

Basic Information

Title	Connexional Team Report
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Status of Paper	Final
Resolution/s	The Conference receives the report.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To give a flavour of the work of the Connexional Team during 2009–10.
Main Points	Inspired by the Christian work done around the Connexion, the Team seeks to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• be integrated• be clear in its aims of serving the Church• promote the Discipleship theme• respond to unexpected priority needs• provide support services well• be adequately resourced.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	The Connexional Team was reorganised under the Team Focus process, with the main changes being implemented in 2008–9.

1. You could have heard the proverbial pin drop in Methodist Church House. The staff were all gathered listening to Bill Gates. They were gripped not by stories of megabytes but of ministry. The Revd Bill Gates, plucked by God out of a Dorset circuit, spoke about his time as Chaplain to 4/5 Commando, Royal Marines, in Afghanistan. He spoke of going out on foot patrol with the men along paths where the last patrol suffered “casualties”. He said the questions he was asked as a minister were no longer about the flower rota but “Padre, when the Afghan soldiers are killed, do they go to the same place as us?” He spoke of the twelve year old boy with his little wheelbarrow who came for sweets; but he was a suicide bomber and when his wheelbarrow blew up four of Bill’s soldiers were also killed. He spoke of the extraordinary reaction on Christmas Eve to his idea for a midnight service. It took place under the stars, around a bonfire built with military precision, and before a cross made from spent shell cases decorated with hairspray. There was no spoken sermon; Bill had just been alongside the men in everything they had endured over the months, so they understood about a Love that is willing to risk incarnation.
2. For the Connexional Team it was an inspirational reminder, in the 150th anniversary year of Forces Chaplaincy, of the astonishing range of work we have the privilege to support. If that is what the Methodist Church is about, we can find the energy to go the extra mile and answer another ten emails.
3. That afternoon also had echoes of several key aspects of the Team’s work over the past year.

A Single Team

4. The gathering Bill addressed was one of our monthly lunch meetings when staff from all areas of work mix together, have the opportunity to share in accessible worship, share their good news stories, hear about each others’ work, and learn about the wider Connexion’s activities. In our second year after the major reorganisation under Team Focus, efforts continue to promote collaborative working using expertise from across the Team. A clear management structure seeks to identify opportunities and maximise synergies. One area where progress has been made is in bringing together expertise in personnel work with knowledge of the needs of presbyters and deacons to improve the candidating process.

Strategic Aims

5. Like those who serve in Afghanistan, the Team needs to know why they are there and what success would look like. Our aims flow from the Church’s chosen strategic choices in *Our Calling* (2000) and *the Priorities* (2005). However we are increasingly aware of the need for the Methodist Church to undertake more detailed planning of its resources on a longer time horizon than has often been the case. With our internal reorganisation now largely complete, we hope we can in future provide more help to the Church’s governance bodies in thinking through, and monitoring, what the Church’s programmes are intended to achieve.

Growing Disciples

6. Bill Gates’ congregations are a wonderful mixture of the committed, the seekers, the puzzled, the curious and the bored. He aims to help them all to grow in their understanding of the God who loves them.
7. In the Team we have picked up the emphasis on Discipleship, as brought to last year’s Conference by the General Secretary. Where there are choices to be made about the use of scarce resources, we ask which uses would do most to help local churches make and nurture Christian disciples. One new piece of work for 2010–11, which met this test admirably, is a project on chaplaincy. This will study how the Church can best encourage this form of ministry at a local level, not least amongst lay volunteers.

Ready for Anything

8. The Team also has to be ready for the unplanned and the one-off. During the past year, we have worked with the Methodist Relief and Development Fund to channel money, encourage prayer and send ambassadors to express solidarity with the people of Haiti. We have also been able to offer practical help after natural disasters in Chile and Samoa. In Fiji the disaster was political, as the activities of the Methodist Church were curtailed by the Government. We were able to facilitate ways of expressing the concerns of the Methodist people to our Government and in Fiji.
9. On the home front, we are joining with our ecumenical partners and other agencies to ensure a Christian impact on the 2012 Olympics, both in London and elsewhere, by using opportunities for hospitality and witness.

Behind the Front Line

10. Much of the Team's work is unseen and unglamorous. That does not worry us provided we are serving the Connexion well. Over the last year we are very aware that the major reorganisation of the Finance Office, its systems and the rebuilding of its staff team, has resulted in a number of instances of poor service. We regret these but believe that the emerging office will provide a much better standard of service to local churches and governance bodies. The new Director of Financial Operations, Maureen Ndagire, started work in May.
11. Even those performing backroom infrastructures jobs in the Team are challenged to aspire to the Team's goal of being "highly professional and distinctively Christian" in their work. We welcome feedback when anyone in the Team does not appear to be offering a good enough service to the wider Church.

Adequate Resources

12. Both the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Council have raised questions this year about the level of resources in the Team. A survey of working hours confirmed that some parts of the Team suffer from a chronic excessive workload. We welcome the Council's proposal to the Conference to integrate better the processes for establishing the level of funding available to the Team, on the one hand, and the decisions on the work the Team must do on the other.

The Manchester Dimension

13. During this year, the part of the Team based in Manchester has been undergoing its Team Focus review. The outcomes of that are reported to the Conference elsewhere but it is appropriate in this Team report to pay tribute to the way the Resourcing Mission Office staff have maintained their standards of work, whilst also contributing professionally to the review, during a time of extended uncertainty and anxiety for them.

***** RESOLUTION**

- 3/1. The Conference received the Report.