

World Church Relationships Staffing: Report April 2009

Basic Information

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Approval
Draft Resolution	'This report recommends that an additional full-time post be allocated to the WCR sub-cluster with a focus on the area of pan-European relationships and engagement in mission.'
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	No

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To provide the Council with a recommendation regarding the staffing of World Church Relationships in light of Notice of Motion 112 adopted by Methodist Conference 2008.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context of World Church Relationships • Staffing situation • Issues of advocacy, finance/funding and Europe
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	Notice of Motion 112 (7/29) Team Focus Report to Methodist Conference 2008 (Section 5) Report to Methodist Council February 2009 (MC/09/22) SO 362(2)
Consultations	Senior staff within World Church Relationships sub-cluster. CCE&A Cluster Head, Director of Communications & Fundraising Coordinator. General Secretary, Methodist Church in Ireland. MMS(I) Heads of Partner Churches Europe Project Steering Group

Summary of Impact

(Note, if appropriate, as *possible*, *likely* or *confirmed*. If detailed explanation is necessary, include this in the full paper, clearly identified.)

Standing Orders	n/a
Faith and Order	n/a
Financial	Possible
Personnel	Likely 1 FTE
Legal	n/a
Wider Connexional	n/a
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Partner Churches, European ecumenical instruments
Risk	n/a

Context and Purpose of this Report:

- 1.1 In adopting Notice of Motion 112: World Church Relationships (7/29), the Methodist Conference 2008 committed the Secretary for External Relationships to report to the Methodist Council on the progress made on a number of issues relating to the work of the World Church Relationships (WCR) sub-cluster.
- 1.2 As outlined in Notice of Motion 112, Conference:
 1. acknowledges and welcomes the grace gift of our World Church Partners and seeks to express our profound gratitude to our sisters and brothers in Christ for their continued love and support for the British Methodist Connexion;
 2. resolves to take this God-given opportunity to ensure that our interconnection with the world-wide family of Methodists is adequately-resourced, appropriately-supported and well-managed.
 3. Invites the Secretary for External Relationships to report on progress on these issues over the coming Connexional year to the Methodist Council and to the Methodist Conference 2009 and where necessary to bring proposals for refinement or review of existing processes in the light of 1 and 2 above.
- 1.3 The ability of the Methodist Church in Britain to 'ensure that our interconnection with the world-wide family of Methodists is adequately-resourced, appropriately-supported and well-managed' is dependent upon there being sufficient and appropriately equipped staffing in place to enact the various tasks that this involves.

2. Current Staffing Situation:

- 2.1 The current staffing level of WCR is as outlined in the Team Focus report to Methodist Conference 2008. The sub-cluster consists of: Team Leader, three regional Partnership Co-ordinators, Partnership Support Officer and Scholarship and Leadership Training (SALT) Co-ordinator (interim post until 2010, pending review of the SALT programme).
- 2.2 The work of the WCR sub-cluster is also supported by a dedicated Administrator, however this post was vacant from November until February. This resulted in an increased workload for all staff and senior staff devoting large amounts of time to day-to-day tasks that detract time from fulfilling their new job descriptions.
- 2.3 The pilot Companion Programme is now underway and three volunteer Companions (line-managed from the WCR sub-cluster) have been appointed.
- 2.4 There are currently 55 Methodist Council appointed staff (mission partners) serving in 19 countries overseas.
- 2.5 One of the Discernment and Selection Officers within the Development and Personnel team (Support Services Cluster) has now been designated as having specific responsibility for the recruitment and training of Mission Partners. Administrative support for serving Mission Partners is located within the WCR sub-cluster (a separate role from the sub-cluster's Administrator), line-managed from the Support Services Cluster.
- 2.6 Two permanent (and one fixed-term post still to be appointed) Grants Officer roles were created in the Team Focus process, located in the Support Services Cluster, one of which has responsibility for processing World Church grants. However, these posts were not filled

until March which meant that the Partnership Coordinators also had the task of ensuring that grants to Partner Churches and institutions were processed effectively.

