

3. Methodist Council, part 1

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SECTION A GENERAL REPORT

The Methodist Council is charged under SO 211(2) with responsibility to keep in constant review the life of the Methodist Church, to study its work and witness throughout the Connexion, to indicate what changes are necessary or what steps could be taken to make the work of the Church more effective, to give spiritual leadership to the Church and to report annually to the Conference, bringing to the notice of the Conference matters to which it believes the Conference ought to give urgent attention.

The full range of papers presented to the Council and the outcomes of the Council's deliberations on them are available on the Methodist Church website at www.methodist.org.uk/council

The report to the Conference is presented in two parts, this one in Volume 1 of the Agenda and part two in Volume 2 of the Agenda. The business conducted by the Council at its meetings in October and January is reported here; and the business conducted at its meeting in April is reported in part two.

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:

- appointed connexional committees, trusts and representatives for the year 2018/2019;
- received reports from a number of committees and trustee bodies;
- approved the revised list of authorisations and delegations;
- received reports from the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) of the Council at each meeting;
- received reports from the Connexional Team at each meeting;
- on advice from the SRC agreed a set of resolutions in relation to Camden Town Methodist Church, delegating authority to the Property Development Committee to take matters forward;
- on advice from the SRC agreed a set of resolutions in relation to a redevelopment of Oxford Place, Leeds;
- appointed the directors of the Guy Chester Centre and delegated the adoption of Articles of Association for the Guy Chester Centre to the SRC;
- agreed a set of resolutions in relation to the Centenary Hall Trust (which has trustee responsibility for Methodist Church House);
- agreed to recommend to the Conference that the Revd Conrad J Hicks be stationed to the Connexional Team;
- added the Community of Reconciliation to the approved list of partner organisations;
- adopted a Risk Management Policy;
- adopted the corporate risk register;
- noted with thanks the grants provided by the Joseph Rank Trust in 2018;
- on behalf of the Conference, appointed the Revd Catherine Dixon as convener of the Memorials Committee for 2019;
- under SO 136(1C), the Council appointed the Revd Eleanor G Jackson to the Conference Business Committee for the 2019 Conference;
- adopted a report regarding ecumenical partnerships, sharing agreements and ecumenical areas;

- adopted a modern slavery transparency statement and directed the Connexional Team to ensure that, as far as possible, the steps for 2018/2019 as set out in the statement are undertaken;
- adopted an updated whistleblowing policy.

1.2 Other business

The Council received annual reports from:

- the Methodist Heritage Committee;
- the Property Development Committee;
- the Connexional Manse Trustees;
- the Global Relationships Strategic Oversight Subcommittee;
- the Connexional Grants Committee.

All We Can

The Council also agreed a new framework of commitment with All We Can. The framework expresses the relationship between the Methodist Church and All We Can and sets a context for future collaboration, in a way that is intended to motivate, inform and structure the planning and implementation of mutually agreed work without constraining innovative thinking and further collaborative initiatives. The collaboration is set within the context of *Our Calling*, the One Mission statement, a mutual understanding of the nature of mission, and a shared commitment to work together. The framework sets out the principal aspects of the relationship as being missional, operational and characterised by mutual dependence and responsibilities.

Vocations

The Council considered some practical strategies for implementing a connexional approach to vocations. The proposals do not attempt to set out a theology of vocation but rather identify practical steps and policy areas in which change and adaptation are needed to achieve a 'climate change' in relation to the development of vocations in the Methodist Church. This emerging vocations strategy also identifies areas where work is already taking place or where resources exist which feed into the development of a vocational culture across the life of the Church. The vocations strategy needs to be read and understood in the context of the Faith and Order Committee's report to the Conference, *Ministry in the Methodist Church* (Conference Agenda 2018, pp366-421) and the discussions on the draft statement in part B of that report, and in the light of the renewed emphasis in all parts of the Church on *Our Calling* as our key strategic driver. The Council noted the urgency of this work and directed the Connexional Team to begin the implementation and to make progress reports to the Council as appropriate. It directed the Strategy and Resources Committee to consider how funding could be made available to support the programmes which were outlined in the strategy.

