

24. Methodist Council, part 2

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SECTION F GENERAL REPORT (2)

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:

- delegated to the Chair of the Council and the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) authority to agree the terms of reference for a review of the extension and application of SO 955(6) and, if necessary, to appoint a working party to undertake the review;
- agreed that the work directed by Notice of Motion 2015/214, Home for Good, can be considered completed;
- agreed the full and permanent membership of the Church of Scotland in the Joint Public Issues Team;
- authorised interim arrangements for covering the post of the Principal of Cliff College, and directed the SRC to undertake a governance scrutiny exercise in relation to the College;
- further to M20 (2015), noted that guidance regarding small property improvements that do not require consent and clarifying the application of Standing Order 930(1) is now available on the Methodist Church website;
- approved the sale of Swaythling Methodist Church under Model Trust 20 to City Life Church subject to the approved overage provisions, and in doing so, agreed that this does not establish a precedent;
- agreed to increase the budget, to be met from the Fund for Training, for the redevelopment of 24 Somerset Road, Birmingham;
- agreed some amendments to the transition arrangements in respect of the new pay and grading policy for lay employees of the Council;
- received a report regarding the proposed consultation in respect of the re-shaping of the Yorkshire Districts;
- made various nominations and appointments;
- adopted a revised home-working policy for employees of the Council;
- approved a revised annualised hours policy for employees of the Council;
- approved the revised terms of reference of the Finance Sub-Committee of the SRC;
- amended the processes for applying exemptions to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for ministers who are no longer exercising public ministry;
- appointed the members of the Connexional Grants Committee, sub-committees and streams for the connexional year 2016/17.

1.2 Other Business

The Council received annual reports from:

- Southlands College and Southlands Methodist Trust;
- Investment Committee.

The Council also:

- engaged in discussions concerned with the task of Christian apologetics;
- heard reflections from the President and the Vice-President on their year of office;
- witnessed the attestation of the Journal of the 2015 Conference.

In addition, further to its discussions about the proposed Connexional Central Services Budget, the Council agreed that further work should be undertaken in the area of strategic planning and the use of resources. Such work should pay particular attention to contemporary articulations and expressions of connexionalism. The Council committed itself to spend time considering this at its next meetings, resourced by the SRC and the Connexional Team.

*****RESOLUTION**

24/1. The Conference received the General Report of the Council.

SECTION G

RESOURCING LEADERSHIP

The Resourcing Leadership Working Party was appointed by the Methodist Council in response to Notice of Motion 206 (2014):

In the light of the General Secretary's report that urges the whole Connexion to "focus on those things that make for an ever better Church", and the report of the working party which has reviewed the role of the Secretary of the Conference and General Secretary, the Conference:

- a) identifies a need for the church to be better resourced in the variety of leadership roles.*
- b) judges that both ministers and lay people should be better enabled to discern and explore the gifts and graces that they offer in the service of the church,*

and therefore directs the Methodist Council:

(1) to make available resources and training for this purpose;

(2) to establish a working party to consider this need.

The Conference further directs the working party, in collaboration with the Ministries Committee, to consider:

○ mechanisms by which the church might enable ministers and lay people to explore their calling to the variety of leadership roles within the church, in-particular senior leadership roles

○ training, development and discernment opportunities to equip potential leaders to fulfil their calling.

○ how the Connexion might ensure greater representation of ministers from underrepresented groups (such as women, members of black and minority ethnic groups and those who are part of the missing generation ie under 45 years old) in the future leadership of the Methodist Church.

and to report to the Conference no later than 2016.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council considered an initial report from the Working Party in January 2016. The Council noted that there are a number of pieces of work at various stages of development

which relate directly to the terms of the Notice of Motion and to the proposals emerging from the Working Party.

- 1.2 At the same time, the Council concluded that there were a number of proposals within the Resourcing Leadership report which could be implemented now and which did not need to wait for other pieces of work. The Secretary of the Conference was therefore asked to liaise with the Working Group and to report back to the April 2016 meeting of the Council on areas of work which could be developed now and would be of immediate benefit to the Methodist Church. The following four recommendations were identified.

2. Recommendations Made by the Working Party

- 2.1 Connexional Vocations Officer – the Working Group recommends the creation of the post of Connexional Vocations Officer. Feedback from the Council indicated that this should be possible within the current Central Services budget either through the reallocation of responsibilities within an existing role, or by the creation of a new role utilising existing funds. The Working Party sees advantages in developing a role which:

- acts as a focus for vocational exploration throughout the Connexion;
- develops advocacy networks, including the creation of a network of volunteer advocates, often experienced practitioners, providing support and opportunities for conversation and reflection across a range of ministries, lay and ordained;
- addresses issues related to the improvement of support for vocational discernment opportunities for under-represented groups;
- works in partnership with Circuits and Districts, colleagues in the Connexional Team, and those engaged in supporting candidating processes in coordinating discernment opportunities;
- develops, alongside others, learning and development materials and resources which support vocational discernment and development across a range of ministries, lay and ordained.

