

Basic Information

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| Status of Paper | Final |
| Resolution | The Conference receives the Report. |

Summary of Content

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| Subject and Aims | To report to the Conference on work of the Connexional Team not covered elsewhere in Conference Reports. |
| Main Points | The Report describes how the first year of the new Team has evolved and notes some unanticipated challenges. It responds directly to some questions asked at last year's Conference. It then outlines the work of each of the five staff clusters. |
| Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function) | Background to the structure of the new Team is given in the <i>Team Focus</i> reports to the 2007 and 2008 Conferences. Financial aspects of the new Team are covered in the separate Connexional Team budget Report to the Conference. |

An exciting ride

1. The past year in the Connexional Team has not been dull!
2. Last summer the new leadership and management team was put in place. Over the following months the staff posts in the reconfigured Team were gradually filled and the physical environment at Methodist Church House reshaped. The walls knocked down symbolised the refreshed commitment to working collaboratively both within and between the five staff clusters.
3. The whole year has felt transitional with experienced staff in new posts and many new staff discovering the possibilities of their jobs, learning the many particular characteristics of Methodist structures and building relationships with key people they serve in the wider Connexion. At the same time there have been many endings to try to manage well. For the Team itself, these included a service in Wesley's Chapel followed by a boat trip down the Thames to celebrate what the previous Team had achieved and to thank those whose commitment made that possible. For the wider Church, endings have been more complex and a good deal of staff time continues to be devoted to helping new patterns emerge in the best possible ways.
4. The multiple aspects of transition have sat alongside the many continuing processes for which the

Team is responsible regardless of structural changes. In some areas we hope that we have managed to improve the quality of the service given, but we are conscious that the staff turnover has sometimes led to a less good service this year and understandable frustrations in the wider Connexion. We are sorry where that has happened and greatly appreciate constructive feedback, which has helped to pinpoint matters needing attention.

Honouring Team Focus

5. Alongside building the new Team we have endeavoured to keep central to our vision the 'Focus' part of *Team Focus*. The Conference asked for a significantly smaller core staff Team focused more sharply on the chosen priorities of the Church and only undertaking work that the Team can uniquely or best do in the service of the Church and the kingdom. Inevitably there is constant pressure to lose this focus and be drawn into many other tasks; we shall continue to resist this unless the Conference changes its instructions about our brief and the volume of resources available to the Team.
6. Partly to help individual staff develop confidence in how their own work fits with the *Team Focus* objectives, we have introduced a new personal planning, development and review process. This includes encouragement to individuals to receive feedback not just from their

line manager but also from the people who report directly to them, from their peers in the Team, and from key contacts outside it.

7. Even while trying to honour our focus, it was clear at the start of the year that the many staff vacancies would make it impossible to do well every task inherited by the new Team. Therefore, on the advice of the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC), the Council accepted in October a prioritised list of what the Team would attempt this year; recognising that not all items outside the highest priority list would be feasible. The Team will report to the September 2009 Council against the task lists agreed.

Some Surprises

8. Of course not every priority is predictable. Several factors that were not anticipated when *Team Focus* was designing the new Team have made a major impact on our first year.
9. The biggest internal example is the closing of mph (formerly Methodist Publishing House) and the transition into the Team of parts of its work. Five of the former mph staff members are now part of the Team, working from a different building in Peterborough. In addition we have bought in expertise to assist with the myriad of issues arising from the winding down of the mph operation. Future publications of the Connexional Team (which will incorporate the continuing

functions of mph) will be produced by Methodist Publishing, according to clear and focused criteria: these criteria are in the report to the Conference on mph.

10. The most prominent external example would be the deepening economic crisis. Our Joint Public Issues Team (in which our staff work with colleagues from the United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain) were prominent in devising, organising and hosting a symposium under the auspices of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland to explore the underlying moral issues. A rich variety of people attended a full house event and the speakers included one of the Team's Strategic Leaders. The crisis has also made the Vice-President's emphasis on business and ethics especially pertinent and the Team has been glad to offer practical support to that. Connexional Leaders from the Presidency and Team have discussed with the Archbishop of Canterbury possible joint initiatives across the Churches. At the Conference the Beckly lecture by Chris Moorhouse will also be on the theme, under the title *Shall I throw the first stone? A Christian reflection on the financial crisis*.

