

Connexional Team Update

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Subject and Aims	To provide the Council with an update of work undertaken in the Connexional Team since the Council last met in October 2018.

1. This paper provides the Council with an update of work undertaken in the Connexional Team since its last meeting in October 2018.
2. It has been one of the busiest connexional years in recent memory, with some major additional work, like the Pensions work and the Building work, adding to already busy workloads. A number of key vacancies in the Team have meant many people carrying extra responsibilities for the last few weeks but the staff have continued to deliver work in support of the wider Church.
3. This report is the first report since the departure of the Head of Mission & Advocacy. No appointment has been made to this role and the Connexional Secretary is managing this team in the interim. Work is underway to see how best to support this area of work in the future.

The Conference Office

4. Much of the work in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion has been focused on preparing for the Symposium that will explore the major questions raised in the 'Unfinished Agenda' report to the 2017 Conference. We have also begun to look at areas where minorities are under-represented in key leadership roles in the life of the Church.
5. We continue to build the new Ministries: Vocations and Worship (M:V&W) team. As members of the Council are aware, the Revd Dr Jonathan Dean will join the Team as Director of Learning for Ministry from 1 September (though we are hoping that he might be seconded from Queen's for the last quarter of this connexional year). As reported elsewhere, we have not yet been able to appoint a Vocations Advisor.
6. The Leading Worship & Preaching Course (LW&P) is now online. The numbers training via LW&P are now greater than those submitting portfolios for Faith & Worship. A significant piece of work has begun to look at the online mode of delivery to remove the obstacles to learning.
7. Another significant piece of work is being undertaken at the request of the Stationing Committee to move all stationing profiles online. This will enable ministers to have 'live profiles' and for information to be shared more easily by different parts of the stationing matching process.
8. The new arrangements in the Safeguarding Team are becoming embedded. Members of the Safeguarding Committee have attended training and met the new Supervising Caseworkers. There is a separate proposal from the Safeguarding Team on meeting the IT needs in that department.
9. The new Director of Strategic Property Development will be starting in mid-January which will relieve some of the additional workload on the Conference Office in respect of the connexional property projects. The role of Property Support Officer is currently being advertised, this is the role that will be the initial point of contact for all property and legal queries as recommended by the Legal and Property Support for Managing Trustees working party. An outstanding role agreed by the Council in April 2018 will provide the open-ended conversations with managing trustees. Recruitment for this role will begin in February 2019.

Mission and Advocacy

10. A number of new publications have been finalised by the Publishing team. *Talking of God Together* is now available from Methodist Publishing in a cost-saving 'bundle' with Hope's Talking Jesus video pack. A One Mission Matters special issue has been produced on the theme of the Church's response to refugees. There will be four issues of the *connexion* magazine this year, the latest one, on the theme of Journeying, is being finalised for publication in January. The Circuit Stewards Handbook is complete and should be available very soon, and a Susanna Wesley 'reader' is among publications planned for 2019 subject to the approval of the Publishing Board.
11. Within the Communications team, there is enthusiasm for a new *Our Calling* app to replace the existing (and very old) Methodist Church app, which will be considered further in the new year. Plans are also being made to move the Methodist Diaconal Order website onto our (MCB) platform, at the MDO's request. It will still have distinct branding and a confidential area, and we hope to do something similar with the Singing the Faith Plus website.
12. The Engagement team welcomed the new One Mission Engagement Officer, Michelle Pellegrino. Early projects she will be working on include a revamped *Rainbow* and also the 'short' version of the Church's annual report. In the medium term, a key part of her role is to build a network of district/circuit/church advocates for mission. A review of our grants processes has been commissioned from the consultancy group Ethicore, which is running in parallel with the work on priorities being done internally by a group led by Dr Daleep S Mukarji.
13. Within World Church Relationships (WCR), a new Memorandum of Understanding (now retitled Framework of Commitment) with All We Can (AWC) has been produced and is supplied to the Council. As reported elsewhere, Maurice Adams (who is stepping down as AWC CEO) will be 'seconded' to WCR from January to further develop our 'capacity building' programmes with church partners. After several months of delay, an Argentinian visa was finally obtained for our first *Encounter Worldwide* volunteer to Latin America. Coming in the opposite direction, we now have a Global Mission Fellow from Asia successfully working in London.
14. The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) continues to advocate and inform the Church on the topic of Universal Credit, as articles and blog posts continue to appear, and a full report is being produced. Resources on the subject of human trafficking are being compiled, and there are plans for an innovative JPIT Lent 2019 resource, possibly with an element of 'carbon fasting'. The next stages of work concerning Terrorism were recently approved by senior leaders and will continue over the coming months.
15. Much work has been ongoing in support of the Methodist Modern Art Collection management committee, as they seek to put together a strategy for the future. Work by specialist consultants has also highlighted serious issues about the condition of some artworks and the way we manage exhibitions, which will require urgent attention. The committee has in principle agreed a 'pause' in the touring programme starting in 2019, although the longer-term commitment to a touring programme remains firm.

