

Connexional Team Report

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Note
Draft Resolution	36/1. The Council receives the report. 36/2. The Council considers that the work directed by Notice of Motion 2015/214 can be considered completed.
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	n/a

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	This paper offers the Council an update of work undertaken by the Connexional Team since the Council last met in January 2016.
Main Points	Work that is going on in the clusters in the Team
Consultations	Head of Clusters/Offices within the Connexion Team

Summary of Impact

Personnel	Contained within
Risk	Ongoing monitoring of building works at MCH as detailed

Connexional Team Report

- 1 This paper offers the Council an update of work on some specific pieces of work undertaken by the Connexional Team since the Council last met in January 2016.

Further working with All We Can

- 2 It has been agreed that the All We Can Trustees will work on developing a Memorandum and Articles which could be used as the basis for incorporation - this would provide All We Can with the assurances they seek whilst not distancing their work from the Conference in any way. There will be much work to be done if this is to happen and further reports will come to the Council before any decisions are made. This would go to the 2017 Conference if it was thought to be the best way forward. In the meantime work will continue on our positive working together and how to make best use of our differing and unique capabilities in service of the Church.

Updates from clusters in the Connexional Team:

Discipleship and Ministries

- 3 The cluster gatherings have been very positive and have been focusing on the following priorities: Enhanced Visibility (October 2015), Growing Participation (January 2016), and Healthy Methodist Communities (May 2016). The Regional Forums have developed as places where the work of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN) can be contextualised and the needs and expectations of districts are balanced with the connexional pathways and programmes that are being developed.
- 4 The cluster is working in partnership with the Eastern Region Training Partnership (ERTP) and the Arthur Rank Centre to set up Regional Inter-Denominational Learning Communities (RIDLC). The project will gather eight teams, from across the denominational partners, engaged in multi-church rural ministry. The groups will meet over a two year period investing time regularly to think, pray and plan together. We hope that this model will develop across the DMLN, beyond the initial two year regional project.
- 5 The DMLN Cymru Wales team were involved in supporting the Marriage and Relationships conversations across the region. The approaches taken by those appointed by Wales Synod and Synod Cymru to facilitate the conversations were different in order to suit the geographical and cultural differences within both Synods. The Wales Synod hosted three major events in central locations and encouraged circuits to meet at a local level and feed back further responses. Synod Cymru, being a one circuit District, held meetings in each local area to ensure being in reach of members wanting to participate. There were also differences in the structure and content of the meetings in order to encourage people to engage with the issues and our roles ranged from acting as hosts, providing technical support, facilitating group discussions, managing difficult situations, to capturing and collating feedback for reports.
- 6 The Holy Habits initiative designed to deepen discipleship continues to develop extremely well. Half of the Holy Habits programme materials being developed and piloted in Birmingham have now been produced. The Circuit continues to engage enthusiastically with the programme and plans are being developed both to celebrate the halfway point in the programme and to review its impact. Simultaneously, plans are being drafted for the

development of the materials into a connexion-wide resource with other key parties will be drawn in (eg the Faith and Order Committee, potential ecumenical partners etc.). The complementary Holy Habits book was published in January 2016, and reviews have been very positive. A series of events around the book have been planned and include a Launch event in Stafford on 3 March, seminars at Connecting Disciples, Cliff Festival and ECG, and two Holy Habits evenings in Ludlow (5 May) and Bristol (12 May).