Conference Questions

11. Members of the Scarborough Conference asked some specific questions about the Team and were promised responses this year.

(i) Internal Communications

12. We were urged to improve internal communications within the Team in the light of anecdotal evidence that these had been poor.
13. One of the areas of the Team where the *Team Focus* process identified a need to increase resources was communications and although that is mainly directed toward helping the wider Connexion, some of the benefits have flowed into the Team too.
 - ∞ Our internal intranet system is more comprehensive.
 - ∞ Prompt briefings are provided to all staff after each meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Methodist Council.
 - ∞ An information cascade works through staff meetings in each of the five staff clusters.
 - ∞ A monthly gathering for all London and Peterborough staff includes opportunity for common worship, fellowship over food, briefings about work in one area of the Team or wider Church, 'good news stories' slots, and features about the lives of staff and their own faith journeys.
 - ∞ A parallel gathering takes place in Manchester shortly afterwards.

(ii) Capacity of the Finance Office

14. Concern was expressed that the Finance Office did not provide a

sufficiently speedy service.

15. The Finance Office was not reviewed on the same timetable as most of the rest of the Team in the *Team Focus* process and is not yet equipped to deliver all that the leadership of the Team believe it needs to be able to do. A full review has however been put in place this year, overseen by an energetic group that includes an experienced district treasurer and draws on expertise about best practice in the charity sector. The results of that review will be presented to the Finance Sub-Committee of the SRC shortly.

(iii) Review of the Team Focus process

16. Noting how uncomfortable aspects of the *Team Focus* had been for some people, a review of the processes used was requested.
17. The Conference has given the SRC particular responsibilities for the oversight of the work of the Team. During the year this included discussion specifically to reflect on the *Team Focus* process.
18. Within the Team itself, we have done work on options for evaluating *Team Focus* with a view both to identifying ways of monitoring progress against *Team Focus* objectives and to highlighting lessons to be learnt from the process. The fruits of this work will be shared initially with the SRC. This desire has been reflected in the Finance review which has sought

to establish a benchmark level of performance against which it will be possible to evaluate the reconfigured office in the future.

Cluster Highlights

19. The Strategic Leaders of the new Team are the General Secretary and the Secretaries for Team Operations, Internal Relationships, and External Relationships. The Strategic Leaders take responsibility for guiding strategy and policy within the Connexional Team by bringing together and facilitating the work of the Team to complement the work of other Methodist bodies around the Connexion, as well as in relationship with our World Church and ecumenical partners.
20. The Team's work is organised around five staff clusters, with the five Cluster Heads reporting to the Secretary for Team Operations. Substantial parts of the Team's work in support of the wider Connexion feed into other reports coming to the Conference. Below follows a brief summary of the general areas of work for which each of the clusters is responsible, together with some examples of work done during this first year which are not being reported elsewhere to the Conference.

21. Projects Cluster

- 21.1 The Projects cluster exists to turn creative ideas into grounded action

that will help the whole Church. The purpose of the cluster is therefore to manage professionally the connexional projects that have been designated to the work of the Connexional Team and to support the work of the Team Strategic Leaders and Cluster Heads.

21.2 Key general tasks include:

- ∞ providing the support and creative freedom to develop high risk/high gain projects
- ∞ managing the projects approval process
- ∞ overseeing approved connexional projects from outset to completion, testing, evaluating, and taking specific managerial responsibility, where necessary
- ∞ learning lessons from projects work and disseminating these efficiently and effectively throughout the Connexion
- ∞ providing executive support to the Strategic Leaders and Cluster Heads
- ∞ research and development work to support the leaders of the Team and to influence the strategic direction of Team policy.

