

Ministries Committee report

Contact Name and Details	The Revd Dr Andrew D Wood, Chair of the Committee
Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Decision
Resolutions	43/1. The Council receives the report. 43/2. The Council affirms the 15 proposals regarding transferring ministers as set out in paragraph 23 and commends them to the Conference.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To bring the Methodist Council up to date with the work of the Ministries Committee
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of emerging work: Worship Leaders and Preachers, Circuit based learning, the role and ministry of Supernumeraries, probationer studies and CDiM • Work areas requiring policy changes: Transferring Ministers - 15 proposals presented • Areas of work ongoing: Fresh Expressions, VentureFX • Updates on responses to Memorials to the 2016 Conference – M1, M3 and M24

Introduction

- 1 This report brings the Methodist Council up to date with the work of the Ministries Committee. By the April meeting of the Council the Ministries Committee will have met on four occasions since the 2016 Conference.
- 2 It is notable that, having completed a number of significant pieces of work in 2015/16, further conversations regarding developments and more strategic ways forward have now begun. These pieces of work are substantial and the committee is working through them with care and deliberation, mindful of getting to the best place slowly rather than rushing to answer deep questions with insufficient thought. The committee notes the significant contribution of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN) and the two centres in enabling this deeper thinking at a strategic level.

Areas of emerging work; Worship Leaders and Preachers, Circuit based learning, the role and ministry of Supernumeraries, probationer studies and CDiM

- 3 Worship Leaders and preachers

The committee fulfilled the commitment included in responses to memorials from the 2013 Conference (M7, 8 and 9) to consult with circuit local preachers' meetings during 2015-16 and accepted a paper addressing the memorials at its January meeting. The consultation took place across the Connexion, including with district chairs and district local preachers' secretaries. Superintendents and circuit LP secretaries were asked to consult their local preachers' meetings. The committee noted that the 25% response rate provided an indicative, if not full, picture. The

committee received ten recommendations and set up a working group to look at these in more detail. The committee noted that more work was needed on definitions, budgetary implications, decisions regarding the consequences of the review and the impact on candidating for ministry. A draft report will be brought from this group to be considered at the meeting in September 2017, and a final version for the January 2018 meeting.

4 Circuit Based Learning Pathway

The committee received and welcomed an update regarding the pilot of the Circuit Based Learning Pathway, the committee noted that the Queen's Foundation is responsible for the Pathway, although students would be overseen by the Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee (MCPOC). The question of longitudinal research has been considered, but as there were only two students in the pilot that was not currently in place.

5 To Serve and to be Served: the Role and Ministry of Supernumeraries

The Ministries Committee has begun a process of consulting with chairs and superintendents, and more widely to aid with the production of a guidance note. It was agreed by the Committee that care should be taken to ensure that the information used in the consultation reflected the concerns expressed by some about the possible ending of preaching fees. The Committee felt strongly that importance of the ministry of supernumeraries should be both acknowledged and valued.

6 Continuing Development in Ministry (CDiM)

Following discussion at their July meeting a further paper was considered by the committee in January and a framework was agreed that fulfils the requirements for CDiM as set out in SO 745. This framework enables the individual, the district and the Connexional Team to fulfil their various responsibilities in relation to the SO and pays attention to allowing for continuity with the formational journey begun in initial ministerial training and continued through the first five years of ministry, including probation. The committee felt strongly that the responsibilities of the individual, the circuit, district and learning network in creating and strengthening a lifelong culture of partnership in learning and development should be clearly identified and articulated.

7 Sabbaticals policy

The Methodist Conference has received a number of memorials in recent years related to the purpose, frequency and duration of ministerial sabbaticals. Memorial 11 (2015) from the Plymouth and Exeter District Synod, and memorial A2 (2016) from the Bradford North Circuit Meeting. Then previously, memorial M7 (2009) from the South Ribble Circuit Meeting had proposed amending Standing Order 744(3) in order to entitle ministers to their first sabbatical in their seventh (rather than tenth) year of travel. A similar memorial – M8 (2009) was received from the Bolton and Rochdale Synod. Both memorials were referred to the Methodist Council for report and consideration and then subsequently referred to the Ministries Committee. Reply deadlines were extended several times and there is no evidence that these two memorials ever received a final reply. It is clear that the memorials taken as a whole point in quite different directions in terms of their implications for sabbatical practice. This year the Ministries Committee reviewed the rationale for sabbaticals following an online survey of ministers, chairs of district, district sabbaticals officers and a sample of senior circuit stewards. The Committee will be considering a number of recommendations at its meeting in September 2017. Consultation has taken place with the Connexional Allowances Committee about the financial implications of any proposals.

8 Probationer Studies

In summer 2015, after a prior period of discussion and reflection on the issue, the Ministries Committee gave The Queen's Foundation the charge "to design and develop a programme for Ministerial Probation that integrates with pre-ordination training". The committee has considered this item at each of its meetings this year in response to concerns expressed around shortness of initial training; the potential isolation of probationers; a need for more consistency; concerns regarding the transition between initial ministerial training (IMT) and probation; and concerns regarding the levels of work required. Following a year-long consultation and conversation across the connexion, led by Queen's staff, a proposal was put before the Ministries Committee and, after further work to clarify some areas, will be submitted again to the Committee for consideration at its March meeting.

