

# Leadership in the Methodist Church

## ***A. Report to the Methodist Conference 2002 by the Methodist Council***

1. In April 2002 the Methodist Council received the Report of the Leadership Task Group and that Report is attached below in full. It sets out the reasons for the work undertaken and presents us with a range of recommendations and issues that need attention.

2. The Council wishes to record its gratitude to the members of the Task Group whose Report it has received and debated and whose work is now reflected in the resolutions that the Council brings to the Conference. But the Council also wishes to communicate to the Conference its own reflection on the Task Group's central theme of leadership, because that forms the context in which the resolutions about the President, the Vice-President and the General Secretary are made.

### **The context of our discussion**

3. In considering this Report, the Methodist Council recognizes that the Methodist people are looking for spiritual and moral leadership as well as leadership in the most effective way of managing the resources available to us for our mission. The Methodist Church is both a faith community and a mission organization.

4. Leadership needs to be given in both these areas and it is this that makes the task before us distinctive and complex. We cannot find our way through this complexity simply by drawing analogies with secular organizations or even with other Churches, though we can learn from them.

5. Leadership in a *faith community* is about helping people to hold fast to their roots in such a way that they can discover and redefine their task in each new generation. It nurtures the Story: recalling each generation to our 'core belief', reminding us who we are and whose we are and, in present terms, inspiring us to embrace all that is intended by *Our Calling*.

6. Leadership in a *mission organisation* is about mobilising and equipping people for mission. It involves: determining priorities, agreeing strategies and managing resources. Leadership in mission is exercised at every level of the Church's life but finds a focus connexionally in the areas of work for which the Connexional Team holds responsibility.

### **Our resolutions on the President, the Vice-President and the General Secretary**

7. The following resolutions are based on the premise that the two essential elements of leadership in our life together should be held together in the office of 'General Secretary'. In our developing understanding of the leadership we seek under God, we believe it is now right to give to that person the distinctive role and task of unifying these elements, holding the circle, becoming the crucial link between the Methodist Church as a faith community and as a mission organisation. This is the background to the proposals in Section 9 of the Task Group's Report.

8. It is because we believe that it is important to get the position of General Secretary right and to continue to draw on a wide range of Methodist people for President that the Methodist Council has decided overwhelmingly to recommend the continuation of a one-year Presidency. But as the text of the Report makes clear, we would envisage the President and Vice-President making active contributions to the shaping of policy, not only bringing to bear the gifts and experience for which they were elected, but also the unique contact they have with the Methodist people.

9. You will see from the Task Group Report that a longer term Presidency was preferred by *a majority of* those who responded to the consultation. This was probably linked to the view that the Church needs a higher media profile (6.2.1). However, the consultation was conducted at an early stage and the response on the length of the Presidency could not take into account the Task Group's ultimate recommendation on the General Secretaryship.

10. A one-year President and Vice-President with much greater input into policy matters, enables the Methodist Church to continue to be enriched by the diversity of the Methodist people and to be nourished by 'the Story' in all its fulness. The Connexional Liaison Group already involves the President and the Vice-President in ways that were unheard of a few years ago. That must be developed and that will be a key responsibility of the General Secretary. It may be seen, therefore, that the Council's resolutions on the Presidency and the Vice-Presidency, the Connexional Liaison Group (on which the Chairs are represented), and the General Secretaryship belong together.

## **RESOLUTIONS**

1. The Conference receives the Report.

2. The Conference adopts Option 3 as its model for the office of President of the Conference (see Leadership Task Group Report below: paragraph 6.3, Leadership Task Group Report).

3. The Conference affirms the office of the Vice-President of the Conference as a one-year appointment within the terms of paragraph 6.5 (see Leadership Task Group Report below).

4. The Conference reappoints the Connexional Liaison Group for a further year and directs the Methodist Council in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee to bring to the 2003 Conference proposals for the Connexional Liaison Group which reflect its growing importance in the establishing of leadership amongst us.

5. The Conference affirms the decision of the Conference of 2001 that an immediate appointment be made by the Conference of 2003 to the office of Secretary of the Conference. The person to be appointed shall be the General Secretary of the Methodist Church, fulfilling the role and functions described in paragraphs 9.1 to 9.8 of the Leadership Task Group Report.

6. The Conference approves the appointment of a second Assistant Secretary of the Conference from the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2003, the post to be open to presbyters, deacons and lay people. It directs the Methodist Council to bring to the Conference of 2003 a nomination or recommendation for immediate

appointment, following as closely as possible the provisions of Standing Order 313 or 314, as the case may be.

7(i). The Conference resolves that, with effect from the beginning of the Conference of 2004, its membership shall no longer include the category of Conference-elected representatives, the number of representatives to be elected by the Synods being thereby increased.

7(ii). The Conference amends the Deed of Union as follows:

### **1. Particular expressions**

(ix) 'conference-elected representatives' has the meaning appearing from clause 14(5) below;

### **14 The Representative Session**

**(2) Membership.** The Conference in its Representative Session shall comprise:

.....

(ix) the conference-elected representatives, as prescribed below;

### **(5) Conference-elected Representatives.**

(a) The conference-elected representatives shall be elected by the Conference. At least one third of them shall be ministers, at least one third shall be lay persons, and at least one shall be a deacon.

(b) The numbers, term of office and other matters concerning the election and service of conference-elected representatives shall be prescribed by Standing Orders.

(c) Any conference-elected representative who becomes incapable of acting or unfit to act or ceases to be a member of the Methodist Church or, being a minister or deacon when elected, ceases to be such shall be disqualified from being a conference-elected representative and his or her office shall forthwith become vacant.

(d) Casual vacancies occurring from time to time in the number of the conference-elected representatives shall be filled by the Conference.

**16 List of Members.** (a) Before the assembling of the Conference in each year the Secretary of the Conference shall make out a list of the conference-elected representatives and other persons entitled to be members of the forthcoming Conference.

(b) On the assembling of the Conference in each year and before any other business is transacted the Secretary of the Conference, if present and willing to act, failing whom the person who has most recently held office as such, if present and willing to act, and failing any such person then some person chosen by the Conference for that purpose shall lay before the Conference the list made out by the

Secretary of the Conference under sub-clause (a). If the completeness or correctness of that list is forthwith questioned by any person who (in the opinion of the Conference) is entitled to be a member of the Conference the Conference shall forthwith supply any omission or correct any error but subject as aforesaid such list shall be taken to be final and conclusive as to the persons of whom the Conference consists other than the persons (if any) appointed by the Conference as herein provided to fill up the casual vacancies (if any) in the number of the Conference-elected representatives or as substitutes for any members who are not able or willing to attend.

7(iii). The Conference suspends Standing Order 103(1).

