

27. Methodist Council, part 2

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SECTION J GENERAL REPORT (2)

These reports contain those items considered by the Council and not reported elsewhere in the Agenda.

1.1 Governance Responsibilities

In accordance with its governance responsibilities, the Council:

- made various nominations and appointments;
- received a report from the Strategy and Resources Committee at each meeting of the Council;
- adopted recommendations of a review of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee and delegated the adoption of initial terms of reference for the Committee to the Strategy and Resources Committee;
- considered a review of the trust arrangements for Methodist International Centre, noting that recommendations will be brought to the 2018 Conference concerning any proposed amendments;
- approved some principles in relation to the Connexional Grants Committee and directed a small group to formulate a grants policy to be presented to the Council in October 2017;
- appointed the members of the Connexional Grants Committee, sub-committees and streams for the connexional year 2017/2018;
- declined to support the bid of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland to host the World Council of Churches General Assembly in 2021;
- delegated the management of the Superannuation Scheme for Lay Mission Partners to the Investment Committee;
- agreed to sign the Armed Forces Corporate Covenant;
- received a report in relation to the Pension and Assurance Scheme for Lay Employees of the Methodist Church;
- adopted guidelines on ministers' maternity leave and a policy on maternity leave – shared under SO 807A;
- approved revised procedures for safeguarding risk assessments;
- approved a protocol for the reinvitation of ministers in the Connexional Team.

1.2 Other Business

The Council received annual reports from:

- Southlands College and Southlands Methodist Trust;
- the Connexional Grants Committee;
- the Property Development Committee;
- the One Mission Forum;
- the Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Studies Board;
- the World Methodist Committee;
- the Investment Committee.

The Council also:

- heard reflections from the President and the Vice-President on their year of office;
- witnessed the attestation of the Journal of the 2016 Conference.

*****RESOLUTION**

27/1. The Conference received the General Report of the Council.

SECTION K

CONNEXIONAL TEAM REPORT

1. The Council approved a workplan for 2016/2017 allocating work commissioned by the Conference to various groups within the Methodist Church. The workplan allocates a substantial amount of work to various parts of the Connexional Team. Members of the Conference are advised that the Team also engages in an additional amount of regular work and further descriptions of that wider brief can be found on the website: www.methodist.org.uk/links/contact-the-connexional-team/about-the-connexional-team
2. At each of the three meetings of the Council over the past year, the Council has received a report from the Connexional Team containing a summary of work in progress in the Team. Should members of the Conference wish to view them, these reports are also available on the website: www.methodist.org.uk/conference/methodist-council/council-papers-archive.
3. This report does not intend to cover the full breadth of the work of the Team, that having being reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) at each of its meetings (under the terms of SO 213(5A)) as well as the Council. The Conference Agenda contains a variety of reports that members of the Team have produced or contributed to, however some of the other significant pieces of work the Team has undertaken over the past year are now supplied for the Conference in the paragraphs below:

Risk Management

4. The Senior Leadership Group (SLG) of the Team has met quarterly as the Risk Management Group in accordance with the Council's risk management policy framework, where risks relating to the operation of the Connexional Team (listed on a specific risk register for the Team's activities) are considered.
5. This process also involves considering risks listed in the 'corporate' risk register (overseen by the Council) that relate to the wider Church. The Connexional Secretary (nominated Risk Champion of the Methodist Church) emphasised to the Council that as regular scrutiny of risk management is taking place, where the Council is making decisions it is important for the Council to consider whether the proposal before it will support or hinder the growth, health and vitality of the Methodist Church.

Discipleship and Ministries

6. The Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN) has been working with the United Reformed Church and a Liverpool based company, Appreciating People, on a new resource, *Appreciating Church*, which utilises Appreciative Inquiry approaches in congregational development. The DMLN team has taken introductory training in Appreciative Inquiry with

the aim of developing a network of practitioners both within and beyond the learning network able to support Local Churches and Circuits in reimagining their mission.

7. Development has continued towards the new training course for Worship Leaders and Local Preachers, *Worship: Leading and Preaching*. This has been a major undertaking involving the entire Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN) in engagement with local Circuits, the development of writing teams and the creation of a new Virtual Learning Environment to provide a platform for future developments in open learning. The new course is in the process of being translated into Welsh, and Mandarin and Cantonese versions are under consideration. The Methodist Church in Ireland is planning to pilot the programme next year.
8. The last year has seen the regional teams in the DMLN implementing and developing programmes of support for a variety of roles including: circuit stewards and lay employees, those in pioneering roles, continuing support for those delivering *Worship: Leading and Preaching*, and those who are completing their candidating portfolios and those exploring vocation.
9. The Scholarship, Research and Innovation team have supported and promoted a number of research events over the past year including subjects on: Rural Ministry in association with the URC, Migration and Ministry held in conjunction with the Susanna Wesley Foundation, Hymnody with Lutherans/Moravians/Methodists as part of a wider 'Luther at 500' event. This is in addition to holding the second Annual Research Conference in Cambridge and a 'young Methodist scholars' conference for the first time. Plans for the August 2018 Oxford Institute for Methodist Theological Studies are on track including a new development that enables wider Methodism to share in the Institute for one of the days.

Mission and Advocacy

10. Earlier in the year, an international consultation on religious freedom and persecution was held, involving some ten of our Partner Churches from around the world, as well as a selection of voices from within the Methodist Church in Britain (MCB). World Church Relationships have worked very closely with the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) in preparing for this, the first of the 'new-style' partner consultations envisaged in the strategy for global relationships and a great opportunity to draw on JPIT's expertise in an international context.
11. A new fundraising strategy was approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) last September, which has led to new infrastructure to support individual donations to connexional funds, including electronic direct debits. The fundraising team also worked on an Aldersgate Day campaign, based around raising our people's awareness of the significance of John Wesley's experience, sharing stories of how God has worked in our own lives, and encouraging a generous response through support of the mission funds.
12. The major highlight for JPIT over the past year has undoubtedly been *A Very British Nativity*, the video made with children, retelling the nativity story to highlight the situation for refugees in the UK. Resources have been produced to help churches with 'post-Brexit' conversations, which including videos posted on our YouTube channel. Other activities of note include responding to the government's consultation on further changes to the benefits system and the production of a resource on fracking, which is now available on the JPIT website.

13. Work continues towards the development of the new Methodist Church website, with both the navigation and the “look and feel” being key topics. It is anticipated that the site will go live by the time the Conference meets.
14. Under the guidance of the Global Relationships Strategic Oversight Sub-Committee (GRSOSC) of the SRC, discussions of the World Church Relationships Team and All We Can have led to the trialling of joint capacity-building programmes with two Partner Churches.
15. Work has also taken place on refining the World Church grant-making processes, with new timetables, criteria and application forms, in consultation with the World Church Sub-Committee to the Connexional Grants Committee, and its streams.

Support Services

16. The refurbishment work at Methodist Church House was completed in November 2016. The work has been undertaken to a professional level and comments from both staff and visitors have been especially positive. Gratitude is offered 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.
17. The Facilities team has also commenced work with the Methodist Church House Management Committee on long-term maintenance plans for the building; and has also overseen the redevelopment work at 24 Somerset Road, which is due to be completed before the Conference meets.
18. Excellent progress has been made, alongside colleagues in the Conference Office, on the process of incorporating the work undertaken in relation to obtaining and monitoring work permits from the Home Office for ministers coming from outside the EU to serve.
19. Having resolved to apply for Living Wage Employer accreditation in October 2016, the Council has now formally registered with the Living Wage Foundation, and ways as to how this is promoted are now being considered.
20. Other work of note includes the embedding of new payroll systems for both ministers and lay employees, and developing Data Protection operational duties for the Methodist Council to ensure that best practice and procedures are in place.

The Conference Office

21. From October 2016 the Safeguarding Team moved from the Support Services Cluster to the Conference Office in terms of oversight and line management responsibility. Some of the benefits from this move include that:
 - it gives 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.

*****RESOLUTION**

27/2. The Conference received the Report.

SECTION L ISSUES OF PORNOGRAPHY WORKING GROUP

The Council considered a report brought by a working group which had been appointed to take forward the work directed by notice of motion 2015/215.

The notice of motion read:

Notice of Motion 2015/215 – Statement on pornography

The Conference directs:

- *that the Methodist Council appoint a Working Group to prepare a draft Conference Statement and discussion materials appropriate for different age groups on pornography and to report to the 2017 Conference;*
- *that the Working Group has a membership with expertise in sexual ethics, psychology and the nature of digital media, and also representatives from the 3Generate Age Group;*
- *that the Terms of Reference be agreed by the Methodist Council in consultation with the 3Generate representatives to the Methodist Council.*

The Council noted that a Conference Statement is defined in Standing Order 129 as a document intended, if adopted by the Conference, to be a considered Statement of the judgment of the Conference on some major issue or issues of faith and practice, and framed with a view to standing as such for some years. The Council felt that the production of a statement intended to last for a decade might not be desirable, or possible, in such a fast changing digital world. Instead, the Council appointed a working group to produce resources and materials for use by churches and groups.

As a result of this work, the Council thanked 3Generate for initiating this discussion and directed that the report should be used as the basis for the production of a brief document that could be used to facilitate discussion within church groups. The Council directed the Connexional Team to make a list of resources, which the group had identified as appropriate and helpful, available as web-based material. The Council directed the Faith and Order Committee to consider the production of further theological reflections on issues of pornography. The Council called on all the bodies and agencies with responsibility for relationship and sex education in schools to listen to and act on the voices of children and young people, so that children and young people are better supported in their learning about relationships and sex, including pornography, in ways that are safe and credible, and supported the Secretary of State for Education in England's proposals to put relationships and sex education on a statutory footing, so every child would have access to age appropriate provision in a consistent way.

*****RESOLUTION**

27/3. The Conference received the Report.

SECTION M STANDING ORDER 245

Further to conversations between the Council and All We Can regarding a closer working relationship, All We Can requested that the Council link person appointed to the Board should be a voting member of the Board. The Council agreed to recommend the Standing Order change below to the Conference.

245 Methodist Relief and Development Fund. The Trustees of the Fund shall be appointed by the Methodist Council, *and shall include at least one member of the council.* ~~shall appoint one of its members as a representative responsible for linking between the council and the Fund, who shall attend Board meetings of the Fund.~~ The working relationship between the Fund and the Connexional Team shall be set out in a Memorandum of Understanding.

*****RESOLUTION**

27/4. The Conference received the Report.

27/5. The Conference amended SO 245 as set out above.

