

MINISTRIES, LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Basic Information

Contact Name and Details	Doug Swanney swanneyd@methodistchurch.org.uk
Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Decision
Draft Resolution	Resolutions appear at the end of sections B, C and D
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	N/A

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	An outline of proposals regarding a review of ministerial committees, the ongoing development of the Church's learning infrastructure and learning programmes, and the support offered to local preachers.
Main Points	Section B: Proposals for a modified structure of ministerial committees, including the establishment of a Shadow Ministries Committee. Section C: An outline of "The Fruitful Field Project: Nurturing the Learning Church". Section D: An update on the consultations undertaken regarding the initial and continuing development of local preachers.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	Section B: <i>Taking Forward the Stationing Review Group's Report</i> , Agenda 2009 Section C: <i>Future Use and Configuration of Training Institutions</i> , Agenda 2006 Section D: Memorials M2, M3, M4, M5, M6 and M34, Agenda 2009.
Consultations	Section B: The Connexional Allowances Committee, the Connexional Local Preachers Committee, the Diaconal Candidates & Probationers Oversight Committee, the Ministerial Candidates & Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC), the Ordained Ministries Committee, the Chair of the Stationing Advisory Committee, the Stationing Committee, the Strategy & Resources Committee (SRC), the Training Strategy & Resources Executive (TSRE) Section C: MCPOC, SRC, TSRE, the chairs of the Methodist Training Forums of the Regional Training Networks, Training Officers Section D: As noted in section D.

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	Section B: A number of Standing Orders are affected, but no decisions are required regarding SO changes for the time being.
Faith and Order	Further work outlined in section B-D will require F&O consultation.
Financial	Section B and C: Mechanisms are proposed to assess and improve the return achieved from capital assets and revenue expenditure.
Personnel	N/A
Legal	N/A
Wider Connexional	The subject matter of sections B-D is of great significance to a number of practitioners and stakeholders across the Connexion.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Section C: Consultations with ecumenical partners will be required.
Risk	N/A

MINISTRIES, LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

A. 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.

From the “Liverpool Minutes 1820”, CPD, Vol 1, Book V, Part 3, section I

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”.

2. The resolutions take care to 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’”.

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 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 ministry 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 that ministry 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.

B. A “MINISTRIES COMMITTEE”

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”)

4. The Stationing Review Group’s wide-ranging report to the 2008 Conference offered a blunt 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.¹

5. 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.²

6. 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.

7. Work on the review of committees has highlighted the disparate nature of the connexional committees who have responsibilities for equipping this full range of ministries. 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).

8. Some of these committees report directly to the Conference, while others report to the Methodist Council or its 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 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*).

¹ *Stationing Review Group*, Agenda 2008, Section 2, Preface, ¶12

² *Taking Forward the Stationing Review Group’s Report*, Agenda 2009, ¶4.3.1

9. On 29 January 2010, at the direction of the SRC, a meeting was convened of the chairs of the committees listed in paragraph 7, to explore an alternative committee structure. The meeting was chaired by the Chair of the Stationing Committee. The meeting analysed the remit and the assumed responsibilities of each committee, identifying synergies, breaches and overlaps. The meeting agreed to explore an alternative committee structure based on three elements:

- 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.
- A “**Ministries Committee**”, which has oversight of strategic and resource-based issues which 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 and the SRC.
- A number of **practitioners’ forums, stakeholders’ forums** and ad hoc **resource groups** to support the work of the “Ministries Committee” by discerning emerging issues or 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).³

10. 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 a number of the committees listed in paragraph 7. 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

³ For a definition of practitioners’ forums, stakeholders’ forums and resource groups used by the meeting, see *Update on the Review of Committees, Advisory Groups and Reference Groups that Support the Connexional Team*, Agenda 2009, pp. 421-422.

- 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*

11. 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 from the Connexional Central Services Budget will be enhanced.

12. The work currently undertaken by the committees listed above 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.

13. However, it was also suggested at the recent meeting of the chairs of the committees (see paragraph 9) that the shadow body could usefully provide an interim forum for some of the “cross-border” work described above. Recent meetings of MCPOC, the Stationing Committee and TSRE indicated their willingness to delegate some or all aspects of their strategic and resource-based functions to such a shadow body.