- 2.2 Vocational Exploration, Learning and Development – the group affirmed a number of pieces of existing work which enable people to explore calling to a variety of leadership roles, lay and ordained, across the life of the Methodist Church. In particular, the group noted developing work around *Encounter*, an Extending Discipleship Exploring Vocation programme developed in the Yorkshire Districts and now being developed by the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN) across all the network regions. The group also noted existing excellent practice related to the candidating process and the selection of mission partners from which a great deal can be learned and applied to other areas of the Church's life where processes of discernment and selection are significant. In addition to affirming existing work, the Council accepted the following recommendations:

- The development of opportunities for reflection and discernment within the context of a number of existing processes, eg the end of a period serving as a lay officer; in supervision; in Ministerial Development Review especially towards the end of an invitation period.
- That greater attention be paid to the learning opportunities created by 'shadowing' experienced practitioners across a range of lay and ordained roles when new roles are being considered and when people are transitioning into new roles.
- The development of a series of vocational conferences where different opportunities for ministry, lay and ordained, can be explored. In particular such events must have a focus

upon mechanisms which support the exploration of calling as key to the development of a more diverse and broadly representative leadership across the life of the Methodist Church. (The Council agreed that such events should be considered alongside the recommendations in the Larger than Circuit report (elsewhere in the Conference Agenda) about a review of the process by which Chairs of District are identified.)

- The development of a short programme focused on 'pathways into service', offering resources to people exploring or taking up new roles within the life of the Methodist Church.

2.3 Overcoming Barriers to Participation - the Council accepted the following recommendations:

- The development of EDI profiling across a variety of offices, lay and ordained, through both records and statistics, to identify where there are particular issues and where resources may need to be prioritised. (The Council concluded that the development of EDI profiling could profitably be considered in liaison with the EDI Committee and those in the Team with responsibility for Statistics for Mission.)
- The commissioning of research which looks at barriers affecting people from a number of backgrounds from offering for particular offices in the Church, including ordained ministries.
- That research be used to support the Ministries Committee, Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee (MCPOC) and Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee (MCSC), in developing a wider and coordinated approach to these issues.
- That particular attention is paid to the recommendations in Section 12 of MC/14/61, *Belonging Together*, which formed part of the Methodist Council report to the 2014 Conference (cf Resolution 32/8) to ensure that they are or are in the process of being enacted.
- The development of a number of resources and opportunities which focus on the needs of under-represented groups within the life of the Methodist Church and the development of advocacy networks to support this, working in partnership with relevant groups, eg 3Generate; the Belonging Together Ministers Group.

2.4 Communications – the Council accepted the recommendation that a review be undertaken of existing communications and publications designed to encourage consideration of particular roles, drawing upon the experience of those currently or recently in role, developing new materials where appropriate and utilising a variety of media.

***RESOLUTIONS

24/2. The Conference received the Report.

SECTION H

PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. In January 2016, the Methodist Council encouraged the Secretary of the Conference, following a discussion introduced by the Secretary on the potential of our property for mission, to bring forward proposals for the creation of a Property Development Committee. It was recognised that the creation of a new Committee alone would not answer all of the challenges which the Connexion faces in respect of property. However, it was agreed that there does need to be a

structure in place that is smaller than the Council to hold a significant degree of responsibility for the development and testing of policy and practice in respect of property.

2. The establishing of the Property Development Committee is one way of giving expression to the Council's commitment to see property used for the most effective missional purposes. Another is the work being undertaken in the Connexional Team to establish a more coherent professional support service. The two developments go hand in hand and support momentum for change. Large property schemes are not without risk and given the range of Methodist property there will be the need for an equally diverse range of funding partnerships and models for use of property. Equally, there is a risk in doing nothing. What is needed now is a confident testing of: our appetite for missional risk taking; the parameters of the use of our considerable (but finite) financial resources; the willingness to be truly connexional in the development of our buildings.

3. Terms of Reference

The Council agreed to establish the Property Development Committee with the terms of reference as shown below:

- 3.1 The Methodist Council will annually appoint a Property Development Committee which shall work collaboratively with the Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee in developing and maintaining a connexional property strategy.
- 3.2 The connexional property strategy shall articulate the mission imperative of the Methodist Church and ensure that the resources of the church are used so as to give maximum effect to their value and missional opportunities.
- 3.3 The Committee will report to the Council via the Strategy and Resources Committee.
- 3.4 The Committee will:
 - Develop and propose to the Council policies in respect of the use of Methodist Property.
 - Exercise such managing trustee responsibilities and duties as may be delegated to it by the Council.
 - Be responsible for identifying funding sources from across the range of Methodist investments and financial resources and from external sources for the development of Methodist property.
 - Review and monitor the fulfilment of the terms of all agreements reached between the Council and any institution or body with which the Council has agreements for the use and development of property.
 - Review and monitor the use of all property held by bodies reporting to the Council, advising the Council on the effectiveness of current and planned use of property held by such bodies.
 - Make an annual report to the Strategy and Resources Committee on all financial matters relating to the property for which the Committee has managing trustee responsibilities.
 - Undertake such other tasks as the Council may delegate to it in respect of property and the financial management of property.
 - Be alert to ecumenical, multi-partner opportunities for property development.
 - Make recommendations to the Strategy and Resources Committee of the Methodist Council regarding any disposal or mortgage of any property or part of any property for which the Committee has been delegated managing trusteeship by the Council.

- Offer advice to any Methodist trustee body that so requests it regarding any disposal or mortgage of any property or part of any property held on the Model Trust.
- Be available to provide advice to any Methodist body of trustees on the development of property under their management.

4. Membership

The Committee will consist of not more than 14 members including:

- (i) Chair
- (ii) A connexional treasurer
- (iii) The Secretary of the Conference (who may delegate the task under SO 116(1E))
- (iv) Up to eleven other persons which shall include:
 - (a) three District Property Secretaries
 - (b) a representative of the Board of the Trustees of Methodist Church Purposes
 - (c) persons (who may include those listed in (a)) with expertise in at least the following areas: surveying, property management, conservation architecture, funding of property developments, legal issues, planning.