8. The Conference adopts the following recommendations in relation to the meeting of the Conference itself (paragraph 11, Leadership Task Group Report):

a. The annual Conference shall be held, if possible, on a residential site with full conference facilities, with the aim of completing the work of the three Sessions within one week.

b. The District Synods shall be directed to review the way in which they recruit nominations for representatives to the Conference to ensure equal opportunity is given to all church members. More publicity should be provided to inform members how they can offer themselves for nomination.

c. District representatives to the Methodist Council are to be encouraged to offer themselves as a District representative to the Conference, thereby improving links between the two bodies.

d. The date of the Conference will be revised if necessary when the new pattern for school holidays has been determined.

9. The Conference directs the Methodist Council to review its size, membership and its ways of working, and to revise the rota for District representatives so that at least one District Chair from each of the stationing regions is a member of the Council each year (paragraph 12.1, Leadership Task Group Report).

10. The Conference directs the Methodist Council to review the size and membership of the Methodist Council Executive and the manner of appointment, and renames the Executive as 'The General Purposes and Finance Committee of the Methodist Council'. When vacancies are advertised, the skills and experience required of new members shall be made clear and appointments made on that basis (paragraph 13, Leadership Task Group Report).

11. The Conference refers further work to the Methodist Council, including:

- The development of youth leadership (paragraph 14.1, Leadership Task Group Report).
- The proposed review of the Districts, noting the larger context of devolution and regionalisation (paragraph 14.2, Leadership Task Group Report).
- Communications (paragraph 14.3, Leadership Task Group Report).

- The provision of office accommodation at Methodist Church House for the President and the Vice-President.

12. The Conference directs the Methodist Council to bring revised Standing Orders to the Conference of 2003 in respect of:

- i) The Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary of the Methodist Church.
- ii) The Assistant Secretaries of the Conference.
- iii) The Methodist Council Executive.

13. The Conference expresses its gratitude to the members of the Methodist Council Task Group.

## **B. THE REPORT OF THE LEADERSHIP TASK GROUP TO THE METHODIST COUNCIL FOR CONFERENCE 2002**

The Methodist Conference 2000 received a Memorial from the South Wales District:

The South Wales Synod (R) (Present: 146. Vote: 145 for, 0 against), sensing a lack of clarity and certainty in the leadership of the Methodist Church, welcomes the initiatives reported to the Methodist Council to review the effectiveness of leadership in the Methodist Church, and urges the Conference to ensure that this review includes clarification of the roles and terms of the office of the President and Vice-President, the Co-ordinating Secretaries, the Conference Office, the Methodist Council and its Executive as they relate to each other, to the Methodist Conference, to the Methodist people and to the wider world and that a report be brought to the Conference of 2001.

The Memorials Committee recommended, and the Conference adopted, the following reply:

The Conference welcomes the Memorial from the South Wales District on leadership and its recognition of the importance of the work being done in the Methodist Council on leadership in the Church. A report of those of the recommendations of the President's Commission on leadership which were accepted by the Methodist Council may be found on p17 of the 2000 Agenda.

It is clear now that our developing thinking, together with any actions which result, must be owned by the whole Church as we move forward together in learning from the process of restructuring through which we have just come. No further major restructuring is envisaged for the near future. Our approach should now be one committed to organic growth and, where required, incremental change in response to our understanding of God's mission in the world.

This process will gain credence amongst us as we come to clarify the new relationships in which we are now working and, for the health of the whole Church, as we develop trust in one another and in the use of complementary gifts which God has set within his body, the Church.

The Conference therefore instructed the Methodist Council:

(a) to consider the means by which the whole Church may contribute to the development of our thinking on leadership, including the roles of the entities to which the Memorial refers, in conjunction also with any consideration of the Faith and Order Committee's report on Episkope and Episcopacy which the Conference may direct;

(b) in the light of its consideration under (a), to establish a procedure for such development of our thinking which makes use of

(i) the work which the Council has requested from the existing President's Commission and may hereafter request from it,

(ii) the insights of the whole Church and,

(iii) if and when thought appropriate, outside consultancy services;

(c) to report to the Conference of 2001 the procedure which has been established and its results so far as then available and to make any proposals then arising from the process of organic growth and incremental change referred to above.

At the Conference in 2001, the Methodist Council reported the appointment of a Leadership Task Group to assist in replying to the Memorial from the South Wales District:

The Revd David Reddish (Chair), Mrs Marilyn Pack (Convenor), Miss Dorothy Blenkinsop, Mrs Sue Dunstan, Mr Jack Healey, Dr Andrew Hindmarsh, Ms Yvonne Neblett, Ms Barbara Routley, The Revd Neil Stubbens, Mrs Rosemary Wass, The Revd Michaela Youngson.

### **Report to the Conference 2001**

Memorial 1 (2000) and its reply constitute the broad framework within which the consultation will take place as set out in full above. The terms of reference for the Task Group were further clarified at the Methodist Council in February 2001:

- a. To monitor and co-ordinate the various groups who might help the Church come to a mind about its leadership, as set out in the South Wales Resolution.
- b. To advise the Executive/Council about existing pieces of work needing a revisit, or new pieces of work needing to be done to assist the process.
- c. At the appropriate time, to prepare a process whereby the Connexion can be consulted and to initiate that process.
- d. To report to the Executive/Council from time to time and then to prepare the draft of the report to be presented to the Conference of 2002.

The Task Group was instructed to bring a report to the Council and the Conference in 2002.

### **1 The Consultation**

1.1 In responding to the directives in the Memorial and the clarification from the Methodist Council, the Task Group has used the following devices for consulting 'the whole Church':

- A questionnaire to members of the 2001 Methodist Conference.
- A set of four discussion questions for the September 2001 Synods and the opportunity for Synod members to respond individually using the Conference questionnaire.
- A questionnaire to Church Councils throughout the Connexion which was distributed via the Connexional Link Mailing.
- A presentation and questionnaire at the 2001 Methodist Youth Conference.
- A series of four articles in the *Methodist Recorder* in late August/early September 2001 which included a open invitation to readers for comment.
- Correspondence with those who have served as President and Vice-President of the Conference during the past ten years.
- Correspondence with the immediate past Secretary of the Conference and the past Chair of Methodist Council Executive.
- Invitations to the Chairs Meeting and the Methodist Staff Association to make a submission about the issues under consideration.
- Interviews with the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Conference, each of the Co-ordinating Secretaries and the Chair of the Methodist Council Executive.

1.2 Alongside these, the Task Group has been able to undertake some research into the leadership patterns and organisational structures of other denominations and organisations. A review of existing papers and earlier Conference Reports has also been made together with an analysis of the material gathered by the President's Commission which reported to the 2000 Conference.