RESOLUTIONS

- a. The Methodist Council receives section B.
- b. The Methodist Council recommends that the Conference appoints a Shadow Ministries Committee, to operate from the end of the 2010 Conference until the end of the 2010/2011 connexional year.
- c. The Methodist Council encourages other connexional committees, where appropriate, to delegate their strategic and resource-based functions to the Shadow Ministries Committee.

C. THE FRUITFUL FIELD PROJECT: NURTURING THE LEARNING CHURCH

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”.

Liverpool Minutes, II (“The Study”)

14. The **learning infrastructure** and the **learning programmes** which are funded from the Connexional Central Services Budget have demanded a great deal of the Methodist Council’s attention over recent years. Proposals regarding the institutions at which ministerial students undertake initial ministerial learning programmes were considered at length by the Council in 2005/2006, and again in 2006/2007.

15. In the report presented to the 2006 Conference, *Future Use and Configuration of Training Institutions*, it was noted that:

[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.⁴

16. This prophecy of future change and opportunity, demanding a willingness to modify and develop, may lay claim to be one of the most enduring components of the work undertaken during the 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 connexional years. Indeed, as the above extract from the report implies, a willingness to modify and develop is required in the field of learning, education and training, especially when expenditure in that field accounts – however justifiably – for such a significant component of the Connexional Central Services Budget. A willingness to modify and develop is also a proper part of the Christian experience – 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 is a forest.

17. This metaphor from the Liverpool Minutes, drawn from the prophecy of Isaiah, may provide a useful lens through which to look at the Church’s learning infrastructure and the learning programmes as the need for modification and development is again assessed. Hence the title of a proposed project to be undertaken by the Connexional Team, in collaboration with a range of partners across the Connexion, over the coming months: **“The Fruitful Field Project: Nurturing the Learning Church”**.

18. The Fruitful Field Project has four elements:

MAPPING

19. A mapping exercise will identify, describe and relate one to another every component of the learning infrastructure and each learning programme funded from the Connexional Central Services Budget. This may be seen as particularly important, given that several components of the learning infrastructure and several learning programmes were not adequately accounted for during the work undertaken during the 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 connexional years.

⁴ *Future Use and Configuration of Training Institutions*, Agenda 2006, ¶3.7.5 – this paragraph forms part of the 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).

20. Components of the learning infrastructure include:

- The five English Regional Training Networks established in September 2008
- The Wales Training Network and Training for Scotland
- The 2 full-time equivalent Training Officers located within each Regional Training Network in England⁵
- The three institutions at which full-time initial ministerial learning programmes are delivered (the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham; Wesley House, Cambridge; the Wesley Study Centre, Durham)
- The eight institutions at which part-time initial ministerial learning programmes are delivered (ERMC, Cambridge; Hartley Victoria College, Manchester; SEITE, London and the South East; STETS, Salisbury; SWMTC, Exeter; the Urban Theology Unit, Sheffield; Wesley College, Bristol; the York Institute for Community Theology)
- Several other Methodist-controlled or Methodist-sponsored institutions at which learning programmes are delivered or within which Methodist-sponsored research is undertaken (including Cliff College, the Guy Chester Centre, SOCMS, the John Rylands University Library, the SOAS Library, the Westminster Institute of Education and Southlands College)
- Other institutions and ecumenical organisations through which co-funded learning programmes are delivered (including Regional Training Partnerships, the Centre for Youth Ministry and the Fresh Expressions agency)

21. Learning programmes include:

- Initial ministerial learning programmes (2-year full-time or 3-year part-time pathways for ministerial students)
- Probationer learning programmes
- Continuing ministerial learning programmes (including superintendency learning programmes)
- Local preachers learning programmes
- Worship leader learning programmes
- Learning programmes for children and youth workers and other lay employees
- Learning programmes for those exercising other local ministries
- Research and scholarship opportunities

22. A presentation of the mapping exercise will be made to the Council.

⁵ Alternative arrangements apply in Scotland, Wales and the island districts.

