

**Connexional Team Update**

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<b>Status of Paper</b>	Final
<b>Action Required</b>	To Note

**Summary of Content**

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	To provide the Council with an update of work undertaken in the Connexional Team since it last met in October 2019.
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## Connexional Team Update

1. This paper provides the Council with an update of work undertaken in the Connexional Team since it last met in October 2019.

### The Conference Office

2. Ongoing work of the Conference Office has been to support and prepare districts as they facilitate discussions of the Marriage and Relationships report. Our ecumenical partners have been consulted about *God in Love Unites Us* and we will be receiving and collating their responses for consideration in May. Connected to that work there have been initial meetings with TMCP to look at the possible reactions to whatever decision the Conference makes which may lead to queries about membership, property and finance. The aim is to ensure that clear guidelines for Districts, Circuits and churches are available before the Conference so the Council will receive further papers on this area at its next meeting.
3. There have been visits to the 2020 Conference venue in Telford and work has continued on reducing the Conference's carbon footprint.
4. We are continuing to work closely with our Covenant partners, the Church of England, to work out how we might, in time, return to the work of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, in ways that are appropriate for the Methodist Church at this time.
5. The Church's policy is that those who are required to have a DBS check in order to hold office should have their certificate renewed every five years. It appears that there is a number of ministers whose DBS certificate is more than five years old and whilst in some cases this has been a systems error there has been a large number that need to renew. The Safeguarding Team with assistance from elsewhere in the Conference Office has prioritised ensuring that renewals are completed or (in the case of some supernumeraries) that exemptions are in place.
6. The Methodist Church has been asked to make a witness statement to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, which will be hearing evidence in March. Members of the Safeguarding Team have undertaken a considerable amount of work firstly to complete the lengthy draft statement and then to answer a series of questions both from the Inquiry and our own legal advisors.

### Ministries

7. The Ministries team has two major drivers to its work: The first is running the candidating processes of the church for ordained ministry, oversight of ministers in training and on probation and applications from those seeking to serve in the Methodist Church from other conferences and churches. The Ministries team constantly seeks to improve these processes to meet the needs of the Church today and in the future. The second is the promotion of vocations and the development of the ministries of the Church (in policy and practice).
8. Currently the Ministries team is engaged in:
  - Promoting vocational exploration by engaging in a dialogue with various parts of the Church to find out how vocational exploration might be encouraged at the grassroots of Methodism
  - A major review and simplification of portfolio submission process for Local Preacher and Worship Leader training
  - Reviewing and refreshing the content of *Worship: Leading and Preaching* (the training programme for Worship Leaders and Local Preachers)

- Offering structured Continuing Local Preacher Development
- Reshaping Ordained Ministry Exploration days in order to encourage more candidates for ordained ministry
- Developing a new strategy for Continuing Development in Ministry
- The introduction of connexionally funded guided reflective space at year 4 and year 10 of ordained ministry
- Overseeing research around the wellbeing of those in ministry
- The implementation of the supervision policy
- The development of the Ministerial Code of Conduct/Ministerial Covenant
- The induction, training and development of Superintendents and Chairs of District
- Work on Leadership and Changing Patterns of Ministry
- Strengthening relationships with the Learning Network, The Queen's Foundation and Cliff College
- Re-establishing a working relationship with other training institutions in order to enable better research and links with education.

## Mission

### Engagement

9. In autumn 2019, the Connexional Grants Committee (CGC) awarded £730,000 to mission projects in Britain, out of a budget of £2.39m. New work that was funded included new missional communities and embedded outreach workers, table-top gaming evangelism, and support for deprived communities. The remainder of the Mission in Britain budget will be available for the March grants round, when they will be considering property grant applications too. With only £750,000 available for property grant making, the CGC may have to make some very hard decisions next June.
10. Following direction from the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) and under the oversight of the Chair of the CGC, conversations are underway between the Grants and Evangelism & Growth teams to design a proportionate, but robust, distribution process for the Mission in Britain Fund from 2020/2021.
11. A new publishing strategy has been agreed by the Senior Management Meeting (SMM), focusing entirely on creating publications that resource reaffirming *Our Calling*. Two new team roles are being created (from within existing headcount) to support its delivery; specifically a 'commissioning' role in editorial, to support new product development, and the role of 'production controller', to support more efficient and cost effective delivery of publications.
12. As at 1 December 2019, we had distributed 25k printed copies of the *God in Love Unites Us* Report, more than 22k copies of the accompanying Study Guide and 2,750 copies of the supporting film on a USB stick. We are liaising with Methodist Schools to mail copies of the printed materials and the film to all their head teachers. The materials are being translated into Spanish, French and Portuguese to support our partnership and dialogue with overseas partner churches.
13. The back page of *the connexion* magazine is being offered for free to each Methodist organisation in turn to advertise their key campaigns and help to maintain their profile with the Methodist people, starting with All We Can in October and MHA in January.
14. A final gathering in October brought together former One Mission Forum district reps to consult on alternative ways to achieve the learning from local and global mission originally envisaged from the Forum. In November, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly became the pilot district for a 'mission roadshow' comprising about 40 exhibitors and a programme of speakers showcasing mission projects. A review of this event has been undertaken and the viability of implementing a limited