SECTION N

THE UNFINISHED AGENDA – RACIAL JUSTICE AND INCLUSION IN THE METHODIST CHURCH

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 The Methodist Church has a long, active and pioneering tradition of engaging with social justice, challenging the assumptions of wider society. There are really good examples which can be held up by the Connexion as good practice; for example the One Programme and 3Generate which are rooted in the belief that participation of young people in the Church enables them, as well as the Church, to grow, learn and develop. Another example is the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee where the members of the committee are diverse and balanced in regards to age, ethnicity and sex. This is a powerful statement on the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion in the Church for those coming forward as candidates for ordained ministry.¹

1.2 Over the past fifty years, the composition of the Methodist Church membership has been changing and its diversity increasing. This diversity extends throughout the Connexion, but is perhaps most evident in the London District and also in some larger urban areas. In London, for example, it is estimated that more than 66% of the 22,500 plus members have their places of family origin outside of the UK.² However, though the aspiration for racial justice and inclusion has been implicit within the Church's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, within this period District Chairs have remained predominately male, aged 55 years and above and white.

A report to the Conference from 1978, which is today affirmed in Standing Order 013B that *'The Methodist Church believes that racism is a denial of the gospel, says: 'Racism is a sin and contrary to the imperatives of the Gospel. Biblically, it is against all that we perceive of the unmotivated, spontaneous and indiscriminating love of God who in Jesus Christ gave himself for all...'*³

1.3 This report focuses on the sin of racism within the Methodist Church. Although work has been undertaken over the past fifty years to remove it from the life of the Methodist Church it is with a deep sense of sorrow and shame that it is still evident today. The Methodist Church needs to be honest about what might be viewed as the gaping chasm between what it longs and hopes to be and the state of the present reality regarding the senior leadership of the Methodist Church.

¹ www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/guidance-and-reports

² Based on research undertaken by the Belonging Together project 2010- 2013

³ Watson, V, Holder, C Statement supporting the Division of Social Responsibility Conference report 1978.

*'Sin is the condition of estrangement from God which affects the whole human race. Sins are specific actions, words or thoughts which arise from our sinful condition and deny the presence, power and purpose of God...Sin hinders the effects of God's grace. It corrupts our relationships with him and with one another, with the world in which we live and with ourselves. The effect of sin is discord, where God intended harmony.'*⁴

In regards to the sin of racism, in the 1987 report *Faithful and Equal*, the Methodist Church defines racism as:

*'Allowing prejudice to determine the way power is used to the personal, social or institutional detriment of ethnic minority individuals or communities.'*⁵

- 1.4 First identified in the report, *'A Tree God Planted'*, over the past fifty years, a number of recurrent themes have been evident. These are; belonging and exclusion, assimilation, inclusive leadership and participation and tokenism. The 1985 report, *'A Tree God Planted'*, gathered data and stories to show the status and experiences of black people within British Methodism going back over twenty years prior to its publication. Therefore, the period being focused on in this report is 1965 – 2017. By mapping these themes over a fifty year period this report will show how the themes identified in 1985 are still applicable today, hence its title; *'The Unfinished Agenda'*.

Section 2: Recurrent Themes - Belonging and Exclusion, Assimilation, Inclusive Leadership and Participation and Tokenism

- 2.1 The focus of this section of the report is to take the themes; belonging and exclusion, assimilation, inclusive leadership and participation and tokenism and map them across the evidence gathered from four documents:

- *A Tree God Planted*⁶
- *Faithful and Equal*⁷
- *Belonging Together 2012 Aim 2 Summary report*^{8/9}
- *The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit – 'Race' Module (2016)*¹⁰

The purpose is to demonstrate how the issues surrounding these recurrent themes have acted as a barrier inhibiting racial justice and inclusion in the Methodist Church from 1965 to 2017.

- 2.2 Belonging and Exclusion

- i. *'When I came first and asked where was the nearest Methodist Church, I was told I couldn't come because of the colour of my skin. We started to have prayer meetings house to house on Sundays. We worshipped and we prayed. I think prayer breaks down barriers. Until one day I was told Revd. Hughes is the Minister and I could come. So I*

⁴ *A Catechism for the Use of People called Methodists*. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP).

⁵ *Faithful and Equal*, Conference report, 1987.

⁶ Walton, H, Ward, R and Johnson, M *A Tree God Planted*, 1985.

⁷ *Faithful and Equal*, Conference report, 1987.

⁸ *Belonging Together 2012 Aim 2 Summary report*. Research and map the experiences of people from under-represented backgrounds coming forward for leadership'. 2012.

⁹ The purpose of the Belonging Together project was *'To help the Methodist Church to be an effective plural church that engages its richly diverse membership to fulfil its vocation of worship and mission.'*

¹⁰ www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/edi-toolkit

went and sat at the last seat at the back. The announcement was given 'We welcome any new people and hope you feel at home with us. Please come again.'

This excerpt comes from *A Tree God Planted*, and highlights how in the 1960s and 1970s many black people were not initially welcome in Methodist Churches.

- ii. Reflecting on the 1960s and 1970s *'Faithful and Equal'* exposed the stress points for churches with new arrivals:
'...The churches and society saw themselves as basically caring and capable of caring. They saw themselves as tolerant and liberal ...when churches found themselves meeting people and communities which were really different in skin colour, language, culture, religion, it became clear that they could no longer automatically serve their neighbourhood. They discovered that many of their members were prejudiced and afraid and looked for reasons to reject the newcomers...'

- iii. Though this situation is now rare, exclusion still occurs, the *'Belonging Together report'* from 2012 shows how exclusion has mutated from physically barring on the grounds of ethnicity and colour to cultural exclusion:
Respondents argued that there is a high degree of attachment to inherited, culturally specific understandings of the church and that any change is often strongly resisted. This can serve to exclude groups who do not connect with British church tradition and can give the impression of prioritising structure and tradition over inclusiveness and welcome.

- iv. This cultural exclusion is illustrated in Sita's story in the *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit - 'Race' Module*:
Sita has been a member of a local Methodist Church for nearly 10 years and is part of a sizeable Indian community within the church. Despite the length of time Sita has been a member, she has very little interaction with the white British community. Indeed, Indian Christians have been attending the church for 30 years and the communities remain virtually separate congregations within the church.

Only a couple of white British members know Sita's name and the minister is not one of them. The group are almost always referred to collectively, rather than as individuals, as "the Indians". This is difficult for members of the Indian community, but this label is also applied to anyone from an ethnic minority, of which there are multiple within the church.

Sita feels dehumanised by this treatment. Instead of feeling like part of the church she feels like an intruder. She is not sure how to tackle this as she does not want to upset either community but feels this cannot be Christian.

2.3 Assimilation

- i. In *A Tree God Planted*, black Methodists spoke of experiencing spiritual hunger in British churches and felt that they were expected to assimilate or fit in with the existing culture:
You go to church in the West Indies and you feel full – as if you have received a blessing. Most churches you go to here, you walk in, sit there for an hour and you go home empty... People spoke of taking a much more active part in worship: chanting, singing, encouraging the preacher with their comments. Often when these practices were followed in a British church, they caused embarrassments. "If someone said 'Amen!' they looked at you funny."

- ii. This assimilation was evident in the *Faithful and Equal* 1987 report:
 - ...The difficulty of recruiting black people for some church, circuit and district committees may reflect their perception of the nature and style of the working of those committees. Methodist groups often become cynical and ‘maintenance orientated’ to keep things ticking over for another year. In general, black communities tend to adopt a ‘pilgrim approach’.
- iii. Assimilation was also a theme identified in the *Belonging Together* report (2012):
 - Respondents reported being expected to assimilate into the church rather than a process of integration taking place. This results in members of under-represented groups feeling like outsiders in a church which ‘belongs’ to an established group. Respondents pointed to an expectation of losing their identity and assuming the existing one of ‘British Methodists’, rather than forming a new common identity.
- iv. This is illustrated in the *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit* – ‘Race’ module with Kofi’s story:

‘Kofi’s Methodist church has had great success at building relationships within the church with the sharing of meals after services. Although this had proved popular, Kofi noticed that all the meals served are traditional British and attendance by members of ethnic minority communities was low. Kofi suggested that once a month one of the ethnic minority communities would prepare the food to encourage everyone to feel an equal part of the church.

This idea was dismissed without any real discussion. One lay leader commented that, “We wouldn’t be able to get the smell of your kind of food out of the church.” Kofi has had a number of conversations with other church members about the ways in which the structure and practices of the church are informed by British culture. Some of the church members threatened to leave if different musical instruments were used during the service or if different prayers were used. The church leadership argued that the number of people in the church from ethnic minority groups was quite small and that the majority of church members had the right to decide how the church should be run. The makeup of the church membership, however, is not reflective of the wider community.’

2.4 Inclusive Leadership and Participation

- i. *‘..One minister told us how his white members befriended black people and welcomed them into the church. However, when it came to involving them in leadership “there was some opposition.” Today, more than twenty years after black people first appeared in that church (where they form two thirds of the congregation), leadership still remains mainly in the hands of the white membership. What appears on the surface to be a successful multi-cultural congregation may in reality be one in which all the important decisions continue to be taken by white leaders.’*
- ii. This excerpt comes from *A Tree God Planted*, it would be hoped that stories like this would be confined to history. However, again this was highlighted in the *‘Faithful and Equal’* report in 1987:
 - ‘..A knock-on effect is the recognition that the representation of black people in Methodist leadership positions and structures is made more difficult by the nature and style of working that Methodism adopts. It is crucial that the positive contribution of the black*

communities actually enriches and changes our procedures and affects how things are normally done...'

- iii. In 2012 the theme of inclusive leadership and participation continued to resonate. One of the driving forces and areas of concern for the Belonging Together Project was *'The lack of sufficient minority ethnic group participation within the Church's decision-making and leadership structures'*. This theme was also identified in the *'Belonging Together report'*: *'Explicit discrimination still exists with the Church. The research has highlighted examples of individuals being excluded from leadership or prevented from undertaking specific roles or tasks based on their ethnicity. Assumptions are made about the skills and abilities of individuals based on race, and instances were found of existing leaders refusing to work with people different from themselves....'*
- iv. Martyna's story taken from the *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit - 'Race' Module*: also illustrates the issues around inclusive leadership and participation: *'Martyna, a lay member of a local Methodist church, feels called into leadership within the church. She has had a number of conversations with fellow church members about the possibility of taking up a leadership role. She is a senior manager in a government department, managing a significant budget and several teams of staff.'*

A number of roles have become available in the last year, but in each case, the first Martyna heard of them was when someone else was appointed. The vacancies were not announced during services, and no notices or signs were put up. Individuals were appointed by the existing leadership team. There is a group of around 20 people who have all been members for a long time and are all friends. Leadership roles seem to pass between them with no 'outsiders' given the opportunity to join.'

