

Larger than Circuit

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Status of Paper	Interim report to the Council
Action Required	Discussion
Draft Resolution	12/1. The Council receives the report.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To enable the Council to discuss the issues and guide the working group as it prepares its final report.
Main Points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Setting the scene 2. The district consultation: have districts served their purpose? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 The changing role of districts 2.2 Consultation with the districts 3. A theological approach to move us forward <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Mission Shaped Districts 4. Suggested Models 5. What kind of leadership? 6. What are we looking for in the role of a District Chair? 7. Changes to the district will impact District Leadership 8. Suggested Leadership model 9. Finance 10. Further work
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<p>Resolutions taken from the Larger than Circuit Working Party Conference report in 2013:</p> <p><u>Districts</u> 35/4. a) The Conference resolves to appoint a coordinating group as recommended in paragraph 97, to be responsible for taking forward the process connexionally and for reporting regularly to the Methodist Council which shall have oversight of the work.</p> <p><u>District Chairs</u> 35/9. a) The Conference adopts the recommendation in paragraph 109 that a group be appointed to review recent developments in the role of District Chair, particularly in relation to the exercise of personal and collegiate leadership connexionally, with a view to reporting to the Conference of 2015.</p>
Consultations	The Chairs' Meeting, the Connexional Leaders Forum, Faith and Order Committee, Law and Polity Committee, the Districts, the Senior Leadership Group, Synod Secretaries, World Church Relationships, Superintendents Conference, Diaconal Convocation, Resourcing Mission Forum, 3 Generate and the Methodist people through the online questionnaire.

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	Potentially major
Faith and Order	Will require further discussions
Financial	Variable depending on the Council's guidance
Personnel	The proposals may lead to changes in the roles of some personnel
Wider Connexional	This work has implications for the whole of the Connexion
External	Potential implications for ecumenical partnerships
Risk	There are risks in pursuing the various models we bring. Likewise we believe there are risks which may arise from doing nothing

Questions for Council Discussion

The Working Party asks the Council to discuss and advise on:

1. Which model/s of Larger than Circuit would you encourage us to develop for the Conference Report?
2. The possibility and suitability of appointing assistant Chairs from the Diaconal Order or members of the laity.

Larger than Circuit

Section 1 Setting the scene

1. Jesus said; “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age”. (Matthew 28:18-20) NRSV.

Background

2. The present ‘Larger than Circuit’ Working Party was established by the 2013 Conference as a result of resolutions agreed in Report no 35 *Larger than Circuit*. This report should be read being aware of the contents of the original report which also built on the *Mapping the Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission* initiative which preceded in respect of ‘Larger than Circuit’ entities. This is our first report to the Council and highlights the processes we have followed and the consultations we have undertaken and offers a variety of models for debate and discussion.

Introduction

3. We believe our task has a missional imperative. The New Testament tells of obedient followers of God engaged in the mission of spreading the good news of God. The gospels tell how Jesus travelled in the region sharing his knowledge and understanding of God. Some might call him a missionary, others a window to God. In our work, mission and evangelism have been at the forefront of our conversation and decision. As the Conference received and more widely the church has come to speak of Methodism as a ‘Discipleship Movement Shaped for Mission’ we believe that everything that we are and do must be seen through a missional lens. Thus, the Circuits, with the Districts and the Conference must be seen as agents in the *Missio Dei* (the mission of God in the world).
4. We believe that Districts should be structured to give the best possible support and encouragement to the circuits and churches to be effective agents for mission. This echoes SO 400A: *The Primary purpose for which the District is constituted is to advance the mission of the Church in a region, by providing opportunities for circuits to work together[...]*
5. The suggestions and recommendations contained in this report will require further changes to our structures giving greater focus to our limited but still considerable resources.
6. We do not underestimate the hard choices and the decisions which the Church will have to make as a result of this consultation; we expect to receive varied responses. However, we believe what we offer will enable the Church to engage better with the Mission of God in the coming decades.

Our Task

7. The task of the Larger than Circuit Working Party was outlined in the 2013 Conference report 35: Larger than Circuit and can be seen in full at appendix 1 and in the Council Papers January 2014 (appendix 2). In summary we were tasked to initiate a process allowing “...further exploration of the role and responsibilities of both of the district and its synod and of District Chairs...” (paragraph 85).

The Working Party

8. The members of the working group are listed in appendix 3.

Regularity of Meeting and scope of research

9. The group has met on 13 occasions and undertaken consultations with a range of stakeholders, including: District Chairs, the Connexional Leaders' Forum, Superintendents (at their annual conference), Deacons (at Convocation), Superintendents of large Circuits, Synods, Resourcing Missions training event, Team Leaders in the Connexional Team, Faith and Order representatives, 3 Generate and ecumenical colleagues. The Working Party members have also met with a variety of groups in a number of Districts and Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DLMN) regions. We have a number of meetings arranged to take place after the Council, for example with members of the Law and Polity Committee.

Ways of Working

10. The Group divided (as per the Conference resolutions) into two smaller groups looking at the 'Role of the Chair' and models of 'Larger than Circuit' while at the same time working very closely together and meeting together and in parallel.

The group has undertaken three major pieces of consultative work:

11. A: Every district synod was invited to respond to a number of questions which facilitated discussion in a tool kit presentation and to submit responses by the end of September 2014. The tool kit was sent to all Districts and was also made available via the Methodist website. (See appendix 4.)
12. We received responses from 30 Districts. The Bristol District declined to enter into the process stating they believed they had already done a 'Larger than Circuit' review of the district. The North West and Mann covenant of Districts sent a joint response from the District Chairs. We also received responses from individuals, some Districts and Circuits within the covenanted Districts.
13. We also received a number of responses from individuals and Circuits. Some Districts declined to engage in the process with their learning network region. In other parts of the Connexion we can report that the DMLN officers have been involved in the process.
14. B: The District Chairs were consulted about the 'Role of the Chair' and responses invited through questionnaire. We received 27 responses.
15. Reference has been made in the previous report and will be in this to the changing and demanding role of the District Chair. It is worth noting that often their role differs according to their context from how the Church wishes the role to be exercised.
16. We have taken seriously the personal, corporate and collegiate leadership which have emerged in different contexts, the increasingly varied patterns of leadership, and the demands of time and energy made upon the Chairs as connexional leaders.
17. Our recommendations have implications for the way in which the Conference, the Council, the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC), the Connexional Leaders' Forum (CLF) and the District Synods operate. These would need further work.

18. C: Other groups of people within the life of the Church were consulted to gain a snapshot of how the role of District Chair was seen today. We consulted Superintendents, Deacons, Property Stewards, Connexional Leaders, team leaders in the Connexional Team and members of 3 Generate.
19. An online survey about the role of the District Chair resulted in 1270 (506 ordained and 764 lay) responses. A small number objected to the online questionnaire, to both the method and some of the questions. We have sought to allay any fears of inappropriate sharing of gathered comments.

This report to be seen as a “work in progress”

20. At this stage we make no apology for presenting the Council with a variety of suggested models. The consultations revealed a wide variety of views; from “leave everything alone” to “make radical changes”. There was only one prevailing comment (although certainly not unanimous) which was “we must have something between Circuit and Connexion”, yet there was no common view as to what this should look like.
21. Our research shows us that Districts have served the Church well – but that they need some greater clarity as to their purpose for the church of today and the future.
22. We believe that there is an expressed need for a body between the Conference and the Circuits that enable inspirational guidance (that is God-breathed and inspiring leadership, direction and resourcing) in support of God’s mission through the Circuits but do not of itself mean that it is necessarily to retain the current district structures. We judge that to maintain the status quo is not a tenable option.

