

Taking forward Larger than Circuit resolutions

Contact Name and Details	The Revd Canon Gareth J Powell, Secretary of the Conference SoC@methodistchurch.org.uk
Status of Paper	For information and decision
Resolutions	<i>See end of report.</i>
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	Section 2 – The Council may wish to propose further alternative titles to ‘District Chair’

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	This paper is intended to update the Council on progress made regarding specific recommendations of the Larger than Circuit Coordinating Group that were adopted as resolutions by the 2016 Conference.
Background Context and Relevant Documents	<i>Larger than Circuit</i> report to the 2016 Conference (Report 15) <i>Larger than Circuit: Consultation, Methodology and Findings</i> – available from the Conference Office (conferenceoffice@methodistchurch.org.uk) MC/11/52 – <i>The Title of District Chair</i> (2011) – see Appendix I <i>What is a District Chair?</i> (2006)

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	Possible (in relation to the appointment process and/or title of District Chairs and the establishment of a District Commission)
Financial	Possible, as the process of identification, encouragement and mentoring proposed in Section 4 would have cost implications The convening of District Commissions (which will have financial implications) has already been agreed by the 2016 Conference – however, different models will incur different costs
Personnel	Possible, if changes are agreed to the selection and appointment process for District Chairs
Wider Connexional	Possible, with regard to the proposals for the District Commission process
External (eg ecumenical)	Possible, with regard to the role of the District Chair and ecumenical factors to be taken into account in the District Commission process

1. Introduction

This paper builds upon the work behind the report of the Larger than Circuit Coordinating Group to the 2016 Conference and is intended to update the Council on progress made regarding specific recommendations of that report that were adopted as resolutions. Quotations, unless otherwise stated, are from the *Larger than Circuit* report to the 2016 Conference (henceforth 'the report').

2. Resolution 15/2

2.1 The 2016 Conference adopted Resolution 15/2 [Daily Record 6/20]:

15/2. (Recommendation 1) The Conference directs that the Secretary of the Conference oversees a review of:

- a. the use of District Chairs to chair or serve on working groups appointed by the Council/Conference;
- b. the roles performed by the District Chair (and identify the roles that might be more appropriately carried out by the Connexional Team thereby allowing District Chairs further to exercise spiritual leadership); and
- c. the title 'District Chair', and whether an alternative title would be more appropriate; and bring recommendations to the Conference as soon as possible.

The use and roles of District Chairs (Resolutions 15/2a and b)

2.2 The background to Resolution 15/2 can be found in full in the report. In summary, following consultation with District Chairs and others, the Coordinating Group noted the following factors and perceptions that lie behind recommendations a and b (paras. 12-18):

- While very little has changed in terms of Standing Orders, the demands of the role of District Chair have increased.
- District Chairs employ a variety of leadership styles according to the situations in which they find themselves, and these increasingly varied patterns of leadership make demands upon the Chairs' time and energy.
- Consultation responses suggested that "what the Methodist Church wants from its District Chairs is spiritual leadership, strategic development and pastoral care" (para. 16). In addition to the resolution above, Chairs were encouraged "to review their diary commitments and hear the call from the church to prioritise preaching and leading worship" (para. 18).
- The Coordinating Group queried whether asking District Chairs to chair and/or serve on connexional working parties is "in line with the priorities of the Conference and whether this is best use of significant spiritual leaders in the church" (para. 15).

2.3 In preparing this report, we have attempted to address the question of whether the use of District Chairs to serve on connexional committees and other groups is in line with the priorities of the Conference and the best use of significant spiritual leaders in the Church. *What is a District Chair?* (2006) noted that:

"... in exercising the oversight and responsibilities [within the District], a District Chair is not just relating to the particular context of the District to which she or he is appointed, but also to the wider context of the whole connexion... the role of Chairs in the wider Connexion has become increasingly important. Chairs are not so much Chairs of a particular District, in the sense of only belonging to the District and only having

authority and responsibility in it. Rather they are Chairs appointed by the Conference for a particular District, in the sense of belonging to the whole Connexion through the Conference and as such being assigned particular functions and responsibilities in the affairs of the Connexion beyond the District because of the particular knowledge and experience they have by virtue of their office” (para. 27).

