

28. Methodist Council, part two

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SECTION E

General Report (2)

This report contains those items considered by the Council at its April meeting and not reported elsewhere in the Agenda.

1.1 Governance Responsibilities

In accordance with its governance responsibilities, the Council:

- appointed Mr Brian Rollins as Convener of the Candidates Appeals Committees for 2015;
- received a report regarding the ongoing work of Methodist Independent Schools Trust, and Methodist Academies and Schools Trust;
- directed the Ministries Committee to oversee a review of the practices and policies relating to Ministers of Religion coming to Britain from overseas, with the aim of formulating a coherent and comprehensive policy relating to such ministers serving in the British Connexion;
- approved the recommendations of the Strategy and Resources Committee regarding the use of the money in the Connexional Priority Fund available in excess of the reserve level;
- agreed to the Statement of Funding Principles for the Pension and Assurance Scheme for Lay Employees of the Methodist Church (PASLEMC), including the economic and demographic assumptions;
- agreed to the Recovery Plan for PASLEMC;
- agreed to consult with members of PASLEMC in May and June 2015 with regard to linking the normal retirement date to the male State Pension date for service from 1 September 2015;
- agreed to the Schedule of Contributions for PASLEMC;
- agreed to consult with members of PASLEMC in May and June 2015 with regard to amending the definition of pensionable salary to change from the current deduction of Basic State Pension to 75% of the new single-tier State Pension from 6 April 2016;
- delegated the final consideration and decision on the benefits change which needs to be implemented from 1 September 2015 to the Finance Subcommittee of the Strategy and Resources Committee which for the purposes of considering this matter will be supplemented by two members of the Council;
- agreed, on behalf of the Conference, to the Statement of Funding Principles for the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme (MMPS), including the assumptions proposed by the Trustee of MMPS as the basis of the Actuarial Valuation;
- agreed to the Recovery Plan of MMPS and recommended to the Conference that a contribution of £1million per annum from 1 September 2015 continue to be made from the Pension Reserve Fund to MMPS for the duration of the recovery period;
- agreed to the Schedule of Contributions for MMPS and recommended to the Conference to retain the existing Church contribution rate of 26.9% of standard stipends from 1 September 2015;
- recommended to the Conference that a consultation be initiated with members on a change to benefits to link the pension increases awarded in relation to both past and future service to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rather than the Retail Price Index (RPI) from 1 September 2016;

- approved the Joint Policy on Safer Recruitment (with the Church of England);
- delegated responsibility for the approval of the practice guidance on carrying out Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks as part of Safer Recruitment to a sub group;
- appointed Mr David S Walton to be the Methodist co-Chair of the Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group and the Revds David Gamble and Michaela Youngson to be its other two Methodist members.
- considered the grants made to other parts of the World Church through the Connexional Grants Committee;
- received an update report concerning the work of Inter Faith Relations;
- agreed to change the pay and grading structure for lay employees of the Methodist Council, directing that work be done on the detailed proposals for a new structure;
- made various nominations and appointments to committees, trusts and other bodies;
- adopted proposals for establishing the One Mission Forum;
- noted the guidance produced concerning Regulated Activity under the Lobbying Act;
- approved safeguarding practice guidance for single congregation LEPs with the Church of England;
- adopted terms of reference for the Cliff College Committee;
- adopted Disciplinary and Grievance policies for Methodist Council employees;
- received a report concerning Releasing Property for God's Mission and directed that further work be done in this area;
- considered the proposals of the Larger than Circuit coordinating group and directed that further work be done;
- noted, on the advice of the Law and Polity Committee, the need to clarify aspects of membership.

1.2 Other Business

The Council also:

- heard reflections from the President and Vice-President on their year of office;
- discussed Mission Rediscovered – A Strategic Plan for World Church Relationships as a global expression of One Mission;
- witnessed the attestation of the Journal of the 2014 Conference.

The Council received annual reports from:

- Southlands College and Southlands Methodist Trust.

***RESOLUTION

28/1. The Conference received the General Report of the Council.

SECTION F

Definition of replacement projects

The 2013 Conference accepted Memorial 19 from the North East Somerset and Bath Circuit:

M19 *Definition of replacement projects*

The North East Somerset and Bath (7/13) Circuit Meeting (Present: 49; Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference to review the principles under which a levy upon the proceeds of sale of a property are made under Standing Order 973 and to broaden the definition of 'replacement scheme' to include new ventures in mission that may not involve buildings, thereby releasing resources for new models of mission.

The Circuit Meeting recognises that their memorial M17 (2012) to the Conference of 2012 was declined by the Conference but are concerned that this was solely on the grounds of the potential impact on the amount of money that would then be available to the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF). It appears that no consideration was given to the major point of principle that the present arrangements involve a bias towards projects involving new or renewed buildings over against those where churches seek to develop new patterns of church life which do not involve developing their own buildings. The Circuit Meeting again requests the Conference to review the principle that Methodism, as a discipleship movement shaped for mission and as a Church encouraging fresh expressions of church, should give increased resources to work that involves new patterns of church life over against those which relate solely to the replacement of existing buildings.

Whilst the Circuit Meeting recognises that new ventures in mission may themselves attract money from the CPF there is no certainty, when planning future policy, under present Standing Orders that this would be forthcoming.

Reply

The Conference thanks the North East Somerset and Bath Circuit Meeting for its memorial.

The Conference has received a number of memorials which seek to expand the definition of replacement projects under Standing Order 973. It is important to consider any amendment to the definition of replacement projects alongside the level of income to the Connexional Priority Fund and commitments of the Connexional Priority Fund.