All appointments to the Committee will be for a period of three years. Each member may be reappointed for a further period of up to three years.

In attendance as advisers:

The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice

A member of the staff of the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes.

The Committee will be convened by the Connexional Property Development Adviser.

The Committee shall ensure the diversity of the Methodist Church is reflected when considering nominations.

*****RESOLUTION**

24/3. The Conference received the Report.

SECTION I

RESEARCH INTO THE IMPACT OF *MAPPING A WAY FORWARD: REGROUPING FOR MISSION*

1. The Council received a report from stage one of a research project conducted into the impact of *Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission*, as required by Notice of Motion 2015/204. The text of the Notice of Motion is as follows:

The Conference:

- *Notes with appreciation the significant impact the initiative of “Mapping the Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission” has had on the life of the Methodist Church for almost a decade – helping Circuits to review their readiness for mission and the structures needed to facilitate that mission.*
- *Notes that a significant consequence of this work has been the reconfiguring of many Circuit.*
- *Recognises that there are many anecdotes as to the perceived positive and negative effects of such reconfigurations for both large and small Circuits.*

However there has never been any quantitative or qualitative research into the impact and effect of “Mapping the Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission” for the mission of the Church. Given that the process has now been underway for almost a decade the Conference is of the view that the time for a formal research project examining the evidence would be extremely helpful to the Church as it continues to reshape for effective mission in the twenty-first century.

The Conference therefore directs the Methodist Council to make arrangements for and oversee such research and report its findings to the Conference of 2016. This may be an interim report.

2. Defining a Large Circuit

2.1 Various ways to distinguish size were considered, including number of congregations, circuit deployment and other staffing, numbers of churches, or a combination of two or more such variables. However, on balance, membership appeared to be the most helpful, consistent and easy to apply approach. During the research, it became apparent that there were factors impacting a small number of very large Circuits. Consequently a four level categorisation of Methodist Circuits appears to be helpful.

- a) Very large Circuit – having 1,500 or more members (Sep 2015 there were 11 such Circuits)
- b) Large Circuit – having 1,000-1,499 members (Sep 2015 there were 44 such Circuits)
- c) Medium Circuit – having 500-999 members (Sep 2015 there were 138 such Circuits)
- d) Small Circuit – having fewer than 500 members (Sep 2015 there were 179 such Circuits)

It is the current intention that proposals for such a categorisation will be presented to the 2017 Conference.

2.2 With the emergence of the “very large” category, Circuits are less evenly distributed across the range of possible sizes than they were before. In 2007, 94.2% of all Circuits were “small” or “medium-sized” using the categories here defined: by 2014, that proportion had reduced to 85.3%. Correspondingly, in 2007, only 14.4% of Methodist members belonged to churches in Circuits of over 1,000 members whereas by 2014 that proportion had risen to 33.1%.

3. Emerging Themes from Stage One Research

3.1 The research conducted so far reveals a number of themes that emerge regarding the impact of the *Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission (RfM)* process.

- a) Process: The regrouping process is largely positive. Circuits are able successfully to address the administrative issues that arise although in some cases it appears that Circuits have had to discover ways of dealing with issues that are known elsewhere in Methodism but not widely shared. There is an emotional cost borne in particular by superintendents and some circuit officers. The support of Chairs, district development enablers and others during this period has been greatly valued although there was a variety of approach. The level of support that Methodist members gave to their previous Circuits has been largely transferred to the regrouped entity. Regrouped Circuits appear to be stronger entities than their predecessors and addressed, to some extent, financial and other challenges that were making some previous Circuits hard to sustain. This level of improvement is significant and has enabled a further generation of circuit life in some places.
- b) Membership: RfM has not had a significant impact on membership. Circuits have not experienced numerical growth through RfM; indeed, decline has remained fairly constant. Variety in rates appears to be largely due to local factors rather than RfM.

- c) **Mission:** Mission focus in intent has sometimes been a prime motivating reason, but administrative factors around regrouping have, in the initial years of regrouping, absorbed large amounts of time and energy. The qualitative research in particular points to mission as the key area where Methodism needs now to focus.
- d) **Staffing:** Regrouped Circuits are being staffed by a small reduction in ordained staff and a small increase in lay employees who are normally in roles related to administration, finance and property. This is occurring in an era when numbers of candidates for ordination are lower.
- e) **Circuit officers:** There are fewer circuit officers needed when a number of Circuits regroup. For example, when five Circuits come together there is only one treasurer, one safeguarding officer, etc, needed. However, the reduction in numbers needed is somewhat offset by the increased responsibilities of such positions and consequently some very large Circuits now have paid employees carrying out some of these responsibilities formerly undertaken by volunteers. The case studies in particular raised issues regarding the wellbeing of circuit officers, and of ministerial colleagues, during the RfM process and especially where large and very large Circuits emerged. This will be shared with the Connexional Wellbeing Adviser.
- f) **Connexionalism:** This research has noted an ambivalent relationship from local congregations and, to some extent, from Circuits towards being part of a Connexion. This perspective is noted alongside the ongoing conversations regarding 'Issues of Connexionalism in the 21st Century' (2015 Conference).