3. The context of World Church Relationships:

- 3.1 The work of the WCR sub-cluster needs to be examined in the wider context of both the Methodist Church in Britain as a connexion, and its wider global and ecumenical relationships.
- 3.2 There is a strong interest and commitment to the World Church within the membership of the Methodist Church in Britain, who are automatically members of the Methodist Missionary Society (MMS). More than this, British Methodists identify themselves in a world context, seeing a great importance in the Methodist Church's worldwide connexion. Thus, support of the World Church is reflected in consistently high levels of giving to the Fund for World Mission (FWM). In the connexional year 2007-8 income from churches and individuals increased from £2,896,000 in 2006-7 to £3,534,000 – an increase of 22%.
- 3.3 The Methodist Church in Britain also acts on behalf of the Methodist Church in Ireland and Methodist Missionary Society Ireland (MMSI) in terms of overseas personnel; some grant making; the Scholarship and Leadership Training (SALT) Programme and JMA. It is a very close relationship, with the Irish church contributing a considerable amount to the FWM. Therefore, the Methodist Church in Ireland also needs to feel satisfied that the level of WCR staffing is able to meet their mission priorities.
- 3.4 It is also important to note ecumenical relationships that relate to WCR work, particularly where programmes are run jointly, for example the Experience Exchange Programme in which the Methodist Church works in collaboration with USPG: Anglicans in World Mission. Or, when responsibility for overseas personnel is shared (as is the case for all Mission Partners serving in the Church of Bangladesh and the United Church of Zambia), known as 'joint appointments'.
- 3.5 Of particular importance are the relationships with Partner Churches (circa 70 of them), which must be maintained, nurtured and developed. Partnerships have been developed beyond the original British overseas districts, therefore the connexion of Methodism worldwide is significant. Currently, there are 70 million Methodist members globally. It is also important to note the nature of the Methodist Church in Britain's relationship with the United Methodist Church (UMC) and, in this context its General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). The Methodist Church in Britain has worked closely with UMC and GBGM in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

4. Areas of work still under review:

- 4.1 As outlined in the previous report, there are three significant areas of work still to be reported on. In the case of the first two of these, there are staffing implications that will be taken into account in this report.
- 4.2 The SALT Programme has been reviewed and its recommendations are presented in Section 8 of this report.
- 4.3 The Europe Project comes to an end in April and the possible staffing implications of its recommendations will be considered later in this report.

4.4 Mission personnel and associated programmes run jointly with USPG are under review, with the findings due to be presented in August.

5. Mission Education and Advocacy:

5.1 Various functions that were formerly held within the World Church Office and Mission Education have now been allocated to new areas of the reconfigured team. The embedding of these changes is a work in progress and to some extent its effectiveness cannot be evaluated this early on in the new team's existence. There has also been progress in cross-team working and this is a current focus of the senior leadership who are exploring ways in which this can be improved further. An area for review currently being considered by the Communications and Campaigns team is that of the former functions of Mission Education.

5.2 In the Christian Communication, Evangelism and Advocacy (CCE&A) cluster, the fundraising and communication work of Mission Education is intended to happen within the communications sub-cluster under the direction of the Fundraising Coordinator, liaising with Grants Officers and Partnership Coordinators.

5.3 However, it is clear that this area of work has suffered in transition. Pressure on the Editors/Writers owing to large volumes of additional work which used to be undertaken by **mph**, means that there is not the same capacity to seek stories proactively and to network with enthusiasts. To ensure that Methodist people in Britain are equipped to engage with the worldwide church requires greater advocacy than has been allowed for in the new team.

5.4 A particular area which has received less attention so far this year is supporting the networks of people who give generously to the FWM, through responding to donations, ensuring that the database of enthusiasts is updated, and creating and circulating regular newsletters. In the past, this work of nurturing supporters has paid dividends, reflected in the 22% increase as noted in paragraph 3.2.

6. Other Areas Relating to the Fund for World Mission:

6.1 The work of JMA is now located within the Children and Youth Team, part of the Discipleship and Ministries Cluster.

6.2 Women's Network is in the process of determining how it can remain connected to the Connexional Team and reconfiguring its connexional organisation so that the movement can continue to be inspired and lead without Connexional Team resources.

6.3 Formation in World Mission (FiWM) is becoming part of the grant-making process, as agreed at Methodist Council in March 2008.

