

The Oversight of Methodist Fellowship Groups

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| Contact Name and Details | The Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler Ministerial Coordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries |
| Status of Paper | Final |
| Action Required | Decision |
| Resolutions | 49/1. The Council receives the report. 49/2. The Council appoints the Fellowships Sub-committee of the Ministries Committee (names to be tabled). 49/3. The Council invites the One Mission Forum to consider how an annual opportunity to share insights and develop vision might be afforded to Fellowship Chaplains and others and to report to the Fellowships Sub-committee. |

Summary of Content

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| Subject and Aims | This report follows the report on Fellowship Groups to the 2015 Conference. |
| Main Points | The establishment of an oversight structure for Fellowship Groups and their Chaplains. The consideration of support and encouragement for Fellowship Groups and their Chaplains. |
| Consultations | One Mission Forum Connexional Grants Team Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee World Church Relations Office |

Summary of Impact

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| Standing Orders | N/A |
| External (eg ecumenical) | Relationships with autonomous Conferences should be clarified and enhanced |

The Oversight of Methodist Fellowship Groups

Introduction

1. This paper proposes a structure to address two requirements:
 - 1.1 The recommendation of the final report of the Working Group on Fellowship Groups to the Conference of 2015, viz,

“Set up a connexional advisory/support group for Fellowship Groups. The group to comprise a representative of each of the larger Fellowship Group and some smaller groups. The role of the group is to support Fellowship Groups, share good practice, encourage full and healthy integration and encourage members to become full members of the Methodist Church. The group would also act as an advisory group for the Methodist Church, particularly in relation to encouraging vocational discernment and providing orientation for ministers, leaders and churches.”
 - 1.2 The expressed need of the Fellowship Chaplains to be held accountable for their ministry by the Methodist Church in Britain (MCB) and of those responsible for the stationing of chaplains to ensure that the appointment of chaplains (and the periodic review of their appointments) conforms to our policy and practices.
2. The proposal follows the work of a group drawn together under the chairing of the Revd Ken Howcroft and comprising Fellowship Chaplains/ leaders, representation from the One Mission Forum and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and Connexional Secretary, and Connexional Team members of the World Church and Conference Office, in which it was agreed that responsibility for taking forward this piece of work now rests with the Conference Office.
3. The work on Fellowships is complex and continues to develop, with new groups having been established during the time that this work has been in progress. The group identified two clear needs:
 - 3.1 For a regular, structured, and representative body to whom Fellowship Chaplains and others involved in ministry within other language ministries could be held accountable.
 - 3.2 For opportunities for collegueship, fellowship and sharing for Fellowship Chaplains and others involved in ministry within other language ministries.
4. During the conversation it also became clear that there are other and complex issues around governance and oversight in relation to Fellowships and other groups, eg appropriate accountability for finance, grant applications, and agreements with other Conferences. It is essential that in all these areas we move towards a position of having transparent and equitable processes that honour and benefit both the Fellowship Groups and the MCB.

The Fellowships Sub-committee

5. In order to ensure that we have transparent and equitable processes that offer support and oversight to the Fellowship Groups, it is proposed to establish a Fellowships Sub-committee of the Ministries Committee the responsibilities of which shall be:
 - To receive an annual report from each of the Fellowship Groups. This report should include (*inter alia*) details of the congregations (their location and activities), an account of the ministry of the chaplain, and financial statements and accounts.
 - To receive a report from the Fellowships Forum.
 - To review the inclusion of Fellowship Groups in the life of the Connexion.
 - To challenge both Fellowships and districts or circuits to work more closely together.
 - To support the development of leaders in the MCB from the Fellowships.
 - To formulate with partner churches memoranda of understanding clarifying the roles, responsibilities, accountability, selection and appointment of Fellowship Chaplains.
 - To review the stationing of the chaplains and to ensure that appropriate succession planning is in place (including liaison with the autonomous Conference or partner Church).
 - To facilitate the creation of new partnerships on the fellowship or another model with autonomous conferences.
 - To review the funding of Fellowship Groups and to receive a report from the Connexional Grants Officer on connexional support for the work.
 - To ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for Fellowship Chaplains and those in similar roles to meet together in order to share in fellowship, to exchange ideas, and to offer mutual encouragement.
 - To report annually to the Ministries Committee (and through the Ministries Committee to the Council) on the work of God in the Fellowship Groups.
 - To ask the Ministries Committee to commission the production of resources for the use of Fellowships and other language congregations and the circuits that host them.

Constitution

6. The Fellowships Sub-committee shall comprise the duly appointed chaplains or other representatives of the Fellowship/ Ministries Groups recognised by MCB and those connexional officers with responsibility for the work under discussion. The Ministerial Coordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries (MCOOM) will act as its convener and secretary.

Meetings

7. The Sub-committee shall meet annually. The expenses of the meeting shall be a charge on the budget of the Conference Office.

A Gathering of Fellowship Chaplains

8. Standing Order 1001(1)(iii) charges the One Mission Forum with the responsibility of sharing insights and developing vision. The proposed gathering of Fellowship Chaplains and others clearly fits within that mandate, but it might be that the One Mission Forum itself is not necessarily the best way to do this. The Council is therefore asked to refer this matter to the One Mission Forum for discussion, either to set up a Fellowship Chaplains' Meeting within the Forum or to refer the matter back to the Fellowships Sub-committee which will then propose to the Ministries Committee a suitable annual gathering, the aims of which would be:
 - To draw together representatives of the fellowships and other language congregations for worship, conversation, and mutual support.
 - To celebrate good practice by sharing news of developments from the groups.
 - To promote inclusion by hearing from the groups and the circuits which host them.

Timeline for Implementation

9. These proposals are taken to the April 2017 meeting of the Methodist Council. If approved, a meeting of the Fellowships Sub-committee will be convened in May which will present a preliminary report indicating its ways of working to the Ministries Committee in September. Thereafter, the Fellowships Sub-committee will plan to meet in January or February.
10. The next meeting of the One Mission Forum will be asked to decide whether it should host the gathering of chaplains and report back to the Fellowships Sub-committee which will decide at its meeting in early 2018 how best to take forward this part of the work.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 49/1. The Council receives the report.**
- 49/2. The Council appoints the Fellowships Sub-committee of the Ministries Committee (names to be tabled).**
- 49/3. The Council invites the One Mission Forum to consider how an annual opportunity to share insights and develop vision might be afforded to Fellowship Chaplains and others and to report to the Fellowships Sub-committee.**