4. Stage Two Research

- 4.1 As a consequence of the findings of this Stage One research, it is suggested that Stage Two will address the emerging themes by means of the following:
 - a) Further documentary, qualitative and quantitative research, including with presbyters who are not superintendents, deacons and local church stewards, and further case studies. This research will also consider insights from other contexts where similar processes to RfM have been undertaken.
 - b) To consider issues around the appointment, preparation and support of superintendents of very large Circuits.
 - c) Planned research into Fresh Expressions within the Methodist Church in 2016-17 to consider further the impact of RfM on such initiatives and will report separately.
 - d) Recognising that Methodism is successfully regrouping but not yet experiencing significant missional impact in terms of making 'more followers of Jesus Christ', to research what is appropriate evangelism within the Methodist Church.
- 4.2 This Stage Two research will report to the Council in April 2017 and the Conference in 2017, will be undertaken by the Connexional Team and Susanna Wesley Foundation, and is within existing budget provision.

*****RESOLUTION**

24/4. The Conference received the interim Report.

SECTION J

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL

1. Following changes to the role and responsibilities of the Secretary of the Conference, the Council considered the relationship of the officers of the Conference (that is the Secretary, the Assistant Secretary and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice) to the Council.
2. The Council noted that at present all three officers are appointed by the Conference and are also members of the Conference but that only the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary (who must be Presbyters) are members of the Council. The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice (who may be a minister but must be a member of the Methodist Church) has, under SO 210(7), the right to attend and speak at the Council, but does not have a vote.
3. To ensure that the anomalies present in the current arrangement are addressed and to ensure that the three officers of the Conference relate to and are accountable to the Council in similar ways, the Council recommends to the Conference that it would be more appropriate for the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice to be a member of the Methodist Council.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

24/5. The Conference received the Report.

24/6. The Conference amended SO 210 as follows:

(1) [...]

(1B) *the Conference officer for legal and constitutional practice appointed under Standing Order 116C;*

(7) ... ~~the Conference officer for legal and constitutional practice appointed under Standing Order 116C,~~...

SECTION K

MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

The Council received a report on the work of the Ministries Committee. In addition to the items listed below, the Committee has engaged in discussions resourced by the Faith and Order Committee concerning Ministry in the Methodist Church. The Committee was content with the general direction of that work, and will continue to be consulted. The Committee has continued work in the following areas: review of probationer training, ministry of supernumeraries, initial ministerial training student financial support, frequency and duration of sabbaticals, consultation with Local Preachers meetings.

1. **Update on MLA**

The Committee continues to consider this issue, and work has been undertaken to enable candidates to view limited deployment as an occasional option. However, further work needs to be done and the matter has been passed to the Faith and Order Committee to carry forward in the context of the work on Ministry in the Methodist Church. The Committee has noted the need for proper attention to be given to vocational discernment.

2. **Maximum length of training**

The Committee has agreed the policy that the maximum length of deferral of training should not normally exceed seven years between acceptance as a candidate and reception into Full Connexion. Guidelines are being developed in support of this policy and further discussions will be held at the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee focusing on examples where some flexibility may be required. The Council approved the policy decision, and asked the Law and Polity Committee to prepare the necessary Standing Orders.

3. **Continuing Development in Ministry (CDIM)**

The Committee has reaffirmed its commitment to lifelong learning and the work on CDIM is an expression of that commitment. However, the Committee agreed that the work on CDIM should be delayed, so that it can take account of other, linked pieces of work. These include the review of probationer training, the work of the Resourcing Leadership working group, progress in the area of supervision, a review of sabbatical policy, the small group of the Connexional Leaders' Forum working on ministerial excellence. The revised timeline will enable a period of consultation with the Chairs, Network Committee and the SRC to coincide with budget preparations for 2017-18. A report will be made to the Council in April 2017.

4. **Selection Criteria**

The oversight task group was given a mandate to propose revisions to the selection criteria for ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Britain as it was observed that the context of this ministry had changed significantly since 2003 when the current criteria were approved. The revised criteria proposed below have been adapted from the existing selection criteria approved by the 2003 Conference (www.methodist.org.uk/media/1679593/dev-per-selection-criteriafor-ordained-ministry-19062012.pdf). The oversight task group has also drawn inspiration from the selection criteria for ordained ministry in the Church of England.

The six headings of the existing selection criteria have been amended. The first two current headings – *Vocation (call and commitment)* and *Being in relationship (with God; with self; with others)* – have been divided into *Vocation (call and commitment); Vocation (ministry in the Methodist Church in Britain); Relationship with God; Personality and character;* and *Being in relationship with others*. The criteria are set out as bullet points in the right hand column, below. On the left is a narrative to inform the work of candidates, those who work with them, and those who are asked to recommend them (members of Circuit Meetings and district and connexional selection committees) in addressing the criteria.

Differentiation between capacity/potential and ability is significant. Where 'ability' is stated, candidates should be able to provide evidence that they are already fulfilling this criterion in some way and are willing and able to continue to develop in this area. Where 'capacity' or 'potential' is stated, candidates should be able to provide evidence that their current ministry could (with training and formation) develop into public and representative leadership.

It is anticipated that these revised criteria, if agreed by the 2016 Conference, would be approved for use from 2017/2018 onwards (to avoid a change in criteria midway through the

candidating cycle). It is also anticipated that should these revised criteria be approved, subsequent work would be needed on related sets of competencies and criteria to ensure cohesion. This work would include:

- Revisions to the existing expected competencies at the point of stationing and ordination (to align the headings with those of the revised selection criteria and to ensure appropriate competencies for both presbyteral and diaconal ministry).
- Proposals for expected competencies for worship leaders, local preachers and superintendents.

