

Basic Information

Title	Ministries, Learning and Development
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Status of Paper	Final report
Resolution/s	40/1 The Methodist Conference receives the report. 40/2 The Methodist Conference establishes a Shadow Ministries Committee, to operate during the 2010/2011 connexional year, and encourages connexional committees, where appropriate, to delegate their strategic and resource-based functions to the Shadow Ministries Committee.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	An introduction to the Fruitful Field Project, which includes work on a revised learning and development structure for local preachers and worship leaders. An outline of proposed changes to connexional committees whose remits include ordained and lay ministries.
Main Points	Section 1: introduction. Sections 2 & 3: the first steps undertaken by the Fruitful Field Project, which concerns the Church's learning and development infrastructure and programmes. Section 4: update of ongoing work on a revised learning and development structure for local preachers and worship leaders. Section 5: outlines an alternative structure for certain connexional committees, including the establishment of a Ministries Committee; proposes the establishment of a Shadow Ministries Committee for 2010-11.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<i>Taking Forward the Stationing Review Group's Report</i> (Agenda 2009) provides an introduction to the ecclesiological issues raised in sections 1 and 5. <i>Future Use and Configuration of Training Institutions</i> (Agenda 2006) provides a context for the learning and development issues addressed in sections 2 and 3.
Impact	Sections 2 and 5 outline work which aims to improve the Church's oversight functions. No immediate changes are proposed, but future work outlined in both sections is likely to have a significant constitutional impact.
Risk	Oversight and accountability functions may be weakened if the work outlined in sections 2 and 5 is not able to continue.

1 Introduction

Let us afresh, solemnly and heartily recognise the original purpose of Methodism, “to spread Scriptural holiness through the land”, and ever regard this as the first and great calling of the Methodist people, and especially of the Preachers.

The “Liverpool Minutes 1820”, CPD, Vol 1, Book V, Part 3; section I

1.1 The Wesleyan Methodist Conference of 1820 adopted a series of resolutions on pastoral work which would come to be known as the “Liverpool Minutes”. The resolutions are formed of 21 sections of guidance and direction – with titles such as “*The Study*”, “*The Pulpit*”, “*Leaders’ Meetings*” and “*Extension of Methodism*” – and, together, they constitute what might, in current language, be called a job description for Methodist “Preachers and Pastors”.

1.2 The resolutions outline the very practical actions and structures required to “spread Scriptural holiness through the land”. Yet, throughout, it is emphasised that to secure the “revival and extension of the Work of God, the great thing to be desired is an abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit on ourselves and our families, our Societies and our Congregations”. Accordingly, the resolutions conclude with the affirmation that “we desire to ‘continue with one accord in prayer and supplication’ ‘until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest’ ”.

1.3 This evocation of the thirty-second chapter of the book of Isaiah (where the prophet foresees the Spirit’s gifts creating, for a chastened people, a land of fruitfulness, righteousness, quietness and trust) provides the title for a rolling connexional project which will be outlined below. More generally, the Liverpool Minutes offer a prime example of the Methodist Conference’s attention to the duties of those who exercise ministries within the life of the Church, and its complementary interest both in the manner in which they learn and are educated and also in the organisational structures which enhance those ministries and which develop the Church’s witness. Thus the Liverpool Minutes speak, coherently and under the guidance of the Spirit, of **ministries, learning and development** – the focal points, also, of this report and of the connexional projects and structures which are proposed and outlined within it.

2 The Fruitful Field Project: Outline

Let us “covet earnestly the best gifts”, to qualify us for an effective and useful ministry, and let us seek them in fervent prayer to Him who is the Father of lights and the Fountain of wisdom. Let us meanwhile “stir up the gift of God which is in us”, and improve our talents by close study and diligent cultivation; and especially let every one of us “study to show” himself “approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed; rightly dividing the word of truth”.

The Liverpool Minutes; section II (“The Study”)

2.1 The **learning and development infrastructure** and the **learning and development programmes** which are funded from the Connexional Central Services Budget have demanded a great deal of the Methodist Conference’s attention over recent years. For example, proposals regarding the institutions at which ministerial students undertake initial ministerial learning programmes were considered at length by the Conference in 2006, and again in 2007.

2.2 It is, however, clear that this area of the Church’s life does not lend itself to fallow years. Indeed in the report presented to the 2006 Conference, *Future Use and Configuration of Training Institutions*, it was noted:

[b]ecause the whole education and training field is changing so rapidly any proposals should allow modification and development to take place as flexibly as possible and be robust

*enough to respond to future changes and opportunities.*¹

In other words, despite the significant amount of work undertaken during the 2005–2006 and 2006–2007 connexional years, ongoing change and opportunity are prophesied, and a willingness to modify and develop is demanded. This should not be surprising. A willingness to modify and develop is a natural requirement in the field of learning, education and training, and becomes obligatory for the Church's work in this area as it seeks to learn from, and to work alongside, secular education providers. More generally, as the missional context of the Connexion changes, so should the learning and development structure which resources it. Moreover, this area of the Church's work accounts – however justifiably – for a significant component of the Connexional Central Services Budget; consequently, willingness to assess the return achieved on resources expended, and to modify and develop the Church's provision accordingly, is a mark of good stewardship. Above all, a willingness to modify and develop is a proper part of the Christian experience, flowing from our response to the work of the Holy Spirit. As the Liverpool Minutes indicate, the transformational power of God is that which nurtures the wilderness until it is a fruitful field, and which nurtures in turn the fruitful field until it grows into a forest.

2.3 It is the responsibility of the governance bodies of the Church to exercise oversight of the modification, development and growth of this vital area of the Church's work. However, as the processes implemented during the 2005–2006 and 2006–2007 connexional years demonstrated, the tasks of ploughing, reaping, pruning and nurturing are complex.