1.3 The main areas explored in the consultation were drawn from the South Wales Memorial, namely:

the clarification of the roles and terms of office of the President, the Vice-President, the Co-ordinating Secretaries, the Conference Office, the Methodist Council and its Executive as they relate to each other, to the Methodist Conference, to the Methodist people and to the wider world

and the subsequent guidance offered by the Methodist Council in a paper '*Leadership: tasks to be done*' (MC/00/01) namely:

- The role of the District Chair and his/her relationship with the other officers of the bodies identified in the South Wales Memorial.
- Possible alternatives to the annual Conference.

1.4 Collectively the response to the consultation has been significant. A quarter of the Conference members completed questionnaires, over half the Synods compiled submissions, 39 members of the Youth Conference contributed and 733 Church Councils (involving around 9,700 people) sent in responses to the Link Mailing questionnaire. In addition, nearly 100 letters and papers from individuals, some of them in the form of detailed submissions, were received in response to the *Methodist Recorder* articles or as supplementary material to the questionnaires and Synod discussion questions.

1.5 A number of the responses received lead us to suggest that some of the issues raised by the Memorial in relationship to clarity and representation have already been dealt with in the report received by the Conference in 2001 *Speaking for the Methodist Church*.

1.6 Three key issues featured prominently in the responses we received. Those responding wanted:

- A higher media profile for the President of the Conference.
- A longer term for the President.
- Greater clarity in the roles and terms of office as set out in the Memorial.

1.7 Further information about the main consultations can be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

## **2 Theological Perspectives**

2.1 *Called to Love and Praise*, adopted as a Conference Statement in 1999, expresses British Methodism's understanding of the nature and purpose of the Church. It identifies a number of distinctive characteristics in the Methodist experience and understanding of the Church. Among them are the "connexional principle" and how Methodist ecclesiology affects Church structures.

2.2 The **connexional principle** "enshrines a vital truth about the nature of the Church", namely:

It witnesses to a mutuality and interdependence which derive from the participation of all Christians through Christ in the very life of God himself.

2.3 Two particular ways in which the principle is effected are identified:

First, at all levels of the Church, the structures of fellowship, consultation, government and oversight express the interdependence of all churches, and help to point up, at all levels, necessary priorities in mission and service. Second, alongside this, as the natural corollary of connexionalism, local churches, Circuits and Districts exercise the greatest degree of autonomy.

2.4 For the purposes of this report, it is important to note the following:

Within the structures of decision-making the Church gives a special place to those who are its ordained representative persons; it also listens, where relevant, with especial attentiveness both to ordained persons and to lay persons who serve it with special expertise, but it is ultimately the whole people of God who, through the relevant decision-making bodies, express their affirmation, or otherwise, of the strategies placed before them.

2.5 With regard to **Church structures**, *Called to Love and Praise* states that among the distinctive emphases in Methodist ecclesiology is:

the conviction that the Church should be structured for mission, and able to respond pragmatically, when new needs or opportunities arise.

2.6 This pragmatism in the service of mission follows from the conviction that "the Holy Spirit leads the Church to adapt its structures as it faces new situations and challenges".

2.7 Elsewhere the Statement says that "to speak of God as a loving communion of three co-equal 'persons' suggests that the Church should be a community of mutual support and love in which there is no superiority or inferiority". This implies that "in the Christian tradition all leadership is a form of service" and is best modelled on Christ.

We believe the recommendations we make are consistent with these theological principles.

### **3 Leadership, Management and Governance**

3.1 The Task Group's consultation revealed Methodists want leaders who are spiritual people, inspiring, energetic, enthusiastic and prophetic; who will encourage, enable and nurture God's people. They need to be thoughtful and compassionate as well as competent and reliable in the tasks they undertake. They should offer vision and direction, providing a focus of unity for the whole Church.

We need visionary, spiritual leadership. We need to revisit the core values of the Methodist Church, describe our 'charism' and build on that.

#### **3.2 Leadership**

3.2.1 Leadership is the articulation of a vision and the inspiring of others to share that vision. Leaders need to concentrate on the big picture, to think strategically, and therefore they have to delegate the detail to others. Leadership is not about giving orders, but bringing others along. Through their vision and interaction with others, effective leaders create conditions in which people want to follow. Even very hierarchical organisations, such as the armed forces, understand the need for leaders to be respected and trusted.

3.2.2 Leadership may be through individuals or corporate bodies, but in practice it is rare for people to be inspired to follow a committee.

3.2.3 The 1997 Conference Report on Senior Officers of the Conference identified a number of tasks of leadership in a Methodist context and these can be summarised as:

- To stimulate new vision.
- To initiate action.
- To sustain the ministries of word, sacraments and pastoral care.

- To inspire and encourage others.
- To oversee the life of the Church as a whole.
- To exercise power with authority, justice and love.

3.2.4 Leadership is needed at all levels within the Church, but here we are concerned with leadership that has a Connexion-wide brief.

### **3.3 Management**

3.3.1 Management is the deployment of resources to achieve objectives. These resources are human, technological and capital as well as financial. Very often it is the human resources that are the most important and the effective management of people the best way to achieve objectives. If leaders lay out the desired destination, managers plot the route and organise the journey.

3.3.2 Groups or committees are rarely able to manage effectively. Day-to-day decisions need to be made day-to-day and so waiting for a group or committee to meet is often very inefficient. In addition group dynamics can create a climate of inconsistency, which those being managed may find difficult.

3.3.3 Managers also have a leadership role in relation to their area of responsibility. The manager of a team or unit needs to articulate a vision for that unit and inspire other members to achieve it. Thus leaders and managers are often the same individuals.

3.3.4 Management within Methodism is most obvious within the Connexional Team where there are individuals with responsibility for aspects of the Team's work and who have a variety of resources to help them. Management also occurs at District, circuit and local church level, though line management of individuals is often absent or unclear. However, again this report is primarily concerned with managers who have a Connexion-wide brief.

### **3.4 Governance**

3.4.1 Management needs to be distinguished from governance, which concerns formal authority and the approval of policy. Governing bodies usually have legal powers and responsibilities (the Methodist Conference is enshrined in the Methodist Church Act, for example). They agree policy, set objectives and monitor performance. By their nature, governing bodies are corporate and so find it hard to exercise leadership and management. Thus governing bodies usually appoint inspirational individuals to provide leadership and effective managers to implement their decisions. These individuals are ultimately accountable to the governing body but have freedom on a day-to-day basis.

3.4.2 Within Methodism this pattern is clear, with the Conference appointing an annual President and Vice-President to provide leadership and a Connexional Team to implement the decisions of the Conference.

3.4.3 There is also a range of legal responsibilities included within the notion of governance. The Methodist Executive is currently working on clarifying these responsibilities and ensuring that they are being exercised properly and effectively.

