

PRIORITIES into PRACTICE: TEAM FOCUS

A GUIDE TO THE COUNCIL PAPERS

You will recall that as one part of the whole Connexion working to put the *Priorities of the Methodist Church* into practice, the Team Focus process is designed to shape proposals for the reconfigured Connexional Team. The work that needs to be done before the 2007 Conference was outlined at the October 2006 meeting of the Council.

At the October Council a folder and various papers and diagrams were distributed. You may wish to bring these to the January meeting. Immediately after this note you will find another copy of the paper *Team Focus Process: Expectations of Various Groups* which was tabled in October.

The other papers in this pack represent new material to help the January Council do its work. They are voluminous; but the papers are of different kinds and only a minority are essential pre-reading, so it may be useful to study this guide first.

PART A: ESSENTIAL READING BEFORE COUNCIL

Challenging Priorities

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This paper from the Joint Secretaries Group (JSG) sets out a vision inspired by *Priorities* and will be discussed before the Council turns to any of the other papers.

Challenging Priorities: Reconfiguring the Connexional Team

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This is the Core Report and where the Council will spend a good deal of its time. It is deliberately brief; but it indicates the key proposals for change in the Connexional Team in the light of the vision. It will help the Council's work if members of the Council can thoroughly digest this Core Report in advance of the Council meeting.

PART B: READING TO ILLUMINATE THE PROPOSALS

Perspectives Papers

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Further light may be thrown on the Core Report, and its implications for the wider Connexion, in this series of brief Perspectives Papers. They do not contain additional proposals. They seek to illuminate the thinking behind some of the proposals in the Core Report, with particular reference to areas of interest mentioned by members of the Council at the October meeting. You may wish to read some or all of these, as time permits. They may be referred to in the Council's work, but will not be the focus of our attention.

Paper 1 – Headlines

....a brief paper giving ideas about what a post-Council report on Team Focus for local use might highlight. This will be tabled towards the end of the Council meeting to take account of the Council's own discussions.

Paper 2 – Priorities

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....which shows how specific points in the Priorities document are directly honoured in parts of the proposals as well as providing a general context for the whole plan

Paper 3 – Districts and Circuits

Paper 31

....which illustrates how the Team proposals would enhance local mission as districts and circuits also put Priorities into Practice

Paper 4 - Leadership

Paper 33

....a paper that explores how leadership is exercised within the Methodist Church

Paper 5 – Financial Resources

Page 39

....an overview of the financial framework within which the proposals will fit and be funded

Paper 6 – Ecumenical

Page 41

....addressing some of the questions likely to be asked from an ecumenical perspective

Paper 7 – Wider Process

Page 43

....illustrating how the results of the Team Focus and other review processes have been gathered into the proposals; appendices give more detail on the use made of the outputs from those Ground-clearing Projects which have reported to JSG since the October Council

Paper 8 – Comparison with the present Team

Page 54

....giving more detail about the areas of existing work where JSG see existing staff posts ending; and outlining their thoughts on alternative means of delivery

PART C: BACKGROUND READING

Ground-clearing Project Reports

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The first part of this large section is the full text of the final reports to JSG from several of the Ground-clearing Projects. These have been important influences on the proposals in the Core Report but the individual reports will not be debated separately at the Council.

You are not expected to have read these in advance of the Council: they are provided as background material and fuller explanations of some of the major changes; they are also printed here in the interests of transparency, so that Council members can see the relation between the proposals in the Core Report and the recommendations JSG received from the Projects. A brief summary of each of these reports can also be found in Perspectives Paper 7 (see Part B above).

Several of the reports also make recommendations which will return to the Council at later meetings.

Project 1: Evangelism and Speaking of God

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Project 4: Advocacy

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Project 5: Communications

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Filter Panel Reports

The other form of background material is the full texts of the 47 work theme submissions made to the Filters Panels and the Panels' recommendations to JSG in response. These have also been important influences on JSG's thinking. However they constitute several hundred pages of text, so they have not been produced in hard copy for the Council.

These reports may be useful points of reference if you wish to explore the thinking on a particular area of work. If you wish to have a copy of any particular report, it can be obtained on request from the Policy Support and Research Unit at Methodist Church House (nelsonj@methodistchurch.org.uk or 0207 467 5149).

The full list of available reports is below:

Administration, Maintenance & IT
 Advocacy Project 4 Final Report
 Asylum & Immigration
 Chaplaincy
 Churches Agency for Safeguarding
 Communications Project 5
 Diaconal Order - Central
 Diaconal Order - Development & Deployment
 Diaconal Order - Pastoral Care & Support
 Ecumenical Work beyond Britain
 Ecumenical Work in Britain
 Education - Project 10
 Electronic Communication (Website Management)
 Evangelism - Project 1
 Faith and Order Committee
 Formation in Ministry - Appointment Decisions
 Formation in Ministry Pastoral Care
 Formation in Ministry - Selection
 Formation in Ministry - Training
 Financial Services to The Methodist Council
 Gift Aid Recovery Bureau
 Inter Faith Issues
 Joint Secretaries Office - Representing & Speaking for the Methodist Church
 Joint Secretaries Office - Governance, Leadership & Management (Governance)
 Joint Secretaries Office - Governance, Leadership & Management (Leadership)
 Joint Secretaries Office - Governance, Leadership & Management (Management)
 Joint Secretaries Office - Legal & Constitutional
 Joint Secretaries Office - Ministers, Deacons & Data
 MAYC - MAYC Office
 MAYC - Youth Participation Strategy
 MAYC - Breakout
 MAYC - Other combined areas
 Media Service
 MethodistChildren

Pastoral Care & Spirituality
Payroll Services & Stipends
Personnel - Guidance & Expertise
Personnel - Service to the Connexional Team
Personnel - Services to other Methodist Bodies
Public Issues
Racial Justice
Resourcing Mission Information & Guidance
Rural Mission
Safeguarding for The Methodist Church and The C of E
Training and Development Officers
Urban Mission
Womens' Network
World Church

TEAM FOCUS PROCESS: EXPECTATIONS OF VARIOUS GROUPS

This paper has been prepared to help each party fulfil its proper role in the process of reviewing and reshaping the work of the Connexional Team in relation to the wider Church in the light of the *Priorities for the Methodist Church* (summarised in *Team Focus 2005/2008*). Earlier versions were adopted by the Council in February 2005 by the Conference in 2005. Further editorial work has now been done to make the document coherent with the changes in Standing Orders which followed the reviews of both the Council and the Conference.

Expected of Joint Secretaries Group (JSG)

The JSG comprises the Co-ordinating Secretaries and the General Secretary, who are required to work together to lead and manage the Connexional Team in the setting of the wider Church; they must ensure the work of the Team is carried out effectively in accordance with legal and constitutional requirements and the directions of the Conference and the Council. (SOs 300-303). JSG prepares suggestions, for the SRC to consider in the first instance, of major changes in the Team's work and ways of working.

