

# District and Circuit Perspective

## How will the proposals for a reconfigured Team affect the districts and circuits?

Such a question is not based on selfish self-preservation but on the legitimate concern that the districts and circuits may be deflected in their mission to fulfil the *Priorities* by unrealistic burdens being placed upon them as a result of a reconfigured Team.

<sup>[2]</sup> Reconfiguring the Team is about releasing and redirecting our God-given and precious resources across the Connexion. The Team Focus process is about working alongside districts and circuits in order to make real the imperatives that underpin *Our Calling* and *Priorities for the Methodist Church*.

<sup>[3]</sup> So, in what ways might a newly configured Team aid the districts and circuits in their all-important task to live out their discipleship in worship and mission?

### **Professional Advice & Guidance**

<sup>[4]</sup> Many districts are experiencing problems in identifying knowledgeable people to help with the minefield of Lay Employment issues and legislation. It is proposed that in the new way of working the current Personnel office be reconfigured to include dedicated support for circuits and districts in the whole process of the recruitment and employment of lay employees. This aspect will be charged to the respective circuits or districts in much the same way that some districts and circuits are (or are considering) buying in services from local solicitors or employment agencies.

### **Property & Grants**

<sup>[5]</sup> Our current system in relation to property and grants is overburdened and at times

overly bureaucratic. It is proposed that a new system builds on the October Council's agreement for an integrated grant-making process and a new governance structure for the main Restricted Funds. In a typical case, the District's role in assessing an application would be focused on questions about its mission potential not its technical detail. Where the district does also have to consider technical matters, this work will not be repeated by Team staff.

### **Dedicated Help Desk**

<sup>[6]</sup> District and circuit life is varied and at times complicated. There are many issues that arise that are not readily or easily resolved within the experience or expertise of the circuit or district. The proposed Help Desk will seek to work for churches, circuits and districts and the general public in offering a single point of access service for information. However, this is not a 'one size fits all' solution, nor is it implying that the 'Team knows best.' It is simply a strategy to co-ordinate valuable knowledge and experience in an easily accessible means and location.

### **Partnership and Collaboration**

<sup>[7]</sup> Fundamental to the success of the *Priorities* is that all stakeholders seek to work connexionally, in partnership and collaboration throughout the Connexion and beyond. At all times the Team will seek to work alongside districts and circuits in resourcing them to fulfil their mission.

<sup>[8]</sup> The main driving force behind the Team Focus process has been a desire to fulfil the

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key objectives of the *Priorities*. It is hoped that the proposals for a reconfigured Team will contribute towards equipping the whole Methodist Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

[9] At the heart of what we seek to do as a Church is to enable people to encounter God. Methodism has a rich heritage of social justice and scriptural holiness—the Spirit that warmed Wesley’s heart is the same Spirit that prompts and goads us today. Team Focus is but one component in a Church-wide strategy to enable us to fulfil our calling in Christ.

**Local Support for Staff**

[10] Understandably, the way ahead is not easy and there will be painful decisions, particularly in relation to staffing. In accordance with the Conference decision to work within a constrained budget, it is proposed that the new Team will be reduced from approximately 140 staff as at present to around 80 to 90 staff in 2008. The pain of this will be felt across the Connexion, not least within the districts, circuits and local churches where many Team staff are also worshippers, members and office-holders. During this transitional period and beyond, it is essential that we support and uphold each other.

**Opportunity and Challenge**

[11] The Team Focus process has afforded the Connexion an opportunity and a challenge to review and renew the Connexional Team. A good example of this challenge is reflected in the key questions that the Filter Panels addressed in relation to the tasks and work-streams carried out by the current Team:

*Is this work that the Methodist Church should be doing?*

*If yes, then what contribution can the Team best make?*

The results of these questions are contained in the Core Report and the proposals before Council. It is hoped that districts, circuits, and local churches will agree with much (if not all) of what is proposed for a reconfigured Team.