21.3 A number of projects relate to the continuing transition from former work patterns. Those completed this year include projects on Methodist heritage and European work. Those still in progress include:

- ∞ Inter faith Relations
- ∞ Women's Network
- ∞ Evaluation of *Team Focus*

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- ∞ Urban and rural work

21.4 Other projects where the cluster is in the lead include:

- ∞ Inspire Network
- ∞ One Connexion: many nations and jurisdictions
- ∞ Education Commission
- ∞ Chaplaincy
- ∞ Missing Generation
- ∞ Venture FX (previously known as Pioneering Ministries)
- ∞ Belonging Together (project being finalised)
- ∞ Carbon Footprint (project being finalised)

21.5 The cluster has supported the strategic leaders and others through research on a variety of subjects including the Church's official statements on Connexionalism and work for the Joint Implementation Commission for the Anglican-Methodist Covenant. An interactive Research Forum has been established to improve the quality of research work done around the Church and contacts forged with those undertaking research in other Churches and agencies.

22. Discipleship and Ministries Cluster (D&M)

22.1 The D&M cluster equips the Methodist Church's ministries, so that they, in turn, can equip the world-changing discipleship of the people of God. It equips ministries which enable God-centred worship and prayer; ministries which help people

to grow and learn as Christians; ministries which engage with the everyday acts of love, kindness and service of the people of God in the world; ministries which encourage patterns of witness and evangelism.

22.2 Key tasks of the cluster include:

- ∞ challenging, refreshing and developing the Church's strategic thinking about the ministry of presbyters, deacons, local preachers, worship leaders and others exercising leadership in Circuits, Local Churches and fresh expressions of church
- ∞ collaborating on policies for vocational exploration with Discernment and Selection staff
- ∞ consolidating and implementing a connexional learning and development strategy, which includes:
 - resourcing initial, continuing and reflective learning and development of ordained and authorised ministers
 - resourcing learning and development activities through the regional training networks
 - resourcing Training Officer (TO) posts and supporting the TO network
- ∞ coordinating and encouraging the work of Methodist chaplains in formal and informal networks, and nurturing links between chaplains and the wider Church
- ∞ equipping the Church's ministries both to engage with

children and young people in their distinctive sub-cultures, and also to be responsive to their concerns and aspirations

- ∞ facilitating structured conversations at a connexional level about *Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission*, resourcing District Development Enabler (DDE) posts and supporting the DDE network.

22.3 One of the cluster's most significant tasks is the support of more than 10,000 local preachers. As a result of an informal review of the connexional procedures and processes which support and enable local preachers and worship leaders, and in response to a number of submissions from the wider Connexion, the cluster has begun work to develop new proposals in this area. Among the areas identified by the cluster as being in need of renewal and reconfiguration are: initial and ongoing learning and development for local preachers and worship leaders; the role of local preachers and worship leaders in encouraging fresh ways of being church; and the structures which nurture creative and collaborative relationship between all those within a circuit (ordained ministers, local preachers, worship leaders and others) who have responsibility for planning and leading acts of worship. New proposals are being drawn up in a consultative manner, and will be the subject of a formal consultation process during the next connexional year.

22.4 The cluster has also:

- ∞ enabled the development of an innovative restorative justice programme through the work of Prison Chaplaincy
- ∞ integrated the work of the Forces Board more closely into the Team support framework for chaplaincies
- ∞ accompanied the Regional Training Networks and the Methodist Training Forums during their first full year in existence
- ∞ worked collaboratively with the Discernment and Selection staff in the Support Services cluster who have responsibility within the Team for managing the candidating and stationing processes
- ∞ supported the District Development Enablers and the *Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission* process
- ∞ started work on developing comprehensive connexional strategies for learning and development and for our work with children and young people.

23. Christian Communication, Evangelism and Advocacy Cluster (CCE&A)

23.1 The CCE&A cluster exists to enable and enhance the Church's ability to speak of God and of the Christian faith within Methodism and in the wider world.