2.5 Tokenism

- i. Another theme which was identified in the *A Tree God Planted*, report is tokenism: *'..Today it is widely conceded that different groups and interests should be represented when decision-making takes place. Yet we know from other contexts that the inclusion of a 'token' woman in a group of men, or a 'token' black person in a predominately white assembly, may only serve to legitimise the deliberations of that body and inhibit its development on a more equitable basis.'*

Tokenism operates within the Methodist Church when black people are elected into office because they are black but then not given the means of support they need to exercise their leadership role effectively. It also takes place when the position of one black person in a responsible post serves as reassurance that the congregation can welcome black people into leadership when in fact the majority are not involved at all in the business of the church. Tokenism can also be seen when a black person becomes a leader but then is expected to undertake the leadership role as if s/he came from a white cultural background.'

- ii. This theme was also identified in the *Belonging Together* report:

'Some success has been achieved by making people leaders based on their belonging to specific groups within the congregation, but it is important that this doesn't simply obscure the problem. These roles can become tokenistic, creating difficulties for the individual and providing no real benefit to wider groups.'

- iii. Thomas' story in the *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit* - 'Race' module: also illustrates this issue:

'Thomas has long had a passion for mission and ministry with children and young people. Although he has been made a steward, he feels that he is treated as merely a Black and minority ethnic representative. Important decisions are taken before meetings take place and Thomas' input is only sought in matters which are seen to relate to ethnic minority groups. The church recently created a team to look at ways that it could improve its provision for young people, but the team was formed at an informal meeting to which Thomas wasn't invited. Thomas was, therefore, denied the opportunity to join the group – a group which is noticeably lacking in diversity.'

Thomas feels a great deal of pressure because he is the only representative of very diverse groups within the church and he doesn't feel able to represent every viewpoint. Increasingly, he is becoming reluctant to raise too many issues. He fears any issues he raises would be used to argue against any further progress. He is becoming increasingly concerned having heard members of the church express the view that having one steward representing different groups has resolved the problem of a lack of diversity in the leadership of the church.'

- 2.6 In summary, this section of the report has shown the issues and challenges for racial justice and inclusion within the Methodist Church that the sin of racism continues in the life of the Church.

Section Three: Towards an Inclusive Church

- 3.1 The evidence in section two of this report identifies the issues and recurring themes; the focus of this section of the report is to affirm and identify actions and solutions. Though this report concerns racial justice and inclusion, in working through the issues, it is apparent that many of these resonate with other equality and diversity strands. Therefore, the recommendations identified take a wider perspective around equality, diversity and inclusion, focusing on the following four areas:

- initiating a conversation around a shared model of an inclusive Methodist Church
- presenting the challenges concerning the current statistical picture relating to the age, disability, ethnic and the sex composition of the membership of the Methodist Church and its leadership
- ensuring that all possible steps are taken so that the leadership, personnel and ways of being and working of the Conference and all connexional committees and oversight bodies reflect the commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- affirming a programme of identification, encouragement and mentoring for potential senior leaders of the Church.

- 3.2. Initiating a conversation around a shared model of an inclusive Methodist Church

- i. Reflecting on the themes identified in section 2 of this report it is clear that the Methodist Church has been on a journey concerning racial justice and inclusion. In the 1960s and 1970s, the journey was from a model of rejection to one of assimilation. Since then, there have been a number of responses to inclusion across the Connexion, variations of; Assimilation, Melting Pot Approaches or Tolerance:

- Assimilation – Kofi’s story in section 2 of this report illustrates how this model operates, black and global majority (BGM) people are expected to be absorbed into host churches, adopting the hosts ways and losing their own distinctiveness. Though there has been a great deal of work to move away from this model in many multi-cultural churches, assimilation is still evident when BGM people are a significant minority.
- The Melting Pot Approaches– The idealism of this approach presumes that different ethnic, cultural or national groups will ‘melt or blend together’ into a harmonious whole losing their distinctiveness and developing a new common culture. However, in practice, this can lead to conflict with groups unwilling to lose their identity and distinctiveness. Or faced with change groups leaving the church and there is always the question of power and the improbability of those groups in power simply blending in.
- Tolerance – This is a significant model in the Methodist Church’s journey towards inclusion, with difference permitted to exist separately, we see this in the case of Methodist churches which take on a particular ethnic or national identity. However, the challenge to this model is that separate existence can lead to fracture and apartheid.

ii. The Enrichment Model

The models above embody both a separateness from each other and therefore God, an alternative model of inclusion which has more in common with the emphasis on relatedness within Methodist ecclesiology is the Enrichment model, the 1985 ‘*A Tree God Planted*’, report began to develop the early stages of this model.

‘A plural community is one in which different groups are free to maintain their own traditions rather than adopt a standard form of behaviour. Because acknowledgement is made of the fact that each group has distinctive gifts to offer, a form of equality develops which is based on sharing rather than conforming to a dominate ethos.’

The Enrichment model focuses on gifts rather than threats, affirming relationships of mutuality. However, further work is needed on the Enrichment model to root it in the value and ethos of the Church. Key questions that need to be answered are:

- How can the Church ensure that difference in the life of the Church is mutually enriching?
- What intentional activities are needed to build a plural community where different ethnicities and national groups and identities bring their gifts to the Church and what are the challenges?
- What needs to change in the Church for this process to be mutually beneficial?
- If one of the key indicators for the success of this model is that senior leadership should both reflect inclusivity and be inclusive, what are the current implications for the senior leadership of the Church?

3.3 Presenting the challenges concerning the current statistical picture relating to the age, disability, ethnic and the sex composition of the Methodist Church and leadership

Currently, the Methodist Church does not routinely gather statistics relating to the ethnic composition of the Church or general equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) demographic data on age, disability and sex as part of Statistics for Mission. It is also difficult to draw

conclusions about Church leadership as not all EDI data is gathered for this group. What is known and what is not known is:

- Only 10 per cent of representatives of the Methodist Conference are from black and global majority (BMG) groups.
- The Church does not collate data on disability or ethnicity for Presbyters and Deacons.
- In 2014, 88 per cent of District Chairs were 50 and over, 73 per cent were male.
- 83 per cent of superintendents were over 50 years old and 75 per cent were male. While some of the senior leadership of the Methodist Church have entered leadership without being a superintendent minister, most have been. The role of Superintendent Minister can be seen as a gateway position for leadership in the Methodist Church.
- The Chairs of Committees are predominately white and male.
- The data for the Connexional Team Senior Leadership Group shows that 60 per cent are male and 100 per cent are white.

Anecdotally, there is awareness that the main area of growth occurring in the Church is within black and global majority (BGM) communities and this is echoed across Christian Churches in the UK with the phenomenal growth of the Black Majority Churches. Research carried out by the Church of England in 2012 unearthed extraordinary statistics about the number of BGM Christians and the growth of new churches. This research demonstrates the value of gathering this type of data.¹¹

Black and Global Majority in the Methodist Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% BGM at the Conference • 3% BGM District Chairs • 66% BGM in the London District
Black Majority Churches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500,000 Christians in BM churches • At least 5,000 new churches since 1980
Black and Global Majority Christian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One million BGM Christians in Britain

The Methodist Council has therefore directed the Team to undertake further work on the collection of Equality Diversity and Inclusion profiling data of those in Full Connexion with the Conference.

- 3.4 Ensuring that all possible steps are taken so that the leadership, personnel and ways of being and working of the Conference and all connexional committees and oversight bodies reflect the commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

One of the key areas where the Methodist Church needs to ensure that there is better inclusion of BGM people is at the Methodist Conference, the ultimate decision making body of the Church. The EDI Committee has written to District Chairs and Synod Secretaries reminding them of the requirements of Standing Order 417(2) with regard to district representatives to the Conference:

¹¹ [Goodhew](#), D 2012. *Church Growth in Britain: 1980 to the Present*. Ashgate Contemporary Ecclesiology

(2) Subject to clause (2B) below the election shall be made by the Synod by ballot vote after nomination. In electing such representatives members of Synod shall have regard for the composition of the membership of the District as a whole with regard to age, sex and ethnic origin.

The lack of diversity and inclusion and in particular a BGM presence on the platform of the Conference needs to be reflected on, as symbolically this speaks volumes and is not a reflection of God's realm. In addition, the church needs to ensure that it takes account of inclusion when conferring. If justice is what love looks like in public, then the Methodist Church has a long way to go. Leadership needs to ensure that diversity in its fullest sense is taken into account in conferring and decision-making across the Connexion.

3.5 To develop a programme of identification, encouragement and mentoring for potential leaders of the Church

The EDI Toolkit is now available and the EDI Committee will be monitoring its take up within the Connexion. Significant resources were expended in creating the EDI Toolkit, the purpose of which is to provide a learning experience that can be easily used in local situations to support local Churches and Circuits in positively engaging with equality, diversity and inclusion. The toolkit has been developed in an accessible modular format and can be accessed via the Methodist Church website, the aim is to continue to add to its resources. In addition, targeted unconscious bias development has been offered to the following Committees and sub-committees; Strategy and Resources, Complaints and Discipline Panel, Stationing Matching, Ministries, Connexional Grants and Safeguarding. Currently, work is underway to include this as a module in the EDI Toolkit.

However, as identified in the *'Taking forward Larger than Circuit'* report (MC/17/11), the EDI Committee is also concerned with the lack of diversity and inclusion within the leadership of the Church. Within Methodism it is the whole people of God through the relevant decision-making bodies who make decisions about the life of the Methodist Church.¹² Leadership is exercised at all levels of the Church, this includes the: President and Vice President, District Chairs, Chairs of Committees, district leadership teams, circuit leadership teams, Church Councils and the Connexional Team Senior Leadership Group. Though there are differing selection methods for leadership groups; by appointment, voted upon, nominated and recruited there remains an issue of diversity.

Therefore, the EDI Committee welcomes the development of a programme of identification, encouragement and mentoring for potential candidates for appointment as a District Chair, but sees this as a first step in the development of inclusive leadership within the Church and would urge the Conference to take similar action concerning other leadership roles and positions in the Church.

The EDI Committee recognises the value of the 'Germinate Leadership' Programme in the *'Taking forward Larger than Circuit'* report (MC/17/11). To ensure both future leadership is inclusive and understands the dynamics of inclusivity, equality and diversity in the Church, modules need to be specifically developed to include this.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

27/6. The Conference received the Report.

¹² Called to Love and Praise, 1999 4.6.6

- 27/7. The Conference, in confessing the sin of racism and seeking to repent of that sin, recognised the considerable amount of work still required of the whole Connexion in order to achieve greater equality, diversity and inclusion.**
- 27/8. The Conference urged Districts, Circuits, Local Churches and appropriate connexional bodies to engage with the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit.**
- 27/9. The Conference:**
- (a) as a matter of urgency, committed itself to taking steps to enable the Methodist Church to become a more inclusive and multicultural community of faith;**
 - (b) therefore directs the Methodist Council to request the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee to consult with the Belonging Together Ministers' Group, the Fellowships Sub-Committee of the Ministries Committee and the World Church Relationships office in order to develop and implement measurable and time bound plans that will increase participation and inclusion, and to report to the Conference of 2018 on how the plans are progressing.**

SECTION O

RESEARCH INTO THE IMPACT OF *MAPPING A WAY FORWARD: REGROUPING FOR MISSION*

The Council reported the outcomes of stage one of the research conducted into the impact of the *Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission* process (in response to notice of motion 2015/204) to the 2016 Conference. The Council received the report from stage two of the research. The conclusions are shown below.

