

## Connexional Team Update

<b>Contact Name and Details</b>	Doug Swanney, Connexional Secretary, swanneyd@methodist.org.uk
<b>Status of Paper</b>	Final
<b>Action Required</b>	Note
<b>Resolution</b>	4/1. The Council receives the report

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	This paper offers the Council an update of work undertaken by the Connexional Team since the Council last met in October 2016.
<b>Main Points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk Management processes</li> <li>• Work that is going on in the clusters in the Team</li> </ul>

- 1 This paper offers the Council an update of work undertaken by the Connexional Team since the Council last met in October 2016 and provides some details of the work going on in the clusters and office of the Team.

### **Risk Management**

- 2 The Senior Leadership Group (SLG) of the Team met as Risk Management Group in November as part of its quarterly risk management review process. This is where the SLG considers risks relating to the operation of the Connexional Team, which are listed on a specific register for the Team's activities. Part of this includes bearing in mind the risks in the corporate register, overseen by the Council, that relate to the wider church. Now that regular scrutiny of risk management is taking place, the Council's role, when making decisions, is to consider whether the resolution(s) proposed will support or hinder the growth, health and vitality of the Methodist Church. With this top level risk in mind the Council can clearly enable good decision making processes to take place.

### **Updates from clusters/office in the Connexional Team:**

#### **Discipleship and Ministries**

#### Positive Working Together

- 3 The first phase of work on Positive Working Together began in 2015-16, and development has since taken place in a variety of ways including:
  - a conference at Cliff College in June 2016 for members of District Reconciliation Groups;
  - the production of a short guide to Positive Working Together and a small group resource called *Shared Commitments*;
  - the development of a module on *Growing through Conflict* in partnership with the Church of Scotland related agency, Place for Hope, which is currently being delivered regionally using a 'training the trainers' model; and
  - the development of a module on bullying and harassment which will be completed in 2017.
  - Initial conversations have also taken place with Bridgebuilders about a closer working relationship.

### Appreciative Enquiry

- 4 The Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN) has been working with the United Reformed Church and a Liverpool based company, Appreciating People, on a new resource, *Appreciating Church*, which utilises Appreciative Inquiry approaches in congregational development. The workbook is due to be released in January 2017. The DMLN team is currently undertaking introductory training in Appreciative Inquiry and it is hoped that a number of officers (at least one per region) will undertake more advanced training with the aim of developing a network of practitioners both within and beyond the learning network able to support local churches and circuits in reimagining their mission.
- 5 The whole of the Discipleship and Ministries Cluster gathered at Cliff College in early December alongside the District Development/Mission Enablers to explore the theme of Healthy Methodist Communities, through an appreciative inquiry lens.

### Worship: Leading and Preaching

- 6 The Ministry Development Team has been working on the new training course for Worship Leaders and Local Preachers, *Worship: Leading and Preaching*, which is due to be complete by December 2016. This has been a major undertaking involving the entire DMLN in engagement with local circuits, the development of writing teams and the creation of a new Virtual Learning Environment supported by the University of London Computer Centre which will provide a platform for future developments in open learning. The new course is in the process of being translated into Welsh, and Mandarin and Cantonese versions are under consideration. The Methodist Church in Ireland is planning to pilot the programme next year. The team is now focusing its attention on the development of Continuing Local Preacher Development and on a framework for local ministry development, the former being supported by the recruitment of an Officer for Worship and Local Preachers.

### 3Generate

- 7 Just over 700 young people attended 3Generate in November 2016. Some age groups were fully booked and had a waiting list and there are plans in place to accommodate future growth. This year included a new focus on ensuring accessibility. A number of specialist volunteers provided additional support to those with learning difficulties, physical limitations and in need of additional emotional help. Young people reflected on a number of issues including refugees, prayer, relationships. Michael Pryke from Stamford in Lincolnshire was elected as the Youth President for 2017-18.