Work areas requiring policy changes; Transferring Ministers

- 9 The meeting of the Ministries Committee on 25 September 2015 agreed (at the request of the SRC) to "oversee the undertaking of a review of the practices and policies relating to Ministers of Religion coming to Britain from overseas for whom the Methodist Church is sponsor under the Home Office Points Based System, with the aim of formulating a coherent and comprehensive policy relating to such ministers serving in The Methodist Church in Britain [MCB] and to report to the Council no later than January 2017."
- 10 This review was to include:
 - i. Visa fees and their renewal; initial settlement costs; costs relating to extending and changing appointments; costs relating to returning to a sending Conference.
 - ii. An assessment of the impact of receiving ministers on sending Conferences and receiving circuits.
 - iii. The expectations of ministers, circuits and other groupings.
 - iv. The significance of receiving ministers in relationship to the development of other personnel exchange programmes overseen by the World Church Relations Team.
 - v. Reflection on the need to hold together the numbers of incoming ministers, the needs of the Church and the consequential budgetary implications.
- 11 A Transferring Ministers Policy Review Group (TMPRG) was appointed, comprising a representative of the Faith and Order Committee, a representative of the World Church Relationships Team, two presbyters currently recognised and regarded as being in Full Connexion (R&R), a representative of the SRC and a representative of the members of the Connexional Team responsible for implementing the relevant processes. The group consulted other members of the Connexional Team with expertise in the areas of human resources and development and equality, diversity and inclusion. The group met in February and July 2016 and considered (among other material):
 - i. Statistical evidence regarding the current landscape of ministry in the MCB, including the Statistics for Mission report to the 2014 Conference, ministry deployment figures and the number of incoming presbyters of other conferences and churches between 2010-2015;
 - ii. Comments from those with experience of current processes, including ministers of other conferences and churches (MOCCs) and receiving circuits;
 - iii. Detailed financial information regarding the costs of immigration for MOCCs.
- 12 This report of the TMPRG outlined: issues raised regarding current practice and proposals based on the group's discussions. These proposals were agreed by the Committee and are presented on behalf of the Committee to the Council. To enable the Council to do its work with rigour the substantive portions of the TMPGR report are set out below.

- 13 *Current practice:* The MCB welcomes those who are ordained by and currently in good standing with other conferences and churches to work formally on its behalf. Ordained ministers of other conferences and churches (MOCCs) may seek to exercise ministry in a British Methodist context in several ways, outlined on the Methodist Church website (www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/leadership-and-ministry/ministers-of-other-churches). The statuses of ‘visiting preacher’, ‘Authorised to Serve’ or ‘Associate’ were not addressed by the TMPGR as such ministers normally do not usually fall within the category of “Ministers of Religion coming to Britain from overseas for whom the Methodist Church is sponsor under the Home Office Points Based System.”
- 14 Ordained MOCCs can apply to transfer into Full Connexion with the MCB in accordance with SO 730 (or SO 731 if the applicant is no longer recognised as a minister by his or her home church) or to be R&R as such for a period of time (in accordance with SO 732). It is worth noting that:
- i. Application forms for R&R status and transfer into Full Connexion (which are revised annually) are currently made available via the Methodist Church website (as well as being sent by email to all those who register an interest). This means that prior to the deadline of 15 January the Connexional Team cannot be certain how many applications it will receive. It also means that applicants may submit their forms without prior discussion with their home church.
 - ii. As (for good reason) there is no list of “other churches with which we are in communion” (SO 730(1)) some applications require significant investigation in order to determine: a) whether the MCB recognises the applicant’s ordination and b) if it is an application for R&R status, whether the MCB can share oversight with the home church of the vocation and development of one of its ministers.
 - iii. The deadline for applications for transfer into Full Connexion (15 January) is set down in SO 730(2)(b). Although a deadline for applications to be R&R is not set down in Standing Orders, in practice, the same annual deadline has been applied.
 - iv. Following receipt of an application, consent is obtained from the home church for the minister to explore serving MCB. The MOCC is asked to provide references and to meet a connexional assessor who reports to the transfer panel.¹
 - v. Following receipt of the necessary paperwork, the applicant meets with members of the Ministerial Candidates’ Selection Committee (MCSC) acting as a transfer panel. For applicants for transfer into Full Connexion, “[c]lauses (1) to (9) of Standing Order 713 shall apply with any necessary modifications and, in particular, substituting ‘applicant’ for ‘candidate’ throughout, and adapting clause (9) as set out in clause (7) below” (SO 730(6)) – ie the panel follows closely the processes used for candidates for ordained ministry in the MCB. This currently means that applicants for transfer complete a medical form, meet a connexional psychotherapist, engage with the panel through triangle interviews and a presentation to the full panel, undertake a group work exercise under observation, and (if requested) meet a panel of reference where further examination is required. Queries have been raised as to whether this practice fully acknowledges and honours that the applicant’s calling to and competence for ordained ministry have already been tested and affirmed.
 - vi. Applications for R&R status are “assessed by the same connexional bodies as deal with those offering for reception into Full Connexion by transfer, and according to similar criteria” (SO 732(3)(d)). Lists of expected competencies (ie the “criteria”) exist for transfer into Full Connexion and R&R status based on the expected competencies for probationers due to be received into Full Connexion and ordained. Applications for R&R status are addressed by MCSC following a very similar pattern to those for transfer into Full Connexion (ie that which is based on the model used for candidates).

¹ Although ministers who seek to be recognised and regarded are not asking to transfer into full connexion (FC), the language of ‘transfer panel’ is used for the meeting of MCSC with both FC and R&R applicants.