KEY ACTIONS

23. Key actions related to the learning infrastructure and the learning programmes will be identified and implemented. Key actions will involve:

- **Clarifying** responsibilities, expectations and assumptions
- **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
- **Establishing** new initiatives where the evidence of the need for those initiatives is already strong
- **Reviewing** elements where there is evidence that their current contribution does not clearly correspond to needs or strategies

24. Major key actions are likely to include:

- Establishing a clear pattern of Methodist governance-level and management-level involvement for all learning institutions
- Reviewing Methodist involvement in Regional Training Partnerships, in partnership with the Church of England and the United Reformed Church
- Reviewing the key competencies for ministerial candidates, ministerial students and probationers
- Establishing a comprehensive superintendency learning programme

25. An outline of all proposed key actions will be presented to the Council, alongside the presentation of the mapping exercise.

ASSESSING METHODIST-CONTROLLED PHYSICAL LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

26. The viability of the full range of physical learning institutions over which the Methodist Church has effective control will be assessed. This assessment will enable decisions to be made about the appropriate degree of continued capital investment in physical institutions.

ASSESSING VALUE FOR MONEY

27. An ongoing assessment of the return achieved on resources expended from the Connexional Central Services Budget will be instigated. This assessment will enable decisions to be made about the appropriate degree and focus of continued revenue expenditure.

RESOLUTIONS

- a. The Methodist Council welcomes the Fruitful Field Project.
- b. The Methodist Council commends the work of the Fruitful Field Project to the institutions and office-holders within the learning infrastructure, and encourages their cooperation with the project's key actions.

D. SUPPORTING LOCAL PREACHERS

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”)

28. The 2009 Conference received several memorials regarding the support offered to local preachers and to those preparing to be accredited as local preachers⁶. 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

29. 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”.

30. 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.

31. The consultation about initial development has, at the time of writing, not yet closed; however, the response rate is already encouragingly high.

32. The consultation about continuing development closed in February, although many responses were received after the official deadline. The response rate has, again, 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**. The result is a wealth of quantitative and qualitative data about the experience of local preachers across the Connexion.

⁶ Memorials M2, M3, M4, M5, M6, M34, Agenda 2009

33. Such is the unexpectedly high response, and such is the quality of the qualitative data received, that a full analysis of the results has not been completed at the time of writing. The raw quantitative data gleaned from the submitted questionnaires is included as an appendix below. Initial analysis of the qualitative data supports some of the conclusions which may be drawn from the data in the appendix, namely: a desire on the part of local preachers to be better equipped for contemporary mission; a general willingness to undertake at least an eight hour continuing development programme each year; a desire for continuing development to be made available locally and contextually; and a wish to explore the interface of Christianity with contemporary culture, both in theology and in preaching and leading worship.

34. An update of the analysis of the results will be provided during a presentation to the Council.

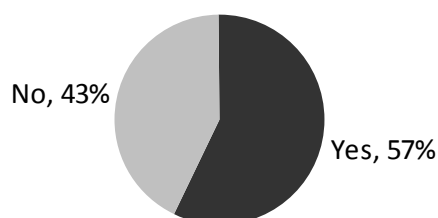
35. A report analysing the complete results of both consultations will be prepared for the 2010 Conference, and a process and timetable for further work, based on the evidence gathered, will be presented to the first Methodist Council meeting of the 2010/2011 connexional year.

RESOLUTIONS

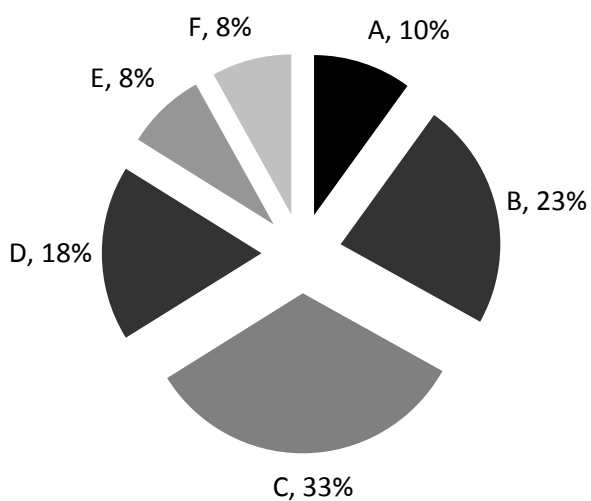
- a. The Methodist Council receives section D.
- b. The Methodist Council instructs that an analysis of the consultations about the initial and continuing development of local preachers be brought to the 2010 Conference, and deems the analysis to form its initial report to the Conference as requested in the 2009 Conference's reply to Memorials M2, M3, M4, M5, M6 and M34.

