

## **‘Called To Love and Praise’ - Report from the Meeting of Former Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Methodist Conference held 10-11 January 2015**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Gatherings of former Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Methodist Conference have taken place twice before, in 2009 and 2012. The current President and Vice-President felt that it would be worthwhile to repeat this event, with the following aims:
- to encourage a spirit of fellowship and collegiality amongst past holders of these offices;
  - to explore ways in which their wide and varied collective experience could be made available for the benefit of the Connexion;
  - to explore ways in which their experience in office could help to shape the future effectiveness of the Presidency in the light of recent Conference reports.
- 1.2 40 former Presidents and Vice-Presidents participated in the event, which was held at The Royal Foundation of St Katherine in London. The Secretary of the Conference designate attended and addressed the gathering. The discussions were held in an atmosphere of prayer and worship, and concluded with the celebration of Holy Communion in the Foundation Chapel.

### **2. Content**

- 2.1 The President and Vice President led separate presentations and discussions focussed on two former Conference reports: The Ministry of the people of God in the World (1990), and Leading and Presiding (2010 and 2011).
- 2.2 The former enabled members to reflect upon the nature of lay ministry and its place in the Connexion. The latter re-introduced the concept that the Presidency is essentially a collaboration between the ordained and the lay, and re-examined the distinctive contributions that both ordained presbyters and lay people (and deacons, where a member of that order is elected Vice-President) can make to it.
- 2.3 In a final plenary session, members considered what recommendations they wish to make.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 In order to foster the fellowship and collegiality of the Presidency:
- a) a similar residential gathering may be held every two or three years;
  - b) a short meeting may be held before the lunch for former Presidents and Vice-Presidents that takes place just before the Opening of the Representative Session of the Conference;
  - c) conversation by phone conference or electronic media may take place on particular topics where it is judged that the wisdom and experience of some or all of the former Presidents and Vice-Presidents might make a useful contribution to the discernment of the matter in question.

- 3.2 The 'Aide-memoire' issued to those designated as President or Vice-President should be revised and re-written in the light of changes following the "Leading and Presiding" reports.
- 3.3 Ways should be found to communicate more effectively with District Chairs before District visits.
4. The role of Vice-Presidents should be maximised by enabling their particular gifts and experience to be used (eg not all Vice-Presidents are preachers, yet a lot of preaching is currently asked for: on the other hand, they may have workplace experience which could be shared in visits/chaplaincy/workshops).
5. The collaborative nature of the Presidency should be positively encouraged, not left to the preference of individual personalities.