annual programme of events staged on a similar model is to be explored with the District Chairs in January; the success of this model is very dependent on a high level of local ownership; for promotion and as contributors.

### Evangelism and Growth

15. The draft connexional Evangelism and Growth Strategy includes a deep and expansive focus on 'Church at the Margins' with three primary goals: (1) to start a movement of new Christian communities led by those at the margins; (2) to work along people experiencing poverty to deepen community engagement; and (3) to build on the biblical connection between evangelism and social justice.
16. A new Church at the Margins Officer will be appointed to oversee this work starting in the connexional year 2020/21, incorporating key elements of the work of the current Fresh Expressions Missioner, who will sit down at the end of 2019/20.
17. After 100 on-site consultations and thousands of conversations across the Connexion, God for All, the draft connexional Evangelism and Growth strategy has been written and deeply engaged with at an October 2019 Consultation attended from 250+ diverse Methodists representing every district. The Methodist Council has affirmed the direction of travel. The SRC has discussed the budget and asked for detailed figures to be submitted to the Finance Sub-Committee in February. Advanced drafts are to be brought to the Council in the spring towards the 2020 Conference.
18. The evangelism pages of the Methodist Church website have been updated to include a tool-kit of key information, starting guidance, and ideas for next steps in the areas of mission planning, church starts, church growth and change, evangelism, and discipleship.
19. *Our Church's Future Story* has been published and is available for free. This set of resources takes churches, circuits or districts through the process of considering and planning for the next chapter in their story.
20. 26 of 30 Districts have submitted Mission Plans. Over the past year, a suite of apologetics resources (*Talking of God Together, Talking Jesus, Talking of God With Others*) has been developed, sourced, promoted, with complimentary copies sent to every circuit in the Connexion.
21. A diverse design team is working in concert with Districts, the Learning Network, and the Faith and Order Committee to map clear, flexible discipleship pathways and resources for a Methodist Way of Life.

### Children, Youth and Family

22. The development of 3Generate as part of a wider strategy of participation of children and young people in the church is continuing following a successful 3Generate 2019. The NEC is now booked for the next 3 years and dates are set. Young people will play an ever increasing part in the development and leadership of the event and the strategies that drive it. A pilot will be undertaken in 2020 to allow for children from 4-7 to visit for the day with parents/carers with a view to lowering the younger age in 2021. There are plans to recruit a fulltime event/logistics manager in January.
23. Work is underway to develop new ways to engage and hear the voice of children and young people paying particular attention to those places where young people are most excluded.

24. *The Story Project* launched in autumn 2019 to assist with the development of local church cultures of lay testimony and to gather diverse Methodist testimonies from across the Connexion:  
<https://thestoryproject.org.uk/>

#### Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT)

25. The Churches which are members of JPIT agreed the following priority areas for work in 2019/20:
- A just economy that enables the flourishing of all life
  - A planet where the environment is renewed
  - A society where the poorest and most marginalised are at the centre
  - A society that welcomes the stranger
  - A world which actively works for peace
  - A politics characterised by listening, kindness and truthfulness
26. In furtherance of these objectives JPIT has recently undertaken the following:
- Ecumenical resources were produced for the general election on key issues, hustings, and prayer under the **#LovePrayVote** campaign
  - Issues of justice and “unlikely messengers” in society were highlighted to 6,000+ people through the interactive social media retelling of the “Natwivity”
  - The JPIT monthly Faith in Politics podcast focused on issues of refugees and sanctuary including an interview with Inderjit Bhogal
  - Media work around the Channel 4 “Growing Up Poor” documentary
  - Hundreds of people wrote to their MPs about the lack of a reply to the Church Leaders’ letter to the Prime Minister expressing concerns about the effect of a no-deal Brexit on those locked in poverty. A reply was received from the Prime Minister.