The 2011 Conference expanded the interpretation of replacement projects to allow for multiple dispositions to not attract the CPF levy and the Methodist Council considered the impact of these amendments in the papers MC/11/20 and MC/11/45. Prior to any further amendments to the definition of replacement projects the Conference considers it appropriate for a full review to be undertaken into the application of the CPF levy and the exemptions and the income from the levy since 2011.

The Conference therefore accepts the request for a review of this policy and directs the Council to undertake a full review of the CPF levy policy and report no later than the 2015 Conference with proposals for any amendments to the policy.

1. The SRC and the Council, having considered this matter, recommend that the CPF levy policy be amended to enable the Council to grant exceptions to the application of the CPF levy. The policy change is reflected in the proposed amendment to Standing Order 973. The Council also agreed that a consultation group should be appointed to assist in the decision-making task of classifying a project as a replacement, particularly for the complicated cases. The group will be three people, potentially including a member of the Connexional Grants Committee, a District Property Secretary and a member of the Council.
2. The Council further directed the Connexional Team to develop more detailed guidance for the classifying of replacement projects with key terms defined. The detailed guidance will be developed in consultation with the Connexional Grants Committee which has responsibility under SO 971 for administering the Connexional Priority Fund.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

28/2. The Conference received the Report.

The Law and Polity Sub-Committee has advised the Secretary of the Conference and the Chair of the Methodist Council that the proposed Standing Order 973(5)(i) should be withdrawn and detailed guidance on the classification of replacement projects be brought to the Conference in 2016. The advice has been offered and accepted in recognition of the significant impact the application of the Connexional Priority Fund levy and classification of replacement projects can have on a local church or circuit project. It is also recognised that the application of the levy and the classification of replacement projects can be a sensitive issue and the guidance should command the confidence of the whole connexion. It is on this basis that the Committee has advised that draft detailed guidance on the classification of replacement projects be brought to the Conference.

The Law and Polity Sub-Committee has clarified that in paragraph 1 of Section F of the Methodist Council Report the Council has recommended that the CPF levy policy be amended to enable the Council to grant an exception to the five year rule not exceptions to the policy generally. The Connexional Team as directed by the Council should still prepare interim guidance to define key terms.

28/3. The Conference amended Standing Order 973 as follows:

973 Replacement Projects. [.....]

(4) If the replacement project is not implemented forthwith then the levy shall initially be paid as if there were no such project, but if the project is implemented within five years of the disposition ***or if the appropriate connexional authority has granted an exception to the five year requirement in this Standing Order***, the levy shall be cancelled or recalculated in accordance with clause (2) or clause (3) above, as appropriate, and the overpayment refunded with interest at the rate earned by the Central Finance Board's Trustees Interest Fund.

(5) The Methodist Council shall adopt criteria for any application for an exception under clause (4).

28/3A. The Conference directed the Council to bring draft detailed guidance on the classification of a project as a replacement project to the Conference in 2016.

SECTION G

Use of investment property

1. The Council directed the Connexional Team to undertake a review of the current restrictions on the use of Investment Property. This was as a consequence of concerns having been raised about the ability of local churches and circuits to achieve the best rent for the lease of Investment Property premises due to some restrictions imposed by the application of Standing Orders to such premises.
2. The Council recommends to the Conference that a policy is adopted that allows a tenant of Methodist premises which are no longer required for Methodist purposes and where a commercial lease is being entered into, for the best price, to sell lottery tickets, and/or scratchcards and alcohol and to allow the consumption of alcohol on such premises. The policy would allow for a commercial lease for any Class of Use provided for in The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 other than A4 Drinking Establishments eg public houses and wine bars or nightclubs. This would allow a lease to restaurants. Nor would a lease be permitted for a betting office/shop but other types of shop falling with A2 use would be permitted. Provisions would also be included in the lease that excluded any other forms of gambling such as gambling machines.

3. A provision would also be included within any commercial lease that the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes and the managing trustees must give consent to any change to the Class of Use of the premises being sought by the tenant, with the managing trustees retaining the ability to terminate the lease if the proposed Class of Use was contrary to the policy.
4. The Council also recommends to the Conference that managing trustees of Methodist premises being leased for a term of 10 years or more, for the best rent and on a full repairing basis do not have to undertake the quinquennial inspection required in SO 952.
5. The definition of commercial lease would be any lease of premises no longer required for any purpose in paragraph 13(b)-(n) of the Model Trusts, for a term of 10 years or more and where the best price is being obtained.
6. The Council also directed the Connexional Team to undertake a review of the definition of application of the term 'investment property' and 'land held as an investment' in Standing Orders with particular thought being given as to the continued justification of the exemption from the Connexional Priority Fund levy for land held as an investment .

*****RESOLUTIONS**

28/4. The Conference received the Report.

28/5. The Conference directed that where a commercial lease is being entered into of Methodist premises that are no longer required for model trust purposes, the restrictions on the sale and consumption of alcohol will be amended to allow a lease for any class of use other than drinking establishments or nightclubs.

28/6. The Conference directed that where a commercial lease is being entered into of Methodist premises that are no longer required for model trust purposes, the restrictions on commercial gambling be amended to allow for the sale of scratch cards and lottery tickets as part of a tenants business, but not for a lease to a betting shop or equivalent.

28/7. The Conference directed that where a full repairing lease for a period of 10 years or more is being entered into of Methodist premises that are no longer required for model trust purposes, there be no requirement for the managing trustees to undertake a quinquennial inspection of the leased premises.

28/8. The Conference directed the Law and Polity Committee to bring the necessary Standing Order amendments to the 2016 Conference.

SECTION H

Ministries Committee

1. Introduction

1.1 The Ministries Committee made an annual report to the Council and the Council highlights the following work of the Committee.