#### **4 Analysis of Methodism Today**

4.1 The Presidency is the most obvious locus of connexional leadership in Methodism but the role was explicitly designed to be too weak to offer effective leadership. After the death of John Wesley, the early Methodists decided that the President should be a President of the Conference, and not a President of the Church, and that he (later, he or she) should hold office only for one year. The intention was to avoid the possibility of any individual achieving the degree of dominance that Wesley had had over Methodism. In their language, it was so that there should never be 'another King in Israel'. One result is that the President has very few formal powers. Standing Order 111 headed "President's Powers" lists just three such powers:

(i) To assist any Synod if requested to do so.

(ii) To visit any Circuit if requested to do so to inquire into its affairs and to take any steps open to him or her which he or she judges beneficial.

(iii) To be informed of every case of the breakdown of the marriage of a presbyter or deacon and to ensure arrangements are made for pastoral and material help as appropriate.

On closer scrutiny none of them is really a power in any conventional sense at all, though elsewhere in Standing Orders there are references to the President's powers in relation to stationing, usually in exceptional circumstances.

4.2 The formal term of office of the President and Vice-President is a full year, and not just the duration of the Conference. However, designation brings at least three years of significant responsibilities. The year following designation offers the possibility of ex-officio attendance at a number of committees. This is repeated in the year as ex-President and ex-Vice President, as well as some representative functions. During the year in office they are kept busy visiting Districts, attending meetings and sharing in a wide variety of other engagements. Although the tradition of visiting nearly every District has been replaced by a rota, it is still doubtful whether they have sufficient time to devote to strategic thinking or real leadership in the year when their presence is most visible.

4.3 Within our structures the responsibility for leadership and strategy does not rest where it might be assumed to be, i.e. with the President and the Vice-President, but with the Connexional Team (see S.O. 300, 301). It is the Team which is responsible for assisting the Methodist Council in considering and determining future policies (S0 301). Whilst members of the Connexional Team are appointed officers with a role set out in Standing Orders, there appears to be a lack of understanding in the wider Church about their role. This may be one reason why the Connexional Team members are often heavily criticised and find it hard to carry the Methodist people with them.

4.4 On the other hand, the offices of President and Vice-President are too weak to offer effective leadership and the Connexional Team, as a result of their position as appointed officers without an elected mandate, find it difficult to act as effective leaders. It is therefore not surprising that there is a perceived lack of clarity and certainty in the leadership of Methodism.

## **5 A Key Leadership Question**

5.1 A key question about leadership is how much leadership does the Methodist Church want? Do we want clearer and/or stronger leadership than we have at present?

5.2 The possible advantages include:

- A greater sense of direction.
- More strategic thinking about the key issues facing the Church.
- Greater clarity of roles between leaders and managers.
- The opportunity to try something new to arrest the decline in membership, if that is the criterion.

5.3 The possible disadvantages include:

- The cost of electing an ineffective leader is greater.
- Those alienated by the views of a leader will be alienated more by a stronger leader.
- The current structures are tried and known.
- There is considerable reluctance among some Methodists to be led.

## **6 Options for Leadership**

This report offers three possible approaches to the Presidency and Vice-Presidency in response to the leadership question. The first Option regards the weakness of these offices as a fundamental part of the problem and suggests transforming the Presidency in particular into a clear and explicit strategic leadership role. The second Option offers more modest change but still gives the President and Vice-President an explicit role in strategic policy-making through strengthening the role of the Connexional Liaison Group. The third Option argues the changes to the Connexional Team are sufficient to address the main issues of leadership though, in common with the other two, gives the President an explicit role in relation to the public and media profile of the Methodist Church.

### **6.1 Option 1: The President as Ambassador and Strategic Leader for Five Years**

6.1.1 If the Methodist Church does wish to have stronger leadership, one way forward is to strengthen the role of the President. The President would be made explicitly responsible for leadership and strategic policy development for the Church and, to facilitate this, the President would be elected for a

longer period, say three or five years. The elected President would work with the Connexional Team to develop and present strategies and policies for the Church and be a personal force for change and renewal. The President would also then be in a position to develop a much higher profile within Methodism and the national media.

6.1.2 If this proposal is accepted, then several other changes follow naturally. As the Church would be electing someone to lead and guide it for a number of years, it would be reasonable to expect candidates for the office to offer some insight into their thinking and ideas as to how they might steer the Church during that time. It would not need to be a detailed manifesto or programme of action, but a clear indication of the type of President they would be and the areas on which they would focus. Some thought would be needed as to how best to present this, with possibilities including a document circulated to the electorate or a discussion among the candidates at the Conference. Another alternative might be the introduction of a nomination committee to bring a name or names direct to the Conference. Furthermore, if the President has a stronger position and role, consideration would have to be given to widening the franchise for his or her election so that the elected person could genuinely carry the authority of the majority of the Methodist people.

6.1.3 It is important to note that this proposal does not involve any diminution of the power or authority of the Conference. Any major presidential initiatives would still need the approval of the Conference, though it would normally be the case that the President would carry the support of the Conference as the person chosen by Methodism to act as its leader.

6.1.4 Alongside these proposals for the Presidency, it is necessary to consider carefully the role of the Vice-President. A longer term for the Vice-Presidency would exclude many lay people who would be unable to make a longer-term commitment. One solution would be to retain a term of office of one year but give the Vice-President a specific high profile role to give the office a particular status within our structures.

6.1.5 Another area requiring careful thought would be whether the President should continue to preside over the Conference. If the President has a more significant role for which he or she is accountable to the Conference, it might be more appropriate for someone else to be in the chair. Indeed, there could be considerable advantages in having someone appointed just to that role, who had experience and skills in chairing large bodies, rather than expect a President to be able to do so effectively.

6.1.6 These proposals are in line with many secular organisations where leadership is primarily located in an elected leader, with an appointed 'civil service' to carry out the decisions made by the organisation. The most obvious example is the government of many countries where the locus of leadership and power is with the elected members of the government, clearly differentiated from the task of the Civil Service to implement government policy.

6.1.7 In some ways, among governments, the United States is a suitable model of this option for Methodism. Here the President is clearly the national leader, with well-defined powers, but he or she can enact legislation only with the consent of the Congress. Another model is the elected mayor of a city such as London.

6.1.8 Many professional organisations also operate in a similar way: the Royal Society, the medical Royal Colleges, the Law Society, and many others all elect Presidents, some of whom take the lead in the development of policy, with a headquarters staff led by a Chief Executive or Executive Secretary who is responsible for the implementation of policy.

## **6.2 Option 2: The President as Ambassador and Policy Contributor for Five Years**

6.2.1 It is clear from the consultation process that there is a strong desire for the President to have a higher profile in both the media and the Church. A significant number have suggested that a longer term for the President would enable this desire to be achieved.

