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SECTION A GENERAL REPORT

The Methodist Council is charged under SO 211(2) with responsibility to keep in constant review the life of the Methodist Church, to study its work and witness throughout the Connexion, to indicate what changes are necessary or what steps could be taken to make the work of the Church more effective, to give spiritual leadership to the Church and to report annually to the Conference, bringing to the notice of the Conference matters to which it believes the Conference ought to give urgent attention.

The full range of papers presented to the Council and the outcomes of the Council's deliberations on them are available on the Methodist Church website at www.methodist.org.uk/council

The report to the Conference is presented in three parts, this one in volume 1 of the *Agenda* and parts two and three in volume 2 of the *Agenda*. The business conducted by the Council at its meetings in October and January is reported here; and the business conducted at its meeting in April is reported in parts two and three.

These reports contain those items considered by the Council and not reported elsewhere in the *Agenda*.

1.1 Governance responsibilities

In accordance with its governance responsibilities, the Council:

- noted the workplan for the Connexional Team and for other bodies for 2017/2018;
- appointed connexional committees, trusts and representatives for the year 2017/2018;
- received reports from a number of committees and trustee bodies;
- approved the revised list of authorisations and delegations;
- received regular reports from the Strategy and Resources Committee of the Council;
- received reports from the Connexional Team at each meeting;
- on behalf of the Conference, appointed the Revd Dr Vincent M Jambawo and the Revd Peter E Barber to the Council;
- approved the principle of the sale of Sidwell Street Methodist Church under Model Trust 20;

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- agreed to recommend to the Conference that, pursuant to SO 315, Deacon Ruth M Richey be appointed Deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order for a period of five years from 1 September 2018;
- encouraged the Property Development Committee to continue exploring potential developments for the North Bank Estate and Oxford Place, Leeds;
- directed the Property Development Committee to draft Memorandum and Articles of Association for establishing a wholly owned trading subsidiary company for undertaking property development on behalf of the committee;
- amended the policy on Sunday trading to allow such trading within the curtilage of Model Trust property, following consideration of an application by three members of the Property Development Committee, and directed the committee to produce an application form and criteria to be applied in such situations;
- requested the preparation of a new Memorandum of Understanding with All We Can;
- on behalf of the Conference, appointed Mrs Barbara Easton, Mrs Lesley Brookbanks and the Revd Sally Ratcliffe to the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust;
- on behalf of the Conference, appointed Mr Thomas Cadman to the Wesley Trust;
- adopted the reports concerning Ecumenical Partnerships, Sharing Agreements and Ecumenical Areas;
- delegated the oversight of the Auxiliary Special Purposes Fund to the Connexional Allowances Committee;
- revoked the appointment of the Network Committee as the connexional trustee for 24 Somerset Road, Birmingham, and appointed the Property Development Committee to fulfil the role of connexional trustee;
- revoked the appointment of the Network Committee as the connexional trustee for the North Bank Estate and appointed the Property Development Committee to fulfil the role of connexional trustee;
- approved the recommendations of the Heritage Committee for the relocation of artefacts from the former Wesley College Bristol;
- approved criteria and method of approval for recognised heritage site status, directing the Heritage Committee to implement the scheme;
- amended the reporting timeline for the working group considering the Methodist Diaconal Order as a religious order, noting that it will report to the Council prior to its presentation at the 2019 Conference;
- adopted the renominations by the Governors for the appointment of Mrs Barbara Easton and Mr Robert Cowie as Trustees for Methodist Independent Schools Trust for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2020;
- confirmed that Mr Andrew Paul and Capital Cranfield Pension Trustees Limited, represented by Ms Ingrid Kirby, have been appointed as directors of the Methodist Lay Employees Pension Trust Limited for a period of three years from 1 September 2016;
- approved the list of partner organisations as compiled by the Global Relationships Strategic Oversight Sub-Committee;

- directed that a record of all visits and work supporting the strategy for global relationships be retained and overseen by the Connexional Secretary;
- adopted the policy for connexional grants towards Mission and Ministry in Britain;
- approved the updated Risk Management policy;
- adopted the Corporate Risk Register, keeping it under review;
- co-opted the Revd Andrew Letby to the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee;
- adopted the City Centre list, agreed the process for changes to the list, and recommended a rota for review;
- noted with thanks the grants to the Methodist Church from the Joseph Rank Trust, totalling £556,500 in 2017;
- approved the change of the name of the Joint Safeguarding Working Group to the Anglican-Methodist Safeguarding Group, rescinded the group's terms of reference and appointed the Methodist members of the group;
- approved, on behalf of the Conference, a revised list of overseas Conferences and Churches to be invited to the 2018 Conference;
- appointed the Revd Rosemarie E G Clarke and Deacon Jennifer A J Jones to the Conference Business Committee (Representative Session) for the 2018 Conference under the terms of SO 136(1C);
- under the terms of SO 803(1)(c), delegated its responsibility for considering requests to depart from the approved accommodation guidelines for manses to the Manses Group appointed by the Ministries Committee;
- adopted a process for identifying a nominee as Chair of the Council;
- noted, on behalf of the Conference, a change in the membership of the Stationing Committee whereby the Revd Canon Helen D Cameron is now representing the East Midlands stationing region, in place of the Revd Bruce Thompson;
- directed that the redevelopment of Camden Town Methodist Church should proceed, with a budget of no more than £8m + VAT, subject to satisfactory resolution of the planning conditions and further directed that the redevelopment should be financed from connexional funds.

