

## Connexional Property Strategy

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<b>Resolution</b>	74/1. The Council adopts the connexional property strategy 2018-20.

*The Methodist Council in October 2017 received Paper MC/17/88 ('Developing a connexional strategy for the use of Methodist Property in Mission and Evangelism'), approved the principles of a connexional property strategy as outlined in the report and directed the Property Development Committee to bring a strategy to the Council (originally no later than April 2018, although this has since been deferred). The 2018 Conference adopted Standing Order 990 ('Property Development Committee'), which includes the following:*

*(2) The committee shall work collaboratively with the council and the Strategy and Resources Committee in developing, maintaining and implementing a connexional property strategy, that is to say a strategy for the use and, where appropriate, the disposal of Methodist land and for the use of the proceeds of such disposals. In this Section the word 'property' is used in that context.*

*(3) The connexional property strategy shall express the mission imperative of the Methodist Church and ensure that its property resources are used so as to give maximum effect to their value and to missional opportunities.*

*The Strategy and Resources Committee now recommends that the Council adopts the strategy. In considering the strategy it is important to remember that in light of the Council's adoption of the recommendations of the working party on Legal and Property Support for Managing Trustees [SRC18/23] major work is now underway to make various appointments to a professional property service within the Team. Other work is also underway to implement those recommendations, most notably work to establish a panel of surveyors, and a suite of legal precedents for the use of property, especially in relation to partnerships and funding. This work will give effect to the application of this strategy.*

# Connexional Property Strategy 2018-20

## Introduction

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

It does this through:

- Worship
- Learning and caring
- Service
- Evangelism

The Methodist Council, working with the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Property Development Committee, recognises the need to keep under review and better support the most effective use, development and disposal of property in order to enable Local Churches, Circuits and Districts to fulfil this calling, and to ensure a coherent approach to property across the Connexion.

Property plays a significant role in enabling a presence within a community. A Methodist building that is welcoming, eye-catching and that acts as a focal point for community engagement can speak powerfully of God's love. Utilising a property either by redeveloping it to provide social housing or employment opportunities could be part of a mission plan, as could incorporating a range of social uses into an existing building.

In order to achieve this the Methodist Council will seek to encourage trustees to see the possibilities that exist and then to resource and support them in exploring and fulfilling those possibilities. Therefore the Council sees the following areas of work as being necessary and urgent during the connexional years 2018-19 and 2019-20:

### 1. Mission plans

- 1.1 Effective mission plans need to be developed, adopted and implemented across the Connexion making clear how the use of property will support and facilitate mission and ministry.
- 1.2 Circuits and/or Districts will be supported in the production of property development plans as a means of evaluating and planning how property can be used to assist in delivering the circuit or district mission plan. These property development plans (to be completed by 2020) need to include all existing Methodist property (including churches, manses, ancillary and investment properties) and an evaluation of each property in terms of its part in delivering the agreed mission plan. Such property development plans should also include locations where a new Methodist property would be advantageous, or where partnership with another Christian community should be explored.
- 1.3 Work should be undertaken to ensure that decisions about property are taken in the context of the whole Circuit and District, reflecting where the Circuit wishes to prioritise Methodist presence and resources in order to deliver the mission plan.
- 1.4 In order to enable the establishment of new Methodist communities the new property support function and the Evangelism and Growth unit in the Connexional Team will undertake a review of the resources needed to give greater expression to Standing Order 1005 which provides for the Methodist Council to appoint a New Town or New Area Commission where an expansion scheme to house a population of 20,000 or more is planned by a local authority.

## **2. Purchases and disposals**

- 2.1 Sales should only be undertaken once trustees have demonstrated that a thorough evaluation has been made of potential other uses for the property within Methodist ownership. An evaluation process and criteria will be developed to enable a coherent yet context specific response to the use of resources.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.2 A professional property advice service will enable all trustees to be proactive in maximising the value of a site, mission and/or financial. This may involve gaining planning permission prior to sale, agreeing overages etc. Professional guidance should be obtained prior to the decision to sell being taken. Proof of both of these steps being undertaken should become part of the consents process, without which consent should not be given.