Notice of motion 2015/204 reads as follows:

The Conference:

- notes with appreciation the significant impact the initiative of Mapping the Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission has had on the life of the Methodist Church for almost a decade – helping Circuits to review their readiness for mission and the structures needed to facilitate that mission;*
- notes that a significant consequence of this work has been the reconfiguring of many Circuits*
- recognises that there are many anecdotes as to the perceived positive and negative effects of such reconfigurations for both large and small Circuits;*

However there has never been any quantitative or qualitative research into the impact and effect of Mapping the Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission for the mission of the Church. Given that the process has now been underway for almost a decade the Conference is of the view that the time for a formal research project examining the evidence would be extremely helpful to the Church as it continues to reshape for effective mission in the twenty-first century.

The Conference therefore directs the Methodist Council to make arrangements for and oversee such research and report its findings to the Conference of 2016. This may be an interim report.

When the insights from both stage one and stage two are considered together, there are a number of themes that emerge regarding the impact of the *Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission (RfM)* process. The themes that emerge from the research are consistent. There was no significant difference between the insights from stage one and stage two, or between the qualitative, quantitative and case study approaches.

- a) **Process:** As a process, this has been experienced as largely positive, although not uniformly so. Circuits are able successfully to address the administrative issues that arise although in some cases it appears that Circuits have had to discover ways of dealing with issues that are known elsewhere in Methodism but not widely shared. There is an emotional cost borne in particular by superintendents and some circuit officers. The support of Chairs and others during this period has been greatly valued although there was a variety of approach. The level of support that Methodist members gave to their previous circuits has been largely transferred to the regrouped entity. Regrouped Circuits appear to be stronger entities than their predecessors and addressed, to some extent, financial and other challenges that a previous Circuit had to sustain. This level of improvement is significant and has enabled a further generation of circuit life in some places.
- b) **Membership:** RfM has not had a significant impact on membership. Circuits have not experienced numerical growth through RfM; indeed decline has remained fairly constant. Variety in rates appears to be largely due to local factors rather than RfM.
- c) **Mission:** Mission focus in intent has sometimes been a prime motivating reason, but administrative factors around regrouping have, in the initial years of regrouping, absorbed large amounts of time and energy. The qualitative research in particular points to mission as the key area where Methodism needs now to focus. The specific evangelism research indicates that Methodism can make more followers, but is currently not doing so in significant numbers.
- d) **Staffing:** Regrouped Circuits are being staffed by a small reduction in ordained staff and a small increase in lay employees who are normally in roles related to administration, finance and property. This is occurring in an era when numbers of candidates for ordination are lower.
- e) **Superintendency:** A variety of models provides some challenges, but flexibility enables circuits to express superintendency in a variety of ways that are considered to be contextually appropriate. Standing Orders have enough flexibility to enable this. Additional preparation and support for superintendents of large and very large Circuits, in particular, will assist those office holders in carrying out the level of responsibility such appointments entail.
- f) **Circuit Officers:** There are fewer circuit officers needed when a number of Circuits regroup. For example, when five Circuits come together there is only one treasurer, one safeguarding officer etc needed. However, the reduction in numbers needed is somewhat offset by the increased responsibilities of such positions and consequently some very large Circuits now have paid employees carrying out some of these responsibilities formerly undertaken by volunteers in the past. The case studies in particular raised issues regarding the wellbeing of circuit officers, and of ministerial colleagues, during the RfM process and especially where large and very large Circuits emerged.
- g) **Connexionalism:** This research has noted an ambivalent relationship from local congregations and to some extent from Circuits towards being part of a Connexion. This perspective is noted

alongside the ongoing conversations regarding 'Issues of Connexionalism in the 21st Century' (Conference 2015).

*****RESOLUTION**

27/10. The Conference received the Report.

SECTION P

MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

The Council received a report on the work of the Ministries Committee.

1 Worship leaders and preachers

The Committee fulfilled the commitment included in responses to memorials from the 2013 Conference (M7, 8 and 9) to consult with circuit local preachers' meetings during 2015/2016 and accepted a paper addressing the memorials at its January meeting. The consultation took place across the Connexion, including with district chairs and district local preachers' secretaries. Superintendents and circuit LP secretaries were asked to consult their local preachers' meetings. The committee noted that the 25% response rate provided an indicative, if not full, picture. The committee received ten recommendations and set up a working group to look at these in more detail. The committee noted that more work was needed on definitions, budgetary implications, decisions regarding the consequences of the review and the impact on candidating for ministry. A draft report will be brought from this group to be considered at the meeting in September 2017, and a final version for the January 2018 meeting.

2 Circuit Based Learning Pathway

The committee received and welcomed an update regarding the pilot of the Circuit Based Learning Pathway, the committee noted that the Queen's Foundation is responsible for the Pathway, although students would be overseen by the Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee (MCPOC). The question of longitudinal research has been considered, but as there were only two students in the pilot that was not currently in place.

3 To Serve and to be Served: the Role and Ministry of Supernumeraries

The Ministries Committee has begun a process of consulting with chairs and superintendents, and more widely to aid with the production of a guidance note. It was agreed by the Committee that care should be taken to ensure that the information used in the consultation reflected the concerns expressed by some about the possible ending of preaching fees. The Committee felt strongly that the importance of the ministry of supernumeraries should be both acknowledged and valued.

4 Continuing Development in Ministry (CDiM)

Following discussion at their July meeting a further paper was considered by the Committee in January and a framework was agreed that fulfils the requirements for CDiM as set out in SO 745. This framework enables the individual, the district and the Connexional Team to fulfil their various responsibilities in relation to the SO and pays attention to allowing for continuity with the formational journey begun in initial ministerial training and continued through the first five years of ministry, including probation. The committee felt strongly that the responsibilities of the individual, the Circuit, District and Learning Network in creating and strengthening a lifelong culture of partnership in learning and development should be clearly identified and articulated.

5 **Sabbaticals policy**

The Conference has received a number of memorials in recent years related to the purpose, frequency and duration of ministerial sabbaticals. It is clear that the memorials taken as a whole point in quite different directions in terms of their implications for sabbatical practice. This year the Ministries Committee reviewed the rationale for sabbaticals following an online survey of ministers, chairs of district, district sabbaticals officers and a sample of senior circuit stewards. The Committee will be considering a number of recommendations at its meeting in September 2017. Consultation has taken place with the Connexional Allowances Committee about the financial implications of any proposals.

6 **Probationer Studies**

In summer 2015, after a prior period of discussion and reflection on the issue, the Ministries Committee gave the Queen's Foundation the charge "to design and develop a programme for ministerial probation that integrates with pre-ordination training". The Committee has considered this item at each of its meetings this year in response to concerns expressed around shortness of initial training; the potential isolation of probationers; a need for more consistency; concerns regarding the transition between initial ministerial training (IMT) and probation; and concerns regarding the levels of work required. Following a year-long consultation and conversation across the Connexion, led by Queen's staff, a proposal was put before the Ministries Committee and, after further work to clarify some areas, will be submitted again to the Committee for consideration at its March meeting.

Work areas requiring policy changes: Transferring Ministers

- 7 The meeting of the Ministries Committee on 25 September 2015 agreed (at the request of the SRC) to "oversee the undertaking of a review of the practices and policies relating to Ministers of Religion coming to Britain from overseas for whom the Methodist Church is sponsor under the Home Office Points Based System, with the aim of formulating a coherent and comprehensive policy relating to such ministers serving in The Methodist Church in Britain [MCB] and to report to the Council no later than January 2017."
- 8 This review was to include:
 - i. Visa fees and their renewal; initial settlement costs; costs relating to extending and changing appointments; costs relating to returning to a sending Conference.
 - ii. An assessment of the impact of receiving ministers on sending Conferences and receiving Circuits.
 - iii. The expectations of ministers, Circuits and other groupings.
 - iv. The significance of receiving ministers in relationship to the development of other personnel exchange programmes overseen by the World Church Relationships Team.
 - v. Reflection on the need to hold together the numbers of incoming ministers, the needs of the Church and the consequential budgetary implications.
- 9 A Transferring Ministers Policy Review Group (TMPRG) was appointed, comprising a representative of the Faith and Order Committee, a representative of the World Church Relationships Team, two presbyters currently recognised and regarded as being in Full Connexion (R&R), a representative of the SRC and a representative of the members of the Connexional Team responsible for implementing the relevant processes. The group consulted other members of the Connexional Team with expertise in the areas of human resources and development and equality, diversity and inclusion. The group considered (among other material):

- i. Statistical evidence regarding the current landscape of ministry in the MCB, including the Statistics for Mission report to the 2014 Conference, ministry deployment figures and the number of incoming presbyters of other conferences and churches between 2010-2015;
 - ii. Comments from those with experience of current processes, including ministers of other Conferences and Churches (MOCCs) and receiving Circuits;
 - iii. Detailed financial information regarding the costs of immigration for MOCCs.
- 10 This report of the TMRPG outlined: issues raised regarding current practice and proposals based on the group's discussions. These proposals were agreed by the Council and are now presented to the Conference.