1.2 Other business

The Council received annual reports from:

- the Methodist Heritage Committee;
- the Property Development Committee;
- the Connexional Manse Trustees;
- the Global Relationships Strategic Oversight Sub-Committee;
- the Connexional Grants Committee.

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The Council also:

- engaged in discussions following the presentation of the Statistics for Mission to the 2017 Conference, considering how *Our Calling* may be reaffirmed and used as a basis for the shaping of connexional priorities, the structure of the Connexional Team and the support of the Church as a whole in its task of mission.

***RESOLUTION

3/1. The Conference receives the General Report of the Council.

SECTION B THE NETWORK COMMITTEE

Introduction

1. The Network Committee was set up as a result of the implementation of the Fruitful Field report and is appointed annually by the Methodist Council. It is required to report to the Council and work collaboratively with the Ministries Committee and the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) in developing and maintaining the learning and training of lay people and ministers and the pursuit of scholarship, research and innovation throughout the Connexion. The committee has brought a number of reports to the SRC and the Methodist Council over the past years concerned primarily with the responsibility of the Network Committee for the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN) under SO 32A3 and in particular with regard to the management and development of a number of key assets.
2. The committee has had broadly three main areas of work:

First it holds the managing trusteeship of those centres designated by the 2012 Conference in section J of the Fruitful Field Project Report as “income generating”;

Secondly it is responsible for reviewing and monitoring the terms of all agreements reached between the Council and any training institutions with which the Council has agreements (for the definition of “training institution” see SO 007(ii)) and;

Thirdly it works in collaboration with the Ministries Committee to ensure the implementation of connexional policy as regards learning, training and development.
3. Much of the work of the Network Committee is now undertaken in other places. The Council now recommends to the Conference that this committee be dissolved and its remaining work distributed among the relevant existing committees.

The work of the committee

4. **Managing trusteeship:** the managing trusteeship for Methodist International Centre (MIC), MIC Ltd, 24 Somerset Road Birmingham (Frances Young House), and the North Bank Estate has now been delegated to the Property Development Committee.
5. **Review and monitoring of training institutions relationships:** The Ministries Committee has the responsibility for “developing and supporting the Church’s structures and resources for learning, training, scholarship, research and development” (SO 32A1(2) (iii)). The summary of the report of the Training Review Group (TRG) presented to the 2017 Conference (Agenda pp 459-461) noted “the need for continuing the conversation about how the content and pattern of training reflects more clearly our understanding of ministry in all its forms.” The natural setting for such a conversation would be the Ministries Committee. It would seem sensible therefore that the Ministries Committee holds the relationship with those places decreed as “centres of the network” and should be responsible for the development of another of the recommendations of the TRG to which the Council responded warmly, that of, “the need for further investments in creating Methodist theologians for the future”.
6. **Oversight of the implementation of connexional training, learning and development:** this responsibility also has a clear overlap with the tasks of the Ministries Committee and with the work of the SRC with regard to SO 213(2B) to “advise and assist the council in fulfilling the council’s responsibilities for the strategic oversight and use of resources with regard to personnel, finance and physical assets” and also SO 213(5A) to “exercise oversight of the general work of the Connexional Team, and report thereon to the council and Conference as appropriate.”

Conclusion

7. Given that the tasks for which the Network Committee was established either are, or now can be, dealt with elsewhere, the Council recommends to the Conference that this committee be disbanded and its work re-allocated as set out in this report. It should also be noted that the SRC was of the view that the committee should not be disbanded immediately but at an appropriate time, as there is still some work to be done with the Ministries Committee.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 3/2. **The Conference adopts the Report.**
- 3/3. **The Conference revokes Standing Order 32A3.**

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SECTION C ACCESSIBILITY TO THE CONFERENCE

Background

Further to decisions of the Conference in 2015 (specifically notice of motion 2015/108), the Council established a working party to bring recommendations to address issues of accessibility to the Conference. The working party was asked to include within its remit questions not just about logistical arrangements, but to consider how people can engage with the Conference, regardless of their experience, ability or confidence.

The Council considered the working party's 16 recommendations at its meeting in April 2017 and concluded that these recommendations needed to be considered in detail by the Conference Business Committee before the Conference could be asked to consider any matters of principle.

The Council received a report from the Business Committee at its meeting in January 2018, and now reports the following summary to the Conference, listing each recommendation and the proposed action to be taken in respect of each. The recommendations are shown in italics, with the proposed action shown in ordinary type below it.

