

**Connexional Team Update**

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<b>Status of Paper</b>	Final
<b>Action Required</b>	To Note
<b>Resolution</b>	68/1. The Council receives the report.

**Summary of Content**

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	To provide the Council with an update of work undertaken in the Connexional Team since the Council last met in April 2018.
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## Connexional Team Update

1. This paper provides the Council with an update of work undertaken in the Connexional Team since its last meeting in April 2018.
2. It has been an exceptionally busy five months, exceeding what would be considered normal operational pressures. This is partly due to the work that was ongoing relating to changes in the Team structure but also a number of large work projects which are placing significant extra demands on the Team.

### The Conference Office

3. A number of new members of the Team joined us in September: Deacon Donna Ely as Complaints Worker, the Revd Dr Claire Potter as the Ministerial Coordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries, and the Revd Ruth Gee as Connexional Ecumenical Officer. The Ministries: Vocations and Worship team also came together earlier in the year and a key focus will be to continue to develop the vocations strategy.
4. The Conference Office will also be taking forward the implementation of the recommendations of the working group considering the legal and property support for managing trustees. Two job descriptions which implement the recommendations of the working party to have a member of the Team able to hold the open ended conversations with managing trustees and another to be the first point of contact for all legal and property queries have now been graded. Interviews have taken place for the Director of Strategic Property Development which is the role that will lead on the Property Development Committee projects. Additional support is also being provided to the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice through the creation of a two year fixed term Executive Officer post.
5. The Audit Committee has directed that work is undertaken on improving the Risk Register so as to make it more effective and relevant to the purpose of the Team. A review of the risk management policy is also being undertaken to assist with improvement of the register.
6. The restructuring of the Safeguarding Team has now been completed with the (regionally based) Supervising Caseworkers and the Policy and Development Officer in post and reporting to the Director of Supervision.

### Mission and Advocacy

7. Martin Ashford, Head of Mission and Advocacy, has decided to retire at the end of December. The Connexional Secretary in consultation with others is reflecting on the implications of this for the Team and on the next steps to be taken.

### Engagement, Publishing and Communications

8. With the Director of Publishing and Communications leaving within the next month, consideration is currently being given to the best way of structuring the team in these areas, particularly in order to support a more proactive approach to Communications.
9. A draft Publishing Strategy received outline approval from the Publishing Board in the early summer. An important element of it is to support a renewed engagement in theological publishing and debate. Work continues to validate and finalise that strategy. Over the past 1-2

years we have made increasing use of freelance third-party editors to supplement our in-house resources and this has been a successful model which we are likely to expand.

10. As well as the usual annual products (Prayer Handbook, Diary, Presidential and Conference materials) the Publishing team has delivered a long list of new resources in recent months, including revised Safeguarding materials, a guide to ministerial development review (MDR), Worship Foundations, the Superintendents' Handbook, What We Believe (a new edition of the Catechism), Talking of God Together, and the first *connexion* magazine of the new year.
11. Plans for the autumn include a one-shot special magazine on the Methodist Church's support for refugees, and a resource to mark the 350<sup>th</sup> birthday of Susanna Wesley next year has been given approval. The very successful *Our Calling* video, shown at the Conference, is being updated with further material on evangelism.

### Engagement

12. As part of realigning the work of the Connexional Team, Grants is now part of our Engagement sub-cluster, and recruitment is underway for the post of One Mission Engagement Officer which will significantly strengthen our ability to tell the stories of mission.
13. Recent and ongoing work in the Engagement sub-cluster:
  - Marketing continues to develop in flexible ways, including the provision of much support to 3Generate as well as promoting Publishing and developing our email newsletters.
  - Heritage are working closely with the main sites but also with other locations including Cornwall. The 'Methodist in the Family' websites are being revamped in the coming months.
  - A plan has been approved for dealing with the mission archives in the basement of MCH and we are recruiting two part-time temporary archivists to undertake the required work.
  - Significant support is also being given to the Methodist Modern Art Collection management committee as the new Chair seeks to address a number of long-standing issues.
  - The Methodist / URC Inter Faith Relations Reference Group has been wound up by mutual agreement but both Churches are maintaining contact on matters of shared interest. A new Inter Faith e-newsletter has been launched by Marketing and is being used to keep practitioners in the Methodist Church involved and aware of news items of interest. All newsletters can be accessed at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/sign-up-for-newsletters/>

### World Church Relationships (WCR)

14. The Revd Dr Stephen Skuce completes his period as Interim Director of Global Relationships on 31 March so plans for recruitment will be put into effect this autumn. Meanwhile, the areas of focus include:
  - After a lengthy vacancy at our European 'desk', we recently announced that Revd Dr Barry Sloan has been appointed to the role of Europe Regional Relationship Coordinator in the World Church Relationships team, working from Chemnitz (Germany) where Barry and his wife are already based as mission partners. Barry will continue to serve - in a reduced capacity (50%) - as Director of Evangelism for UMC Germany.
  - We are continuing to develop work jointly with All We Can (AWC) on capacity-building projects with church partners. The first such joint project has been underway for some time in Sierra Leone, and a second is due to begin very soon with the Church of North India. We are finalising plans with AWC to develop this further through the secondment of an AWC employee to work within WCR as the lead for what is known as Church CAN.
  - By the time the Council meets we hope to have filled three new roles within the WCR office, partly replacing staff who have left. They will significantly strengthen our ability to run new programmes, particularly 'People to People' (P2P) exchanges of all kinds, and our mission education work in the UK.