Proposals

- 11 The Council presents the following 15 proposals of the TMRPG to the Conference believing that a 'coherent and comprehensive policy' must begin with a clear rationale for welcoming those who are ordained by and currently in good standing with other conferences and churches to work formally on behalf of the MCB.
- 12 The Methodist Church "claims and cherishes its place in the Holy Catholic Church which is the Body of Christ" (Deed of Union, Clause 4) and "has always understood itself to be part of the whole Church of Christ" (*Called to Love and Praise*, 4.1.1). The MCB acknowledges "that it is a pilgrim Church, travelling with many others of different traditions, but united in the one faith" (Ibid).
- 13 This self-understanding is visible in a number of areas in the life of the MCB (such as the role of the World Church Representative at ordination services). It is manifest in the sending and receiving of ordained ministers to and from other conferences and churches, as a visible sign that we are all members of one Body seeking together to share in the mission of God in the world – a calling that transcends national and ecclesiological boundaries. This is a sign of our willingness to be open to that which the Spirit is saying to the churches about the use and deployment of the resources of the whole Church of Christ (currently, for the MCB, in the context of a significantly greater number of appointments than presbyters available for stationing).
- 14 "The nature of the Church as an international community properly finds expression in international structures ... At this international level, the connexional principle propels Methodist Churches towards a sharing of resources which crosses both denominational and national boundaries" (Ibid, 4.7.8).
- 15 The Council acknowledges the challenges that have arisen in this area in the past and celebrates the numerous occasions when MOCCs have flourished in the MCB and have played a significant role in the mission and ministry of Local Churches, Circuits and the wider Connexion. It makes the proposals below in the hope that the MCB might be enabled to build on the good work already done.
- 16 The 15 Proposals:
1. The role of the home Church: The ability of the MCB to welcome ministers from other Conferences and Churches depends on open and cordial relationships being maintained with those other Conferences and Churches (see SO 736, which speaks of seeking to enter into 'mutually acceptable arrangements'). By and large, this has been the case, but we need to avoid the impression which is sometimes given of the MCB taking the

brightest and best from other Churches or enabling ministers to serve in Britain rather than to abide by the discipline of their own Church. It is worth noting that should a minister from the MCB wish to reside overseas or to serve another Church or Conference, we would expect him or her to seek permission from the Stationing Advisory Committee (SAC) before making any application. It is therefore proposed that:

- a) where an applicant is Methodist, s/he be asked to provide evidence that conversations have been had with the appropriate officer within her/his Conference before completing a formal application to transfer (FC1a) or to be R&R (R&R1a). The MCB would still approach the conference in question for formal permission, the record of ministry, and assurance that the minister was in good standing;
 - b) applicants from other Churches should be asked to provide evidence that conversations have been had with their bishop or equivalent before completing the FC1a or R&R1a. As above, the MCB would still approach the church in question for formal permission, the record of ministry, and assurance that the minister was in good standing;
 - c) conversations, facilitated by the appropriate team member in the World Church Relationships (WCR) Office, should be held with other Methodist conferences about, in general terms, the appropriateness or otherwise of our procedures. This might result in different approaches being used with different conferences and in some conferences indicating to us that they do not wish any of their ministers to be considered for service in the MCB. (The TMRPG notes that this proposal has resource implications for the WCR Office in equipping Partnership Coordinators to take on this additional responsibility);
 - d) SO 730(11), which distinguishes those who are from autonomous conferences from other applicants in detailing the way in which applicants should be treated, be deleted. This amendment would bring the Standing Order in line with current practice and, more importantly, would reflect that it can no longer be assumed that initial ministerial training and expected competencies for ordained ministry in autonomous conferences are near-identical to those of the MCB;
 - e) in the light of other proposals in this report and the risks inherent in advertising abroad to 'fill the stations', the suggestion of another conference identifying a list of ministers whom we might interview each year is not a proposal that we should pursue. However, the practice of approaching a conference with a particular station in mind has been trialled this year; the situation in that appointment should be kept under review and consideration given to this being a model for the future;
 - f) it is important that MOCCs who are R&R be encouraged to maintain their links with the sending Church. If the proposed oversight group/committee (see below) comes into being, it should report annually to the sending Church that the MOCC's ministry is being received with joy (and/or reporting any concerns) and noting any changes and the time when any decision about the MOCC's future would need to be made;
 - g) an additional gathering be added to the induction programme during the third year of the MOCCs' appointments to discuss with the cohort how they feel about the future (including the possibilities of returning to their home Church after five years offering an extension or to move to a new appointment as R&R, or applying to transfer into FC;
 - h) in the light of the above proposals, the literature given to MOCC applicants and the forms they are asked to complete should be revised.
2. Liaison with the WCR Office: The TMRPG made a series of suggestions about how the work of the WCRO might contribute to the development of work with MOCCs. The Ministries Committee asked the Assistant Secretary and the Ministerial Coordinator for

the Oversight of Ordained Ministries to look again at the proposals in consultation with the team members in the WCRO to ensure that appropriate connections are made and relationships developed.

3. Fellowship groups have provided a means for Methodists from other parts of the world to worship in their own language and according to their own traditions whilst contributing to the life of the MCB (usually by encouraging integration into the life of the circuit). Each Fellowship Chaplain is someone respected by the sending church and with unrivalled understanding of the experience of her/his compatriots within the MCB. Therefore, the Ministries Committee proposes that Fellowship Chaplains:
 - a) be notified when an application to transfer or for R&R status is received from a minister from their home Church;
 - b) be available to the host circuit to advise on cultural issues between stationing in January and the arrival of the minister in August (this could be facilitated at the induction for receiving circuits in February);
 - c) be encouraged to meet any MOCC from their home church stationed to a circuit in the MCB shortly after arrival (eg at the induction event in August), but with no expectation that they will take on a coaching/mentoring role.
 - d) Following the report to the 2015 Conference of the working group on Fellowship Groups, a small group has been working on the oversight of Fellowship Chaplains and will propose to the Methodist Council in October that a formal body be established to oversee the processes around the appointment of Fellowship Chaplains ensuring that both the needs and wishes of the sending Church and the MCB's processes of discernment and stationing are honoured. The Ministries Committee supports this proposal as a vital step in working towards the inclusion of those from other conferences (including MOCCs) in the life of the Connexion.

4. Transfers from those already R&R: Many of those ministers who seek to transfer (ie to be received into Full Connexion) have already served as R&R for some years. Strictly speaking, only those MOCCs who are received into Full Connexion 'transfer', though the language is often used for those who serve as R&R. Many of those who seek to transfer are already R&R and have therefore undergone a rigorous discernment process equivalent to that for those who are received into Full Connexion. MCSC acknowledged the duplication of process that those who move from one status to another now face. MCSC therefore decided to adopt a revised process for 2016 (later extended to 2017), viz:
 - a) Applicants will be asked to reflect theologically on their experience of being R&R and their sense of being called into a permanent relationship with the MCB.
 - b) Permission will be sought from the home Church.
 - c) Affirmation will be sought from the applicant's District Chair (and in the case of a deacon, the Warden of the MDO) and superintendent (or, if the applicant is the Superintendent, a circuit steward).
 - d) Applicants will be asked to produce a theological reflection (2000 to 3000 words) on 'The identity of a Methodist presbyter/deacon in the 21st century' drawing on (amongst other sources) their experience, *Called to Love and Praise* and *What is a Presbyter/Deacon?*
 - e) Applicants will be invited to an interview before a panel of eight members of MCSC. The interview will involve two triangle interviews, examining 1) practice and discipline and 2) spirituality and resources. With the full panel, they will explore their theological reflection and personal experience.

Even this, however, can seem to belie the equality of R&R and FC status and it is questionable whether it would be right to ask Irish ministers (all of whom are R&R) to undergo such a process. On recommendation from the TMPRG the Ministries Committee feels that a minister already serving under the terms of service of a minister in Full Connexion should not be asked to undergo an extensive discernment process similar to that which she/he underwent in order to become R&R. The Committee therefore proposes that where a minister has already undergone a discernment process to be R&R, the Ministerial Co-ordinator for the Oversight of Ordained Ministries (MCOOM) needs simply to ask for:

- a) A statement from the minister's home church consenting to the transfer
- b) A supporting letter from the minister's superintendent and District Chair
- c) A statement from the minister indicating her/his wish to transfer into Full Connexion, willingness to be itinerant, and fidelity to our doctrine and practice.

The Ministries Committee recommends that the Law and Polity Committee bring the necessary revisions to Standing Order 730 (and any subsequent changes) to the 2018 Conference.

Statistics should be held regarding the number of R&R ministers who return to their home churches after five years and the number who do not. If a significant number remains beyond five years, evidence will need to be collated on a case-by-case basis as to why this was the most appropriate course of action (as evidence to the Home Office that our systems are fit for purpose). This task should be passed to the oversight group outlined in proposal 5. Letters to home churches requesting permission to extend the length of an R&R minister's service should include a description of the discernment process involved. Guidelines should be produced to ensure consistency in the conversations between R&R ministers, superintendents and District Chairs regarding the possibility of extension.

5. Oversight structure: recent experience has shown that both circuits and MOCCs value the input of the MCOOM in reviewing their situation during the first year (and feel acutely the lack of such input where it has not been forthcoming). Such personal contact is important but a structured system of reporting and evaluation would be more helpful both to those currently in appointments and those supervising them and to the Connexional Team as it seeks to improve its processes. A small oversight group for MOCCs should be established to which the MCOOM should report on the recommendations of MCSC, the outcomes of initial stationing, and any interventions s/he makes, to which the MOCCs' supervisors should report according to agreed criteria. The oversight group will report annually to the Conference.
6. Candidates: Over the last few years, MCSC has seen a number of applications from student ministers from other churches and conferences. It has dealt with these under SO 714 (Overseas Candidates); however, it is clear that this Standing Order is a vestige of the days when overseas Districts still existed and it is not clear how 710(1) applies (MCSC has simply assumed that it does not). The Council therefore proposes:
 - the deletion of Standing Order 714, and
 - the revision of Standing Order 730(2) as follows:
 - (2) (a) Persons ordained to the ministry of word and sacraments in other conferences or other Christian churches, probationers for such ministry, **accepted candidates for such ministry**, ordained deacons of the United Methodist Church or of a church with a three-fold order of ministry and officers of the Salvation Army

who wish to be admitted into Full Connexion with the Conference as presbyters or admitted upon presbyteral probation **or to enter initial training as accepted candidates for presbyteral ministry** shall apply in writing before the 15th January to the President, and the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf shall arrange for the application to be considered as set out in the following clauses.

- (b) Ordained deacons ~~or persons accepted for training for the diaconate~~ of other conferences or Christian churches, **probationers for such ministry, accepted candidates for such ministry** or officers of the Salvation Army who wish to be admitted as deacons in Full Connexion with the Conference or as diaconal probationers **or to enter initial training as accepted candidates for diaconal ministry** shall apply in writing before the 15th January to the President, and the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf shall arrange for the application to be considered as set out in the following clauses.
7. Connexional Assessment: it is at present unclear whether or not Standing Orders require an applicant for transfer or R&R status to undergo a psychological assessment. SO 730(5)(ii) merely requires the MCOOM to 'appoint and obtain a report from a connexional assessor'. However, SO 730(6) requiring MCSC to apply clauses (1) to (9) of SO 713 has been read to include the requirement for psychological assessment at SO 712(3). Psychological interviews have not always been easy to arrange when applicants arrive only shortly before their interviews by MCSC. Given the new arrangements that MCSC has made in relation to the psychological testing of candidates, the Committee recommends that:
- a) the connexional assessor should be appointed following liaison with the WCR Partnership Coordinator;
 - b) the discernment process include a 'fitness to minister' assessment covering both physical and psychological wellbeing conducted by Interhealth or another provider of occupational health services (parallel to the processes for potential Mission Partners) and that the results of this assessment only be disclosed to MCSC after it has made its recommendation; the medical committee should be consulted if the recommendation of the 'fitness' assessor contradict that of MCSC.
8. Stationing: The Council notes the considerable amount of work that has been done to improve the induction for both Circuits and MOCCs in which various cultural issues have been addressed and mechanisms put in place to support MOCCs in their first years of ministry in the MCB. However, there has still been a series of problems in some Circuits where the expectations of minister and Circuit did not correspond. Such experiences can be destructive of both the presbyter or deacon's ministry and of the Circuit's confidence in its ability to welcome a MOCC in future. The Stationing Committee has agreed this year that separate profiles should be used for MOCC appointments (to adapt the process whereby all initial stationing applications are considered for probationers or MOCCs unless where the circuit is content for that to be the case). However, the TMRG recommended that more attention is given to the possibility of a MOCC appointment by asking Circuits in the year before a profile (year minus one)¹³ is submitted to contact the MCOOM and to engage in a consultation process to explore (a) the suitability of an appointment for a MOCC and (b) consideration about the background and experience that a MOCC would need to bring to the appointment. Such conversations should be encouraged by District Chairs as a matter of good practice (but applications received

¹³ On a numeration that stationing matching occurs in (connexional) year zero and the minister takes up the appointment on the first day of year one.

without prior conversation will not be declined automatically). Circuits should be reminded (eg at the induction in February) that for all MOCCs (other than ordained probationers) the language of 'probation' is inappropriate.