	Narrative	The Church is therefore seeking evidence of...
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	Narrative	The Church is therefore seeking evidence of...
1.1 Vocation (call and commitment)	<p>The starting point of Christian ministry is the call of Christ to follow him; the call to ordained ministry is a specific development of the vocation to discipleship which is shared by all members of the Church. As the Deed of Union says, “It is the universal conviction of the Methodist people that the office of Christian ministry depends upon the call of God.”¹ More than any of the other criteria, this is necessary but not by itself sufficient. However competent s/he may appear or be proven to be in meeting the other criteria, a candidate will not be accepted unless those who explore the questions with her/him discern that s/he has a distinct call to be a presbyter or deacon.</p> <p>We hear God speaking to us both through the personal life of prayer and through the encouragement of others (though the balance between the two varies for each of us). The criteria make it clear that candidates must be able to articulate a call that is both personal (as a personal assurance and conviction which is still also open to testing) and corporate (being heard through the witness of others and affirmed in and through the Church’s testing of not just calling but also gifts and graces, which involves recognition of the needs of the Church). This requires an high level of self-awareness which informs and is informed by a disciplined spiritual life and a deep commitment to the life of the Church.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An inner sense of call that is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ confirmed by others ○ obedient, based on an understanding of the demands of ordained ministry in terms of training, deployment and sacrifice and the candidate’s capacity to be a servant in a community of servants ○ realistic in terms of the candidate’s capacity to meet the expected competencies for reception into Full Connexion and ordination after a period of training and probation ○ informed by a clear understanding of the representative nature of ordained ministry and the discipline of the Methodist Church ○ transformative, in that the candidate is being changed by this sense of call and is willing to continue to be changed • Ability to articulate clearly this sense of call to a particular order of ministry and its development • For diaconal candidates only: Commitment to membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

¹ Deed of Union cl4

	Narrative	The Church is therefore seeking evidence of...
1.2 Vocation (ministry in the Methodist Church in Britain)	<p>Candidates for the diaconal or presbyteral ministries in the Methodist Church offer in the understanding that we ordain “not to a denomination, but to the presbyterate and diaconate of the One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.”² As part of the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Methodist Church receives its ordinands into Full Connexion which demands a willingness to exercise ministry within and as a representative of the Methodist Church in Britain.</p> <p>The British Methodist Church rejoices in its ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity and recognises that it is important to balance the variety of expressions of Methodism with the common identity of the Church as an whole. Candidates are asked to explore with selectors how their call fits with Methodism’s self-understanding (as it is expressed in, eg, <i>Called to Love and Praise</i> and <i>A Catechism for the Use of the People called Methodists</i>) and how their particular experience of Methodism has shaped their sense of call.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and understanding of the Methodist Church in Britain • Demonstrable and enthusiastic commitment to and desire to serve the Methodist Church in Britain • Understanding of ministry within the Methodist Church in Britain including the distinctiveness of the two orders of ministry • Willingness to work with diversity within the Methodist Church in Britain.
<p>God “bestows the gifts of the Spirit the grace and fruit which indicate those whom He has chosen.”³ The remaining criteria are designed to enable those examining candidates to see evidence of the gifts of the Spirit, although the development of those gifts may still be at an embryonic stage.</p>		

² *Methodist Worship Book* p298

³ Deed of Union, cl4

	Narrative	The Church is therefore seeking evidence of...
2. Relationship with God	<p>Presbyters and deacons are first and foremost people of prayer; candidates need to be able to speak about their spiritual life in a way that is authentic and offers a clear understanding of themselves both as those confident in God’s love for them and as those who are still being made into the saints that God wants them to be. They should therefore be able to articulate an appreciation of, and regular engagement with, the means of grace individually and in the life of the Church and to express how they understand this engagement both as gift and as discipline.</p>	<p>A relationship with God that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounded in an understanding of God’s loving acceptance and a personal commitment to Christ • Both mature and child-like with the capacity to grow • Nourished by a commitment to individual and corporate prayer and worship and engagement with the means of grace • A means of sustenance and encouragement in the candidate’s daily life and in his or her relationships with others and the wider world.
3. Personality and character	<p>“This ministry will make great demands upon you.”⁴ Those demands are spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical, and therefore those who offer for ministry as presbyter or deacon need to be able to demonstrate the resources necessary to cope with the stresses and strains that we anticipate they will face in training and in active ministry. They also need to exhibit a willingness to be challenged and changed by the process of formation and to show that they understand their own vulnerability. Candidates should be able to show that they can care for themselves and that they have the capacity to engage with, and to work on, areas of perceived weakness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-awareness and self-acceptance grounded in God’s loving acceptance • Emotional stability • Maturity, honesty and integrity • Appropriate self-confidence and humility • Stamina, robustness and resilience • Potential for self-development and growth.

⁴ *Methodist Worship Book* p302/317

	Narrative	The Church is therefore seeking evidence of...
4. Being in relationship with others	<p>All ministry is relational. A candidate needs to be able to demonstrate his or her understanding of the gift of human love in all its manifestations and her or his recognition of and ability to honour appropriate boundaries. Candidates are asked to talk about their own relationships as a secure basis from which ministry can be offered and to show the capacity to engage with a wide range of other people appropriately as a representative of the Church.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to relate to a variety of people • Capacity to develop open and healthy personal, professional and pastoral relationships • Capacity to relate to the same people in a number of different roles without confusion and with generosity • Potential to exercise effective pastoral care • Acceptance of the discipline of the Church and respect for the diversity of views within Methodism.
5. The Church's ministry in God's world	<p>The Church and the world beyond the doors of the church have changed rapidly and greatly in recent years and are changing still. Candidates should be able to articulate an understanding of social holiness that is appropriate to their contemporary context. This means that candidates need to be able to demonstrate an understanding of the mission of the Church within God's world, the priorities that the Methodist Church has identified as it plays its part in God's mission, and the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives and asks to be used in fulfilling that mission. Candidates will need to demonstrate proven ability and further capacity to exercise appropriate gifts in serving God's mission and a coherent (if as yet undeveloped) theological understanding of mission in the 21st century including an appreciation of, and a preparedness to engage with, the multiplicity of ecclesial forms the Church takes in serving God's mission.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and understanding of mission and evangelism, including the variety of approaches within the Methodist Church • Personal commitment to mission and evangelism and the Methodist Church as its vehicle • Out of engagement with the world of work and contemporary culture in a multicultural society, the ability to make connections imaginatively between today's world and the gospel • Ability to work for change, with particular attention to the marginalised • Potential for engaging in mission-shaped ministry.