- vii. Presbyters of the Irish Methodist Conference who offer to serve in appointments in the MCB are not required to undergo the same interview process, as “[m]inisters of the Irish Conference admitted into Full Connexion with the Methodist Church in Ireland [MCI] are listed in the Minutes of Conference and by virtue of clause 43(b) of the Deed of Union are recognised and regarded as presbyters of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion” (SO 732(1)).
- viii. It has been the case that MOCCs who have been serving for a number of years as R&R and who discern a sense of call to be received into Full Connexion are asked to undergo the same process as other applicants for transfer (which is currently almost identical to the process they underwent when applying to be R&R). Following feedback from the TMRPG, MCSC agreed an amended process for 2016 for these cases which sought better to recognise their service in the MCB – however, unusually, no applications for transfer were received from R&R ministers who had previously met with a discernment panel, so this process was not tested. The process for transfer for those already serving as R&R cannot be changed significantly without amendments to SO 730(6).
- ix. For applicants for transfer into Full Connexion, MCSC can recommend that the applicant: be received into Full Connexion (Category 1); be received into Full Connexion upon fulfilment of specified conditions (eg following a period of training, Category 2); not be received into Full Connexion (Category 3). Under Categories 1 or 2, the panel has further options – it can decide to defer its recommendation to the Conference (applicants for transfer who are not already serving under another status in the MCB normally meet with a panel in March/April and are then matched with an appointment by the Initial Stationing Sub-Committee the following January, meaning that they are often recommended to the Conference approximately 14 months after the panel. The panel can also decide to recommend ‘ordained probationer’ status, if it concludes that a period of further discernment would be beneficial to both the MOCC and the MCB before the MOCC transferred. MCSC will only make this recommendation if it feels that there are clear and measurable outcomes (identified against the agreed competencies) that would enable that discernment to be achieved. It has been noted that where the language of ‘probation’ is used this can be problematic for MOCCs as it suggests that their experience of ordained ministry is not fully recognised by the MCB.
- x. For applicants for R&R status, MCSC can recommend that the applicant: be recognised and regarded as being in Full Connexion (Category 1); be recognised and regarded as being in Full Connexion upon fulfilment of specified conditions (eg following a period of training, Category 2); not be recognised and regarded as being in Full Connexion (Category 3).
- xi. Applicants for transfer (to FC) may appeal the recommendation of the panel (SO 730(10)) but there is no provision in CPD for applicants for R&R status to do so.
- xii. In recent years, applications have been received from individuals from other conferences and churches who are not yet ordained – those recommended as candidates for ordained ministry (considered under SO 714), student ministers and those wishing to transfer as probationers (SO 730). Some adjustments have been necessary to ensure that the process above is appropriate in each case.
- xiii. MOCCs who are recommended and would be entering their first appointment in the MCB are matched with suitable appointments by the Initial Stationing Sub-Committee (for presbyteral applicants). From 2016/17 onwards, at the request of the Stationing Committee, circuits will be asked to complete a separate stationing profile for a MOCC. This profile is based on that which is used to apply for a probationer presbyter, with some amendments. It is hoped that this will encourage circuits to reflect more fully on the possible joys and challenges of receiving a MOCC and to extend a more intentional welcome.

- xiv. Before a MOCC can be matched with an appointment, the Connexional Team must receive a satisfactory enhanced DBS clearance if the minister has been resident in the UK for at least five years and/or a police check from their country of origin if not.
 - xv. There has been debate over a number of years as to the most appropriate support structures for MOCCs (to ensure sufficient care and opportunities for reflection while honouring their ministerial experience). Circuits are asked to appoint a supervisor (as they would for a probationer) and to provide mechanisms to facilitate reflection on preaching and leading worship in a new context (akin to the Worship Development Group for probationers). Unless the MOCC is an 'ordained probationer' he or she is not required to engage with the District Probationers' Group and reports will not be made on his or her development to the District Probationers' Committee. MOCCs are encouraged to complete the 'Orientation Project' (as would a probationer) to facilitate reflection on their new context.
 - xvi. From 2016/17 onwards, MOCCs will also be matched with a 'buddy' (another minister, preferably from the same church of origin, with experience of serving in the MCB) for additional pastoral support. This will be an informal, non-reporting relationship and conversations will be held with the proposed buddy's Chair of District prior to an approach being made.
- 15 *Issues raised regarding current practice:* Prior to the first meeting of the TMPRG, a wide range of questions and issues had already been noted, including:
- i. Questions raised by Notice of Motion 209, adopted by the 2013 Conference ;
 - ii. A suitable induction programme for MOCCs and receiving circuits;
 - iii. Issues associated with using R&R status as a form of 'probation' prior to transfer into Full Connexion and its relationship to 'ordained probationer' status. Concerns regarding the language of 'ordained probationer';
 - iv. The question of whether there should be a requisite length of service as an ordained minister prior to application for transfer;
 - v. [See proposal 4.1] A suitable discernment process for R&R ministers who sense a call to transfer into Full Connexion with the MCB;
 - vi. [See proposal 13] Situations where it may be appropriate for a MOCC to serve for a shorter period than five years;
 - vii. [See proposals 10.1 to 10.7] Financial implications of the transfer process
- 16 In addition, the General Secretary's report to the 2011 Conference noted that:
- "Alongside these various partnerships, the nature of Methodism in Britain is itself changing fast, presenting wonderful opportunities and no small challenges to our Connexion at this time. Like most of Europe, longer-term immigration, recent migration, asylum and other factors have resulted not only in a more pluralist Britain, but also a considerably more diverse family of Methodists living, worshipping and witnessing in Britain...I consider it a missional priority and a requirement of Christian discipleship, hospitality and mutual learning that our Connexion seeks to enable new congregations and fellowships, both language-based and ethnic/national groupings, to belong to us and us to them in apt and mutually enriching ways that do not currently fully exist. This is one important aspect of the work being undertaken through the Belonging Together project, and is of considerable urgency" (paras. 77-78)."*
- 17 In addition to those listed above, the TMPRG and therefore the Ministries Committee took into account in its discussions the following concerns and queries:
- i. An existing lack of clarity surrounding R&R status, including on the part of applicants, as many other churches have no equivalent;
 - ii. The need to be clear with applicants at an early stage about the position and current context of the MCB (eg with regard to marriage and the myriad forms of relationship in British