9. The Ministries Committee recognises that the current system and its proposed revisions demand a considerable investment of time from staff in the Connexional Team. It also notes that one of the drivers for its work has been finance. The costs of welcoming MOCCs from overseas are considerable and have sometimes been underestimated. In particular, the costs of visas have increased exponentially in recent years and are likely to continue to rise. At present, MCSC is asked to interview every MOCC applicant who is qualified under SO 730(2) and has the appropriate permission from her/his home church and to recommend to the Conference those who meet the criteria, for whom a station has been identified and who have the necessary police clearance. The Ministries Committee therefore believes that it is necessary to limit the number of recommended MOCCs (not already serving in the MCB) each year and therefore that:
 - a) a 'cap' should be agreed each year by the Stationing Committee in the light of the MCOOM's report on interest shown by circuits considering an application and advice from the relevant budget holder in the Connexional Team (Development & Personnel) about the financial implications. This cap is likely to be between six and ten;
 - b) applications for R&R status should be discouraged where the MOCC has under five years' experience of ordained ministry (unless there are exceptional circumstances surrounding the application);
 - c) MCSC should continue to interview all qualified applicants and to recommend those who meet its criteria but all applicants should be warned (as now) that recommendation does not guarantee an appointment and that opportunities for them to serve might be limited;
 - d) recommended applicants might be 'held over' for appointments in the year following that for which they applied.

10. The TMPRG considered a number of other issues of cost and has had some referred to it by the Immigration Meeting. Costs are sometimes 'hidden' because of unidentified expectations (eg a minister from overseas might expect that the circuit provide her or him with a vehicle for use on church business). Transparency is needed as to which costs will be borne by the MOCC, the Circuit, and the Methodist Church Fund (MCF). The Ministries Committee therefore recommends that:
 - a) Applicants for transfer or R&R status should (as now) bear the costs of the application (including visa and travel to the interviews);
 - b) the MCOOM and the Circuit discuss the budgetary implications of a MOCC appointment as part of the 'year minus one' conversations;
 - c) the Circuit bear the cost of the MOCC's removal to the circuit (including her or his dependants). This would constitute a change to current guidance, which states that 'the receiving circuit will reimburse the door-to-door costs of the travel and transportation to the MCB appointment by the transferring minister and dependents of an amount not exceeding £2,000' (however, this figure is often exceeded in practice);
 - d) the MOCC be entitled (as now) to the means-tested grant and loan that are offered to probationers entering their first appointment;
 - e) the MCF bear the cost of the visa (and all related costs, eg BRP cards and the NHS surcharge) for the MOCC and up to three of her/his dependants throughout the period that s/he serves in the MCB. The MCF (or its advisor) will only be responsible

for any legal costs (appeals &c) if the MOCC has consistently followed the advice of the connexional immigration advisor. This is a significant change to current practice. It relies on conversations regarding immigration status and vocation being held closely together by the MOCC, the Connexional Team and District Chairs for those exploring a sense of call to serve in the MCB indefinitely.

- f) the information sent to applicants before they complete an FC1a or R&R1a¹⁴ and to MOCCs who are recommended by MCSC before they are entered into initial stationing include a breakdown of the 'costs of transfer' to make it clear that in the MCB ministers are not provided with furniture or motor cars but circuits should be willing to provide furniture for a MOCC's manse where it is clear that (a) the MOCC is coming from a church or conference where the custom is for manses to be furnished or (b) it appears more cost effective to furnish the manse than to bear the cost of freight. It would be appropriate for discretionary funding to be made available from districts to assist with this;
 - g) the costs of the MOCC's return to his/her home church are not the responsibility of the MCB. In exceptional circumstances (eg in case of hardship on retirement) a MOCC might apply for a grant of up to £2000 from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons.
11. The Irish Conference has welcomed a number of MOCCs and has in recent years also attempted to discern carefully how those who express an interest in serving the MCI might be assessed and matched carefully with appropriate appointments. The MCOOM has met the Secretary of the Irish Conference, the Director of Ministry, and the Senior Secretary of the Ordained Ministry Committee, and has agreed to explore the possibility of working jointly in this area by pooling the applications that the two conferences receive and discussing with applicants for the MCB whether they would be willing to serve in the MCI (and *vice versa*). The Ministries Committee therefore proposes that in any year that there are applicants who are willing to serve in (or to transfer into) either conference, the panels interviewing be made up of six representatives of MCB and two of MCI and any panel of reference of two MCB and one MCI committee members.
12. At present the MCB makes no requirement as to competence in the English language. Applicants for Tier 2 Minister of Religion visas are required to demonstrate competence at IELTS level 6.5. The Ministries Committee recommends that those applicants who do not need to meet this requirement for visa purposes but whose ability to function in English gives concern either to the connexional assessor or to the MCSC panel be required to demonstrate such competence (at the expense of the MCF) before initial stationing.
13. The Ministries Committee asked the TMRG to consider whether it feels that the MCB should develop shorter-term (ie one-year) programmes for MOCCs. The TMRG felt that one-year programmes are a desirable outcome but would require very serious consideration and preparation. Such a programme would need to be distinct from the transfer/R&R process (perhaps administered through the World Church Relationships Team) with links to the Conference Office. The Ministries Committee therefore recommends that this matter is passed to the oversight group proposed in Recommendation 5 for further consideration.

¹⁴ FC1a and R&R1a are the application forms completed by MOCCs seeking to serve in the MCB.

14. The TMPRG knew of no reason why 15 January should be identified as the terminus ad quem for transfer applications. It is proposed that SOs 730 and 732 be amended so that the deadline for applications for transfer/R&R status is determined by MCSC on an annual basis in line with the candidating timetable and (if proposal above is approved) in consultation with MCI.
15. The TMPRG recognised that there is a number of the issues listed above that are not fully addressed in its proposals and that this is an area of continually developing concern. It is therefore proposed that the Ministries Committee asks the small oversight group (proposal 5) to reflect on the processes it oversees and to listen to concerns of MOCCs, Circuits, and others and to report regularly to the Ministries Committee on policy issues in this area.

Areas of work ongoing; Fresh Expressions, VentureFX

- 17 Since the Methodist Church became one of the founding partners in Fresh Expressions, there has been an annual report of its activities to the Methodist Conference; initially via the Fresh Ways Working Group and more recently through the Ministries Committee report. This year, it includes a report of the VentureFX project.
- 18 The team works in five areas of focus that were introduced in the 2015 report: Inspiring Vision; Networking Strategically; Connecting Geographically; Supporting Practitioners; Resourcing Learning.
- 19 The Church of England, the Methodist Church, the Salvation Army, the United Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland are the existing Fresh Expressions partners. This year conversations have taken place with both the Baptist Union of Great Britain and with the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland about joining the partnership.
- 20 The board and team leadership have been giving considerable thought to the next quinquennium. Whilst there is still work to be done in advocacy, promotion and initial training for those engaging in fresh expressions, the emphasis is now shifting towards sustainability and embedding.
- 21 This will probably entail a shift of resources from a smaller ecumenical team working primarily on the areas of resources and communications to a more integrated fresh expressions presence in the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network.
- 22 Discussions between the board and senior Connexional Team leaders are planned which will lead to proposals being brought to the Methodist Council in due course.
- 23 The number of fresh expressions in the Methodist Church continues to grow. The 2015 statistics for mission show that we now have 2,800 fresh expressions of church recorded and that the average weekly attendance in worship accounts for 12% of Methodist worshippers. 93% of Methodist Circuits now have at least one fresh expression of church as part of their mission and more than a third of individual churches.
- 24 The Reimagine Church Conference organised by the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network in October was oversubscribed and had a sense of excitement about it as delegates engaged with different ways of 're-imagining Church'. A major ecumenical Festival event is to be planned to celebrate 15 years of the Fresh Expressions movement.

- 25 However, the point has not yet been reached where fresh expressions have become a normal part of Methodist culture. There is a good deal of research that suggests that a 'tipping point' is reached when 20% penetration is achieved. In the case of fresh expressions this will probably mean that 20% of circuit resources (budget, paid staff time, volunteer energy) are devoted to fresh expressions of church. This is the point when embedding will have been properly achieved and sustaining a mixed economy of mission shaped Circuits becomes the primary agenda.
- 26 Last year, the Ministries Committee agreed to a piece of research that will qualitatively examine a random sample of Circuits to give the church a more accurate picture of what is happening in fresh expressions. A researcher has been appointed on a one year contract to do this piece of research, detailed criteria have been established and a questionnaire developed to take this work forward. We are grateful for the generosity of the Church Army research unit who have shared with us the criteria which they have used for their research (published in *Anecdote to Evidence* and more recently *The Day of Small Things*).
- 27 The Fresh Expressions team have concentrated their efforts on promoting and resourcing fresh expressions of church, but it is becoming increasingly apparent that many of the fresh expressions resources have a wider application.
- 28 It is therefore proposed that in the connexional year 2017-2018, the SRI team investigate a sample of those projects that do not meet the rigorous indicators applied in this year's research. The primary purpose of this research is to explore the extent to which fresh expressions thinking and resources are informing and shaping the mission of more traditional churches and circuits. The director of SRI has been consulted and agrees that this work is possible within existing budgets.
- 29 A good practice in fresh expressions small group has been set up (Connexional Fresh Expressions Missioner (convener), a superintendent minister (the Revd Michael Redshaw), a fresh expressions practitioner (the Revd Matt Finch) and a member of the DMLN (Ms Katie Deadman). They have identified a number of Circuits which are engaging well with fresh expressions as part of an overall circuit mission strategy and have begun conversations with them to identify practical discoveries of good practice that can be written up into a guide to be published in the next connexional year.
- 30 One of the outcomes of these conversations is a growing awareness that mature fresh expressions of church do not often become Methodist churches, and that emerging fresh expressions of church would benefit from more clearly identified guidance in the *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*.
- 31 The creation of a Fresh Expression category within Methodist practice is primarily to create space in which Methodist individuals, churches and Circuits can engage with the communities around them in creative ways. The distinguishing feature of the Fresh Expression rather than a mission project serving the felt needs of a community is that there is always the intention to create Christian community (whether or not it looks like a traditional Methodist Church).

