

57. The Fruitful Field Project

Basic Information

Title	The Fruitful Field Project
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Status of Paper	Final report
Resolutions	Contained within the report

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	A report of the recommendations of the Ministries Committee at the end of <i>The Fruitful Field</i> project – a project about the Church’s activities in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development
Main Points	See the overview of the report in paragraphs 1 and 2
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<i>Ministries, Learning and Development</i> , Agenda 2010: an introductory report received by the 2010 Conference <i>The Fruitful Field project</i> , Agenda 2011 <i>The Fruitful Field: A consultation document</i> , October 2011; <i>An interim response to The Fruitful Field consultation</i> , February 2012: two consultative documents published by the Ministries Committee
Impact	The report’s recommendations have significant educational, financial, legal and constitutional consequences.

Overview of the Report

- 1 Part 1** of the report is concerned with the context for *The Fruitful Field* project. Section A (paragraphs 3-5) briefly introduces the report's scope and mandate. Section B (6-24) roots our task of discernment in reflection upon scripture in the light of the tradition of the Church and our present experiences and contexts. Section C (25-47) outlines the origins of *The Fruitful Field* and describes the processes which the Ministries Committee has implemented since the 2011 Conference, which included a consultation period during the autumn of 2011. Section D outlines the current provision which the Conference sponsors and supports in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development. This section describes the pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources which are currently offered (49-55), the expert staff and the institutions, colleges and centres which support this provision (56-82), and the overall budget for this area (83-85). Section E outlines the financial, infrastructural and educational challenges and opportunities faced by the Church in this area (86-111). Section F outlines the ways forward explored by the Ministries Committee during the current connexional year. This section includes extracts from a consultation document published in October 2011 (113) and from the Committee's interim response to the consultation published in February 2012 (114). Those who have already read the consultation document and the interim response will be familiar with much of the content of sections D-F. The inclusion of these sections within this report formally places the information before the Conference.
- 2 Part 2** of the report outlines the Ministries Committee's recommendations. Section G outlines the primary and over-arching recommendation, namely the establishment of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network, whose purposes (117-126) are the support of discipleship development, ministry development, and church and community development across the Connexion, and the nurturing of scholarship, research and innovation. This section also identifies the values of the Network (127) and some of its early goals (128). A redevelopment of pathways for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders within the context of the Network is explored (132-147), as is the opportunity for the Network to participate within a developing ecumenical Higher Education partnership with the Church of England (148-156). Section H outlines the recommended structure of a staff team to support the Network's activities. The ways in which the staff team will work regionally (163-171) and in centres (172-177) are explored, as is the make-up of the Network's coordinating team (178-179). Implications for the Connexional Team which flow from the establishment of such a staff team are also outlined (180-186). Section I identifies the importance of appropriate spaces across the Connexion to support the Network's activities (187-193), as well as the scope for greater use of virtual learning environments (194-196). Section J recommends the establishment of two connexional centres to serve the Network, one based at Cliff College and the other at the Queen's Foundation. The role of centres within the Network is explored (198-200), as is the number of centres required (201-204). The section then assesses the institutions, colleges and centres currently sponsored and supported by the Church in the light of the Network's needs and activities (205-219). The contribution to be made by Cliff College is outlined (220-226), followed by a description of the various options which the Committee explored during the final stages of its deliberations (227-242). A single governance structure for the Network is recommended in section K (249-258), and the Network's recommended expenditure, funding streams, funds and assets are outlined in section L (259-274).

Part 1: Context

Section A: Introduction

- 3 The final resolution which accompanies this report invites the Conference to record its deep gratitude to all those across the Connexion who work diligently in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development, and to give thanks to God for their faithful service and witness. It is appropriate to begin in the same place, by drawing attention to the manifold gifts brought to the Methodist Church by the expert staff who serve the Connexion as tutors and officers in these fields. Often working in a context of insecurity and change, their contribution to the life of the Methodist Church has been significant; it is their diligent endeavours, sustained good practice and commitment to formation, growth and development in all its rich forms which makes much of what this report recommends possible.
- 4 The Methodist Church values deeply its activities in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development. Through its support of these activities within and across the Connexion, the Conference fulfils some fundamental aspects of its purpose and calling. At their best, these activities help to nurture and equip the Methodist people to be Christ-like **disciples** in an often un-Christ-like but never Christ-less world. At their best, these activities help to form and equip those called to a wide range of **ministries and roles** within and beyond the life of the Church to be effective leaders and servants of God's mission. At their best, these activities challenge and equip **Circuits and Local Churches** as they change and grow as Christian communities of faith, hope, love and mission.
- 5 The Conference last reviewed its strategy in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development in 2008, in the light of decisions about the allocation of resources made at the previous meeting of the Conference in 2007.¹ In response to the timescales laid down by the 2007 Conference, a process of reassessment of Methodist activities in these fields was requested by the Conference in 2010. This process was named *The Fruitful Field*, and an interim report about *The Fruitful Field* project was brought to the 2011 Conference. The Conference tasked the Ministries Committee with oversight of the project during 2011/2012. The Conference agreed a timeline for activities during 2011/2012, including an open consultation period, and asked the Committee to report to the 2012 Conference. This report about *The Fruitful Field* offers the Conference a comprehensive picture of the issues at stake, a careful exploration of the ways forward, as well as the Committee's developed recommendations.