Section 2 The district Consultation: have districts served their purpose?

Historic Background – A Summary from the 2013 report

23. The grouping of Circuits into Districts with Chairmen dates from the period immediately after John Wesley’s death. The development was intended to provide a means for dealing with problems, disputes and disciplinary matters, and for offering support and advice to the circuit assistants [Superintendents] between meetings of the Conference. Gradually the ‘District Committee’ or ‘District Meeting’ [later, Synod], became a significant part of connexional life. Organisation into Districts continued in the various Methodist traditions and at Methodist Union in 1932 the Connexion consisted of 46 districts in the home work and 36 overseas.
24. A later review of the role of District Chairman [now Chair], with increased emphasis on their being a ‘District Missioner’ as well as pastor to the ministers, led to the decision that in most cases they needed to be ‘separated’, ie not to hold a circuit appointment. To enable this to be afforded, in 1957 the number of home districts was reduced to 34, on the basis of roughly 30,000 members per separated Chairman.
25. There are now 31 home (and no overseas) districts, many with largely the same configuration as in 1957. All but four have separated Chairs. Three of those four operate as single circuit districts: Shetland, Isle of Man and Synod Cymru, there are two Circuits in the Channel Islands.

Nature and Purpose of District and its Synod

26. Clause 38 of the Deed of Union contains the basic constitutional requirement for the existence of Circuits and Districts. It states:
27. *The Local Churches in Great Britain, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, Malta and Gibraltar forming part of the Methodist Church shall be formed into Circuits for mutual encouragement and help (especially in meeting their financial obligations) in accordance with directions from time to time made by the Conference, and the circuits shall be arranged by the Conference in Districts in like manner, but the Conference shall not direct the division or combination of existing Circuits or Districts or the formation of new Circuits unless and until the Synod or Synods of the district or Districts involved have been consulted.*
28. SO 400A(1) states that *“The primary purpose for which the District is constituted is to advance the mission of the Church in a region, by providing opportunities for Circuits to work together and support each other, by offering them resources of finance, personnel and expertise which may not be available locally and by enabling them to engage with the wider society of the region as a whole and address its concerns. The district serves the Local Churches and Circuits and the Conference in the support, deployment and oversight of the various ministries of the Church, and in programmes of training. It has responsibility for the evaluation of applications by Local Churches and Circuits for approval of or consent to their proposals, when required, or for assistance from district or connexional bodies or funds. Wherever possible the work of the district is carried out ecumenically. The District is thus an expression, over a wider geographical area than the circuit, of the connexional character of the Church”.*
29. The Deed of Union proceeds on the basis that the Synod is to be constituted as the principal meeting responsible for the affairs of a district (clause 1(xxxiv) and 40), but does not, with one significant exception below, elaborate on what it is to do. SO 412(1) does this:
30. *Subject in Wales to Standing Order 491 the Synod is the policy-making court of the District, serving as a link between the Conference and the Connexional Team on the one hand and the Circuits and Local Churches on the other. It shall have oversight of all district affairs. It shall formulate and promote policies, through its various officers and committees, to assist the mission of the Church, to give inspiration to the leaders in the circuits and to ensure the interrelation of all aspects of the Church’s life throughout the district. It is a forum in which issues of public concern relevant to the witness of the Church may be addressed. The Synod’s business is the work of God in the district, expressed in worship, conversation, formal business, the communication of Conference matters to the circuits and the submission of memorials to the Conference.*

There is also the important provision for the Presbyteral Session of the Synod, in SO 481(1):

31. *The members of the Presbyteral Session meet to recall and reflect upon their ministerial vocation, to watch over one another in love, to make recommendations to the Conference concerning presbyteral probationers and to consider the work of God in the district ...*
32. Finally, the one significant aspect in the Deed of Union about what the Synods do is the provision in clause 14 that the membership of the Conference itself consists of representatives who, apart from certain specified categories, are all to be elected by the Synods.

Functions and Responsibilities

33. The checklist for meetings of the district Policy Committee (in CPD Book VII, Part 6) best indicates the wide range of functions now exercised under the aegis of the district – financial, ecumenical, lay employment, city centre work, chaplaincies, formal education, manses. There are also the significant district functions relating to presbyteral candidates and probationers.
34. In two particular aspects the District has assumed a much greater role in recent years: the giving of consents to property projects and the significant grant-making powers through the district Advance Fund.
35. The functions and responsibilities might best be identified as:
 - Working in effective partnerships
 - Maximising the effective uses of resources of people, property and finance
 - Oversight, leadership, governance and management
 - Promoting, supporting and encouraging appropriate opportunities for learning and development
 - Conferring together effectively, enabling the discernment of God's call to discipleship and mission to be more readily heard in the Circuits

Section 2.1 The changing role of Districts

36. The role of the District has changed in recent years in a variety of ways including:
 - The changing number of district based staff, including district funded roles (eg District Evangelism/Mission Enablers, District Safeguarding Officers and Connexional Officers residing in the regions (Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network
 - The responsibilities which the Conference has decided are most appropriately exercised within the district rather than at a connexional level (eg grant making, property consent).
37. One of the consequences of these changes, for a connexional church, is that Districts have responded to these challenges in quite different ways. This raises questions both about the nature and character of our connexional life, but also about the means of sharing good practice between districts and reflecting together on these ways of working in order to nurture best practice across the Connexion.

Section 2.2 Consultation with the Districts

38. The report to the 2013 Conference of the Larger than Circuit (LTC) working party recommended the establishment of a connexion wide exploration of the need or otherwise for an entity within our structures which is 'Larger than Circuit'.
39. The Conference of 2013 (Resolutions 35/2 – 35/4) directed each District and its Synod to explore further the role and responsibilities of both the District and its Synod and established a Coordinating Group to take forward the process connexionally.
40. The Coordinating Group created a Tool kit, including questionnaires and other materials, to assist the districts and their synods in the consultation process (appendix 4). These responses have been analysed to identify themes and potential approaches going forward.

Consultation Feedback

41. The most consistent theme within the responses is an expressed need for a body between the Conference and the circuits that enables inspirational guidance (ie God-breathed and inspiring leadership, direction and resourcing) in support of God's mission through the circuits. Currently we call such a body a "District".
42. The distilling of feedback identifies that respondents believe "Districts" should:
 - Provide support and assistance to the Circuits in their task.
 - Act as critical friends to the Circuits.
 - Be a place where relationship and connectedness between Circuits can best be expressed and resources shared most effectively according to the needs of an issue being considered.
 - Be sufficiently local to understand the context, and sufficiently distant to be objective, according to the needs of an issue being considered.
 - Be of a size to enable it to operate effectively and efficiently in delivering its functions whilst being relevant and accessible.
 - Enable the Circuits to engage in the wider society.
 - Enable the Circuits to engage widely with ecumenical and other partners.
 - Remind us that we are a connexional church which assembles to celebrate and confer.
43. We noted how clearly these closely resemble Standing Order 400A (see above).
44. Other themes in the responses question whether there is a need to review current structures at all. There is a wide range of views about this, from those who see this as something long overdue and who question why it is taking so long to carry out, to those who see no need for any such review because the system seems to be working well where they are.
45. The consultation feedback includes the phrase; "If it ain't broke, don't fix it", and indicates a level of what is best described as "change fatigue". A number consider that their review is already complete or they are satisfied with the relationships and efficiency of their current structure. Little feedback covers the needs or structure beyond a local perspective, save for the recognition that "one size does not fit all".
46. The feedback also identifies a number of ongoing concerns and issues facing our current structures:
 - The infrastructure squeezes out time for speaking out for God.
 - The current model is management, rather than mission focused.
 - Many have lost the sense of connexionalism and so we work in an increasingly congregational environment.
 - A growing inability to find volunteers to fill district roles.
 - The requirements (legal and otherwise) to employ professionals; eg for Safeguarding and Lay Employment roles.
 - Working from a 1950s model of 30,000 members per district in a Connexion whereas district membership is now on average 6,900 per district.
 - Working with an infrastructure designed for a membership of 900,000 when we now have 209,000.
 - Working in an infrastructure with the dynamics already impacted by changes to the structure of other major elements (eg the Connexional Team Focus, the Resourcing for Mission: Mapping the Way Forward and Fruitful Field).