23.2 The cluster seeks to help the Church to nurture world-changing, lifelong disciples by:

- ∞ developing and maintaining lively relationships with World Church partners and organisations
- ∞ enabling the prophetic and engaged voice of the Methodist Church to be heard in the public domain so that local, national and global issues are influenced and Methodist disciples are encouraged
- ∞ listening to the Church's needs for published and online resources to develop world changing disciples, and producing and marketing these to the highest standards and in the formats that local Methodists need
- ∞ providing for the communication needs of the Church's governance bodies so that decisions are fully owned and permeate rapidly within the Connexion
- ∞ linking networks of practitioners in faith sharing and local communication, advocacy and campaigning, and rural and urban mission
- ∞ enabling the passionate and pragmatic 'DNA' of Methodism to become more accessible to contemporary Methodist disciples and the wider public, through heritage work and all aspects of 'branding'
- ∞ enabling Methodists to give generously and intentionally to the world-changing work of God's mission in Britain and across the world.

23.3 The cluster aims to deliver a more professional service in these areas, whilst always maintaining a distinctly Christian and distinctly Methodist approach. Staff are committed to listening to the signs of the times and to voices speaking throughout this and Partner Churches, ensuring that what the Team delivers is effective, inspiring and timely.

23.4 The Communications Team can report:

- ∞ increasing usage of the Methodist website (overall visits up 20% on 2008)
- ∞ significant profile in broadcast and news media including the Methodist stance on gambling (eg the Fruitless campaign)
- ∞ improved communications following 2008 Conference to resource Conference members and local churches
- ∞ popularity for the '... in your Pocket' series of give-away booklet, including a request for the contents of *Hope in your Pocket* to be used for Prisons Week 2009
- ∞ surveys to establish needs and effectiveness of current publications, eg Link Mailing – this proved very popular and is being re-launched
- ∞ supporting *Magnet* magazine to move to independent status in July 2009.

23.5 The Help Desk was established in a phased way in the summer of 2008 with two full-time and two part-

time staff. It has been a learning experience for the newly appointed staff as they have developed their knowledge of Team work areas and key contacts, for the Team staff as they collaborate to ensure a professional and timely service to enquirers, and for the wider Connexion as everyone gets used to the new system. The Help Desk welcomes comments and has acted promptly to test out and rectify areas for improvement. It continues to be possible for callers with an established relationship with a particular member of staff to contact them directly.

23.6 A report to explore connexional communication needs was brought to the October 2008 Council and the results of group discussions analysed. Work is now progressing on a coherent communications strategy. It will encompass how the Team converses with its key audiences, including different office holders within the Church and lay staff employed by Circuits or Districts. One major outcome will be a number of policy recommendations for the Team to ensure that it communicates with the Connexion and the wider world as effectively as possible.

23.7 The cluster has also:

- ∞ appointed an officer in World Church Relationships to offer specialist language skills, making Spanish and French language material more widely available

- ∞ organised a 24-hour conference for about 90 Methodists to explore principles of Cell Church as a means of creating effective disciples
- ∞ begun phase two of the ecumenical Fresh Expressions initiative with a new team leader (Bishop Graham Cray), a new Methodist Missioner (The Revd Stephen Lindridge) and redefined objectives
- ∞ been working with ecumenical colleagues in the Joint Public Issues Team to develop study guide material for the 2008 report on Early Human Life *Created in God's Image*.

24. Governance Support

24.1 The Governance Support cluster supports the Methodist Church in fulfilling its mission through enabling the proper functioning of its legal and constitutional responsibilities as laid out in its foundational documents and subsequent constitutional materials approved by the Conference. The cluster assists the Church to develop continually its governance arrangements, enabling it to live out *Our Calling* and the *Priorities* in new and innovative ways.

24.2 In order to achieve this, the cluster will:

- ∞ develop and apply appropriately experienced and specialist expertise in legal and governance matters
- ∞ provide reliable support and

- guidance for the constitutional and timely functioning of the governance bodies of the Church
- ∞ assist the Secretary of the Conference, the Team Secretaries and the wider Church in developing the Church's mission and ministry in full compliance with the law, internal Methodist legislation and the discipline of the Methodist Church
- ∞ facilitate theologically informed developments in leadership, management and governance
- ∞ prioritise, enable and embed within the Team work in the areas of safeguarding, equalities and diversity, faith and order, law and polity and ecumenical relationships.