¹ *Stirring up the Spark of Grace: Connexional Training Strategies*, Agenda 2008; *Talking of God, Acting for God: Report of the Training Institutions Review Group*, Agenda 2007

Section B: Our Starting Point

- 6 We start where many Methodists have done, by reflecting upon scripture in the light of our tradition as part of the one Church of Christ and mindful of our present experiences and contexts in order to seek to discern and pursue God's will for us. The New Testament is filled with material pertinent to Christian believers and Christian communities as they seek to be faithful and obedient. For our purposes here a good and appropriate place to begin is with the twelfth chapter of the letter to the Romans.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.**

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. **We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.**

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. **Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.**

Romans 12:1-11 (NRSV)

- 7 In this passage are three important motivations for the work which is presented here.

“Be transformed”

- 8 First, we hear the bold instruction to God's people: “Be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.”
- 9 This injunction reminds us of our fundamental calling as Christians to be transformed and transforming disciples. We are called to be life-long learners, life-long followers of Jesus, growing in confidence, and growing in Christian character and virtue. We are called to be hospitable, gracious and reflective disciples, fired by our knowledge and love of God, crossing boundaries, stepping into the new, engaging boldly with the world as it is now, challenging injustice, led by the Holy Spirit to be authentic bearers of the gospel in our families and communities.
- 10 This emphasis on transformation through renewal and growth reminds us of John Wesley's zeal for the transforming power of knowledge in all its forms. Wesley was clear about his priorities – “I would throw away all libraries rather than be guilty of the loss of one soul” – but he saw no conflict between learning and missionary activity. Indeed, he saw them as complementary, as his mix of evangelistic and educational activities at the London Foundery, at the Orphan House in Newcastle and

at Kingswood School bear witness. Wesley also clearly identified the importance of the education and development of his preachers, and dedicated much of his own energy to ensuring that preachers were “more holy and more knowing.”

- 11 This emphasis is not merely historic. In recent years we have reminded ourselves about the importance of this transformed and transforming discipleship. “The ministry of the people of God in the world is both the primary and the normative ministry of the Church... This ministry in the wider world, outside explicitly ecclesiastical contexts, and away from church premises, is expressed in Christ-like living, in social action and in witness to the Christian Gospel.”² “We affirm the validity of people’s witness, and their attempts to hammer out a theology to enable them to discover the holy in their daily lives, to be true to Christ wherever they are, and to experience the presence of Christ in all the confusion of the world as it is.”³
- 12 When, in 2008, the Conference last reviewed its strategy in the fields of formation, learning and development it prioritised the integrating of “all kinds of training and learning for lay and ordained. All are called to grow as disciples: all are charged to ‘go and make disciples.’ Learning for discipleship is not radically separate from learning for ministry, for ministry is the service of God’s mission, and that mission is entrusted to the whole Church. Today’s mission context calls for Christians who are engaged with their faith at the deepest levels of their being, who are able to speak of God and faith in ways that make sense in a challenging and sometimes hostile context and who are so skilled in the practice of godly living as to be able to show what the Kingdom looks like.”⁴
- 13 This report continues that commitment, found in the scriptures and our tradition; that a key responsibility of the Church is to nurture and equip the Methodist people to be Christ-like disciples in an often un-Christ-like but never Christ-less world.

Gifts and grace

- 14 The passage from Romans also offers a well-loved description of God’s people as one body made up of many parts, with each part using distinctive gifts to serve the whole. “We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.”
- 15 There are a range of lay and ordained ministries, offices and responsibilities which en flesh our discipleship of Christ and make up our church communities – “ministries which enable God-centred worship and prayer; ministries which help people to grow and learn as Christians; ministries which engage with the everyday acts of love, kindness and service of the people of God in the world; ministries which encourage patterns of witness and evangelism”⁵ – ministries which depend on one another and which are nurtured by one another to create loving, participative, rooted, pioneering and contextual church communities.

² *Called to Love and Praise*, Agenda 1999, ¶4.5.4

³ *The Ministry of the People of God in the World*, Agenda 1990, preface

⁴ *Stirring up the Spark of Grace: Connexional Training Strategies*, Agenda 2008, ¶1.1