Chairs are required to act “as representative of the Conference and Connexion within the District” and “to represent the District in the Conference” (Ibid., paras. 28-29). The report acknowledges that “this dual role of the Chair in the District and the wider Connexion” may cause the Chair to feel “unable to fulfil either responsibility effectively” and that she/he “may be pulled in two directions, not just by competing demands on time from the District and the wider connexion but by the expectations and fantasies which people in one sphere of his or her responsibilities have of the other sphere.” It suggests that “it is important to find ways in which there can be a proper exercise of the shared nature of oversight as a means of seeking to prevent this” (Ibid., para. 33).

- 2.4 The Coordinating Group stated its belief “that the District’s primary function is to provide the link between the Conference and the Circuits” (para. 48). In light of the importance of this link in our connexional Church and the reflections above, this report recommends that it is both beneficial and appropriate for District Chairs to take up roles in the broader life of the Connexion, as this strengthens the dialogue between Circuits, Districts and the wider Church and informs the dual representative roles outlined in *What is a District Chair?*
- 2.5 It is worth noting that the Chairs’ Meeting has a mechanism (one Chair through whom requests must be made for Chairs to serve on working groups etc) to ensure equitable division of responsibility, as it is necessary and appropriate to ensure that no individual Chair is overloaded with connexional responsibilities. However, it is also important to ensure authentic and continuous dialogue between the Districts and the life of the wider Church, and so it is not proposed that the Council recommends to the Conference a change to the use of District Chairs to serve on working groups and other connexional bodies.
- 2.6 It is, as noted above, vital to be careful to watch over one another and not to overburden District Chairs, given the nature and demands of their role. The Coordinating Group encouraged Districts to “explore increasing the numbers of those involved in leadership of the District, so that District Chairs (who are selected for their particular gifting), are able to lead the District alongside others who have complementary gifts, for a strategic missional approach to be developed (with reference to SO 962)” (para. 30). In addition, Districts are encouraged to ensure the provision of high-quality administrative support for District Chairs, as this is another area that has been shown to absorb a high proportion of Chairs’ time and energy.

The title ‘District Chair’ (Resolution 15/2c)

- 2.7 Regarding the title ‘District Chair’ (Resolution 15/2c), a recommendation was made to the Methodist Council in 2011 to move from ‘District Chair’ (or ‘Chair of District’) to ‘District Superintendent’ (see MC/11/52, which provides a helpful history of the title ‘District Chair’ and various alternative titles – see Appendix I). The Council agreed to delay any consideration of the recommendation until the Regrouping for Mission process was further advanced [Minute 11.2.35].
- 2.8 In light of Resolution 15/2c, and the long running question of the use of the title ‘District Chair’ the Council must now move to reach a conclusion on this matter. At the nub of this issue is the question whether ‘District Chair’ best reflects the prime duty of a District Chair “to further the work of God in the District... being especially diligent to be a pastor to the ministers and

probationers and to lead all the people of the District in the work of preaching and worship, evangelism, pastoral care, teaching and administration” (SO 424(1))?

- 2.9 As the Council will see from Appendix I this issue has been extensively explored over a period of some years. It is hard to see that anything new can be added to this exploration. Equally, whilst there has been a degree of interest in exploring the question, there has been some reluctance to reach a conclusion one way or the other. So the Council is now faced with a choice of either drawing a line under the exploration and retaining the status quo, or revisiting the 2011 report and considering afresh the recommendation to a change of title from District Chair (or Chair of District) to District Superintendent.
- 2.10 In considering a change the Council will want to give thought to how best to consult with which bodies. To put it rather more sharply, does the Council wish to direct the energy of the wider connexion into consideration of this matter, recognising that any change would require some degree of consultation followed by changes to Standing Orders and a range of publications? To test the mind of the Council, two resolutions are presented below.

