

Connexional Team Update

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Note
Resolutions	16/1. The Council receives the report 16/2. The Council adopts the proposals for Eco Circuits and Eco Districts as set out in paragraphs 2-5 of the report.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	This paper offers the Council an update of work undertaken by the Connexional Team since the Council last met in October 2017.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is asked to endorse the proposals for Eco Circuit and Eco District and Council members are invited to consider the Eco Circuit and Eco District awards in their local setting • Work that is going on in the clusters in the Team

- 1 This paper offers the Council an update of work undertaken by the Connexional Team since the Council last met in October 2017 and asks the Council to adopt Eco Circuits and Districts.

Eco Church

- 2 Eco Church is a programme of A Rocha (a Christian organization engaging communities in nature conservation – www.arocha.org) run in partnership with the Church of England, United Reformed Church, Methodist Church and other churches. In January 2016 the new format for Eco Church was launched in England and Wales with the support of a Methodist Church connexional grant. Since the launch around 100 Methodist Churches have registered interest in Eco Church and 17 have achieved Eco Church awards.
- 3 In Scotland the Eco Congregation programme continues to be managed by Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS).
- 4 The Eco Church and Eco Congregation programmes provide a visible means for circuits and local churches to put into practice Methodist Church commitments to environmental stewardship in the face of climate change. In line with the Church's commitments towards carbon reduction made in *Hope in God's Future* and more recently Notice of Motion 2016/206 to the Conference in 2016, the Senior Leadership Group of the Connexional Team has resolved to promote Eco Church more extensively across the Methodist Church through *the Connexion* magazine, Mission Matters, property stewards and the property strategy.
- 5 A new Eco Circuit and Eco District concept has been developed in parallel with the recently introduced Eco Diocese concept and the URC Eco Synod. This enables Eco Church to be supported across a group of churches and offers circuits and districts further guidance for practical responses to *Hope in God's Future*. The criteria for Eco Circuit and Eco District can be found on the Methodist Church website <http://www.methodist.org.uk/mission/climate-change/eco-church>. The Council is asked to endorse the proposals for Eco Circuit and Eco District.

Updates from clusters in the Connexional Team: Discipleship and Ministries

Scholarship, Research, and Innovation (SRI)

- 6 In conjunction with World Church Relationships colleagues, a study tour visit to the Holy Land has been developed for February 2018 to be co-led by the Revds John Howard and Stephen Skuce to expose Methodists to the Israel/Palestine context and enable us to better reflect on both this context and our own. Study tours to USA (May) and to Killarney, Ireland (April) are in progress designed to help Methodists better understand and experience appropriate forms of evangelism.
- 7 The Evangelism in the Methodist Church research report is nearing completion and complements the Growing Methodism in the North East research, copies of which were sent to all Chairs and superintendents and is available on line at http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/4891/leading_together_final_report.pdf. Following this distribution several requests have been received to speak at synods. The Fresh Expressions research will be available by summer 2018.
- 8 In addition to the 3rd Annual Research Conference, to be delivered in conjunction with the University of Manchester and a 'Methodism and Politics' conference in conjunction with the Wesley Historical Society in June, in August 2018 the 14th Oxford Institute for Methodist Theological Studies will be held in Pembroke College, Oxford.

Regional Teams

- 9 Richard Armiger has been seconded to the role of Director of Regions for the connexional year 2017/18 .
- 10 A new resource, 'Discipling Presence', has been produced to support those in rural ministry. The resource is now being shared widely across the Connexion and being used for opportunities to talk about community engagement and evangelism where we are.
- 11 In the North East during August we organised the first pilot session of a Mental Health Awareness Training Day for young people in response to the issue of Mental Health being highlighted through the 3Generate Manifestos. The day was delivered by If U Care Share Foundation (www.ifucareshare.co.uk) and aimed to enable young people linked to our churches to build their confidence in understanding and talking about mental health. It also encouraged them to think about mental health from a faith perspective and to share what they learn with others. Fifteen young people and three youth workers attended and participated in a creative and inspiring day with very positive feedback. We are following up with more sessions for young people and a Mental Health First Aid course this November.
- 12 The first 'Islands Ministry Conference' was held in October with Superintendents, Chairs and DMLN coordinators involved in Islands Ministry gathered, shared stories, found commonalities, explored Brexit (from each island's perspective), worshipped together and reminded themselves that we are all part of the same Connexion. The conference was hugely successful with a desire to offer a similar conference in two years' time for a wider selection of people engaged in Islands Ministry.
- 13 Two half time officers have been recruited in Scotland and Shetland on a 9-month contract to cover the vacancy in this region. A Coordinator for East of England has been recruited and will begin at the end of January. In London a part-time officer is acting up as Coordinator.