⁵ *Taking Forward the Stationing Review Group’s Report*, Agenda 2009, ¶4.3

- 16 We have asserted that a healthy Connexion is properly a community of learning where every disciple is learning about their faith and telling the story of their faith, where every minister is both an educator and a reflective learner, and where every Circuit is a learning Circuit. We are reminded of our calling as disciples to be open to learning from a variety of sources, opportunities and disciplines within and beyond the life of the Church. Becoming “more holy and more knowing” is as much a priority for today’s Methodist Church as it was for Wesley’s movement 260 years ago. Our interdependence as Christians, our emphasis on “relatedness” as essential to the concept of “Church,” and our societal past rooted in mutual fellowship and shared discipline – these elements of our common life make manifest for us the teaching about God’s people as a body.
- 17 A recurrent theme and emphasis of the Methodist Church in recent times has been the importance of the ministry of the whole people of God within the corporate life of the Church. “‘The ministry of the whole people of God’ can be discerned in the recurring insistence [in the New Testament] that each has a gift (Romans 12:3-5; Ephesians 4:7; 1 Peter 4:10). The interdependence of all within the body of Christ issues in corporate forms of leadership (eg 1 Peter 5:1-2); even strong individual leaders such as Paul engaged in collaborative ministry (as the frequency of the word ‘fellow-worker’ in his letters shows, eg Romans 16:3, 9, 21)... The ministry of the people of God in the world is both the primary and the normative ministry of the Church... But the ministry of all Christians within the corporate life of the Church is also important. By their various gifts the members of Christ’s Body contribute to the health and growth of the Church. Indeed, the ministry of laypeople has been essential to the very functioning of Methodism from its earliest days. Far more Methodist services of worship are led by Local Preachers than by ordained ministers [and much pastoral work is conducted by class leaders and pastoral visitors]. The partnership of ordained and lay ministers remains vital to the work and well-being of the Church, even though this truth has often been lost sight of in the history of the Church.”⁶
- 18 In light of this it is unsurprising that another of the priorities identified by the Conference in 2008, when it last reviewed its strategy in the fields of formation, learning and development, was to emphasise the need to offer to “all learners opportunities to develop in godly knowledge, practice and character within the Christian community. Acquisition of knowledge and skills, developing the ability to perform tasks; these are held within a cycle of reflection which continually links what is being learned with the great story of salvation. Learning in this context is a means of growth in grace and holiness. Discipleship is rooted in the warmed heart, but in the ‘heart’ understood in its classical and biblical sense as the seat of will and conviction, not mere ‘feeling’ (emotion). Both Christian living and effective mission require feeling, thinking and doing to inform one another in openness to the Holy Spirit. In the words of John Wesley, “God works; therefore you can work... God works; therefore you must work... You can do something, through Christ strengthening you. Stir up the spark of grace which is now in you, and he will give you more grace.”⁷

⁶ *Called to Love and Praise*, Agenda 1999, ¶2.3.17 and ¶4.5.4

⁷ *Stirring up the Spark of Grace: Connexional Training Strategies*, Agenda 2008, ¶1.1

- 19 This report continues that commitment, found in the scriptures and our tradition; that a key responsibility of the Church is to form and equip all those who share in the ministry of God within the life of the Church to be effective leaders, servants and partners in God's mission.

“Be ardent in spirit”

- 20 The passage from Romans 12 is unambiguous about the urgency of our high calling: “Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.”
- 21 As a Church we have expressed our desire to be a more effective vessel for use by a missionary God, and our readiness to make difficult decisions to ensure that our focus matches our zeal. “The sharp challenge before us now is the extent to which we are willing to continue to reshape our life together in faithful obedience to God – locally, in Circuits, Districts, regions, and in terms of the whole Connexion – for the sake of the world... There is always a fertile period for making hard choices which must not be missed, a finite season in which the varied resources and energy needed to implement necessary decisions are available. Sadly what often happens in organisations, including Churches, is that decisions are not made at the point when resources and energy are sufficient to enact them, but are then made, usually reluctantly and as a last resort, when the required resources and energy to implement them are no longer available. Thankfully we are not yet in that deadly and disillusioning place, but... the fertile season when we are able to properly implement the kind of decisions we need to make is fast coming to an end.”⁸
- 22 This report is written mindful of the ways in which Circuits and Districts have reflected on their own life and witness. Across the Connexion over recent years, Circuits have mapped the size and growth of Local Churches, and considered the demography and mission needs of their communities. Having then reflected on the stewardship of the resources in their care, many Circuits have changed their structures so that they can better share in God's mission with their members, with those seeking Christ, and with the world. Such a willingness to reflect and to change should also mark our connexional structures.
- 23 This desire and intention to serve the Lord and “serve the present age” resulted in a third priority identified by the Conference in 2008. It is a priority to structure “the provision of training and learning resources so as best to serve the mission of the Church as a whole. This means in practice clustering resources regionally in a connexional and ecumenical context. It means making use of the resources for training and learning available outside the Church. It necessitates a flexible approach to boundaries within the Church in order to make the best use of scarce resources.”⁹
- 24 This report echoes that priority, taking seriously the injunction in the passage in Romans about ardency of faith, zeal in doing God's will, and resolve to serve Christ, here and now. In the present context this manifests itself in an owned responsibility of the Conference to challenge and equip Circuits and Local Churches as they change

⁸ *Contemporary Methodism: a discipleship movement shaped for mission [The General Secretary's Report]*, Agenda 2011, ¶12 and ¶14

⁹ *Stirring up the Spark of Grace: Connexional Training Strategies*, Agenda 2008, ¶1.1

and grow as mission-focused Christian communities of faith, hope and love. The responsibility to change and to develop our connexional structures and resources to meet the contemporary needs of Methodism and better serve the Lord is also taken with the utmost seriousness.