1. To exercise leadership in developing proposals for the ways in which the Team will change and adapt to enact the vision for its work in the short, medium and long term.
2. To propose to the SRC draft annual WorkPlans, with their budgetary implications, in the context of a Forward Financial Plan.
3. To communicate with the Council, the Team, the wider Church and to ecumenical partners (as appropriate in each instance) a clear understanding of the stages of reflection, consultation or decision-making in the processes of change, to brief them as appropriate concerning the content of those stages and to provide updates and additional information as requested.
4. To create an atmosphere of trust and openness in the Team, which will be marked by sensitivity to the pressures and anxieties released by the prospect of change and by the care of individuals under stress. And to put in place supportive resources which also ensure full compliance with the law and aim for best practice in managing change.
5. To apply Conference and Council decisions and criteria fairly and firmly.
6. To make decisions about the detailed or routine application of Conference and Council policies and criteria and about minor changes in the Team's work, without further reference to the Council.
7. To accept collective responsibility for the ownership of JSG decisions.

Expected of the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC)

The SRC is appointed by the Conference to have oversight of the Connexional Team (SO 213(5)); following detailed exploration of suggestions from the JSG, it prepares proposals for the Council about significant developments in the work of the Team that affect the wider Church; and undertakes particular functions with regard to the budget and the accounts.

(The SRC comprises thirteen voting members, along with the JSG, who are non-voting members.)

1. To work with the JSG at the stage where proposals for the Team are being formulated before they are placed before the Council, to ensure that such proposals and their rationale are robust, and that all relevant stakeholders have been adequately consulted.
2. To examine critically the JSG's communication strategy with the Team, the procedures proposed by the JSG for consultation and for adherence to good employment practice and employment law.
3. To agree with the JSG what must be presented to the Council for debate and approval, and what appertains to the management responsibilities of JSG.
4. To scrutinise in detail all proposals relating to the budget and to access to funds, ensuring that all such proposals comply with charity law and particular Methodist trusts.
5. To require from the JSG a risk assessment for all major proposed changes.
6. To monitor the implementation of changes endorsed by the Council and/or the Conference
7. To accept collective responsibility for the ownership of SRC decisions.

Expected of the Methodist Council

The Council has to keep in review the life of the Methodist Church and propose to the Conference changes which will make the Church's work more effective; and to give spiritual leadership to the Church. This involves elements of leadership, in that the Council seeks to harvest insights and articulate vision for the work of the Districts and the Team, and to motivate and inspire it. It also involves major elements of governance. The Council is the trustee body for the Methodist Church Fund. The Council is also the employing body for lay staff in the Team and nominates to the Conference presbyters and deacons for appointment to serve in the Team. The Council aspires to adopt best practice in fulfilling these responsibilities and looks for best practice to be applied in the management of staff in the Team. (See Standing Orders 210-212.).

1. To take the lead in encouraging every part of the Connexion to apply the *Priorities for the Methodist Church* to its life, work and mission.
2. To hold to the vision endorsed by the Conference in the *Team Focus 2005-2008* document for the way the *Priorities for the Methodist Church* affect the work of the Team and the wider Church.
3. To work with the Joint Secretaries Group (JSG) to create an environment of trust, courtesy and openness, within which rigorous conversation, scrutiny and exploration can take place, to the benefit of the Church's work; with respect given, as may be required, to the need for confidentiality.
4. To hold the SRC to account for overseeing the Team, and for the implementation in the Team of the Council's ambition of delivering 'best practice' in the management of the Team.

5. To insist that proposals for change from the SRC have a rationale, which can be tested in the light of the *Team Focus* document.
6. To agree and commend to the Conference major changes of direction, focus, commitment and resource allocation; and/or criteria which decisions in the Team must meet.
7. To endorse the annual WorkPlan as proposed by the JSG, and to report its essential features to the Conference.
8. To approve a budget which is to be recommended to the Conference for approval.
9. To accept collective responsibility for the ownership of Council decisions.

Expected of the Conference

*The Conference is the governing body of the Methodist Church under God. It has responsibility for what the Deed of Union calls the government, discipline, management and administration of its affairs. It fulfils this responsibility through a process of “Christian conferring”. This involves its members in seeking to discern the will of God through taking counsel together in a mutual, prayerful and thoughtful dialogue that leads to collective decision-making. Overall it is responsible for exercising **oversight**. Much of this is in the form of **governance** i.e. exercising final authority over things. A major expression of **oversight** is in the form of **leadership** i.e. inspiring Methodist people to be imaginative and to articulate vision. Less of the Conference’s activity is to do with expressing oversight through **management**, the direct exercise of which is the duty of the other groups mentioned above. [See further the reports *The Nature of Oversight and The Review of the Methodist Conference in the 2006 Conference Agenda*].*

1. To formulate and adopt the principal purposes and policies of the Church.
2. To set parameters for the implementation of those policies, and to bring to the attention of the Church issues and opportunities that may need to be considered as its policies are applied.
3. To set the parameters and structures of accountability and support for the Methodist Council and other bodies to act on its behalf in particular matters, authorising them to exercise appropriate oversight directly, seeking to ensure that they do so under the guidance of the Spirit and in an attitude of stewardship and encouraging them to adopt best practice in the fulfilment of their governance responsibilities.
4. To receive and assess reports from the Methodist Council and others charged with monitoring the fulfilment of the Conference’s agreed purposes.
5. To adopt the budget of the Connexional Team and to set the assessments on the districts.
6. To appoint a small number of senior officers, who are to work collaboratively to enable effective linkages between the Conference and key bodies acting in its name so that the policy-making of the Conference is well-informed and visionary and that the decisions of the Conference are effectively implemented through appropriate groups and bodies.

PART A

ESSENTIAL READING BEFORE COUNCIL

CHALLENGING PRIORITIES

This short paper sketches a vision shared by members of the Joint Secretaries Group, inspired by Priorities for the Methodist Church.

We have three purposes in sharing it with the Council:

To illuminate where we are coming from in preparing the Report about the reconfigured Connexional Team;

To stimulate Council members to ponder whether there are features of our vision which strike a chord with their experience and their conviction of God's call to the Christian movement in general, and the Methodist Church in particular, in 21st century Britain;

To encourage Council members to share with us their vision of what the Spirit is asking of the Church today, in the light of the Priorities.