2.4 The metaphor of the “fruitful field”, used in the Liverpool Minutes, provides a useful lens through which to look at the development of the Church's activities in this area. Hence the title of a rolling project to be undertaken by the Connexional Team, in collaboration with a range of partners across the Connexion: “The Fruitful Field Project”. The primary aims of the project are:

- to support the governance bodies of the Methodist Church as they exercise their oversight of the Church's learning and development infrastructure and programmes, by providing an overview of the Church's connexional commitments and activities;
- to ensure that modifications and developments across the Church's learning and development infrastructure and programmes are coherent, and that the work undertaken across the Church's connexional commitments and activities is consistently reflective, collaborative, ambitious and prophetic.

3 The Fruitful Field project: First steps

It is already possible to provide illustrations of the work which will be undertaken by the Fruitful Field Project:

3.1 An overview of the Church's connexional commitments and activities

Tables 1 and 2 at the end of this section provide an initial overview of the Methodist Church's learning and development infrastructure and programmes. They draw together institutions and programmes which have hitherto been overseen in a number of discrete contexts. As such, they constitute the first step in developing a reporting procedure which will support the governance bodies of the Church as they monitor, discern and direct the work represented by the institutions and programmes named here.

3.2 Cohering modifications and developments

For each component of the Church's learning and development infrastructure, and for each learning and development programme, the Fruitful Field Project will identify key actions. Work on

¹ ¶3.7.5, *Future Use and Configuration of Training Institutions*, Agenda 2006. This paragraph forms part of the report's conclusions which were adopted by the Conference “as the framework within which specific decisions are to be made about training provision” (see Resolution 46/2 of the 2006 Conference).

these key actions will be undertaken reflectively and collaboratively, taking advantage of the skills and experience of a range of stakeholders and expert practitioners, especially the skills and experience of Methodist Council staff outside the Connexional Team, such as Training Officers and District Development Enablers. Key actions will involve the following.

- 3.2.1 **Clarifying** responsibilities, expectations and assumptions. Examples of “clarifying” tasks include (a) clarifying the responsibilities of the Regional Training Networks and the governance arrangements of the Methodist Training Forums; (b) clarifying the capacity of ministerial learning institutions to contribute to other learning and development programmes (eg learning and development programmes for preaching and leading worship, learning programmes for lay employees, and research and scholarship programmes); (c) clarifying the role, contribution and accountability structures of those Methodist institutions, partner-institutions and partner-organisations not included in the 2005–2006 and 2006–2007 reviews of ministerial learning institutions; and (d) clarifying the relationship of World Church learning and development programmes to the Church’s other learning and development programmes.
- 3.2.2 **Consolidating** resources and initiatives – both in the sense of pooling resources in the form of expenditure, assets, staff, energy and time; and also in the sense of affirming, formalising and reproducing positive and productive initiatives. Examples of “consolidating” tasks include (a) consolidating the cooperation between district chairs and learning institutions exemplified through the workings of the Methodist Training Forums; (b) consolidating the cooperation between the three learning institutions receiving ministerial students undertaking full-time training pathways; (c) consolidating the quality assurance and accountability mechanisms applied to ministerial learning institutions; and (d) consolidating the development of mixed-mode ministerial learning pathways which incorporate contextual learning in learning circuits.
- 3.2.3 **Establishing** new initiatives where the evidence of the need for those initiatives is already strong. Examples of “establishing” tasks include (a) establishing a clear pattern of Methodist representation within the governing bodies of each learning institution; (b) establishing a comprehensive superintendency learning and development programme; (c) establishing a prospectus of learning and development programmes for those exercising lay ministries within the life of the Church; and (d) establishing a portfolio of research and scholarship priorities for the Methodist Church, alongside complementary outcomes for research and scholarship funded by the Church. See also the work on learning and development programmes for preaching and leading worship discussed in section 4 of this report.
- 3.2.4 **Reviewing** elements both where there is evidence that their current contribution (a) does not clearly correspond to needs or strategies, or (b) is not achieving an appropriate return on the resources expended; and also where an intensive capital investment in the form of assets controlled by the Methodist Church is involved. Examples of “reviewing” tasks include: (a) reviewing the development of Regional Training Networks, especially in the context of other regional groupings and activities; (b) reviewing the coordination of Training Officer responsibilities across the Connexion; (c) reviewing, in collaboration with the Church of England and the United Reformed Church, the development of Regional Training Partnerships; (d) reviewing the learning outcomes for initial ministerial learning programmes and probationer learning and development programmes, and the balance in such programmes between academic, skills-based and formational inputs; (e) reviewing the learning and development expectations for ordained ministers; and (f) reviewing the effectiveness of the Church’s capital investment in those learning institutions over which the Methodist Church has exclusive control.

3.3 The Fruitful Field Project offers an opportunity to bring together disparate elements of the Methodist Church's learning and development structure to ensure that it is responsive to the missional needs of the Church, and that it develops in a reflective, collaborative, ambitious and prophetic manner. It is, however, a wide and broad field, and the Fruitful Field Project will require significant attention from connexional committees. Section 5, below, suggests a locus for the project in the context of proposed changes to connexion committee structures.

Table 1

THE CONNEXIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT INFRASTRUCTURE	
Regional Training Networks and Methodist Training Forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Midlands Regional Training Network ● The North-West Regional Training Network ● The South & South West Regional Training Network ● The South-East Regional Training Network ● The Yorkshire & North-East Regional Training Network ● The Scotland Training Network ● The Wales Training Network
<p>The networks and their forums were formally established in September 2008 to network learning and development provision within broad geographical areas. The networks consist of learning institutions, district and regional learning and development experts, other learning and development providers (eg Regional Training Partnerships), district representatives (usually in the form of District Chairs), and representation from the Connexional Team. The forums are the meetings at which the network participants are gathered. Distinctive networks exist in Scotland and Wales, reflecting the nations' distinctive institutional infrastructure.</p>	
District and regional expert staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training Officers ● PPMs (Participation Project Managers) ● District Development Enablers ● District Evangelism/Mission Enablers <p>➤ Two full-time equivalent Training Officer posts in each Regional Training Network were established in September 2008. Distinctive arrangements are in place for Scotland, Wales and the island districts.</p> <p>➤ Five PPM posts are a component of the Youth Participation Strategy; part of their brief is the provision of learning and development for children, youth and family workers.</p> <p>➤ A half-time district development enabler post in each district has been provided from September 2008. Distinctive arrangements are in place for Scotland, Wales and the island districts.</p> <p>➤ District evangelism/mission enabler posts, and other similar mission development posts, are supported by connexional grants in several districts.</p>
Learning institutions	
(a) Learning institutions receiving ministerial students undertaking full-time learning pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham ● Wesley House, Cambridge ● The Wesley Study Centre, Durham
<p>The primary focus of these institutions is the delivery of initial ministerial learning programmes. The 2007 Conference decided that these institutions were normally to receive presbyteral and diaconal students undertaking full-time learning pathways, and that an attempt would be made</p>	