***RESOLUTION

3/1. The Conference received the General Report of the Council.

SECTION B

CONNEXIONAL FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND CONNEXIONAL PROPERTY STRATEGY

The Council adopted a connexional financial strategy and a connexional property strategy at its meeting in October 2018. The strategies seek to ensure that the financial and property resources of the whole Church are allocated and supported appropriately in the support of *Our Calling*.

Copies of the strategies are available on the website www.methodist.org.uk/property and members of the Conference can obtain copies from the Connexional Team stand.

1. Connexional Financial Strategy

The financial strategy emphasises the need to use the reserves and other assets of the Church wisely, and to engender an open, flexible, entrepreneurial environment where funds flow to the projects and initiatives that most need them in fulfilment of the Church's calling.

It sets out the work to be undertaken in support of this in the three areas of: connexional funds; Districts, Circuits, churches and members; other connexional assets.

The overarching emphases are identified as being:

- ensuring that the resources that are administered directly by the Connexional Team on behalf of the Methodist Council are focused on the priorities of *Our Calling*;
- enabling financial assets of the wider Connexion, held through Districts, Circuits and churches in particular, to be released to resource the work of the whole Church in what might be deemed by the Conference to be priority areas;
- ensuring that resources connected with the wider Methodist Church through other connexional assets are focused on the priorities of *Our Calling*.

2. Connexional Property Strategy

The property strategy was developed in accordance with SO 990(2) and seeks to encourage trustees to see the possibilities that exist and then to resource and support them in exploring and fulfilling those possibilities.

It focuses on the following areas: mission plans; purchases and disposals; environmental and ethical matters; role of the District Property Secretary; creation of a wholly owned trading subsidiary company for undertaking property development on behalf of the Property Development Committee and the Council; establishment of a panel of surveyors and other professional bodies; partnerships; grants; conservation and heritage.

*****RESOLUTION**

3/2. The Conference received the Report.

SECTION C

THE METHODIST 21ST CENTURY DEVELOPMENT FUND – FUNDING OF PROPERTY DEVELOPMENTS

The Council agreed to establish the 21st Century Development Fund for the purpose of funding property projects. The Council noted that there had been discussions for some time about how to utilise the significant monetary resources held across the Connexion for the benefit of the whole Church. The Fund seeks to make fund assets available to the wider Connexion by creating a vehicle that benefits both local church managers of funds, whilst also releasing cash for investment in mission. The fund will be established by the Central Finance Board (CFB) from which money will be loaned to the Methodist Council. Managing trustees may choose to place funds held with CFB into the 21st Century Development Fund. It is hoped that managing trustees will be enthusiastic about this fund not only because it will pay interest 2% above the rate on the CFB Deposit Fund (fixed quarterly) but also because it is a tangible example of connexionalism in action in the 21st century.

The terms of the fund are as follows:

- The fund will be a closed fund;
- It will have a fixed term of five years, with the intention to roll over into a new fund;
- Interest will be 2% above the rate on the CFB Deposit Fund, fixed quarterly;
- The fund will make a loan direct to the Methodist Council for such purposes as the Council wishes including offering a loan to a Methodist Company undertaking developments of Methodist property
- The initial fund will raise £15m to cover the cost of a particular development project.

The Council approved the terms of the fund and loan to the Council, and delegated authority to the SRC to approve and sign the necessary legal documentation.

*****RESOLUTION**

3/3. The Conference received the Report.