#### Global Relationships

27. Work continues in Global Relationships to engage with a range of partners:
- Capacity building through Church Can is developing well, with new partners engaging in this process.
  - A legal agreement with the Methodist Church in Portugal has been drawn up under which the grant for their income-generating investment project can be released.
  - The first tranche of grants have been released to The Queen’s Foundation, Cliff College and Wesley House to facilitate capacity building programmes with global partners in education.
  - An evangelist through the Council of Latin American and Caribbean Evangelical Methodist Churches (CIEMAL) has been identified for appointment in the Newcastle District from 1 September 2020.
  - A successful Encounter Together (ET) Visit has been held in India.
  - Plans are advanced for a One Programme: Teams Encounter Together visit to Hungary in 2020 and also financial support under the ET programme for visits to Mexico and Israel/Palestine.
  - The Encounter Worldwide programme has facilitated a short-term skills-based service placement in the Sia’toutai Theological College, Tonga.
  - A ministerial sabbatical placement was made to a school in Chile.
  - The implementation of the Mission Partner Review has created a more robust system of pastoral care and debriefing for Mission Partners, plus the implementation of new stipends and benefits.
  - Two candidates have been accepted for Overseas Service. There is a review of the application process, and, whilst the review is in progress, further applications are not being considered.
  - We are reintroducing the pre-Conference consultation with representatives from Partner Churches.

28. Monies and advice will be available for each District to facilitate a visit from a partner church that will help progress a strategic mission goal of the District and encourage twinning. A policy for sending representatives of the Methodist Church in Britain to partner churches has been drawn up and the nurturing of district links is now to be a key element in deciding representation. The Director of Global Relationships is to meet the Chairs of District to discuss and encourage twinning as part of their mission planning process.

### **Finance and Resources**

29. The key focus of the Finance Team over the last couple of months has been the production of the Annual Report and Accounts. The accounts were presented in their final draft for Audit Committee in December, and a short form Annual Review will be produced for dissemination across the Connexion.
30. The Finance Team along with the Connexional Treasurers hosted the Annual District Treasurers' Forum in November. We shared our plans and priorities for the coming period and also had a good discussion on the Finance Strategy and the proposed changes to the Connexional Priority Fund Levy.
31. The IT Systems Review has moved into the next phase where we will gather detailed requirements that can form the basis of a specification we issue to potential suppliers. Whilst the focus remains on replacing the connexional database, we will look to replace as many associated systems as possible.
32. The changes to the Gift Aid bureau to make it compliant with the General Data Protection Regulations are being developed. These changes will be communicated to Gift Aid secretaries in January.

### **HR and Development (HR&D)**

33. The HR&D team has implemented a new online Planning, Development and Review (PDR) system, which will enable managers and Team members to work more effectively and enable more efficient management of the PDR process as a whole.
34. The team has also implemented an online recruitment module which will allow for a much more effective and professional recruitment process. These systems will enable the recruitment and new starter processes to become more efficient across the Team, be more secure with personal data (as opposed to paper application forms and formal documentation) and will also contribute towards minimising paper, printing and postage costs.

### **Communications**

35. The Communications team has been without a Director since October 2018, and after joining in an interim position, Jillian Moody has been confirmed permanently in the post. She comes to the Methodist Church with vast experience in the media, working for the BBC news division for over 20 years, and in faith-based communications working with the Church of England and the Archbishop of Canterbury for two and an half years.
36. The team has spent the past few months focusing on placing stories that tell of the work going on around the Connexion as part of *Our Calling*. Successes include stories in *the Guardian* about summer lunch-clubs for schoolchildren run by Methodist churches, and a 'Credo' column in *The Times* by the Revd Dr Barbara Glasson.

37. The Director of Communications and the Digital Officer accompanied the President to Palestine for a four-day visit and to film parts of her trip. The filmed reflections were released weekly and audio readings were sent out during Advent. Standalone films were also recorded with the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and with the Methodist Peace Prize winning *Tent of Nations*.
38. We have held media training for the Secretary of the Conference and Youth President as well as training for several people on writing for BBC Radio 2's Pause for Thought. We are in the process of developing a communications training plan that can help support churches and those running projects around the Connexion.
39. As always the Council is invited to engage with the Team on any areas it has concerns about through the Connexional Secretary at any time.

**\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

**6/1. The Council notes the update from the Connexional Team.**