### Scholarship, Research and Innovation

- 8 A World Council of Churches (WCC)/Methodist symposium on the important WCC 'Together Towards Life' document was held at Cliff College in December under the leadership of the Revd Dr Janet Corlett, with the hope that some of the papers and insights from this gathering can be disseminated more widely. Research commissioned by the Conference about *Regrouping for Mission* is progressing in association with the Susanna Wesley Foundation, at no additional cost to the central services budget. The associated evangelism research is recognising that while Methodism is making more followers of Jesus Christ, this is not a major emphasis in the life of our Church. In conjunction with Church of England and other colleagues, the ongoing Fresh Expressions research will hopefully provide a great deal of evidence as to the scale, scope and impact of fresh expressions within Methodism. Plans for the August 2018 Oxford Institute for Methodist Theological Studies to be held at Pembroke College are progressing, and a call for papers is likely to go out before June 2017. A 'young Methodist scholars' conference is now planned for May 2017 in an attempt to encourage the

small number of such people within British Methodism, create a peer group, and encourage others to aspire to this calling.

### Regional Teams

- 9 The last few months have seen the regional teams rolling out programmes of support for a variety of roles including: circuit stewards and lay employees, those in pioneering roles, continuing support for those delivering *Worship: Leading and Preaching*, and those who are completing their candidating portfolios and those exploring vocation. Alongside these programmes there are a few particular events to note:
- the launch of Beibl Bym (the Living Bible) in Wales, launched jointly with the Bible Society, beibl.net, and the Welsh Sunday Schools Council to encourage people of all ages to engage with the Bible;
  - a day in the north east to explore worship in the home, particularly in the context of the family, led by Ed Mackenzie (Discipleship Development Officer), one of the co-authors of *Together with God: An Introduction to Christian Worship*;
  - a conference in the south west entitled 'Discovering God in Culture', built around the artwork of the Revd Peter Willis and including a keynote address from the Revd Neil Richardson;
  - the second 'Navigating Change' conference in Stoke-on-Trent, led by the Revd Ashley Cooper and Matt Miofsky, from The Gathering in St Louis;
  - the Solas Festival in Scotland where the Methodist input was led by the Revd Inderjit Bhogal exploring the topic of sanctuary.

### **Mission and Advocacy**

#### Engagement

- 10 Implementation of the new fundraising strategy has been slightly held back by the departure of the Fundraising Officer, but recruitment to this post was progressed rapidly and an appointment made with an expected start date in early January. There was a strong response from the Church to Hurricane Matthew and over £55,000 has been donated through all channels. Planning for an Aldersgate Appeal in 2017 is well advanced. The three vacancies on the Methodist Heritage Committee were advertised, leading to a number of candidates coming forward, and we expect to bring one or more names to the next Council. The process will commence in January to find a new liaison officer for archives under Standing Order 337(4), replacing Philip Thornborrow who will be stepping down.

#### Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT)

- 11 Work has continued on the agreed priorities for this year. Resource materials to encourage church conversations about the post-Brexit future of the UK are currently at final design stage. A submission on gambling has been made to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on behalf of the Churches, and strong statements made on the situation in Aleppo (with the involvement of other faith leaders) and on poverty/benefits. The preparation of webpages on countering the persecution of religious minorities is running a little late but these should be available by the time Council meets. A separate paper is also before the Council on the subject of Fracking which JPIT was also asked to consider.
- 12 The major highlight for JPIT in recent weeks has undoubtedly been *A Very British Nativity*, the video made with children, retelling the nativity story to highlight the situation for refugees in the UK. Within a few days of release this had been viewed over 100,000 times on Facebook, just one of the channels used.

## World Church Relationships

- 13 Plans are proceeding for some of the new work contained in the strategy for Global Relationships, including development of new People-to-People (P2P) programmes, for which a temporary post has been approved, and planning for a thematic consultation with invited partners in spring 2017. The review of the Mission Partner programme has also commenced, under the direction of the Global Relationships Strategic Oversight Sub-Committee (GRSOSC). The process for grant-making in the current connexional year ran less smoothly than hoped but, with the considerable assistance of members of the World Church Sub-Committee and its streams, most applications were processed and approvals given as planned in November.
- 14 Following the Council's response to MC/16/81 (governance proposals for All We Can (AWC)), a number of senior level conversations have taken place with AWC to explore options for a closer relationship. Discussions also continue on broader aspects of One Mission.