Introduction – Questions and Convictions

1. For all of us, there are questions arising in our everyday experience which prompt us to reflect on what the Spirit is asking of the Church today. For example:
 - A British Airways employee is told to conceal her cross. Some think Christ has been demeaned. Some think religious tolerance has been promoted. The Archbishop of Canterbury notices crosses on sale in BA's duty free catalogue. Church and society appear confused about the place of the principal Christian symbol.
 - The most recent study of people coming to Christian faith in Scotland reports that almost all had respect for the Bible. But almost none found it helpful: "hard-going"; "incomprehensible"; "absolutely impossible". All needed an interpreter.
 - In a Devon chapel on Christmas Eve the preacher was asked to drop the traditional carol service and repeat the previous Sunday's nativity play. Not because it was sentimental and twee: it wasn't. Perhaps because all involved made sure it was as professional as it could be. More likely because its first song was about food shopping at ASDA and buying underwear at M&S: the play connected life as we know it with Bethlehem.
2. Our conviction can be put simply: God's infinite, faithful Love undergirds everything that exists. God is at work, pursuing the divine purpose of Love, in every part of the universe that God has brought into being. This holds true whether or not we or anyone anywhere believes it. Everywhere and consistently God longs to release into the life of the world the mystery of God's incomprehensible and holy energy.
3. Included in that fundamental conviction is this truth: God's grace envelops, supports, guides and seeks to transfigure every Christian disciple, every Christian group, Church or Church-based project, anywhere and everywhere in the world. We are recipients of such divine goodness. So we praise God every day for God's patience and generosity in

dealing so kindly with the British Methodist Church in all its parts – the lively and the dull, the inspirational and the routine, the confident and the insecure.

Overriding Challenge

4. What is the overriding challenge posed by this conviction for Christian mission in 21st century Britain? It has two aspects: discernment and witness.
5. Where and how do we *discern* God's loving actions in the midst of the ups and downs, the joys and sorrows of our personal lives? Or in the cacophony of messages, programmes of action and political manifestos which batter our hearts and minds through the media? How do we *discern* God's message and love as good news for all, when there is so much pressure on us, in our post-modern society, to concern ourselves only with personal or local truths?
6. And if we can discern God's words and actions, how do we *witness* to them in ways that make sense to ourselves and to our contemporaries? How do we speak, in everyday language, about our convictions? What can we do to communicate effectively something of what we have glimpsed of God's presence in the world?
7. And how can we be sure that what we *discern* and the *witness* we make to what we have discerned are truly Christian? We believe that in the Bible there is a unique and authoritative message about God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ and a witness to it in stories of a world and of individual lives transformed. But the Bible is largely a closed book to people in our generation. And, if the truth were told, it is hard for contemporary Christians to make sense of its stories and vocabulary.
8. This 'overriding challenge' for Christian faith and mission is at the heart of *Priorities for the Methodist Church*. It is there referred to as renewing confidence in 'God's love in Christ, for us and for all the world'; and 'God's presence and action in the world and in the Church'.

How do we meet this overriding challenge?

9. We need to go on two interlinked journeys of exploration and discovery. On the one hand, prompted by the Spirit, we need to probe more deeply into the Bible and the ways in which it points to Jesus Christ. And we need to allow our lives and the life of the Church to be reshaped and refined around what the Spirit is saying to us today in and through the discipline of digging ever more deeply into the Bible and into Christian reflection on it over the centuries.
10. On the other hand we need to engage as deeply as we can with the many cultures all around us. We need to discover 'from the inside' what makes people think and feel and act as they do, how they find their values and meanings – usually without any reference to God at all. We need to deepen our understanding and develop the gift of empathy for ways of speaking and living that may sometimes puzzle us or even be offensive to us. Though not always! For not all of the sub-cultures that make up contemporary society are strange to us. We belong to several of them. They give colour and shape to our lives.
11. There are many metaphors that can throw light on these two sorts of enquiry: we have already used the metaphors of 'going on a journey' and 'digging deep'. We could have

said it is a bit like ‘learning a number of foreign languages’ or ‘translating backwards and forwards between a mother tongue and one or more dialects or languages’ or ‘listening intently to different sorts of instruments in a jazz band’.

12. It’s crucial that all the time we look and listen for links. Entering more deeply into the biblical witness and getting beneath the skin of a local culture can illuminate or resonate with each other. Suddenly we see that two things that on the surface have nothing in common connect to each other. ‘This’ is about ‘That’! We find ourselves wonderfully caught up in what someone once called ‘explosions of hidden likeness’. Or, to cite words attributed to Jacob in Genesis 28: ‘Truly the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.’
13. Illustrations abound of insights arising when dialogue is established between the Christian tradition and the many cultures around us. Think, for example, of what happens when we bring together the classic Methodist talk of personal and social holiness and the contemporary political and legal passion about human rights. It is out of such engagements that God both deepens our understanding of God’s will and empowers us to live in the Church and in the world in obedience to God’s will.
14. One sobering observation is that even in the organisations and groups that we are part of in the course of our everyday lives (including the Church), we often struggle to make connections between the things that matter to us and our faith. How much more difficult it is to make links with sub-cultures which we know little of, yet alone to find ways of speaking of God and faith there.
15. It is when things come together from different sources to create new harmonies that faith is born and life is transfigured – for others as well as for ourselves. The four aspects of *Our Calling* then come alive. Perhaps we think we could have **Worship** (of a sort) without having to understand the culture around us. Perhaps we think we could give **Service** without having much clue about the language of Christianity. But key to the *Our Calling* process has always been to see the need for all four sides to be held together and expressed by each Methodist community. So we only respond fully to God’s love when we also **grow and learn as Christians**, which certainly requires us to understand both the tradition of faith and the culture around. And we will not **make more disciples of Jesus Christ** unless we can explain our faith and advocate it persuasively to those who are outside the Methodist sub-culture.
16. It is surely the work of God’s Spirit to have confronted us with this overriding challenge, springing as it does from *Our Calling* and *Priorities for the Methodist Church*. No part of the Church, in any part of Britain, can today avoid this ‘overriding challenge’. Facing up to it profoundly alters what we expect of one another in our discipleship. It also compels us to work together, with urgency and commitment, to change the Church. That means that those of us who are Methodists have to work in partnership with others wherever possible (to quote *Priorities for the Methodist Church* once more). But we also need to do it as ourselves because in doing so we are fulfilling in the present age our original calling as a Church to be a movement of lay disciples supported by a few ordained disciples - gathering together from time to time but living most of their lives as dispersed Christians in the many sectors of the contemporary world, there to discern God’s actions of love and to witness to them in word and deed.
17. We have much to do to help one another better to discern God’s activity in everyday life and to witness to it effectively; and much to do to reclaim credibility for the Church as an

institution. We have to dispel false and negative ideas about ‘religion’ and ‘faith’ (however widespread they are) and build public trust in our desire to serve the common good and not just our own interests.

