' set out in Section 5 to be made to the Pensions Trustees when required, and directs that a report to that effect be made to the Conference of 2009.

(b) Pension and Assurance Scheme for Lay Employees of the Methodist Church (PASLEMC) (MC/09/11A)

This scheme is in a much more satisfactory position than the ministers' scheme, although the deficit is still significant.

Prior to the discussion and vote, those who are beneficiaries of this fund were asked to indicate this to the meeting.

The Council agreed the following resolution.

The Council:

- (i) proposes that from 1 September 2009 the employee contribution to PASLEMC should be 8% and the complementary employer rate (eg 24%) be set to eliminate the actuarial deficit;
- (ii) requests the necessary consultation with the other participating employers and with the membership;
- (iii) affirms that at present it has no intention of adjusting the benefits in the Scheme during the current triennium;
- (iv) requests that a resolution be put to the Conference in the light of (i) and (ii) above.

09.1.17 Extension of Appointment (MC/09/14)

The Council voted by ballot and the following resolution was passed by the required majority:

The Council agrees to an extension of the appointment of the Revd Pearl Luxon as Safeguarding Adviser (Child and Adult Protection) for the connexional year 2009/2010.

09.1.18 Chair of the Council (MC/09/32)

The Council elected David Walton for nomination to the Conference as Chair of the Council from 2009-2012.

09.1.19 Conference 2010

Ken Howcroft presented the proposals for the date and time of the 2010 Conference. The Council approved the following resolutions

The Council

- (i) welcomes the identification of Portsmouth as the venue for the 2010 Conference;
- (ii) authorises the relevant officers to negotiate and sign suitable contracts;
- (iii) recommends to the 2009 Conference that the 2010 Conference meet in Portsmouth from 24 June 2010 to 1 July 2010.

09.1.20 Discipleship (MC/09/15)

Jenny Ellis, Spirituality and Discipleship Officer in the Connexional Team, was welcomed to present MC/09/15. She explained that this paper came following the support of the SRC in putting an intentional focus on this area in the 2009/10 budget.

The Council discussed the paper in groups (comments from the groups are attached to these minutes).

09.1.21 Local Preachers Developments (MC/09/16)

Sion Rhys Evans, Strategic Development Officer for authorised ministries in the Connexional Team, presented MC/09/16. The paper seeks to put far sighted vision and pragmatic administration alongside one another. Local Preachers are vital to the Methodist Church, bringing perspectives from everyday discipleship. The Discipleship and Ministries Cluster seeks to put an emphasis on learning and development and to help the church think strategically about ministries. The reflection undertaken so far on the support given to the ministry of Local Preachers indicates that the current system is very focused on the initial learning and development, with much less emphasis given to continuing learning and development. The Council was asked to delegate the granting of exemptions on the basis of prior learning and experience to the Team as an interim measure while further work is done.

In response to some of the comments made, John Ellis explained that there is now a consciously different philosophy in the Discipleship and Ministries cluster, which is deliberately not dividing up the work according to the different exercise of ministries. He emphasised that the fact that there is no longer a Local Preachers' Secretary does not mean that the work is not done, but it does mean that it is undertaken in a different way, with an emphasis on the ministry of the whole people of God. It was felt that this was a helpful statement and should be circulated widely.

The Council agreed the following resolution:

The Council delegates to the relevant Connexional Team members its responsibilities under SO 565B concerning the Accreditation of Prior Experience and Learning, and directs that reports on the above be made to the Council at regular intervals.

09.1.22 Stamp out Poverty (MC/09/17)

John Ellis presented MC/09/17. It was noted that the Conference in 2001 did not endorse the proposals for what was known as the "Tobin Tax", but the situation has changed since then.

The Council approved the following resolution:

The Methodist Council welcomes the development of innovative financing mechanisms to assist nations in meeting their commitments to finance progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and endorses the Stamp Out Poverty campaign.