	Narrative	The Church is therefore seeking evidence of...
6. Leadership and collaboration	<p>The call to presbyteral ministry is a call to “a principal and directing part in [the] great duties [of the Church]”;⁵ the call to the diaconate is to “represent the servanthood of Christ, exercising a formal role of leadership in the Church.”⁶ Candidates therefore need to demonstrate an ability to work with others in a variety of ways, exhibiting a willingness to collaborate, to delegate, and to take responsibility as appropriate. Candidates should be able to recognise, to nurture and to cherish the gifts of others. Candidates should demonstrate an appropriate degree of both humility and confidence in the way in which leadership is discussed and be able to give examples of how they are already exercising leadership within and outside the Church.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and understanding of leadership • Ability to exercise leadership in the Church community and beyond • Capacity to offer an example of faith, discipleship and humble service • Ability to inspire, enable and empower others • Potential for creative leadership • Willingness and ability to work collaboratively, and capacity to exercise appropriate authority • Ability to work with supervision and to supervise others • Ability to develop administrative skills • Flexibility, adaptability and willingness to take risks.

⁵ Deed of Union cl4

⁶ What is a Deacon? 7.3

	Narrative	The Church is therefore seeking evidence of...
7. Learning and understanding	<p>Presbyters and deacons are required to undertake duties on behalf of the Church in which it is essential that they can explicitly and lucidly articulate the Christian faith to those who have received the gospel and to those who are yet to receive it. Their practice of ministry must be informed by an understanding of the doctrines of the Church and an ability to use a wide range of resources creatively in order to reflect theologically. For that reason, initial formation for ministry almost always takes place at least in part within an academic setting and candidates need to be able to demonstrate that they have the capacity to benefit from the programme of learning that will be offered to them by already having some theological understanding and by having the gifts that are needed to engage with a multi-disciplinary programme of study. Within this understanding, the Church is committed to welcoming candidates from a range of academic backgrounds and to treating particular educational needs with sensitivity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to learn and to benefit from theological study • Enthusiasm for lifelong learning and formation • Curiosity and flexibility of mind • Capacity to use a range of ways of thinking and models of reflection and to select the most appropriate for each situation • Appreciation of the significance of theology to the Church.
8. Communication	<p>To articulate the truths of the Christian faith demands the skills of communication. Whilst some of these can be taught, candidates are expected to demonstrate an understanding of what makes communication effective in a variety of media and with a multiplicity of conversation partners. Particularly because not all have English as their first language, candidates are encouraged to express themselves and to be heard in ways that are culturally appropriate both to their own background and to the ministry for which they are offering. Candidates are also expected to be able to communicate effectively in the wider Church with cognizance of 21st-century Methodism's cultural diversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to express faith naturally and effectively in ways that are appropriate, accessible and sensitive to the situation, using biblical and theological understanding • Ability to select and use the most appropriate media and approach for the context • Careful and appropriate use of language • Understanding and appropriate use of symbols, gestures and space • Effective communication skills for mission and evangelism.

5. Status of an Accepted Candidate

The Committee has undertaken some work on clarifying the status of an accepted candidate in the life of the Church. This new statement will be issued to candidates for 2017, and a letter summarising its contents will be sent to each accepted candidate with the request for information about their training allocations.

6. God's Worthship and our Worship

In response to a resolution of the 2011 Conference, the Committee has considered issues relating to worship. This work is being taken forward by the Liturgical Sub-Committee of the Faith and Order Committee, and will be reported on by the Faith and Order Committee.

7. Fresh Expressions

7.1 Since the Methodist Church became one of the founding partners in Fresh Expressions, there has been an annual report of its activities to the Methodist Conference; initially via the Fresh Ways Working Group and more recently as part of the Ministries Committee report to the Methodist Council.

7.2 In the light of the positive impact of fresh expressions of church on the denomination, Methodism has sustained its commitment and increased its financial commitment to Fresh Expressions at the end of each quinquennium.

Five areas of Focus

7.3 The five areas were introduced in last year's report and give a clear focus to the work and future direction of Fresh Expressions:

7.4 Inspiring Vision - the key development in this area is the identification of Local Pioneer Centres, ie Fresh Expressions which are models of good practice from which others can learn. This is already happening, but in a disjointed way. By creating a larger network of Local Pioneer Centres, it is hoped that the workload caused by frequent visitors will be spread over a much larger group of fresh expressions. A number of fresh expressions have already agreed to become Local Pioneer Centres (including several Methodist projects). When a large enough number has been agreed, they will be advertised on the Fresh Expressions website.