VentureFX

- 32 The Connexional Pioneering Ministries Scheme (VentureFX) has been in place since the first five pioneers were appointed in 2010. By 2012 a further nine pioneers had been added, bringing the total number to fourteen. The scheme was established as a response

to the call in the Mission Shaped Church Report (2004) to identify and support pioneers who would form and lead fresh expressions of church. The coordinator of VentureFX and the Connexional Missioner for Fresh Expressions continue to work very closely together.

- 33 VentureFX was designed to be an experimental approach to pioneer mission, and the learning which is being distilled is being shared in appropriate ways. The pioneers themselves share this learning effectively in their local setting and often more widely, taking part in connexional, district and circuit events and sharing in conferences and gatherings of interested people. Recently, video interviews were made with each of the pioneers under the heading 'Thinking Allowed' in which they speak of their experiences and approaches, and these are available on the Methodist website to make their insights more widely available. This connexional year has been a pivotal moment in the development of VentureFX for three reasons:
- i. Some of the longer-established projects have come to the end of the first five-year phase and local discussions about whether or not they should continue into the second five years have proved more challenging than anticipated. Apart from the fact that a commitment to a further period of funding at a higher rate is required, it has also sometimes prompted sponsoring Circuits or Districts to query the shape of the emerging project. Some projects have come to a close, either because a pioneer has decided to move on, or because the sponsoring circuit or district chose not to continue the project into Phase 2. The way the ending of a project happens is extremely important and the Project Management Group responsible for overseeing the scheme is in the process of capturing and reflecting upon the valuable lessons to be learned in this phase. These lessons about transition of leadership, sustaining and building upon that which has already been developed, and ending well, have a wider potential to help pioneer situations across the Connexion and the next few years of such learning from the scheme will be vital.
 - ii. While the original VentureFX projects are still providing important experience and learning, and will continue to do so in the remaining years of the scheme, the development of Methodist Pioneering Pathways means that the experiment can now begin to be integrated more fully into the life of the Church. Nearly 50 pioneers are now registered with Methodist Pioneering Pathways and VentureFX pioneers are playing their part in helping to resource this development.

Updates on responses to Memorials to the 2016 Conference – M1, M3 and M24

- 34 M1 Criteria for candidating for the ministry

Following discussion at the January meeting the Committee noted that it will consider recommendations from the Ministerial Co-ordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries on this memorial at its March meeting.

- 35 M3 Questions asked in the Presbyteral Session of Synod

The Committee drafted a statement in response to this memorial which affirmed the significance and centrality of the questions of the annual inquiry which was agreed and circulated to all presbyters.

- 36 M24 Circuits in tragedy and crisis

The Committee noted that a meeting had been arranged with a steward, superintendent and presbyter from Circuits that had recently been affected by the deaths of ministers in the active work, to gather their views on whether there is further support that can be offered in such circumstances, beyond that normally arranged by the District Chair. This small group created by the Ministries Committee has now met to listen to Circuits affected by tragedy and crisis, in particular the death of ministers in the active service. It will consider a response following that consultation and will issue a guidance note for the Districts to be reported to the March meeting of the Committee.

***RESOLUTIONS

27/11. The Conference received the Report.

27/12. The Conference adopted the 15 proposals regarding transferring ministers as set out in paragraph 16 with the exception of recommendation 10 which it refers to the Connexional Allowances Committee.

27/13. The Conference revoked Standing Order 714.

27/14. The Conference amended Standing Order 730(2) as follows:

(2) (a) Persons ordained to the ministry of word and sacraments in other conferences or other Christian churches, probationers for such ministry, **accepted candidates for such ministry**, ordained deacons of the United Methodist Church or of a church with a three-fold order of ministry and officers of the Salvation Army who wish to be admitted into Full Connexion with the Conference as presbyters or admitted upon presbyteral probation **or to enter initial training as accepted candidates for presbyteral ministry** shall apply in writing before the 15th January to the President, and the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf shall arrange for the application to be considered as set out in the following clauses.

(b) Ordained deacons ~~or persons accepted for training for the diaconate~~ of other conferences or Christian churches, **probationers for such ministry, accepted candidates for such ministry** or officers of the Salvation Army who wish to be admitted as deacons in Full Connexion with the Conference or as diaconal probationers **or to enter initial training as accepted candidates for diaconal ministry** shall apply in writing before the 15th January to the President, and the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf shall arrange for the application to be considered as set out in the following clauses.

SECTION Q

ACCESSIBILITY TO THE CONFERENCE

The Council received a report from the working party established by the Council to take forward the matters raised by notice of motion 2015/108.

Notice of motion 2015/108 reads as follows:

The Conference notes:

That the 2013 Conference directed a working party to be formed to look into the issue of accessibility to the Conference. Many who spoke at that meeting of the Conference supported the notice of motion and highlighted areas that could be looked at, including barriers stopping people from attending, the impact of dyslexia upon report reading, how people engage with the Conference and how people engage, or sometimes not engage.

That the working party report at p413 of the Agenda lays out a definition of accessibility, which is narrower than the wider understanding of accessibility.

The Conference thanks the working party for the report and the work that has gone into it particularly as it highlights areas of work that the Conference needs to consider, and brings up issues that will need addressing in the future.

The Conference is of the view that the report does not answer what many feel it set out to answer in the first place.

Add to Resolution 45/2:

The Conference further directs that the terms of reference for the working party shall include further consideration of the issue of accessibility, not just the logistics of running the Conference, but how people can engage with the Conference, regardless of experience, ability or confidence. The membership of the working party shall include those who have expertise in these areas.

In their report to the Council, the working party made the following main points:

1. Improving accessibility to the Conference requires directional guidelines (for others to follow) as well as prescriptive solutions, and is as much incremental improvement as radical upheaval.
2. There are tensions within the Working Party's terms of reference, and between people's expectations of the Conference.
3. Accessibility is influenced by:
 - Members' knowledge of participants and procedures;
 - How Conference business is transacted;
 - Patterns of worship, prayer and Ordination Services;
 - The Conference venue, accommodation and facilities;
 - Provision for those with particular or special needs;
 - Use of technology, including electronic voting;
 - The overall pattern and length of the Conference week;
 - The size and composition of the Conference.

The Council considered the proposals brought by the working group and referred their report to the Conference Business Committee for detailed consideration of the recommendations and directed the Conference Business Committee to report back to the Council with regular updates.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

27/15. The Conference received the Report.

27/15A. The Conference directed that the full report of the Accessibility to the Conference Working Party, MC/17/42, which includes the 16 recommendations of the working group, which was presented to the Council in April 2017, be brought to the 2018 Conference for debate and decision.

SECTION R FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

Introduction

1. During the course of the year the Council has addressed two requirements in respect of Fellowship Groups:
 - 1.1 The recommendation of the final report of the Working Group on Fellowship Groups to the Conference of 2015, viz,

“Set up a connexional advisory/support group for Fellowship Groups. The group to comprise a representative of each of the larger Fellowship Group and some smaller groups. The role of the group is to support Fellowship Groups, share good practice, encourage full and healthy integration and encourage members to become full members of the Methodist Church. The group would also act as an advisory group for the Methodist Church, particularly in relation to encouraging vocational discernment and providing orientation for ministers, leaders and churches.”
 - 1.2 The expressed need of the Fellowship Chaplains to be held accountable for their ministry by the Methodist Church in Britain (MCB) and of those responsible for the stationing of chaplains to ensure that the appointment of chaplains (and the periodic review of their appointments) conforms to our policy and practices.
2. The work on Fellowships is complex and continues to develop, with new groups having been established during the time that this work has been in progress. The Council identified two clear needs:
 - 2.1 For a regular, structured, and representative body to whom Fellowship Chaplains and others involved in ministry within other language ministries could be held accountable.
 - 2.2 For opportunities for collegueship, fellowship and sharing for Fellowship Chaplains and others involved in ministry within other language ministries.
3. During the conversation it also became clear that there are other and complex issues around governance and oversight in relation to Fellowships and other groups, eg appropriate accountability for finance, grant applications, and agreements with other Conferences. It is essential that in all these areas we move towards a position of having transparent and equitable processes that honour and benefit both the Fellowship Groups and the MCB.

The Fellowships Sub-committee

4. In order to ensure that the Conference has in place transparent and equitable processes that offer support and oversight to the Fellowship Groups, the Council has established a Fellowships Sub-committee of the Ministries Committee, the responsibilities of which shall be:
 - To receive an annual report from each of the Fellowship Groups. This report should include (*inter alia*) details of the congregations (their location and activities), an account of the ministry of the chaplain, and financial statements and accounts.
 - To receive a report from the Fellowships Forum.

- To review the inclusion of Fellowship Groups in the life of the Connexion.
 - To challenge both Fellowships and Districts or Circuits to work more closely together.
 - To support the development of leaders in the MCB from the Fellowships.
 - To formulate with partner churches memoranda of understanding clarifying the roles, responsibilities, accountability, selection and appointment of Fellowship Chaplains.
 - To review the stationing of the chaplains and to ensure that appropriate succession planning is in place (including liaison with the autonomous Conference or partner Church).
 - To facilitate the creation of new partnerships on the fellowship or another model with autonomous conferences.
 - To review the funding of Fellowship Groups and to receive a report from the Connexional Grants Officer on connexional support for the work.
 - To ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for Fellowship Chaplains and those in similar roles to meet together in order to share in fellowship, to exchange ideas, and to offer mutual encouragement.
 - To report annually to the Ministries Committee (and through the Ministries Committee to the Council) on the work of God in the Fellowship Groups.
 - To ask the Ministries Committee to commission the production of resources for the use of Fellowships and other language congregations and the Circuits that host them.
5. The Fellowships Sub-committee, which shall meet annually, shall comprise the duly appointed chaplains or other representatives of the Fellowship/ Ministries Groups recognised by MCB and those connexional officers with responsibility for the work under discussion. The Ministerial Coordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries (MCOOM) will act as its convener and secretary.

A Gathering of Fellowship Chaplains

6. Standing Order 1001(1)(iii) charges the One Mission Forum with the responsibility of sharing insights and developing vision. The proposed gathering of Fellowship Chaplains and others clearly fits within that mandate, but it might be that the One Mission Forum itself is not necessarily the best way to do this. The Council is therefore asked to refer this matter to the One Mission Forum for discussion, either to set up a Fellowship Chaplains' Meeting within the Forum or to refer the matter back to the Fellowships Sub-committee which will then propose to the Ministries Committee a suitable annual gathering, the aims of which would be:
- To draw together representatives of the fellowships and other language congregations for worship, conversation, and mutual support.
 - To celebrate good practice by sharing news of developments from the groups.