09.1.23 Decisions taken by the Council (MC/09/18)

Between meetings of the Council, the Council had made the following decisions by e-mail ballot:

- (i) The Council approved the provision of a President's Assistant for an extended term from January 2009 to the end of August 2010.
- (ii) The Council approved a further term of office on the board of Westminster College Oxford Trust for the Revd Professor Frances Young and Mrs Susan Barratt.
- (iii) The Council approved the appointment of Miss Ruth Wilson as a Mission Partner to The Gambia.

09.1.24 Connexional Team responses to the resourced debate at Conference (MC/09/19)

Janet Morley, Head of the Christian Communication, Evangelism and Advocacy Cluster in the Connexional Team was welcomed to present MC/09/19. Following the resourced

debate, the President invited responses by way of notes and notices of motion. The Team undertook to report back on the outcomes of the debate, bearing in mind what the Team can uniquely and best do. The two key themes were identified as speaking with boldness and clarity and also discipleship and responsible living.

The Council noted this response and thanked the Team for its work.

09.1.25 Validation of alternative course to Faith & Worship (MC/09/07)

The Council agreed the following resolution:

The Council notes the approval given to the Certificate in Theology programme at Cliff College as an alternative to Faith & Worship for Methodist Local Preachers in training, for the period until 2014.

09.1.26 Report of the Archives and History Committee (MC/09/20)

The Council agreed the following resolutions:

The Council receives the report of the Archives and History Committee.

The Council notes the Committee's nominations for membership of the Committee in the connexional year 2009/2010.

09.1.27 Procedures for updating and implementing the 1977 agreement between MCO and SOAS (MC/09/21)

The Council approved the procedures set out in the report.

09.1.28 World Church Relationships Staffing (MC/09/22)

The Council noted the progress report concerning the staffing of World Church Relationships within the Connexional Team. A full report will be brought to the April Council.

09.1.29 Report of Equal Opportunities monitoring (MC/09/23)

The Council noted the outcome of the monitoring of its membership.

09.1.30 Resolution to Undesignate Funds (MC/09/24)

The Council resolved to undesignate the balance held in the Flame Magazine Fund.

09.1.31 Ratification of the amended European Methodist Council constitution (MC/09/25)

The Council approved the revised European Methodist Council constitution as set out in MC/09/25.

09.1.32 Appointment of Connexional Advocate (MC/09/26)

The Council appointed the Revd Stuart Wild as a Connexional Advocate with immediate effect.

09.1.33 Additional signatory for Model Trust Consents (MC/09/27)

The Council authorised Robin Garrido to sign memoranda of consent under Model Trust 26, in place of Paul Ingram.

09.1.34 Appointment of Companions (MC/09/28)

The Council appointed the Revds Jennifer Potter, Ward Jones and Conrad Hicks as Companions in the pilot programme for a period of up to three years.

09.1.35 Report of the Connexional Manse Trustees (MC/09/29)

With the addition of the following to the last sentence of the report, the report was received:

, and would welcome a dialogue to refine the guidelines on the allocation and management of the Connexional Manses

09.1.36 Action for Children and Methodist Church Britain's collaboration through World Church Relationships (MC/09/30)

The Council approved the report and the proposed approach for collaboration contained within it.

09.1.37 Memorandum of Understanding with MRDF (MC/09/31)

The Council approved the Memorandum of Understanding with MRDF.

09.1.38 Covenant Relationship

Ken Howcroft reported that the report to the Conference of 2008 concerning the covenant relationship between presbyters and deacons and the Conference had directed that a consultation questionnaire be produced. This has not yet been done and it was proposed that the Conference of 2009 be asked to extend the consultation period for a year so that responses can be sought in time for the 2010 Conference. The Council supported this approach.

09.1.39 April Council Arrangements

The Council was alerted to the fact that the April Council is likely to have quite a full agenda. In view of this, the Council agreed to begin its work at 12:00 noon on 3rd April, in the expectation that it would be able to finish by lunchtime on the 4th April.