- society, gender equality, or the theology of the demonic), recognising that the applicant, in light of this, may be unable to serve in the MCB and abide by its doctrines and discipline;
- iii. The need to facilitate a period of discernment prior to application;
 - iv. [See proposals 1.1 to 1.8] The role of the home church in the processes of discernment, appointment and extension – the group felt that it was vital to work more closely with other conferences and churches to facilitate these conversations and, if necessary, to enable the home church to refuse permission for a minister to serve as R&R (the letter requesting consent has since been adapted with this purpose);
 - v. [See proposal 5] Whether MCSC is the most appropriate body to consider applications for transfer and recognition (and whether there should be a connexional oversight committee and/or a standing group responsible for practice and process specifically for MOCCs);
 - vi. Why the processes for receiving MOCCs differ so significantly from those for sending Mission Partners from the MCB (whose appointments are for a fixed period of three years, with the potential to extend by a further three years);
 - vii. [See proposal 1.5] The possibility of mechanisms designed to receive MOCCs in order to fill particular appointments in the MCB (eg where there is a language requirement);
 - viii. [See proposal 9.1 and 9.3] Whether there should be a set budget for visa costs that results in a cap on the number of applications that can be accepted each year, or whether the Church should commit to cover the costs of receiving as many MOCCs as offer and are recommended and stationed;
 - ix. Relating to the discussion above of ‘probation’, ways of providing appropriate support (eg opportunities to reflect on the leading of worship in a new context) for an appropriate period of time in a way that recognises the MOCC’s experience;
 - x. What it means to serve under the discipline of two conferences (especially for R&R ministers who serve in senior leadership positions, such as superintendents);
 - xi. Issues relating to ministers’ families (including the potential difficulties of finding places for school-age children and work for partners);
 - xii. [See proposal 3.4] Coordination with appropriate processes for the recognition of Fellowship Chaplains;
 - xiii. [See proposals 3.1 to 3.3] Ways in which MOCCs are expected to interact with the relevant Fellowship Group (if one exists);
 - xiv. [See proposals 10.1 to 10.7] The possibility of ‘centralising’ costs specific to MOCCs (so that there is no financial difference for circuits between receiving a MOCC and a probationer);
 - xv. Pensions for those who are R&R.

Proposals

- 18 Following discussion the Ministries Committee presents the following 15 proposals of the TMRPG to the Council believing that a ‘coherent and comprehensive policy’ must begin with a clear rationale for welcoming those who are ordained by and currently in good standing with other conferences and churches to work formally on behalf of the MCB.
- 19 The Methodist Church “claims and cherishes its place in the Holy Catholic Church which is the Body of Christ” (Deed of Union, Clause 4) and “has always understood itself to be part of the whole Church of Christ” (*Called to Love and Praise*, 4.1.1). The MCB acknowledges “that it is a pilgrim Church, travelling with many others of different traditions, but united in the one faith” (Ibid.).
- 20 This self-understanding is visible in a number of areas in the life of the MCB (such as the role of the World Church Representative at ordination services). It is manifest in the sending and receiving of ordained ministers to and from other conferences and churches, as a visible sign that we are all

members of one Body seeking together to share in the mission of God in the world – a calling that transcends national and ecclesiological boundaries. This is a sign of our willingness to be open to that which the Spirit is saying to the churches about the use and deployment of the resources of the whole Church of Christ (currently, for the MCB, in the context of a significantly greater number of appointments than presbyters available for stationing).

- 21 “The nature of the Church as an international community properly finds expression in international structures... At this international level, the connexional principle propels Methodist Churches towards a sharing of resources which crosses both denominational and national boundaries” (Ibid., 4.7.8).
- 22 The Ministries Committee acknowledges the challenges that have arisen in this area in the past and celebrates the numerous occasions when MOCCs have flourished in the MCB and have played a significant role in the mission and ministry of local churches, circuits and the wider Connexion. It makes the proposals below in the hope that the MCB might be enabled to build on the good work already done.
- 23 **The 15 Proposals:**
 1. The role of the home church: The ability of the MCB to welcome ministers from other conferences and churches depends on open and cordial relationships being maintained with those other conferences and churches (see SO 736, which speaks of seeking to enter into ‘mutually acceptable arrangements’). By and large, this has been the case, but we need to avoid the impression which is sometimes given of the MCB taking the brightest and best from other churches or enabling ministers to serve in Britain rather than to abide by the discipline of their own church. It is worth noting that should a minister from the MCB wish to reside overseas or to serve another church or conference we would expect him or her to seek permission from the Stationing Advisory Committee (SAC) before making any application. It is therefore proposed that:
 - where an applicant is Methodist s/he be asked to provide evidence that conversations have been had with the appropriate officer within her/his conference before completing a formal application to transfer (FC1a) or to be R&R (R&R1a). The MCB would still approach the conference in question for formal permission, the record of ministry, and assurance that the minister was in good standing;
 - applicants from other churches should be asked to provide evidence that conversations have been had with their bishop or equivalent before completing the FC1a or R&R1a. As above, the MCB would still approach the church in question for formal permission, the record of ministry, and assurance that the minister was in good standing;
 - conversations, facilitated by the appropriate team member in the World Church Relationships (WCR) Office, should be held with other Methodist conferences about, in general terms, the appropriateness or otherwise of our procedures. This might result in different approaches being used with different conferences and in some conferences indicating to us that they do not wish any of their ministers to be considered for service in the MCB. (The TMRPG notes that this proposal has resource implications for the WCR Office in equipping Partnership Coordinators to take on this additional responsibility);
 - SO 730(11), which distinguishes those who are from autonomous conferences from other applicants in detailing the way in which applicants should be treated, be deleted. This amendment would bring the Standing Order in line with current practice and, more importantly, would reflect that it can no longer be assumed that initial ministerial training and expected competencies for ordained ministry in autonomous conferences are near-identical to those of the MCB;