Conclusions

47. The wide ranging consultation has resulted in an expressed need for a body between the Conference and the Circuits that enables inspirational guidance (ie God-breathed and inspiring leadership, direction and resourcing) in support of God's mission through the circuits.
48. This body needs to be able to support, resource and critique the Circuits whilst enabling them to pursue their missional tasks. It needs to be of an appropriate size and have sufficient local understanding to be representational and efficient whilst affording opportunities to celebrate our connexionalism and to confer together.
49. We believe this body needs to:
 - Be restructured in the light of the current times and with an understanding of future potential trends. It has therefore to address issues which stem from current demographic and membership trends.
 - Inspire our people to remember their connexional nature and to resource them to have the desire and the time to speak of God.
50. Above all the body must serve the people called Methodist as they seek to advance the ministry of the Church and the mission of Christ.

Section 3 A theological approach to move us forward

51. We do not pretend that this is a full ecclesiology of Methodist Districts, even less a full ecclesiology of the Methodist Church, nor is it a full missiology of British Methodism, but we do suggest that it contains some threads that will be significant in our thinking about the missional unit that is larger than Circuit. It draws on some of the key themes of earlier work to suggest some ways of thinking that might shape our missiology and ecclesiology with respect to that which is 'Larger than Circuit'.
52. The Conference statement on our ecclesiology, *Called to Love and Praise*, and other reports on ecclesiology and missiology, such as *the Missional Nature of the Circuit* (2010) form the basic statements on which our thinking builds, but other important statements also form part of the connexional context.
 - *Our Calling* (2000) and the *Priorities for the Methodist Church* (2004) set the Methodist Church on a particular direction of discernment, praying, policy making and implementation.
 - *Mapping the Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission* (2007) encouraged Districts to seek new shapes for their Circuits through reviewing their roles, ways of working, purposes and boundaries. It also encouraged Districts to review their ways of working, purposes and boundaries within five years.
 - Recent *General Secretary's reports* further refined the thinking of the last few years about our direction of travel and the desire for us as a Church to become more of a 'discipleship movement shaped for mission' and gained considerable support.
53. We take as our starting point that key expression of connexionalism as expressed in our Standing Orders:

SO500 Nature and Purposes. (1) The Circuit is the primary unit in which Local Churches express and experience their interconnexion in the Body of Christ, for purposes of mission, mutual encouragement and help.[....]

54. It is the circuits that form our primary unit of connexionalism - all that is larger than Circuit must be focused on resourcing the mission of God as effected by the Circuits and their churches and ecumenical and other partners.
55. The Methodist Church Act makes provision for the Conference to be the governing body of the Church and for its powers and duties. The District enables the Circuits to relate to the Conference and the Conference to the Circuits. We suggest we might remind the Districts of SO 400A (see above) where the nature and purpose might be re-titled: Mission Shaped Districts.

Section 3.1 Mission Shaped Districts

56. As we imagine how districts could be shaped to enable mission, we summarised our thinking:
 1. The *Mission Shaped District's* priority is to support and connect the Local Churches and Circuits in their mission.
 2. The *Mission Shaped District* will be a 'network', or series of 'networks', rather than a boundary, which raises the question; 'what networks will best resource and connect the local churches and circuits?' This will allow a certain fuzziness to the edges of Districts and flexibility about who connects with whom. Clearly missional context is of great significance here.
 3. *Mission Shaped Districts* will work in a different way than existing Districts because their primary focus will be mission.
 4. The *Mission Shaped District* will ask; 'where should existing functions be best undertaken?' as well as 'what should we be doing to further God's mission through the Circuits and churches?' The process of reshaping Districts thus includes the question about priority and choice. Some functions might be better done centrally.
57. Whatever we do, we believe the District's primary functions are to provide the link between the Conference and the Circuits that is most effective in enabling the development of God's mission in particular locations and to provide the resources, encouragement and support that will most effectively enable God's mission in the District.

Section 4 Suggested models

58. Whilst the LTC consultation saw some emergence of consensus around the prime features of a LTC body, there was no real consensus about possible future models for such a body; this said, we believe that from the evidence gleaned above, alongside the disparity of finances across our Connexion, that something needs to be done. The consultation calls for simplicity/clarity, and an emphasis on the need for efficiency and effectiveness. There would be no support for a proposal which imposed a regional model in addition to Districts, in terms of an additional 'tier' of governance and administration, for example.
59. Consequently, the working party has explored a wide range of possible models for a LTC entity, given the group's view that retaining the *status quo* is not a tenable position for the Church. These included:

- existing models of collaboration between Districts;
 - the newer, larger districts in the Connexion;
 - the DMLN Regions;
 - a variety of other scenarios for fewer and larger groupings than current Districts, for example basing these on:
 - a. Anglican dioceses;
 - b. URC or other ecumenical partners' organisational structures;
 - c. Other jurisdictional/governmental models;
 - d. Geographical area, or natural geography;
 - e. Equity models of varying kinds;
 - f. Mission-focused areas;
 - having more and smaller groupings of Circuits.
60. The possible models were then tested against the purposes identified by the group for such a body, which are set out in the paragraphs above. In addition, any model would need to be able to incorporate sufficient flexibility (a) to accommodate the different nations and jurisdictions, (b) to acknowledge English local authorities/regions, and (c) to recognise the issues of geographies, cultures, relationships, and ecumenical partners.
61. As a result of its deliberations, the group decided that several of the possible models would not meet these criteria, or would not be appropriate structural models for our polity as a connexional church. It has therefore focused its attention on six of these potential models as these were felt to be worthy of further exploration:
- Working Towards Working Together
 - Using Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN) Regions
 - Membership Equity-based
 - Focused on centres for potential mission opportunity
 - Circuits Working in Clusters
 - Service Provider
62. These are set out below, with the Working Party's current reflections on their relative strengths and weaknesses.

Model One: Working Towards Working Together

63. This model would be based on the progressive, incremental development of existing initiatives across the Connexion where some Districts are already working together or ecumenically, but with targets/timetables and added impetus. The group looked in particular at the covenant between the Districts in North-West England, and the more federal approaches between the Bedfordshire, Essex & Hertfordshire and East Anglia Districts, and between the four (mainly) Yorkshire Districts, Scotland and Shetland, ecumenical Cumbria and Cornwall.
64. There would be strengths in this approach. It begins from where some Districts already are, and would thus be a comfortable place from which to move forward. It avoids the need for radical change, which would satisfy those who feel that there has already been sufficient major change within the Church's structures recently. It therefore would not require much structural or procedural change for it to be implemented.
65. However, several potential weaknesses were also identified. Starting from a comfortable place may well mean that there will be a lack of willingness to move in the direction of changing the number and nature of the Districts in order to meet the future criteria, and

thus allow the *status quo* to prevail. Unless the Conference were to set out a timetable for action, there would be no pressure for any movement, and there could well be differential movement across the Connexion, which would be problematic in terms of, for example, representation of Districts at the Conference. Potentially, any development could be dependent on the willingness of those involved in a District to engage in the task.

