

Issues for the Council – World Church Relationships

Basic Information

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Discussion
Draft Resolution	1. None
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	N/A

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	This report articulates the Connexional Team's response to the SOCMS Review of Mission Personnel Report and offers pointers for discussion.
Main Points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Review of Mission Personnel Report commissioned by the Methodist Church and USPG highlights the fact that present World Church Relationships staff are overstretched and cannot sustain an acceptable standard of support for mission personnel. The Council is asked to consider which strategies could best be used to address this. 2. In the light of the principles expressed in <i>Partnerships: Purpose and Practice</i> there is a growing awareness across the Connexion of the need to reconsider the way the Church shares with its Partner Churches in decision making about the use of the World Mission Fund. Council is asked to consider whether the time is right to explore a change to the way the World Church Relationships team is structured more accurately to reflect these principles of partnership. 3. Income for the World Mission Fund can probably be increased if more attention is given to fundraising for specific projects. The Council is asked to consider whether this strategy should be given more emphasis.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<p>In 2008 the Secretary for External Relationships and the Leader of the World Church Relationships agreed to a review of mission personnel supervised by SOCMS on behalf of USPG, the Methodist Church in Britain, and the Methodist Church in Ireland, and appointed the Revd. Diane Clutterbuck to conduct this review. The executive summary of her report forms paper MC/10/12 and the full report is available on request.</p> <p>Reference should also be made to the paper <i>Partnerships: Purpose and Practice</i> presented to the 2007 Conference.</p>
Consultations	

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	N/A
Faith and Order	Faith and Order will need to reflect on the theological issues surrounding mission partnership in the 21st century
Financial	<p>Some strategies suggested for Council's consideration would have financial impact e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• changing the proportion of World Church Fund disbursed for major categories of work• adjusting the 15% charge on the Fund• increasing the Fund's income
Personnel	<p>The report deals with many issues relating to mission personnel, and seeks to improve the standard of support for them. Some of the strategies suggested for Council's consideration would have personnel impact e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• reducing or increasing the number of mission partners• supporting mission partners from regional bases• changing the ratio of mission partners sent from Britain to those received into Britain
Legal	The report suggests considering changing the contractual arrangements for mission personnel.
Wider Connexional	The Methodist people are very interested in the World Church and very generous in their support, therefore the issues in the report and any changes which may be implemented as a result have significant implications across the Connexion.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The Methodist Church works with USPG in training mission partners and with the Methodist Church in Ireland in supporting their discernment and selection, and their support of partners. Many Partner Churches are united or uniting churches, and the Methodist Church in Britain works with other mission agencies to provide 'joint appointments'.
Risk	The report highlights many issues which need addressing to re-establish a high standard of support for mission personnel. If these are not addressed there are risks that relationships with Partner Churches will deteriorate. This could mean that some mission personnel will at best be ineffective or at worst have to withdraw early from service.

Review of Mission Personnel
Connexional Team's Response to the Report of the Revd Diane Clutterbuck

1. Background

1. Various sections of the World Church Relationships (WCR) programme have already been reviewed as part of the Team Focus process, or subsequent to it. This includes Nationals in Mission Appointments; World Church in Britain Partnership; Scholarship and Leadership Training (SALT); and the World Church Relationships office staffing.
2. In 2007, the Joint Secretaries Group (JSG) took the decision to review the Mission Partners programme differently. All Mission Personnel training is delivered in partnership with USPG Anglicans in World Mission by the Selly Oak Centre for Mission Studies (SOCMS), part of Queen's College in Birmingham. SOCMS is jointly funded by the Methodist Church in Britain (MCB), and the staff are appointed and managed through the SOCMS Board of Governors. SOCMS has already been reviewed by JSG and the recommendations were presented to Council.
3. In 2008 the Secretary for External Relationships and the Leader of the World Church Relationships agreed the process for a joint review of mission personnel. This was to be supervised by SOCMS on behalf of USPG, the MCB and the Methodist Church in Ireland (MCB WCR acts on behalf of the Methodist Church in Ireland in respect of world mission programmes including grants, mission personnel and JMA).
4. Revd. Diane Clutterbuck was appointed to conduct this review, and the Executive Summary of her report is provided as paper MC/10/12 (the full report is available on request).
5. The senior staff of the Connexional Team have reflected on the report and its recommendations. We value the depth of insights given, noting that most are about maintaining high standards in the work and support of mission personnel. We are committed to address those which can be accommodated within present resources
6. However the focus of this paper is to highlight strategic issues for the Council to discuss. These seek to explore how best to use limited resources while maintaining the core principles of partnership in mission.