Pointers to the Future

18. Already there are hints and pieces of good practice to celebrate as key pointers to the future.

18.1 The interim report on ‘evangelism and speaking of God and faith in ways that make sense to all involved’, which was widely circulated in the Church early in 2006, insisted that ‘evangelism, apologetics and the nurture of discipleship and a culture of Christian conversation within congregations are strands that need to hang together as we seek to renew our confidence in God, in our faith in God, and in our ability to share our faith in God appropriately’. The following objectives were identified for the Church:

i. The Methodist Church is seeking:

- ii. to increase confidence in evangelism across the whole Church, not just the parts with a traditionally evangelical approach
- iii. to enable more lay people who feel confident and empowered to speak about their faith to others while still being lifelong seekers themselves, and who are able to help others become attentive to the kingdom of God
- iv. to discover gifts and release resources for evangelism and speaking of God and faith within a renewed movement in which lay people take a lead.
- v. to encourage churches (whether fresh expressions or mainstream) to become more welcoming and offer real nurture in discipleship as a lifelong journey for all
- vi. to identify and appoint more people who are trained, equipped, deployed and supported for the work of evangelism and apologetics

18.2 Further illustrations of well-established initiatives in engaging confidently and imaginatively with our complex and rapidly changing society, to meet the ‘overriding challenge’ are:

18.2.1 The refreshment of some local churches, focussing on the essentials of *Our Calling* with a determination to make the local church hospitable, welcoming, accessible, engaging and profound - thereby creating new possibilities for mission and worship.

18.2.2 The development of fresh expressions of Church, touching groups and communities that have no living contact with mainstream church life and work; and a wide range of other projects, sponsored by churches, circuits, districts or the Connexional Team, which facilitate connections between the Church and people who play no part in the life of the Church – people

making their way in life without reference to God; people in need; or groups which are dedicated to community development or campaigns for peace, justice, development or ecological responsibility.

18.2.3 The intentional concern for and engagement with organisations and institutions in a neighbourhood, covering all sectors of society: certainly encouraging Christian people who play a part in or work for such organisations; and sometimes leading to the provision of chaplaincy (lay or ordained, informal or formal) in those organisations and institutions.

18.2.4 The imaginative attempt to understand the ferment in some parts of society in the area of 'spirituality' (however defined), to engage with it and to bring the resources of the Christian tradition to initiate constructive dialogue with it.

Conclusion

19. These illustrations express the response of Methodist people, working with others, to *Our Calling*. They are at the heart of *Priorities for the Methodist Church*, which has sprung out of that process and programme. We are at the position where some things have already been done, some insights have already emerged and other ideas and insights are gestating. There is much more to be done to engage the whole Church in putting into practice the *Priorities* and meeting the overriding challenge that we have referred to here.

APPENDIX

From vision to a programme of change

The Conference is the final authority in the Methodist Church. But the Conference does not act in an authoritarian manner. It governs the Church so as to maximise, for the good of the whole Church, the godly and creative contributions of individual disciples, churches, circuits, districts and connexional bodies. So the Conference is unlikely to impose a programme of change in the Church, as its response to the vision God has given it. But the Conference does have the responsibility of overseeing the whole Church, in all its variety, and of encouraging communication, networking and the sharing of resources and good practice, so that authoritative innovation in one part can stimulate comparable obedience to God's prompting in another part.

Since 2004, when the Conference adopted *Priorities for the Methodist Church*, it has repeatedly called on all parts of the Connexion, in consultation with one another, to discern what is entailed in putting the *Priorities* into practice. Sometimes the whole Church has responded in unison – as in the disciplined contributions to the Year of Prayer. More typically, there has emerged a mosaic of smaller, more localised attempts to fulfil *Our Calling* and apply the *Priorities*.

If now, at the heart of the *Priorities*, we identify an 'overriding challenge', it becomes a challenge we must help one another to meet in every church, circuit, district and connexional body and in all the many groups, organisations and communities in which individual disciples live out their everyday lives.

It is one thing to make such a commitment. It is another thing to put in place the resources and procedures that can genuinely help people to fulfil that commitment; and yet another thing to remove the blockages and distracting systems and structures that prevent people fulfilling that

commitment. But the Conference must attend precisely to these ‘second order’ issues if its primary desire – to see the *Priorities* applied everywhere – is to be achieved.

While, therefore, there is no ‘grand plan’ of change to reinforce the Church’s prayer and action in response to the gospel, through the *Priorities* and the ‘overriding challenge’, the Connexion from time to time agrees to significant processes of change, which affect everyone to some degree, to move the Church forward in support of its mission.

It is helpful to try to see these laid out together, because they begin to provide an overarching picture of a Church on the move to coherent renewal. Important examples include:

- The commitment, wherever possible, to work in partnership with others, illustrated in one instance by the Anglican-Methodist Covenant.
- The decision to inaugurate a thorough review of stationing policy for ministers and deacons, and more widely of a deployment policy for lay and ordained leaders.
- The decision to review radically what a circuit is for, to look in depth at the best possible use of locked-up resources in circuits (including buildings) for mission and, over a five-year period or thereabouts, to look at the number of circuits we need in 21st century Britain to support and lead the connexion as natural units of mission.
- The decision to co-ordinate into appropriately-resourced regional clusters a rich range of training providers and enablers, to equip all God’s people for effective participation in worship and mission.
- Decisions which together sketch a set of moral and spiritual commitments for contemporary Methodists: they draw on good practice in the everyday life of the world, but are imbued with the vitality and grace of the gospel. Consider here: commitments to racial justice, the co-dignity of women and men, the overcoming of violence and to peacemaking; resistance to ageism; advocacy of the joy we have in diversity in every part of the Church (including the particular challenge of living with contradictory convictions) and in all aspects of wider society; the holding together of global concerns for justice, peace and development with local community concerns (especially generous care for the poor and needy). And all this underpinned by a refreshing spirituality.
- The reviews of governance bodies (the Conference and the Council) and disciplinary procedures, to ensure that they operate effectively and efficiently, utilising good secular practice and modern technology as discerned through our theological perspectives.
- The constant encouragement of lay leadership in worship and mission, through vocational discernment and effective personal development, and the clarification of roles for well-trained ordained officers of the Church.
- The provision by the Conference of a Connexional Team which is fit for purpose (when judged against the *Priorities* and the overriding challenge mentioned above), flexible (as is necessary in our rapidly changing society) and innovative – a resource to support and inspire the rest of the Church.

Is all this too much change too quickly? That is unlikely, because to do less (and even worse, to do nothing) is to court disaster for the institutions and traditions which have nourished Christian

faith in the Methodist way in Britain. The alienation of the Church from the complex, multi-faith, multi-racial, multi-racial and multi-cultural society that Britain has become very rapidly is hard to overestimate. Yet our conviction about God's love in action *for the whole world* constantly unsettles us and prompts us to make response! God will not let us collude with that alienation or settle for half-hearted responses. Thoroughgoing change, urgently pursued, is what God is asking of the Methodist Church, so that we become an effective, confident and joyful agent of discernment and witness in our world.