Section C: Our Processes

The origins of The Fruitful Field project

25 In 2010 the Conference received the report *Ministries, Learning and Development*. The report noted that activities in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development had:

demanding a great deal of the Methodist Conference's attention over recent years. For example, proposals regarding the institutions at which student ministers undertake initial ministerial learning programmes were considered at length by the Conference in 2006, and again in 2007.

It is, however, clear that this area of the Church's life does not lend itself to fallow years. Indeed in the report presented to the 2006 Conference, *Future Use and Configuration of Training Institutions*, it was noted: "because the whole education and training field is changing so rapidly any proposals should allow modification and development to take place as flexibly as possible and be robust enough to respond to future changes and opportunities." In other words, despite the significant amount of work undertaken during the 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 connexional years, ongoing change and opportunity are prophesied, and a willingness to modify and develop is demanded. This should not be surprising. A willingness to modify and develop is a natural requirement in the field of learning, education and training, and becomes obligatory for the Church's work in this area as it seeks to learn from, and to work alongside, secular education providers. More generally, as the missional context of the Connexion changes, so should the learning and development structure which resources it. Moreover, this area of the Church's work accounts – however justifiably – for a significant component of the Connexional Central Services Budget; consequently, willingness to assess the return achieved on resources expended, and to modify and develop the Church's provision accordingly, is a mark of good stewardship. Above all, a willingness to modify and develop is a proper part of the Christian experience, flowing from our response to the work of the Holy Spirit...

It is the responsibility of the governance bodies of the Church to exercise oversight of the modification, development and growth of this vital area of the Church's work. However, as the processes implemented during the 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 connexional years demonstrated, the tasks of ploughing, reaping, pruning and nurturing are complex.¹⁰

26 In order to support this ongoing task of assessment, modification, development and review, the report proposed the establishment of *The Fruitful Field* project. The project took its name from a reference in the "Liverpool Minutes", a series of resolutions on pastoral work adopted by the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of 1820 and revised in 1885. The resolutions outline the pragmatic, practical and

¹⁰ *Ministries, Learning and Development*, Agenda 2010, ¶12.2-2.3

efficient actions and structures discerned by the Conference as necessary to “spread Scriptural holiness through the land.” Yet, throughout, it is emphasised that, in order to secure the “revival and extension of the Work of God, the great thing to be desired is an abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit on ourselves and our families, our Societies and our Congregations.” Accordingly, the resolutions conclude with the affirmation that “we desire to ‘continue with one accord in prayer and supplication’... ‘until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.’”¹¹ This concluding image is taken from the thirty-second chapter of the book of Isaiah, where the prophet foresees the Spirit’s gifts creating, for a chastened people, a land of fruitfulness, righteousness, quietness and trust. It is a vision of organic development – a vision of ploughing, reaping, pruning, nurture and growth – and, as such, was judged to be an appropriate foundational image for a project which concerns the development of the Church’s existing connexional activities in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development.

- 27 The primary aims of the project were:
- [a] to support the governance bodies of the Methodist Church as they exercise their oversight of the Church’s learning and development infrastructure and programmes, by providing an overview of the Church’s connexional commitments and activities;
 - [b] to ensure that modifications and developments across the Church’s learning and development infrastructure and programmes are coherent, and that the work undertaken across the Church’s connexional commitments and activities is consistently reflective, collaborative, ambitious and prophetic.¹²
- 28 The report noted that the new Ministries Committee would be the natural locus for oversight of the project, and the project consequently became part of the work of the Shadow Ministries Committee during 2010/2011.

The decisions of the 2011 Conference

- 29 The 2011 Conference received the report *The Fruitful Field project*. The report had been prepared under the oversight of the Shadow Ministries Committee and an earlier version discussed and received by the Methodist Council. The report offered an overview of the Church’s existing commitments and resources in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development; this overview is revisited in section D of this report. This overview was informed by significant research and consultative work to establish, in particular, a robust understanding of the institutions, colleges and centres sponsored by the Conference to undertake activities associated with formation, learning and development in terms of their (a) core and peripheral activities, (b) learning environments, (c) premises, (d) partnerships, (e) governance arrangements, (f) financial activities, and (g) assets, funds and liabilities. Expanding on the general case for development and review made in the report to the 2010 Conference, the report also outlined particular challenges and opportunities faced by the Connexion in this area of its work, giving an indication of the possible future direction of travel in each case; these challenges and opportunities are revisited in section E of this report. The