At the end of every TV advertisement there's a close-up of the product: the pack shot, designed to stay in your mind. If we want the Methodist Church to be able to speak through the media, then we need a recognisable face which is going to be there for at least three years.

6.2.2 If the President is appointed for, say, five years he/she would have more time to give to policy and strategy issues and to share in the discussion and implementation of these issues working with the Connexional Team as well continuing the current role of inspirational and ambassadorial leadership. Strengthening the place of the Connexional Liaison Group within our structures to give a more defined role in contributing to policy and strategy development would provide an appropriate forum for the President and Vice-President.

6.2.3 This option would give the President time and space to be a higher profile ambassador and, with the revised Connexional Liaison Group, provide a setting within which to influence policy-making. However, the role is more limited than Option 1 and set more clearly within a collaborative structure.

## **6.3 Option 3: The President as Ambassador and Policy Contributor for One Year**

6.3.1 The changes to the Connexional Team (see Section 9 below) could be seen as providing a more unified focus and leadership for the Church and, if so, the suggestions for a longer-term Presidency have a different context.

6.3.2 This model underlines the representative emphasis of Methodism and currently provides the Church with an ambassadorial and inspirational leader. Each office holder brings a particular emphasis which the Church can take up either in part or as a whole as it sees fit. Thus the Church is given the opportunity to benefit from a wide range of gifts and experiences, which may well identify some of the directions the Church may take. Those in favour of this option have suggested to us that this model has served Methodism well so far, and provided the Methodist Church with a wide range of experience and insight.

6.3.3 The establishment of the Connexional Liaison Group with the President and the Vice-President, the Secretary of the Conference, the Co-ordinating Secretaries, the Chair of the Executive and a representative group of District Chairs has been an important development. The inclusion of the previous and designated Presidential officers for six months pre-office and six months post-office provides continuity, allowing the group to benefit from the experience of those recently in office and

supporting those about to serve. The President and Vice-President now have the opportunity to work with the Connexional Team in discussing and developing policy and strategy issues before, during and after their year in office.

#### **6.4 Some Comments**

6.4.1 The greater the desire to involve the President in policy formation, the stronger the case for a longer term of office than exists at present. Two of the main conclusions from the consultation were a strong preference for a longer term of office and a higher public/media profile for the President. To some extent these go together as a longer term gives an individual more opportunity to build up the public/media profile.

6.4.2 A fundamental change in the role of the President would be required if Options 1 and 2 are the preferred choice. Option 1 has far-reaching implications for relationships with the Conference, the Secretary of Conference, the Co-ordinating Secretaries and the Connexional Team.

6.4.3 The advantages of a longer term of office for the President include the following:

- It would reflect the clearly-expressed views of Methodists in the consultation.
- The President would be able to develop a higher public and media profile.
- The President would be able to be an effective policy contributor in both Options 1 and 2, above.

6.4.4 The advantages of retaining the current term of office include:

- More individuals would be able to offer their gifts in the role.
- Leadership in the Church is focused in a collaborative team and not an individual.
- Parity on the length of term of office with that of the Vice-President is retained.
- The budgetary implications are minimal. Significant additional funds would not be required to provide a stipend, manse, office and secretarial support as they would be for a longer-serving President.

6.4.5 The Group recommends that, if Option 1 or 2 is chosen, the term of office of the President is five years, since this would be comparable with our normal stationing pattern, and that further work should be done to identify the most appropriate role for the Vice-President to give sufficient prominence to lay leadership within a longer term of office.

#### **6.5 The Vice-President**

6.5.1 Whilst this office is open to lay people and members of the Diaconal Order, the term of office of the Vice-President will require careful attention if that of the President changes. Care must be taken to ensure that lay leadership retains its prominence. A longer term for the Vice-President may restrict the

number of lay people and deacons able to take up the office as some are not in a position to give a long-term commitment. However, it may be possible to reconsider the nature of the office and to adjust the expectations on the incumbent to reduce the commitment involved and therefore allow a longer term of office, say, for three years or five years.

6.5.2 The 1997 Report on the Senior Officers of the Conference said:

- We believe it is important to have a senior office which is open to a lay person, and will most often be filled with a lay person.
- It is important to have laity represented at the centre of Church life.
- It affirms the particular contribution of lay people, recognising their gifts and responsibilities in Church and society.

6.5.3 We endorse those comments and draw the attention of the Conference to what has already been agreed as the principal responsibilities of the Vice-President:

- To share with the President the chairing of the Conference.
- To assist at an Ordination Service and to share with the President in arrangements for the Ordination Services.
- To share with the President in the chairing of the Methodist Council.
- To fulfil a representative role nationally.
- To visit the Irish Conference when possible.
- To meet and consult with the Co-ordinating Secretaries and, as appropriate, to visit the staff of the Connexional Team and to share in their annual service.
- As personal commitments allow, to conduct up to ten Vice-Presidential visits to Districts (on a rotational basis arranged by the Methodist Council) for a short period for the purpose of encouraging lay ministries in the Church and society. Where possible these visits should include involvement, for at least part of the time, in the four Presidential visitations being conducted that year. We see this as an opportunity for developing the role of the Vice-President in using his/her gifts and graces.
- However, if there are better or other ways of using his/her year of office they should be explored, and each Vice-President-designate should receive support in identifying these.

Since that list was prepared the Vice-President is now included in the membership of the Connexional Liaison Group.

## **6.6 Recommendations for the President and Vice-President**

6.6.1 The Group has been unable to come to a common mind about its recommendations relating to the President. Some of the Group argued the case for following the findings of the consultation process and strongly supported Option 2. The possibilities offered by a five-year appointment would give a fresh approach to the focus of leadership in the Church and offer the opportunity for a higher profile to the President in both the Church and the media. Others in the Group argued that whilst a longer-term Presidency might address the issue of Church and media profile, that is the wrong criterion for making such a significant change. The effect of such a change on our understanding of the Vice-President, the Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Team would be considerable and possibly detrimental. The Leadership Task Group offers the arguments for and against these Options and, without a majority for either of these Options being established in the Group, the final decision rests with the Conference.

6.6.2 It has been strongly represented to us that there should be parity between the term of office for the President and the Vice-President.

Any discussion of the leadership roles of the President and Vice-President must assume that they are of equal value, otherwise there is the assumption that leadership offered by presbyters is in some way superior to that offered by the laity.

If Option 2 is the preferred option then we recommend the Methodist Conference to undertake a wider examination of the role and term of office of the Vice-President serving with a President elected for five years. Until that examination is completed or if Option 3 is the preferred option then the continuation of the annual appointment remains appropriate.