3. Resolutions 15/3 and 15/6

- 3.1 The 2016 Conference adopted Resolution 15/3 [Daily Record 6/20]:

15/3. (Recommendation 2) The Conference directs that a process of discernment is facilitated by the Methodist Council to identify and nurture potential leaders in the church; such a process would enable potential leaders to be guided to the most suitable of the wide variety of leadership roles that exist in the church.

- 3.2 The Council is asked to note that a small group is currently attempting to draw together and (where appropriate) develop various interrelated areas of work involving leadership and vocational exploration, including:

1. Ministry in the Methodist Church [Faith and Order Committee]
2. Leadership and vocation [Methodist Council]
3. Probationer studies and the first five years in ministry [Ministries Committee]
4. Continuing Development in Ministry [Ministries Committee]
5. Sabbaticals [Ministries Committee]
6. Structured supervision [PCRIG]
7. Church and circuit steward training [Discipleship and Ministries]

- 3.3 The Council is asked to note that, in the interests of cohesion, this small group will take forward work on Recommendation 15/3 regarding the identification and nurturing of potential leaders in the Church (which is addressed in part by the recommendations regarding discernment and selection made in Section 4 of this report). This group will also take forward work on **Resolution 15/6** adopted by the 2016 Conference [Daily Record 6/20]:

15/6. (Recommendation 5) The Conference directs that training for leadership development of District Chairs be produced to cover the issues raised in paragraphs 28-41, and provided to existing and future District Chairs, and that this is overseen by the Secretary of the Conference.

4. Resolution 15/4

- 4.1 The 2016 Conference adopted Resolution 15/4 [Daily Record 6/20]:

15/4. (Recommendation 3) The Conference directs the Secretary of the Conference to review the processes for the selection of District Chairs with the aim of increasing gender and ethnic diversity among the District Chairs.

- 4.2 Currently, where a new appointment is to be made, a nomination committee is appointed in the last year but one of the current Chair's term. The committee consists of the members of a panel appointed by the Synod, together with five persons chosen by the Secretary of the Conference from a panel appointed annually by the Conference. These five persons should not be members or stationed within the District and the committee should be chaired by the President, the Vice-President, an ex-President or an ex-Vice-President (SO 421A).
- 4.3 The District Policy Committee prepares a district statement of needs and opportunities and a person specification indicating the qualities required of the person to be appointed. The current Chair is consulted as well as other church leaders as judged appropriate by the Policy Committee. The statement and person specification are sent to the Secretary of the Conference for circulation to the nomination committee (in some instances, the responsibilities appointed to the Secretary of the Conference by Standing Orders are delegated to the Assistant Secretary). The district members of the nomination committee may meet the current Chair to gain a better understanding of the role (SO 423).
- 4.4 The vacancy should be widely advertised connexionally and within the District (by the Synod Secretary). The dates when the nomination committee is to meet and the means by which a nomination or expression of interest may be made or shown are published. Nominations or expressions of interest are made on a standard application form obtained from the Secretary of the Conference, which is supplied along with a copy of the district statement and person specification. In practice, the deadline for nominations/expressions of interest has on occasion been extended following a direct approach to District Chairs informing them of the advert and asking them to circulate details.
- 4.5 For each candidate, the Secretary of the Conference obtains:
- a. A statement of personal information;
 - b. A reference from the candidate's District Chair;
 - c. A reference from the candidate's circuit stewards or other appropriate person where the candidate is not in a circuit appointment.
- 4.6 The nomination committee proceeds to a process of discernment through shortlisting and interviewing to a point where it is able to bring a recommendation to the District Policy Committee. Prior to the shortlisting meeting, the nomination committee is sent a shortlisting pack and the shortlisting process is agreed at the start of the meeting.
- 4.7 The current process, as set down in Standing Orders and summarised above, does not readily lead to opportunities for the Church to encourage individual presbyters over a period of time to consider a possible calling to appointment as a District Chair in light of their own vocational discernment and the needs of the wider Church. The Coordinating Group "believes that further work should be done towards the nurture, recruitment and selection process of District Chairs in order to ensure that strategic appointments are made that best suit the whole Connexion, taking into consideration that the role has changed considerably in recent times, and that there are a variety of differing types of leadership roles in the Methodist Church" (para. 20).
- 4.8 It is proposed that it would be helpful to create such opportunities in part through a mentoring programme (over a period of one to two years) that would create space for individuals to be supported in exploring questions of leadership, vocation and the needs of the Church. It should be acknowledged that this discernment process may well lead to the conclusion that the individual is not suited to the duties of a District Chair, and that he/she could share more fully in the ministry of the Methodist Church in another role.