Discipleship

- 14 The Discipleship Development Team has been working with the Vice-President on a conference focused on pilgrimage. 'To be a Pilgrim' runs at Cliff College from 6-8 April 2018 and offers opportunities to explore different aspects of pilgrimage. More details can be found at <http://www.methodist.org.uk/deepening-discipleship/pilgrimage/pilgrimage-events/to-be-a-pilgrim-conference>
- 15 The second series of Re-Imagine conferences begins in February 2018. A partnership between the Discipleship and Church and Community Development Team, regional teams and the District Missioners' Community, four one day conferences will run in London, Manchester, Newcastle and Bristol on the theme Reimagine Circuits: Planning for Life. The first Re-Imagine Conference, Next Steps on Revitalising and Starting Churches, led by Trey Hall, which has been run in several districts, has been videoed and will shortly be available as a resource on the website.
- 16 Following discussions at the Publications Board, the Discipleship Development Team is working on a set of study group resources focused on evangelism which draw upon the Conference report, Time to Talk of God, and an online resource, Talking of God. The writing group is developing an eight session course with four sessions focused on talking about God and four sessions on talking to others about God. The resource will be developed around a simple 4W structure (Welcome; Worship; Word; Witness) and focus upon creating space for conversation and a particular emphasis on evangelism in the Methodist tradition. The aim is to have the resources available for the 2018 Conference.

Ministry Development

- 17 The Ministry Development Team is developing a particular focus on supporting various forms of lay ministry. A new set of pages have been designed for the website with the title Supporting Local Ministry, which will go live in February 2018, the first part of the Local Ministry Framework agreed by the Ministries Committee. The web pages will include resources on assessing local ministry needs, advice on recruitment and support for employees and volunteers, and will include a variety of inputs including video, case studies and whiteboard animation. A set of competencies for local, lay ministry will be discussed by the Ministries Committee in January 2018 around which it is hoped to develop a set of learning resources which will support circuits and districts in induction and key learning. The Team is also working as part of a 'trailblazer' group with the Church of England and other ecumenical partners to develop an apprenticeship standard for local, lay ministry available at a number of levels. Work is also being undertaken with the learning network centres to provide programmes which respond to the needs of lay employees.

Church and Community

- 18 A live streamed conference, All Together Now, exploring intergenerational church took place in October 2017. The event, the first of its kind for the Methodist Church in Britain, was overwhelmingly well received with people joining from across the globe. Engagement on social media was high, encouraged by book giveaways and invitations to comment and share photos of individuals and groups. 408 people were registered, 18 hubs streamed the event; many of these spontaneously organised by local churches and networks who contacted the team directly to offer an invitation to others. A number of events were organised by the DMLN but there were also small groups who met in offices and homes to watch. The total participant figure was much higher than those registered.