7.5 Networking Strategically - this began as a process of networking practitioners. This is happening in a number of ways; in the Methodist Church most notably via the Venture FX Extra days. These have proved invaluable in offering informal networking around a theme for all those who are engaging in pioneering ministry. In the Church of England, this concept has been extended to create strategic hubs of both Bishops and Archdeacons who wish to network together in order to learn from one another about how to deal well with issues around 'Mixed Economy Church'. It is hoped that the possibility of hubs for Chairs and Superintendents will be explored in the next twelve months.

7.6 Connecting Geographically - up to now this work has largely been done by FEASTs (Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Teams). The implementation of these has been patchy, both in the amount of take-up and in their strategic effectiveness. Some are predominantly gatherings of practitioners and trainers with little strategic influence whilst others are very effective mixes of key leaders from across the breadth of the Church whose influence goes far beyond the Fresh Expressions world. There will now be a period of evolution as the best of these continue and at the same time new structures are put in place that are much more relational in nature. It is hoped that a number of 'champions' will emerge in each region who will regard it as their

duty to keep the Fresh Expressions and 'Mixed Economy' vision in front of the Church at every level until it becomes a normal way of working. It is also noticeable that different denominations are taking a regional strategy on board, Methodism's 'Fresh Ways Hubs' and the Salvation Army's regional strategy being good examples of this.

- 7.7 Supporting Practitioners - perhaps the most important development for supporting practitioners is an increased emphasis on training and deploying coaches. Recent Church of England research shows that Fresh Expressions are most likely to continue growing if there is some outside consultancy. Fresh Expressions plans to introduce a multi-layered approach to coaching: regional champions (spread across the denominations) who are trained to a high standard (International Coach Federation Associate, Certified Coach or equivalent) and will act as trainers/supporters of a large cohort of coaches in their region. Training is in place for the 'champions' for next year and there will be a subsequent roll-out of training at an introductory level for locally based coaches. Many of the coaches will be used to support those who are training on Mission Shaped Ministry (MSM) courses (traditional or flexi). In this regard the Methodist Church is taking a strong lead. The commitment to providing coaches for all those joining the 'Pioneer Pathway' has resulted in two training events for coaches sharing resources between the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network and Fresh Expressions. On both occasions the trainers were Methodist coaches and we now have almost 50 Methodists trained in basic coaching skills. Fresh Expressions has also entered into partnership with 'Mentor Connect' a multi-denominational online resource for matching mentors to clients. Fresh Expressions is seeking to catalyse a culture change within the churches, where it is too often the case that seeking outside help is seen as an admission of failure rather than developing high-fliers.
- 7.8 Resourcing Learning - Fresh Expressions is rightly proud of the quality and range of training resources it has produced. These continue to evolve: Vision Events have been scrutinised and reshaped in the light of feedback as has the role of Fresh Expressions Associate Missioners in delivering them. New materials will be rolled out in the forthcoming year. Mission Shaped Intro (a six session introduction to thinking missionally) continues to grow in its impact – it is the newest of the resources provided by Fresh Expressions and the least well known, but it is an extremely helpful resource for churches or house groups to use to challenge and inform their thinking about how to engage in mission in the 21st century. MSM continues to evolve, this year has seen the introduction of online MSM and flexible MSM (where the content is taken by an experienced coach and is delivered in a coaching setting rather than a more traditional training setting) – this enables the material to be configured in a much more appropriate way for the participants. This year has also seen the publication of a series of '3-minute guides' to different aspects of fresh expressions.

Fresh Expressions in the Methodist Church

- 7.9 We are now well into the third quinquennium for Fresh Expressions. The Methodist Church has been a partner from the beginning. As each partner denomination works hard at embedding Fresh Expressions into its life, careful thought must be given to the future support for the fresh expressions agenda. This will entail a careful consideration of the benefits and costs of doing this ecumenically rather than internally within the Methodist Church. Fresh Expressions will soon be faced with decisions about whether to continue beyond current agreements or to wind up as an ecumenical mission agency and hand over its legacy to the partner denominations. One of the strengths of Fresh Expressions has been its demonstration of a very practical ecumenical way of engaging with the wider world for the sake of the kingdom of God.

- 7.10 The number of fresh expressions in the Methodist Church continues to grow. The statistics for mission returns have been expanded this year to record the number of circuit projects which are or have the intention to become fresh expressions of church. In previous years it was relatively straightforward to record a fresh expression as an initiative of an individual church, but not one which was a circuit project. At the time of writing this report, the data was not available to know how many had been reported in 2015.
- 7.11 The question is often asked how reliable our Methodist statistics on fresh expressions are.
- 7.12 The Fresh Expressions organisation has defined a fresh expression as:
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.*
- 7.13 Those who are not convinced that all the projects self-identifying as fresh expressions in the statistics are genuinely fresh expressions offer three principal objections: fresh expressions are not reaching those who are not yet members of any church, rather they are providing new worship opportunities for existing Christians; second, they are traditional activities rebranded as fresh expressions; third they have no intention of becoming 'mature expressions of church' (also known as intentional ecclesial communities), they are engaged evangelism - a stepping out into communities beyond the normal reach of Church in order to bring people back to the church from which they have come (many Messy Churches start with this intention and falter because the gulf between messy church and Sunday morning is too wide to cross). It is very difficult to ascertain the validity or not of these objections. The statistics for mission are self-reported and so it is difficult to assess the qualitative difference that the fresh expressions movement has made to the Methodist Church without doing a piece of quantitative research examining these self-reported statistics against more rigorous evaluative criteria. The Church Army's Sheffield Centre has been engaged for some time in detailed research on the fruitfulness of fresh expressions in the Church of England, they published a report on ten dioceses last year, and are expanding their work to cover the remaining dioceses. They have developed much more rigorous criteria for evaluation, which would translate well into a Methodist setting. The Committee has therefore agreed to set up a pilot research project involving a number of Districts. The research will, as far as possible, use the same criteria as the Church of England which will enable future comparisons, and will be carried out within the existing research budget.
- 7.14 In addition to the evaluation of projects self-identifying as 'fresh expressions projects' any research project evaluating them should consider whether further research is necessary to evaluate projects that fail to meet more rigorous fresh expressions criteria. They may not be fresh expressions, but that does not mean they are not fruitful activities. Given the rate of decline in Methodist membership any project that meets the spiritual needs of people who might otherwise have left the Church may still be helpful. Rebranding sometimes breathes new life and energy into projects. Fresh expressions of worship, service or discipleship that do not lead to intentional ecclesial communities may nevertheless prove to be evangelistically effective.