to maintain a cohort of 20 such ministerial students at each institution. The 2007 Conference also decided that these institutions would receive additional connexional funding to nurture their development as communities of scholarship and research.

(b) Learning institutions receiving ministerial students undertaking part-time learning pathways

- EMMTC (the East Midlands Ministry Training Course)
- ERMTC (the Eastern Region Ministry Course)
- Hartley Victoria College, Manchester
- SWMTC (the South-West Ministry Training Course)
- STETS (the Southern Theological Education & Training Scheme)
- SEITE (the South-East Institute for Theological Education)
- UTU (the Urban Theology Unit), Sheffield
- Wesley College, Bristol
- The York Institute for Community Theology

The primary focus of these institutions is the delivery of initial ministerial learning programmes. The 2007 Conference decided that these institutions were normally to receive presbyteral and diaconal students undertaking part-time learning pathways.

(c) Other Methodist institutions

- Cliff College
- The Guy Chester Centre
- The Selly Oak Centre for Mission Studies (SOCMS)
- The Westminster Institute of Education (including the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History)
- Southlands College

These institutions have, or are developing, a connexional responsibility for the provision of training, theological education or learning and development programmes.

(d) Other partner-institutions and partner-organisations

- Regional Training Partnerships
- The Centre for Youth Ministry
- The Fresh Expressions agency
- The John Rylands University Library (housing the Methodist Archives and Research Centre)
- The School of Oriental and African Studies (housing the Methodist Missionary Society Library)

These institutions and organisations either provide learning and development programmes for the Methodist Church at a connexional or regional level, or work in partnership with the Methodist Church to preserve and promote Methodist research and scholarship resources.

Table 2

CONNEXIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES	
Initial ministerial learning programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-year full time learning pathways • 3-year part time learning pathways • Mixed-mode learning pathways incorporating contextual learning in learning circuits <p style="text-align: right;"><i>including academic, skill-based and formational learning</i></p>
Probationer learning and development programmes	<i>including academic, skill-based and formational learning</i>
Continuing ministerial learning and development programmes	<i>including superintendency programmes</i>
Learning and development programmes for preaching and worship-leading ministries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith & Worship • Alternative local preacher programmes • The Worship Leaders' course
World Church learning and development programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission Partner initial and continuing learning and development programmes • The Scholarship & Leadership Training (SALT) Programme
Learning programmes for other ministries	<i>including connexional and regional programmes for circuit stewards, lay employees and children, youth and family workers</i>
Research and scholarship programmes	<i>including research undertaken by tutors at learning institutions, by ministerial students and by ministers as part of their continuing learning and development</i>

4. The Fruitful Field Project: Learning and development programmes for local preachers and worship leaders

And let us preach these cardinal doctrines in our primitive method, – evangelically and experimentally, with apostolical earnestness and zeal, and with great simplicity. Let us “labour in the word and doctrine”; applying our discourses closely and lovingly to the various classes of our hearers, and “by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God”.
 Liverpool Minutes, III (“The Pulpit”)

4.1 Among the most important of the actions to be undertaken as part of the Fruitful Field Project is the establishment of revised learning and development structures for those exercising preaching and worship-leading ministries.

4.2 The 2009 Conference received several memorials regarding the support offered to local

preachers and to those training to be accredited as local preachers.² The replies adopted by the Conference noted that the following areas of connexional support required further development:

- initial learning and development for those seeking accreditation as local preachers or seeking to be commissioned as worship leaders, including the modification or replacement of the *Faith & Worship* course and the provisions made for accreditation of prior experience and learning;
- continuing learning and development for local preachers and worship leaders;
- delivery mechanisms for initial and continuing learning and development, including the role of the new Regional Training Networks;
- suitable ecumenical contexts for initial and continuing learning and development;
- mechanisms for acknowledging and celebrating the ministry of local preachers and worship leaders;
- the links between the ministry of local preachers and worship leaders on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the ministries of presbyters and deacons within circuits;
- the role of local preachers and worship leaders in nurturing and enabling fresh ways of being Church.

The replies also noted that “work on these areas is already being undertaken by the Connexional Team. The Team’s work will continue during the 2009/2010 connexional year, and will involve detailed consultation within the Connexion.”

4.3 In the autumn of 2009, every Local Preachers’ Meeting was invited to participate in a consultation about the continuing development of local preachers. In the spring of 2010, a consultation about initial development was launched, involving all those who are currently following the *Faith & Worship* course, all local tutors and all *Faith & Worship* assessors.

4.4 The consultation about continuing development requested responses by February 2010, although, to enable the widest degree of participation possible, responses continued to be received until the middle of March. The response rate has been very encouraging. A total of 3,845 local preachers completed an individual questionnaire, and local preachers’ secretaries submitted almost 40,000 words of notes of discussions held at 354 Local Preachers’ Meetings.

4.5 The consultation about initial development requested responses by March 2010, although, to enable the widest degree of participation possible, responses continued to be received until the beginning of April. The response rate has, again, been very encouraging. A total of 424 persons on note and on trial completed an individual questionnaire, and submitted comments amounting to over 60,000 words in response to the question “In what ways do you think the teaching and tutoring of *Faith & Worship* could be improved?” A total of 280 local tutors completed an individual questionnaire, and submitted comments amounting to over almost 30,000 words in response to the question “In what ways do you the teaching and tutoring of *Faith & Worship* could be improved?” In addition 21 *Faith & Worship* assessors responded to an invitation to complete a questionnaire and to submit comments, along with 8 chaplains to the forces, who encounter the challenges of enabling Methodists in the forces to complete the *Faith & Worship* course.