- 19 The Church and Community Team continues to work with Place for Hope, a Scottish based charity with roots in the Church of Scotland, on the development of Positive Working Together. A module entitled Growing through Conflict has been piloted across all the regions and each region is now developing a strategy for making the resource available more widely to local churches and circuits. A follow-up resource, Bullying and Harassment, is now being trialled and will be made available across the connexion over the next 18 months. Context specific training has been provided for a number of District Reconciliation Groups (DRG) and a new certificate has been developed in partnership between the DMLN, Place for Hope and Cliff College in 'Conflict, Transformation and Mediation in Faith Contexts' which aims to provide intermediate level training in conflict mediation and transformation for practitioners, including members of DRGs.
- 20 3Generate is a story of growth and development for the Methodist Church. The event moved to Pontin's, Southport, this year and attracted 1086, 8-23 year olds and 486 leaders and contributors. They engaged with various styles of worship and sessions focused on several themes, electing the Youth President Designate Jasmine Yeboah along with the reps from 3Generate to various bodies including the Conference and the Council. The voice of young people was captured in a variety of ways and from this the 3Generate manifesto will be created, detailing the key issues that young people want to raise with the church. It has been an enormous task to turn around the logistics management for the larger event in the space of eleven months and we will learn lots from this year's processes for next year's event. Pontin's, Southport, has been re-booked for 3Generate 2018.
- 21 ONE Intern launched in September 2017 with a cohort of 7seven full time interns aged between 20 and 26 years of age. The yearlong initiative is designed with an emphasis on vocation and faith in the professional sphere – making a difference by applying one's faith to one's professional life.
- 22 The internships in 2017-18 include Action for Children, Central Finance Board, Academy of Executive Coaching, the House of Lords and the Joint Public Issues Team (Methodist Central). The year started with a full induction training week. There will be four subsequent training and development residentials with all the interns together throughout the year. The first of those took place at Saint Columbas' House Woking and focused on leadership with input from the Secretary of the Conference, the Head of Discipleship and Ministries, and included a full MBTI (Myers Briggs) assessment for each intern. Subsequent residentials are planned focusing on spiritual development, discipleship and ethics and have contributions from a wide variety of different speakers and contributors.

Education

- 23 Working with the Church of England, the church school inspection (SIAMS) framework has been redesigned and the Methodist flavour enhanced through a new, deeper appendix. This is accompanied by a training presentation which has been delivered t in some schools and Districts to give staff and supporters a stronger understanding of the ways the schools offer something which is deeply Christian and distinctively Methodist. However, training the schools (especially those which are solely Methodist) in the requirements of new framework now becomes a priority for this connexional year. After work with colleagues from the Free Church Education Committee, a grant from the Westhill Foundation and support from RE Today, materials about the Free Church perspective have now been completed to supplement the RE curriculum nationally from Keystages Two to Four. They were launched to coincide with Reformation500 to enable schools to unlock the religious issues alongside the historical story. They are available on the Free Churches and Methodist Schools website. In continued support for schools chaplaincy, Barbara Easton (Director of Education) worked with colleagues in the schools to put on a 'so you want to be a schools chaplain?' taster day in the early autumn.

Mission and Advocacy

Engagement

- 24 Advent, Christmas and Epiphany window displays have been produced in collaboration with the design team which have been on display in Methodist Church House.
- 25 A survey of JMA Secretaries and others was conducted as part of a review of JMA materials including *Rainbow*. Over 160 responses were received and analysed, which will help reshape the resources that we produce to engage young people with mission. The Fundraising team has also been preparing content for Superintendents' Conferences in 2018, particularly around 'speaking boldly' about money.
- 26 The new Methodist Heritage handbook has been produced and published. The Heritage team also assisted a Chinese film crew who came to the UK to make a documentary about some Methodist missionaries to the Miao people. Job descriptions and adverts have also been prepared for recruiting new chairs both for the Methodist Modern Art Collection management committee, and the Methodist Heritage Committee.
- 27 Work continues on producing plans for digitising some parts of the missionary archive, dealing with the archives at Methodist Church House and hopefully providing a digital content platform for all photographic images.

Publishing and Communications

- 28 The new Methodist Church website is being launched in December; it is hoped that Council members will have found the new navigation a considerable improvement, and any feedback is welcome.
- 29 Recently completed publications include: two reports for the Pensions Team; Encounter Worldwide - printed resources to help promote the programme; preparation for Easter Offering materials; and Christmas resources, which include A4 and A5 door drop leaflets and matching service sheets, simple carol booklets, and the redesigned *Gift of Christmas*, all of which have sold well.
- 30 The next issue of the *connexion* magazine, which was guest edited by Myrtle Poxon to whom we are very grateful, should be with Council members well before the meeting,. A new contract editor has been appointed for *Rainbow* (JMA magazine) and a revamp for the next issue has been made.
- 31 *Responsible Grace* (the folder produced for supervision training) has been amended following the pilot projects and will be available from January.
- 32 Work is in hand on prayer and worship resources for the 2018 Thy Kingdom Come, which is being worked on by the Revds Micky Youngson and Catherine Dixon. A writing group has also met to work on a relaunched *Time to Talk of God*, it is expected that text will be agreed by April.

Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT)

- 33 JPIT launched a #nuclearban film to raise awareness about a key issue of peacemaking. The video and accompanying call to action can be viewed at this link:
<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/nuclearbansigned/>

- 34 Campaigns continue to influence the debate on Universal Credit, with a number of MPs quoting from JPIT's briefing during the most recent parliamentary debate.
- 35 Plans are advancing rapidly for the JPIT conference (to take place on 17 March 2018) under the title *Brave New World?* Booking is open and the booking form can be accessed at www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/
- 36 Recent activity also includes: leading workshops at Movement Day; co-running the *Agents of Change* tent at 3Generate; working with the Alcohol Health Alliance to support their media campaign around low cost alcohol; and producing Advent reflections on peace, poverty, refugees and women. Looking further ahead, organisation of the church leaders' delegation to the Party Conferences is under way.

World Church Relationships

- 37 Anne Baldwin and Freddy and Dee Takavarasha were commissioned in November as Methodist Mission Partners to serve in Sri Lanka and Uganda respectively.
- 38 The November 2017 grants round was the first one conducted under new arrangements, whereby all applications from a given country are considered in a single process rather than looking at different types of grant at different times. Following some initial challenges around breaking down budgets in a way suitable for the new approach, the process then ran well and we are grateful to those who serve on the grants stream.
- 39 Plans are well in hand for including the Methodist Church in Britain in the Global Mission Fellows programme run by the United Methodist Church, identifying placement sites for incoming fellows from other parts of the world. We also continue to pursue our own People to People (P2P) programmes and successful group visits took place this year to South Africa and Haiti.
- 40 Initial thought has been given to how we reflect safeguarding best practice in the work of World Church, both in grant-making and the activities of Mission Partners, also consulting with All We Can (AWC) in the process.
- 41 GRSOSC also reviewed a number of new ideas for way the World Mission Fund might be used. Plans are being made to "regionalise" some activities by creating partnership roles located overseas: initially, this will be trialled in Europe as we have a current vacancy for a partnership coordinator in this region. GRSOSC gave approval in principle to the use of WMF monies to fund posts outside the UK.

Support Services

Finance Office

- 42 Ian McClelland joined as Interim Director of Financial Operations in late September and we are already benefiting from his experience and thoughtful, calm approach.
- 43 Work has continued on resolving various issues within the payroll section and the patience of treasurers in particular has been much appreciated. Changes to the staffing structure are in progress. Progress is also being made on addressing some of the systems issues that continue to hamper performance.

- 44 The main focus during October and November was preparation of the 2016/2017 Consolidated Accounts, and the accompanying statutory audit. After all of the changes made in 2016 relating to the adoption of the new FRS 102 SORP, we have been able to refine some aspects of the ordering and layout, which was commended by both the Finance Sub-committee and Audit Committee. The Trustee Report has been pared back closer to what is required by the SORP, whilst a new accessible version will be produced by the Publications team, to appeal to a much wider audience. Administration of the MIC Trust has moved from MIC Ltd to the Connexional Team.
- 45 Already work is underway on compilation of the draft Connexional Central Services Budget for the three years commencing 1 September 2018, with templates and income assumptions being issued to budget holders during December 2017.