- 4.9 This mentoring programme, it is envisaged, would lead to the identification of a pool of people suited to and equipped for the role of a District Chair (as described in para. 26 of the *Larger than Circuit* report). It would also allow the wider Church to recognise where there is a need for greater diversity and to create opportunities for support and encouragement accordingly (eg in response to the fact, as outlined in para. 23, that the current number of District Chairs who are female and/or from ethnic minority backgrounds does not reflect the profile of the Methodist Church or wider society). It is suggested that shortlists of candidates could then be drawn from this 'pool' when a vacancy arises.
- 4.10 This mentoring programme would differ in significant ways from the Church of England's Strategic Leadership Development Programme (increasingly integrated within the *Renewal & Reform* programme). Although sharing some commonalities, the primary focus of the proposed mentoring programme would be an ongoing process of discernment resourced from within the Church, and drawing to a lesser degree on secular management expertise. The Church of England is similarly working to improve the diversity of its senior leaders through its *Turn Up The Volume* programme.
- 4.11 These proposals cannot be held in isolation from Resolution 15/6 and work being undertaken around vocation and training for future District Chairs.
- 4.12 In addition, there are clear links with Resolution 15/5, "that the Stationing Committee gives consideration to the direct stationing of District Chairs." This conversation will begin at the meeting of the Stationing Committee that will take place the week after the January Council, in light of the discussions and decisions of the Council. The creation of a programme of training and mentoring that would lead to a pool of suitable candidates is in harmony with the suggestions in paras. 25-27 of the report for the direct stationing of District Chairs.
- 4.13 It may be of interest to note that the Arthur Rank Centre has developed a programme entitled "Germinate Leadership" (www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/mission-and-ministry/clirc) – a programme that "helps lay and ordained leaders from all denominations to develop creative, entrepreneurial skills for effective rural church leadership." Germinate Leadership consists of "a subsidised 18 month programme which includes 360 degree appraisal, a residential event, input and peer days, mentoring and work shadowing" and "explores particular areas of expertise such as envisioning, strategic development, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, group dynamics and team building." Participants complete a learning portfolio and a leadership development plan which form the basis for a Professional Dialogue with two external leaders at the programme's conclusion. After the programme, participants are invited to stay in touch through a network and an annual lecture. Although designed for a specific context, some of the principles of the programme may be transferrable.
- 4.14 To enable further work on this concept to take place the Council is invited to direct the Connexional Team to develop a programme of identification, encouragement and mentoring for potential candidates for appointment as a District Chair, bearing in mind the need to increase gender and ethnic diversity among the District Chairs. The Team would then bring a further report with detailed proposals to the Council no later than April 2018.**

5. Resolutions 15/7 and 15/8

- 5.1 The 2016 Conference adopted Resolutions 15/7 and 15/8 [Daily Record 7/13/1 and 7/13/2]:

15/7. (Recommendation 6) The Conference directs that:

- (a) At the times specified below, the Secretary of the Synod in consultation with the Secretary of the Conference shall convene a District Commission, jointly appointed by the District and the

Conference, to oversee and undertake a thorough review of the life of the District, set in the wider regional, connexional and ecumenical context.

