

## 41. Update on the Review of Committees, Advisory Groups and Reference Groups that Support the Connexional Team

### Basic Information

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Contact Name and Details</b> | The Revd Dr Mark Wakelin, Secretary for Internal Relationships, wakelinm@methodistchurch.org.uk, 020 7467 5239 and Isabel Taylor, Executive Officer, taylori@methodistchurch.org.uk, 020 7467 3771 |
| <b>Status of Paper</b>          | Final  |
| <b>Resolution</b>               | The Conference receives the Report.  |

### Summary of Content

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Subject and Aims</b>  | This paper aims to update the Conference on the Review of committees, advisory groups, and reference groups that support the Connexional Team.  |
| <b>Main Points</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>∞ Review of committees continuing on a cluster-by-cluster basis.</li> <li>∞ New nomenclature and principles of working already established.</li> <li>∞ Members of the Connexional Team now working with relevant groups to create a new, efficient, and effective framework.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)</b> | Methodist Conference 2007 (Resolution 41/4) directed the Council to oversee a review of all groups that support the work of the Connexional Team. The first steps in this review were taken last year when 31 out of the 78 groups originally identified were reviewed and a proposed nomenclature and specific changes to 16 groups were approved by the Council (MC/08/49). Since then, the Methodist Council has given the authority to determine future outcomes of the groups to the Secretary for Internal Relationships, unless it involves a matter of substantive principle. |
| <b>Risk</b>  | Connexional Committees currently cost the Methodist Church towards £500,000. An inefficient framework of groups and committees threatens to take much-needed funds away from the most vital work of the Methodist Church.   |

## 41. Update on the Review of Committees, Advisory Groups and Reference Groups that Support the Connexional Team

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The review of committees, advisory groups, and reference groups that support the Connexional Team is one of the outstanding pieces of work remaining from *Team Focus*.
- 1.2 This review aims to create a more efficient, effective and resourceful structure of groups and committees. An updated framework of all groups will be more responsive to the needs of the whole Connexion and better suited to support the work of the reconfigured Connexional Team.
- 1.3 The support that groups and committees offer is highly valued throughout the Connexional Team and the wider Connexion and will be taken into account during this review process.
- 1.4 However, the Methodist Church currently supports, and so circuits fund, a large structure of sizeable

committees. The total cost of these committees is, at present, around £500,000. It was the aim of *Team Focus* to reduce inefficient expenditure across the Connexional Team so as to free up funds for the most vital work of the Methodist Church. This aim needs to be kept in mind throughout this review. The current financial context for the whole Church needs to be considered as we work to create a more efficient system of groups and committees.

### 2. Established Principles

- 2.1 As part of the first stage of the review of Committees which took place last year, the Methodist Council in April 2008 agreed a robust nomenclature for the future framework of all groups supporting the Connexional Team. This classification, as set out below, is being used as the basis for all groups and any new structure that will be put in place:

#### **From Appendix 5 to the Team Focus Report to the 2008 Conference**

##### **Nomenclature**

*To ensure consistency and clarity in terminology used, the Council Reference Group [CRG] recommends that the following nomenclature be used to describe groups that support the Connexional Team*

- ∞ **Practitioners' Forums:** *Practitioners' Forums are appointed by Council and comprise of practitioners with similar responsibilities within the Church, (for example, Higher Education Chaplains). The Practitioners' Forum facilitates learning and development, fellowship and discernment of emerging issues in that area of work. The Connexional Team will assess suggestions from Practitioners' Forum and assess its priority within*

## 41. Update on the Review of Committees, Advisory Groups and Reference Groups that Support the Connexional Team

*the Connexional Team's work. Practitioners' Forums are in contact electronically throughout the year and typically meet face-to-face once a year.*

- ∞ **Stakeholders' Forums:** Stakeholders' Forums are appointed by Council and comprise a maximum of 12 persons with experience and expertise in a particular area of the Church's work (for example, Methodists within Higher Education and students). It will include Church practitioners from that area of work. The Stakeholders' Forum facilitates discernment of emerging issues in that area of work. The Connexional Team will assess suggestions from the Stakeholders' Forum and assess its priority within the Connexional Team's work. Stakeholders' Forums are in contact electronically throughout the year and typically meet face-to-face once a year.
- ∞ **Resource Groups:** Resource Groups are authorised and appointed by the Connexional Team, committees or forums to undertake a clearly defined time limited piece of work on its behalf. (For example, provide a resource pack, provide advice on a new initiative, and undertake a piece of consultation with the wider network.) Resource Groups comprise of a maximum of 12 persons with appropriate experience and expertise, and are likely to be recruited from existing forums, committees and networks. Accountability for a Resource Group remains with the authorising body. Connexional Team support for the Resource Group (financial and HR) is to be agreed with the Team or directed by Council or Conference.
- ∞ **Committees:** Committees are standing groups appointed by Council or Conference and delegated to make decisions on its behalf. The decision-making remit means that Committees benefit from face-to-face meetings; however, some contact can be undertaken electronically.
- ∞ **Open Networks:** Open Networks are groups of persons with an interest and varying degrees of experience in a particular area that communicate electronically in an ad hoc manner to share information and experience, hold discussion, explore new ideas and provide mutual support. Members of Networks need not be in direct contact with each other.
- ∞ **Scrutiny Groups:** Scrutiny Groups are appointed by Council to undertake detailed analysis of reports on its behalf on matters relating to formal processes, trusteeship and finance. Scrutiny Groups comprise of 3-4 persons with appropriate experience and include within their membership one person who is independent of both the Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee.
- ∞ **Reference Groups:** Reference Groups are appointed by Council or Conference. Council Reference Groups usually have five members. Their role is to consider in