- in the light of other proposals in this report and the risks inherent in advertising abroad to ‘fill the stations’, the suggestion of another conference identifying a list of ministers whom we might interview each year is not a proposal that we should pursue. However, the practice of approaching a conference with a particular station in mind has been trialled this year; the situation in that appointment should be kept under review and consideration given to this being a model for the future;
 - it is important that MOCCs who are R&R be encouraged to maintain their links with the sending church. If the proposed oversight group/committee (see below) comes into being, it should report annually to the sending church that the MOCC’s ministry is being received with joy (and/or reporting any concerns) and noting any changes and the time when any decision about the MOCC’s future would need to be made;
 - an additional gathering be added to the induction programme during the third year of the MOCCs’ appointments to discuss with the cohort how they feel about the future (including the possibilities of returning to their home church after five years offering an extension or to move to a new appointment as R&R, or applying to transfer into FC);
 - in the light of the above proposals, the literature given to MOCC applicants and the forms they are asked to complete should be revised.
2. Liaison with the WCR Office: The TMRPG made a series of suggestions about how the work of the WCRO might contribute to the development of work with MOCCs. The Ministries Committee asked the Assistant Secretary and the Ministerial Coordinator for the Oversight of Ordained Ministries to look again at the proposals in consultation with the team members in the WCRO to ensure that appropriate connections are made and relationships developed.
 3. Fellowship groups have provided a means for Methodists from other parts of the world to worship in their own language and according to their own traditions whilst contributing to the life of the MCB (usually by encouraging integration into the life of the circuit). Each Fellowship Chaplain is someone respected by the sending church and with unrivalled understanding of the experience of her/his compatriots within the MCB. Therefore, the Ministries Committee proposes that Fellowship Chaplains:
 - be notified when an application to transfer or for R&R status is received from a minister from their home church;
 - be available to the host circuit to advise on cultural issues between stationing in January and the arrival of the minister in August (this could be facilitated at the induction for receiving circuits in February);
 - be encouraged to meet any MOCC from their home church stationed to a circuit in the MCB shortly after arrival (eg at the induction event in August), but with no expectation that they will take on a coaching/mentoring role.
 - Following the report to the 2015 Conference of the working group on Fellowship Groups, a small group has been working on the oversight of Fellowship Chaplains and will propose to the Methodist Council in October that a formal body be established to oversee the processes around the appointment of Fellowship Chaplains ensuring that both the needs and wishes of the sending Church and the MCB’s processes of discernment and stationing are honoured. The Ministries Committee supports this proposal as a vital step in working towards the inclusion of those from other conferences (including MOCCs) in the life of the Connexion.
 4. Transfers from those already R&R: Many of those ministers who seek to transfer (ie to be received into Full Connexion) have already served as R&R for some years. Strictly speaking, only those MOCCs who are received into Full Connexion ‘transfer’, though the language is often used for those who serve as R&R. Many of those who seek to transfer are already R&R

and have therefore undergone a rigorous discernment process equivalent to that for those who are received into Full Connexion. MCSC acknowledged the duplication of process that those who move from one status to another now face. MCSC therefore decided to adopt a revised process for 2016 (later extended to 2017), viz:

- Applicants will be asked to reflect theologically on their experience of being R&R and their sense of being called into a permanent relationship with the MCB.
- Permission will be sought from the home church.
- Affirmation will be sought from the applicant's District Chair (and in the case of a deacon, the Warden of the MDO) and Superintendent (or, if the applicant is the Superintendent, a circuit steward).
- Applicants will be asked to produce a theological reflection (2000 to 3000 words) on 'The identity of a Methodist presbyter/deacon in the 21st century' drawing on (amongst other sources) their experience, *Called to Love and Praise* and *What is a Presbyter/Deacon?*
- Applicants will be invited to an interview before a panel of eight members of MCSC. The interview will involve two triangle interviews, examining 1) practice and discipline and 2) spirituality and resources. With the full panel, they will explore their theological reflection and personal experience.

Even this, however, can seem to belie the equality of R&R and FC status and it is questionable whether it would be right to ask Irish ministers (all of whom are R&R) to undergo such a process. On recommendation from the TMPRG the Ministries Committee feels that a minister already serving under the terms of service of a minister in Full Connexion should not be asked to undergo an extensive discernment process similar to that which she/he underwent in order to become R&R. The Committee therefore proposes that where a minister has already undergone a discernment process to be R&R, the MCOOM need simply to ask for:

- A statement from the minister's home church consenting to the transfer
- A supporting letter from the minister's Superintendent and District Chair
- A statement from the minister indicating her/his wish to transfer into Full Connexion, willingness to be itinerant, and fidelity to our doctrine and practice.

The Ministries Committee recommends that the Law and Polity Committee bring the necessary revisions to Standing Order 730 (and any subsequent changes) to the 2018 Conference.

Statistics should be held regarding the number of R&R ministers who return to their home churches after five years and the number who do not. If a significant number remains beyond five years, evidence will need to be collated on a case-by-case basis as to why this was the most appropriate course of action (as evidence to the Home Office that our systems are fit for purpose). This task should be passed to the oversight group outlined in proposal 5. Letters to home churches requesting permission to extend the length of an R&R minister's service should include a description of the discernment process involved. Guidelines should be produced to ensure consistency in the conversations between R&R ministers, Superintendents and District Chairs regarding the possibility of extension.

5. Oversight structure: recent experience has shown that both circuits and MOCCs value the input of the MCOOM in reviewing their situation during the first year (and feel acutely the lack of such input where it has not been forthcoming). Such personal contact is important but a structured system of reporting and evaluation would be more helpful both to those currently in appointments and those supervising them and to the Connexional Team as it seeks to improve its processes. A small oversight group for MOCCs should be established to

which the MCOOM should report on the recommendations of MCSC, the outcomes of initial stationing, and any interventions s/he makes, to which the MOCCs' supervisors should report according to agreed criteria. The oversight group will report annually to the Conference.