Recommendation 1:

That recommendations from the 2015 report continue to be implemented:

- *Strengthening of pre-Conference district briefings.*
- *Making reports available as early as possible.*
- *Commending the use of the cover sheet for reports to assist with the large volume of reading.*
- *Priority for first-time speakers.*
- *Variety in the format of debates – referred to the Business Committee for consideration as to how best to use, eg, workshops, hearings etc. Clarity of the purpose of the alternative formats.*
- *Districts to ensure that the decisions and outcomes of the Conference are disseminated to circuits and churches.*

The Council felt that the content of this recommendation is already being implemented. The reintroduction of a Conference Business Digest was felt to be helpful in support of the dissemination of the decisions and outcomes of the Conference, particularly if it can be distributed quickly after the close of the Conference.

Recommendation 2:

Greater attention be given to enabling members of the Conference to identify office holders by publicising who they are.

The Council felt that this should be done by means of the Conference Handbook.

Recommendation 3:

A 'Glossary of Terms used in the Methodist Church' be compiled.

There is already a long list of terminology in use by some committees, but it is not a simple process to adapt it since there are, for example, some acronyms which apply to several different things. The Conference Office ensures, through the scrutiny process, in the case of the Conference Agenda and associated documents, that acronyms are always spelled out the first time they are used with the abbreviation in brackets. The Council felt that the issue is as much to do with how speakers use the acronyms as the text of the reports themselves, and that speakers therefore need to be discouraged from speaking in acronyms or jargon. The Council noted that members of the Committee had agreed to look at the list which already exists to assess whether it would be helpful to make it more widely available or whether it could be adapted for this purpose.

Recommendation 4:

Stricter control of en bloc and 200-series Notices of Motion is exercised.

The Business Committee and the Council wished to put to the Conference that the number of signatures required to remove an item from the *en bloc* list should be the same number as that required to submit a notice of motion about new business. The Council therefore recommends to the Conference that Standing Order 134A(1)(c) be amended to require a reasoned statement supported by twenty signatures to remove an item of business from its *en bloc* list. The Business Committee and the Council wish to emphasise that items of business which are dealt with *en bloc* are no less important than any of the other business which is before the Conference.

The Council gave careful consideration to the 200-series notices of motion (ie those which do not directly relate to items of business contained within the Conference Agenda), and what 'stricter control' might mean. The Council noted that a number of such notices of motion could have come before the Conference as memorials, as often they do not represent new or urgent matters. In the light of this, the Council recommends to the Conference that the Conference Business Committee be directed to develop criteria by which it can be agreed whether or not notices of motion might be dismissed as impermissible. The Council also recommends to the Conference that there should be an increase in the number of signatures required for a notice of motion not related to business in the Conference Agenda to twenty. The Council was also concerned about the impact of notices of motion on the workplan of

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the Connexional Team, particularly in respect of staff time and the costs to the connexional budget.

Recommendation 5:

President and Vice-President exercise stricter control of speakers in debates, encouraging restraint, and that the Conference Business Committee explores use of 'planned debates' in major debates on controversial subjects and ways of enabling 'comment from the floor' without the need to speak from the front.

The Council felt that the President and Vice-President are free to exercise control of debates as is appropriate. Standing Order 136(2)(iv) already allows for the use of 'planned debates' and the Business Committee can explore their use where it might be felt to be appropriate. 'Comments from the floor' can have the effect of making the business less accessible, for reasons of audibility and visibility and the Council declined to take this further.

The following three recommendations were considered together, and the Council does not wish to pursue them.

Recommendation 6:

President and Vice-President each offer one set-piece address or sermon at the Conference – one at the Opening of the Conference, and one on the Sunday morning.

Recommendation 8:

Wednesday service of Holy Communion be discontinued, and that there be an early morning communion on the Wednesday (as on other days).

Recommendation 14:

The Conference be scheduled as follows:

Saturday – 10:30 start

Sunday as at present

Monday and Tuesday – 09:00-19:00

Wednesday – 09:00-17:00

The Council discussed these three recommendations together. It was confirmed that finishing on the Wednesday evening would not make a significant impact on the costs of the Conference, because of the numbers of people who would still need accommodation on the Wednesday night. Although these recommendations were made with lay working people in mind, the Council did not feel that it represented enough of a change balanced against the amount of change that it would mean for the functioning of the Conference. There would clearly be timetabling issues as a result of this, not least the deadlines for notices of motion (which, it could be argued, would make the decision-making process less accessible). The Council also felt that the Conference needs proper time available to it to confer on the more

difficult and sensitive issues. The Council noted the effect that this, and particularly the later finish times on Monday and Tuesday, would have on those working in the Record Office and all the volunteers who support the Conference in various ways. The Council would not wish to see the end of the Wednesday communion service, and was particularly concerned that there should be an opportunity for the Representative Session to engage in an act of remembrance, which is included within the communion service.

The Council was not minded to pursue these recommendations, and felt that such changes should only be considered within the context of a more over-arching review of the governance and oversight processes of the Church.

Recommendation 7:

Guidance regarding morning and evening prayers is strictly observed by those preparing and leading them (and that they should only be led by those who are already at the Conference).

The Committee noted that practice in this respect has improved, and that the shorter pattern of evening prayers has been appreciated.

Recommendation 9:

Arrangements for continuous prayer within the Conference day be encouraged and be implemented through the chaplaincy team, with the President and Vice-President being encouraged to pause for moments of prayer or silence as appropriate.