PRIORITIES into PRACTICE: TEAM FOCUS

CHALLENGING PRIORITIES
Reconfiguring the Connexional Team

I. Introduction

1. This paper follows immediately from *CHALLENGING PRIORITIES* (MC/07/03).

Priorities for the Methodist Church (hereafter referred to as *Priorities*) was adopted in 2004. Immediately it was obvious that the Connexional Team (hereafter 'the Team') must change, in the light of the *Priorities*. So in 2005 an outline sketch of what a reconfigured Team might look like and how it would work was presented to Conference. The Conference agreed a 3-year process of thoroughgoing review – *Team Focus 2005-2008*. To achieve that target, the key decisions about change must be taken by Conference 2007.

The fruits of Team Focus so far are summarised in this paper, in words and diagrams.

In the light of the Council's judgments on these proposals in January, further work will continue up to the March Council, which will agree the proposals to be presented to Conference 2007.

2. Draft **Resolution** for the January Council

The Council endorses the proposals in this paper and encourages the Joint Secretaries Group to develop them in line with the discussions at the Council.

[The Joint Secretaries Group (JSG) recommend the following understanding of this resolution: Processes at the Council will enable the Council to specify either a particular section of the report or an aspect of the Team's responsibilities which must be brought back to the March Council after further consideration and in some instances to identify the main thrust to what is expected of JSG in their report to the March Council. Each of these will be minuted.]

II. Starting Points

3. The paper [MC/07/03], offered to the Council by the Joint Secretaries Group (JSG), outlined the theological and intellectual background against which the practical task of reconfiguring the Team should, in our view, be undertaken. The lively and fluid context for the Methodist Church which it identifies means that the Team must be a connexional resource which:
 - helps the whole Church to meet the overriding challenge in Christian mission in 21st century Britain ;
 - learns from other parts of the Connexion which, in their contexts, are meeting this challenge; and
 - itself meets the same challenge with singleness of mind and at ever greater depth.

4. To be best equipped to serve the Church in the early decades of the 21st century, the Team must be clear (i) about what it uniquely can contribute to putting *Priorities* into practice everywhere and (ii) what it can best do on behalf of the whole Church and the Conference. This entails careful listening to what is going on throughout the Connexion; and the development of shared understandings of what the Team can and should contribute. The Team must not duplicate or disable what is better done in local churches, circuits, districts or other Methodist bodies.
5. The Team Focus process is designed to help the whole Connexion reach confident conclusions about how these objectives are best met.

III. Progress with the Team Focus Process

6. The Team Focus process has been gathering momentum since the Conference of 2005 endorsed it. The reconfigured Team, putting *Priorities* into practice and also operating on a budget reduced by around 30%, is due to be up and running from September 2008. Therefore most of the critical decisions must be taken not later than Conference 2007.

7. The Team Focus process has included three principal components.

(i) A dozen Ground-clearing Projects were identified at the beginning: areas of the Team's current work which could be thoroughly reviewed only in partnership with others (usually districts). Most of these have now reported to the JSG, who have integrated their findings into the proposals below, having reflected on the outcomes of each Project in the light of the Team Focus vision and against the need to construct a reconfigured Team that is coherent, flexible and affordable.

(ii) A fresh look at leadership, management and the 'shape' of the reconfigured Team, which will enable the Team to operate effectively and efficiently, and which also meshes well with the governance structures of the Methodist Church and facilitates the ongoing development of co-ordinated leadership roles across the Connexion.

(iii) The Filters Process, whereby Panels of Methodists (lay and ordained) who are not Team members have reviewed what the Team currently does, in all its aspects, plus the proposals emerging from (i) and (ii) above. The Panels have displayed a diligent thoroughness and professionalism in their work, for which JSG is grateful. The two key questions that the Panels have addressed when considering each work theme, which have in turn been systematically analysed using consistent scored criteria, are:

- * Should the Methodist Church of 2008 and beyond be doing this work?
- * If the Methodist Church should be doing this work, what contribution (if any) can the Team uniquely or best make?

(In addition, Filter Panels were invited, where appropriate, to suggest alternative ways in which continuing Team responsibilities might be fulfilled.)

8. The proposals in this report bring together for the first time these three components of the process. JSG have received the outputs from all three elements of the process. We have engaged in further consultations ourselves, including with the existing Team staff. As has been explained to the Council before, to obtain a coherent model for a reconfigured Team was always going to involve much more than simply aggregating the various

recommendations. While we are conscious that our current thinking remains very much work in progress, this paper summarises where JSG have reached.

9. The complementary Perspectives Papers provide more information on the thinking behind these proposals and how they would serve the Church. For example, for more detail on how particular aspects of *Priorities* link into the proposal in this paper, see Perspectives Paper 2; and for the ways in which ideas from the Projects and the Filters Panels feed into the core proposal, see Perspectives Paper 7.
10. JSG have confidence that a proposal along the lines set out here would provide a reconfigured Team which had the capacity, often through working in new ways, to be a flexible and resourceful tool in God's purposes within and for the Methodist Church.
11. If this proposal finds favour with the January Council, it will form the basis for (much more) further work. This will result in refined proposals for discussion at the March Council and eventually a full proposal being presented for approval to the Conference in July.

IV. Some Preliminary Reminders

12. It is the responsibility of the whole Methodist Church to put *Priorities* into practice: the challenge is no more or less important in districts and circuits than in the Team. This report, however, is about the Team Focus part of that work and how it can best interact with the work being done on *Priorities* elsewhere. This report therefore relates to the Team itself and how it can best serve other parts of the Church as they seek to put *Priorities* into practice, either by supporting them in what they do or in doing some things on their behalf. As explained at the October Council, a discussion about the Team must always be held within the setting of the whole Connexion and particularly its governance structures. By focusing in this paper on the Team, there is no suggestion that it is the heart of the Church in any theological or ecclesiological sense.
13. This proposal is not an assessment of past performance. Existing patterns of working may have been exactly right for their time but not best for the future. In a changing Church, some may have reached the natural end of their life cycle. In other cases, it is the success of past ways of working that now makes new ones both possible and desirable.
14. This proposal looks to more flexible use of central resources with some work being covered by permanent staff posts and other work being covered by time-limited project working. Recommendations about which work is done in which way are not value judgements about what is most important but pragmatic judgements about the best use of resources given the task.
15. This proposal does not assume that if work is no longer done by the Team it will be picked up by the districts. In some cases it is recommended that pieces of work should now simply end; in others, the recommendation is that a continuing objective should be met another way. For more detail on how the proposal impacts on districts and circuits, see Perspectives Paper 3.
16. This proposal reflects a vision but is also meant to be realistic. It is not what we would choose if subject to no constraints; instead it takes seriously the realities the Methodist

Church faces. Externally, for example, the ecumenical climate may not be as we would wish; internally we have to live within our means.

17. This proposal is still being developed, not least because important elements hinge on other Council and Conference work not yet completed, for example, the review of the post of General Secretary and the work of the Stationing Review Group (for some other examples see paragraph 49).