6.6.3 A recommendation for either Option 2 or Option 3 goes hand in hand with our recommendation for the formalising of the Connexional Liaison Group appointed by the Conference to meet in the connexional years 2000-2001 and 2001-2002. "The group shall meet not less than three times each year to contribute to the work referred to the Methodist Council on leadership and governance. The group may also consider current issues and priorities in our work and communicate its thinking to the Methodist Council." (Notice of Motion 3 (2000))

6.6.4 In the course of our consultations it has been suggested to us that further work is required to offer better support to the President and Vice-President during their term in office. The needs for readily-available facilities to meet people at Methodist Church House and adequate secretarial support have been brought to our attention. We recommend these matters be referred to the Methodist Council.

## **7 A Key Management Question**

7.1 A key question about management is: how effective is the current structure of the Connexional Team? More specifically, is the structure of four Co-ordinating Secretaries, with the Conference Office and the Secretary of the Conference alongside, an effective means of managing the implementation of the decisions of the Conference?

7.2 The Compass Management consultants working for the Methodist Church in 1994 during the restructuring of the former Divisions said:

While there was much support for the concept of a chief executive, this was set against the belief that the Conference would not accept it. We have therefore not suggested the appointment of a chief executive at this stage, but believe this should be reviewed after the new structure has been in place for three years. In evaluating the need for a chief executive, the Church should consider such factors as:

- The development of a strong sense of team-working.
- The development of a clear overview, strategy and work programme for the team, with clear priorities.
- The ability to take and implement difficult decisions without always referring issues to the Executive Committee for resolution.

7.3 At the time of restructuring in 1995 it was agreed the Secretary of the Conference should not take on the role of chief executive. We appreciate there were good reasons offered at that time to support the recommendations taken to the Conference, but the needs of the Church have moved on since those decisions were made. Many of our correspondents have argued for the appointment of a chief executive, believing that an organisation of the size and complexity of the Methodist Church would function more effectively with such a person to focus its leadership. This model is well used in almost every other organisation of comparable size and structure, and some cannot see how the Methodist Church is capable of having the leadership and management it now requires without a similar appointment being made.

## **8 The District Chairs**

8.1 The Compass Management Report 1994 made a further recommendation:

Strengthening the links between the Secretary of the Conference, Co-ordinating Secretaries and District Chairs should be reviewed once the new structure is in place (perhaps as part of the strategic plan).

8.2 Despite the introduction of S.O. 230 to formalise the meetings of the District Chairs,

There shall be a meeting of the Chairmen of the home Districts not less than three times a year for the discussion of stationing issues and other matters of mutual concern and reflection upon the work of God in the Districts and the Connexion.

there remain some who express surprise at the matters discussed by that meeting and the initiatives taken by the District Chairs as a collective body. The Standing Order does not give the District Chairs any powers as a result of its implementation, perhaps reflecting the fears of some that this body could easily become another power base within the Church. However we see the District Chairs as playing a key role within the leadership of the Connexion and acknowledge the important work done by the District Chairs in representing their Districts to the Conference and the Conference to their Districts.

8.3 Whilst the Districts have a key role to play in the nomination and re-nomination of District Chairs, it must be recognised that these officers are appointed by the Conference and not the District. Further

work needs to be done by the District Chairs' meeting and the Connexional Team to explore the dual responsibilities of the District Chairs. They represent a considerable resource of knowledge and experience. At present just how their experience and knowledge is made available to the Church is somewhat imprecise. There is a need for the Methodist Church to revisit the questions surrounding the leadership of this group to ensure their gifts are used effectively.

## **9 Our proposals for leadership and management**

9.1 The Connexional Team needs to be strengthened so that the present roles undertaken by the Conference Office and the Co-ordinating Secretaries and the District Chairs are brought together in a unified management and leadership team, with one member of that team being designated the executive leader. Whilst there has been real progress in developing team working since the introduction of the new structures, the Leadership Task Group believes this is now the time to revisit the concept of a chief executive. Currently the work of the Co-ordinating Secretaries is supervised by the Methodist Council and its Executive. The Conference Office, although part of the Joint Secretaries Group, nonetheless is answerable directly to the Conference. The Secretary of the Conference has a critical role on behalf of the Conference in relation to the Districts, and the oversight of the ministry.

9.2 Our preference would be for the Secretary of the Conference, the senior officer of the Conference after the President and Vice-President, to be given the responsibility for leading the unified team. We recommend the designation General Secretary. We would expect the person holding this post to work in an obviously collaborative manner to unite the team.

9.3 Whilst all the officers of the Connexional Team have a considerable portfolio of responsibilities, it is clear to us that it would be impossible to add to the already overstretched resources of the Conference Office in the way our proposals suggest. In addition, it has become clear since the introduction of the new Complaints and Discipline procedures just how much oversight and support is being given to District officials by the Secretary of the Conference, often at the expense of time allocated for other responsibilities. It would be our recommendation that an additional person should be added to the Conference Office staff to take on the oversight and support of the Complaints and Discipline procedures, along with some other responsibilities to enable the Secretary of the Conference to fulfil the additional role outlined above.

9.4 Thus we recommend the Conference Office should be made up of three people as follows:

- The Secretary of the Conference and General Secretary (Presbyter).
- An Assistant Secretary of the Conference (Presbyter).
- An Assistant Secretary of the Conference - a person skilled, say, in the kind of issues covered by a company secretary, with a particular responsibility for all matters relating to the Discipline procedures included in Section 02 of Standing Orders.

9.5 In 1997 the Conference accepted the recommendation from the Senior Officers' Report, for the Secretary of the Conference to continue as a presbyteral appointment, as set out in the Deed of Union,

and we acknowledge that. Thus we recommend the appointment of a presbyter to be the Secretary of the Conference and General Secretary from 2003 as set out above.

9.6 However, in the long-term we acknowledge it may not always be possible for a presbyter to fill the role of General Secretary, and we recommend the Methodist Council Executive should undertake a careful investigation of the implications for the role of the Secretary of the Conference if a lay General Secretary should be appointed.

9.7 More time and money should be invested in preparing new District Chairs for their work by developing the programme of induction training from its current minimal base.

9.8 The District Chairs with the help of the General Secretary and working with the Connexional Liaison Group should be encouraged to reflect on how best the knowledge and experience contained in their group can be made available to the Church and enable them to contribute to the development of policy and strategy.

## **10 A Key Governance Question**

10.1 A key question about governance is: how effective is the current structure of the Conference, Council and Executive in overseeing the development of policy and the monitoring of the performance of the Connexional Team?

## **11. The Conference**

11.1 If the Conference is to fulfil its role as the voice of the Districts, then the Council, the Executive and the Connexional Team, with the District Chairs are its agents and must answer to it for their work. The Conference has powers to regulate what happens in Districts, circuits and local churches, but they do not answer to the Conference for their life. Ministers and deacons are in a different situation in that they serve as agents of the episcopé of the Conference and, through the Synods and Convocation, are answerable to it.