(b) A review shall take place:

- (i) At a time which will allow the outcome of the review to inform the work of the Chairs Nomination Panel when a new Chair is sought or the present Chair is exploring the possibility with the District of a reinvitation; and
- (ii) At any other time when a District or group of Districts wants to engage in the process of reflection or review.

15/8. (Recommendation 7) The Conference directs the Council to bring a process for implementing the creation of a District Commission, and the nomination of those to be appointed by the Conference as District Commissioners to the 2017 Conference.

5.2 The Conference resolved that Resolution 15/7 would take effect from 1 September 2017 [Daily Record 8/42/2].

5.3 This recommendation was made in response to the suggestion that “present structures militate towards self-perpetuation [and] it is not clear how either District appointments, or indeed the life of the District, are required to reflect on the wider priorities of the Methodist Church connexionally, or regionally” (*Larger than Circuit: Consultation, Methodology and Findings*, p. 39). The report proposed that a more “robust, connexionally-engaged and connexionally-consistent, process of discernment” was needed to allow Districts to engage with opportunities for review with confidence and imagination (para. 43).

5.4 Questions and areas for reflection regarding the life of the District, region (including neighbouring Districts) and wider Connexion that could form the basis of the work of a District Commission are given in Appendix XI of *Larger than Circuit: Consultation, Methodology and Findings*.

5.5 Some district Synods have already adopted resolutions to encourage and resource Circuits and Local Churches to carry out a similar review process with regard to their finances, property and policy and mission statements. In the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District, Circuits and Local Churches are invited to avail themselves of a small team of people appointed to assist in this review process.

5.6 It is hoped that a small group with knowledge of these existing processes will bring proposals to the April meeting of the Council as to how the questions outlined in Appendix XI of *Larger than Circuit: Consultation, Methodology and Findings* might be addressed, including:

- A proposed timeline for the District Commission process;
- Suggested ways of addressing the proposed questions (eg materials to be gathered, suggested consultation partners);
- The roles of the Secretary of the Synod and the Secretary of the Conference;
- Cost implications;
- Proposed changes to Standing Orders.

5.7 Should it prove possible to complete this work within the timescale envisaged by the 2016 Conference, proposed nominations for appointment by the 2017 Conference as District Commissioners will be brought to the April meeting of the Council.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

11/1. The Council receives the report.

11/2. The Council recommends to the Conference that no further consideration be undertaken on the title of District Chair.

Or

11/3. The Council directs the Connexional Team to;

- a) identify a suitable process of consultation on a change in the title of District Chair (or Chair of District) to District Superintendent.**
- b) consider what changes would be necessary to bring about the change and on what timescale.**

The Council further directs the Team to make a report to the Council on this matter no later than October 2018.

11/4. The Council directs the Connexional Team to develop, for detailed consideration by the Council, a programme of identification, encouragement and mentoring for potential candidates for appointment as a District Chair, bearing in mind the need to increase gender and ethnic diversity among the District Chairs,

APPENDIX I – MC/11/52 – THE TITLE OF DISTRICT CHAIR

Basic Information

Contact Name and Details	Brian E Beck Ken Howcroft
Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Discussion and Decision
Draft Resolution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council recommends in principle to the Conference of 2011 the change of title from District Chair (or Chair of the District) to District Superintendent 2. The Council directs that a report be presented in its name to the Conference in the light of its decision and comments made in its debate.
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Reject the proposed change (b) Accept the recommendation, but delay presenting it to the Conference until the “Regrouping for Mission” review is further advanced (c) Delay any consideration of the recommendation until the “Regrouping for Mission” review is further advanced

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	The Working Party on the roles of the President and Vice-President’s response to the Council’s direction that it make recommendations about the title “District Chair”
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey of history • Changing context • Review of alternatives • Recommendation
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	As noted in paragraphs 1 and 2
Consultations	

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	Extensive amendment to the text of CPD will be required if the principle is accepted, before the recommendation can be implemented
Faith and Order	
Financial	
Personnel	
Legal	
Wider Connexional	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	
Risk	