66. Pursuing this model would not of itself directly engage with the structural issues facing the Church in terms of LTC which the previous Conference reports and the work of this group have identified. By retaining existing Districts, it would also be counter-connexional in that it could be seen as territorial, and it would allow different areas to act differentially and in an un-coordinated manner.
67. In terms of how well this model would be able to carry out the purposes and functions envisaged by the group for the re-envisioned LTC body, there is the potential for things to carry on across the Connexion as a whole substantially as at present, unless there is an agreed programme for change, with a timetable for action. However, it would not be clear what the eventual goal of this model would be, how Districts would come together to decide which worked with which, and which body would decide on what was proposed. There is also the issue of whether it would actually achieve a sufficient release of personnel, resources and imagination for development, compared to the current position.
68. Under this model, there is a risk of creating an extra tier between the Circuits and the Conference (a regional gathering of a number of Districts). We have already identified there is no appetite for creating another tier. Equally there is the potential for a strengthening of connexionalism if we were to take the process seriously.
69. If this model were followed, there could be encouragement to pursue covenants or federations, (some might call this connexional principles) but these would need to be real, and subject to external review and development to ensure that they met clear objectives for progress and mission. The potential end could be fewer LTC entities, but this would not be guaranteed.

Model Two: Using DMLN Regions

70. This model recognises that the DMLN regional structure has already grouped existing Districts together for this particular purpose, and thus builds on this existing LTC relationship in creating the new LTC entities. Its strengths also include the fact that these are areas/regions with which people are becoming familiar (and in some cases have been working together for longer), and would not require any new patterns to be developed. Reducing the number of Districts to the number of regions would be more likely than Model One to achieve a sufficient release of personnel, resources and imagination for mission and development, compared to the current position. The model would enable the retention of the flexibility of methods of operation across the differing regions.
71. However, there would be weaknesses in this approach, too. There are already concerns in some quarters that the DMLN regions are not equitable in terms of size, scale, staffing, etc, and this would be exacerbated if the regions were to become the new LTC bodies as well – for example, in terms of available financial and other resources, and representation at connexional bodies.
72. The model presupposes that the present DMLN regions are the most sensible division of the Connexion and are an appropriate way ahead, it has to be questioned whether this model is sufficiently creative and forward-looking, rather than being grafted onto the existing

structures. Although the new LTC entities would be sufficiently local to understand contexts, in some cases they might not be large enough to be objective and have sufficient resources to be supportive to the Circuits.

73. This model, as with all others that propose reducing the number of LTC entities from the current number of Districts, will increase travelling distances for certain activities and thus may increase the Church's carbon footprint (although with fewer people travelling - as there will be fewer district officers - and with a review of LTC functions, this may not in fact turn out to be the case). The increased distances may also be felt to have the potential to reduce the involvement of lay people in the LTC life of the Church, which may lead to a sense of disenfranchisement.
74. In terms of being able to deliver the revised LTC purposes and functions, this model (again as with others that reduce the number) has the potential for significantly reduced and more resource-efficient structures. In some cases under this model, this would be less significant than others however, as the number of current Districts in each region varies significantly. This and other models might also lead to an increase in the number of professional paid staff, if lay people are not willing to carry out some of the tasks across the wider geographical areas. Leadership would also need to be remodelled.

Model Three: Membership Equity-based

75. This model would also see a significant reduction in the number of LTC entities compared to the current number of districts. It thus shares some of the above advantages, disadvantages and implications of Model Two.
76. This model takes as its starting point the principle which was followed in the 1950s when the current district pattern began, ie dividing up England into Districts on the basis of broadly the same number of members in each. We have taken the view that merely replicating that number (30,000 per District) would lead to LTC entities which would be too large to undertake effectively the purposes and functions which it envisages; we are therefore suggesting that a model based on LTC entities of 20,000 members would be more appropriate. The model thus reflects the changes in membership since the 1950s, and creates a LTC infrastructure that is relative to the size of the Church today, recognising that we cannot be the same with a membership of 209,000 members compared to 1,000,000. Nonetheless, it builds on an existing way of seeing things within the Church, with a rootedness in 1950s thinking.
77. This model has the advantage of starting from a base of inherently approximate equity, in terms of members at least, although it would seem sensible to retain separate entities for the countries of Wales and Scotland. Further consideration would need to be given to the island districts. It would be a more radical and creative proposal than the DMLN model, as it takes a different starting point than existing structures. However, it could be developed from the basis of existing Districts (in whole or in part) rather than starting entirely from first principles. The principle of membership equity would be understandable, and it would address some of the issues of inequity mentioned above in the DMLN model.
78. Creating new LTC structures under this model would, however, be seen as a greater degree of change, and thus more disruptive, than the DMLN model. However, in the longer term, this might well prove to be more of a strength than a weakness. A weakness in this model, though, is that in using membership as the sole criterion for the LTC entities would be arbitrary and would fail to reflect other realities, particularly including physical geography.

Model Four: Focused on centres of mission opportunity

79. This model again would be expected to lead to a significant reduction in the number of LTC entities compared to the current number of districts, sharing some of the advantages, disadvantages and implications of Model Two.
80. Unlike Models Two and Three, it takes a radically different approach and more creative starting point. In so doing, it would take the Church back to the intention that Districts should be a focus for supporting the mission of the Circuits, and be mission-focused entities themselves. It would look to create a structure of LTC entities focused on today's society's points of focus for growth and potential growth, which would be akin to the missional driving force of early Methodism. Some of the factors which we initially considered included city-regions, airports and other transport/communication nodes, universities, rural development, and chaplaincy areas.
81. It would require more investment of resources in establishing the new entities, as it would not start from any existing structures. The growth points would need to be identified, and then the Circuits would be required to coalesce around those in order to create entities of a sufficient number and size (which may well not be too dissimilar in number to Models Two and Three) to meet the suggested criteria.
82. This model would provide a significant opportunity for Methodism to engage more effectively with wider society at a more local spatial area than across the whole Connexion, but at a larger spatial area than the Circuits, thus enabling a more strategic relationship with modern societal structures. It has the potential for significant developments within the Church in support of mission. It could lead to a radically different way of deploying support for ministry – in all its forms. It could create centres for growth which could be a focus for diaconal ministry, pioneer ministry and missional chaplaincy, and for putting our limited resources into a smaller number of significant projects. Within Circuits, it would thereby have the potential to enable presbyters to lead Local Churches and their ministry from maintenance/decline mode to mission mode. There would also be an opportunity to work strategically, and thus to access secular funding, over a workable spatial area with ecumenical and other partners (existing and potential) and government and related entities. The model could therefore lead to a radical re-positioning of the Methodist footprint.
83. We recognise that many of the above points could be seen as either strengths or weaknesses of the model, depending on one's point of view. However, in our view, this model presents an exciting opportunity to challenge the negative narrative of a spiral of decline and has significant potential to enable growth and missional development for the Church.