Legal advice obtained on the proposed legal documentation for the loan arrangement has advised that the Methodist Church in Great Britain as a charity may need to accept the loan or loans rather than the Methodist Council as a managing trustee body. Whilst Standing Order 211(1) provides a general delegation for the Council to act on behalf of the Conference between meetings, the legal advice is that a specific resolution authorising the Council is required. Such authorization will delegate to the Council responsibility for and the power to negotiate and agree the value of any such loan or loans from the Central Finance Board and to agree the terms of any legal agreement or legal agreement in respect of such loans on behalf of the members of the Conference as the charity trustees of the Methodist Church in Great Britain. Any legal agreement would be signed by two members of the Methodist Conference as charity trustees on behalf of all members of the Conference.

*****RESOLUTION**

3/3A. The Conference authorised the Methodist Council to negotiate and agree the amount or value and terms of a loan or loans to the Methodist Church in Great Britain by the Central Finance Board.

SECTION D

PENSION AND ASSURANCE SCHEME FOR LAY EMPLOYEES OF THE METHODIST CHURCH (PASLEMC)

1. The Council heard that, in the light of the valuation of the Pension and Assurance Scheme for Lay Employees of the Methodist Church (PASLEMC), a consultation had been undertaken with all the employees of the Council. The consultation had informed employees of proposals to close the PASLEMC and to replace it with a new Defined Contribution scheme. The feedback from the consultation was considered by the Finance Subcommittee and the Strategy and Resources Committee.
2. The Council considered the information from the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Finance Subcommittee along with the current financial situation and agreed that the PASLEMC needed to be closed to future accrual of benefits with all active members becoming deferred members at a future date.
3. Under the terms of the new proposed Defined Contribution scheme, all eligible employees will have the option of contributing between 3% and 8% of their eligible salary into the scheme. For each 1% that the employee contributes, this will be matched by the employer in the ratio of 2:1. Should employees wish to contribute more than 8% then they would be able to do so as an 'Additional Voluntary Contribution' (AVC), but this would not result in additional contributions from the employer. All contributions (employee and employer) will be paid into a Group Personal Pension Plan to be provided and managed by an independent specialist investment company, regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Members will have the option to invest contributions in a default fund, or choose from a range of different investment funds to suit their personal circumstances. At least one of the funds on offer will offer an 'ethical' investment policy.
4. The Council agreed that the Scheme should be closed to future accrual from 1 April 2019 (or at the earliest date following that as is practically possible) and directed that the Rules of the Trust Deed be amended to effect this. The Council authorised the Strategy and Resources Committee to negotiate with the PASLEMC to implement the closure of the Scheme to future accrual. The Council delegated to the Strategy and Resources Committee responsibility for overseeing and agreeing

with the PASLEMC the amendments to the Trust Deed. The Council delegated to the Strategy and Resources Committee responsibility for negotiating and agreeing a new defined contribution pension scheme and such additional benefits as required for the lay employees of the Methodist Council which, where appropriate, also enable other participating employers to obtain similar contractual terms. The Council authorised the Chair of the Methodist Council, the Secretary of the Council and/or Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee to execute the amended Trust Deed and such other legal documentation required.

***RESOLUTION

3/4. The Conference received the Report.

SECTION E

CONCORDAT 50TH ANNIVERSARY

1. Methodists in Great Britain and in the United States of America adopted a special concordat agreement in 1968 at their respective conferences. That agreement solidified our unique history and Wesleyan heritage and bound us together in a formal connection. The statements of concordat the two churches approved, however, were different, and that has been the topic of conversation since that time.
2. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the concordat, the two churches sent official delegates to a special gathering in London to talk about the concordat and to dream about the future. The event was designed for worship, fellowship and to talk about the past, present and potential future of the concordat relationship.
3. The following statement was drafted at the gathering, and endorsed by the Council:
The Methodist Church in Britain and The United Methodist Church have a unique relationship born out of our common heritage in the ministries of John and Charles Wesley. While both of us have other important relationships and are a part of the larger Wesleyan Family through the World Methodist Council, we know the particular relationship we share is special. Therefore, on the 50th anniversary of the ratification of our concordat, we claim our distinct links anew, hoping to live them out in today's context.