V. Types of Team Staff

18. At the October Council JSG presented work in progress on the possible senior staff for the reconfigured Team: Strategic Leaders (the Reds) and Senior Managers (the Greens). The Council asked for further work to be done on the basis of these ideas. Perspectives Paper 4 explores how the leadership of the Team relates to and interacts with the wider leadership of the Church. In addressing some of the issues raised at the October Council, the Paper underscores the point that the role of General Secretary of the Methodist Church, as presently established, entails responsibilities across the Connexion and is not confined to the Team.
19. In this proposal, we retain the Reds and Greens and the understanding of their distinctive roles set out in the October Council papers, especially MC/06/93B and the Supplement to that paper. However we suggest they are now given specific titles. The strategic leaders would be the Secretary for Internal Relationships, the Secretary for External Relationships and the Secretary for Connexional Team Operations, all working with the General Secretary. In this paper the four roles are referred to collectively as “the Secretaries”. They will exercise the function and responsibility of strategic leadership in two related ways. They will be the strategic leaders of and within the Connexional Team; and also be the representatives of the Connexional Team who share with others in the wider strategic leadership of the Connexion.
20. In the proposal most of the management of areas of the Team would be devolved to what were called in October the Senior Managers (Greens). The October Council was briefed on the characteristics we envisage would be required of people appointed to these posts. They would work closely with each other and with the Secretaries. Without implying any change in their role, we suggest these are now referred to collectively as “the Managers” with corresponding provisional job titles eg “Support Services Manager”.
21. In the proposal we now add thinking about further groups of staff. We envisage a number of staff known collectively as Officers and Advisers. These would typically work directly to Managers. They would be responsible for carrying out policy in specified areas.
22. In 2001 the Conference adopted *Speaking for the Methodist Church*, which sets out guidelines for authorising statements and positions which are issued in the name of the Methodist Church. While the detail of the report will need modest editing, the policy remains unchanged. We envisage that, alongside the President and the General Secretary, Team staff referred to above as Secretaries, Managers and Officers and Advisers will, in appropriate circumstances and on carefully prescribed matters, be competent to speak for the Church.
23. A further group of staff would be the Specialist and Support Staff. Many of these would be highly skilled and would not necessarily be paid less than the categories above. They

would be working to Managers, Officers or Advisers and not typically be representing the Church externally. Included within the Specialist and Support Staff would be those providing secretarial and PA functions across the whole Team.

(A question for the Council: Have you any wisdom on whether there are better descriptive titles than 'Officers and Advisers' and 'Specialist and Support Staff'?)

24. The evolution of ways of working by the Team means that important work will also be done by those who are not paid staff but provide their expertise voluntarily or via a contract to project groups, networks, etc. Such people are not included in the numbers given in the following sections. Nor are staff who might be employed as part of the Team but who are funded by charging for their services rather than from the Connexional Team budget.
25. Most of the Secretary, Manager, Officer and Advisor posts are likely to qualify for the exemption in employment regulations that would allow us to require a Christian commitment from the postholder.

VI. Ways of Working in the Team

26. The basic document *Team Focus* is clear that the 2008 Team needs to work in different ways from its predecessor. Therefore the starting assumption should be that no job in the existing Team will continue unchanged into the reconfigured Team. It was made clear at the October Council, for example, that the proposed Secretary jobs were not existing JSG jobs renamed and would be advertised accordingly. The continuation of an area of work within the Team will normally carry the assumption that it will be done differently in future.
27. In presenting thinking on the Secretaries and Managers to the October Council, the point was stressed that these would not be running independent fiefdoms within the Team. The three Secretaries would work with the General Secretary as a group (illustrated diagrammatically by the group being linked around a circle). Similarly the Managers would also work as a group. Equally importantly, the Secretaries would collectively inter-relate with the wider governance and other Connexional bodies, and also interweave with the Managers. It is impossible to represent all the multi-dimensional working relationships on a two-dimensional diagram, but the commitment to this way of working is resolute.
28. The purpose of working in this way is to make the Team as integrated, responsive and flexible as possible. It is a further cultural shift in the direction envisaged when the single Team was first established as the successor to separate Divisions.
29. These principles enunciated in October also apply to the staff groups described in more detail in this paper. Although for the purposes of describing the Team and its management structure, reference is made to separate clusters, all of them will be constantly interacting with other parts of the Team and the wider Church. While close interaction within clusters will be important for maximum effectiveness, this must not be at the expense of relationships outside the cluster. It will be the responsibility of Managers, themselves working together, to ensure that all staff in the Team are deployed flexibly and efficiently, and in ways that contribute to the wide networking envisaged here. (For more detail of how these clusters are different from the existing Team structure, see Perspectives Paper 8.)

VII. Areas of Work

30. New ways of working will not just be about inter-relationships between staff. This paper gives most attention to which main areas of work would feature in the reconfigured Team. If these are agreed, work for the March Council and on into 2007-8 would provide more detail about other changes in ways of working for both continuing and new areas of work. The following sections of this paper survey the principal proposed clusters of staff, and provide an outline of their areas of work.

(i) Christian Communication and Advocacy

31. *Priorities* underlined how vital effective communication is for the Church and how inadequate many of its members feel in trying to address the overriding challenge referred to in MC/07/03. A major plank of our proposal responds to this cry by bringing together staff with complementary areas of expertise, who between them could form an exciting new resource for the Church centrally and for its local expressions.
32. The Christian Communication and Advocacy cluster would in the first instance be world-facing, helping the Church to articulate what it needs to say to our society, (eg at the level of Government) and to advocate the gospel message winningly. The cluster would also resource and challenge the Connexion by helping Methodists to discern and witness to God's actions of love in the world and in the Church. It would provide access to insights from Christian life and mission in other parts of the world and from many other rich sources of information. In its own communications there would be an emphasis on electronic means.
33. The Help Desk run from the cluster would be an important innovation: a single reference point for enquiries on all aspects of the Church's life and mission. The ambition is for enquirers to be responded to expertly, speedily and personally, electronically, on the telephone, by mail or face-to-face. The Help Desk (supported by a senior member of staff designated as being 'on call' to whom appropriate matters can be referred) will be the principal source of information within and outside the Church, alongside the resources of the web-site.
34. A further aspect of the advocacy role of this cluster within the Connexion would be the provision of attractive resources to raise funds for the Church's own work.
35. As with the other clusters, the Manager would be responsible for holding the work together and ensuring it was done in full co-operation with other parts of the Team and partners within and beyond the Connexion. In 2008-9, we envisage the Christian Communication and Advocacy cluster would include Officers and Advisers dedicated to:
- Communication Skills
 - Evangelism and Spirituality
 - Help Desk
 - International Mission Relationships
 - Public Issues (within an ecumenical team)
 - Media Relations
36. The Specialist and Support staff located within this cluster, but of course serving more widely, would include staff with expertise in:

- Campaigning
 - Fundraising
 - Organising major events
 - Publications
 - Website Development
37. At this provisional stage, we would envisage that up to 24 staff might work in this cluster, including the Manager and around 12 Officers and Advisers. The staff number does not include administrative support staff, who would be managed from elsewhere (see (iii) below).
38. These proposals (and terminology) draw on work in several of the reports from Ground-clearing Projects, especially 1, 4, 5 and 6. For more detail about those reports, see the Appendix to Perspectives Paper 7 and their full texts in Part C. As with the other clusters, Christian Communication and Advocacy needs to serve local districts and circuits effectively; for more detail on how this cluster and others would help a district or circuit fulfil its mission, see Perspectives Paper 3.

