

## Connexional Team Update

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<b>Status of Paper</b>	Final
<b>Action Required</b>	To Note

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	To provide the Council with an update of work undertaken in the Connexional Team since the update provided in April 2019.
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1. This paper provides the Council with an update of work undertaken in the Connexional Team since the most recent update which was submitted to the Council in April 2019.
2. Other significant developments that have taken place since the Conference include further reflection on how best to support the *Our Calling* strategy development including thinking on the structures of decision making, and a number of senior leaders spending time at a residential with our partners from the United Methodist Church to take forward the work on the Concordat.
3. Updates from the specific areas in the Team are provided below.

### **The Conference Office**

4. Since the Conference, the Conference Office has been working closely with staff in the communications and engagement teams to prepare resources to facilitate the study and prayerful discussion of the Conference report, *God in love unites us*, and to offer guidance to district synods as they prepare to vote on the provisional resolutions.
5. Similarly, work is being undertaken by the Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group (in partnership with the Church of England) to produce resources which will encourage and enable people in circuits and parishes to engage with the Covenant and recognise the potential that already exists to work together in mission. The Conference Office is being assisted in this by the media team as we plan to produce a suite of resources.
6. Work on the Vocations Strategy continues apace as Alison Ransome joins the Ministries: Vocations and Worship Team half-time as Vocations Advisor. Andrew Wood is in post now as the Head of Ministries.
7. The implementation of the interim supervision policy nears completion with training programmes administered and resourced by the Ministries: Vocations and Worship Team with members of the Learning Network staff and external providers.
8. The Ecumenical Officer has been heavily involved in ongoing work to resource the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome. Since the Ecumenical Officer is now also the Assistant Secretary of the Conference, the Council has agreed to the appointment of an Assistant Ecumenical Officer who will also be engaged in inter-faith work and oversight of the chaplains to the fellowship groups.
9. The Methodist Church has been asked to provide a witness statement to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse so members of the Safeguarding Team have been engaged in the preparation

of that statement. Other staff are supporting the team to ensure that all those who need DBS checks have had or are having their checks processed.

10. The new Director for Property Support has been recruited and will be based in Manchester starting on 1 October 2019. This is the role that was envisaged by the Legal and Property Support for Managing Trustees working party and is currently being fulfilled by two consultant surveyors. The Property Support function is producing a programme of events and training for managing trustees and District Property Secretaries (DPSs) for this connexional year in order to support managing trustees and DPSs in the implementation of the Connexional Property Strategy.
11. There is clearly a significant amount of work to be undertaken proposing different models of managing trusteeship and in reviewing of the complaints and discipline process as directed by the Conference. However, in light of the Governance Adviser having recently handed in his notice, a review will be undertaken of the legal and governance resource required within the Conference Office. The review will focus on the work directed by the Conference, the need to better resource managing trustees in understanding their charity trustee responsibilities and improve the assurance framework for the work and processes of the Connexional Team which is an ongoing concern of the Audit Committee.

## **Mission**

### Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT)

12. JPIT continues to work on a number of campaigns, including the production of an ecumenical statement and letter raising concerns about the impact of a No Deal Brexit on the poorest in society, and coordination of *Lift the Ban* on asylum seekers working, with hundreds of postcards signed at and after the Methodist Conference.
13. We have also been involved in a lot of TV and radio coverage discussing Universal Credit, including the provision of childcare during the summer. The team has also achieved a change to the Department of Work and Pensions website to remove “stripclub assistant” and “dancing for adult entertainment” as appropriate job opportunities for people on Universal Credit.
14. The UK Government has accepted the Net Zero by 2050 target, a campaign target of Churches and others.

### Evangelism & Growth

15. The Evangelism & Growth team of ten people, including three new team members who joined in March and April, is now in place and beginning to be well established. The writing of the Evangelism & Growth strategy is well underway and was discussed in workshops at the Conference. An Evangelism & Growth consultation is planned for 19 October 2019, when over 250 people will also discuss the strategy.
16. Most districts have submitted a mission plan of one kind or another. Four have mission plans in progress and five have submitted a plan which needs further work. The team is planning pilots for 2019/2020 to train, enthuse, and build energy and skills for mission planning.
17. Our Contemporary Apologetics Officer, along with our Projects Officer, is in the process of evaluating and editing the resources available on the Evangelism & Growth section of the website, as well as working on new resources for Christmas 2019.