A CONSULTATION ABOUT CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT: SOME PRELIMINARY RESULTS

In the past 12 months, have you attended any continuing development programmes and events for local preachers?



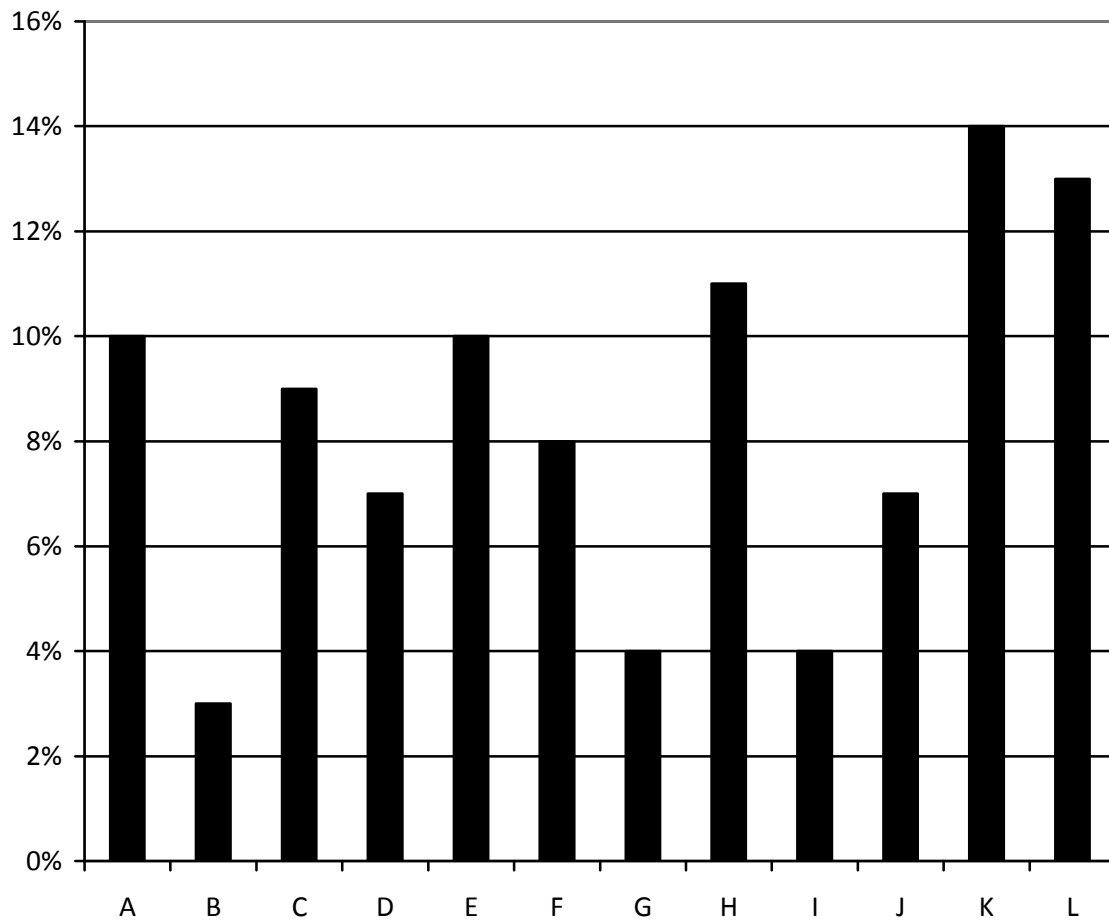
If yes, what was the cumulative length of all of the continuing development programmes and events which you have attended in the past 12 months?