2. Recommendations which the Connexional Team will address within existing resources

- 2.1. Mission Education – Recommendation 2.4 (bullets 2-3);
the fundraising Coordinator is already looking at ways to address how best to present World Church work to Methodists in Britain.
- 2.2. Discernment and selection process, and contractual arrangements – Recommendations 4.1 - 4.2; and 6 (bullet 1);
over the past year, the discernment and selection staff have had to give priority to the discernment and selection process for Presbyters, while maintaining the existing processes for mission personnel. However they will now be able to give more attention to reviewing the mission personnel processes.
- 2.3. Outcomes Review – Recommendation 3.1 (bullet 1);
the recommendations for outcome review are very helpful, and will be further explored with staff.

3. Strategic Issues

3.1. Maximising the impact of limited resources.

3.1.1. The report offers very useful reflections on the *Missio Dei* and the nature of partnership.

- It emphasises the importance of mission “from everywhere to everywhere”, and that partnership is still a good model for mission.
- It reflects on the fact that at the heart of mission is the principle of people sharing their God-given gifts in cross-cultural situations as they journey together in the work and witness of local church life, thus building up the body of the world church.
- It recognises the shared value of such partnership to both sending and receiving churches, as returning personnel share their stories and experiences.

3.1.2. All the partner churches contacted in the review have clearly indicated that if they had to choose between receiving mission partners and receiving grants, they would choose to receive mission partners.

3.1.3. There are several places in the report where the concerns raised reflect a significant overstressing of resources in the WCR office. In response, the report recommends an increase in resources e.g. to provide more staff time for matching personnel with partners; more pastoral support for mission personnel; more staff time to debrief in “House visits”; more support to mission personnel when re-entering Britain, and more coordination of mission partner visits when in Britain.

3.1.4. However the staff resources of the WCR office have already been reviewed and agreed by the Conference in 2009. In the light of the present financial and general environment, any further expansion of the Connexional Team cannot be considered.

Therefore the strategic issue is how to use the present resources for maximum impact within the principles of partnership summarised above.

3.1.5. The review also highlights comments from many partner churches that true partnership entails working through such strategic issues together, with participation in the decision making itself by representatives of the partners. The ***All Partners Consultation*** planned for June 2010 provides a natural forum to start this process, and these strategic aspects will be explored within the four major themes already agreed.

3.1.6. Issues surrounding genuine partnership are highly complex. Some partners say that the mission of the church only gains momentum once western/northern churches and their money cease to have influence. For example the Christian Church in China operates the three self principle - self promoting, self propagating, self determining - and has grown exponentially year on year. One recent estimate reckons on 100 million members. The Methodist Church in Brazil has more than doubled its membership in the past 10 years.

3.1.7. When we witness other countries and their needs, we have no doubt that we are wealthy and have resources to share – and we want to share. The challenge of duty and the obligation to share resources as Christian people is our desire to witness to the gospel and the transforming power of God’s love and the call of responding to God’s mission in the world.

3.1.8. There are essentially three main components to the deployment of resources for world partnership mission¹:

- The funding of personnel from everywhere to everywhere – £2,513,200 for the 2009-10 budget. This is 45% of the budget and includes funding for Mission Partners; SOCMS; SALT; Nationals in Mission Appointments, and the World Church in Britain.
- Grants to partner churches – £2,701,000. This is 48% of the budget and covers both annual and general grants.
- The WCR section of the Connexional Team to effectively facilitate the above - £423,000. This is 8% of the expenditure budget and includes the work of Companions.

3.1.9. If the present WCR staff resource is too overstretched and cannot sustain an acceptable standard of support, what strategies should be considered?