- 7 The Connecting Disciples event for Lay Employees took place in March, this year's theme being 'Then: Now, Passion - Prophecy - Prayer – Protest'. Workshops and seminars were led by a variety of facilitators mostly sourced from within the DMLN, with music from OneSound for worship throughout the conference. We are really excited to introduce CDTV for the first time, courtesy of Sharemedia.tv. As part of CDTV, the President and Vice-President's sessions will be live streamed and also be downloadable following the event for people to view and share with others. In addition, some short films featuring interviews with some of the workshop facilitators and delegates will be available for use after the conference. We have been oversubscribed again this year and next year there are plans to extend the event by holding the conference as usual, and a weekend event held later in the year at Cliff College, repeating workshops for those unable to make the mid week conference, and held somewhere slightly further in the north of the Connexion.
- 8 Members of the cluster have worked with the Fresh Expressions Missioner to deliver Venture FX Extra days. The establishment of Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Teams (FEASTs) has been mixed, both in the amount of take-up and in their strategic effectiveness. Some are predominantly gatherings of practitioners and trainers with little strategic influence whilst others are very effective mixes of key leaders from across the breadth of the church whose influence goes far beyond the Fresh Expressions world. There will now be a period of evolution as the best of these continue and new structures are put in place. It is hoped that a number of 'champions' will emerge in each region who will keep the Fresh Expressions and 'Mixed Economy' vision in front of the church at every level until it becomes a normal way of working.
- 9 An important development for supporting Fresh Expressions practitioners is an increased emphasis on training and deploying coaches. Training is in place for the 'champions' and there will be a subsequent roll-out of training at an introductory level for locally based coaches. There is a commitment to providing coaches for all those joining the 'Pioneer Pathway' which has resulted in two training events for coaches sharing resources between the DMLN and Fresh Expressions. There are now almost 50 Methodists trained in basic coaching skills.
- 10 A Scholarship, Research and Innovation twitter feed @methodistSRI was established in early December and 420 followers as at 3 March shows progress. Another 100+ follow these feeds on Facebook at 'Methodist Church Research'. In March the first of a regular mailing 'Methodist Research Matters' was issued. In April the inaugural Methodist Research Conference will be held at St John's Durham with over 20 papers offered. A small number of additional academic conferences are planned including Rural Ministry in July (jointly with the URC); Mission and Migration in September (jointly with Susanna Wesley Foundation); and a proposed conference on Hymnody with Lutherans/Moravians/Methodism as part of a wider 'Luther at 500' event. A study tour to Rome to consider issues of ecumenism and Methodism will run in June in conjunction with the Revd Dr Tim Macquiban, and a contextual theology study tour to Palestine will happen in July.
- 11 Work with the new Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Studies Board has bedded down very quickly with the first meeting taking place in February. Modules 3 and 4 have now both gone

live and pilot versions of 5 and 6 are now being used by pilot groups. Modules 7 and 8 are approaching final draft stage and the team is on target to complete launch of Worship: Leading and Preaching by December 2016. One of the most recent major pieces of work has been to remodel the 'Apply & Reflect' material to make it much more straightforward for students to create their portfolios. This was a direct response to feedback provided by students on the pilot course.

Mission and Advocacy

- 12 The Engagement team have been making final preparations for the “Asbury 200” celebration at the Black Country Living Museum on 9 April, and wish to convey thanks to the Districts, Heritage, the museum itself and all others involved. The legacy fundraising pack has been revised and should be launched, with a supporting video and other materials, in time for spring Synods. We have received an amazing response to the request for donations to be sent to Cumbria Community Foundation in response to the floods, with over £105,000 received from Methodist churches, circuits and districts. Recruitment continues for the Marketing and Heritage Officer posts, and we hope to have found suitable candidates by the time the Council meets.
- 13 Publishing and Communications have commissioned a survey of users of the Methodist Church website and we encourage as many as possible from all around the church to contribute their views (the survey can be accessed from the website homepage). Issue 5 of the *Connexion* is at an advanced stage of preparation, the theme being “Enthusiasm”, and should be delivered through the post at the very beginning of April, hopefully just in time for the Council. Other publications to be produced over the coming weeks include *Rainbow, A Deacon in the Circuit* and the spring edition of *One Mission Matters*. The announcement of the 225th Anniversary of John Wesley’s death attracted a lot of social media attention and activity, showing the impact that even a very simple but well-timed story can have in the ‘twittersphere’. Work is also underway to support the Art Trustees in development of new web pages for the collection.
- 14 The Joint Public Issues Team have made efforts to influence the Welfare Reform and Work Bill which has potential to be damaging to many low-income and vulnerable individuals and families. Work is also underway on multiple aspects of response to the refugee crisis, including practical support, information for churches, and a significant advocacy campaign is being developed. The European referendum will provide an opportunity for JPIT to resource our churches and members, and a briefing is under development. JPIT’s response will draw on the “Think, Pray, Vote” approach adopted for the general election.
- 15 The World Church Relationships (WCR) team have developed plans for the placement of interns from Swan Bank in the summer with project ‘Mediterranean Hope’ with the church in Italy. *Global Vision* in Ireland was deemed to be a great success. The first *Encounter Worldwide* participant has been accepted for placement (this is the initial pilot of a new “P2P” scheme for short-term placements with overseas partners). The Global Relationships Strategic Oversight Sub-committee met for the first time in early March and received detailed information from WCR about current Partner Churches and Organisations and how these might be prioritised for the future.