THE TITLE OF DISTRICT CHAIR

A report to the Methodist Council

1. In 2009 the Methodist Council requested the working party on the roles of President and Vice-President to consider the title of District Chair. This report looks at alternatives put forward to date and offers a suggestion.
2. The question has been considered on previous occasions. There was a brief report by the connexional General Purposes Committee in 1989 (Agenda pp. 641f.), and in 1997 there were attempts by Notice of Motion to amend 'chairman' to 'chair' (defeated) or 'bishop' (not put) or 'district superintendent' (not put). The change from 'chairman' to 'chair' in relation to districts was adopted in 2004 on a motion from the Law and Polity Committee. *What is a District Chair?* (Agenda 2006 pp. 84-107) is important background reading but does not answer the question of title.
3. Behind the question of title is the wider issue of the relation of the Chair to the district synod, the wider district and the Conference. Historically, the title 'Chairman' was adopted in 1791 for the preacher chosen by the other preachers in the district to chair their meeting, although already by 1792 the term 'Chairman of the District' (rather than 'Chairman of the District Meeting') was in use, implying a wider authority in the district than just presiding over the meeting. In the Primitive Methodist tradition, by contrast, chairman and vice-chairman of the district meeting were elected ad hoc by the meeting itself and appear to have had few if any functions beyond the meeting.
4. Today the relation of the Chair to the synod is spelled out in the 2006 report and in CPD. It is similar to the relation of the Superintendent (of the circuit, not of the circuit meeting) to the authority of the circuit meeting over which he or she presides. Both Chair and Superintendent exercise personal authority on behalf of the Conference in the context of a meeting which also has Conference-given authority.
5. We recognise that the context is changing. The synod in many districts is becoming more of an 'event' and less of a business meeting. The representative session, like the ministerial, may meet once only in the year. Much of the traditional synod business may now be transacted in the district policy committee or its equivalent. Much of this is to be welcomed. No one would wish to return to the days when the synod was no more than a forum for the transmission of business from the Conference to the circuits and from the circuits to the Conference. Nevertheless the synod has important governance responsibilities which need to be fulfilled. It does not exist only to oversee and encourage the mission of the Church in the circuits. It has its own mission responsibilities for the geographical and political region in which it is set.
6. The nature of districts and circuits is also changing, with some large circuits as big as some districts and circuit meetings as large as or larger than some synods. We are aware too that in some quarters the question is being explored, how, and to whom, do District Chairs render account for the exercise of their responsibilities?
7. The title we choose for the District Chair will be influenced by, and tend to influence, our thinking about the relationship of that person to
 - (a) the Conference which appointed him or her to exercise authority in the district on its behalf, and to which she or he renders account and contributes insight from the district;
 - (b) the Methodist people, circuits and churches in the district, and the ecumenical partners and other bodies to whom they relate
 - (c) the synod and other oversight and governance bodies in the district.

8. We make no proposals in regard to these issues but note them as the background against which the choice of a different title for the District Chair needs to be made. The possible alternatives can now be reviewed.

8.1 *Chairman*

The historic title was discontinued in 2004 because it is now widely regarded as gender-specific, although some national women's organisations still retain it.

8.2 *Chair*

This is resisted by some as being ugly and in some contexts ludicrous. 'Addressing the chair', and 'the chair ruled as follows' have a long pedigree in English usage, but 'Mr/Madam Chair' sounds odd. Further, while in general English usage 'chair' is employed in relation to a meeting it is unusual in relation to a region (the District).

8.3 *Chairperson*

Standard usage in the United States, it does not seem to have caught on in Britain, where it sounds pedantic.

None of the above three versions of the traditional title is much understood outside Methodism and all suffer from the fact that they no longer adequately describe the range of responsibilities carried by a District Chair. It is for that reason, and not just for linguistic niceties, that change is needed.

