

## **Minutes of the Methodist Council held on 21-22 September 2009 at Methodist Church House**

**Present:** The President (for part of the meeting), and 45 voting members

Peter Phillips (Faith and Order Committee), Gareth Powell (Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice), Kirsty Thorpe (URC) as participating observers

**Apologies:** Ron Calver, Catherine Campbell Hyde, Christine Elliott, John Goacher, Norman Mann, Eileen Sanderson, Richard Vautrey, Steve Charman, John Best

**Apologies for second day:** Ruth Gee, Graham Illingworth, Alison Tomlin, David Gamble

Prayers were led by the Chaplain, Mrs Gill Dascombe.

Those attending the Council for the first time were particularly welcomed, as well as the Revd Kirsty Thorpe who attended as a participating observer from the URC.

It was noted that Mark Hammond was attending in place of Steve Charman as the representative from the North Lancashire District.

The President reported on the Christian Blog Awards which had seen David Perry (Chair of the Lincoln and Grimsby District) win the award for Best Christian Blog and the President and Vice-President win the runners-up prize in the most inspiring Christian leadership blog category. It was agreed that a letter of congratulation should be sent to David Perry.

**09.3.1 The Minutes of the Methodist Council held on 3-4 April 2009 were agreed and signed as a correct record.**

**09.3.2 Matters arising from the Council Minutes [MC/09/69]**

Ken Howcroft presented MC/09/69, which the Council noted.

**09.3.3 Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC)**

Ken Wales welcomed David Walton in his first meeting as Chair of the Methodist Council. Ken Wales presented the minutes of the SRC held on 5 May and the draft minutes of the meeting held on 25 August. He explained that the SRC aimed to be a supportive, enabling and challenging group. Many of the items discussed at the recent SRC meetings were to be found elsewhere on the Council agenda. The relationship between SRC and the Connexional Team is one of support and encouragement. This relationship has been through a critical period during the working out of the Team Focus process. He reminded the Council that the Connexional Team is now smaller as a result of decisions of the Council and the Conference and this affects the work of the Council.

**09.3.4 Report from Strategic Leaders**

John Ellis explained that the purpose of this slot is to share items from the Strategic Leaders that are not otherwise on the agenda. Within the Connexional Team, there are currently some changes in the management of the five staff clusters. The head of the Governance Support cluster, David Gamble, is currently the President of the Conference. The head of the Christian Communication, Evangelism and Advocacy cluster, Janet Morley, is leaving the Team and her successor, Claire Herbert, was introduced to the Council. Two areas of the Team were not reviewed during the Team Focus process and these are now at different stages. The Finance Office has now been reviewed and the processes of redeployment are

underway. The review of the Property Office and Resourcing Mission Office based in Manchester is just beginning.

John Ellis asked members of the Council to remember all the members of the Team in their thoughts and prayers, and indicated (without sharing names or details) that there were a number of pastoral concerns among them.

Martyn Atkins reported that he and Christine Elliott are going to the USA to meet with the Presiding Bishops and the Ecumenical Officer of the United Methodist Church (UMC) to discuss how the British Methodist Church and the UMC might collaborate more fully. This discussion needs to focus on how the two traditions can work together, acknowledging their historic role in different countries around the world. The outcome of these conversations will be reported to the appropriate bodies.

It was noted that the situation of Christians in Pakistan is increasingly serious.

Some of the recent issues reported in the *Methodist Recorder* have highlighted the need to be people-centred and flexible and some of the difficulties that this raises. It is envisaged that a group will be brought together to explore these issues in terms of gaining consensus about where there is a need to be pro-active in the areas of policy and creative in the use and development of Standing Orders. A report will be brought to the Council in due course.

The situation in Fiji is now becoming very serious. It seems that the military government is intentionally trying to cause problems for the Methodist Church. Speaking restrictions on the church leaders are still in place. The church leaders are due to appear in court this week charged with speaking in a political manner.

The Chair led the Council in prayer.

#### **09.3.5 Southlands [MC/09/70]**

Mark Wakelin presented MC/09/70, noting that the SRC and the Council had previously been uneasy with the proposals brought by the Southlands governing body last year. A significant amount of work has been undertaken since then, notably by the scrutiny group appointed by the Council. The SRC and the Southlands governors are now comfortable with the proposals being brought. Thanks were expressed to Helen Woodall and the small group who have worked on this.