4.6 The result is a wealth of quantitative and qualitative data about the experience of local preachers across the Connexion. A full analysis of the results was still being undertaken at the time of writing this report in April. An analysis will be published in August 2010, and will be made available to those who have taken part in the consultations.

4.7 In the light of this analysis, work will be undertaken by the Connexional Team during the 2010–2011 connexional year, in collaboration with a wider range of stakeholders and practitioners, to

² Memorials M2, M3, M4, M5, M6, M34, Agenda 2009.

develop a revised learning and development structure to resource the ministry of local preachers. As has been emphasised by a number of respondents and in several other contexts, this work should also include the development of a revised learning and development structure to resource the ministry of worship leaders. Several factors will need to be taken into account, including (a) the learning outcomes for the period of initial learning; (b) the balance between initial learning and continuing learning and development; (c) the financial resources available to support initial and continuing learning and development programmes; (d) the role of Regional Training Networks, district and regional expert staff and learning institutions in supporting learning and development programmes; (e) the work already undertaken by some districts, institutions and ecumenical partnerships to design and implement alternative learning and development programmes; (f) supporting and resourcing the ministry of local tutors, circuit local preachers secretaries and district officers.

4.8 Proposals regarding a revised learning and development structure will be brought to the 2011 Conference, and will be subject to wider consultation during the spring of 2011. However, it is appropriate to draw attention in this report to the breadth of the task to be undertaken. This can be done by reference to a common component of the questionnaires completed by existing local preachers, those following *Faith & Worship*, local tutors, and *Faith & Worship* assessors. In varying forms, all four groups were asked to identify, from a range of options, which skill or area of knowledge they would wish to see further developed during learning and development programmes. The skills and areas of knowledge offered as options were as follows. The results are shown in Charts 1–4.

Practical knowledge and skills

- A. using technology in worship (eg PowerPoint)
- B. vocal and projection techniques
- C. leading all-age worship
- D. alternative media and expressions of worship (eg art, movement)

Supporting knowledge and skills

- E. your personal spirituality, life of prayer and continuing pilgrimage in faith
- F. reflecting on the gifts you bring and on your personal strengths and weaknesses
- G. developing pastoral and professional relationships
- H. engagement with and study of Scripture and the traditions of Christian thought
- I. the traditions and distinctive charisms of Methodism
- J. the practices of mission and evangelism
- K. the interface of Christianity with contemporary culture & spirituality
- L. communicating the gospel in a variety of media and in emerging forms of church.

4.9 One of the most striking features is the common emphasis in all four charts on the knowledge area of “The interface of Christianity with contemporary culture & spirituality” and the skill of “Communicating the gospel in a variety of media and in emerging forms of church”. Initial analysis of the comments submitted by the respondents suggests that the emphasis apparent in the quantitative data will be supported by the qualitative data. Thus, for example, when asked to note the major challenges which face local preachers today, existing local preachers noted:

“Cannot assume today that people know the Bible stories – old and young – yet still want to meet God; so local preachers are challenged to find fresh ways of leading worship and using other gifts.”

“Congregational knowledge – i.e. leading worship to mixed congregations – ages, backgrounds, stages of faith, recognising there may be no residual knowledge of either church or scripture and overcoming the false assumptions of people.”

“While clearly we need to reach and bring to commitment those presently outside worshipping fellowships, some coming into worship through outreach have no background

and little existing Biblical knowledge against which to understand and engage with existing worship offerings. That in itself can be addressed relatively easily, but what appears to engage such 'new' worshippers contrasts with the expectations and preferences of many 'regular' worshippers."

"To be flexible enough to meet the needs of all members of our very varied congregations, and to make our message relevant to multi-cultural, multi-faith, twenty-first century congregations. The background knowledge, tradition and size of a congregation can no longer be assumed and vary tremendously."

"We need worship that copes with short attention spans."

"People's attention span ... means that listening to one person for 15–20 minutes is counter-cultural. Also, in secular life, a presentation for 10 minutes would [expect] responses."

"People are not used to sitting and listening for any length of time. They are used to interactive sessions in other parts of their lives."

"... where do we pitch the message, and is a spoken sermon appreciated or even appropriate?"

"... it is recognised that our congregations need all things – teaching, worshipping and fellowship."

"Is Sunday morning for evangelism or nurturing the converted?"

"Meeting the variety of worship styles within the circuit, from 'Fresh Expressions' at Polzeath (often with 150+ congregation in summer, mainly under 40 years old), churches with PowerPoint, to moorland chapels of 5/6 members of 65 years old +."

4.10 These quotations illustrate the thirst among those exercising a preaching ministry within the life of the Church for a learning and development structure which resources their vital missionary activity. However, these quotations also illustrate that better resourcing the vital ministry of local preachers and worship leaders cannot be a matter simply of revising a course or altering a training pathway. This missionary thirst poses a challenge to our connexional structures holistically to equip the Church's ministries to respond to our postmodern society. It is a challenge which belongs within the wider context of the Fruitful Field Project, and the links offered therein (a) to the development of the Church's other lay and ordained ministries, and (b) to wider organisational development issues, such as the *Regrouping for Mission* programme supported by District Development Enablers, and the structuring of circuit life enabled by the ministry of supported, fully-resourced superintendents. The challenge also belongs within the wider context of the development of the Church's other ministries, and thus within the revised structures outlined in the next section of this report.

4.11 In the meantime, the vital work of supporting those on note and on trial continues. 78% of those currently following *Faith & Worship* and who responded to the consultation noted that they enjoyed studying *Faith & Worship*. This is a tribute to work of local tutors, *Faith & Worship* assessors, circuit local preachers secretaries and district officers. The Church's preaching and worship-leading ministries are sustained and supported by a vast number of Methodist members who give freely of their time and of their gifts and graces. The Church continues to owe them a great debt of gratitude.