Discipleship and Evangelism

16. The new "branding" for Discipleship and Evangelism (D&E) is complete, including regional 'pop-ups' for the Learning Network to use based around the theme of *Our Calling*. Work is well underway for an improved online learning calendar for the website, with improved search functionality that will enable people to find the nearest or most convenient training event or method for them rather than just the one put on by their regional team.

17. There will be a full staff team in Evangelism & Growth from 1 March 2019. The Director has virtually completed one to one meetings with each of the District Chairs, the Learning Network Regional Coordinators, as well as presenting at three Synods. He has received lots of hopeful and positive feedback which has enabled him and the Head of D&E to begin work on a strategic intent document that will be developed collaboratively over the next year.
18. The Children, Youth and Family team successfully delivered the biggest *3Generate* yet, receiving lots of positive feedback over the improvements to the logistics of the Pontins site as well as the programme. The Youth President for next year is Thelma Commey from the Northampton district (Milton Keynes circuit).
19. Ministry Development work in the new Team structure is so far progressing well, with Ministry Development Officers working closely with Learning Network staff to continue the progress on Worship: Leading and Preaching. D&E Officers are involved in the roll out of the Positive Working Together training to prevent bullying and harassment (working with Place for Hope).
20. Work with the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust (MAST) to create a new post to manage many of the regulatory affairs of our Schools is underway and we hope to make an appointment to this in the very near future.

Finance and Resources

21. We are looking forward to welcoming Matthew Tattersall as Director of Finance and Resources. Matthew is joining us from his role as Director of Finance within the NHS and will take over from Hylda Wilson who is with us until the end of January to ensure a smooth transition.
22. The main focus of the Finance Team for the last quarter has been the preparation of the 2017/2018 Annual Report. We anticipated some difficulty producing the report due to loss of key personnel and knowledge in the reporting team. However, the year-end audit progressed without any significant difficulties as noted by both the Finance sub-committee and Audit Committee. We have also been working hard to prepare the Connexional Central Services Budget for the three years commencing 2019/2020.
23. Further progress has been made in resolving issues within the Payroll Office so that we are beginning to deliver a more satisfactory level of service. There is still much work to be done on developing the reliability and robustness of the systems and continuing to grow the knowledge and experience of the staff.
24. The facilities team at Methodist Church House has been under pressure at times to maintain the building partly due to staff vacancies but primarily due to the ageing infrastructure (faulty lifts, leaks etc.). We need to maintain a balance between maintenance expenditure and sustaining operations until the future plan for the building is finalised.
25. Related to the above comments on payroll and facilities, we have instigated a review of the IT applications and infrastructure. This is to improve co-ordination of data, processes and information flow across the Connexional Team and the wider Connexion. There will be more on this as the project develops over the next few months.
26. 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**

5/1. The Council notes the update from the Connexional Team.