The Council agreed the following resolutions:

*The Council authorises the preparation of a Lease, Governance Deed and Transfer Agreement of Southlands College to Roehampton University on the basis of the Heads of Terms recommended by the Governing Body of the College, together with a new Southlands Trust Deed reflecting the changed relationship of the College and University which is envisaged in the Heads of Terms.*

*The Council requires these, when drafted, to be brought to the Council in February 2010, for review and approval prior to their submission to the Conference of 2010, and appoints a Scrutiny Group of Helen Woodall, Russell Buley and Margaret Faulkner. The Council gives the group permission to co-opt someone with legal expertise.*

*The Council consents to the transfer of the Mount Clare property from the College Trust to Methodist Council Charitable Fund [Southlands] (MCCF(S)).*

*The Council approves the proposal to amend the MCCF(S) Trust Deed to bring together the work of MCCF(S) and the Southlands Methodist Centre and to create a Trustee body who shall also form the Southlands Liaison Group.*

### **09.3.6 Abortion Statement Working Group [MC/09/71]**

Ruth Gee presented MC/09/71. The Conference report, *Created in God's Image*, had requested a review of the 1976 Conference abortion statement. Some debate had since ensued about whether the term "review" implied that there would be also be a "revision" of the statement. It was therefore being proposed that the working group update the statement in terms of the language, the scientific and social/political context of the statement, and also bring recommendations to the 2010 Conference as to whether a revision should also be undertaken.

The following resolution was agreed:

*The Methodist Council agrees the Terms of Reference and membership of a working group to update the Methodist Conference Statement on Abortion.*

The working group was appointed as follows: Ruth Gee (Chair), Ian Cooke, Margaret Cox, Paul Morrison, Beverley Ramsden.

### **09.3.7 Conference Executive [MC/09/74]**

Martyn Atkins presented MC/09/74 and explained the background to these proposals. Concern was expressed that the group should include some representation from the area where the Conference was to meet. However, the group needs to be small enough to be able to work quickly.

The Council agreed the following resolutions:

- 1. The Council resolves that a Conference Planning Executive (CPE) be formed with immediate effect.*
- 2. The Council approves the membership of the CPE as listed, with the addition of a person nominated by the Chair of the District in which the Conference is to be held.*

### **09.3.8 Fundraising [MC/09/72]**

David Bennett, Fundraising Co-ordinator, introduced MC/09/72. The Council's feedback was particularly requested in relation to project funding; direct communication and partnership working.

There were some concerns about direct communication with people connected with Methodist churches – there can be a greater response if the request comes via the local church. It was also noted that although it seems as if the giving has declined, the giving to support the local church and circuit may be increasing. There can be a tension between asking for money for the connexional funds and for local projects.

There was concern about the information that might be held about donors and the protection of that data and reassurances were given on this point.

There were concerns about moving to giving to general funds rather than particular projects. Givers often give because they identify with a particular cause.

The budget that was agreed for 2009/10 highlighted that there would be a shift in this area, and this report is an attempt to implement that. The Council requested that further reports

should be brought back to the Council and that districts should be consulted. It was agreed that an extract from this document should be used for consultation in the districts with a clear timeframe set out.

### **09.3.9 Communication Strategy [MC/09/73]**

Toby Scott, Director of Communications and Campaigns, presented MC/09/73, which represented an updated communications strategy. It was noted that the strategy would be constantly evolving. Some concern was expressed about the language of 'Mother Church' in paragraph 3, and it was agreed that this would be looked at again. The Council noted the report.

### **09.3.10 Pension Reserve Fund [MC/09/75]**

John Ellis explained that there had been a difficulty in the implementation of the Pension Reserve Fund. The May 2009 meeting of the SRC had proposed how it should be funded and the Conference had accepted those proposals. However, a late tweak to the Conference resolution introduced an anomaly for 2009/10. The proposal now is that the Conference resolutions are followed, but with shadow accounts which note what would have happened if the previous system had applied. This will then be taken into account when the budget for 2010-11 is proposed. It was noted that the District Treasurers were informed of this proposal at their meeting in August.

The Council agreed the following resolution:

*The Council endorses the approach set out in paragraph 11 of MC/09/75.*

### **09.3.11 Joint Implementation Commission [MC/09/76]**

Peter Howdle was welcomed to the Council. He summarised where the implementation of the Covenant has reached. A connexional consultation is now underway.

The Council met in groups, focusing on three of the chapters from *Embracing the Covenant: The Unity we have and the Unity we Seek*; How can decision-making be shared; Episkope and Episcopacy.

### **09.3.12 Discipleship**

Martyn Atkins, Mark Wakelin and John Ellis introduced the theme of discipleship to the Council. This is seen not as a new initiative, but a way of focusing common elements in the mission of the Church and the workplan of the Connexional Team. As such, it was an extension of the focus and prioritising for the whole Church in the programme *Our Calling* and the *Priorities for the Methodist Church*. Three descriptors of discipleship were explored: whole-life, life-long and world-changing. Discipleship will be a particular focus of *Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission*. The key tasks of making and nurturing disciples are the responsibility of the local church, so the questions put to the Council were about how the Connexional Team could support and equip in this.

The Council discussed two major questions in group discussions:

Is the Connexional Team in step with God, Church, Society?

What can the Connexional Team offer as its 'uniquely and best' contribution?

The groups reported back some of their principal points to the whole Council. A paper on discipleship will be taken to the October meeting of the SRC, and the comments of the Council will be taken into account.

### **09.3.13 Connexional Team Work Delivered 2008-09 [MC/09/77]**

John Ellis presented MC/09/77, which set out the work which the Connexional Team had delivered in 2008-09. The Team was thanked for the work that had been done in the last year, particularly in the difficult circumstances of transition.