Chart 1

The skills and areas of knowledge which local preachers would like to see addressed by continuing development programmes.

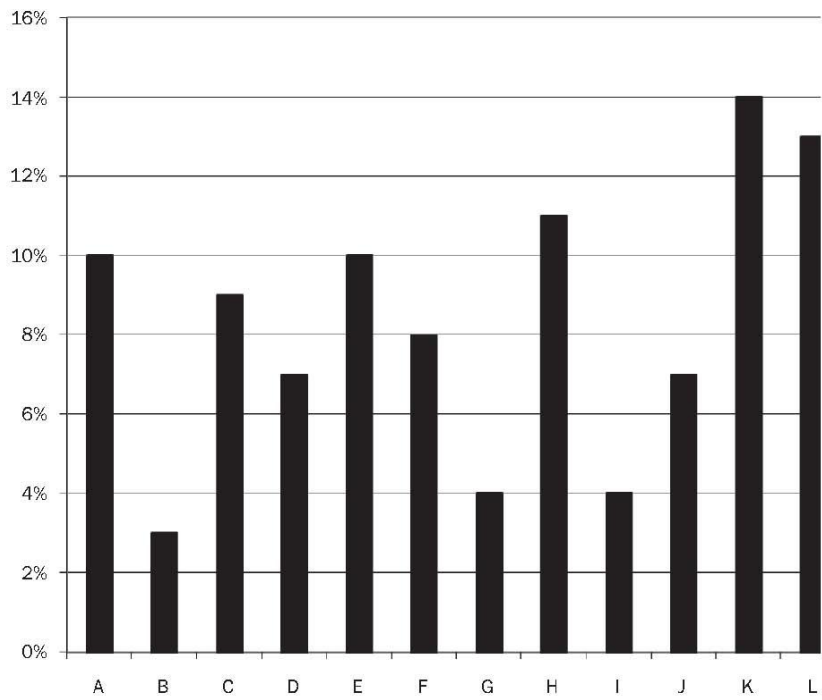


Chart 2

The proportion of *Faith & Worship* students wishing to see more emphasis placed on the following skills and areas of knowledge during *Faith & Worship*.

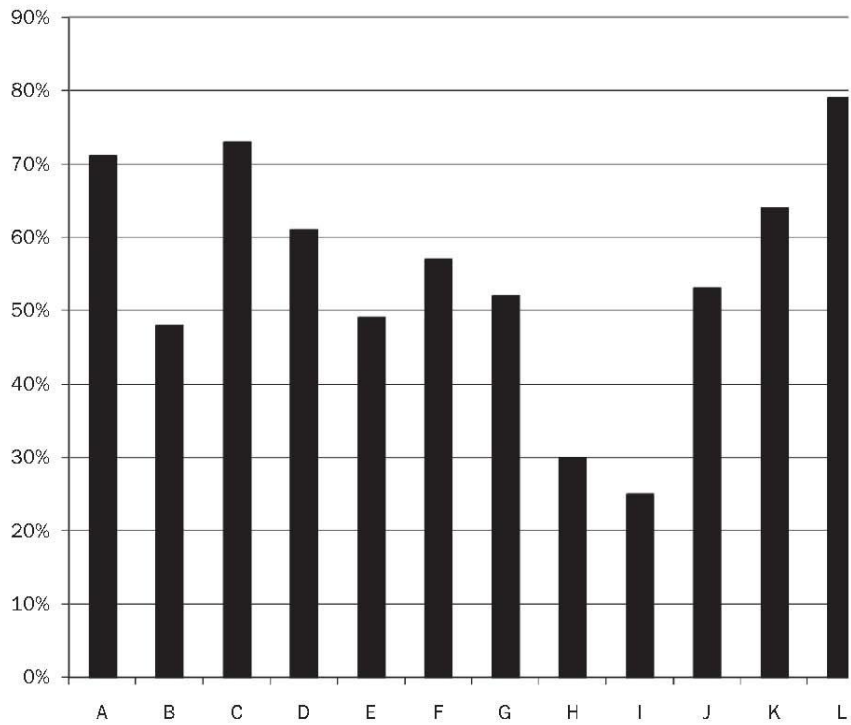


Chart 3

The proportion of local tutors wishing to see more emphasis placed on the following skills and areas of knowledge during *Faith & Worship*.