Development and Personnel

- 46 Work has continued on embedding the new arrangements for administering the Church's sponsorship of work permits for ministers coming from outside the EU to serve the Church here. This is also the time of the year when a significant part of HR&D staff's time is devoted to supporting both the candidating and stationing matching processes. All of this work is undertaken in close collaboration with colleagues within The Conference Office.
- 47 The largest proportion of time has been spent supporting the annual Planning, Development and Review processes – both year-end appraisals and new year objective setting. Although it was anticipated that the first year of the performance-related pay process would generate a large amount of work, in the event this has been a significant drain on resources. It has involved a major culture shift for the Team and even the disciplines of holding review meetings and completing the necessary paperwork has required large amounts of support, chasing up and follow through from HR&D staff and senior managers across the Team.
- 48 At the last minute HMRC notified us of its intention to postpone its investigation of the entire Church regarding its conformity to statutory minimum pay legislation. This will include all local lay employees, in addition to those of the Council and ministers, so data has been collected from across the Church. Responding to this will be a collaborative effort between Support Services and the Conference Office – an initial meeting has now been re-arranged for mid-January at which the scale of the work will become clearer.
- 49 The task of identifying a new occupational health provider continues, but interim arrangements have also been put in place to support various processes on behalf of the Conference. Initial work has also started on issues relating to mental health at work within the Team.

Facilities and Property

- 50 The work of the Property Development Committee (PDC) has continued to be supported. After the Council's adoption of the key principles of the strategy in October, the main focus is on developing a detailed strategy for consideration in April. As a result of work by a sub-group, the PDC has agreed new guidelines relating to quinquennial inspections. It has now charged the Team with updating the detailed guidance and implementing it in collaboration with District Property Secretaries, whilst work is underway to review the relevant Standing Orders. The team is working with the MCH Management Committee on long-term maintenance plans for the building and also on the proposed redevelopments of Camden Town Methodist Church, the property at Oxford Place, Leeds and the North Bank Estate.

51 James Middleton is working part-time as Connexional Property Development Adviser and along with the Strategy Consultant, Charles Palmer, is now providing professional advice to various managing trustees exploring options regarding the future use and/or redevelopment of properties across the connexion. This includes two circuits that will act as pilots for the property strategy and a District-wide focus in Cornwall.

Archives and Data Protection

52 Work continues in preparing for the May 2018 implementation of the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which will replace the Data Protection Act and place significantly more responsibility on all organisations to manage data more effectively. This is a large piece of new compliance work. A short-term appointment has been made within the Conference Office to focus on this, and discussions continue with TMCP regarding guidance for the wider church.

Procurement

53 In addition to regular work relating to various contracts, such as those for venues for the Conference and other residential meetings, the Procurement Manager played a leading part in working with the Conference Office and TMCP Legal to support the process of identifying a panel of recommended solicitors across the connexion. New Team procurement guidelines have been launched, intended to bring a much tighter use of purchase ordering.

The Conference Office

54 In June 2017 we were delighted to welcome the Revd Dr Jane Leach into the Conference Office as the Connexional Director of Supervision. The creation of this post indicates both the seriousness with which we take the necessity of meeting the recommendation of the Past Cases Review that all ministers in the active work should be in regular supervision and the size and complexity of the task. A series of training events is in train to equip Chairs and Superintendents and those who will supervise on their behalf to offer pastoral supervision; the language of The Greenwich Foot Tunnel is becoming increasingly common around the Connexion. In this piece of work we have benefited from a collaborative approach from our colleagues in the Discipleship and Ministries Cluster (who have, *inter alia*, checked the district implementation plans, reworked the budget, and arranged the training events) and the Communications and Publications team who have published the final version of the *Responsible Grace* training pack early in the new year.

55 Much of the work of the Conference Office concerns those who are, are training to be, or feel called to be ministers in Full Connexion with the Conference. 2018 will see work continue in a number of areas as we facilitate conversations around the draft Code of Conduct and present to the Ministries Committee the work on competencies at each stage of ministry; the Ecumenical Officer and others are engaging with partners to explore the proposals in *Mission and Ministry under the Covenant*; we will service and respond to the work of a joint meeting of the Ministries Committee and members of the Faith & Order committee on *Ministry in the Methodist Church*.

56 Recruitment is underway for an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Adviser. This post is now located in the Conference Office.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

16/1. The Council receives the report

16/2 The Council adopts the proposals for Eco Circuits and Eco Districts as set out in paragraphs 2-5 of the report.