The Committee felt that the President and Vice-President do this in appropriate ways.

Recommendation 10:

Present pattern of Sunday worship and ordination services be retained until further notice.

There was no action to be taken in relation to this recommendation.

Recommendation 11:

Making venue and accommodation as accessible as possible.

These concerns are being taken up by the Conference Planning Executive.

Recommendation 12:

Following up and implementing guidance on providing for special needs.

These concerns are being taken up by the Conference Planning Executive.

Recommendation 13:

Use of technology and electronic voting be explored and implemented as far as possible.

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The Council noted that when electronic voting was trialled for a day at the 2011 Conference, it was expensive (around £2500 for a day's rental) and slow to use. However, some feedback indicated that there were those who felt more able to vote in the way they wished when their vote was not seen. The Council was unsure whether the software would only be used for those votes that require counting, which would have meant, for example, that it would not have been used very much at all at the 2017 Conference. The Council felt that electronic voting, by its very nature, changes the nature of the Conference's conferring as it moves from votes to ballots. The concern was raised that members of the Conference need to be accountable to one another, and live with those with whom they disagree. The Business Committee felt that it should, through its reporting, address the issue of representatives not feeling able to vote in the way in which they wish to vote. The Committee will explore the cost of hiring electronic voting systems and discuss the matter further.

Recommendation 15:

Participation of fellowships of national origin be encouraged within Districts.

This is being done.

Recommendation 16:

Reduction in size of the Conference – phased reduction to 250 in 2020 and then 220 in 2023.

The Conference reviews its membership every five years. When this was last done two years ago, the conclusion was reached that, although in terms of the church's membership it should be cut by 100, the present size was appropriate to aid representation and participation. The review also noted that it is proportionally the same size as it was in 1933. The Council felt that this recommendation was being suggested for cost-cutting reasons, but was unclear as to whether it would save enough money to be worthwhile. The Council felt that the broader question about the necessary size of the Conference in order to be fully representative was more important. If the Conference is significantly smaller, it becomes less accessible. The Council did not therefore wish to pursue this recommendation.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

3/5. The Conference adopts the Report.

3/6. The Conference amends Standing Order 134A(1)(c) as follows:

(c) Subject to sub-clause (e) below any resolution, including any recommended reply to a memorial, which becomes the subject of an amending notice of motion shall be removed from the list. In addition, by giving notice to the Secretary of

the Conference in writing before the close of business on the third day of the Representative Session, any six **twenty** members of the Conference may, **with a reasoned statement but** without proposing an amendment, require any item or items, except a recommended reply to a memorial, to be removed from the list. The Business Committee itself shall be free at any time before the resolutions are moved to remove any item or items from the list.

3/7. The Conference directs the Conference Business Committee to develop criteria by which it can be agreed whether or not notices of motion might be dismissed as impermissible.

3/8. The Conference amends Standing Order 132(1A)(iii) as follows:

(1A) Every notice of motion shall be handed to the Secretary in written form and signed by the following persons:

(i) where the proposal is to amend a resolution and those responsible for presenting that business to the Conference are prepared to accept it, the proposer and seconder of the motion;

(ii) where such a proposal to amend is not accepted by those responsible, the proposer and seconder and four other persons;

(iii) in all other cases, the proposer and seconder and ~~eight~~**eighteen** other persons.

3/9. The Conference directs the Conference Business Committee and the Conference Financial Committee to review the procedure for assessing the impact of notices of motion on the Connexional Team workplan and the budget.

SECTION D DISTRICT REVIEWS

1. Introduction

1.1 The 2016 Conference directed the Council to bring a process for implementing the creation of District Commissions and the nomination of those to be appointed by the Conference as District Commissioners to the 2017 Conference. The Conference directed that such a commission would be convened when a new Chair is being sought, or the present Chair is exploring the possibility with the District of a reinvitation, or a District (or group of Districts) wishes to engage in the process of reflection or review. It would oversee and undertake a thorough review of the life of the District, set in its wider connexional and ecumenical context.

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- 1.2 The Methodist Council in April 2017 considered proposals for a District Commission process as envisaged in Resolution 15/7 (2016). However, the Council expressed significant concerns that this process seemed overly complex and that, instead of helpfully 'holding up a mirror' to the life of the District, it would prove to be a burden.
- 1.3 The Council also considered information about the Church of England's newly-developed peer review process for dioceses. This more 'light-touch' approach was favourably received, acknowledging that it would need 'shaping' for the Methodist context. Following group discussions, the Council agreed to recommend that work should proceed along the lines of a peer review process.
- 1.4 The 2017 Conference therefore directed the Council to undertake work to establish a peer review process for Districts and report on progress to the 2018 Conference (Resolution 27/19).
- 1.5 One of the overarching themes from the feedback was the need for flexibility. It was proposed that 'broad parameters' should be developed, within which Districts would take the lead in developing the review process as appropriate for the context with regard to timing, the number of people involved, the level of ecumenical involvement etc. However, there will need to be some support from the Connexional Team at various stages in the process, so that there is not too much burden placed on Districts and on volunteers. Some broad parameters are proposed below, based on the conversations of the Council in April 2017. If adopted, these will come into effect no later than September 2019, recognising that some reviews could take place as part of a pilot process during the course of 2018.