## **3. Environmental and ethical matters**

- 3.1 In all matters relating to property, consideration must be given to the Church's commitment to addressing its carbon footprint in the context of climate change, as expressed in the Conference Statement, *Hope in God's Future*. Attention will be given to the 2010 Conference directive that Circuits should endeavour to use model trust money to put in place high standards of energy efficiency, and also directed that Circuits should endeavour to provide smart meter devices in manses.
- 3.2 All developments should, as far as possible:
  - 3.2.1 be funded by ethical investors with the principles of the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment being applied to funding packages wherever possible ,
  - 3.2.2 utilise Methodist money earning negligible returns in deposit accounts.

## **4. Role of the District Property Secretary**

- 4.1 The role of District Property Secretary is crucial to the outworking of this strategy, and therefore work will be undertaken to clarify the role with minimum standards for the post being agreed. These standards should set out the skills and the capacity required to enable consistency of support across the Connexion, as well as sufficient local knowledge.
- 4.2 The development of a property support function within the Connexional Team shall liaise closely with current post holders to assess the needs of the Districts.

## **5. Property Development Company**

- 5.1 Work will continue to create a wholly owned trading subsidiary company for undertaking property development on behalf of the Property Development Committee and the Council.

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<sup>1</sup> The questions to be asked could include:

- Is there no longer potential for Methodist mission from this property?
- How does this church property shape and give expression to the circuit/district mission plan(s)?
- What alternative uses might be made of the property/site as an expression of Methodist mission and ministry?
- Is the site of strategic importance within the locality?
- What other Christian presence remains in the locality, particularly in rural areas? Is this the only community space in the locality?
- What are the alternative uses with the site vacated, taking into account amongst other things the local authority strategic plan – could it be redeveloped to generate income for mission elsewhere?
- What ecumenical/other partnership opportunities exist for using the property?
- Are alternative sites available which better enable mission?

## **6. Property consultancies**

Work should be undertaken to establish a panel of Surveyors and other professional bodies to ensure the ready provision of advice to trustees from property consultancies.

## **7. Partnerships**

7.1 The Connexional Team, working where appropriate with TMCP staff, will actively seek to establish and maintain strategic property partnerships with a range of organisations that may prove suitable partners for specific property situations. These would include third sector bodies focusing on encouraging community engagement, Christian charities focusing on helping the Church to engage with society, specialist charities such as Methodist Homes (MHA) and also potential commercial developers and land agents. This will act as a menu of potential partners with whom trustees could consider engaging as part of the process of discerning God's will for the use of property to fulfil mission in a specific location and context. It will provide a framework of trusted partners that have demonstrated a good track record in their field and a keenness to partner with local Methodist churches.

7.2 District Property Secretaries and connexional staff will assist managing trustees in evaluating potential partnerships and in embarking on discussions with potential partners from within this recommended list.

7.3 The types of partnership envisaged come in several categories:

7.3.1 sharing a building for worship;

7.3.2 partnering in redevelopment for social purposes;

7.3.3 partnering in redevelopment for commercial purposes;

7.3.4 sharing a building for other social mission;

7.3.5 imaginative experiment and ecumenical co-operation.

## **8. Grants**

8.1 The Council will consider developing a grant-making process that will specifically assist with the 'speculative stage' of a scheme by funding pre-planning option appraisals or similar. This would enable money held connexionally to bear the risk of any pre-planning costs.

8.2 In order to create and sustain a coherent approach to grant making for property schemes the Property Development Committee, in conjunction with the Connexional Grants Committee, will work with the Board of TMCP and the Council to ensure that all money held in trust funds that have purposes which would support this strategy are made available to the wider connexion and applied in accordance with an agreed policy.

## **9. Conservation and heritage**

Work will be undertaken to ensure the exploration of the most effective use of Listed Buildings. Such work will take account of current policies in respect of planning legislation as well as the need to make bold decisions about the application of finite resources.

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

**74/1. The Council adopts the connexional property strategy 2018-20.**