8.4 *Moderator*

This title is used in ecumenical circles, in the United Reformed Church and in the Church of Scotland. The General Purposes Committee report in 1989 considered it, and observed that it was not a term previously used in our tradition, which might be an advantage or a disadvantage: we could fill it with our own meaning. The report noted that it avoids suggestions of hierarchy, implying rather 'in amongst', 'holding together', 'a focus', 'a representative person'. The Committee affirmed it to be an inclusive term, the strict feminine 'moderatrix' being generally regarded as archaic. For the media the Committee thought it would be a marginal improvement on 'chairman', but because it is not rooted in our tradition the report recommended no change.

All the four possibilities outlined above, even when prefixed by 'district', imply a primary relationship to the synod over which the person presides.

8.5 *District Bishop*

The use of 'bishop' rather than 'president' has been adopted elsewhere in world Methodism, most recently in The Gambia. South Africa has district bishops and a presiding bishop. But in the British ecumenical context it would be seen as confusing, even irresponsible. Moreover, judging by recent evidence of Methodist opinion, it would be widely unpopular. It was rejected in the 1989 report. In any case it carries no reference to the synod, which might then come in time to be seen as merely advisory.

8.6 *District President*

We have not heard this alternative canvassed but it was considered in 1989 and rejected as confusing. It is used, alongside 'connexional president', in the MCCA.

8.7 *District Minister*

The Baptist Union has Regional Ministers, which might offer a precedent. The title carries no overtones of superior authority, simply implying a wider sphere of ministry. However it lacks any reference to the synod and would lead to confusion with other district-wide ministerial appointments. It has not, so far as we know, been advocated.

8.8 *District Superintendent*

The title is standard in the United Methodist tradition for their equivalent of our District Chair, but 'circuit' has all but disappeared from their usage. It was rejected in the 1989 report because of likely confusion with Circuit Superintendent. More fundamental than possible confusion is the question, is the authority of the Chair on a par with the historic authority of the Superintendent as the local representative of the Conference? Since the recent amendment of SO 425 to give the Chair wider powers in the circuits, the answer to this question must now be 'yes'. The Chair is to 'exercise oversight of the character and fidelity' (SO 424) of ministers, and to care for and assist the superintendents. Although the Chair must still uphold the authority of the Superintendent and not over-ride it, he or she is to offer 'supervision and support' (SO 425 (2)). The Chair shares with the Superintendent, other ministers and other members of the circuit leadership team in the oversight of the Circuit (SO 425 (3)). These are clearly superintendency functions. The term has a long pedigree in Methodism, back to John Wesley's usage, precisely because it means 'overseer'. A change in title to 'district superintendent' would emphasise that oversight is the essence of the Chair's ministry.

9. The Methodist Church in Ireland has now adopted 'district superintendent', and this is the recommendation of the working party. It is important however that for clarity 'Superintendent' should always be prefixed by 'Circuit' or 'District' as appropriate. It is important too that the office of District Superintendent should not be seen as taking away from the direct responsibility of the Circuit Superintendent. This is already clearly stated in SO 425, but because titles can encourage false assumptions it may be necessary to add further emphasis to that Standing Order.
10. The working party therefore recommends the change of title from District Chair (or Chair of the District) to District Superintendent. It will require extensive amendment to the text of CPD, so that, if the Council adopts the recommendation, it would be wise to recommend the change in principle to Conference and introduce amendments to CPD (including the Deed of Union) once the principle had been approved.
11. The working party is aware that the programme "Regrouping for Mission" is moving to a review of what sort of entities are required between the circuits and the Conference. It recognises, therefore, that the Council may choose to delay making any proposal to the Conference until the review is further advanced. Nevertheless, the fact of that review does not of itself preclude the change of title recommended here, which would be appropriate for any sort of district. The following resolutions are therefore proposed to help the Council test its mind.

Resolutions

1. The Council recommends in principle to the Conference of 2011 the change of title from District Chair (or Chair of the District) to District Superintendent
2. The Council directs that a report be presented in its name to the Conference in the light of its decision and comments made in its debate.