2. Proposed outline

- 2.1 Each District shall undertake a review every three to five years.
- 2.2 The Secretary of the Conference shall have oversight of District Reviews taking place across the Connexion and shall ensure that one takes place in each District at least every five years. A representative of the Secretary of the Conference will attend the review meeting, not to facilitate the conversation, but to feed in any points of learning from a connexional perspective. If the District wishes them to, they will also act as note-taker and draft the report following the meeting.
- 2.3 The District Policy Committee (DPC) shall take the lead in the organisation of the review process, including setting a date for the meeting and arranging a venue. Costs incurred (other than the expenses of members of the Connexional Team) will be covered by the District.

3. Indicative structure

- 3.1 There will be a named person within the Connexional Team (but not a full-time role), whose role will be, on behalf of the Secretary of the Conference, to ensure that the reviews are taking place in accordance with the outline above (but with appropriate flexibility for each context). The officer will hold a log of the reviews, and keep a copy of each report (which will remain confidential). The officer will attend review meetings, and act as note-taker if required. The officer will ensure that the reviewers are provided with appropriate support and training.
- 3.2 The officer will be provided with administrative support to assist with the preparation and sending out of documentation, to work with each District in the setting of review dates, and maintenance of the review log.
- 3.3 There will be a pool of reviewers appointed by the Council, who will need to be trained. No more than three reviewers will be identified from outside the District being reviewed, based on initial feedback from the District concerned as to the skills and experience that they would find most helpful.
- 3.4 It is suggested that the review would normally need to happen in the connexional year prior to the year in which a Chair's reinvitation/nomination process needs to be undertaken, to enable the review to inform that process.
- 3.5 At the beginning of that connexional year, a briefing pack will be sent to the Synod Secretary, which will include a pro forma asking the District to consider the following:
 - When is the District Chair's current term of service due to finish? Is this the most appropriate timing for a review, to ensure it can inform the reinvitation/nomination process, without impinging upon it?
 - It is suggested that those involved in the review process meet for one day and discuss papers and feedback circulated in advance. With regard to who should be present at this meeting:
 - Would it be helpful to involve a trained, external facilitator (eg a member of DMLN staff from another District/region)?
 - Who should be involved from the life of the District?
 - What is the appropriate level of ecumenical involvement?
 - Which 'peers' could helpfully be involved? Neighbouring Districts will provide a helpful perspective, as will 'contrasting' Districts – for instance, a large, predominantly urban District might find it helpful to invite the Chair of a smaller, predominantly rural District to join the process.
 - Is the group suitably diverse and representative of the District?

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- Are there people in the group willing to ask critical questions?
- What documents could helpfully be circulated to the review group in advance?
Suggested documents include:
 - The District Development Plan (SO 962);
 - The District's statement of needs and opportunities formulated when a District Chair was last appointed (SO 423);
 - Figures from the most recent triennial statistical returns;
 - Financial records;
 - Papers and minutes from the previous Synod;
 - A list of questions to be explored at the meeting.
- Are there conversations that need to take place in advance of the meeting with people who will not be present but who might inform the work of the review group?

3.6 The responses to these questions will enable the Team to appoint the reviewers, and to begin to set up a timetable for the process, including a date for the review meeting.

3.7 The following questions are suggested for consideration by those undertaking the review:

- Of the paperwork, what comes as a surprise? What reflects your experience?
- What appears to be the state of the work of God in the District?
- How can the Methodist Church participate most fully in the work of God in this place?
- How do the answers to these questions compare to the District's Development Plan (SO 962)? Are there aspects of the plan that need to be revised? Are there successes to be celebrated, or challenges to be acknowledged?
- In light of *Our Calling*:
 - What are the District's strengths? Where are the areas of numerical and spiritual growth?
 - Where are the challenges?
 - What is unique or unusual about the context in this District? How is the Methodist Church in this place responding – and being called to respond?
 - Which areas of the life of the District are energising – and which are draining?
 - What does the District need in order to respond as it feels called? Are there things it needs to 'let go'?
- How do Circuits relate to the District?
- What learning might be available from other Districts?

3.8 The Secretary of the Conference shall receive a copy of the review report (which need not be long) on a confidential basis. The District Policy Committee shall decide how to take forward the recommendations contained within the report, and how widely it is helpful for the report to be shared.

4. Conclusion

The Council agreed to recommend an outline District Review process, as set out above, to the Conference and directed the Connexional Team to ensure that the process is regularly reviewed as part of the ongoing work to support the development of district mission plans.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

3/10. The Conference receives the Report.

3/11. The Conference directs that a District Review process be established as set out in the Report.

3/12. The Conference directs the Council to ensure that the District Review process has appropriate links to ongoing work to support the development of district mission plans.