(ii) Work Covered by Projects

39. At any given time there are likely to be a number of topical themes which need particular attention if the Church is to be as effective and as Christ-like as possible. A second major area of work will therefore be the Projects cluster. All projects sponsored here would be time-limited.
40. The Filter Panels recommended that certain existing areas of work would best be addressed in future via a project with a designated staff member for the duration of the project. Typically a project might be short-term – a matter of months or a year. In some cases, however, a project might extend over a number of years but, if the project met its objectives, should not need to be indefinite. Examples included work on Inter-Faith Relations, Equalities and Diversity, and the Methodist-Anglican Covenant.
41. Other projects needed in 2008 are harder to predict but JSG have identified several that flow out of Ground-clearing Projects and other recent work, eg the need to look at the Methodist Church's contribution to the world of education and the carrying forward of ideas in the paper *Mapping the Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission* received at the October Council. JSG see the project way of working as making a vital contribution to the Team's capacity to respond most effectively to new challenges and opportunities as the Church and the culture evolve. This includes being able to respond quickly without needing a major reorganisation of staff structures.
42. JSG envisage this cluster might need around four Officers and Advisers in addition to specific arrangements for running individual projects. Many projects would expect to draw on the expertise of other staff members outside the cluster.

(iii) Support Services

43. JSG support the Filter Panels' view that the Team must continue to provide a wide range of support services to the Church at large, always aiming at excellence and efficiency. While in a number of work areas the ways these services are provided need to be given further attention, at this stage we assume they are serviced by paid Team members rather

than, for example, outsourced. Some services might nevertheless be charged to the users, as the October Council agreed with respect to professional advice on personnel or property matters.

44. The Panels were also clear that a number of predominantly administrative functions had tended to be sucked into the jobs of senior staff in the Team and should be more clearly located in a support function; JSG agree. There would of course be management level advice available. In particular, the Panels and JSG favour a number of functions in relation to presbyters and deacons being part of a professional personnel function, in order to achieve the benefit of experience gained in developing best practice in relation to the Council's lay employees.
45. The Support Services cluster of staff would be led by a Manager and might include two Advisers supported by around 30 Specialist and Support staff. This would include around ten PA and similar staff managed from this cluster but working flexibly across the Team: a cluster of staff would be supported by a group of specialists, who would all work across the whole cluster rather than each being linked as a PA to an individual senior person. One, for example, might include in their responsibilities dealing with all the cluster's budget issues.
46. Several work themes would be gathered within Personnel including:
 - Complaints and Discipline Support
 - Payroll input
 - Presbyteral and Diaconal Selection Support
 - Presbyteral and Diaconal Appointment Support
 - Safeguarding Advice
 - Support for President's Advisory Groups
47. Other work areas covered by the Support Services cluster would include:
 - Administration of Team Offices
 - Central database
 - Connexional Grant-Making Support
 - Connexional Property Issues
 - Finance
 - Team IT
 - Team PAs
48. The proposals for this cluster are partly shaped by the work done at the October Council on Ground-clearing Projects 8 (Property) and 12 (Grant-making).

(iv) Learning and Ministries

49. The fourth main cluster of work themes directly relates to equipping the Church at large, and especially its local leaders (lay and ordained), to contribute to the *Priorities* and meet the 'overriding challenge' that springs from them so that they in turn can equip the lay members of the Church to share more fully in God's mission. However this cluster is currently the least well-developed as it awaits the outcome of further work. This includes the report of Ground-clearing Project 2 on support for local churches, including the TDO scheme, and the Review of Training Institutions. Further discussion will be possible at the March Council.

50. JSG support the Filter Panel recommendation that the Faith and Order Committee should move to its proposed new way of working with a staff person in the Team linked to networks outside it.
51. JSG also want to rise to the challenge that comes from studying the report of the Ground-clearing Project on work with children and young people and which was highlighted by the Filter Panel. The Church has two connected tasks – to nurture and encourage the children and young people who are linked to Methodist churches; and to respond to the reality that the vast majority of children and young people in today’s world have no relation to the Christian movement and no interest in it. Moreover, large numbers of children and young people who have had some link to the Church in the past have chosen to disconnect themselves from the Church. (The number of children in church on a Sunday fell by almost two-thirds in the fifteen years up to 2001; in the next five years the total number of children and young people linked with our churches fell by another third). For further information see Perspectives Paper7
52. We therefore propose that, given the wealth of resources from other places for working with the children and young people still within church life, the Team’s energies should be focused on helping the Church to engage with those outside. We envisage one Officer post and a project to develop such work after 2008. We also propose this work should be intertwined more closely with our work on formal education.
53. JSG are aware that the Youth Executive and Youth Conference have also been thinking about future patterns of support in relation to young people’s work and this will be considered by the Council in March.
54. The Learning and Ministries cluster will also include continuing work in support of Presbyteral and Diaconal Formation, although with some of the more administrative support processes moved to the Support Services cluster.
55. We would expect this cluster to include perhaps six Officers and Advisers plus whatever staff are needed to support recommendations accepted from Project 2.

(v) Leadership Support and Research

56. In addition to these four clusters, the reconfigured Team would include the Leadership Support and Research Unit. Unlike the four clusters, it would report to the General Secretary/Secretary of the Conference not to the Secretary for Connexional Team Operations. The unit’s responsibilities will be twofold. On the one hand it would provide a research capacity for the leadership of the Team and the Church, encouraging forward thinking of an imaginative kind, and enquiring into the success or vulnerability of adventurous pieces of work in various parts of the Connexion. On the other hand it would provide expertise to support:
 - formal ecumenical partnerships, nationally and locally
 - governance roles of the Council and the Conference
 - disciplinary responsibilities allocated to the Secretary of the Conference
 - Law and Polity Committee
 - revisions of CPD
 - other legal and constitutional matters

57. For more detail on how the Team proposals serve the Church's ecumenical agenda, see Perspectives Paper 6.
58. The Unit would be staffed by around six Officers under a Manager.