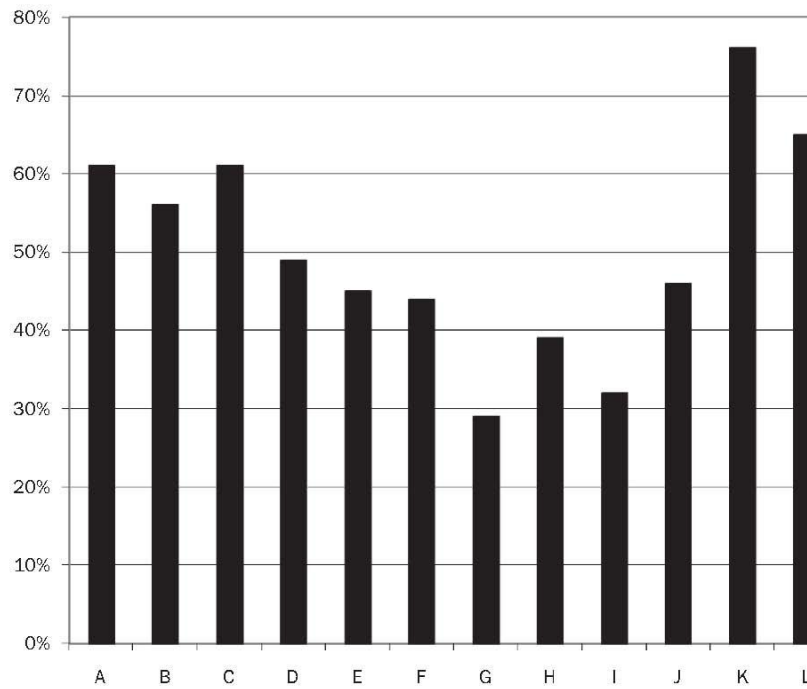
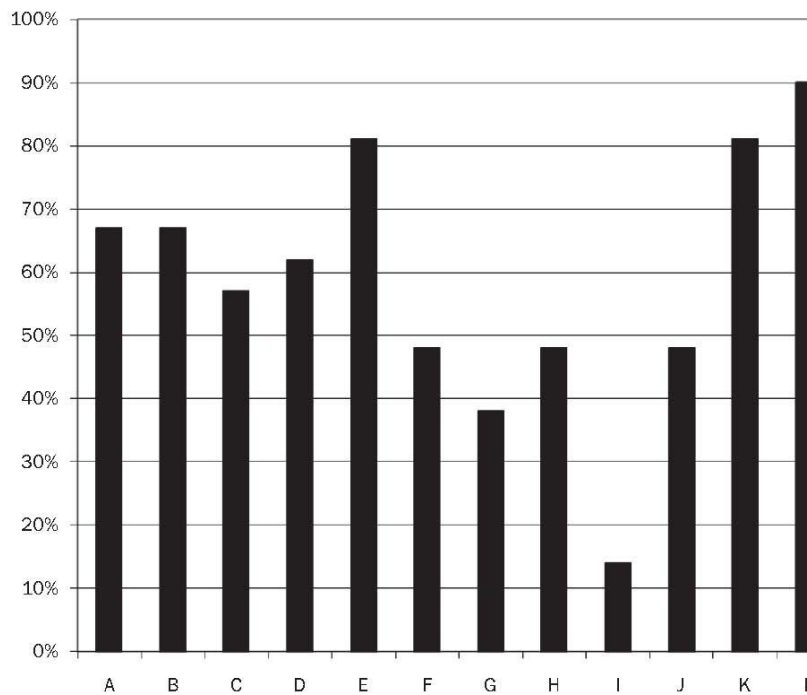


Chart 4

The proportion of assessors wishing to see more emphasis placed on the following skills and areas of knowledge during *Faith & Worship*.



Key for charts 1–4

Practical knowledge and skills

- A using technology in worship (eg PowerPoint)
- B vocal and projection techniques
- C leading all-age worship
- D alternative media and expressions of worship (eg art, movement)

Supporting knowledge and skills

- E your personal spirituality, life of prayer and continuing pilgrimage in faith
- F reflecting on the gifts you bring and on your personal strengths and weaknesses
- G developing pastoral and professional relationships
- H engagement with and study of Scripture and the traditions of Christian thought
- I the traditions and distinctive charisms of Methodism
- J the practices of mission and evangelism
- K the interface of Christianity with contemporary culture & spirituality
- L communicating the gospel in a variety of media and in emerging forms of church

5 Connexional committees

In a word, let every one of us consider himself called to be, in point of enterprise, zeal, and diligence, a Home Missionary; and to enlarge and extend, as well as keep, the Circuit to which he is appointed.

Liverpool Minutes, XVII (“Extension of Methodism”)

We do not forget that the cares and labours, both spiritual and economical, which devolve upon Ministers, and in particular upon Superintendents, are steadily increasing ...

Liverpool Minutes, VII (“Pastoral Visitation”)

5.1 The Stationing Review Group’s wide-ranging report to the 2008 Conference offered a challenging analysis of the demands which contemporary mission make of the Church and the ways in which it structures its ministries:

Historically ... [enabling ministry] was judged to be best done by stationing presbyters in appointments which, although they offered the possibility of many kinds of activity, were basically structured around the care and oversight of Local Churches which constituted the mission bases. Although there always were exceptions to this pattern, it is fair to say that the present situation is fundamentally different. Described in much of the literature as post-Christendom, today [the situation] is characterised by a wide gulf between many local churches and their mission field.³

5.2 A follow-up report to the 2009 Conference identified in general terms the types of ministries required to bridge this gulf. Echoing the categorisation of *Our Calling*, these ministries were described as:

- 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.

In short, they will be ministries which equip the holistic discipleship of the people of God.⁴

³ ¶2 of the preface to Section 2, *Stationing Review Group*, Agenda 2008.

⁴ ¶4.3.1, *Taking Forward the Stationing Review Group’s Report*, Agenda 2009.