SECTION E SAFEGUARDING RESOURCE AND STRUCTURE

1. The 2017 Conference received a report concerning the supervision of District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs). The Conference directed as follows:

The Conference directed the Council to proceed with producing detailed and costed proposals for professional supervision of District Safeguarding Officers based on the approach to supervision as set out in paragraphs 3.0 – 8.12 of the report.

2. In response to this, an Independent Safeguarding Consultant, was commissioned to prepare a report outlining proposals for professional supervision of District Safeguarding Officers. The Safeguarding Committee, the District Chairs and the Strategy and Resources Committee were consulted as part of this process, and the Council presents the following recommendations to the Conference.

Safeguarding reports to the 2017 Conference

3. The report from the Past Cases Review Implementation Group showed the considerable work that has been done to progress the Past Cases Review and implement the lessons

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from it. The review of individual cases is almost complete and has required temporary resource to finish that work.

4. The report from the working group reviewing Covenants of Care – now to be called Safeguarding Contracts – recommended changes for these arrangements to ensure they do not drift leaving both perpetrators or alleged perpetrators, and victims/survivors, with uncertainty. Implementing an annual review will require additional connexional safeguarding team time to keep track of the contracts as well as capacity for the commissioning of more risk assessments.
5. Two further reports specifically focused on the work of District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) who are pivotal in ensuring the quality of safeguarding work on the ground. One set out a method for calculating the number of hours of DSO time needed in any one District, and the Conference adopted that method.
6. The second of these reports described a standardised approach to the provision of casework supervision for the DSOs. While those working in DSO roles are eminently able and qualified, the report provided very clear reasons why they should have access to professional casework supervision, as do safeguarding professionals in other organisations, to provide support, challenge and reflection in making what are sometimes very difficult judgments. Currently District Chairs provide line management and many have indicated that they do not feel qualified to provide proper casework supervision. Ad hoc advice can be sought from the Safeguarding Team but the team is not resourced to offer systematic casework supervision.
7. The Council therefore proposes changes to the Safeguarding Team specifically for the provision of casework supervision for DSOs but also recommends that further consideration is given to accommodate the increasing impact of other demands.

Provision of Casework Supervision from Connexional Safeguarding Team (CST)

8. The Council proposes that the connexional Safeguarding Team (CST) takes on all the professional casework supervision of the DSOs.
9. It further proposes that each member of the CST will supervise all the DSOs for a collection of Districts (probably grouped into four to begin with, thereby developing 'area' teams of DSOs).
10. The rationale for this recommendation is that:
 - It focuses ownership of safeguarding within the Connexion with a clear line of accountability through to the Secretary of the Conference.

- It allows the CST to formalise much of what they are already doing informally, reducing duplication or competing advice.
 - It brings safeguarding support closer to the Circuits and will assist with safeguarding in recruitment locally.
 - The team members are full time and therefore contactable outside of formal casework supervision meetings, and able to support and advise as cases unfold and develop.
 - The model supports consistency and standardisation of approach as members of the CST can check their practice and thresholds with each other and the Safeguarding Adviser.
 - It supports standardised record-keeping.
 - It supports team working for DSOs in the areas, building peer to peer support and cover for sickness or holidays.
 - It enables better management of DSO casework workloads with the area team being able to share the load more equitably.
 - The area team approach facilitates joint work, where there is a particularly complex case.
 - The model provides the opportunity for area-based training and continuous professional development for DSOs and encourages a learning culture in the work.
 - The additional capacity being proposed will allow for some quality audit work to be undertaken across areas.
11. The Safeguarding Adviser will provide casework supervision to the members of the CST, and therefore be in a position to comprehensively overview safeguarding quality across the Church.
12. The employment responsibility for DSOs will remain with the line manager (generally the District Chair) on behalf of the District. Casework supervision will be distinguished from the employer's legal responsibilities for the DSO. To ensure the necessary role clarity it is proposed that a standard agreement is used setting out the different responsibilities and accountabilities between the Casework Supervisor, District Chair/line manager and DSO.
13. Professional casework judgements will be overseen by the Casework Supervisor. In the event of a dispute about appropriate actions the Casework Supervisor will refer to the Connexional Safeguarding Adviser who will discuss the matter with the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and agree the best way forward with the District Chair.

Changes to Connexional Safeguarding Team

14. These proposals, both to strengthen safeguarding in the organisation, and specifically for the provision of casework supervision, involve significant change to the structure and job roles of the CST.

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15. There are 25 DSOs in total with varying hours and geographical spread. It is proposed they are grouped into four areas, each one with about six DSOs, and each with a Casework Supervisor who will oversee all the safeguarding work within that area. In order to bring this support closer to the Districts it is proposed that the Casework Supervisors are themselves located in the areas.
16. They will also retain a lead role as part of the Connexional Safeguarding Team, including:
 - Supporting the development of policy and procedures
 - Provision of training
 - Work with survivors
 - DBS blemish management
17. Some of this work, particularly the casework elements, will be accommodated by the proposed increase in the Casework Supervisor establishment to four posts.
18. However, a new type of role is needed to address aspects of this work, and it is proposed that a Policy and Training Officer post is developed, which will include the provision of legal expertise.
19. The recommendations pertaining to changes to the Safeguarding Team will be found within the existing staffing budget of the Connexional Team.