24.3 In the process of doing this, the cluster will keep under review formal procedures in order to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and make *Constitutional Practice and Discipline (CPD)* as accessible and user-friendly as possible.

24.4 A major piece of work during this first year of the cluster's life has been to assist with the implementation of the major changes to the Complaints and Discipline procedures introduced by the Conference in 2008 (CPD, part 11). Cluster staff have worked with colleagues in Development and Personnel and valued volunteers to provide support, resources, and training events for those appointed as panel members and to other positions within the procedures.

The same staff have also developed ways of working to provide efficient administrative backup for the procedures.

24.5 The cluster has also:

- ∞ been involved in developing training material for Creating Safer Space
- ∞ developed new ways of ecumenical working
- ∞ appointed staff to take up the Equalities and Diversity brief
- ∞ serviced the Church's governance bodies, again in collaboration with colleagues from other parts of the Team, and convened Conference-appointed working parties and commissions
- ∞ offered advice and guidance on constitutional matters to Local Churches, Circuits, Districts, the Connexional Team and other connexional bodies, and made rulings on the application of Standing Orders to particular cases.

25. Support Services

25.1 The Support Services Cluster exists to provide the support to enable work everywhere else in the Team to go ahead smoothly and efficiently. A range of services are provided in addition to the generous volunteer support offered to the Church from throughout the Connexion. The cluster seeks to provide and continually improve administrative, technical and specialist support

to Team and wider-connexional functions.

25.2 Key functions of the cluster include:

- ∞ financial planning and the running of the Team's financial processes, budgeting and software
- ∞ the management of accounting and payroll systems for the Team and for some other Methodist bodies
- ∞ the incorporation of best practice in personnel into the processes of the Team's Development and Personnel (D&P) sub-cluster, including the distinctive area of vocational discernment and selection
- ∞ provision of Team-wide administrative support
- ∞ oversight and maintenance of all Team information technology (IT)
- ∞ administration of the grants for Mission in Britain and Mission in the World overseen by the Connexional Grants Committee
- ∞ support of connexional property management.

25.3 The review of the Finance Office has included a full evaluation of how it services not only the Team, but the wider Church as a steward of God-given resources. It is anticipated that this will result in a number of projects that will involve overhauling systems and processes over the next one to two connexional years.

25.4 In addition to the review of the Finance Office, the promised

review of the Property Office is now beginning for implementation by September 2010. Work has continued to achieve the new streamlined Property Consents process that was enthusiastically welcomed by the 2007 Conference. Two district pilot schemes are providing valuable feedback and version two of the website has been launched. Over the first six months of the next connexional year full implementation across the Connexion is planned. The Charity Registration programme for larger churches in England and Wales is well underway with over 100 Methodist churches now registered.

25.5 The cluster has also:

- ∞ commenced work on implementing the IT Strategic Review, including the formation of an IT Strategy Group and IT User Group
- ∞ implemented the enhanced version of Sun Finance software
- ∞ led the development of the Property Consents website and launch of the first two pilot districts. This has included contributing to the re-writing of CPD Part 9
- ∞ implemented the Administration Support Team, including the ability to move capacity within and between work areas on a daily basis
- ∞ worked, via the Wellbeing Officer, to bring all issues and groups relating to helping ministers suffering impairment through

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- ill-health within a coordinated framework
- ∞ developed and updated a wide range of personnel management policies to reflect the new Team and changing legislative requirements
- ∞ provided personnel management expertise to the new complaints and discipline process
- ∞ planned and implemented the physical relocation of staff and redecoration of Methodist Church House
- ∞ begun examining the environmental impact of the Team, including usage of paper and energy, recycling facilities
- ∞ organised the annual Resourcing Mission Forum empowering district representatives in areas such as grants, property and charity registration. This included sessions considering the challenges that climate change and the need to use buildings for innovative mission bring to the Church.

***RESOLUTION

28/1. The Conference received the Report.