### Children, Youth and Family

18. Preparations for 3Generate continue in the following ways:
  - Plans to increase the capacity of 3Generate with a larger venue to continue growing the event through to 2022
  - More young people are engaging in shaping the programme and delivery of 3Generate
  - Creation of tailored young adult venues to encourage their engagement
  - Revised information for leaders, with session plans produced to help leaders prepare children and young people before they attend
  - Increasing accessibility and provision for those with additional needs
  - Presence of mental health first aiders during the weekend
  - Keeping inclusion and diversity at the top of the agenda in all strategic development eg gender neutral toilet facilities from 2020.
19. Work has taken place alongside the Vocations Adviser to identify opportunities for vocational discernment for children, youth and young adults, which includes the development of prospectus with details of all vocational opportunities for young adults.
20. The team is also piloting an intergenerational project that links youth groups with MHA homes and Live at Home schemes, as well as an annual young local preachers' event for those aged 16 and above.

### Global Relationships

21. Capacity building through Church Can is developing well, with new partners engaging in this process. A separate grant to the Methodist Church in Portugal has been pledged to help in their capacity development. Grants have also been pledged to The Queen's Foundation, Cliff College and Wesley House to facilitate capacity building programmes with global partners in education.
22. Our People-to-People Programmes have seen: two Global Mission Fellows come to serve with the Methodist Church in Britain; some successful Encounter Worldwide programmes to India and Argentina; an Encounter Together visit to Haiti; and facilitating appropriate short-term skills-based service overseas during sabbaticals.
23. The implementation of the Mission Partner Review has begun. We currently have five candidates for service overseas at various stages of the process.

### Engagement

24. Following the Conference's decisions in relation to *God in love unites us*, a Study Guide with discussion questions and a supporting film featuring the Task Group were made available online at the end of August. They have also been made available in printed form, along with the report containing the revised resolutions. In addition, resources are provided online to set the consultation in the context of worship, to help group leaders facilitate discussions of the report, including encouraging the contribution of young people, and to guide individuals in prayerful reflection on the report.
25. The team is contributing to a shared pack, co-ordinated by All We Can, encouraging legacy giving to the Methodist Church and 'family' of associated organisations. We have agreed systematically to invite each of these partner organisations to promote their activities and impact through the *connexion* magazine, beginning with the All We Can Christmas 'Extraordinary gifts' campaign.
26. Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice (MAPJ) grants are especially focused on areas of greatest need, and are enshrined in the Connexional Grants Committee's grant-giving priorities following the review that was presented to the April Council. This is particularly to support the aim 'to transform

societies and communities by reaching and empowering people experiencing poverty and inequality of resources whether in an urban or rural setting.'

27. Following the decision of the Conference to end the One Mission Forum in its previous form, a mission consultation day is scheduled for October 2019 to celebrate the Forum and offer workshops to share ideas and good practice in mission engagement. As a possible alternative to the Forum meetings, a district mission event is being piloted in the Cornwall District in November 2019, supported by members of the Global Relationships and Engagement teams.

#### **Finance & Resources**

28. We have been undertaking a review of our IT systems over the last few months. External analysts have been meeting with key individuals and groups across the Connexional Team to map out our current systems in order to propose a way forward. At the time of writing, the draft output from this piece of work was due to be received during September.
29. The Income Team has been reviewing the future of the Gift Aid Bureau. Following engagement with a number of church treasurers, it is intended to continue to operate the bureau but with some necessary investment in systems to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation. We will also be enhancing the training materials available for Gift Aid Secretaries.
30. Procurement activity has been high recently with many of the professionals for the project to redevelop Methodist Church House (MCH) being appointed. Also, we have procured the provider of a new and much needed digital phone system for MCH. This will replace our aging switchboard and provide a modern fit for purpose phone system with significantly improved features and capabilities.
31. As always the Council is invited to engage with the Team on any areas it has concerns about through the Connexional Secretary at any time.

#### **\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

- 65/1. The Council notes the update from the Connexional Team.**