11.2 The size of the Conference has recently been reduced but some comments received in our consultation indicate that it is still too large, too long and too expensive. Whilst the majority of people attending are District representatives, there are others who represent specific areas of Church work and there are eighteen Conference-elected representatives. Comment has been made that the voice of 'ordinary' people at the Conference is not heard because those 'well-known' speak too often.

"The Methodist Conference is too long and could be more effective if there was only a Representative Session concentrating on business and not indulging itself with other presentations."

11.3 A variety of solutions have been suggested. For example, the Conference could meet every three years instead of annually. (This could require a change in the Methodist Church Act through Parliament.) One of the concerns about a Conference every three years is related to the Ordination Services, which could possibly be held within Districts, but the Reception into Full Connexion can be carried out only within the Conference, unless Standing Orders were changed. Another suggestion is for a shorter

Conference to be held for two consecutive years followed by a longer Conference every third year. It has also been suggested that we could reduce the length of the Conference by cutting out events, concentrating on business, including having evening sessions for that purpose. However, the desire to attend evening meetings and regard for the considerable amount of administrative work required after the close of the Conference have also to be considered. Our recommendation is that the Conference continues to meet annually but contained within one week (or less, if possible), to include Ministerial and Diaconal Sessions, the week to begin with celebrations and the rest of the time to be given to business, with fewer outside speakers.

## **12 The Methodist Council**

12.1 The major responsibility of the Council is to carry out the work of the Conference between its annual meetings and its general powers and specific functions are set out in Standing Orders. Council, as presently constituted, is too large for all members to become involved in the work. It currently comprises 63 members and nine ex officio persons. District Chairs have commented, in their representation to the Task Group, that as a body of experience and expertise they are under-represented on the Council. Some ex-Presidents and ex-Vice-Presidents have commented that the experience and knowledge gained in their year in office is undervalued if they are expected to remain silent during Council debates. This is a matter of custom rather than rule, and we recommend its discontinuance, recognising the need for sensitivity from those concerned.

## **13 The Methodist Council Executive**

13.1 There is suspicion and misunderstanding about the role of the Executive. The name creates a view of management responsibilities and power. Whilst it is the Executive of the Council, the members are not appointed by the Council and are not representatives but they are appointed in their own right for the expertise they can bring. In accordance with S.O. 213 there are eleven appointed members (currently one of whom is a District Chair) in addition to the Chair of Council and the Connexional Treasurer. If there were no Executive there would then be a need to appoint several groups to undertake its work.

13.2 At the present time, the Executive prepares for the smooth running of the Council by carrying out the spadework and timetabling, is a point of reference for the Connexional Team and has oversight of the Team and the specific responsibility for the appraisal of the members of the Joint Secretaries' Group. Since its inception, the Executive has moved from process to strategy. Not all the work which it undertakes comes from the Council, some coming from outside and some being self-initiated. Currently, membership of the Executive is not confined to those already appointed to serve on the Methodist Council. Vacancies on the Executive are advertised and individuals can apply, as well as nominate others.

## **14 Recommendations for Future Work**

### **14.1 Development of youth leadership**

14.1.1 The consultation with Synods indicated the need to encourage young people within our congregations to take on leadership roles and to encourage them to develop the skills necessary for this to take place.

14.1.2 The Youth Conference and District Youth Executives are a good medium for developing potential young leaders, but they are not the only way forward for all young people. Indeed this may not be the appropriate route for many. Just as for many adults, not everyone responds well to committee meetings as a place to be inspired to take on a leadership role within the Church. Sometimes it may have quite the opposite effect.

14.1.3 The Leadership Task Group has not had sufficient time to look at this issue further and so recommends that more work is required by an appropriate group.

## **14.2 A review of the Districts**

14.2.1 At the time of the local government restructuring in the mid 1970s, the Conference initiated a review of the London Districts and a review of District boundaries throughout the Connexion was also included. The Conference decided not to make any changes as a result of the review. Since that time much has happened to affect our thinking about these matters, e.g. Government policy and thinking about regionalisation, the continuing decline in Church membership and the use of the stationing regions in the Connexion for matters not directly related to stationing. In the consultation process a number of respondents questioned the necessity of Districts whilst others mentioned size, boundaries and regionalisation. We recommend the Conference to initiate a fresh review of Districts.

## **14.3 Communications**

14.3.1 Inevitably communications featured in many of the views received by the Group. Whilst there were those asking for better communications, others were appreciative of the efforts made to make the Link Mailing a more effective channel. Some respondents recognised that for communications to be effective, diligence is required not only from Connexional Officers and Committees but also from those appointed in local churches and circuits with the responsibility of appropriate dissemination in their local situation. The group finds itself unable to make any firm recommendations but encourages those working on these matters to keep these issues constantly before the Church at all levels.

## **15. Conclusion**

This report has attempted to offer a way ahead for leadership in the Methodist Church over the next decade. We believe the possibilities we have outlined offer both the stability of clearer structures and the flexibility to respond to any developing situations.

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Summary of Responses to the Consultation with Conference and the Synods**

## **1. When the Methodist people ask for 'clarity and certainty in the leadership of the Methodist Church', what are they really looking for?**

Methodists want leaders who are inspiring, energetic, enthusiastic and prophetic; who will encourage, enable and nurture God's people. They need to be thoughtful and compassionate as well as competent and reliable in the tasks they undertake. They should offer vision and direction and provide a balance between giving authoritative guidance and holding together a broad Church.

Our consultation revealed that people are looking for spiritual people that reflect God's leadership and provide a focus of unity for the whole Church.

The responses contained a clear call for a strong media presence and the delivery of clear statements on church, ethical, national and political matters. A great deal was said about the need for good or better communications, particularly as a way of bridging the perceived gap between the centre and the margins.

## **2. What do we expect from the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary of Conference and the Coordinating Secretaries.... etc?**

### **President**

Only 7% of those who expressed an opinion wished the President's term of office to remain at one year. This went hand in hand with a desire for an increased media and public profile and a wish for continuity in the leadership of the Church.

Other roles expected of the President were that of a spiritual pastor and visionary who should be free to challenge the Church and share his/her own unique gifts. Some felt the role was similar to that of a mayor and many emphasised qualities of listening and communicating as being important as well as being someone with a national overview and a 'finger on the pulse of church life'.

### **Vice-President**

There was a good deal of confusion over the role of the Vice-President. In this case 50% of those expressing a view suggested the term of office be kept at one year.

The main expectations of the Vice-President were that s/he works in a relationship of mutual support with the President and s/he has a similar high media profile. Again emphasis was placed on the need for good communication skills and the desirability of using his/her own gifts and vision to challenge the Church.

Comments were made regarding both roles that there should be a broader electorate, especially if there were to be an increase in term of office.

