

Following Up the Group Discussions

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Note
Resolution	5/1. The Council receives the report.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	This paper follows on from the group discussions at the October 2016 Council meeting and presents the Council with information about a number of pieces of work in progress that relate to some of the themes that arose in the discussions.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis undertaken of group discussions from the October 2016 Council • Areas of existing work in progress
Background Context and Relevant Documents	MC/16/DP1 – Introduction for discussion topics MC/16/DP2 – Use of Money MC/16/DP3 – Releasing money for God’s Mission MC/16/DP4 – Priority Appointments

Summary of Impact

Wider Connexional	Discussion topics on how to share resources connexionally
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Introduction

1. The last meeting of the Council in October 2016 included a number of discussion papers around the theme ‘Reimagining a Connexional Church’. More specifically, members of the Council engaged in group discussions on the subjects of people, financial resources, and mission and reserves policies.
2. Having undertaken some analysis of the feedback from these discussions, a number of suggestions of new areas for further action were raised which are being considered as to how best to take forward. In the meantime the Council is offered a summary of areas of existing work that relate to the themes that arose during the discussions, to highlight the work already taking place across the life of the Church.

Mission and Reserves Policies

How might we be more strategic about enabling one part of the Connexion to help another? The ‘Use of Money’ discussion paper raises the possibility of connexional ‘crowd-funding’.

The ‘Releasing Money’ discussion paper refers to the 2004 policy whereby each trustee body should have a mission policy and a reserve policy, and if there were no agreed plans or projects for the next five years, each local church should make proposals for how these funds should be utilised elsewhere in the Connexion.

Do you wish to affirm this policy?

Items raised by the groups	Further information
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There is a need to discern buildings are in the right place and resource them.	The Property Development Committee has engaged a specialist consultant to work with it over the next 12 months producing a connexional strategy that helps local trustees, circuits and districts to plan the most effective use of property for mission.
We need to reverse perceptions of church decline which causes people to turn inwardly.	One aim of the property strategy will be to help churches take difficult decisions by being able to see them within the context of an overall strategy for growth and mission. Use of money will fit into that picture too.
Amounts of money held in separate bank accounts, away from TMCP, needs to be minimised.	The Central Finance Board has plans to promote and market the services that it offers more widely, which may draw in funds currently held elsewhere.
There is a question about whether or not connexional grant-making is seen as generous because of the move towards larger grants.	The Connexional Grants Committee is aiming to use the change from the Mission Alongside the Poor Programme to Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice as a way of promoting more local grants and working with the Communications team to disseminate good news stories.
Too often, people are coaxed into serving as church Treasurers with no real training or understanding of TMCP rules. But Circuit Treasurers should have visibility over all church accounts, the onus must be on them as well as the superintendent.	The requirement for details of all total bank balances to be reported via circuits to districts now gives improved visibility, but it is up to districts to use the information.
Work needs to start by identifying mission priorities and then looking for resources.	The One Mission work being taken forward focuses on setting our priorities for mission.
Would reactions be different [about having to share money] if we talk about loans rather than gifts of money? Maybe some kind of “bank” through which churches can lend to each other at very low rates of interest?	While loans would not be viable, the Property Development Committee alongside Treasurers are considering with the Central Finance Board how money could be invested in a fixed interest bond that could be used to develop church properties.
“Skills” of applying for money are unevenly spread – can Districts help resource churches and circuits with business management skills, or grant application writing skills?	The connexional Fundraising team offer this service. There are also some districts which have Grants Officers with expertise in this area.
When donations are received, it is important to say thank you – have a celebration to launch something to celebrate the giving.	We are now ensuring that “thank you” letters are sent to Treasurers and others sending donations to connexional funds. For instance, this has been done for all donations to the recent Haiti hurricane appeal.
We are good at coming up with proposals for buildings but not mission.	The Connexional Grants Committee is looking at partnering with the Cinnamon Network which specialises in helping churches to devise projects aimed at social action and mission locally.
People will give to Haiti etc – why not give them the chance to give to “justice projects” etc at home?	The One Mission Matters magazine is focusing on Mission in Britain in equal measure to overseas mission.
The “top risk” of the Methodist Church no longer existing in a few years time is a huge danger but it is still really hard to get people to engage / respond at that connexional level.	The Council has an ongoing risk management responsibility to ask if the proposals it considers are supporting the Church in engaging with God’s mission – the Connexional Team report to the January Council 2017 also highlights this.

