

Larger than Circuit

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Status of Paper	Interim report
Action Required	Decision
Draft Resolution	47/1. The Council receives the report.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To inform the Council of the continuing work in preparation for the Conference
Main Points	Review of the Work of the Coordinating Group and Review Group on the Chair's Role since the January 2015 Council Changes to original suggestions Likely conclusions to be made in the Conference Report
Background Context and Relevant Documents	Report to the January 2015 meeting of the Council – MC/15/12 Resolutions passed by the 2013 Conference: <u>Districts</u> 35/4. a) The Conference resolves to appoint a coordinating group as recommended in paragraph 97, to be responsible for taking forward the process connexionally and for reporting regularly to the Methodist Council which shall have oversight of the work. <u>District Chairs</u> 35/9. a) The Conference adopts the recommendation in paragraph 109 that a group be appointed to review recent developments in the role of District Chair, particularly in relation to the exercise of personal and collegiate leadership connexionally, with a view to reporting to the Conference of 2015.
Consultations	The Chairs' Meeting, the Connexional Leaders' Forum, Secretary of the Law and Polity Committee, the Districts, the Senior Leadership Group, Synod Secretaries, World Church Relationships, Superintendents' Conference, Diaconal Convocation, Resourcing Mission Forum, 3 Generate and the Methodist people through the online questionnaire, the Methodist Council, Districts were requested to consult with their ecumenical partners and advice given by the Ecumenical Officer.

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	Potentially major
Faith and Order	Will require further discussions
Personnel	The proposals may lead to changes in the roles of some personnel.
Wider Connexion	This work has implications for the whole of the Connexion.
External	Potential implications for ecumenical partnerships.
Risk	We believe there are risks in doing nothing.

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1. The Larger than Circuit Coordinating Group and Group reviewing the developments in the role of District Chair presented an interim report for discussion to the Council in January 2015 (MC/15/12). Both groups were grateful for the time and consideration given and for the constructive feedback offered.
2. We acknowledge that the report to the Council left some feeling that they did not know whether there was a case for change. As we prepare the report to the Conference we will include more of the process and findings of the consultations. We believe that in sharing this “working out” we will enable others to understand why we would want to make particular recommendations to the Conference.
3. We have taken seriously the Council’s encouragement to recognise the work and development that is already happening and believe that Model 1: *Working toward working together* (in the January document) can be developed to offer a model that encourages what is already happening but also develops a process across the Connexion.
4. We note some anxiety about developing a model around the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN) regions (Model 2) and seek to make some modifications that offer a regional approach, recognising already existing regional approaches including DMLN and Stationing Regions etc.
5. We will reflect on models 3 and 4 suggesting re-imagining of the district boundaries either aligned to the 1950s concept of equity of members or with a focus on mission opportunities and which offers the most potentially fruitful path.
6. In the light of the feedback from the Council we have withdrawn models 5 and 6 and intend to develop a model that incorporates the best of models 2, 3 and 4.
7. In the Conference report both models will have a descriptor along with advantages and disadvantages of the model listed in order to help the reader engage with the process.
8. We have discussed at some length the call for a so called *option zero*, that is, do nothing. In the light of our findings we find this a difficult concept to offer to the Conference as change is already happening. However, we intend drawing up our recommendations and resolutions to the Conference in such a way that if the Conference rejects the recommended models, it will, in effect, select option zero.
9. We hear the Council’s guidance, as we heard in the feedback, that one size does not fit all – and intend to build into our recommendations to the Conference a degree of flexibility.
10. Since the Council we have sought conversation with our Covenant and other ecumenical partners, these are ongoing with the Convenor of the Coordinating group.
11. We noted that there was some anxiety that we might be moving too quickly and seek to reassure the Council that in any recommendations we make to the Conference we will seek to build in achievable timelines for implementation.

12. We agree with the Council that some further work needs to be done on what is to be learned from the Regrouping for Mission process, and would commend this to the Conference.
13. We have heard a clear call for more collaborative leadership in districts and noted from members of the Council some of the areas within the Connexion where this is already happening. We will bring recommendations to the Conference that this be built upon without necessarily imposing a “one size fits all” leadership model.
14. We are still in consultation with other groups.
15. As the coordinating and review groups were created by, and instructed to report back to, the Conference we continue to review our findings and develop possible models to recommend to the Conference. The timeline of our meetings since the January Council has meant that we cannot offer a full report to the Council, at this stage, which acts as a prelude to the Conference Report.

Conclusions

16. Therefore we bring to the attention of the Council that our conclusions are likely to be summarized thus:
17. The Coordinating Group believes that changes to districts’ boundaries and structures are inevitable. The Coordinating Group recommends that any change to districts be carefully managed rather than the present situation of *ad hoc* modifications which may be seen as less strategic.
18. The Coordinating Group will bring 2 models to the Conference with an indication of its recommended/preferred option.
19. As a result of the various consultations highlighted in this report the Coordinating Group believes that both models have merit. We offer them to the Conference to decide which one will best enable the mission of the Church.
20. We asked little of the Council on leadership. Our report to the Conference will say more and lead to some suggested resolutions.
21. We will make comment upon the report *What is a District Chair?* which will reflect the changes we are suggesting in the report.
22. We note that different groups within the Church want different things from District Chairs.
23. Our consultations revealed that many people value their current District Chair but believe that the role is almost impossible for one person to fulfil.
24. The consultations revealed that the majority of people want a leadership that is spiritual, strategic and pastoral. The Review Group wishes to encourage District Chairs to adopt more collaborative ways of working so that the district leadership might be considered outstanding in all three areas.
25. We report that many District Chairs already operate a collaborative model of district leadership (embracing the gifts of Presbyters, Deacons and members of the laity) and we would seek to encourage these developments across the Connexion.

Recommendations to be drafted into Conference resolutions:

- We adopt model A (a new structure for districts based upon the previous models 2, 3 and 4) and that further work be done to bring this about.
If this falls
- We adopt model B (which would resemble model 1 in the January Council paper with slight

amendments).

- A collaborative leadership model be adopted that supports either model A or B.
- That the Faith and Order Committee offer direction on the possibility of an Assistant Chair being either a deacon or a lay person.
- District Chairs are invited to reflect upon the findings of *What is a District Chair?* today contained within the report.
- That leadership training is given to current District Chairs and new District Chairs on better ways of collaborative working, and how Chairs might use the gifts of others in the areas of Spiritual Leadership, Strategic Development and Pastoral Care.
- At the beginning of the District invitation/re-invitation process The Secretary of the Conference (or his representative) should lead the District Policy Committee (or its equivalent) in reviewing the qualities of the districts and their District Chairs profile. The Secretary of the Conference should make recommendations in order to incorporate the district strategy into *Our Calling* and *The Priorities*.
- A process is developed to help identify and nurture potential District Chairs.
- The Conference directs that the Council undertakes further work to enable the direct stationing of District Chairs.
- That the Connexional Team (Ministry Development Team), in liaison with the Secretary of the Conference, develop a training continuum (to include induction and ongoing development of District Chairs).
- The Conference directs the Council to ensure that work is undertaken to evaluate what has been learned from *the Regrouping for Mission* process.

*****RESOLUTION**

47/1. The Council receives the report.