2. Circuit Based Learning Programme: A Practice-based Pathway for Ministry

2.1 The *Fruitful Field* report identified "the development of practice-based formational pathways for a number of those preparing for ordained ministry" (para 128.3) as one of the early

priorities of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN) reflecting “the desires expressed both by student ministers and also by institutions, colleges and centres for a greater proportion of formal learning activity to take place in local contexts” (para 102). The Practice Based Formation (PBF) Working Group provided a specification to the January 2015 meeting of the Ministries Committee which addressed complex issues in developing a pathway about the status of students: financial and stationing issues; implications for Standing Orders; the need for clarity in relation to oversight; for accessibility and diversity despite geographical and financial considerations; and the need for rigour in the allocations process. The specification also took account of a range of questions about where and how formation happens, the role of communities and the relationships involved in learning, the interface between local context and the training institution, and the determinants of suitability of both contexts and people.

2.2 The pathway specification contains the following key elements:

- A five-year pilot phase;
- Students on the pathway will be designated as ‘student ministers’;
- Students will receive a bursary;
- The pathway will involve three years of training;
- Approved Practice Bases;
- Supervision;
- Research and review;
- Allocations.

3. Local Preachers and Worship Leaders

3.1 During 2014-15 work has continued on the development of a new programme for the initial training of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders (‘Worship: Leading and Preaching’). Draft versions of modules 1-4 are being made available in pilot form in the current connexional year and are being trialled in a number of regions. A joint Reference Group has been appointed by the Ministries Committee and the Faith and Order Committee and the evolution of its way of working holds considerable promise for the continuing partnership between the two committees once work on the initial phase of development has been completed. Considerable work has been completed on the infrastructure of the course including the development of training resources for tutors, work on portfolio assessment and an underpinning Virtual Learning Environment which will also provide a platform for future developments in Methodist online training. Modules 1-4 remain on target for connexional release in 2015-16 with Modules 5-8 being made available in 2016-17. Concerns expressed in several quarters about the length of training for Worship Leaders have been heard and will be reflected upon further in the light of the experience of the pilot projects.

3.2 A number of issues related to the practice of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders have been raised in recent years and reflected in a number of memorials to the Conference. This has happened in a fairly *ad hoc* way and the DMLN Ministry Development Team will undertake a consultation process with Local Preachers’ Meetings and other relevant parties during 2015-16 bringing recommendations to the Ministries Committee in 2016-17. The Ministries Committee has considered a number of Memorials presented to the 2013 Conference and makes reports on the consideration it has given to them here.

Response to Memorials

M7 (2013) Local Preachers on trial

The Glossop (19/21) Circuit Meeting (Present: 22; Voting: unanimous) suggests to the Conference that the title ‘Local Preacher on trial’ is outdated and ambiguous and asks

the Conference to find a name that more appropriately reflects the nature of the role, for example, 'Preacher in Training' or 'Student Preacher'.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Glossop Circuit Meeting for its memorial.

The development of new flexible and accessible pathways for Local Preachers (as outlined in The Fruitful Field Project report to the 2012 Conference) will provide the best opportunity to reconsider the title 'Local Preacher on Trial'. The Conference directs the Ministries Committee to continue to oversee work on the development of these new pathways. The pathways are currently being developed within the framework of existing Standing Orders (including terminology); however, the Conference acknowledges that it would be appropriate to revisit these Standing Orders in the future in the light of this work. The Conference therefore refers this memorial to the Ministries Committee to consider as part of their work on Local Preacher training and directs the committee to report back to the Conference no later than 2015.

The Ministries Committee recommends, at this stage, that no changes are made to standing orders but that consideration of the appropriate title form part of a consultation process with Local Preachers' Meetings during 2015-16 with recommendations to the Ministries Committee in 2016-17 and, as appropriate, to the Conference of 2017.

M8 (2013) Responsibilities of Worship Leaders

The Sheffield (West) (25/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 21; Voting: unanimous) draws the Conference's attention to the current situation relating to Worship Leaders and their relationships with presbyters and Local Preachers and asks the Conference to take the following actions:

- (a) To review the responsibility of Worship leaders within Methodist worship, taking into account the variety of gifts now offered by Worship Leaders and the considerable variety of patterns of worship in current Methodist practice and to provide guidance as to the Worship Leader's relationship to and with the planned presbyter or Local Preacher.*
- (b) To review the membership, agenda and title of the Circuit Local Preachers' Meeting to include Worship Leaders as members of that meeting and to enable them to participate in and to vote on appropriate parts of the agenda.*
- (c) To revise Standing Orders as necessary.*

Reply

The Conference thanks the Sheffield (West) Circuit Meeting for its memorial and for raising the issue of the responsibilities and relationships of Worship Leaders.

Since the introduction of Worship Leaders, their role has changed. We believe that the new pathways for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders that are currently under development will reflect these changes, including a "greater emphasis on the skills required for preaching and leading worship" (The Fruitful Field Project report to the 2012 Conference, para 134).

As noted in The Fruitful Field Project report, the new pathways will present an opportunity for far greater shared training and development for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. These pathways are currently being developed within the framework of existing Standing Orders (including the responsibilities of Worship Leaders and the constitution of the Local Preachers' Meeting); however, the Conference acknowledges

that it would be appropriate to revisit these Standing Orders in the future in the light of this work. This may include a review of the membership, agenda and title of the Local Preachers' Meeting. The Conference notes that many Circuits already invite Worship Leaders to be present and participate at Local Preachers' Meetings. The Conference therefore refers this memorial to the Ministries Committee to consider as part of their work on worship leader training and directs the committee to report back to the Conference no later than 2015.

SO 685 reads as follows:

At each service in which a worship leader shares the person appointed on the circuit plan of preaching appointments shall retain overall responsibility for the act of worship, but shall seek to work collaboratively with the worship leader appointed to share in that service by the Church Council.

