

Looking to the Future

Contact Name and Details	The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler, Secretary of the Conference soc@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolution	75/1. The Council receives the report.

1. Introduction

The Conference received the Secretary of the Conference's Report, *Looking to the Future*¹ and commended it and a record of its conversation about it to the Council for further deliberation and action. **Members of the Council are therefore asked to read the report and to listen to the recording of the debate in the Conference by following this link: <https://video.silverstream.tv/player/jkpg7XEL?time=2180s>, in preparation for the Council.**

2. Questions for the Conference

There were four questions that the Conference was asked to explore:

2.1 Has the time come radically to rethink the funding of stipends by assessing Circuits by criteria other than the number of ministers?

This question is connected to a Notice of Motion² to the 2018 Conference directing the Stationing Committee to consider:

- (a) how circuit profiles offered into the stationing matching process might be scrutinised so that those accepted for the process meet the needs of the wider Connexion, as well as those of the Circuit concerned.
- (b) how the broader stationing issues that the Methodist Church is currently facing might be tackled - in particular, the funding of ministerial appointments and the needs of the most deprived parts of the Connexion, and report to the Conference of 2019.

The Conference further directed the Methodist Council to work with the Stationing Committee in consideration of part (b) so as to ensure coherence with the work being undertaken on a Connexional Financial Strategy.

The response of the Conference to this section of the Secretary's report indicated a willingness to consider some radical alternatives to the current system so that the number of ministers stationed to a circuit might no longer depend on the ability of the circuit to fund those appointments. To break this connection would necessitate either:

- (i) a method of assessing circuits on criteria other than the number of ministers (eg, membership, reserves, socio-economic deprivation data) both to determine the needs for ministry and the ability to contribute to the funding of ministry across the Connexion, or:
- (ii) identifying circuits in particular need of additional ministry resources and subsidising those circuits by asking for (or levying) contributions from other circuits.

The Council is asked to consider which of these (or any other) option it favours and to mandate the establishment of a task group to scope the proposal in further detail.

¹ The Methodist Conference, 2021, item 62: *Looking to the Future*.

² Notice of Motion 2018/205 [Daily Record 2018 8/9].

2.2 How can the ministry of the Presidency offer the best of both a physical presence and online engagement across the Connexion (and how will that be supported)?

This part of the report sought to react to the ministry exercised by the President and Vice-President in 2020-21. It recognised that the digital engagement managed in that year cannot be sustained alongside the ministry of visitation that had been expected in previous years. The Council is therefore asked to consider the value of physical visits alongside online engagement with the Connexion and to make recommendations about the pattern of Presidential ministry in the future.

The current Presidency has also asked the Council to consider the support offered to the Vice-President which is (when held by a lay person) viewed as volunteer role for which expenses are paid but no additional allowance offered. The Council is asked to consider if this arrangement restricts the office to those who are retired, able to take time away from their employment, or in the employ of the Church. It is also asked to consider whether this reflects the parity of esteem which the Connexion offers the President and Vice-President (whilst noting the considerable additional responsibility which the President holds) or is appropriate given the arrangements that are made when a deacon is elected Vice-President (SO 113(2b)).

2.3 How can we best express our Methodist identity in collaboration with others who bear the name Methodist in these islands and this context?

The Connexional Secretary and the Secretary of the Conference are working on a gathering for representatives of other Methodist Churches in these islands in early 2022. Any comments that the Council wishes to offer on the outcomes that we should seek from that meeting would be welcomed.

2.4 How can we better witness to what we believe with and through the Methodist family of charities?

The report details some of the points of contact with the family of Methodist charities and it is clear that the charities value their association with the Methodist Church. As a recent gathering of those bodies whose trusts are appointed by either the Conference or the Council revealed, there is a number of different ways in which the charities see themselves in relation to the Church. The Council is asked to consider how it is most helpful for those bodies which the Conference or Council appoints to report to the Conference or Council and how their information about their work can be most fruitfully shared with the wider Church.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

75/1. The Council receives the report.