6. Candidates: Over the last few years, MCSC has seen a number of applications from student ministers from other churches and conferences. It has dealt with these under SO 714 (Overseas Candidates); however, it is clear that this Standing Order is a vestige of the days when overseas districts still existed and it is not clear how 710(1) applies (MCSC has simply assumed that it does not). The Ministries Committee therefore proposes:
 - the deletion of Standing Order 714, and
 - the revision of Standing Order 730(2) as follows:
 - (2) (a) Persons ordained to the ministry of word and sacraments in other conferences or other Christian churches, probationers for such ministry, **accepted candidates for such ministry**, ordained deacons of the United Methodist Church or of a church with a three-fold order of ministry and officers of the Salvation Army who wish to be admitted into Full Connexion with the Conference as presbyters or admitted upon presbyteral probation **or to enter initial training as accepted candidates for presbyteral ministry** shall apply in writing before the 15th January to the President, and the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf shall arrange for the application to be considered as set out in the following clauses.
 - (b) Ordained deacons ~~or persons accepted for training for the diaconate~~ of other conferences or Christian churches, **probationers for such ministry, accepted candidates for such ministry** or officers of the Salvation Army who wish to be admitted as deacons in Full Connexion with the Conference or as diaconal probationers **or to enter initial training as accepted candidates for diaconal ministry** shall apply in writing before the 15th January to the President, and the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf shall arrange for the application to be considered as set out in the following clauses.
7. Connexional Assessment: it is at present unclear whether or not Standing Orders require an applicant for transfer or R&R status to undergo a psychological assessment. SO 730(5)(ii) merely requires the MCOOM to 'appoint and obtain a report from a connexional assessor'. However, SO 730(6) requiring MCSC to apply clauses (1) to (9) of SO 713 has been read to include the requirement for psychological assessment at SO 712(3). Psychological interviews have not always been easy to arrange when applicants arrive only shortly before their interviews by MCSC. Given the new arrangements that MCSC has made in relation to the psychological testing of candidates, the Committee recommends that:
 - the connexional assessor should be appointed following liaison with the WCR Partnership Coordinator;
 - the discernment process include a 'fitness to minister' assessment covering both physical and psychological wellbeing conducted by Interhealth or another provider of occupational health services (parallel to the processes for potential Mission Partners) and that the results of this assessment only be disclosed to MCSC after it has made its recommendation; the medical committee should be consulted if the recommendation of the 'fitness' assessor contradict that of MCSC.
8. Stationing: The Ministries Committee notes the considerable amount of work that has been done by the MCOOM's predecessor and others to improve the induction for both circuits and MOCCs in which various cultural issues have been addressed and mechanisms put in place to support MOCCs in their first years of ministry in the MCB. However, there has still been a series of problems in some circuits where the expectations of minister and circuit did not correspond. Such experiences can be destructive of both the presbyter or deacon's ministry

and of the circuit's confidence in its ability to welcome a MOCC in future. The Stationing Committee has agreed this year that separate profiles should be used for MOCC appointments (to adapt the process whereby all initial stationing applications are considered for probationers or MOCCs unless where the circuit is content for that to be the case). However, the TMRG recommended that more attention is given to the possibility of a MOCC appointment by asking circuits in the year before a profile (year minus one)² is submitted to contact the MCOOM and to engage in a consultation process to explore (a) the suitability of an appointment for a MOCC and (b) consideration about the background and experience that a MOCC would need to bring to the appointment. Such conversations should be encouraged by District Chairs as a matter of good practice (but applications received without prior conversation will not be declined automatically). Circuits should be reminded (eg at the induction in February) that for all MOCCs (other than ordained probationers) the language of 'probation' is inappropriate.

9. The Ministries Committee recognises that the current system and its proposed revisions demand a considerable investment of time from staff in the Connexional Team. It also notes that one of the drivers for its work has been finance. The costs of welcoming MOCCs from overseas are considerable and have sometimes been underestimated. In particular, the costs of visas have increased exponentially in recent years and are likely to continue to rise. At present, MCSC is asked to interview every MOCC applicant who is qualified under SO 730(2) and has the appropriate permission from her/his home church and to recommend to the Conference those who meet the criteria, for whom a station has been identified and who have the necessary police clearance. The Ministries Committee therefore believes that it is necessary to limit the number of recommended MOCCs (not already serving in the MCB) each year and therefore that:
 - a 'cap' should be agreed each year by the Stationing Committee in the light of the MCOOM's report on interest shown by circuits considering an application and advice from the relevant budget holder in the Connexional Team (Development & Personnel) about the financial implications. This cap is likely to be between six and ten;
 - applications for R&R status should be discouraged where the MOCC has under five years' experience of ordained ministry (unless there are exceptional circumstances surrounding the application);
 - MCSC should continue to interview all qualified applicants and to recommend those who meet its criteria but all applicants should be warned (as now) that recommendation does not guarantee an appointment and that opportunities for them to serve might be limited;
 - recommended applicants might be 'held over' for appointments in the year following that for which they applied.
10. The TMRG considered a number of other issues of cost and has had some referred to it by the Immigration Meeting. Costs are sometimes 'hidden' because of unidentified expectations (eg a minister from overseas might expect that the circuit provide her or him with a vehicle for use on church business). Transparency is needed as to which costs will be borne by the MOCC, the circuit, and the Methodist Church Fund (MCF). The Ministries Committee therefore recommends that:
 - Applicants for transfer or R&R status should (as now) bear the costs of the application (including visa and travel to the interviews);

² On a numeration that stationing matching occurs in (connexional) year zero and the minister takes up the appointment on the first day of year one