***RESOLUTIONS

3/13. The Conference receives the Report.

3/14. The Conference adopts the proposals for the casework supervision of District Safeguarding Officers as set out in the Report and directs the Methodist Council to oversee the implementation and review of proposals as part of the Council's general responsibilities.

SECTION F

TAX JUSTICE AND ETHICAL INVESTMENT

Executive summary

In response to a memorial to the Methodist Conference in 2015, the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) has undertaken work on ethical investment and tax justice, meeting with other denominations and organisations working in this field. As a result JACEI has agreed a draft position statement on tax justice, and consequently the Central Finance Board will be producing a policy statement later this year which will shape its

ethical investment practice. The Methodist Church is a leader in ethical investment, and this report outlines in greater detail for the Methodist Council the work undertaken and the issues faced when trying to ensure that our church investments contribute to tax justice.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 In 2015 the Methodist Conference, in its reply to a memorial (M30) on tax justice, recognised *“that by taking measures to avoid paying tax which is owed companies and private individuals deprive countries of financial resources needed to meet their educational, health, social and other needs”*. The Methodist Conference directed *“the Methodist Council to ensure the Connexional Team continues to work with Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI), the Central Finance Board (CFB), the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) and the Methodist Tax Justice Network (MTJN) for at least the next three years, as resources allow, and direct[ed] the Methodist Council to review progress in this area of work in early 2018 and to report to the Conference of that year.”*

1.2 In taking this work forward JACEI has worked with the Central Finance Board (CFB) and the Connexional Team through the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT).¹ This report provides an account of the steps that JACEI has undertaken to approach the question of taxation and engagement with investments as required by the Memorial.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 It is clear from different groups who have been consulted that there are a variety of views as to the meaning of the terms “tax evasion” and “tax avoidance”. This paper uses the definitions set out below from the OECD glossary of terms.

Tax Evasion is “A term that is difficult to define but which is generally used to mean illegal arrangements where liability to tax is hidden or ignored, ie the taxpayer pays

1 The Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church (CFB) is the investment agency of the Methodist Church. It is the job of the CFB to manage the funds of the Methodist Church and obtain good returns on their investments whilst making sure that the investments are in line with the moral and ethical teaching of the Church. The Joint Advisory Committee on Ethical Investment (JACEI) advises the CFB of ethical considerations relating to investment, and reports to the Conference commenting on the performance of the CFB in managing the funds under its control according to an ethical stance which is in accordance with the aims of the Methodist Church. JACEI comprises 11 persons, the Chair, and ten other individuals, half of whom are appointed by the Methodist Council, and half appointed by the CFB. The Joint Public Issues Team works on behalf of the Connexional Team to support the work of JACEI and conducts research on the implication of economic policy (including in the area of taxation) on various groups. The Methodist Tax Justice Network (MTJN) has played an important part in bringing the question of tax justice to the forefront of the Methodist Church as well as providing a continued engagement with the theological issues surrounding tax.

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less tax than he is legally obligated to pay by hiding income or information from the tax authorities.”

Tax Avoidance is “A term that is difficult to define but which is generally used to describe the arrangement of a taxpayer’s affairs that is intended to reduce his tax liability and that although the arrangement could be strictly legal it is usually in contradiction with the intent of the law it purports to follow.” (Emphasis added)

- 2.2 Mechanisms such as Gift Aid or Patent Box, although they reduce tax liability are not considered avoidance when used appropriately, as the intention of the law is to reduce tax liability in order to encourage behaviours of which the Government approves.

3.0 Position of the Methodist Church on taxation

- 3.1 The Methodist Church recognises, as detailed in the reports it has received at the Conference, that institutions and individuals have a responsibility to obey not just the letter but the spirit of the law on taxation. This responsibility applies with particular gravity to the Church itself, given its role in building a more just society.
- 3.2 The Methodist Church has received two reports that are particularly relevant to the question of taxation: *Ethics of Wealth Creation* (1990) and *Of Equal Value: Poverty and Inequality in the UK* (2011). In both the *Ethics of Wealth Creation* and *Of Equal Value* the importance of tax in creating a just society is highlighted. Tax is used for state investment in key services, as well as redistributed in benefits to the least well off. Taxation when used properly should enable everyone to share justly in the developing national wealth. Taxation is a contribution to the common good.
- 3.3 In *Of Equal Value* the Methodist Church recognises the importance of integrity in its own financial affairs when speaking out on issues of government cuts. This can be seen to apply more broadly to questions of social justice and inequality. If the Church fails to fulfil its moral and legal duty to pay tax then its ability to speak out on behalf of the poorest in society will be compromised.
- 3.4 The position of the Methodist Church on taxation, as represented in these two reports, can be summarised as follows. The state has a legitimate expectation that people will pay the taxes they owe. Such taxation fairly paid can contribute to a more just, relational society. Therefore, the Church expects people to pay the taxes they owe. The Church also expects companies to be transparent around their corporate tax affairs² and to pay what they owe.