(vi) Overall Picture

59. The reconfigured Team described above is depicted in a simplified form in the accompanying diagrams for the benefit of those who find a visual presentation helpful.
60. The starting point is the simplified core of the diagrams presented in October: *Figure 1*. The red circle represents the four Secretaries and they work both as a group and interacting with the green circle representing the five managers. The October Council discussed these roles and more detail about them is given in Perspectives Paper 4.
61. In this paper JSG have explained that there would be four main clusters of staff supporting this leadership and management group. For example, the Christian Communication and Advocacy cluster. In line management terms, the cluster will report to a Manager in the green circle: see *Figure 2*. The cluster is represented in this diagram just by its Officers and Advisers: this type of staff are represented in all the diagrams by yellow colouring. The circle joining them represents the fact that they will work closely together as a cluster.
62. *Figures 1 and 2* focus on management lines. It is important to stress that day-to-day working relationships will be much more all-embracing around the reconfigured Team. Continuing with the Christian Communication and Advocacy cluster as the example, the staff there would in fact serve all the Secretaries and Managers when the work required that and not just work via their own manager. This is presented visually by *Figure 3*. Beyond the individual cluster there would in reality be a multitude of other cross-relationships around the Team (not shown here) to ensure optimum co-ordination across the whole Team and the best possible use of the various areas of expertise and creativity.
63. A simplified line management diagram of the whole Team as proposed in this paper is given in *Figure 4*. The points made about the ways of working in the Christian Communication and Advocacy cluster would apply equally to the other clusters, even though they cannot all be shown on a single diagram. A more detailed version of this diagram will be presented to the Council when it meets.
64. The diagram cannot encapsulate the new culture that would be embedded in the Team, enabling it to be flexible, innovative and clear about its distinctive contribution, alongside complementary contributions from other parts of the Connexion, to the worship and mission of the Church. The Team will be doing some new things: e.g encouraging fresh expressions of Church; focussing on forging links with children and young people who have no current link to things Christian; and working in novel ways to learn from and contribute to its international mission partnerships.
65. This reconfiguration of the Team does mean that a number of work areas would no longer be handled in the traditional way by employing Team members and so there would be clearly evident differences in staffing from the 2006-7 Team. The Ground-clearing Projects and the Filter Panels made a number of suggestions for changes and after careful consideration JSG believe it is right to recommend that some of them are implemented for

2008-9. With Project 2 still to report, not all existing posts have yet been considered and so there may be further recommendations coming to the March Council. However, on the basis of the work done so far, the main areas where permanent Team staff would be withdrawn or substantially reduced due to work being approached in a fresh way are (in alphabetical order):

- Asylum Seekers & Refugee Support
- Children's Work and MAYC
- Gift Aid Recovery Service
- Mission Education
- Pastoral Care
- Racial Justice
- Rural and Urban Officers
- Women's Network
- World Church Office

66. Although the issues are different in different areas of work, in all these areas the Filter Panels believed that the Church would be better served by different ways of delivering what they fully recognised were important areas of Christian concern. For more detail about the reasons behind their recommendations in these areas and how the work themes will be pursued in future, see Perspectives Paper 8.

VIII. Provision of Grants

67. The Team does not of course only serve the Church through its paid staff posts. It is also the means by which millions of pounds are moved every year to support work that is deemed important in meeting the Methodist Church's goals for mission in Britain and in strengthening its international mission partnerships.
68. The October Council agreed a new integrated grant-making process and a new governance structure for the main Restricted Funds. Since then progress has been made on new property approval arrangements, including their integration with district roles, and on increasing resources for grant-making from districts. A further report will come to the March Council.
69. The document *Team Focus* stressed the role of the Team after 2008 in promoting and inspiring innovation and creative solutions to the challenge of discerning and bearing witness to God's loving actions in many different local settings. This will be woven into the Job Descriptions of the Team staff. In addition, JSG believe substantial sums should still be made available from the Team budget to support innovative ideas sponsored by circuits or districts. Further detail should be available for the March Council.

IX. Financial Framework

70. The Council and the Conference accepted *Team Focus* with its dual commitment not just to reconfigure the Team to serve the Church better but also to reduce the resources the Team consumes by around 30%. This financial target reflected the reduced size of the Methodist Church and the pressures from local treasurers not to increase relentlessly the Assessment portion going to fund the Team. It also reflected the dependence on non-recurring or unstable income to fund significant shares of the Team's expenditure in several recent years.

71. JSG plan to offer to the February Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) some proposals for the longer-term financial scenarios that could underpin the Team Focus proposals and provide a framework for grant-making budgets. This SRC meeting will also look at related questions about the Church's reserves policy and Team budget-making for 2007-8 and beyond. A report will come to the March Council.
72. Meanwhile the proposal in this report implies a Team staff of around 80-90 permanent, full-time equivalents (compared with around 140 now) and a continuing substantial capacity for grant-making in Britain and beyond. This represents a reduction in recurring expenditure of around 25% compared with the 2005-6 base year budget. In presenting this proposal, JSG are confident that, on the basis of the latest available figures, it can be funded from stable and reliable income streams. When other income streams are buoyant, they could be used to supplement the funds available for grants and one-off projects.
73. In addition, JSG believe this proposal is consistent with restraining the call on Assessment income, so that for the years after 2008 the contribution to the centre could be on a slight downwards trend, allowing a greater share of local giving to be used on local mission.
74. For more detail on the financial framework, see Perspectives Paper 5.

X. The Work Ahead

75. If the Council feels this proposal is moving in the right direction and would help the Church honour its *Priorities*, JSG would intend to contribute to several major areas of work in order that further proposals can be brought to the March Council. They would include:
 - Recommendations following from the report of Ground-clearing Project 2 on Local Support, including the TDO scheme
 - New ways of working, especially in work areas where the paid staff contribution will not be prominent, eg using agencies or networking
 - Possibility of co-locating office-based Team staff, currently in Manchester and London, with the central staff of the United Reformed Church, at Methodist Church House in London
 - Financial scenarios developed with the SRC.

XI. Conclusion

76. This paper sets out JSG's proposal for a substantially reconfigured Team to take effect from September 2008. It draws on the work of many other people, especially the Ground-clearing Projects and the recommendations of the Filter Panels on the 47 proposed work themes examined by them. Not every question can be answered yet but JSG believe this outline provides the grounding for a better service to the Church in the light of *Priorities*.
77. Outside the proposals described here are the resources required for significant transitional tasks, not all of which will necessarily be complete before 2008-9. The staff numbers suggested are also on the assumption that better ways of working can be achieved in a number of areas; further work is necessary to see if the service intended can be provided in each cluster by the number of staff proposed. And it may be worth reiterating that the staff numbers quoted do not include staff funded from outside the Team budget or temporary or contract staff such as might be employed to service a particular short term project.

78. Perhaps more importantly, the staff numbers and posts proposed are not intended to be fixed indefinitely in September 2008. Key to the culture of the reconfigured Team is a greater capacity to respond quickly to changing circumstances and needs. JSG believe the model proposed can offer the necessary flexibility and that it could provide an attractive environment for high quality staff and a high standard of service to the Connexion.

Joint Secretaries Group
January 2007

PART B:

READING TO ILLUMINATE THE PROPOSALS