(See also SO 681(1), which draws attention to the role of Worship Leaders in assisting in the leadership of God's people in worship.)

The Ministries Committee believes that the current Standing Order is clear in identifying the nature of the working relationship between a Worship Leader and those who retain overall responsibility for an act of worship. The Committee recognises that this is not always the case in practice and recommends that consideration of a Code of Practice form part of a consultation with Local Preachers' Meetings in 2015-16. The Committee notes that in future Worship Leaders and Local Preachers on Trial will share in significant parts of their training together (Modules 1-4 of Worship: Leading and Preaching). The new pathway for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders includes examples of good practice in collaborative working and the Committee encourages Local Preachers' Meetings together with Worship Leaders to make use of the relevant part of these resources.

The Ministries Committee recommends that a consideration of the title and agenda of the Local Preachers' Meeting form part of a consultation process with Local Preachers' Meetings during 2015-16 with recommendations to the Ministries Committee in 2016-17 and, as appropriate, to the 2017 Conference.

M9 (2013) Length of appointment for worship leaders

The Gordano Valley (7/15) Circuit Meeting (Present: 33; Voting: 24 for, 6 against) draws the Conference's attention to the three-yearly appointments of Worship Leaders by local churches and asks the Conference to direct the Faith and Order Committee and/or the Discipleship and Ministries Cluster to review this period taking into consideration the lifetime admission of Local Preachers to their office.

There has been growing participation of Worship Leaders in the conduct of worship over the last 20 years. The 2012 report to the Conference, The Fruitful Field Project, acknowledged that "Local Preachers and Worship Leaders make an immense contribution to the life of the Connexion".

It is the view of this Circuit Meeting that this level of acceptance is not reflected in the requirement for a three year review of a Worship Leader's appointment.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Gordano Valley Circuit Meeting for its memorial and for raising the issue of the term of service of Worship Leaders between reviews.

As noted in The Fruitful Field Project report to the 2012 Conference, flexible and accessible pathways are currently being developed under the oversight of the Ministries Committee for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. These pathways are currently being developed within the framework of existing Standing Orders; however, the Conference acknowledges that it would be appropriate to revisit these Standing Orders in the future in the light of this work. The Conference is grateful for the feedback of the Gordano Valley Circuit Meeting in this process, and acknowledges that in revisiting Standing Orders it would be helpful to reconsider the period of time between reviews. The Conference therefore refers this memorial to the Ministries Committee to consider as part of their work on Worship Leader training and directs the committee to report back to the Conference no later than 2015.

The Ministries Committee recommends that no changes be made to the current length of appointment of Worship Leaders noting that there is already provision to extend appointments subject to review. In the light of increased expectations related to the initial training of Worship Leaders, the Committee recommends that Circuits pay careful attention to who is appointed to the role of Worship Leader noting that a Worship Leader is someone who regularly takes a leading or co-ordinating role in the conduct of worship. The Ministries Committee also recommends that the possibility of a quinquennial review of Local Preachers be included as part of a consultation process with Local Preachers' Meetings during 2015-16 with recommendations to the Ministries Committee in 2016-17 and, as appropriate, to the 2017 Conference.

4. A Framework for Local Ministry Development

- 4.1 The General Secretary's Report to the 2011 Conference (paras 38-42) noted the importance of returning to the issue of local pastoral ministry with "some rigour and urgency". Initial discussions within the Ministries Committee indicated that it would not be appropriate to proceed with a form of connexional authorisation for such roles until a wider piece of work regarding ministry in the Methodist Church had been completed by the Faith and Order Committee. In addition, wider consultation indicated that the range of local ministries being exercised across the Connexion were diverse and, often by their nature, occasional (ie local, time limited and non-transferable) or, in the case of various paid lay roles, guided by contracts of employment and job descriptions so that it was not clear precisely what office, or range of offices, required connexional authorisation. It was agreed, however, that work should begin on developing appropriate resources for a local ministry framework including core competencies, stories of good practice and signposts to existing courses and resources to provide a connexional framework within which various lay ministries which act as focuses of pastoral care and mission in Local Churches, Circuits or Districts might be appropriately supported.
- 4.2 The Ministries Committee at its January 2015 meeting accepted a proposal outlining a connexional framework for Local Ministry Development. Implicit within the proposal is the recognition that a framework for Local Ministry Development is important not just for existing patterns of ministry in the Church, but for future patterns of mission and outreach. It is also the recognition that new patterns of mission and ministry are emerging in the Methodist Church which need to be honoured and supported within a framework of excellence. The new framework seeks to encourage the development of a permissive but accountable culture within which a range of lay ministries which focus elements of the life of a Local Church might flourish in a way which complements existing structures of authorised lay and ordained ministries and principal officers. Key to the proposal is a structure of voluntary agreements and contracts of employment which support the emergence of such 'occasional' and diverse ministries within a framework of connexional guidelines, learning and development. The framework works on the assumption that current Standing Orders and connexional practice

already contain significant permissions, examples of good practice and guidelines, and necessary checks and balances to enable such a pathway to emerge.