Model Five: Circuits Working in Clusters

84. This model would also look radically different compared to the current ways of working. It would be based on small groups of Circuits agreeing to work together in clusters for matters which they or the Conference felt needed wider collaboration beyond their own Circuits, in order to meet the purposes for LTC entities set out above. Under this model, there would clearly end up being far more LTC entities than with the current Districts.
85. A strength of this model would include the ability of Circuits to determine their own groupings, which could therefore relate to particular geographic or societal links (and need not be physically adjacent circuits). The Working Group acknowledges that this would be a change in policy for the Methodist Church in that the Conference has always determined the

composition of the Districts. There would be a very different model of LTC leadership, as there would not be a requirement for non-separated Chairs of these entities, or indeed Chairs of any sort, as any chairing function could be shared amongst the Superintendents as was felt to be appropriate to each aspect of their collaboration. This would increase the number of presbyters available for circuit ministry, which was an issue in some of the consultation feedback.

86. Amongst the weaknesses of the model would be that it starts from a comfortable place and that there will be a lack of willingness to move in the direction of change. Some Circuits may feel that they can manage without much LTC collaboration, even though that may not be the case, and then there would not be the desire for any LTC involvement: that would not then meet the desire for an LTC structure and for the role and purposes which we have set out. Unless the Conference were to set out a timetable for action, there would be also be no pressure for any movement, and there could well be differential movement across the Connexion, which would be problematic in terms of, for example, representation of Districts at the Conference. Potentially, any development could be dependent on the willingness of those involved in a Circuit, and in groups of Circuits, to engage in the task.
87. In terms of how well this model would be able to carry out the purposes and functions envisaged for the re-envisioned LTC entity, there would need to be an agreed programme for change, with a timetable for action. However, it would not be clear what the eventual goal of this model would be, how Circuits would come together to decide which worked with which, and which body would decide on what was proposed. There is also the issue of whether it would actually achieve a sufficient release of personnel, resources and imagination for development, compared to the current position.
88. This model would create the potential for some form of structures between the Circuits and the Conference (eg regional forum) to progress the relationship between the participating circuits, presumably with Standing Orders underpinning the arrangements in order for progress to be ensured. In order for all of the benefits of LTC to be obtained, it might even be necessary for these groups of Circuits to be further grouped together in a federated manner. Whilst it would not be essential for this arrangement to be overly formal, it would still require some personnel resource to enable the model to work. Alternatively, the model might require some of the LTC functions to be carried out connexionally, with the consequential increase in the size of the Connexional Team (although this would be counter-balanced by the absence of District Chairs).
89. Thought would also need to be given as to how representation of the groups of Circuits at the Conference could be organised. Groups of Circuits working together would be able to address issues requiring a slightly larger perspective than individual Circuits, such as some ecumenical and local authority matters, although we are not convinced that this would be, in most cases, at a sufficiently large spatial scale to be sufficiently strategic.

Model Six: Service Provider

90. This model recognises there would be roles and functions identified which could be carried out by an LTC entity which was that, and only that, of a professional service provider. There would be some attraction in this model in terms of addressing comments in the consultation, but having examined the model we are not convinced that it would be effective in meeting the purposes and functions which we have set out.
91. In order to be effective, for example, there would need to be some form of governance structure between the Circuits in an area in order to determine policy, and to set priorities

for, and manage, the service providers. This would then mean that this model was not dissimilar to the federation of Model One. Alternatively, LTC policy would just be an agglomeration of circuit policies, but in that case there would still need to be some kind of body making decisions on the use of professional services, unless it was entirely 'first come first served'. It would also not be clear how the pastoral ministry of the LTC would be carried out in the absence of a formalised leadership for this kind of LTC entity.

92. We are not convinced that this model would enable the Church to be sufficiently strategic in an LTC context. Our current view, therefore, is that, whilst clearly an LTC entity should be providing some professional services in support of the missional activity of the Circuits, this should not be the sole purpose of an LTC entity. This role would thus be better incorporated within the other LTC models, rather than being seen as a potential model in its own right.

Section 5 What kind of leadership?

What is a District Chair? - Then and Now

93. In 2006 the Methodist Conference adopted the report *What is a District Chair?* It set out in detail both a history of the development of the role of the district Chair within Methodism, and an analysis of the multiple roles of the District Chair to that point. In many ways we judge this to be not only the classic statement concerning Methodism's understanding and expectations of a District Chair, but also a summary of our understanding today.
94. The report stresses the Chair's function as a spiritual leader, as a regular leader of worship, and as a pastor to other ministers. It also emphasises the Chair's role of seeking to advance the Church's mission in a region (in the *What is a District Chair?* report, the term 'region' relates more to a District than the current DMLN regions) in the changing context in which the Church finds itself. As well as providing a critical link between Local Churches and ministers and the wider Church.
95. *What is a District Chair?* also notes the Chair's connexional responsibilities, not least as the representative of the Conference within the District, and the district's representative to the wider Church and Conference. It further recognises that the Chair's responsibilities within the Connexion and the District may lead to them feeling pulled in different directions.
96. *What is a District Chair?* acknowledges that the Chair of District does not personally have to fulfil all the duties set out in the previous paragraph, indeed it recognises the impossibility of such an expectation. The report therefore stresses that the Chair maintains the responsibility for ensuring the tasks are fulfilled, emphasising the need for a ministry which is shared with others; the Chair takes the lead as the district's Chief Officer, but shares the ministry of oversight with colleagues lay and ordained, especially with Superintendents.
97. In summary, *What is a District Chair?* declares that "...The role is, amongst other things, one of presiding over the people in the sense of being the representative, focal point, animator and guide amongst them..." (paragraph 22).

How has the Chair's world changed since 2006?

98. Both the Church and the world have moved on since 2006. We note for example, the continually developing implications of our duty of care as expressed in the Church's commitment to safeguarding. The role of the Chair within our complaints and discipline process continues to develop, as indeed does the Chair's role as a "trouble-shooter" within the district. The, albeit anecdotal, evidence gathered from the District Chair's questionnaire

(appendix 4) led to a number of Chairs stating that the demands of the role had increased during their period of service. Whilst *What is a District Chair?* uses the word “region” our use of that word has substantially developed since 2006. No longer do we use it to describe a collection of Circuits which form a region; rather it is used by some to refer to stationing regions and by many following the development of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN) regions. These regions have been formed, in which the Districts seek to work more closely together in the formational fields of ministry and discipleship. For some, this has provided a springboard for developing new ways of working in areas beyond the remit of the DMLN; for others, such as the north-west, this has happened at a time when Districts and Chairs were already discerning how to work more efficiently and creatively together.