Embedding fresh expressions

- 7.15 After ten years of formal engagement with the Fresh Expressions initiative, there are now a number of projects that are maturing into ecclesial communities. One of the learning points is that a fresh expression that genuinely reaches out to this with little or no contact with traditional forms of church takes a long time to form a community - more than five years is not unusual. However these ecclesial communities do not always fit well into Methodism's existing oversight structures or ecclesiology. The Faith and Order and Law and Polity Committees are beginning a piece of work to investigate how some of these issues can be explored and addressed. The Connexional Fresh Expressions Missioner is drawing together a small number of Circuits who are wrestling with these issues to create a learning circle with the intention of producing a 'good practice guide'. This work may also identify areas where adjustments to policy should be considered.
- 7.16 Embedding is not simply about how fresh expressions of church can be made to fit into Methodism's existing governance structures and ecclesiology. It is also about how those structures and ecclesiology are being challenged and transformed by the new things that God is doing among us.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 24/7. The Conference received the Report.**
- 24/8. The Conference resolved that the maximum period between acceptance as a candidate and reception into full connexion, including any period of deferment, suspension or extension, should not normally exceed seven years.**
- 24/9. The Conference adopted the revised Selection Criteria for ordained ministry (as set out in paragraph 4).**

SECTION L

URC-METHODIST RECIPROCAL ARRANGEMENT

1. What does the Arrangement do?

The Reciprocal Arrangement (sometimes known as the Reciprocal Agreement) came into being at the start of the 1990s. It provides for Methodist and United Reformed Church (URC) funds to be invested in shared buildings. Typically, it applies when a local congregation in one of the two traditions closes its doors, sells the building, and merges with a nearby fellowship from the other tradition, as a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP). Proceeds from the sale might then be used to develop the other church building, even though it is held under different trusts to that of the property that was sold. A key feature of the Reciprocal Arrangement is that this money will carry no legal charge to require its repayment should the second building eventually be sold too – if, for example, the united congregation decides a decade or two later that its life must end. The freedom from such a legal charge has often given local churches the confidence to develop their buildings and their congregational life in creative ways, which have in turn released energy and shaped opportunity for effective Christian mission.

2. Who has supported it?

The legal title of Methodist buildings is held by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes as the Custodian Trustee, whereas most URC buildings in England and Wales are held by the various synod trust companies. Therefore the URC synods (apart from the Synod of Scotland, which had not yet come into being) were asked to commit themselves formally to this Arrangement within the first year or two. A number did so, although at least one Synod declined, on the grounds that the Synod meeting could not direct the Provincial Trust Company; nonetheless, the URC has been widely supportive of the Arrangement. The Methodist Church has supported it too.

3. How well has it worked?

The Arrangement has proved creative and helpful in many places. An organised list of these situations has, however, proved impossible to assemble. While we honour what has been done, we have no complete record of it. There is no evidence of any systemic bias towards either Church, although there may be local memories of one tradition 'doing better out of it' than the other in a particular area. If this had happened, it would not be surprising; one could not expect complete symmetry in every corner of the land.

4. How is it working today?

There is no thought at all of withdrawing from commitments made under the Arrangement. Money that has been committed is precisely that – committed. However, expectations have moved on since the early 1990s. Perhaps there is less energy and enthusiasm now for some ecumenical ventures. There is certainly a higher level of sensitivity around the responsibilities of charity trustees. Possibly for these reasons, among others, the Arrangement is presently being applied rather unevenly, and is sometimes surrounded by a more visible caution than would once have been the case.

5. Where should we go from here?

It seems that the time has come to draw a line under the Arrangement as a formal bilateral commitment. It was never exactly that anyway, due to the diffuse polity in the URC, compared with the structure of the Methodist Church. In part for that reason, it would be difficult to construct a new reciprocal scheme that had a uniform and formal structure. So perhaps it is now better to proceed no less carefully but on a case-by-case basis according to local circumstances.

6. A less formal generosity?

Both churches continue to value each other's witness highly, and we welcome opportunities to worship and work together both in local situations and more widely. There will still be occasions and places for dealing collaboratively with church buildings, and we shall do so best when each side seeks to be generous. But the formal structure that has helped us to do this since the early 1990s is no longer serving the present need. Subject to the comment of Mission Council and the agreement of the Methodist Council, it is suggested that the Methodist Conference and the URC's synods release one another from formal obligations under the Arrangement. The obligation that will remain is the regular Christian debt, to love one another, and so to devise, explore and adopt practical, timely and generous ways of expressing that love.

The Council agreed to recommend to the Conference that it acknowledges that the Reciprocal Arrangement has come to an end.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

24/10. The Conference received the Report.

24/11. The Conference acknowledged that the Reciprocal Arrangement has come to an end.