- 5.3 The 2009 report also emphasised that church-based presbyteral ministry was only one expression of such ministries, and noted that a primary challenge for the Church was to develop strategies, structures and processes which could equip “a range of lay and ordained, life-long and shorter-term, paid and voluntary, connexional and local, generalist and specialist, church-based and community-based ministries” to serve and support the Methodist people. The 2009 report highlighted the importance of equipping the ministry of superintendents, chaplains and those pioneering “fresh ways of being church”. Memorials to the 2009 Conference, and the Conference’s replies to them, also emphasised strongly the continuing centrality of local preachers, and the importance of light and effective programmes to equip their ministry.
- 5.4 A recent review of connexional committees has highlighted the disparate nature of the committees with responsibility for equipping this full range of ministries (see Figure 1). Among the committees with responsibilities in this area are the Connexional Allowances Committee, the Connexional Local Preachers Committee, the Diaconal Candidates & Probationers Oversight Committee (DCPOC), the Ministerial Candidates & Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC), the Ordained Ministries Committee, the Stationing Advisory Committee, the Stationing Committee and the Training Strategy & Resources Executive (TSRE).
- 5.5 Some of these committees report directly to the Conference, while others report to the Methodist Council or the Strategy & Resources Committee (SRC). Moreover some of these committees exercise general oversight of an area of ministerial policy (eg TSRE’s responsibility for the institutional infrastructure which delivers initial ministerial learning), while others combine general oversight with immediate oversight of individuals on the Conference’s behalf (eg MCPOC meets in public session to discuss policy relating to candidating, initial ministerial learning and probation, and in private session to exercise immediate oversight of particular students and probationers based on information provided by local Oversight Committees and District Probationers Committees; similarly, the Stationing Committee has responsibility both for general policy regarding the deployment of ordained ministers – and, thus, of issues such as itinerancy, the re-invitation procedure and the projected number of ministers available for stationing in future years – while also having the responsibility, exercised largely via a range of sub-committees, for the annual cycle of stationing matching). Further still, some committees share responsibility for the same area of work (eg the Stationing Committee is responsible for selecting the appointments for presbyteral probationers and for directly stationing probationers to those appointments, whereas MCPOC has oversight of the individuals concerned both during their period of initial ministerial learning and during their period of probation, and has general oversight of the criteria for suitable appointments for presbyteral probationers which will be used by the Stationing Committee).
- 5.6 In the spring of 2010, at the direction of the Strategy and Resources Committee, a meeting was convened of the chairs of the Connexional Allowances Committee, the Connexional Local Preachers Committee, DCPOC, MCPOC, the Ordained Ministries Committee, the Stationing Advisory Committee, the Stationing Committee and TSRE, to explore an alternative committee structure (see Figure 2). The meeting was chaired by the Chair of the Stationing Committee. The meeting analysed both the remit and the assumed responsibilities of each committee, identifying synergies, breaches and overlaps. The meeting explored and commended an alternative committee structure based on three elements.
- 5.6.1 First, a grouping of committees, working to established protocols, which undertake tasks of immediate oversight on behalf of the Conference. Most of these committees exist at the moment, though they may technically be sub-committees of other committees. Examples include the Diaconal and Ministerial Candidates Selection Committees (which recommend candidates to the Conference and currently operate under the auspices of DCPOC and MCPOC), the Connexional Allocations Committee (which allocates ministerial students to learning institutions and currently operates under the auspices of DCPOC and MCPOC), the

Initial Stationing Committee (which recommends the stations of presbyteral probationers and those to be stationed to their first appointment within British Methodism, and currently operates under the auspices of the Stationing Committee), the Stationing Matching Group (which matches presbyters to circuit appointments and currently operates under the auspices of the Stationing Committee), the Stationing Action Group (which matches presbyters to circuit appointments when the Stationing Matching Group is not in session and currently operates under the auspices of the Stationing Committee), the work of the Stationing Advisory Committee, the functions of DCPOC and MCPOC which pertain to immediate oversight of ministerial students and probationers, and the functions of the Connexional Allowances Committee which pertain to enquiries or applications from individual ministers or their families.

5.6.2 Secondly, a “Ministries Committee”, which has oversight of strategic and resource-based issues that pertain to the Church’s ministries (including the ministry of deacons, local preachers, presbyters, those pioneering “fresh ways of being church”, superintendents, worship leaders and the corporate ministry of circuit leadership teams). This “Ministries Committee” would also have general oversight of the protocols for the grouping of committees which undertake tasks of immediate oversight on behalf of the Conference, and a duty to work closely with that grouping of committees, responding to their experience and expertise. The committee would report to the Conference via the Methodist Council.

5.6.3 Thirdly, a number of practitioners’ forums, stakeholders’ forums and resource groups to support the work of the “Ministries Committee” by discerning emerging issues, by undertaking a clearly defined, time-limited piece of work on its behalf (eg a Probationers’ Forum consisting of a number of ministerial probationers gathered from across the Connexion to reflect on the experience of probation from the practitioners’ perspective, and to act as an informal channel of probationers’ comments or concerns), or by assuming a standing responsibility to scrutinise the protocols and practices of significant connexional processes (eg candidating and stationing).

5.7 The major change proposed is the establishment of a Ministries Committee. The creation of this committee would achieve a consolidation of currently disparate discussions which take place across the Connexional Allowances Committee, the Connexional Local Preachers Committee, DCPOC, MCPOC, the Ordained Ministries Committee, the Stationing Advisory Committee, the Stationing Committee and TSRE. In particular, it is hoped that a Ministries Committee would provide a forum for connexional conferring on a range of issues which pertain to the full range of the Church’s ministries – ordained ministries, accredited ministries and a number of emerging, informal ministries. Thus, a forum would exist for conversations about “cross-border” issues such as:

- the ministry of deacons, at a time of growth and development within the life of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- the relationship between the ministry of local preachers and the ministry of worship leaders;
- the creation of flexible structures to enable a range of ministries within fresh ways of being Church;
- the encouragement of, and engagement with, the patterns of ministry emerging from *Regrouping for Mission*.

5.8 Furthermore, it is envisaged that the Ministries Committee would also have responsibility for the general oversight of the learning infrastructure and learning programmes which are currently within the remit of the Connexional Local Preachers Committee, DCPOC, MCPOC and TSRE. By marrying the oversight of learning outcomes (as currently determined by DCPOC and MCPOC and, to some extent, by the Connexional Local Preachers Committee with regard to local preachers) to the oversight and stewardship of resources (currently within the remit of TSRE), it may be expected that the effectiveness of, and controls upon, expenditure on learning and development structures from the Connexional Central Services

Budget will be enhanced. The Ministries Committee would therefore be the natural locus for oversight of the Fruitful Field Project, outlined in sections 2 and 3 of this report.

5.9 The work currently undertaken by the Connexional Allowances Committee, the Connexional Local Preachers Committee, DCPOC, MCPOC, the Ordained Ministries Committee, the Stationing Advisory Committee, the Stationing Committee and TSRE is of great importance to the life of the Methodist Church. Moreover, changes to the official structures of these committees will require significant changes to Standing Orders. Furthermore, it will be important to ensure that the Ministries Committee has clearly defined terms of reference, membership guidelines, and monitoring and evaluation procedures. These reasons argue against swift changes in this area. Consideration has therefore been given to the creation of a Shadow Ministries Committee, to operate during the 2010/2011 connexional year. A primary task for this committee would be to oversee the establishment of terms of reference, membership guidelines, and monitoring and evaluation procedures for the Ministries Committee, along with the Standing Order changes required to enable its terms of reference, for presentation to the 2011 Conference.