4.3 A number of elements were identified by the Ministries Committee as crucial to the emergence of excellence in local church pastoral practice in the development of local ministries. The following points are of particular significance:

- The way in which Local Churches, Circuits and Districts respond to contexts of pastoral care, fellowship, mission and service in culturally appropriate ways involves processes of mutual, collaborative discernment which are not simply a response to pastoral emergency but a shared prayerful process within which future patterns of ministry and mission can be identified.
- The Committee noted the importance of the collaborative character and mutual interdependence of ministry and the need for a local ministry framework to reflect the gifts, partnership and mutual interdependence of all ministries whilst affirming the ministry and distinctive role of those set aside and authorised by the Conference to enable the Church in its ministry and mission. It is key to the development of a framework that job descriptions and volunteer agreements take sufficient account of the various relationships and accountability structures within which an appointment is held and the development of guidelines on good practice related to the development of shared, collaborative models of leadership, accountability, review and oversight.
- Diversity of ministries – it is evident that there is a diverse range of local responses to pastoral and missional need which a single nomenclature (eg Local Pastoral Ministry) is not sufficient to describe. The term ‘Local Ministry Development’ is used to describe a framework within which a variety of locally recognised ministries, including those which act as focuses of pastoral leadership in Local Churches, can flourish, be properly resourced and appropriately overseen.
- Core practices – to support such a framework it is essential that a blend of learning resources be identified which support the emergence both of a set of core, underpinning practices and sets of learning opportunities appropriate to particular focuses of ministry.
- Services of recognition – each year pastoral visitors and class leaders participate in services of rededication.

4.4 The Ministries Committee accepted an outline scheme which the DMLN will now begin to develop in partnership with others. The proposed Local Ministry Development Framework has four key elements: guidelines; circuit development; core practice and individual learning components; gathering places.

4.5 The Ministries Committee notes the significance of these developments and will bring further reports to the Methodist Council as this piece of work evolves.

5. Venture FX

5.1 As the Connexional Pioneering Ministries Scheme, *VentureFX* was charged by the Conference to explore how pioneer ministry might best be developed within a Methodist context. Since 2009 the scheme has established 13 projects each led by a pioneer and each with the intention of helping non-churched people to become disciples of Jesus, and for contextually relevant forms of church to emerge among them. The scheme intended each project to be supported, in collaboration with local Circuits and Districts, for two five-year phases. Some of the earlier projects are now entering into the second phase, and are in the process of being reviewed by an external consultant. Early indications suggest that healthy, though usually quite small, Christian communities are being formed in the majority of the projects. All of them comprise people who have no previous connection with church or faith, as well as some

whose engagement with church has lapsed. In both cases these people are unlikely to have been able to relate to more conventional forms of church.

- 5.2 The experience to date suggests that the scheme was correct to build on the assumption that forming church communities from scratch among un-churched or de-churched people is an essential but painstakingly slow process. Often it is in the fourth or fifth year of a project that a visible community begins to form and it is likely that in the majority of cases it will take the full ten years to reach a point of maturity and sustainability. The challenge of sustaining funding beyond the first five years has been problematic in a number of cases and, in one instance, caused a project to founder.
- 5.3 The learning and experience emerging from the scheme is being captured and shared by the coordinator of the scheme, the project management group, and the pioneers themselves. Through articles, books, websites, conferences, retreats and in the various governance bodies of the Church, the stories emerging from the projects are being told. In particular, the experience of the scheme has been key in helping to shape the development of Methodist Pioneering Pathways as part of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network strategic approach to the development of pioneer ministries. The pathways will offer a framework of recognition, support, learning and oversight in which people can respond to God's call to pioneering ministry. In this way *VentureFX* is seeking to fulfil its remit, not only to establish new ecclesial communities through pioneering mission, but also to embed the vision and practice of pioneering mission and ministry within the lifeblood of the Methodist Church.
- 5.4 The learning and experience from *Venture FX* has been fed into the development of Methodist Pioneering Pathways. In 2014-15 pilot projects have been developed in the North East, Yorkshire and Bristol and West Midlands Regions with the pathway being rolled out gradually in other regions throughout 2015-16.

6. Fresh Expressions

- 6.1 The 2007 Conference affirmed and encouraged the priority of developing fresh ways of being church and the various ways in which this priority is being taken forward in the life of the Connexion. The 2009 Conference reaffirmed this for Phase 2 of the Fresh Expressions initiative. A gathering of the Fresh Expressions Partner Forum in 2013 affirmed the commitment to develop and sustain the work into a third phase from April 2014 to 2019. The 2013 Conference (Resolution 42/2) directed the Methodist Council to bring annual reports to the Conference on the development of fresh expressions across the Connexion. This is the annual report for 2015.
- 6.2 The Fresh Expressions Team is committed to developing five focused areas of work which emerge out of the core Fresh Expressions vision and promote effective support for an increasingly diverse group of partners. The vision and areas of work are as follows:

A Fresh Expression is a form of Church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any Church:

- *It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples*
- *It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context.*

Five areas of work:

- *Supporting Practitioners* – the team are committed to the development of pioneer communities of learning and practice and the establishment of an effective

coaching/mentoring network both providing training and resources to connect clients to mentors/coaches.

- *Modelling Good Practice* – it is clear that a key way of inspiring vision is through enabling people to encounter the stories of God’s action through the faithful steps of those who have taken holy risks. The team is seeking to identify ‘*Pioneer Centres*’, varied places and contexts around the UK which can offer generous hospitality to others wanting to begin (or grow in) a journey of establishing a *fresh expression of church*. Such places will be expected to pass on their learning in apt and appropriate ways and offer some measure of relational support through a community of mutual learning.
- *Resources for Learning* – the team are gathering together existing resources and developing new ones in a single online resource centre which will be available through the www.freshexpressions.org.uk website. The new provision will enable more flexible delivery and greater accessibility to courses like *Mission Shaped Ministry*.
- *Connecting Geographically* – the team is developing ways of delivering its objectives regionally by identifying small groups of senior practitioners and network leaders across the partner organizations working together in 12-15 regions across the UK. These regional groupings will help coordinate support to pioneers and leaders of fresh expressions in their area, signposting the tools and resources developed by *Fresh Expressions* and others and acting as a key focus for delivery and promotion of the five areas of focus.
- *Networking Strategically* – the team is developing a model of hubs and roundtables which group together around common roles, skills, or interest, to engage strategically with the fresh expressions vision within a variety of spheres. The hubs themselves will have different personalities, reflecting the context and culture they represent, but will all share in a desire to be strategic, and reproduce themselves. A number of ‘partner’ hubs will develop within each denomination, as well as specialist hubs that take the vision of roundtables a stage further (eg rural, young adults, youth, young families, mission communities, local resource churches).

