

Priorities Perspective

Tracing the line of God's leading via the Priorities

Our Calling

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

This calling is rooted in an experience of God's grace and leads to a deeply held conviction about what we must do to respond to this grace. Following in the footsteps of the early church, it challenges us to radical action and makes us bold in our worship; learning and caring; service; and evangelism.

[2] Above all our calling brings passion. As we are touched by God's grace and empowered by his Holy Spirit we are emboldened to stand firm in our faith, and continually seek to witness its power in our lives.

Priorities

[3] *"To proclaim and affirm its conviction of God's love in Christ, for us and for all the world; and renew confidence in God's presence and action in the world and in the Church...."*

[4] This priority draws us to God in worship and prayer, and commits us to reach out into the world by speaking of him in ways that make sense, and by working for justice, especially among the most vulnerable.

[5] Putting these priorities into practice, and doing this with passion and integrity is the responsibility of the Methodist Connexion as a whole. Churches, Circuits, and Districts need inspiration and support to catch this new vision. They also need practical help in this

task by an efficient Connexional Team which can provide cohesion; a unified voice, and practical services which match a 21st century approach.

Team Focus

[6] Team Focus 2005-2008 seeks the outcome of *"a more flexible and focused Connexional Team dedicated to modelling and advocating allegiance to the Priorities, to innovation and to good practice... the Team will challenge the wider church to courageous actions in pursuit of the Priorities, and will look to be similarly challenged in return...."*

The Reconfigured Team

[7] To achieve the outcome in *Team Focus* the various elements of the *Priorities* are embedded in the proposed reconfigured Connexional Team. Some examples are listed below, using the five areas marked for 'particular attention' in *Priorities*. These elements are not to be seen as existing in the new Team in separate 'boxes', rather they run right across the Team, sometimes surfacing in overt forms but present everywhere.

[8] While the reconfiguration of the Team is a significant development, requiring a major shift in its culture, the full impact of the *Priorities* will only be felt when they are thoroughly embedded throughout the whole

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Connexion. Therefore the role of the reconfigured Team in its interaction with the wider Church, to challenge and to be challenged, is crucial to realising this vision.

God-centred worship and prayer

^[9] Equipping and supporting the Churches with Presbyters, Deacons, and Lay Workers is a major focus, and will continue to require significant resources. The reconfigured Team includes a *Learning and Ministries* cluster which brings together the formation work and support work of Presbyters, Deacons, Local Preachers, and the work of Faith and Order.

Community development and action for justice - in Britain and worldwide

^[10] This priority has high prominence in the reconfigured Team. The new Team seeks to work in an effective and coordinated way by bringing together within one cluster the work of *evangelism and spirituality, public issues, international mission relationships, media, and communications*. This will enable advocacy work both in the wider world, and within the Connexion to be focused and coordinated. It holds *international mission relationships* within the same context to strengthen an integrated approach. In addition specific time bound projects can be initiated to pursue particular issues relating to the Priorities like developing confidence in evangelism.

Confidence in evangelism

^[11] *Evangelism and spirituality* is integrated into the *Christian Communication and Advocacy* cluster to strengthen its work and interaction with *communications* and *media*. Within the new Team, this integrated approach would better enable innovative work in evangelism, perhaps taking advantage, for example, of released reserves.

Fresh ways of being Church

^[12] Within the reconfigured Team is a substantial *Projects* cluster. Projects consist of time bound pieces of work which enable innovative approaches relating to the Priorities, or to finish off work to which the Team is already committed. By their very nature fresh ways of being church lends themselves to this approach.

Nurturing a people-centred and flexible culture

^[13] The new culture will emerge as attitudes and behaviour start to remould in line with the new Priorities, though inevitably this will take some time both for the Team and the wider church. The reconfigured Team aims to be more integrated in structure and style and better enabled to demonstrate these values. One example of a people centred and flexible approach would be the simplified process for property approval, emphasising the mission potential of a project but maximising local discretion and streamlining the paperwork.

The transition period to the reconfigured Team will in itself be a challenging opportunity to demonstrate this aspect to the Priorities, and will be shaped both by courageous leadership, and dedicated work of specialist staff handling the transition process.