¹¹ The “Liverpool Minutes 1820”, CPD, Vol 1, Book V, Part 3

¹² *Ministries, Learning and Development*, Agenda 2010, ¶12.4

report also outlined the care which had been taken during 2010/2011 to prepare the report in a reflective and collaborative manner. It noted that the report's considerations:

have been developed through informal discussions with a range of partners, practitioners and stakeholders. The direction of travel has been explored at meetings of the Shadow Ministries Committee and the Connexional Leaders' Forum, and through informal discussions with a number of learning institution principals and tutors, Training Officers, Local Preachers' meetings and Superintendents' meetings. Further informal consultations, including discussions with ecumenical partners, will follow over coming weeks... Explorations during the current connexional year have been reflective and collaborative, and several partners have welcomed this way of working, and expressed their confidence in the character of the judgements likely to emerge from such a reflective and collaborative undertaking. The importance of the Church's learning, formation, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development activities is such that a positive and inclusive way of working, fostered by reflection and collaboration, is crucial if misunderstandings and apprehensions are to be minimised. However, reflection and collaboration cannot and should not preclude the consideration of prophetic and ambitious proposals.

- 30 The report concluded that a report to the 2012 Conference would consolidate the project's deliberations and proposals. Factors which determine this timeline are outlined in section E below. However the report also noted that the deliberations and proposals brought to the 2012 Conference would need to be the subject of wide and open consultation, and a timeline for work during 2011/2012 (to include an open consultation period) was presented to the Conference for its approval. The Conference received the report and approved the proposed timeline, directing the Ministries Committee to have oversight of the project and to bring a report to the 2012 Conference.

Preliminary work after the 2011 Conference

- 31 Working within the mandate given to it by the Conference, the Committee undertook its own assessment of the Church's connexional commitments, activities and resources in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development. This assessment was informed by the research, informal consultations and analysis undertaken since the 2010 Conference. The outcome of the Committee's assessment was a vision for the future of the Conference's commitments, activities and resources in this area. The Committee was grateful for the opportunity to discuss its analysis and vision at a residential meeting of the Connexional Leaders' Forum held in late September 2011, to which members of the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Ministries Committee itself were also invited.

The formal consultation

- 32 Working to the timeline and processes approved by the 2011 Conference, the Committee then moved to prepare and publish a consultation document, which outlined much of the background and analysis which had informed the Committee's deliberations, as well as the Committee's vision for the future. The vision which was shared in the consultation document is outlined in section F of this report.

- 33 Reflections on all aspects of the consultation document were invited from “the Methodist people and all of our partners, colleagues and friends” from 17 October 2011 until 2 December 2011. Hard copies of the consultation document were sent to all those institutions and postholders whose work was discussed in the document. Hard copies were also sent to all District Chairs, Superintendent ministers, Synod secretaries and members of the Methodist Council. Several other office-holders and representatives received emails directing them to the consultation’s website. Hard copies were also sent to church leaders and officers within partner denominations and within Methodist-related organisations. Hard copies of the document could be ordered free of charge from the Connexional Team, and an electronic copy could be downloaded from the website. Over 1,900 hard copies of the consultation document were dispatched during the consultation period. The consultation’s web page was viewed 5,001 times, and the electronic version of the consultation document was downloaded 1,661 times.
- 34 During the consultation period, members of the Committee, supported by members of the Connexional Team, accepted a number of invitations to meet with staff teams and governing bodies at the institutions within the remit of the project. A residential conference of District and regional postholders (District Development Enablers, District Evangelism/ Mission Enablers, Participation Project Managers and Training Officers) and a meeting of oversight tutors were also able to dedicate time to a discussion of the consultation document. Each of the Regional Training Forums held a special meeting to make a response to the consultation, as did many other groupings throughout the Connexion. Meetings with ecumenical partners were also held. The consultation document was discussed by the Methodist Council, and at a meeting of past Presidents and past Vice-Presidents. Some of the Ministries Committee’s wider reflections were also shared through a series of podcasts/ vodcasts, which were able to respond to some frequently asked questions and requests for clarification raised during the consultation period.
- 35 The Committee received five hundred and eighty consultation submissions, running to nearly a thousand pages and containing over half a million words. Submissions were received from 382 individuals and postholders. The remaining 198 submissions came from Circuits, Districts, forums, institutions, ecumenical partners and other bodies. The Committee is particularly conscious of the volume of submissions received during the consultation period, and wishes to note its thanks to all who spent a significant amount of time preparing considered, detailed, creative, impassioned and informative submissions. The Committee is also grateful to all those who raised awareness of the consultation period and who encouraged others to share their views and experiences.

Responding to the consultation

- 36 Each submission made during the consultation period was seen by every member of the Committee. The Committee met residentially in late January 2012 so that members could discuss their reflections and their analysis of all that had been shared within the consultation submissions. On the basis of these deliberations, the Committee issued, on 21 February 2012, an interim response to the consultation. Electronic copies of the Committee’s interim response were sent to all those who had made submissions during the consultation period (unless those making a submission had done so by post, in which case hard copies were sent). Electronic

copies of the interim response were also sent to all those institutions and postholders whose work was discussed in the consultation document, to all District Chairs, and to the members of the Methodist Council.