- To promote inclusion by hearing from the groups and the circuits which host them.

Timeline for Implementation

7. The next meeting of the One Mission Forum will be asked to decide whether it should host the gathering of chaplains and report back to the Fellowships Sub-committee which will decide at its meeting in early 2018 how best to take forward this part of the work.
8. The Council also invited the One Mission Forum to consider how an annual opportunity to share insights and develop vision might be afforded to Fellowship Chaplains and others and to report to the Fellowships Sub-committee.

*****RESOLUTION**

27/16. The Conference received the Report.

SECTION 5

LARGER THAN CIRCUIT FOLLOW-UP

The 2016 Conference, in considering the report *Larger than Circuit* directed the Secretary of the Conference to oversee a review of:

- a. the use of District Chairs to chair or serve on working groups appointed by the Council/Conference;
 - b. the roles performed by the District Chair (and identify the roles that might be more appropriately carried out by the Connexional Team thereby allowing District Chairs further to exercise spiritual leadership); and
 - c. the title 'District Chair', and whether an alternative title would be more appropriate;
- and bring recommendations to the Conference as soon as possible.

The use and roles of District Chairs (Resolutions 15/2a and b)

The 2016 Conference heard that following consultation with District Chairs and others, the following factors and perceptions lie behind recommendations a and b:

- While very little has changed in terms of Standing Orders, the demands of the role of District Chair have increased.
- District Chairs employ a variety of leadership styles according to the situations in which they find themselves, and these increasingly varied patterns of leadership make demands upon the Chairs' time and energy.
- Consultation responses suggested that "what the Methodist Church wants from its District Chairs is spiritual leadership, strategic development and pastoral care" (para. 16). In addition to the resolution above, Chairs were encouraged "to review their diary commitments and hear the call from the church to prioritise preaching and leading worship" (para. 18).
- The Coordinating Group queried whether asking District Chairs to chair and/or serve on connexional working parties is "in line with the priorities of the Conference and whether this is best use of significant spiritual leaders in the church" (para. 15).

In preparing the report to the Conference, the Working Group attempted to address the question of whether the use of District Chairs to serve on connexional committees and other groups is in line with the priorities of the Conference and the best use of significant spiritual leaders in the Church. *What is a District Chair?* (2006) noted that:

“... in exercising the oversight and responsibilities [within the District], a District Chair is not just relating to the particular context of the District to which she or he is appointed, but also to the wider context of the whole connexion... the role of Chairs in the wider Connexion has become increasingly important. Chairs are not so much Chairs of a particular District, in the sense of only belonging to the District and only having authority and responsibility in it. Rather they are Chairs appointed by the Conference for a particular District, in the sense of belonging to the whole Connexion through the Conference and as such being assigned particular functions and responsibilities in the affairs of the Connexion beyond the District because of the particular knowledge and experience they have by virtue of their office” (para. 27).

Chairs are required to act “as representative of the Conference and Connexion within the District” and “to represent the District in the Conference” (Ibid, paras. 28-29). The report acknowledges that “this dual role of the Chair in the District and the wider Connexion” may cause the Chair to feel “unable to fulfil either responsibility effectively” and that she/he “may be pulled in two directions, not just by competing demands on time from the District and the wider Connexion but by the expectations and fantasies which people in one sphere of his or her responsibilities have of the other sphere.” It suggests that “it is important to find ways in which there can be a proper exercise of the shared nature of oversight as a means of seeking to prevent this” (Ibid, para. 33).

The Council affirmed the view expressed in the report to the 2016 Conference “that the District’s primary function is to provide the link between the Conference and the Circuits”. In light of the importance of this link in a connexional Church and the reflections above, the Council recommends that it is both beneficial and appropriate for District Chairs to take up roles in the broader life of the Connexion, as this strengthens the dialogue between Circuits, Districts and the wider Church and informs the dual representative roles outlined in *What is a District Chair?*.

It is worth noting that the Chairs’ Meeting has a mechanism (one Chair through whom requests must be made for Chairs to serve on committees and groups) to ensure equitable division of responsibility, as it is necessary and appropriate to ensure that no individual Chair is overloaded with connexional responsibilities. However, it is also important to ensure authentic and continuous dialogue between the Districts and the life of the wider Church, and so the Council recommends to the Conference that there be no change to the important principle and practice of District Chairs serving on appropriate working groups and other connexional bodies.

It is, as noted above, vital to be careful to watch over one another and not to overburden District Chairs, given the nature and demands of their role. The Coordinating Group encouraged Districts to “explore increasing the numbers of those involved in leadership of the District, so that District Chairs (who are selected for their particular gifting), are able to lead the District alongside others who have complementary gifts, for a strategic missional approach to be developed (with reference to SO 962)” (para. 30). In addition, Districts are encouraged to ensure the provision of high-quality administrative support for District Chairs, as this is another area that has been shown to absorb a high proportion of Chairs’ time and energy.

The title ‘District Chair’ (Resolution 15/2c)

In considering the question of the title ‘District Chair’, the Council noted that a recommendation was made to the Council in 2011 to move from ‘District Chair’ (or ‘Chair of District’) to ‘District Superintendent’ (see MC/11/52, which provides a helpful history of the title ‘District Chair’ and

various alternative titles). At that point the Council agreed to delay any consideration of the recommendation until the Regrouping for Mission process was further advanced [Minute 11.2.35].

In returning to the matter the Council considered that at the nub of this issue is the question whether 'District Chair' best reflects the prime duty of a District Chair "to further the work of God in the District... being especially diligent to be a pastor to the ministers and probationers and to lead all the people of the District in the work of preaching and worship, evangelism, pastoral care, teaching and administration" (SO 424(1))

The Council noted that this issue has been extensively explored over a period of some years and concluded that it was hard to see that anything new could be added to this exploration. Equally, whilst there has been a degree of interest in exploring the question, there has been some reluctance to reach a conclusion one way or the other. So the Council was faced with a choice of either drawing a line under the exploration and retaining the status quo, or revisiting the 2011 report and considering afresh the recommendation to a change of title from District Chair (or Chair of District) to District Superintendent. If the latter course of action were to be undertaken the Council was clear that a connexion wide consultation would be required. Furthermore, should it be decided to make any change there would then follow a not particularly complicated, but nonetheless time consuming process of amending a whole range of documents.

In light of these points the Council concluded that it did not wish to direct the energy of the wider connexion into consideration of this matter. The Council therefore recommends to the Conference that no further consideration be undertaken in respect of the title of District Chair.

District Commissions

The 2016 Conference also directed the Council to bring a process for implementing the creation of a District Commission, and the nomination of those to be appointed by the Conference as District Commissioners to the 2017 Conference. The Conference directed that such a commission would be convened when a new Chair is being sought, or the present Chair is exploring the possibility with the District of a reinvention, or a District or group of Districts wishes to engage in the process of reflection or review. A District Commission would oversee and undertake a thorough review of the life of the District, set in the wider regional, connexional, and ecumenical context.

The Council considered the ways in which a District Commission process might operate, and also discussed the peer review process which has been developed by the Church of England. The Council felt that the peer review process was an appropriate model to develop and adapt for use in a Methodist context. The process offers a lighter touch with considerable flexibility, and while it might require some investment in terms of staffing it offers the opportunity for Districts to reflect in a more holistic way than might be the case with a more formal process. The Council therefore reports to the Conference that it is unable to bring detailed proposals to the 2017 Conference; and recommends that work is undertaken to establish a peer review process for Methodist Districts.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

27/17. The Conference received the Report.

27/18. The Conference concluded that in light of extensive work over many years no further consideration be undertaken on the title of District Chair.

27/19. The Conference directed the Council to undertake work to establish a peer review process for the Districts and report on progress to the 2018 Conference.

SECTION T

LEGAL AND PROPERTY SUPPORT FOR MANAGING TRUSTEES – PROGRESS REPORT

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The 2016 Conference received four memorials (M26 – M29) relating to the work of TMCP and the level of support and advice available to managing trustees. In response, and recognising the need to be faithful in the use of the resources of the whole Connexion, the Conference directed the Methodist Council and invited the Board of TMCP to appoint a joint working party to:

(a) Clarify the extent of the application of SO 931(3) and the role and responsibility of the custodian trustee under the Methodist Church Act 1939 and charity law.

(b) Clarify the need for SO 931(3) in its current form and where appropriate suggest amendments.

(c) Assess what steps are necessary to ensure that the Connexional Team has available to it an appropriate level of resource so as to fulfil the terms of SO 931(3).

(d) Clarify the requirements placed upon Managing Trustees in respect of disposals and contracts and identify ways to speed up transactions, taking into account the views of the Law and Polity Committee on the role of the custodian.

(e) Clarify and define respective areas of responsibility so as to resource the mission and ministry of the whole Connexion most effectively.

(f) Establish a full review of the needs of Managing Trustees in terms of property and legal advice and consider the benefit of professional legal services being provided by the Connexional Team.

1.2 The Conference directed the Council to bring a report on progress in this area to the 2017 Conference.

1.3 The working party consists of Mrs Susan R Howdle (Chair, appointed by the Conference), Mr Graham Danbury (appointed by the Board of TMCP), the Revd Jennifer M Dyer (appointed by the Council), the Revd Richard W Oldroyd (appointed by the Council) and Mr G Alan Pimlott (appointed by the Board of TMCP). Although appointed by different bodies, the members of the working party recognise the need to work cohesively in the interests of the wider Church. Recognising the breadth of its remit, the working party chose at an early stage to amend its name from the TMCP working party to the Legal and Property Support for Managing Trustees working party.

2.0 Progress

2.1 To date, the working party has met four times: in October and November 2016 and January and February 2017.

2.2 The working party is aware of the need to consult widely in its work, and has so far held conversations with:

- Three District Property Secretaries
- The Chair of the Board of TMCP
- A number of members of staff from TMCP

- The Connexional Team's Facilities and Property Coordinator
- The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice
- The Secretary of the Conference.

2.3 In addition, the working party has endeavoured to establish close links with the newly appointed Property Development Committee.

2.4 The working party will continue to consult with the Law and Polity Committee as and when required.

3.0 Future plans

3.1 The working party is aware of the breadth of its terms of reference and the need to focus on the full range of support required by managing trustees (and not simply the issues raised in memorials to the 2016 Conference relating to TMCP).

3.2 As such, it has so far identified a range of key questions and will continue to consult widely in its work and to report to the Council and seek its views on key questions. The timing of a final report to the Conference has not yet been confirmed, but it may be possible to bring recommendations to the 2018 Conference.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

27/20. The Conference received the Report.

27/21. The Conference revoked Standing Order 730(11).

27/22. The Conference directed the Law and Polity Committee to bring Standing Order amendments to effect the proposals as set out in paragraph 16 of this report to the 2018 Conference.