### **Secretary of Conference**

The Secretary of Conference is expected to have a knowledge of the whole Church and his/her finger on the pulse. He/she is expected to be a good administrator, a provider of continuity and someone who enables the implementation of vision. He/she is expected to be a spokesperson, a voice heard by the Church and speaking on behalf of the Church to the world.

A number of respondents expect or desire the Secretary to operate as a Chief Executive Officer, some arguing for a policy-maker and others an executor of policy.

### **Co-ordinating Secretaries**

The role of the Co-ordinating Secretaries is not clearly understood by many respondents, many suggesting that they know little about them. Expectations of them tend to be more about qualities than particular tasks. The qualities desired are the ability to offer guidance, to be facilitators 'rather than managers', to offer integrity, humility, godliness and prayerfulness.

Expectations of their position within the structure differ. Some state that they have an executive function, or that they are responsible to the Secretary of the Conference and there is confusion about their relationship to the Conference and the Council. Trust and accountability are words which come up regarding all aspects of leadership and most often regarding the Co-ordinating Secretaries.

Regarding their functions, it was stated by some that the Co-ordinating Secretaries have too large a task, by some that they should offer 'specialist knowledge' and, by others, that they should engage in the theological task of reflecting upon the Church's ministry.

### **General Comments under Question 2**

A great deal of concern is expressed about a perceived bureaucracy which leads to lengthy decision-making. People call for clarity as to where authority lies and for a Team that works together well and presents a united view.

### **3. What is the role of the District Chairs in the Leadership of the Church?**

District Chairs are understood as being pastors to the ministers, deacons and other staff within a District. They are also a representative link between the Connexion, the circuits and the churches. They are expected to develop and offer a broad outlook and vision and can encourage, envision and release gifts in churches to forward that vision.

A key role is that of being an ecumenical representative and also being a voice to the wider world, offering public leadership. The responsibility for stationing is a clear expectation and is part of the 'mission-oriented' nature of the Chair's role.

The ability to listen and to communicate is important, as well as sensitivity and being able to mediate in disputes and to exercise discipline.

District Chairs are a symbolic focus of unity and supportive, critical friends to local churches. They provide oversight, moral authority and should be an exemplar of good practice.

A number of people questioned the need for 'separated' Chairs of Districts.

#### **4. What can be done to strengthen the links between churches, circuits and the Connexion?**

Communication, good or better, was by far the most frequent comment. The need for education about the structures of the Church and the resources offered by it was clearly called for, as well as the increased use of information technology. A number of people are concerned about too much information and would desire a reduction in administration.

Many people called for more circuit or District events and concerns were raised over increasing congregationalism and parochialism in Church life. The Connexion should not be a hierarchical structure but should be about belonging to the whole.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Summary of Responses to the Consultation with Church Councils**

Questionnaires were circulated to every Church Council in the Connexion (around 6,100) via the September Connexional Link Mailing. 733 responses (c. 12%) were received involving almost 9,700 Church Council members. In addition, a number of written comments were received from Church Councils and individuals as supplementary contributions.

#### **1 There is 'clarity and certainty' in the leadership of the Methodist Church. \***

Half of the respondents to this statement either chose 'neither agree or disagree' or declined to vote. One minister made the following observation of his Church Council's voting:

*'The fact that this Church Council seemed to indicate that they do not perceive clarity and certainty in the leadership of the Methodist Church need not be a negative. Indeed it may be a very positive indicator of the ability of the leadership to appeal to a wide diversity of people - by indicating that the serious questions of life and death are complex, multi-faceted and not admitting of one clear and simple answer or sound-bite media-friendly statement.'*

#### **2-4 Most members of the Church Council know the name of the current President/ Vice-President, Secretary of Conference.**

Two-thirds of respondents indicated that they believed that most Church Council members do not know the name of the President. In the case of the Vice-President and the Secretary of Conference this view was expressed by around eighty per cent. One individual comment makes an interesting point:

*'The tendency is to refer to these office holders by their office title. Unless the ordinary member had some personal knowledge of the office holder which puts the name into their memory, people use the office title because other people will know to whom they are referring.'*

**5-6 The President should serve for longer than one year and should be more widely known and appear more in the media.**

Almost two-thirds of the Church Council members who took part in the survey felt that the Presidential term should be longer than at present and something like eighty-five per cent supported the view that he/she should be more widely known and appear more in the media. However, individual comments on these issues were quite varied, ranging from:

*'The genius of Methodism is that we give the President power, and then just around the time he or she begins to know how to handle it, we take it away from him/her.'*

to

*'A year is too short a time for anything to be of influence or to motivate, supervise, encourage any change.'*

**7-8 The Presidency/Vice-Presidency is an essential role for offering leadership to the Methodist Church.**

Nearly three-quarters of respondents agreed with the statement that the Presidency is an essential role for offering leadership. Rather fewer, just over half, felt this about the Vice-Presidency, with a quarter not expressing a view at all. This reflects a trend noted in other consultations, i.e. that the Methodist people seem to be less sure about what the role of the Vice-President is and where it fits into the leadership structures of the Church.

**9-10 A key role of the President/Vice-President is to develop strategies for the Methodist people as a whole.**

Interestingly, the responses to these two questions produced a 'hung' vote - with roughly a third agreeing, a third disagreeing and the other third either being unsure or not voting.

**11 The Methodist leadership at connexional level is out of touch with Methodists as a whole.**

Nearly half of the respondents supported this view. However, there was some anecdotal evidence to suggest that the accusation, 'being out of touch', was quite readily used either as an easy way of dismissing unpalatable leadership initiatives or as an avoidance of responsibility by those at local church level who fail to acknowledge that 'being in touch' is a two way communication process:

*'The fault is not entirely that of the leadership but with individual members who should also try to take a greater interest in what is going on.'*

**12 The President and Vice-President should be elected by a broader range of Methodist people in addition to Conference members.**

Again, those who responded to this proposition were almost equally divided between those in favour, those against and those with no preference. Even amongst those who favoured a wider electorate, there was the feeling that:

*'The wider Church might not be sufficiently well informed about the potential candidates to be able to make a wise choice.'*

### **13 We should trust the Connexional Team to get on with their jobs.**

Two-thirds of the Church Council members who took part supported this view. One comment typifies something of the 'simple trust' that many Methodist people are still willing to place in their leaders:

*'I may not know the name of the Secretary of Conference, but that doesn't mean to say that he's not doing a good job.'*

### **Postscript**

*'It was a valuable survey, not least to find out the almost complete lack of knowledge of the Methodist Church as Connexion amongst the most 'clued' up members of the churches.'*

*\* The numbering and text in bold type refer to the statements Church Councils were asked to consider in the Connexional Link Mailing questionnaires.*