The Council agreed the following resolution:

*The Council notes the work delivered by the Connexional Team in 2008-09.*

### **09.3.14 Connexional Team Workplan 2009-10[MC/09/78]**

John Ellis presented MC/09/78 as a list of the priority discretionary work to be done during the next year, noting that it is not a list of everything that the Team does.

It was asked why 'Back to Church Sunday' was included, where Racial Justice Sunday was not in the list. It was explained that this was because it was a new addition to the established pattern of special Sundays.

The Council agreed the following resolution:

*The Council welcomes the key emphasis for the Connexional Team's work in 2009-10 outlined under headings I-III.*

### **09.3.15 Israel/Palestine Working Group [MC/09/80]**

Peter Jennings explained that he had requested that this item be brought out of the list of *en bloc* items because he was concerned that the proposed group might be seen as representing a particular bias. Janet Morley explained that the Joint Public Issues Team had convened the group and worked hard to bring names for which there is broad agreement, especially since the Conference resolution had highlighted the urgency of the situation. There had been a concern to ensure that those who will serve on this group are in agreement with the Conference resolutions in this area. The working group is to bring together previous Conference decisions rather than to conduct a full review of the situation.

The Council agreed the following resolution:

*The Methodist Council agrees the Terms of Reference and membership of the Israel/Palestine Working Group as set out in paragraphs 3 and 5.*

### **09.3.16 Appointment of the Revd Gareth Powell [MC/09/79]**

Martyn Atkins explained the background and the exceptional circumstances within the Governance Support Cluster which led him to bring the request outlined in MC/09/79 to the Council.

Some Council members expressed their concern at the process, feeling that it was not as transparent as it should be. However, it was explained that this was a proper process under Standing Orders for situations such as this. Some exceptional features of the current circumstances were explained. It was noted that this appointment is an addition to the current Team budget and this would need to be taken into account in preparing the 2010-11 budget.

The Council voted on and agreed the following resolution:

*The Council recommends that the Revd Gareth Powell be stationed to serve in the Connexional Team for an initial period of six years from 1 September 2010.*

**Extension of the appointment of the Revd Kenneth Howcroft [MC/09/91]**

Martyn Atkins presented MC/09/91. The Council voted by ballot and agreed the following resolution by the necessary majority:

*The Council nominates the Revd Kenneth G Howcroft to the Conference of 2010 as Assistant Secretary of the Conference, for a further period of five years, from 1 September 2010.*

**09.3.17 Music Resources Group reconfiguration [MC/09/81]**

With the addition of Paul Leddington Wright to the Music Arrangements Group, the Council approved the terms of reference and additional names for the reconfigured Music Resources Group as set out in MC/09/81.

**09.3.18 Epworth Press: Transitional and Future Arrangements [MC/09/82]**

The Council noted and approved the action taken by the SRC, as set out in MC/09/82.

**09.3.19 Local Preachers update [MC/09/83]**

The Council noted the update provided in MC/09/83.

**09.3.20 Committee appointments [MC/09/84]**

With the following corrections, the Council made the appointments as in MC/09/84:

- (1) *for* Auxiliary Fund *read* Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons
- (9) *add* The Revd Steven J Wild
- (13) *delete* Ms Nancy Odunewu
- (33) *add* Dilys Wood, Ruby Beech, Chris Wood

The Council granted permission for the Chair of the Safeguarding Advisory Panel to co-opt up to six further members in consultation with the Secretary of the Conference to deal with immediate case-work, their names to be brought to the next meeting of the Council.

It was agreed that now that the Methodist Diaconal Order (MDO) Committee is part of the Ordained Ministries Committee, the SRC would be asked to appoint trustees for the MDO Centre.

**09.3.21 Memorandum of Understanding between Christian Aid, MRDF and the Methodist Church [MC/09/85]**

The Council approved the memorandum of understanding.

**09.3.22 Managing Trustees for 4 John Wesley Road [MC/09/86]**

The Council ratified the delegation of managing trusteeship to the Strategy and Resources Committee of the office warehouse building located at 4 John Wesley Road, Peterborough.

**09.3.23 Appointment of Connexional Reconciliation Panel [MC/09/87]**

The Council appointed Tim Coward, David Kershaw, Samuel McBratney, Angela MacQuiban, Patricia Olivent-Hayes and Beverly Richardson to be the Connexional Reconciliation Panel.

**09.3.24 Appointment of small group to consider presidential inquiries [MC/09/88]**

The Council appointed the working group to consider presidential inquiries as requested by Notice of Motion M1 as set out in MC/09/88.

**09.3.25 Additional appointments [MC/09/89]**

The Council made the appointments listed on MC/09/89.

**09.3.26 Wind up of two MMS Custodian Trustee bodies [MC/09/90]**

The Council agreed that the Iberian Estate Company Limited and the Primitive Methodist African Missionary Society be wound up.

**09.3.27 Appointments to the SRC**

The Council appointed Rachael Fletcher to be a member of the SRC from September 2009, and agreed to recommend to the Conference that Eden Fletcher and Adrian Burton be appointed from September 2010.