Financial Resources

The view has been expressed that Standing Order 962 needs some reworking to be more wide-ranging in terms of the use of money as well as property and staffing.

The District Policy Committee shall formulate and keep under annual review a development master-plan for the Methodist church buildings and circuit staffing of the District taking into account Planning Authority proposals (e.g., new residential areas, new road proposals, and urban centre redevelopment).

The District Treasurers' consultation indicated that 'no district was identified as having a full masterplan, but a third appear to have some sort of strategic approach and documentation to assist with taking funding decisions, including decisions regarding potentially redundant church buildings'.

What has been your experience of the outworking of this Standing Order? And should it be rewritten? If so, what should it seek to express?

How might the Connexional Team support Districts in developing priorities for mission and ministry? What resources do you think a District most needs?

Items raised by the groups	Further information
[When considering Standing Order requirements in relation to trusts] principles of "proper financial control" must be adhered to as the alternative can lead to fraud.	Training on the new Statement Of Recommended Practice for charities has taken place with District Treasurers and others.
In considering Standing Order 962, the District Policy Committee has a wide overview – some Districts are very mission orientated and have schemes (District Mission Enablers) but staffing can be an issue.	The Learning Network is working closely with District Mission Enablers as much as possible to assist with sharing mission activity. Opportunities are available for stories to be shared in the One Mission Matters Magazine.
[How might the Connexional Team support Districts in developing priorities for mission and ministry?] The Connexion Magazine could include training courses. We need to identify contextually areas of need and resource these.	Work is underway to amalgamate a range of e-newsletters into one. Staff in Discipleship and Ministries will work alongside colleagues in Mission and Advocacy in developing the networks of correspondents and advocates that we have in various places, to link people together and encourage dialogue.

People

Do you think there is a need to rearticulate a form of priority or significant appointments? If so, what would you include in the criteria?

If such a category of appointment were to be reintroduced should such appointments be filled as part of the stationing matching process, or by some earlier process?

Items raised by the groups	Further information
Good suggestion for an initial or complementary system of stationing prior to SMG 1 which had an element of vocational exploration or discernment benefitting from every presbyter and deacon keeping a live profile.	There are a number of existing pieces of work on vocation and continuing vocational development, in particular one of the recommendations in the Larger Than Circuit report being taken forward by the Conference Office.

Have we lost sight of annual stationing disciplines, our call to live by the connexional principle which permits agility, responsiveness and openness to the Spirit?	The Faith and Order Committee will report to the 2017 Conference on Issues of Connexionalism in the 21 st Century.
<p>We would constitute the following as significant priority appointments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locations where Christian presence disappear otherwise • Specialisms - Higher Education chaplaincy for eg significant locations of public theology, investing in abilities, skills and people, theological education, administrative. • Some churches of connexional significance - Central Halls, Wesley's Chapels • Areas of poverty - advocacy skills, creation of community • Creating diverse leadership – we need multi-ethnic leaders • Leaders with ecumenical experience or commitment. 	There is existing support available for a number of these areas in various ways. We already send chaplains to a number of different areas which is supported by Discipleship and Ministries (including Higher Education). Grants are available from Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice Grant stream. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committee are working on creating and promoting diverse leadership in the Methodist Church.
We want a task force to be created to work on the criteria for significant or priority appointments, and on the process and methodology to introduce a culture change within stationing matching prior to SMG 1.	

Conclusion

3. It is recognised that there were also a number of comments and suggestions of new areas of work not referenced above and it is important that consideration be given to how these areas can move forward most appropriately and effectively. It is hoped that the Council is encouraged by the details above, which demonstrate the areas of work which are already happening in relation to what was discussed.

***RESOLUTION

- 5/1. The Council receives the report.