- the MCOOM and the circuit discuss the budgetary implications of a MOCC appointment as part of the ‘year minus one’ conversations;
 - the circuit bear the cost of the MOCC’s removal to the circuit (including her or his dependants). This would constitute a change to current guidance, which states that “the receiving circuit will reimburse the door-to-door costs of the travel and transportation to the MCB appointment by the transferring minister and dependents of an amount not exceeding £2,000” (however, this figure is often exceeded in practice);
 - the MOCC be entitled (as now) to the means-tested grant and loan that are offered to probationers entering their first appointment;
 - the MCF bear the cost of the visa (and all related costs, eg BRP cards and the NHS surcharge) for the MOCC and up to three of her/his dependants throughout the period that s/he serves in the MCB. The MCF (or its advisor) will only be responsible for any legal costs (appeals &c) if the MOCC has consistently followed the advice of the connexional immigration advisor. This is a significant change to current practice. It relies on conversations regarding immigration status and vocation being held closely together by the MOCC, the Connexional Team and District Chairs for those exploring a sense of call to serve in the MCB indefinitely.
 - the information sent to applicants before they complete an FC1a or R&R1a³ and to MOCCs who are recommended by MCSC before they are entered into initial stationing include a breakdown of the ‘costs of transfer’ to make it clear that in the MCB ministers are not provided with furniture or motor cars but circuits should be willing to provide furniture for a MOCC’s manse where it is clear that (a) the MOCC is coming from a church or conference where the custom is for manses to be furnished or (b) it appears more cost effective to furnish the manse than to bear the cost of freight. It would be appropriate for discretionary funding to be made available from districts to assist with this;
 - the costs of the MOCC’s return to his/ her home church are not the responsibility of the MCB. In exceptional circumstances (eg in case of hardship on retirement) a MOCC might apply for a grant of up to £2000 from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons.
11. The Irish Conference has welcomed a number of MOCCs and has in recent years also attempted to discern carefully how those who express an interest in serving the MCI might be assessed and matched carefully with appropriate appointments. The MCOOM has met the Secretary of the Irish Conference, the Director of Ministry, and the Senior Secretary of the Ordained Ministry Committee, and has agreed to explore the possibility of working jointly in this area by pooling the applications that the two conferences receive and discussing with applicants for the MCB whether they would be willing to serve in the MCI (and *vice versa*). The Ministries Committee therefore proposes that in any year that there are applicants who are willing to serve in (or to transfer into) either conference, the panels interviewing be made up of six representatives of MCB and two of MCI and any panel of reference of two MCB and one MCI committee members.
12. At present the MCB makes no requirement as to competence in the English language. Applicants for Tier 2 Minister of Religion visas are required to demonstrate competence at IELTS level 6.5. The Ministries Committee recommends that those applicants who do not need to meet this requirement for visa purposes but whose ability to function in English gives concern either to the connexional assessor or to the MCSC panel be required to demonstrate such competence (at the expense of the MCF) before initial stationing.

³ FC1a and R&R1a are the application forms completed by MOCCs seeking to serve in the MCB

13. The Ministries Committee asked the TMPRG to consider whether it feels that the MCB should develop shorter-term (i.e. one-year) programmes for MOCCs. The TMPRG felt that one-year programmes are a desirable outcome but would require very serious consideration and preparation. Such a programme would need to be distinct from the transfer/R&R process (perhaps administered through the World Church Relationships Team) with links to the Conference Office. The Ministries Committee therefore recommends that this matter is passed to the oversight group proposed in Recommendation 5 for further consideration.
14. The TMPRG knew of no reason why 15 January should be identified as the terminus ad quem for transfer applications. It is proposed that SOs 730 and 732 be amended so that the deadline for applications for transfer/R&R status is determined by MCSC on an annual basis in line with the candidating timetable and (if proposal above is approved) in consultation with MCI.
15. The TMPRG recognised that there is a number of the issues listed above that are not fully addressed in its proposals and that this is an area of continually developing concern. It is therefore proposed that the Ministries Committee asks the small oversight group (proposal 5) to reflect on the processes it oversees and to listen to concerns of MOCCs, circuits, and others and to report regularly to the Ministries Committee on policy issues in this area.

Areas of work ongoing; Fresh Expressions, VentureFX

- 24 Since the Methodist Church became one of the founding partners in Fresh Expressions, there has been an annual report of its activities to the Methodist Conference; initially via the Fresh Ways Working Group and more recently through the Ministries Committee report. This year, it includes a report of the VentureFX project.
- 25 The team to work in five areas of focus that were introduced in the 2015 report: Inspiring Vision; Networking strategically; Connecting Geographically; Supporting Practitioners; Resourcing Learning.
- 26 The Church of England, the Methodist Church, the Salvation Army, the United Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland are the existing Fresh Expressions partners. This year conversations have taken place with both the Baptist Union of Great Britain and with the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland about joining the partnership.
- 27 The board and team leadership have been giving considerable thought to the next quinquennium. Whilst there is still work to be done in advocacy, promotion and initial training for those engaging in fresh expressions, the emphasis is now shifting towards sustainability and embedding.
- 28 This will probably entail a shift of resources from a smaller ecumenical team working primarily on the areas of resources and communications to a more integrated fresh expressions presence in the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network.
- 29 Discussions between the board and senior Connexional Team leaders are planned which will lead to proposals being brought to the Methodist Council in due course.
- 30 The number of fresh expressions in the Methodist Church continues to grow. The 2015 statistics for mission show that we now have ~2800 fresh expressions of church recorded and that the average weekly attendance in worship accounts for 12% of Methodist worshippers. 93% of

Methodist Circuits now have at least one fresh expression of church as part of their mission and more than a third of individual churches.

