

Connexional Team Report

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Note
Draft Resolution	73/1. The Council receives the report.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	This paper offers the Council a update of work undertaken by the Connexional Team since the Council last met in April 2016.
Main Points	An update of work that is taking place across the clusters in the Team.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	Regular report to the Council on behalf of the Senior Leadership Group.

- 1 This paper offers the Council an update on some specific pieces of work undertaken by the Connexional Team since the Council last met. In September the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) considered the Work Plan for 2016/17 which is offered in MC16/74 for the Council to approve. There is a substantial amount of work contained with this plan for the Connexional Team. This workplan does not represent the entirety of what the Team does and further descriptions of that wider brief can be found on the website <http://www.methodist.org.uk/links/contact-the-connexional-team/about-the-connexional-team>.
- 2 Over the summer work has continued apace in Methodist Church House. Hopefully by the time the Council meets the contractors will have left the building and the whole building will be available for visitors and staff alike. I would like to offer sincere thanks to all those who have been inconvenienced by this work but also to all those volunteers who have put in so much time and energy to keep the project going.

Updates from clusters in the Connexional Team:

Discipleship and Ministries

- 3 **Scholarship, Research and Innovation.** The inaugural Annual Research Conference was held in Durham in April with 70 attending with the 2017 conference planned for Cambridge. A conference to support thinking on Rural Ministry was held in July in association with the URC, and in September a conference on Migration and Ministry was held in conjunction with the Susanna Wesley Foundation. There will be a conference on Hymnody with Lutherans/Moravians/Methodists as part of a wider 'Luther at 500' event and there is preliminary planning for a conference to support and encourage young Methodist scholars. The June ecumenism study tour to Rome attracted a group including a former Irish Methodist president, a former vice president of the Conference, district ecumenical officers, lay employees, some training for ministry and some from beyond Methodism. This diversity enabled an excellent learning environment. The Palestine study tour in July had a strong mix of ordained and lay Methodists and now involves a deepening relationship with the Church of the Nazarene in Nazareth. A regional research group has been established in the Southampton area and the Honorary Methodist Research Fellow scheme has expanded to include Sarum College and Wesley House Cambridge. The main research areas for the

strategic research team include a major research project on Fresh Expressions in Methodism and stage 2 of Regrouping for Mission.

Mission and Advocacy

- 4 **Engagement.** Since the last update we have successfully appointed both a new Heritage Officer (Owen Roberts) and a new Marketing Officer (Sanya Strachan. The Methodist Heritage Committee also needs to find three new members over the coming months and suggestions for these vacancies, as well as additional district heritage volunteers, would be welcome. The Director of Engagement, with the Marketing Officer, ran the Connexional Team stand at the Conference and distributed large amounts of material, the JPIT report on refugees being one item in much demand. A new fundraising strategy was approved by the SRC in September. Short-term actions arising from the strategy include putting in place new infrastructure to support individual donations to connexional funds, including electronic direct debits, and developing a new Aldersgate appeal for May 2017. Engagement team members have participated in a number of autumn Synods to talk about their work and to showcase the Advent offering.
- 5 **Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT).** The European referendum materials produced were well received and, following the outcome of the vote, the referendum result is a key item on JPIT's workplan for 2016-17. This will consider 'hopes for a post-Brexit world', looking at the kind of society that we want to be and inviting/resourcing personal reflection, theological exploration and feedback from individuals and churches. Two other major items on the workplan are continued campaigning and advocacy on issues of migration and asylum, and a new piece of work with (not just about) those experiencing poverty.
- 6 **World Church Relationships (WCR).** Since the strategy paper, "Partnership, Focus and Evolution", was approved by the Council in January, much has been done on its implementation under the guidance of the Global Relationships Strategic Oversight Subcommittee, which recently met for the second time. Lists of Partner Churches and Organisations are being presented to the Council for approval, and discussion has moved on to broader strategic considerations including our relationships with the United Methodist Church and with All We Can. Development work towards changes to the process for grants applications continues. While there was no Pre-Conference Consultation this year, representatives from Partner Churches made a significant and well-received contribution to the 2016 Conference. Subsequently, the World Methodist Council has met in Houston and the European Methodist Council in Porto; alongside the latter, the WCR team organised an outstanding conference on the subject of migration. Visits were also recently organised for the outgoing Youth President (to Fiji) and for his successor (to central America and Mexico).
- 7 **Publishing and Communications.** The Revd David Perry has now completed his first year as editor of *the connexion* magazine, issue six being distributed at the very start of the connexional year. We are very grateful for the flair and enthusiasm which David brings to this task and the positive feedback we continue to receive is testimony to the outstanding results achieved. The Publishing team continue to edit and design a very wide range of printed and online materials and the opportunity has been taken to test some other lines of merchandise which were displayed at the Conference. Another innovation coming soon will be 'customisable' posters to our own design, for churches to use, available via the Christian Publishing and Outreach website. Work is progressing towards a completely refreshed www.methodist.org.uk and we have appointed Avenue Digital as our main partner for building the new website. There may still be an opportunity to join the consultation group and anyone interested should get in touch. Finally, the work of our Media Team should be recognised and in particular the very difficult task that they have of dealing with media interest in safeguarding cases, work that calls both for calmness under pressure and great sensitivity.