6.3 Although the five areas of focus are the main UK catalysts for the coming years there is a growing contribution to Fresh Expressions through international partnerships in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands and the USA. The British Board recently celebrated the approval of the South African Fresh Expressions Partnership to host the 2015 International Conference.

6.4 This is the sixth and final year in post for the current Connexional Missioner, the Revd Stephen Lindridge, and the Ministries Committee wishes to thank Stephen for his contribution to Fresh Expressions in the life of the Methodist Church. There have been some significant developments in this period including a growth in the confidence of many individuals and communities through participation in fresh expressions of church. The last five years have re-ignited everyday conversations about what it is to be the church in a relevant way (focused around the four marks of Church: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic) and Fresh Expressions continues to provoke good theological and ecclesiological questions for the whole ‘mixed economy’ of church life. The Methodist Church’s commitment to working ecumenically has been strengthened through the partnership in Fresh Expressions, especially with our covenant partner the Church of England, and the partnership has enabled a broader and deeper, missional, functional ecumenism to emerge.

6.5 The 2013 Statistics for Mission demonstrated a continuing rise in new initiatives with a further 355 fresh expressions of church being initiated. The current activity across the Connexion recognises more than two thousand places, engaging almost one hundred thousand people, most of whom had no previous connection with the Methodist Church.

7. Oversight Task Group

- 7.1 The Oversight Task Group (OTG) was established by the Ministries Committee to bring together the processes for the selection and oversight of candidates for two orders of ministry. The Ministries Committee agreed a brief for the task group including:
- The integration of DCPOC and PCPOC into MCPOC;
 - A review of candidating and allocations processes;
 - A review of competencies for the selection of candidates for ordained ministry;
 - A review of oversight processes and procedures for student ministers and probationers including the designation and role of Oversight Tutors;
 - Recommendations concerning Reception into Full Connexion, Ordination and (for deacons) membership of the Diaconal Order;
 - Arrangements for services of testimony and ordination retreats;
 - Criteria for probationer appointments.
- 7.2 The work of the OTG has resulted in the modification and clarification of existing guidelines and, as appropriate, recommendations for changes to policy or standing orders will be brought to the Conference via the Methodist Council over the next few years as the OTG completes its tasks. The revised standing orders to create a single Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee appear in part two of the report of the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity.

8. Discerning Needs and Matching Resources

- 8.1 The Stationing Committee report to the 2014 Conference identified a number of challenges faced by the Methodist Church regarding the numbers of ministers and stations. A paper produced for the Strategy and Resources Committee identified the need for further work in this area.
- 8.2 The Ministries Committee has commissioned a piece of work discerning needs and projecting the ministry resources the Methodist Church will need in the future building upon existing work by the Stationing Committee on stationing projections which take into account predictions on normal/early or later retirement, resignations and the number of new probationers. Initially this work will employ a purely statistical approach looking at the number of presbyters and deacons, churches and membership of the church and identifying the needs of the Church for the next 2-3 years. Once this initial piece of work has been completed the Committee will reflect upon how the model might be developed further to support the Methodist Church in identifying needs and matching resources in the medium to long term.

9. The Theology of Pastoral Care (2011)

- 9.1 The 2011 Conference received Part 2 of the Faith and Order Committee Report, *The Theology of Pastoral Care* and directed "... the Ministries Committee in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee and the Law and Polity Committee to consider the recommendations for further work and the practical outworking of this Statement in paragraph 31 of the Statement" (Resolution 7/4). At the same Conference the reply to Memorial M12 asked the Ministries Committee to report on progress related to the development of support and resources in supervision for all involved in ministry in the Methodist Church, especially presbyters and deacons. The Ministries Committee commends the following reply to the 2015 Conference.

- 9.2 The Ministries Committee notes that work on the development of appropriate support and supervisory mechanisms is a standard part of initial ministerial training. Supervision training on a connexionally accredited course is now mandatory for all superintendents in circuits receiving probationers. From September 2015 this training will be centred and focused at the Queen's Foundation, enabling the Connexion to focus its resources and develop practice in this area through a clearly defined route. It should be noted that all DMLN officers with a ministry development specialism have now undertaken the Queen's course. Special mention should also be made of the work and expertise of Wesley House, Cambridge and the Wesley Study Centre, Durham, in the development of work in this area.
- 9.3 The term 'supervision' continues to be used in a variety of ways but the DMLN Ministry Development Team has been asked to develop a broad understanding of how the term might be applied specifically to Methodist contexts. The importance of supervision has also been noted in wider discussions, eg in relation to the development of various forms of local ministry. In 2015-16, the DMLN plans to distil learning from the past few years and to identify ways in which appropriate training and support can be offered within regions by DMLN Officers and networks and connexionally through the Queen's Foundation.
- 9.4 There is still significant work to do in relation to these issues but the question of supervision practice is now embedded as a significant strategic objective within the work of the DMLN, and will be kept under review as the future unfolds.