- 31 The Reimagine Church Conference organised by the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network in October was oversubscribed and had a sense of excitement about it as delegates engaged with different ways of 're-imagining church'. A major ecumenical Festival event is to be planned to celebrate 15 years of the Fresh Expressions movement.
- 32 However, the point has not yet been reached where fresh expressions have become a normal part of Methodist culture. There is a good deal of research that suggests that a 'tipping point' is reached when 20% penetration is achieved. In the case of fresh expressions this will probably mean that 20% of circuit resources (budget, paid staff time, volunteer energy) are devoted to fresh expressions of church. This is the point when embedding will have been properly achieved and sustaining a mixed economy of mission shaped circuits becomes the primary agenda.
- 33 Last year, the Ministries Committee agreed to a piece of research that will qualitatively examine a random sample of circuits to give the church a more accurate picture of what is happening in fresh expressions. A researcher has been appointed on a one year contract to do this piece of research, detailed criteria have been established and a questionnaire developed to take this work forward. We are grateful for the generosity of the Church Army research unit who have shared with us the criteria which they have used for their research (published in 'Anecdote to Evidence' and more recently 'The Day of Small Things').
- 34 The Fresh Expressions team have concentrated their efforts on promoting and resourcing fresh expressions of church, but it is becoming increasingly apparent that many of the fresh expressions resources have a wider application.
- 35 It is therefore proposed that in the connexional year 2017-2018, the SRI team investigate a sample of those projects that do not meet the rigorous indicators applied in this year's research. The primary purpose of this research is to explore the extent to which fresh expressions thinking and resources are informing and shaping the mission of more traditional churches and circuits. The director of SRI has been consulted and agrees that this work is possible within existing budgets.
- 36 A good practice in fresh expressions small group has been set up (Connexional Fresh Expressions Missioner (convenor), a superintendent minister (the Revd Michael Redshaw), a fresh expressions practitioner (the Revd Matt Finch) and a member of the DMLN (Ms Katie Deadman). They have identified a number of circuits which are engaging well with fresh expressions as part of an overall circuit mission strategy and have begun conversations with them to identify practical discoveries of good practice that can be written up into a guide to be published in the next connexional year.
- 37 One of the outcomes of these conversations is a growing awareness that mature fresh expressions of church do not often become Methodist churches, and that emerging fresh expressions of church would benefit from more clearly identified guidance in Methodism's Constitutional Practice and Discipline.
- 38 The creation of a Fresh Expression category within Methodist practice is primarily to create space in which Methodist individuals, Churches and Circuits can engage with the communities around them in creative ways. The distinguishing feature of the Fresh Expression rather than a mission project serving the felt needs of a community is that there is always the intention to create Christian community (whether or not it looks like a traditional Methodist Church).

VentureFX

- 39 The Connexional Pioneering Ministries Scheme (VentureFX) has been in place since the first five pioneers were appointed in 2010. By 2012 a further nine pioneers had been added, bringing the total number to fourteen. The scheme was established as a response to the call in the Mission Shaped Church Report (2004) to identify and support pioneers who would form and lead fresh expressions of church. The coordinator of VentureFX and the Connexional Missioner for Fresh Expressions continue to work very closely together.
- 40 VentureFX was designed to be an experimental approach to pioneer mission, and the learning which is being distilled is being shared in appropriate ways. The pioneers themselves share this learning effectively in their local setting and often more widely, taking part in connexional, district and circuit events and sharing in conferences and gatherings of interested people. Recently, video interviews were made with each of the pioneers under the heading 'Thinking Allowed' in which they speak of their experiences and approaches, and these are available on the Methodist website to make their insights more widely available. This connexional year has been a pivotal moment in the development of VentureFX for three reasons:
- i. Some of the longer-established projects have come to the end of the first five-year phase and local discussions about whether or not they should continue into the second five years have proved more challenging than anticipated. Apart from the fact that a commitment to a further period of funding at a higher rate is required, it has also sometimes prompted sponsoring circuits or districts to query the shape of the emerging project. Some projects have come to a close, either because a pioneer has decided to move on, or because the sponsoring circuit or district chose not to continue the project into Phase 2. The way the ending of a project happens is extremely important and the Project Management Group responsible for overseeing the scheme is in the process of capturing and reflecting upon the valuable lessons to be learned in this phase. These lessons about transition of leadership, sustaining and building upon that which has already been developed, and ending well, have a wider potential to help pioneer situations across the connexion and the next few years of such learning from the scheme will be vital.
 - ii. While the original VentureFX projects are still providing important experience and learning, and will continue to do so in the remaining years of the scheme, the development of Methodist Pioneering Pathways means that the experiment can now begin to be integrated more fully into the life of the Church. Nearly 50 pioneers are now registered with Methodist Pioneering Pathways and VentureFX pioneers are playing their part in helping to resource this development.

Updates on responses to Memorials to the 2016 Conference – M1, M3 and M24

- 41 M1 Criteria for candidating for the ministry

Following discussion at the January meeting the Committee noted that it will consider recommendations from the Ministerial Co-ordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries on this memorial at its March meeting.

- 42 M3 Questions asked in the Presbyteral Session of Synod

The Committee drafted a statement in response to this memorial which affirmed the significance and centrality of the questions of the annual inquiry which was agreed and circulated to all presbyters.

43 M24 Circuits in tragedy and crisis

The Committee noted that a meeting had been arranged with a steward, superintendent and presbyter from circuits that had recently been affected by the deaths of ministers in the active work, to gather their views on whether there is further support that can be offered in such circumstances, beyond that normally arranged by the district chair. This small group created by the Ministries Committee has now met to listen to circuits affected by tragedy and crisis, in particular the death of ministers in the active service, It will consider a response following that consultation and will issue a guidance note for the districts to be reported to the March meeting of the Committee.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

43/1. The Council receives the report.

43/2. The Council affirms the 15 proposals regarding transferring ministers as set out in paragraph 23 and commends them to the Conference.