Support Services

- 8 **Safeguarding.** The Safeguarding Adviser has visited a large number of districts to meet with DSOs, District Chairs and District Safeguarding Groups over 2016, which has proved to be very instructive and provided helpful opportunities to discuss where we are and appreciate the richness and diversity of our safeguarding provision across the church. Planning for the safeguarding conference is under way, and will be from 17-19 January 2017. The conference will be held in Wakefield and has a working title of 'Declaring the Church's Offer to Survivors'. This conference promises to be an encouraging and stimulating event with a chance to get to grips with one of the key themes that emerged from the Past Cases Review.
- 9 **Property and Facilities.** At the time of writing the building works are nearing the extended completion date of 30 September. The work completed so far has been done to a professional level and comments from both staff and visitors on the refurbished toilets have been especially positive. Work continues to oversee significant property development, including at 24 Somerset Road.
- 10 **HR and Development.** A new Performance Development Review system which follows up the Pay Review has been produced and is now being carried out across the Team. Work is also being undertaken to implement new arrangements for professional Immigration Advice relating to non-EU ministers being sponsored to work in Britain. A review of employment tax arrangements for ministers and Council employees is underway, as is the second phase of work for the access to Personnel files for Ministers.
- 11 **Data Protection and Audit work.** Work towards developing Data Protection operational duties for the Methodist Council is taking place to ensure that best practice and procedures are in place. There is also ongoing internal audit work covering a number of areas including Payroll, Expenses and Benefits; Procurement processes; and Risk Management.

The Conference Office

- 12 From 1 October the Safeguarding Team has moved from the Support Services Cluster to the Conference Office in terms of oversight and line management responsibility. The Assistant Secretary of the Conference will line manage the Safeguarding Adviser, but the Safeguarding Team remain in their current location on the 4th floor of Methodist Church House. This change has taken place for the following reasons:
 - It brings safeguarding issues and the work of the Safeguarding Team a significant profile within the work of the Conference Office;
 - It permits collaboration, where appropriate, between complaints and discipline and safeguarding processes and staff with responsibility for these areas in the manner envisaged in the Past Cases Review Report;
 - It mirrors arrangements for the Church of England who we partner in safeguarding work. The Safeguarding Team for the Church of England is located in the Central Secretariat.

We are grateful for the willingness of colleagues in helping to make this happen.

- 13 The workplan (MC/16/74) indicates the work that is being taken forward following the Marriage and Relationships report to the 2016 Conference. One of the matters that was referred to the Council was the decision on whether new marriage preparation resources were required to be produced. It is thought that, until the work is undertaken on the Conference Statement, it would be unhelpful to make a decision about appropriate marriage preparation resources. Once the Statement is in place it will be possible to offer to the Council a weighed up case about the necessity and costs of new resources which would take into

account what is already available from other denominations as well as within our own Connexion. The Council should therefore note that this decision will be before it at a future meeting.

Conclusion

- 14 It is hoped the information in this report ensures that members of the Council are kept up to date with the latest developments on work undertaken by the Connexional Team. As always Council members are encouraged to be in touch with the Connexional Secretary at any time to discuss any aspects of the work of the Team to ensure that the Team is supporting the wider Connexion in the most helpful ways possible.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 73/1. The Council receives the report**