10. Partnership between the Centres

- 10.1 The Ministries Committee was asked to support the Network Development Group (a group comprising the Head of the Discipleship and Ministries Cluster, the Directors of the DMLN, the Principals of the Queen's Foundation and Cliff College, the Director of Methodist Formation at the Queen's Foundation, the Academic Dean at Cliff College, and two Regional DMLN Co-ordinators), in clarifying the roles of the two centres within the learning network and the ways in which partnership between the centres could be enhanced. An interim report presented to the January 2015 meeting indicated that the two centres will build upon their existing core charisms. However, the Ministries Committee confirmed the recommendation that the delivery of Pre-ordination Training be led by Queen's in collaboration as appropriate with Cliff College and the DMLN Regions. The Ministries Committee welcomes the appointment of the Revd Kenneth Howcroft as Chair of the Queen's Foundation Governing Body from 1 September 2015 and the presentation of new terms of reference for the Cliff College Committee to the Methodist Council.

11. Length of Appointment to the Ministries Committee

- 11.1 SO 32A0(4) indicates that members of the Ministries Committee are eligible to serve for a period not exceeding four years. It has become clear that continuity of experience is vital to the proper functioning of the Committee and that the potential for an extended period of service in some cases would benefit its work. The Ministries Committee therefore recommends that SO32A0(4) be amended to enable new members to be appointed for an initial period of three years which can be extended for a further period of up to but not exceeding three years. The Ministries Committee notes that a revised provision, if accepted, should not apply retrospectively to existing members. The revised standing order appears in part two of the report of the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

28/9. The Conference received the Report.

28/10. The Conference adopted the further replies to replies to M7, M8, M9 (2013).

28/11. The Conference adopted the further replies to Resolution 7/4 and M12 (2011).

SECTION J

Recording pioneering fresh expressions

The 2013 Conference adopted the following Notice of Motion:

The Conference affirms the ongoing work to “develop and respond to growth in the life of the Connexion” (para 2.2 p 473, Ministries Committee report) and also welcomes the General Secretary’s endorsement of Fresh Expressions, as indicated in his report.

However, the Conference recognises that there are a number of weaknesses in the current way we record the variety and creativity of FX communities and Pioneering Projects in our Statistics for Mission. In particular we do not have a mechanism for recording those Fresh Expressions of Church that are truly pioneering and therefore not linked to an existing Methodist Society (or LEP). Many of them are, or are emerging into, churches in their own right but are not recorded as such. Secondly, recording them as ‘groups’ within existing churches does not inspire the desired intention that they grow to become an ecclesial community in their own right and mature as a fresh expression of church.

The Conference directs that:

- a) the Faith and Order Committee and the Law and Polity Committee consider the implications of this work for the Methodist Church’s understanding of its ecclesiology;*
- b) the Ministries Committee liaise with the Connexional Team to develop proposals for how this immensely significant work can be properly supported, celebrated and recorded; and*
- c) an interim report on a) and b) be brought by the Methodist Council, in collaboration with the Ministries Committee, to the 2014 Conference and a full report to the 2015 Conference.*

- 1.1. The Faith and Order Committee and Ministries Committee brought a joint report to the Methodist Council, having consulted with the Connexional Missioner, the Statistics and Mapping Research Officer, members of the Fresh Expressions Network and the Venture FX Coordinator.
- 1.2. The diversity and developmental nature of fresh expressions of church present a complexity that requires thorough and careful consideration. This has been a consistent challenge in seeking to respond to the Notice of Motion, and although much work is being undertaken progress may not be sensibly achieved as quickly as first intended. Therefore much of the work described in this report is still at a preliminary stage.

Recording Fresh Expressions

- 2.1 Every three years a report on the annual membership returns is presented to the Conference as required by Standing Order 305(2). This has been the platform for using a variety of statistical information to offer to the Conference a more detailed picture of the activity and composition of the Methodist Church in Britain (*Statistics for Mission 2013*, 1.4 and 1.5). Such information assists the Conference in engaging in pastoral conversation on the Work of God, for example as under clause 23f of the *Deed of Union*. Methodists have generally recognised

the usefulness of statistics to the Church's mission and ministry, while acknowledging its limitations (*Statistics for Mission 2013*, 1.2).

- 2.2. Under the present system, Methodist Societies (Local Churches) are the primary focus for data collection and statistical reporting. Methodist numbers therefore comprise a membership measure, made up of people who belong to a Methodist Society, as well as measures of attendance at Local Church services and of numbers who might be considered to come within the pastoral care of a Local Church (the "Community Roll"). More recently, statistics have also included information on the range of "groups and outreach activities" associated with, and reported by, individual Local Churches.
- 2.3. Fresh Expressions have sometimes struggled to be satisfactorily recorded within this framework. Some originate otherwise than through association with a particular Local Church. Others, though they may have originated as a "group" or "outreach activity" associated with a Local Church, have evolved into something more than this, so that to report them as such is no longer adequate.
- 2.4. The Research and Statistics for Mission Office has found that such Fresh Expressions are generally keen to be counted among Methodist numbers, and to be reported within the range of missions and ministries over which the Conference has oversight. However, further work is needed to determine how they might be mapped onto the picture of Methodism that emerges as a result.

Celebrating Fresh Expressions

- 3.1. There are multiple dimensions to the concept of celebrating this work. A small and concise piece of work is being tasked to compile a current dossier of links for information.
- 3.2. One example is the welcome service of a maturing fresh expression of church being established as an identified Methodist Church in the Circuit. A small but significant number of fresh expressions have become a church of the circuit in which they reside. These welcome services have been written and agreed through their District and Circuit bodies and may offer some examples of how best to celebrate this aspect of maturing fresh expressions. This is not the whole picture for celebrating this significant work but it is some visible practice that has worked well.
- 3.3. Another type of example can be found on the Fresh Expressions website and specifically the stories pages. They regularly carry news that celebrates this significant work of God and has been one of the most effective methods of inspiring many others to go and try (www.freshexpressions.org.uk/stories). Alternatively you can view the 'On demand' page with regular month podcasts with a wide range of material and information, sharing and celebrate God's action in and through *fresh expressions of church*.