5.10 The proposals outlined in 5.6–5.9 were received and welcomed by the Methodist Council. However, in recommending to the Conference the establishment of a Shadow Ministries Committee, the Council was also conscious that the shadow body could usefully provide an interim and immediate forum for some of the “cross-border” work described in 5.7 and 5.8. Recent meetings of MCPOC and TSRE have indicated their willingness to delegate some or all aspects of their strategic and resource-based functions to such a shadow body, and the Stationing Committee has indicated that it would be desirable to be able to direct some of the items which have been brought before it for consideration to such a body. Consequently, the Methodist Council resolved to encourage other connexional committees, where appropriate, to delegate their strategic and resource-based functions to the Shadow Ministries Committee, should it be established by the Conference.

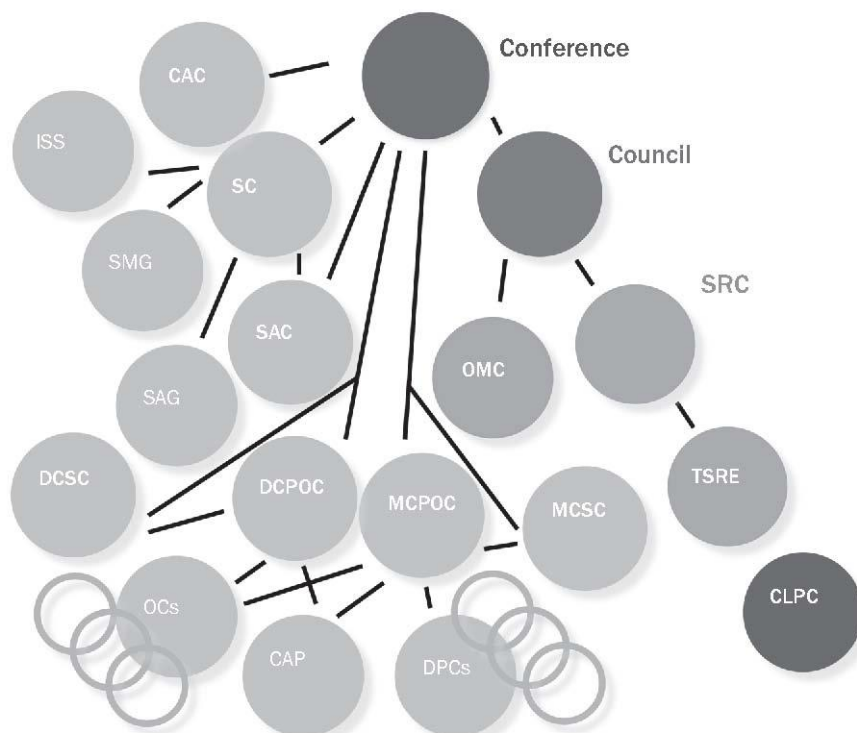


Fig 1: Indicative diagram of the current structure

Key to Fig 1:

CAC: The Connexional Allowances Committee
CAP: The Connexional Allocations Panel
CLPC: The Connexional Local Preachers Committee
DCPOC: The Diaconal Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee
DCSC: The Diaconal Candidates Selection Committee
DPCs: District Probationers Committees
ISS: The Initial Stationing Sub-committee
MCPOC: The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee
MCSC: The Ministerial Candidates Selection Committee
OC: Local (learning institution) Oversight Committees
OMC: The Ordained Ministries Committee
SAC: The Stationing Advisory Committee
SC: The Stationing Committee
SAG: The Stationing Action Group
SMG: The Stationing Matching Group
TSRE: The Training Strategy and Resources Executive

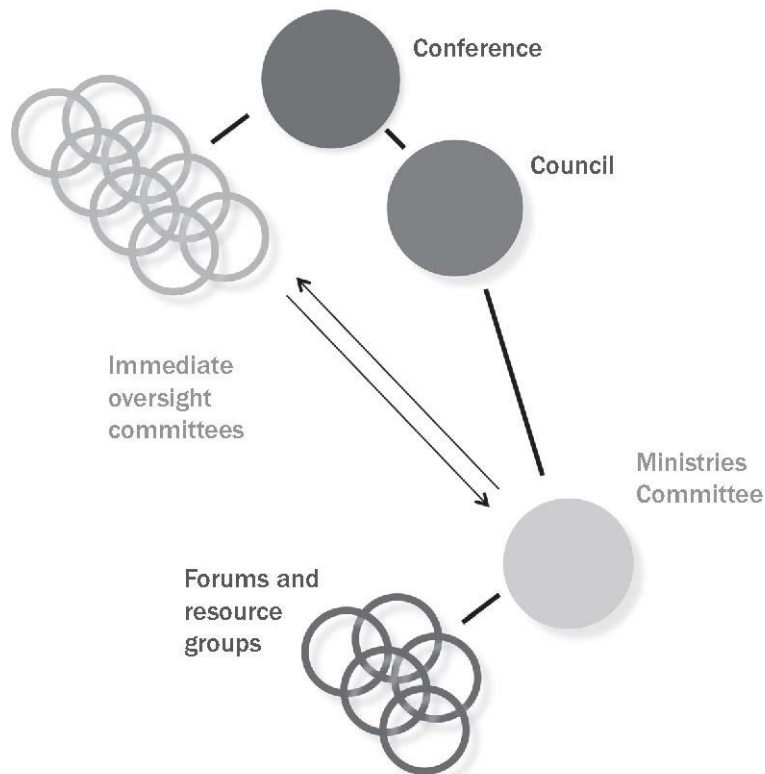


Fig 2: Indicative diagram of an alternative structure

***Resolutions

- 40/1. The Methodist Conference received the report.
- 40/2. The Methodist Conference endorsed the proposals for a Shadow Ministries Committee, contained in paragraphs 5.9 and 5.10 of the report and encouraged connexional committees, where appropriate, to delegate their strategic and resource-based functions to the Shadow Ministries Committee.