99. Another significant development since 2006 has been the consequences of the *Mapping the Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission* initiative which has led to the development of a multiplicity of models of circuit including the development of very large Circuits (sometimes colloquially known as mega-circuits). Some contributors to the online consultation suggested that this had blurred the relationship between Circuit and District, and also between Superintendent and District Chair.
100. We note that the ecumenical landscape is ever shifting. In some parts of our Connexion, ecumenical relationships continue to grow and deepen, both formally and informally, and with great vigour. In other parts of the Connexion, the landscape seems to be more barren. The oversight roles within the Church continue to develop. Inevitably the roles and responsibilities of a District Chair, or the expectations the Church lays upon those whom the Conference appoints to this ministry appear to some to be ever changing.
101. In addition there is for some at least a substantial shift in the perception of the role of the District Chair. For example, when asked about the changing role of a District Chair in the online survey question 9 (appendix 5), numerous correspondents expressed their opinion that less pastoral care and support was being offered by District Chairs, and that they were becoming less visible. Moreover, an oft-repeated claim is of the belief that the amount of time a Chair spends on connexional business is increasing – to the detriment of their role within the District.
102. This perception stands in stark contrast to the perceptions expressed by the Chairs themselves when questioned in early 2014. Here it is noteworthy that the majority see themselves as pastor (10 placing the role in first or second place), preacher (9 in first or second place), and strategic leader (8 in first or second). Equally it is worth reporting that in the same survey, most Chairs felt that they spent no more than 10% of their time on connexional business, and a similar amount on stationing (appendix 6).
103. In response to the questionnaire most Chairs indicated that their role has progressively changed in that they are working in a more collaborative ways. There was a feeling that the role involved dealing with more rapid change and complex issues than previously, which could be both energising and wearying.
104. Further change was anticipated, with regard to even more collaborative working, a more strategic role across a larger geographic area and a need for leaders who are creative, imaginative, inspiring and theologically literate.
105. Our research showed that Chairs have a variety of working environments. One quarter has a district office, all work partially from home, and travelling forms a significant part of many Chairs’ working routines. Like other presbyters, the nature of a Chair’s activities is very

diverse with no set working pattern. The role of a Chair can be a lonely one and support is important. Support comes from the Connexional Team including the Well-Being and Safeguarding Officers. The Ministerial Development Review (MDR) process also provides support. District support comes from an administrator/PA in half the Districts and many Chairs mentioned the support they receive from the deputy/assistant Chairs. Several responses indicated that there was no official support from the District.

106. The picture that has emerged is one of a group of people who are energised by diversity and the challenge of the role, and are seeking to find a balance between what is possible to do and what can practically be done.
107. The survey suggests that many Chairs feel that there is an awful lot they actually need to do themselves. We are not sure why this is the case. It seems to go against the idea of delegating particular tasks and sharing responsibility, and doing a few things and doing them well. Many Chairs listed things that they would like to do beyond what they are doing already. These included giving spiritual, biblical and theological leadership, and teaching and preaching more. There is a dissonance between these two sets of answers, Chairs want to spend more time building up the body of Christ but feel that there is little they can give up in order to make space to do it.
109. The consultation across the Connexion with regard to the way we should organise our church Larger than Circuit was inconclusive. It was more clear that the majority of people, whilst having a good relationship with their own Chair, felt that the role could be shaped differently to suit better the needs of the Church of the future.

Section 6 What are we looking for in the role of a District Chair?

110. In developing a snapshot of “What is a District Chair today?” we consulted with over 1500 people across the Connexion from District Chairs to 3 Generate, connexional leaders to the people in the pew. Unsurprisingly the picture is a complex one:
111. The majority of people believed that their Chair was doing a good job – but that often the job in reality was undoable! People want a spiritual and strategic leader but found the Chairs to be over committed to administration and church processes. Within the ordained there was a ground swell for more pastoral care (although individually many did see their Chair as a pastor).
112. People from all sections of our research wanted to ask questions of how much does the Chairs’ role enable the mission of God (and of the Church) to happen better. There was a strong cry for District Chairs to be passionate about God – and to speak about it!
113. When asked to consider how the role could be improved the major suggestions were: to reduce administration and increase support, to reduce connexional demands, to change the job description to enable Chairs to help solve problems and to make the role a more team focused approach. In the online survey 70% of respondents believed the role of District Chair to be vital or important whilst 25% declared them to be not important or unnecessary.
114. Interestingly the younger stream of 3 Generate when asked: “What do you think a District Chair does?” suggested: “Can make changes” – very few adults (including the Chairs) were so bold. The older stream suggested we should have District Youth Chairs.
115. It is clear that people in our church are looking for different things in the person living out the role of the District Chair. If we are to enable good leadership we believe it is important

that the Church should create a clear role description with achievable targets. The role should be defined rather than appointing a person and letting the role develop according to the gifts (or sometimes the whims) of the person inhabiting the role, in order to develop a strategic missional approach to District Leadership.

Section 7 Changes to the Districts will impact on District Leadership

116. If the model of the way we organise our Districts is to change then the pattern of leadership will also need to change to make it not only “do-able” but also to attract the people who will enable the mission of God on a larger map.
117. Chairs currently have many roles to fulfil, some of which we believe could be done more effectively either by one or more Connexional Officers / appointed specialists, freeing time for mission in the Districts.
118. Throughout our research there was a call from Circuits for more spiritual leadership and pastoral care, whilst many church leaders longed for Chairs to be more strategic and possibly be given more power to promote and develop the work of the Kingdom of God. These two, of course, are not exclusive but of them are limited by time restraints and the capabilities of individuals. Any change to the current model we believe should seek to free Chairs to do their roles well.
119. Increasingly as we consider leadership in a different model of District it seemed that we were being led to recommend a pattern where the work of the Chair was done by a team of people most of whom (if not all) would also have pastoral charge of a church community or at the very least a regular place where they would lead worship. This would have the added bonus of returning many gifted leaders into church communities and would help address the call for leaders to have a better understanding of what is happening at the grassroots.
120. This naturally leads us to suggest models of leadership based around Lead Chair and assistant Chair, with the Lead Chair having focus on strategic leadership and assistant Chairs providing pastoral care and spiritual leadership. We believe it would be right for the Lead Chair to be a Presbyter – we have heard the call by many of the people responding to our surveys to consider the merits of opening up the assistant Chair roles to Deacons and the laity. This needs further thought and work in relation to our ecclesiology and we seek advice from the Council.
121. Our research also suggests disquiet about our recruiting policies. We believe that further work should be done on the nurture, recruitment and selection process to ensure that strategic appointments are made that best suit the whole Connexion. In this we were drawn to the Brazilian model where Bishops (in their case) are elected, for five years, by the general Conference and then appointed to the regional Conference where they are most needed. The key being that Bishops are nurtured and directly stationed by the Conference, not recruited and selected by a connexional/district panel.

Section 8 Suggested Leadership model

122. Here we attempt to outline a model of District Leadership in a post larger than circuit structure which could be used with any of the models outlined above.
123. Our research and thinking leads us to offer a more collaborative model based on a core team of Lead Chairs – stationed strategically to serve best the mission of the Church,

working alongside locally appointed/agreed assistant Chairs with a focus on pastoral care of ministers and the building up of the Church spiritually to enable mission.

124. We suggest that serious further consideration be given to removing some roles from the District and these become Connexional Team based roles –serving the Districts as needed. These might include safeguarding and complaints and discipline.
125. In our model the Lead Chair would be a separated Chair (or a separated Chair connected to one “preaching house”). The Lead Chair would be Spiritual Leader of the district and a strategist – focused on enabling the people of God better to speak of God, appointed by the Conference through the stationing process and directly stationed to best serve the missional needs of the Church. The Lead Chair would be the district link between the Connexional Leaders Forum and the District. The Lead Chair would be responsible for stationing matching issues.
126. Working alongside the Lead Chair would be a number of (non-separated) assistant Chairs. The assistant Chairs would be appointed locally according to their gifts and the gifts needed. They would have pastoral charge of a church or number of churches and would be responsible for the pastoral care of a group of ministers in their locality. They would specialise in leading on one part of the district’s life, for example Candidates for ministry, probationers, oversight of district staff, or ecumenism. Assistant Chairs would be embedded locally but their workload would need to be adjusted and monitored to ensure this was not just another job on top of a full work load.
127. The Chairs would be expected to meet regularly to study the scriptures, pray and discuss the life and mission of the district, to hold together, before God, the pastoral care of the body of Christ -particularly those in active ministry. Assistant Chairs would be in a key position to help the Lead Chair reflect and act strategically across the district.
128. It might be possible to see (and thus enable) assistant Chairs as being in a training position – preparing to be stationed as a Lead Chair as and when necessary.
129. We believe this model of leadership would best serve the Larger than Circuit models one to four. Model five presents more problems which would lead us to suggest that all Chairs are non-separated – as there is likely to be more of them. Further work would need to be done on the appropriateness of assistant Chairs being Deacons or members of the laity.