- 37 The interim response contained key reflections drawn from the consultation submissions. These key reflections are outlined in section F of this report. Within the interim response, most of the key reflections were accompanied by relevant extracts from the consultation submissions. The extracts included were diverse and, occasionally, one extract contradicted another which appeared under the same heading. In this respect, they echoed the range of voices heard through the consultation submissions. The interim response also contained a summary of areas for further exploration.
- 38 It was not the Committee's intention, when it launched the consultation period, to publish all of the submissions. When the Committee, in response to a concern raised in one of the submissions, revisited the question of whether the submissions should all be published, the Committee did not judge it appropriate to change its earlier decision. It was evident from many of the submissions that several of those making submissions had been able to share reflections (for example about their own ministry or about an institution for which they exercise legal responsibilities) which could not be shared more publicly. The volume of submissions was such that the Committee also judged it to be its responsibility to digest and identify the key reflections included within the submissions, and to share these key reflections in an accessible format.
- 39 In its interim response, the Committee noted:
In order to ensure that our deliberations take full and fair account of the consultation submissions, we have asked a small number of past officers of the Conference for their assistance. These past officers will be given access to all of the consultation submissions, to the notes from our meetings and to preparatory papers drawing on the consultation submissions. We will ask these past officers to reflect on whether the key reflections which we have drawn from the consultation submissions are supported by their reading of the submissions. We will also ask them to identify any key reflections which they feel have been left out of our considerations so far. We are fully aware that the final responsibility for our recommendations to the Conference rests with us, but we are grateful in advance to those who are helping to support our deliberations in this way.
- 40 The Revd Dr Brian Beck and the Revd Alison Tomlin agreed to act as verifiers. In their report they confirmed that the key reflections which the Committee had drawn from the consultation submissions were supported by the submissions themselves. They wrote that "our overall response is to congratulate the Committee on the way in which it has picked up and incorporated in its revised vision so many of the concerns expressed." They acknowledged that the Committee's response was an interim response and that many of the details raised in the consultation submissions had yet to be addressed. They noted that "more could have been done to allay the fears and suspicions expressed in the responses" but were reassured that further detail would be provided by the Committee in its report to the Conference. On the question of whether the submissions should all be published, they noted that "there were some calls from those who did not trust the process for the submissions to be published.

We support the decision not to do so. Some submissions were offered in confidence. Some were simply rude and reflected poorly on those who sent them.”

Subsequent deliberations

- 41 The Committee’s interim response to the consultation was discussed by the Methodist Council in March 2012. Further reflections were also invited from the leaders of institutions whose work was discussed in the consultation document.
- 42 Since March, and prior to the preparation of this report, the Committee has met on two occasions. At these meetings, as at previous meetings, the Committee has interrogated material closely, debated propositions robustly, and proceeded by consensus. Where the Chair of the Committee has requested a vote, as happened in the case of the recommendations agreed by the Committee at its late April meeting, the members present voted unanimously. The developed recommendations which were agreed by the Committee at these meetings are outlined in sections G-L.
- 43 As the Committee’s recommendations have been formed, advice has been sought from the Connexional Treasurers. As section K of this report (focusing on expenditure, funding streams, funds and assets) has been developed, it has been scrutinised by one of the Connexional Treasurers on behalf of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

A reflection from the Ministries Committee on its work

- 44 The Committee has sought to work reflectively, collaboratively, ambitiously and prophetically in response to the task which it was given by the 2011 Conference. This report constitutes the culmination of a year’s deliberations and of an even longer period of evidence-gathering and analysis. The Committee is pleased that so many voices from across the Connexion and beyond have already been able to contribute to the development of the project.
- 45 The Committee hopes that this report, read in the context of the other documents produced by the Committee during 2011/2012, provides the Conference with a comprehensive picture of the issues at stake, a careful exploration of the ways forward, as well as the Committee’s developed recommendations.
- 46 However the Committee is clear that the decisions of the Conference – whatever they may be – will mark the beginning, and not the end, of a period of change. The need to nurture and enable reflection and collaboration, as well as ambitious and prophetic vision, does not end with the presentation of this report. The Committee is grateful for the care, imagination and patience which so many – not least those most affected by its work – have shown over recent months, and its prayer is that good will and mutual trust will continue to be a mark of our discussions.
- 47 The Committee has been very aware of being supported by the prayers of a large number of people across the Connexion as it has undertaken its work over recent months, and wishes to record its thanks for the support and sustenance which has been so generously offered by so many. The Committee has sought to underpin all of its work in worship and prayer, and the Committee’s members wish to assure all those across the Connexion who work so diligently in the fields of formation, learning

and development of their prayers as we take our next steps forward together in the direction which the Conference will determine.

Section D: Our Current Provision

48 This section describes the current provision which the Conference supports in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development. It does so by describing current pathways – those opportunities, programmes and resources which are made available to a wide range of students, learners and researchers. It then describes the expert staff posts and the institutions, colleges and centres which design, deliver and support these pathways. Finally, it describes the expenditure and the funding streams which make up the budget for this provision.