Supporting Fresh Expressions

- 4.1. Three strands have come together to help answer the perhaps most urgent request of supporting fresh expressions at the grassroots. The national Fresh Expressions team asked for a mechanism by which the growing partnership could continue to be resourced by the small team, the idea of each partner forming a hub to act as an interface was suggested (strand 1). Notice of Motion 103 asked the same question but from the grassroots upwards (strand 2). A conversation was asked for between the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN) and Fresh Expressions as to how a collaborative way of working could be imagined to support fresh expressions within the regions (strand 3).

- 4.2. Over the last year these strands and conversations have progressed the concept of a denominational hub that has both a connexional focus and a regional outworking. After good collaboration with members of the Connexional Team, District Chairs and DMLN Coordinators, a pilot consultation for such a Hub is to be established, exploring the parameters and to aid regional support at the grassroots. A list of regional 'champions/advocates' has been identified and in conjunction with the pioneer pathway development, will offer a tangible framework covering: Vocational Discernment, Community of Practice, Coaching/Mentoring, Formal Learning and developing a Personal Portfolio.
- 4.3. Gathering these advocates several times a year for the Connexional Hub, aspires to capture a more accurate narrative of the developing needs, challenges and opportunities presented across the Connexion, thus informing appropriate strategy and action of both the Fresh Expressions Team and the Connexional Team.

Ecclesiological Questions

- 5.1 The 2012 Anglican-Methodist report *Fresh Expressions in the Mission of the Church* used the definition of the Fresh Expressions initiative, namely:

A Fresh Expression is a form of Church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any Church:

- It will come into being through the principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples;

- It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context.

(Fresh Expressions in the Mission of the Church (2012), 1.1.3 and 2.3.3)

- 5.2. The question of what constitutes "a mature expression of church" is one which requires reflection and discernment. The report affirms the necessity of a "mixed economy" of traditional churches and fresh expressions that "constitute a complementary and mutually enriching partnership in which each learns from the other". (2.1.11) A truly Catholic and incarnational Church will be culturally relevant and therefore diverse, looking different in different contexts. However, if it is also truly apostolic then there will be a sense of connectivity and different expressions of Church will have characteristics in common. It is argued that a mission-shaped ecclesiology should take proper account of the changing missionary context and the ecclesial dynamics of intensity and connectivity. The report explores the criteria "by which it is possible for the Church of England and the Methodist Church to recognise fresh expressions as churches, according to their respective teaching concerning the nature of the Church" (1.4.10) and identifies eight essential ecclesial elements by which a Christian community can be identified as a church (4.6.1 and 7.3.5). The report concludes that the teaching of the Church of England and the Methodist Church concerning the nature of the Church "itself provides the necessary theological and ecclesiastical framework for the development of fresh expressions". (7.1.3)
- 5.3. *Fresh Expressions in the Mission of the Church* makes a significant contribution to, and is a resource for, continuing theological reflection on the ecclesiological questions that fresh expressions provoke. Whilst some of the questions it raises warrant further reflection, it is suggested that there is a period of wider reflection on the theological challenges and insights that fresh expressions provide before any further and more specific work is undertaken by the Faith and Order Committee. Much fresh expressions work is in its infancy and there should be sufficient time and space for its growth and development. Reflections on ecclesiology focused around the four marks of the church are being encouraged both through Methodist structures and the Fresh Expressions movement, especially in the *Mission Shaped Ministry* course.

- 5.4. The more immediate questions requiring careful consideration relate to questions of oversight, governance and hospitality. *Fresh Expressions in the Mission of the Church* calls for a 'light touch' to the way in which ecclesiastical discipline is applied to Fresh Expressions, whilst recognising that a permissive interpretation of discipline needs to be balanced by proper and appropriate structures of accountability. It offers no suggestions as to how this can happen. Further work on what forms of oversight are appropriate and enabling for fresh expressions is needed. This requires consideration of appropriate and effective oversight structures and processes, as well as looking at how the Methodist Church might foster supportive relationships and encourage wider ownership of the mission of fresh expressions.
- 5.5. The Council directed the Law and Polity Committee and the Faith and Order Committee to ensure that work is undertaken with regards to the oversight and governance of Fresh Expressions.

*****RESOLUTION**

28/12. The Conference received the Report.

SECTION K

Corporate Risk Register

1. In October 2014, the Methodist Council adopted a Risk Management Policy and agreed to set up a working group to work on a 'corporate' Risk Register.
2. The group produced a Risk Register containing a number of 'corporate' risks which was adopted by the Council. The risks were identified as being:
 - Inability to create new Methodist disciples results in further decline, ultimately resulting in the Methodist Church ceasing to exist.
 - Lack of coherent strategy/inability to identify priorities contributes to decline, ultimately resulting in the Methodist Church ceasing to exist.
 - Circuits decide to leave the connexional framework resulting in reduction or break up of the Methodist Connexion.
 - Changes in government policy result in loss of favourable charitable status in law.
 - Ineffective recruitment and training of ministerial/lay roles results in shortage/surplus of ministers or decline in membership due to poor standard/allocation of ministers/lay workers.
 - Reputational damage hinders engagement with society and church growth, or results in litigation.
 - Ineffective stewardship of resources results in: reduced liquidity/cash flow or deficit; or failure to use funds towards changing priorities.
3. It is important that the Risk Register of the Methodist Church is kept under review on a frequent basis and by a body that has a close working knowledge of and detailed responsibility for the Connexional Team, Methodist Church finances, and employment processes. Therefore, the Council recommends that the Conference delegates to the Council (working with the SRC) the responsibility for ongoing monitoring of corporate risks.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

28/13. The Conference received the Report.

28/14. The Conference delegated to the Council, working with the Strategy and Resources Committee, the responsibility for ongoing monitoring of corporate risks.