Section 9 Finance

130. Some detailed work was carried out by the previous Larger than Circuit working party. (See paragraphs 60 to 62 explore ‘core costs’ of the Larger than Circuit Conference report, 2013.) We have looked into the financial implications of this work and have consulted with the Connexional Treasurer, Andrew Gibbs, and Head of Support Services, Nick Moore.
131. Unpacking the costs of a District and of the District Chair is difficult, however, we believe that the changes we recommend will not lead to savings (as outlined in the 2013 report) but should not cost any more than our current models.
132. We recognise that organisational change has cost implications and this would require further research including the cost of possible redundancies.
133. We believe that our suggested models would lead to more effective use of our resources.

Section 10 Further work

134. In order to bring our report to the Conference we are aware that we need to do further work on:
- Reducing the number of proposed models and thinking how the leadership might look in these models: we look to the Council for guidance in this.
 - We intend working alongside the Law and Polity Committee, Finance in terms of costing out our models and Faith and Order Committee.
 - As we have focused on Mission Shaped Districts we are aware that we have not given a lot of attention to the Ecumenical and Inter Faith aspects and will seek guidance on this.
 - We are aware that neither we nor previous working groups have ever defined what is a large Circuit - but believe this is not within our brief as this working group is about larger than circuit not specifically large Circuits.
 - Given that our leadership models encourage a Lead and assistant Chair model we would like to have further conversation with the London, South East and Wales Chairs to see how this worked (or did not work) in the past.
 - Gathering the learning from other working groups working across the Connexion.
135. Our research does not conclusively determine whether large Circuits, as they are now constituted, are the best vehicle for mission. We would recommend that the Conference directs further research in this area.
136. We believe further consideration needs to be given to the name of District Leadership. Chairman was of its time. Chair is disliked by many, whilst others in the Methodist Church would love to embrace the title Bishop although many others reject this out of hand. This is of course about title, but also has implications for the role and function of chairs. In addition our renewed commitment as a church to the Anglican Methodist Covenant requires us to do more work in this area.
137. We are aware of other work being carried out elsewhere in the Connexion that may influence our task, namely:
- Statistics for Mission Conference Report.
 - Mission in Britain and the World Mission Fund.
 - Focus on Evangelism.
 - Discipleship (Movement Shaped for Mission).
 - Fellowship groups and churches that use our buildings.
 - Belonging Together – Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).
 - The appropriateness of assistant Chairs being Deacons or members of the laity.

***RESOLUTION

12/1. The Council receives the report.

Appendix 1: The Working Party's Terms of Reference

1 35/2. The Conference adopted the proposal contained in sub-paragraph (a) of paragraph 85 of the report.

(a) The Conference should this year direct that a process be initiated whereby further explorations of the role and responsibilities both of the district and its Synod and of the district Chair are undertaken, and proposals developed for the patterns and structures which will within each particular context most effectively express the 'larger than circuit' aspects of connexional life.

(b) The process should be initially a two year process, with a report as to the various proposals being brought to the Conference of 2015.

(c) These explorations should initially each take place within and between the districts which have been identified as constituting a region for the purposes of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network.

35/3. The Conference directed each Synod to participate in the process referred to in Resolution 35/2 above, conferring both with the circuits in the district and with any other relevant districts including primarily those with which it forms a region for the purposes of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network. The Conference further directs each Synod to ensure that there is adequate opportunity for the participation in this process of children and young people in the district including by finding appropriate ways to consult with children and young people.

35/4. a) The Conference resolved to appoint a coordinating group as recommended in paragraph 97, to be responsible for taking forward the process connexionally and for reporting regularly to the Methodist Council which shall have oversight of the work.

35/5. The Conference gave general approval to the criteria outlined in paragraphs 104-106, as the basis upon which the explorations should proceed and against which proposals emerging from them might be considered by the Conference. It directed the coordinating group to begin its work by producing more detailed guidance as to specific issues to be addressed, for use by those involved in the process, along the lines of the material offered in Appendix 4.

Paragraphs 104-106 extracted from the Larger than Circuit Conference report (2013):

104. First, as was stressed above, the impetus for this task is 'Mapping the Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission', and this is the context in which any review should take place and by which it should be judged.

105. Then the working party provisionally identified at a relatively early stage some criteria which it felt would assist it in its own thinking. These seem to be reflected in and confirmed by the views that others involved have expressed, suggesting that the priorities in any review would be to look for 'larger than circuit' approaches which would:

- a. maintain a clear focus on serving local churches and circuits in their mission;*
- b. provide a professional and coherent provision for local churches and circuits;*
- c. prioritise relationships, connections and networks, rather than boundaries;*
- d. enable the connexion to be inter-connected effectively through good communications and networks.*

106. *The working party also engaged in some more specific thinking, based upon the 'Healthy Circuit' model, about what such a model might look like in a 'larger than circuit' context. This was offered to various groups during the formation of this report and was found to be of some value. Building upon that material the working party has worked on a more detailed paper designed to offer guidance as to how the task of addressing the questions raised by this report could be approached. This can be found in Appendix 4 below. It will be seen that the questions focus upon the criteria of:*

- *being shaped for mission, and supporting mission and missional teams;*
- *inspiring discipleship;*
- *working in partnership.*

Appendix 2: Reviewing the role of District Chairs (Larger than Circuit), Methodist Council report (January, 2014)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The 2013 Conference (Resolution 35/9) appointed a group to review the recent developments in the role of District Chair with particular reference to personal and collegiate leadership exercised connexionally. The Conference authorised the Methodist Council to approve more detailed terms of reference for the group's work. This report seeks to give clear Terms of Reference for the working party.

2. Terms of Reference

- 2.1 The group will present to the Conference a snapshot of "What is a District Chair today" referencing how it has changed since the 2006 report "What is a District Chair" with particular reference to changes in personal, corporate and collegiate leadership.
- 2.2 In conjunction with the on-going review of the CLF the group will reflect and report on the purpose and effectiveness of the Chairs' meeting and the Connexional Leaders' Forum (CLF) – with particular reference to what is distinctive about each and how the role of lay leadership is exercised within the CLF.
- 2.3 The group will engage in some fresh, creative, prophetic, theologically informed thinking on what "District" (or larger than Circuit) Leadership could look like in the future. In light of this thinking, and taking into account the work of the Larger than Circuit Coordinating group and the various Conference reports that relate to leadership and oversight, the working party will seek to present suggested models of leadership.
- 2.4 The group will consult across the Connexion to ensure a wide range of perspectives and understandings are heard.

3. Clarity of Definition

- 3.1 The group will give particular reference to changes in personal, corporate and collegiate leadership.