To that end, delegations from the Methodist Church in Britain and The United Methodist Church gathered in London August 10-12, 2018 with the purpose of re-claiming our concordat relationship and dreaming for the future. Our time together was productive and concluded by offering several suggestions for moving forward.

Foundational to all we do is our common, shared heritage as Wesleyan Christians. We claim a mutual discipleship that leads to our joint and shared mission, as stated in John 17 "so that the world may believe." We claim this as our underpinning, and as we act, we will do so out of the knowledge of who we are together. We will continue to check ourselves in this foundation moving forward, knowing we are healthier and more faithful when we are acting together.

To help keep this focus, we will form a group of representatives from each church who will connect together on a regular, continuing basis. This group will consist of no more than 6 representatives from each communion. They will be named by the Methodist Council and the Council of Bishops by the end of November 2018. They will work on the seven particular areas named at this gathering as areas on which we may want to focus together:

1. *Identifying our purpose and the faith statements expressed in the original concordat,*
2. *Increasing relational ministries,*
3. *Dialoguing around migration and migrant churches,*

4. *Strengthening our common Wesleyan heritage and theology,*
5. *Paying attention to how we share in our relationships with other churches,*
6. *Utilizing better the delegates to each other's conferences,*
7. *Working together for justice.*

These areas, and the ideas around them shared at this concordat celebration will now be given to the Concordat Committee for their further discernment. They will take the work we have begun in London and give life to it by creating a renewed concordat which will be brought to our respective conferences in 2020 for affirmation and commitment.

Even as we commit to renewing the concordat, the good work that is already being done in Christ's name will continue. We will pray for each other. We will support the joint ministries and missions currently being shared, and celebrate the relational work being done. We will continue to take action together in mission evangelism and justice as currently configured. We will be open to instances we can speak together with one voice. We will commit to finding new ways of expressing and building our relationships with one another, as expressed through the current concordat. We will be intentional about inviting representatives to shared learning opportunities. And, we will celebrate the common heritage we share with the whole Methodist family.

We, the representatives of the Methodist Church in Britain and The United Methodist Church, offer this statement as our report of the gathering and our commitment to move forward together.

4. The Council appointed a group to take this work forward along with the representatives of the United Methodist Church.

*****RESOLUTION**

3/5. The Conference received the Report.

SECTION F

NOTICES OF MOTION REFERRED TO THE COUNCIL

The 2018 Conference referred two notices of motion to the Council. The Conference did not vote upon them, and the Council proposes the following responses:

1. Notice of Motion 2018/211: Advance Special Projects of the United Methodist Church

The Conference directs the Methodist Council, in formulating the policy of the Connexional Grants Committee, to study the 'Advance Special Projects' of the Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church (our Concordat Partners), and to consider whether a similar scheme would be of value for the British Methodist Church.

The Conference referred the Motion to the Methodist Council.

The Council noted that work towards this has begun as consideration is given to how we might enable people to donate directly to various projects throughout the Connexion for a limited period of time. This will necessitate development in a number of areas including finance and the Methodist Church website. Work will continue in the months ahead and the Council will be updated accordingly.

2. Notice of Motion 2018/210: Fasting

In the light of the President and Vice-President's addresses to the Conference, the Conference wishes to encourage representatives to forgo their evening meal on the Sunday of future Conferences. Such a

fast would demonstrate the Conference's commitment to God and to those who are struggling with little resources. The fast would be voluntary. The Conference would donate the money saved to the nearest Methodist food bank.

The Conference referred the Motion to the Methodist Council.

The Council directed the Conference Arrangements Team to implement the spirit of this notice of motion, from the 2020 Conference onwards, where it is practicable to do so. The District and Circuit where the Conference is held will be asked to identify the nearest foodbank. Contractual arrangements made with the venue for the 2019 Conference meant that it was not possible to implement it earlier than 2020.

*****RESOLUTION**

3/6. The Conference received the Report.