	A	Up to 2 hours
	B	Up to 4 hours / half a day
	C	Up to 8 hours / full day
	D	Between 1 and 2 full days
	E	Between 2 and 4 full days
	F	More than 4 full days

QUESTION 3

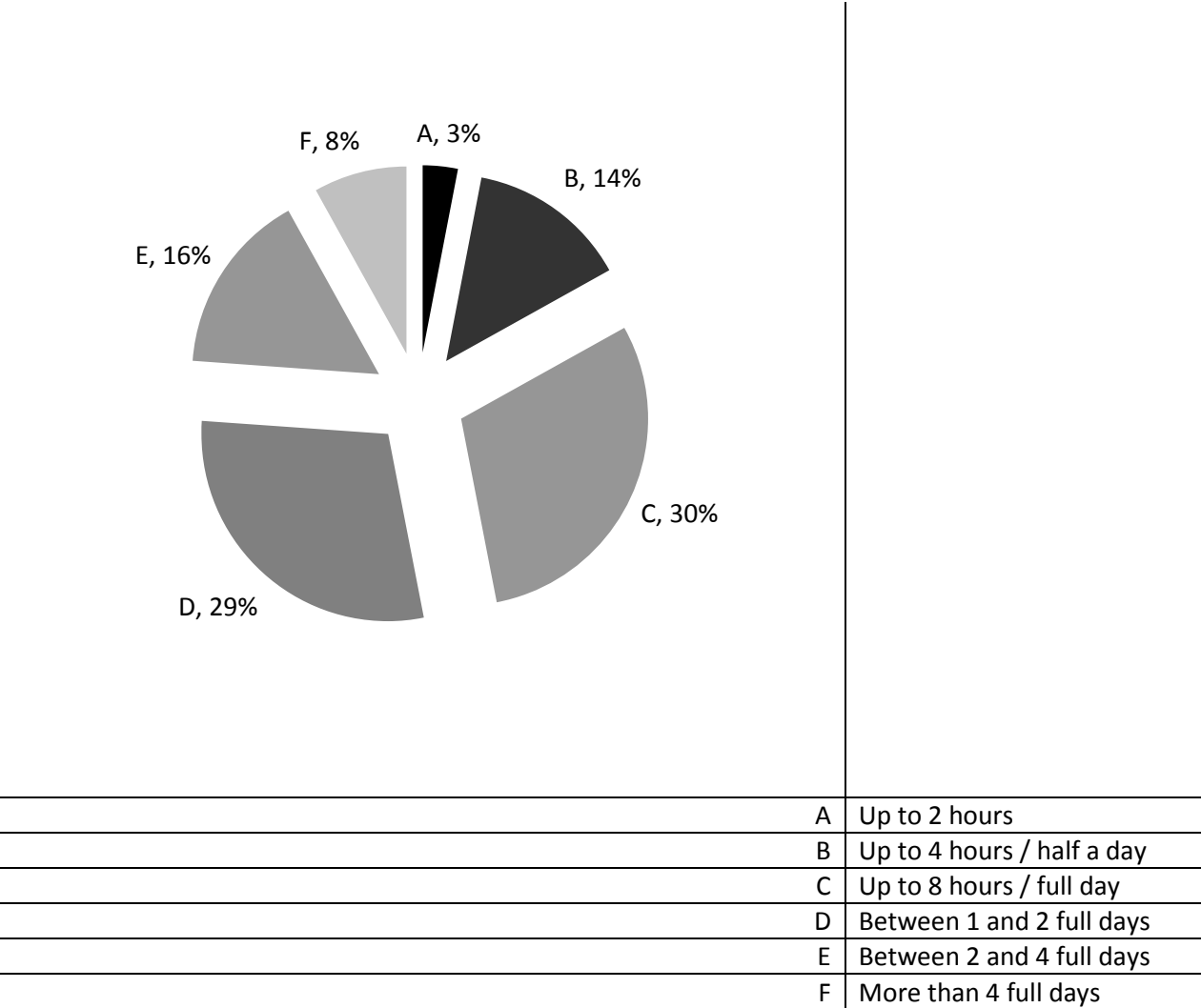
Which skills or areas of knowledge would you like to see addressed by continuing development programmes to assist your development as a local preacher?