- One of those new P2P programmes is our participation in UMC's Global Mission Fellows (GMF) scheme. Two GMFs, from Cambodia and Zimbabwe respectively, should be working in the UK from this October, one at Wesley's Chapel and the other in Birmingham.
- The review of the Mission Partner programme is substantially complete but there will be important follow-up work to be done. That includes likely changes to the way we recruit and deploy MPs, as well as to stipends and allowances. This work cannot be rushed and further consultation will be conducted as required.
- Under the supervision of the Global Relationships Strategic Oversight Sub-Committee (GRSOSC), we are committed to increase the funding of our partners' educational needs, including grants for PhDs, and of Nationals in Mission Appointments. We also have outline approval to bring forward opportunities for large investments in revenue-generative projects by our partners where these can help them achieve financial stability.

#### Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT)

15. As the work of JPIT is by its nature cross-denominational, a formal workplan is agreed each year and this was signed off by the Churches in September. The headings below reflect JPIT's main priorities and summarise the areas of focus. While Brexit does not feature directly on the list, we will continue to resource the Churches to reflect on what kind of country we wish to live in and be.
  - A society that welcomes the stranger: continued campaigning against the 'hostile environment' for refugees, coupled with exploration of what a 'welcoming environment' might look like.
  - A society where those who are the poorest are at the centre: further work on Universal Credit, new work on helping churches be more engaged with issues of homelessness and housing, and the collation of resources on human trafficking (mandated by the Conference).
  - A society which values each generation: theological and practical resources on intergenerational justice.
  - A world which shares a single planet fairly: Lent resources, campaign to promote EcoChurch, and new work to defend development aid programmes against political pressures.
  - A world which works for global peace: completion of work begun this year on terrorism, along with continuing engagement in disarmament and religious freedom.
  - A society where there is greater democratic participation: first year of the young people's Peace and Justice Forum, launch and promotion of Meet your MP in England and Wales.
16. We have also benefitted from the work not just of JPIT's own intern but part of the time of two parliamentary One Interns, with this year's intake joining in September.

#### **Discipleship and Evangelism**

17. The re-emergence of a specific Children, Youth and Family staff group in the life of the team will enable some key areas of work to be developed in a more focused manner. A one day live streamed conference early in the connexional year called "Belonging" is being held to support churches in their ministry with children and young people with additional needs. This is a further development of the innovative webinar based approach for upskilling children, youth and family workers building on the success of "All Together Now". The reconfigured team now has the ability to develop a specific youth and young adult ministry portfolio, which includes improving support for student ministry. The recruitment of a full time logistics post for the 3Generate event will better enable the strategic development of this event. The 1000 letter campaign will provide a platform for the creation of a project plan for the Year of Testimony and staff time will be allocated to this ready for the launch in connexional year 2019/20.
18. In Education an area of our practice which requires work this year is the liaison with the Church of England at diocesan level and, as the new Methodist SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) inspection is more holistic, it is important to establish this on a stronger

footing. The Director of Education will speak to every Diocese which inspects joint schools to ensure that each individual inspector (and critical reader) is appropriately trained. She will offer bespoke support to the first cohort of schools as they are subject to this new inspection framework.

19. The Evangelism and Growth team is currently in very early formation. Crucial to this work is the recruitment of staff and developing relationships across the Connexion, through which we hope to build an integrated, strategic, and compelling purpose and work plan. This work will be guided by three core questions (1) How can we help all Christians to be authentic evangelists? (2) How can we deepen a culture of creating new places for new people? (3) How can we enable existing churches to grow through centring in the Gospel and building vital community relationships?
20. The team will have an interest in community development in particular and will incorporate a focus on discipleship within a whole-church approach to growing churches and developing evangelism. The new Appreciative Inquiry (AI) -based discipleship development resource for circuits and churches, due to be piloted in the autumn of 2018, aims to work with church communities to help them identify their needs with regard to discipleship development and to work on specific areas of discipleship development most in need of attention in their contexts. In particular, there is complementarity between the AI-based Discipleship resource and the resource for developing growth or end of life plans mandated by the 2017 Conference. The follow on to Talking of God will be produced in the next year. Currently titled Talking of God 2, it aims to enable Methodists to speak more confidently about their faith and their experience of God to people outside church contexts and will be a conversationally oriented course of five or perhaps six sessions.
21. The cluster will continue engagement with Cliff College, in particular partnering with them in exploring new models of local lay ministry training, piloting resource days around the Connexion for those in lay ministry and developing further on-line conferencing.

### **Finance and Resources**

22. Since implementation, the two current payroll systems have not been operating as efficiently as expected. Therefore, a review is taking place with a view to combining into one system.
23. Depending on the timescale for the above, other finance systems also require review. As payroll is top priority and will be time consuming, the following pieces of work are dependent on the progress of the payroll review:
  - The Donor Strategy system, used to process Gift Aid will reach end-of-life in 3 years' time. The system needs to be reviewed to meet current expectations e.g. the ability to make donations on line and remove the need for manual intervention, which presents a risk of fraud.
  - The Gift Aid bureau, which also uses the Donor Strategy system, processes around 4,500 submissions (many containing errors and/or handwritten). The Gift Aid service needs to be reviewed to reduce the dependency on manual processes and knowledge, which present a risk to data protection and fraud.
  - The connexional database requires development to synchronise data with other finance systems. This would be phased in with the payroll review, and was identified as a key follow up area from the GDPR implementation work plan.
  - Related to the database is the development of a web portal for the exchange of finance data for payroll and gift aid to improve data protection.
  - Other minor projects will be managed to improve service levels eg call log and error log to track and follow up on payroll queries.

24. We are sad to report that our Director of Finance and Resources has decided not to stay in the role; we are deeply grateful for all that Hylda has helped us do in a short time and the work begins to fill this role.
  
25. 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**

**68/1. The Council receives the report.**