Pathways: Opportunities, programmes and resources

Pathways for student ministers

49 Diaconal and presbyteral candidates accepted by the Conference follow either two-year or three-year pathways as student ministers. Pathways are currently offered at ten institutions, though only three of these are normally able to offer the full-time pathway. Every effort is made to structure each student minister's programme so that it is appropriate for individual learning needs and for personal circumstances. However, it is anticipated that student ministers following the full-time pathway do so as their primary occupation, while student ministers following the part-time pathway are likely to be doing so alongside other commitments, and not as their sole undertaking. Student ministers following the full-time pathway receive a bursary of around £12,000 per annum, from which all maintenance costs must be met, along with means-tested dependent child payments where relevant. For student ministers following the part-time pathway, travel expenses and some other expenses incurred during the course of following the pathway are reimbursed.

50 All student ministers seek to meet a common set of competencies clustered around six headings: Vocation (call and commitment); Being in relationship (with God, self and others); The Church's ministry in God's world; Leadership and collaboration; Learning and understanding; Communication. Although the competencies are common for all student ministers and across the ten learning institutions, the courses and curricula offered at each institution are different and designed by the institution itself. The vast majority of courses and curricula involve the student minister working towards a Higher Education award. The Higher Education awards are made available through partnerships negotiated by each institution. Student ministers who are judged by the local and the connexional Oversight Committees to have met the required competencies are recommended to the Conference for stationing, usually as probationers.

51 The 2007 Conference decided to plan to support 120 student ministers at any one time, half of whom were projected to follow full-time pathways, and half to follow part-time pathways. This projection has proved largely accurate over the intervening five years.

The pathways for those preparing to be admitted as Local Preachers and for those preparing to be appointed as Worship Leaders

52 *Faith & Worship* is the standard course for those preparing to be Local Preachers: seventeen units of study, grouped into four sections, typically tutored in the Circuit. The course was first published in 1990, and revisions intended to give another five years' 'shelf life' were phased in from 2001. At this point examinations were replaced by submission of exegeses and a worship portfolio for each section. Each unit (after the introductory three) is assessed by written assignment, marked by a local tutor and submitted for second marking and moderation by connexional assessors. A pass mark of 40% is required for each piece of work in order to progress. The Local Preachers' Meeting has oversight of the key elements of the pathway and its progress: providing a mentor, arranging for service reports, conducting interviews at the required stages, and recommending continuance on trial and readiness for admission as a Local Preacher. Recently, a number of alternative pathways have been developed and appropriately authorised. Currently seven such courses are in existence. Some are based in learning institutions, and some carry university validation. Some are ecumenical programmes developed by Regional Training Partnerships; others are Methodist courses offered by a particular District. Those who have previously completed other courses or have relevant experience can apply for exemptions from units of the *Faith & Worship* course by applying for accreditation of prior experience and learning (APEL). To be granted APEL, evidence is required to show that prior learning meets all the learning outcomes of units from which they are requesting exemption. Because of the particular way those learning outcomes are expressed, and also because of the way in which *Faith & Worship* units combine theory and practice, it can be difficult to grant exemptions. As well as successfully completing a course, preachers on trial must also successfully complete two Circuit interviews held at the Local Preachers' Meeting, which will draw on an assessment of two trial services. There are currently approximately 1,500 preachers on note and on trial across the Connexion.

53 The *Worship Leaders' Training Pack* is the connexionally approved pathway offered to those becoming Worship Leaders. This was first published in 1996, and consists of seven sessions designed for use in a small study group. There is no formal assessment. Appointment as a Worship Leader is subject to triennial review.

Other pathways and opportunities

54 Beyond these major pathways, several other pathways and opportunities have recently been supported, or are currently supported, by connexional resources. These include:

- 54.1 *Foundation Training*: This was adopted by the 1999 Conference as a pathway for those "judged to have a strong sense of Christian vocation to exercise their discipleship through some form of ordained or authorised lay ministry," and aimed "to enable the particular form of vocation and the person's ability to exercise it to be more accurately discerned."
- 54.2 *Extending Discipleship, Exploring Vocation (EDEV)*: A successor to Foundation Training adopted by the 2006 Conference, EDEV was envisaged as "a new approach to exploration of discipleship and vocation for a wider group of people, located closer to their home Circuit or area, with the support of training institutions." Connexional funds were made available to support the development of EDEV across Regional Training Networks for three years from September 2008.