	<i>Practical knowledge and skills</i>
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)
	<i>Supporting knowledge and skills</i>
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

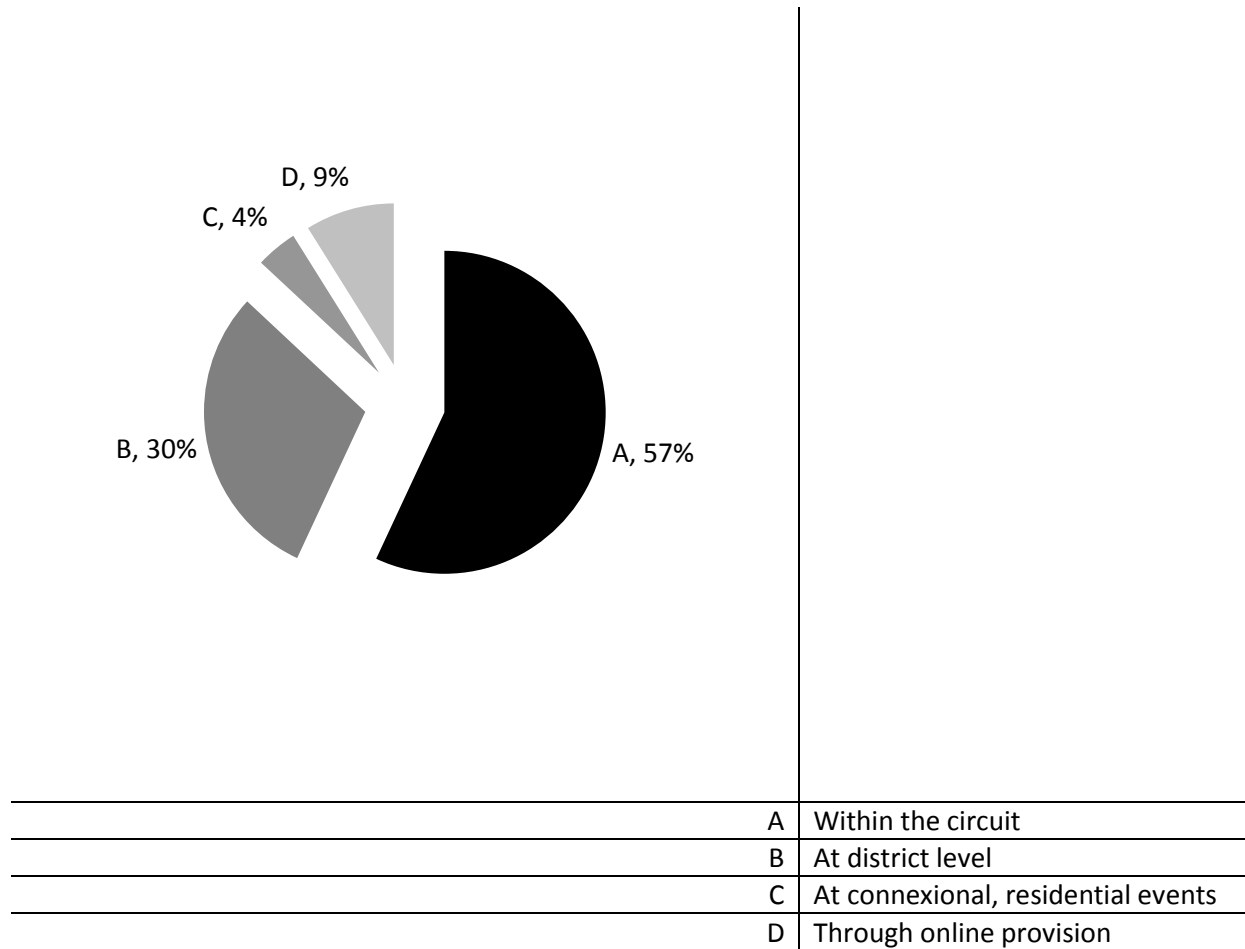
QUESTION 4

How much time, each year, would you be willing and able to commit to continuing development programmes and events?



QUESTION 5

Where should continuing development programmes and events be delivered?



QUESTION 6

Do you think that it should be compulsory for local preachers to attend continuing development programmes and events?