- What is our responsibility in the 21st century when we want to be part of the world church and not continue to act as though we are the hub?
- Should the Church shift the balance in expenditure to give more emphasis on grants, and less on personnel exchange? This may relieve some pressure, but managing an accountable international grants system also takes a lot of support resources.
- Should the Church instead move away from the practice of grant making, recognising that it can lead to dependency and paternalism, and shift the balance of expenditure towards personnel exchange?
- Should the Church build up the personnel exchange programme (from everywhere to everywhere) in a way that enables and funds Partner Churches to take more responsibility for staffing the support programme e.g. by hosting regional offices around the globe employing local staff at a lower cost than in London?
- Should the charge on the World Mission Fund (currently totalling 15%) be increased so that more London staff resources can be applied for mission partner support and less spent abroad?
- Should Methodist mission partners follow the example of USPG and be expected to at least partly fund themselves?

3.1.10. The Council is asked to reflect on these issues and give input to the **All Partners Consultation** in June where they will be further explored.

3.2. Developing a structure which better reflects the principles of partnership

3.2.1. The WCR staff team has sat within the Connexional Team since the separate divisions of the Methodist Church were brought together in 1996. As with other sections of the Team, it is funded from the Assessment plus a 9% charge on the four major restricted funds (including WMF). An additional 6% charge on WMF goes towards appropriate support of ongoing personnel programmes, including the newly-instituted Companions scheme. The budget is constructed on the basis that the direct costs of the WCR team are at least as great as the expected yield of the 15% charge on the WMF.

¹ Note: Discernment and Selection staff, and administrative support staff are not included in these figures, neither is the All Partners Consultation as this is not a regular event

3.2.2. While there is a very clear charitable legal framework about how these funds may be used and accounted for, the principles of partnership articulated in ***Partnerships: Purpose and Practice*** emphasise genuine sharing in mission, based on mutuality; reciprocity; sharing power, and enabling each other. This important report states “MCB is committed to working with its partners to achieve an appropriate balance between togetherness and outcome, recognising that mutual learning and growth are often gradual processes which take a long time”.

3.2.3. It has been reported that there is a growing awareness across the Connexion of the need for the Church to reconsider the way it shares with its Partner Churches in decision making on the use of the World Church Fund. One option could be to work towards a WCR organisation which is not set within the Connexional Team with access to its various support and communications structures, but within another appropriate structure reporting to the Conference. A strategic question is whether the time is right to explore this in greater depth throughout the Connexion and with Partner Churches, noting that other WCR work would need to be set aside to free up resources to enable this to happen. The Council is asked to reflect on whether this is the right time for such a piece of work.

3.3. Project funding

3.3.1. The Methodist people are very generous in their support for the World Church Fund. A large part of this income is given without further restriction, and can be used at the discretion of various bodies and offices responsible.

3.3.2. However, we live in a world where individuals and individual congregations find it more congenial to support single projects where it is possible to have closer involvement through personal links and knowledge. The general experience of fundraisers is that people are more generous when there is a clearly defined “project” to give to.

3.3.3. Such projects are usually a specific piece of work undertaken in a defined time period like infrastructure development (e.g. an improvement to a church building) or capacity development (e.g. supporting a training initiative to upgrade leadership skills in a particular year).

3.3.4. There are both advantages and disadvantages to project based fundraising and support. The advantages include closer relationships and an identification with and knowledge of another’s situation. These links lead to personal commitment and motivation. However the disadvantages include a potentially paternalistic view and an underfunding or even undermining of the national church’s priorities which may include programmes and projects unseen or unheard of because they don’t have advocates known to churches in the UK.

3.3.5. Many churches and mission agencies grapple with the issue of how much to emphasise fundraising for projects. This has the potential to increase income, but also it sometimes adds unhelpful restrictions on the way funds can be used, and may force partner churches to see all their work through a projects lens. This in turn can draw attention away from the *Missio Dei* and the principles of partnership.

3.3.6. The Council is asked to reflect on whether the Church should give more emphasis to project funding and feed into the discussion of Partners.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. This report highlights significant issues about the standards of support offered for mission personnel, and reflects on how improvements could be made recognising both the principles of partnership and the limitation of resources.
- 4.2. The Methodist Church has a rich history of engagement with world mission, and in sending and receiving mission personnel. It is in a strong position to re-establish high standards of mission support, and to develop a model of working in partnership which reflects 21st century thinking.