For the purpose of this work we define Personal Leadership = believing that God has called you to do this in line with your gifting, passion and personality. Corporate = (Connexional) as laid down by the Methodist Constitution, Conference and Connexional Leadership Collegiate = (Collaborative) hearing the voices of those you lead with and leading from that gathered perspective

4. Reporting

- 4.1 The group will bring an interim report reflecting the findings of 2.1 and 2.2 to the Conference of 2015. A final report will be made to the Conference (reflecting 2.3 and 2.4) after the coordinating group has undertaken its work and made its own report.

Appendix 3 : the Larger than Circuit working party members

The Revd Loraine N Mellor (Convener)
Miss Kathleen Burrell

The Revd Rodney Hill
Mr Michael J Noble
The Revd Dr John K Nyota
The Revd Carla S Quenet (nee Hall)

The Revd D Paul Wood
The Revd Olufemi R W Cole-Njie *resigned*

The Revd David Hinchliffe
The Revd Peter Holwell *replacement*
Mrs Charlotte Osborn
Mr David Ridley

Appendix 4: Tool kit questions

Question 1 - What might continue to be gained by having something 'Larger than Circuit'

Question 2 - What might be lost if there was nothing 'Larger than Circuit' except for the Connexional Team and the Conference?

Question 3 - If there were to be nothing between Circuits and the Conference, how might the current functions of the Districts be carried out? (See the list of current functions of the District in appendix 4)

Question 4 - What might be the necessary functions of a 'Larger than Circuit' entity or entities?

Question 5 - What might be lost by having a smaller number of 'Larger than Circuit' groupings (currently Districts) than at present?

Question 6 - What might the relationship be between larger Circuits and 'Larger than Circuit' entities or smaller Circuits and 'Larger than Circuit' entities?

Question 7 - How might 'Larger than Circuit' be undertaken differently and/or more effectively than now?

Question 8 - How might 'Larger than Circuit' be undertaken more cost effectively than now?

Question 9 - Other comments and feedback

Appendix 5: Online survey questions

Question 1 - How would you define yourself?

Question 2 - What District are you in?

Question3 - What is the name of your District Chair?

Question 4 - When asked have you had any interaction with your District Chair in the last 12 months?

Of those who responded “yes” to question 4 we asked

Question 5 - In what capacity was this?

Question 6 - Highlight the 3 most important skills you would hope for from a District Chair

Question7 (i) - How good is your District Chair at offering Pastoral Care?

Question7 (ii) - How good is your District Chair at offering Spiritual Leadership?

Question7 (iii) - How good is your District Chair at offering Strategic Leadership?

Question 8 - How important do you feel the role of District Chair is in the Methodist Church?

Question 9 - If you were to change the role of District Chair how would they operate?

If you were to change the role of District Chair how would they operate?

Appendix 6: District Chairs' questionnaire

Question 1 - How long have you been a District Chair?

Question 2 - Name (Optional) in case we want to ask you anything in follow up

Question 3 - Rank the following according to your understand of the gifts God has given you.
(Ranking as 1 your top gifting)

Communicator

Evangelist

Facilitator / Enabler

Line Manager

Missioner

Pastor

Preacher

Strategic Leader

Teacher

Trainer

Other (please specify)

Question 4 - Please list the things you attend but don't lead: (please state who leads them)

Question 5 - Please list the things you feel obliged to do:

Question 6 - In percentage term where do you typically perform your work?

In the district office (office & meetings held at office)

In my home office (working on tasks & meetings)

At Methodist Church House

Travelling

In church

In meetings elsewhere

Other? (please state)

Question 7- Acknowledging that the role of District Chair varies incredibly from month to month, on average, in percentage terms, how much of your time do you spend on:

Administration	
Civic/Community events	
Crisis Management, Complaints and Discipline	
Connexional Meetings	
District Meetings	
Ecumenical Events	
Evangelist (Being a)	
Line Management of District Staff	
Pastoral Visits	
Personal and Professional Development (inc Retreats etc)	
Safeguarding Issues	
Stationing	
Teaching	
Training	
Trouble Shooting	
Preparing and leading Worship	
Other (please specify)	

For the purpose of the next question please define

Personal Leadership = you believe God has called you to do this in line with your gifting, passion and personality.

Appendix 7: Conference reports and other materials referred to by the Larger than Circuit working party

From Anecdote to Evidence: findings from the Church Growth research programme, Church of England, 2011-2013

Called to Love and Praise - Conference Statement 1999

Central Services Budget, Conference 2014

The Challenge of the Covenant: Uniting in Mission and Holiness, Conference 2014

Circuits Working in Federation a paper by Matthew Reed (DDE in Southampton District), 2009

Constitutional Practice and Discipline

Contemporary Methodism: a discipleship movement shaped for mission, the General Secretary's Conference report, 2011

Development of Methodism in Scotland Report from the Scotland District Development Team 2011

District Allocations, Conference 2013

Episkope and Episcopacy, Conference 2002

Faith and Order statement, volume 2, part 1

Fruitful Field report, Conference 2011

General Secretary's report to the Conference 2007, 2011, 2013 and 2014

Healthy 'Bigger than Circuit'

Healthy Circuit Handbook

A Hub for Rural Mission a paper by Rod Hill (DDE in Liverpool district)

Larger than Circuit, Conference Report, 2013

Larger than Circuit working party notes and reports, 2011-2013

Leading and Presiding: Developing the Presidency of the Conference, 2010

Learning from Mapping the Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission for larger than circuits

Larger than Circuit report, Conference 2013

The Methodist Church Larger than Circuit Coordinating Group, some personal reflections and possible models – a think piece, Michael Noble

Mapping the Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission: Districts, Chairs & Regions notes from CLF 2010

Mapping the Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission Methodist Council, October 2006

Methodist Council General Report to the Conference, 2006

Ministry of the People of God (1988)

Mission Shaped Districts

Reflections on the PCT in Cumbria prepared as part of *Mapping the Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission* process in the Cumbria district, 2009

Report of the North West Districts Review Group, Conference 2011

Mapping the Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission: a retrospective survey of gains – snapshot report, February, 2014

Report of the circuit Regrouping Review Day, Abergavenny, October 2013

Report of the North West Districts Review Group Report to Methodist Conference 2011

Statistics for Mission (triennial and 10 years), Conference 2014

Synod and District current CPD data

Talking to God, Acting of God: report of the training Institutions review group, Conference 2007

Various reports from circuits and districts

What is a District Chair? Report to Methodist Conference 2006

What is a superintendent?

Report to 4 Yorkshire Districts Meeting September 2011

Review of the Yorkshire Dioceses the Dioceses Commission 2010

UK Church attendance and experience segregation Tear Fund, 2006

What might a Yorkshire Plus 'LTC' region look like?

What sort of Bishop? – Models of episcopacy and British Methodism, Conference 2006

What is Synod for? Extracts of the Standing Orders from CPD, Kathy Burrell

JIC reports

Episkope and Episcopacy and our churches in covenant, JIC report

Statement and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order, volume two, 1984-2000, part one

Behold the servants of the Lord: assessing ten years of living in covenant, 2003

Moving forward in covenant: Interim Report (2011) of the Joint Implementation Commission, Phase 2 under the Covenant between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England, 2011

The Challenge of the Covenant: uniting in Mission and Holiness, the Second Quinquennial Report (2013) of the Joint Implementation Commission, under the Covenant between The Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England, 2013

Maps, diagrams and other images

Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network, Region Map, 2014

A series of maps that compared Methodist district boundaries.

Methodist training regions, Methodist stationing regions. Church of England Dioceses, Baptist Union Associations, United Reformed Church Synods, Catholic Dioceses in England and Wales