7. Finance/Funding issues:

7.1 In the research conducted in preparation for this report, it was clear that a major issue affecting the workload of the Partnership Co-ordinators (particularly in the Africa region) was that of conduit funding. Conduit funding is where churches and individuals around the connexion send financial support for specific projects via the FWM. Partnership Co-ordinators have often been consulted about such funding. As mentioned in the first report (MC/09/22 4.3), this facility is a long-standing expectation of the connexion at large from the FWM, and its provision refers back to the era of complicated and expensive international

transferring of funds. However, there is an underlying conflict with the 2003 Methodist Conference resolution¹ on unrestricted giving.

7.2 There is clearly no capacity for the administration of this facility to exist within the WCR sub-cluster. It also seems unlikely that the Finance Team will be able to take on the responsibility.

7.3 .1 Further, conduit funding has the ability to undermine relationships with Partner Churches. While projects are often helpful in focusing peoples' attention and enabling greater understanding, this can lead to the donor dictating the terms of the relationship. The ethos behind unrestricted giving lies in the nature of what "partnership" means to both the Methodist Church in Britain and its partners.

7.3.2 A fundamental element of being "in partnership" with churches around the world is that all partners listen to the needs of others, and do their best to meet them collaboratively. If the Methodist Church in Britain dictates to its partners how its financial support can be spent, the Church can appear paternalistic.

This understanding of partnership lies in unrestricted giving. Receiving a large quantity of donations for a specific country or activity restricts the amount that could be allocated to other regions and programmes that could be of a higher priority.

7.3.3 Additionally, the British Methodist Church has spent the last decade trying to reduce the level of dependency Partner Churches have upon financial support from the UK. There are many Partner Churches who are now able to support themselves and simply look for financial support for a particular activity or in times of need; whilst others need a greater level of support. Another significant area of work is the growing trend of Partner Churches in the same region prioritising where resources are best directed. The WCR sub-cluster therefore requires the flexibility to adapt to these needs, and focus its funds to the areas that need it most. When money is restricted to specific regions or countries, this is more difficult to achieve.

7.3.4 Partner Churches set their own mission priorities, and may use programmes administered by the WCR sub-cluster in order to support them. For example, if a Partner Church chose to submit more than one post in application for funding from the Nationals in Mission Appointments (NMA) Programme and there was only sufficient funding for one post, it would be up to the Partner Church to prioritise the posts, not the WCR sub-cluster. Similarly, when Mission Partners are sent overseas, it is at the invitation of the Partner Church who has identified a particular need within their work.²

7.4 This report recommends that this ethos is communicated to the wider connexion in a way that ensures that support for the FWM is not lost. In addition, that the ethos is incorporated into the fundraising strategy that is currently under development.

¹ *Funding for Mission Report* adopted by the Methodist Conference 2003 states that Methodists should 'give as generously as possible and in as unrestricted a way as possible'.

² Paragraph 5.3 is drawn from the text of a memo written by the WCO in May 2008 and sent on its behalf to District Chairs within a mailing from the General Secretary.

The educational process that the connexional team needs to engage in is to enable British Methodists to see themselves as partners with Methodist and United Churches around the world, and in those relationships note that some parts of the World Church will never receive due attention unless funds are distributed according to partners' priorities. Partnership Co-ordinators are able to (through the work of WCR) ensure that partnership relationships are able to be developed and these areas can be highlighted. To minimise conduit funding, effective advocacy is required within the team. This is a significant educational task for which additional capacity is needed.

If churches wish to focus their attention upon a specific region or area of work, it is possible to use information relating to a grant that has already been awarded. Those giving can then be made aware that whatever money is raised will go into the FWM, replenishing its funds and ensuring that further grants can be given.

8. Europe

8.1 Under Team Focus a project was set up to consider how to embed the European work in the rest of the team. During this process considerable work has been done with mainland European partners to consider a pan-European engagement in mission.

8.2 The Methodist Church in Britain offers its commitment to a universal vision of life, its growing understanding of mission as partnership, dialogue and journey, its interconnection with the world-wide Methodist family (in mainland Europe this predominantly with the United Methodist Church) and with it the connexional understanding of being church.