## Publishing and Communications

- 15 Another excellent issue of the *connexion* should have been received by Council members by the date of the meeting. This is the third year of the magazine and its second under the editorship of the Revd David Perry. Other recent publications include Advent Offering resources, the *Gift of Christmas*. A new compact edition of the Methodist Worship Book is planned for the spring, and *Holy Habits* has been agreed for publication as a connexional resource. A range of gift items was included in a new-look Methodist Publishing catalogue in order to test demand. Work on redeveloping the Methodist Church website has now formally commenced with our chosen partner, Avenue Digital, and should be completed by the early summer.

## **Support Services**

### Finance Office

- 16 Work has continued on embedding the new payroll systems for both ministers and lay employees. Significant progress has been made in resolving issues on them, although unfortunately with more delay than was desirable in some cases; not helped by some of the interactions with HMRC. The volume of queries has been greater than the staff could manage at times, but additional recruitment is ongoing and staff and users are becoming increasingly confident with the new systems.
- 17 The 2016 Consolidated Accounts are the first to be prepared under the new charity Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), FRS102. This has meant significant additional work, some of which could only be undertaken sequentially, making preparation difficult. Senior staff worked with the Connexional Treasurers to persuade the statutory auditors that the liabilities of the Methodist Ministers Pensions Scheme (MMPS) should not be introduced to the Council's balance sheet. This case was finally accepted at the end of November, but the time taken means that the accounts will not be ready and approved in time for presentation to the Council in January, although all other aspects of them have been approved by the auditors.
- 18 The review of employment tax arrangements for ministers and employees has continued. A review meeting is planned with HMRC in January and changes to existing processes and procedures will be brought to the Council and the 2017 Conference by the Connexional Allowances Committee.

## HR and Development

- 19 Significant time has been devoted to the implementation of the new Performance Development Review process. The standard and timeliness of objectives and review meetings is critical as this will determine the pay increases received by each individual in September 2017. Excellent progress has been made, alongside colleagues in the Conference Office, on the process of incorporating the work undertaken in relation to obtaining and monitoring work permits from the Home Office for ministers coming from outside the EU to serve. Significant levels of recruitment continue to be supported by the team, alongside its work administering the annual stationing matching and candidating processes.
- 20 The refurbishment work at Methodist Church House has finally been completed – the Certificate of Practical Completion was issued as at Monday 21 November. The Management Committee wrote to thank staff for their patience during the process. The Property Development Committee met for the first time in November and amongst other things agreed to engage a consultant to work over the next 12 months specifically on developing a connexional strategy for the use of property in furthering mission. An experienced consultant has been appointed to commence work from 3 January.

## IT and database

- 21 A restructure of posts has been undertaken, leading to the appointment of an IT Manager to lead the entire function. Their work plan has been partly determined by an external evaluation of progress on the major systems overhaul that was initiated two years ago.

## **The Conference Office**

### Faith and Order update

- 22 The Conference Office continues to support and resource the work of the Faith and Order Committee primarily through the work of the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee. The Committee's agenda is diverse, although currently significant time is given to considering questions relating to understandings of ministry. Alongside the work directed by the Conference and the Methodist Council, the amount of scrutiny and consultation work undertaken by the Committee has gradually increased in recent years. The Committee seeks to offer theological support and expertise as appropriate and where possible.

### Safeguarding update

- 23 Case work in Safeguarding continues to be dominated by working through the past cases. We have now established a training working group with colleagues from the Learning Network which will be producing new sections for the Leadership Module and House Group materials on the Past Cases Review.
- 24 The Survivors Reference Group has now been established and is developing its structure, to enable the Church to understand the perspective of those who have been abused. The Group will assist the Church as we consider both our practice and procedures,
- 25 A key piece of work has been the implementation of the recommendations of the Past Cases Review with staff in the Conference Office heavily involved in the development and delivery of supervision training and facilitating the drafting of the Code of Conduct. There has been continuing work on the streamlining of our stationing matching processes and related paperwork; Conference Office staff continue to work with those in Discipleship and

Ministries on competencies for ministry at various stages following the adoption by the Conference of the revised Criteria for Selection.

**\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

**4/1. The Council receives the report.**