## 41. Update on the Review of Committees, Advisory Groups and Reference Groups that Support the Connexional Team

*detail reports to the Council on complex issues from any part of the Connexional Team or a working group that reports to the Council; and make recommendations to the Council as a whole. Conference Reference Groups will be initiated for the first time in 2008. They are likely to have one representative from each of the districts and other main constituencies of the Conference membership. They will be asked to explore issues in a complex Conference report and make their own report to the Conference to expedite the Conference's work.*

2.2 Though groups across the Connexion have many different functions, they play an important role and make a valuable contribution to the work and life of The Methodist Church. So as to ensure that everyone gets the maximum benefit from both the work they do and the wider resources of The Methodist Church, all groups should, in future, fit within this agreed nomenclature. This will help to

determine the size of these groups, the frequency of their meetings and to which body they are accountable.

2.3 In addition, the Council also agreed a new set of Principles of Working. These are designed to create a more modern way of working for all groups and committees so to ensure that they work as effectively and efficiently as possible, as detailed below:

### **From Appendix 5 to the Team Focus Report to the 2008 Conference**

#### **Principles of Working**

*To incorporate new ways of working and support the Connexional Team, the CRG recommends that groups that support the Connexional Team adopt the principles below. These principles complement the Ways of Working approach endorsed by Conference 2007.*

- ∞ *Every authorised group will have a clear and structured link into the Connexional Team. The CRG recognises the importance of 2-way communication between groups/networks and the Connexional Team, so that both can hear challenges and be challenging.*
- ∞ *Each group/network will be outward looking, initiate and maintain links with groups within its specialist area and related areas. This will allow integration of work and ideas, and allow groups to be challenged and challenge. It will reinforce the importance of communication between groups/networks and between group/networks and the wider Connexion.*

## 41. Update on the Review of Committees, Advisory Groups and Reference Groups that Support the Connexional Team

- ∞ *Each authorised group/network will have clearly defined lines of authority, accountability, terms of reference, and monitoring and evaluation procedures. A Resource Group will be accountable to its convenor. This will standardise good practice.*
- ∞ *Connexional Team support for the Resource Group (financial and HR) will be agreed with the Team or directed by Council.*
- ∞ *Responsibility for work priorities for the Connexional Team will remain within the Connexional Team, directed by Council and Conference.*
- ∞ *Each group will employ the method of communication that most effectively and efficiently fulfils its role. Developments in electronic communication enable groups/networks to be more flexible in their approach and respond more quickly to emerging issues. In addition, electronic communication allows those who cannot commit to regular face-to-face meetings to participate in forums and contribute their valuable expertise to the Church.*

### 3. Progress to Date

- 3.1 The first stage of the review was initiated last year when 30 out of the 78 groups originally identified were reviewed by the Council Reference Group that was set up.
- 3.2 Since then however, the reconfigured structure of the Connexional Team has been finalised and the *Team Focus* review has been more widely implemented. These factors, coupled with the fact that it has become increasingly clear that the original list of 78 groups and committees was by no means exhaustive (almost 50 other groups have since been identified), have led to a revised approach to this review.
- 3.3 The Connexional Team is now working on a cluster by cluster basis to review all groups and committees that support each area of work. This means that Team members will be able to use their knowledge and

expertise to assess the work done by each group, recognise any duplication of work and create a framework suitable for both their cluster and all relevant groups.

- 3.4 Team Members are working with groups and committees to gather information and model a desired framework. This will create a structure in which groups can maximise their contribution within their defined remit of work and ensure that clusters have an overview of the groups supporting their area of the Connexional Team.
- 3.5 The Council delegated the final decision on the future of all groups to the Secretary of Internal Relationships, unless such a decision involves a matter of substantive principle. In these cases, a future scenario will be recommended to the Council in September 2009 who will be asked to approve any proposals for recommended amendments to

## 41. Update on the Review of Committees, Advisory Groups and Reference Groups that Support the Connexional Team

Standing Orders to be brought to the Conference of 2010.

3.6 Once the final decision on the future of groups has been taken, Connexional Team members will work with all groups and committees to ensure a smooth transition to the new framework.

3.7 In parallel to this review, the Connexional Team is also working

on an open consultation process to reflect its commitment to a responsive decision making process. This reflects The Methodist Church's commitment to formulate policy and programme initiatives in as open a manner as possible by giving more people than ever (both in official committees, groups and networks and across the whole Connexion) the formal opportunity to contribute to the development process.

### \*\*\*RESOLUTION

**41/1.** The Conference received the Report.