8.3 Mission initiatives are being developed throughout Europe with the building of Methodist and ecumenical long-term mutual relationships. Through the quality of these relationships and the high level of trust that has been developed with European partners, a number of pan-European themes have emerged offering a focus for mission development, theological reflection and learning for the Methodist Church in Britain. These themes are:

- People in Transition
- Peace & Reconciliation
- Inter-faith Relationships & Dialogue
- Environmental Issues
- Faith in the Public Space

Part of the Methodist Church in Britain's contribution to these five themes should be the creation of cross-cultural opportunities for both lay and ordained people, younger and older people, women and men to:

- Learn for Discipleship
- Celebrate & Pray together
- Witness and Service with each other

8.4 Migration is becoming a key issue for churches across Europe. Demographics in Western European countries are being changed by a rise in migrants from both inside and outside the EU. They find themselves confronted by racism, both within personal attitudes and actions as well as within some formal Government systems.

The Church, of course, struggles with many of the same issues as the wider European society. It is continually challenged by the evil of racism and needs to continually affirm difference and diversity as God's gift to both church and society. In particular the Church

welcomes migrant Christians as God's new gift to the church in Europe. The learning coming from this experience is for the church's benefit as well as the benefit of those it works alongside. The Methodist Church in Britain, through its own sometimes hard and often painful historic experience, has much to contribute to the learning and development of European society, including other churches and ecumenical organisations.

9. Adequately Resourced?

9.1 Now that a permanent Administrator is in post and the Grant Officers have been appointed, some of the pressure on the WCR sub-cluster has been reduced, however, it is too early to say how the working relationship with the Grant Officers will be developed and what the division of workload will be in practice.

9.2 The research undertaken as part of this review showed that pressures (particularly upon the Partnership Coordinators) meant that it was impossible for staff to fulfil all of their job description. One of these pressures was the issue of conduit funding. Even with the Grant Officers in post, there will still be considerable work to be done by the Partnership Coordinators to ensure that the grant-making process is adequately informed. There is also the responsibility of providing pastoral support for Mission Partners (currently 55 across the four regions) and the need to be developing and leading new mission strategy.

9.3 As relationships with Partner Churches is a priority and is core work of the WCR sub-cluster, it seems that the area of work most at risk of neglect is that of building initiatives with local churches, or at Circuit/District level. This is something that the wider connexion values highly, as highlighted in paragraph 5.

9.4 Much of the SALT Programme will be conducted outside of WCR, by the Grant Officers and within the grant-making structure. However, additional administration will be required from within WCR and the Partnership Coordinators will need to have increased involvement in ensuring effective communication with Partner Churches takes place. There is a need for a designated contact person to exist within the sub-cluster to provide continuity and appropriate pastoral care.

9.5 The senior leadership of the Connexional Team has discussed the staffing situation within WCR and the issue of the charge on the FWM. It has been proposed that the charge on the FWM be 15% in order to ensure that the fund is a relationship fund, not simply a grant-making fund. (Note the purposes of the FWM as outlined in SO 362 which is an appendix to this report.) The Conference decided to reduce core team costs by 30%.

9.6 If Council/Conference agrees with the recommendation, this could have implications for other areas of the team's work.

10. Recommendation:

This report therefore recommends that an additional full-time post be allocated to the WCR sub-cluster with a focus on the area of pan-European relationships and engagement in mission.

Appendix 1: SO 362 (2)

362 Specified Funds. (1) The Methodist Council shall raise and administer the four restricted funds specified in clauses (2) to (5) below, for which contributions, including public collections, subscriptions, donations and legacies, shall be invited for particular aspects of the work of the Church.

(2) The purposes of the Methodist Fund for World Mission shall be the purposes of the Methodist Missionary Society, which are:

- (i) to initiate, maintain and encourage Christian mission in other countries;
- (ii) to encourage the establishment of churches overseas which will themselves undertake that mission within and beyond their own borders;
- (iii) to engage in a continuing relationship of mutual help and enrichment with churches (including united churches) in the life of which Methodist missions have played a part;
- (iv) to foster and take part in ecumenical relationships in the field of world mission, including the work of the World Council of Churches and the Churches' Commission on Mission;
- (ivA) to bear witness to the global character of Christian mission by supporting work with and among ethnic minority communities in Britain and Ireland which have had their origin in other countries;
- (v) in furtherance of these purposes to engage in education, advocacy, recruitment and fund-raising.

See Article 3 of the constitution of the society (Book IVB, Part 3).