Support Services

- 16 Linda Robotham has joined in the key appointment of Connexional Wellbeing Adviser. She will work alongside Tony Tidey until he leaves in early May so will have a very thorough induction into the role as preparation for taking forward this work on behalf of the Church.

- 17 Two new payroll systems have been selected and a specialist Project Manager appointed, so significant work is now underway involving staff from Finance, HR & Development and IT in designing and implementing both systems during 2016. Negotiating new arrangements with HMRC is an important part of these changes. Completing the work on the draft budget and supporting the Strategy and Resources Committee and its Finance Sub-Committee was also a key focus alongside the payroll project.
- 18 Property and facilities staff continue to be heavily involved in the continuing refurbishment work at Methodist Church House, as well as in moving forward the redevelopment project at 24 Somerset Road. The effective way in which the new contractors at MCH have worked has been appreciated by all within the building, particularly with the refurbished and extended meeting rooms on the lower ground floor having returned to use.
- 19 A new meeting room, the Farrar Room, will be dedicated to the memory of Sister Dr Dorothy Farrar. Dr Farrar was ordained as a deaconess in 1936 and in 1952 she became the second woman to be elected Vice-President of the Conference
- 20 The ongoing work currently being undertaken by Celltarga Ltd is progressing well and is expected to be finished by 31/03/2016 with the exception of the fire escape stairs which will be installed separately after fabrication. The second work package has gone out to tender and includes the replacement of the rain water and soil stacks in one riser and the fitting of the new exterior rain water and soil stack. Following this replacement of the WC facilities will resume. Due to these delays the new expected completion date is mid-late August 2016.
- 21 In January the redefined Reception roles joined the Admin Support team so a review is now underway to integrate them into that team in order to maximise the synergies in providing an efficient service to those within the building, visitors and those contacting it by phone.
- 22 The Pensions Office has administered the consultation with members of the Methodist Ministers Pension Scheme as directed by the Conference, sought professional input from the actuaries on some of the suggestions and facilitated the careful discussions undertaken by the Finance Sub-Committee resulting in recommendations to be considered by the Council.

The Conference Office

- 23 In addition to the regular oversight work of the Conference Office since the last Council the Conference Office have concluded the work of the Oversight Task Group and have supported the Ministries Committee in the preparation of the revised criteria for the selection of candidates. They have taken up the work of providing a forum for support and a line of accountability for those working as Fellowship Chaplains or in other capacities with Methodists from other parts of the world. They have also provided fresh guidance on the role and support of ministers who reside in circuits but are not members of circuit staff teams.
- 24 The Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee has enabled the Church's reflections on various aspects of ministry. In particular she has attended the regional diaconal consultations as well as having conversations with members of the Connexional Team and others on a wide range of issues relating to ministry. These have been stimulating opportunities for theological reflection arising from practice, and the Conference Office will be supporting a range of opportunities for Methodists across the Connexion to reflect on ministry in the coming year.
- 25 On-line registration for the 2016 Conference opened significantly earlier this year with excellent early take-up thus relieving some of the administrative pressures of previous years.

- 26 The Conference Office involvement in the work of the implementation of the Past Cases Review Report through the Implementation Group continues to be significant particularly regarding the establishing of supervision practice.

Notice of Motion 2015/214 - Home for Good

- 27 The work arising from Notice of Motion 214 to the 2015 Conference around the importance of fostering and adoption has been taken forward as part of the focus on Family Ministries and will also feature at Connecting Disciples in March 2016. A weblink to appropriate material will be placed on the Methodist Church website and should be available by the time the Council meets. It is therefore recommended that the work arising from this Notice of Motion can be considered completed.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

36/1. The Council receives the report

36/2. The Council considers that the work directed by Notice of Motion 2015/214 can be considered completed.