2 Corporate tax affairs incorporate all aspects of liabilities to the state and are not restricted to Corporation Tax.

4.0 Summary of progress

- 4.1 Since the 2015 Memorial to the Conference, JACEI has undertaken a broad range of work on the issues surrounding tax justice. There has been detailed discussion of the ethical and theological questions involved in tax along with research undertaken to understand the options and levels of efficacy of different policy responses. This work has been necessary to build the foundations of an ethical investment engagement policy on tax justice.
- 4.2 The strategies and legal arrangements used by companies to reduce their tax liabilities, and as a result to avoid tax, are highly complex. Given the amount of money at stake, highly specialised professionals are employed to manage or to provide advice on corporate tax management, a part of which may be the establishment of tax avoidance structures. This makes the engagement with companies about tax justice a complicated, often highly technical exercise. After consultation with other church partners, and having observed the work that a number of other groups are doing in this area, it has become apparent that a solution to the technical difficulties of such work is to focus on transparency of tax reporting. Transparency and exposure to scrutiny is likely to lead to better tax policy given the opprobrium held for those who practice tax avoidance.
- 4.3 A roundtable discussion concerning tax policies and future steps was arranged by JPIT with representatives from the Church of England Ethical Investment Advisory Group, the Quakers, Christian Aid, the Methodist Tax Justice Network and CFB. This meeting was valuable in bringing together the expertise and experience of various partners.
- 4.4 Currently, the Church of England is working through the ecumenical Church Investors Group (CIG) in conjunction with Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) to deal with questions of taxation. They have selected two sectors of priority for engagement: technology and healthcare. The PRI has identified fifty companies of particular concern to engage with, and the CIG has begun engaging with those that they are invested in collectively.
- 4.5 The Quakers have chosen to engage with a number of companies by writing to them to ask questions about their tax strategy and governance arrangements. They have used the Fair Tax Mark as a basis to assess the responses they have received and to consider further engagement in future. The Quakers have written to those companies they are invested in which are accredited by the Fair Tax Mark to express their appreciation of that fact.
- 4.6 Christian Aid, Oxfam and ActionAid have jointly produced a report, *Getting to Good: Towards Responsible Corporate Tax Behaviour*, describing what a responsible tax policy for a company would look like. They have used this report as a means of engaging

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companies in their position as campaigners. They have focused in particular on those companies that have been in the spotlight for poor tax arrangements and who are keen to have a more ethical tax policy. The report points out that ethical tax behaviour benefits companies as well as the countries in which they operate.

5.0 Next steps

- 5.1 Following these engagements, JACEI agreed a draft position paper and consequently the CFB will be producing a policy statement later this year which will shape its ethical investment practice. These will both be published on the CFB website.
- 5.2 It would not be feasible for CFB's investor engagement to make technical determinations around the intentions of individual financial structures within companies. Rather it would be more fruitful to encourage transparent tax compliance and to focus on how a company manages its tax affairs.
- 5.3 Hallmarks of best practice in this area are a meaningful published tax policy that indicates that the ethical and social implications of taxations are recognised, and that a tax is understood as more than a legal commitment to be minimised. Other areas are transparency around how tax is managed, how much tax is paid and in which jurisdictions. The CFB will continue to work collaboratively with others, such as the CIG in the engagement with companies.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The Methodist Church has a clear longstanding position on the importance of tax in building the just society our faith asks us to join in creating. JACEI acknowledges the work of the Methodist Tax Justice Network and others for raising this issue of tax justice and engaging with JACEI and the Connexional Team. It is increasingly clear that, while most companies and individuals pay tax with integrity, some go to extraordinary lengths to reduce or eliminate the contribution they make.
- 6.2 The policy paper to be produced by CFB later this year will enable it to engage with companies around tax justice specifically around tax transparency, enabling the Methodist Church to make a contribution to increasing awareness and raising expectations around the fair payment of tax.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 3/15. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 3/16. The Conference adopts the Report as its further reply to M30(2015).**

SECTION H THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL

In considering the process by which it wished to bring a nomination to the Conference as the next Chair of the Council, the Council reviewed the length of the term of office of its Chair. The Council noted that the present formally-appointed role of the Chair of the Council was introduced following the 2005 Review of the Council, and took effect from 2006. Prior to that, the Council had been chaired by the current President or Vice-President. At the time of the last review, therefore, the Council had been accustomed to having a chair for only one year at a time. Three years was introduced as a means of increasing the sense of continuity, whilst also limiting the potential power that could be held in one person. However, the Council now wishes to increase the term of office to four years, bringing it into line with the length of the term of service for those who are representatives of Districts, District Chairs, the representatives of the Strategy and Resources Committee, the representative of the Ministries Committee, the representatives of the Children and Youth Assembly and the representatives of the concerns of racial justice.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

3/17. The Conference adopts the Report.

3/18. The Conference amends SO 210(2)(d) as follows:

(d) The chair of the council shall be appointed upon nomination by the council for a period of **four** ~~three~~ years, subject to Standing Order 316, and shall not be eligible for reappointment. He or she shall be chosen from amongst those persons, not being members of the Connexional Team, who took office as President or Vice-President during any of the five Conferences preceding the appointing Conference.