- 54.3 *Continuing development in ordained ministry:* These pathways are enabled both through grants (annual grants to Districts, and application grants to ministers and probationers studying for Higher Education awards) and through connexional courses (including courses in supervision skills for Superintendents, the annual Superintendents' conferences, and pathways for ministers from other denominations or Partner Churches selected to serve the Methodist Church).
- 54.5 *Continuing development for Local Preachers:* Although appointment as a Local Preacher is not subject to any formal review, all those admitted as Local Preachers from September 1995 onwards undertake to "participate in a programme of continuing Local Preacher development." The type of programme is not further defined, and provision of suitable opportunities varies greatly across the Connexion.
- 54.6 A number of focused programmes and courses are supported, including: *Core Skills for Churches*, for children's workers (launched in 2006); *Creating Safer Space, Foundation Module*, for office-holders who require safeguarding training (2011); *Disciple*, a course designed to nurture and deepen discipleship through Bible study (1993); *Don't Panic*, for church stewards (1998); *Encircled in Care*, for pastoral visitors (2007); *Mission Shaped Intro (MSI)*, an introduction to Fresh Expressions of Church; *Mission Shaped Ministry (MSM)*, for those launching and leading Fresh Expressions of Church; *Spectrum*, for youth workers (1996); *Step Forward*, a course for small groups (2009); *Talking of God*, a course on faith-sharing for individuals and congregations (2011); and *What Shall We Do Now?*, for those working with older people (2002).
- 54.7 *World Church-related pathways:* These include pathways for those selected to become Mission Partners, and for leaders from overseas Partner Churches sponsored for study in Britain as part of the Scholarship and Leadership Training programme.
- 54.8 *The Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies:* The core activity of the institute, governed by a British Committee and a committee based in the United States of America, constitutes a week-long conference, gathering scholars from around the world for lectures and working groups in a variety of areas, including biblical studies, theology, history, worship, liturgy, evangelism, mission and ecumenism.
- 54.9 *Research opportunities:* Connexional resources support a number of research activities, which have a particular focus on contemporary issues of local, national and global significance for the Church and society. See in particular paragraphs 82.13 and 82.18 below.
- 54.10 *Opportunities for Higher and Further Education students and career-starters:* Two centres currently offer accommodation and related support for students and career-starters in London. These centres offer a safe and supportive place to live, and can allow access to advice and life-skills input within a Methodist environment. See in particular paragraphs 82.14 and 82.16 below.
- 55 Connexionally-resourced postholders also design and deliver pathways within Circuits, Districts and regions in the areas of: adult education, candidating, change, children and youth, collaborative working, discipleship, faith-sharing, leadership, Methodist identity, the 'Missing Generation', mission, safeguarding, visioning and vocation.

People: Expert staff

Tutors

56 The longest-standing cohort of expert staff are tutors deployed within institutions, colleges and centres to support and oversee the education and formation of student ministers. The existence and distribution of tutorial posts have naturally been closely connected to the existence and distribution of institutions, colleges and centres, and these are considered at greater length in paragraphs 75-82 below. Today a nominal 18 tutorial posts are supported by connexional resources across 10 institutions primarily to oversee the education and formation of student ministers, but also to nurture and contribute to communities of formation, scholarship and research.

57 As well as tutors overseeing the education and formation of student ministers, connexional resources also support tutors within a wider range of institutions, whose emphasis is on training, theological education, research and development for a wider audience. The Inspire Network, a connexional project of the Methodist Church, has its roots in the work of tutors at Cliff College. Similarly the *Step Forward* pathway, mentioned above, is designed and supported by staff within the Guy Chester Centre.

District Youth Officers

58 As well as tutors at institutions, colleges and centres, Methodism has a long tradition of supporting officers working within and across Districts. This tradition began in the 1950s with the post of District Youth Officer. A report from the Division of Education and Youth to the 1996 Conference noted that the strengths of the provision of District Youth Officers included:

- the development of strong ecumenical working relationships in youth and children's work
- the establishment of training programmes, including *Kaleidoscope* and *Spectrum*
- the promotion of the safeguarding of children and young people within the whole Church community
- the development and sustaining of youth projects.

District Evangelism/ Mission Enablers

59 Meanwhile, a report from the Home Mission Division to the 1993 Conference "urge[d] every District to consider appointing a District Evangelist/Mission Enabler/team to encourage and assist churches in their evangelistic task." The report suggested that "people, not paper, are our best resource" and encouraged every District to explore making an appointment, "in order that Local Churches may be motivated, guided, trained and resourced in the development and implementation of their evangelistic strategy."

60 Since 1993, many Districts have invested in District Evangelist/Mission Enablers and have been able to supplement their own funds with connexional grants from the Mission in Britain Fund. During 2010/2011 there were 17 District Evangelist/Mission Enablers working in 15 Districts. Of these 17 individuals, 12 are presbyters, many of whom are also serving in a part-time Circuit appointment.

Training and Development Officers

61 In 1996, District Youth Officers were replaced by Training and Development Officers (TDOs) – a move made in response both to the changing needs of the Church, and to the development by local authorities of their own youth provision. The Division of Education and Youth's report to the 1996 Conference envisaged that:

- all Local Churches and Circuits should have access to a team of TDOs who will cooperate with and utilise ecumenical links and theological resource centres
- the officers should enable the whole people of God to become more effective in mission and ministry, particularly among young people
- the officers should encourage the Local Church to develop as a learning community.

62 By 2000 every mainland District had access to a half-time TDO, who were all members of the Connexional Team, and were supported by a number of other Connexional Team staff in a variety of implementation and coordination roles. Each TDO had a Strategic Management Committee with a membership that included representation from the District and a member of the Connexional Team.

District Development Enablers, Training Officers and Regional Training Networks

63 The *Team Focus* report from the Joint Secretaries Group to the 2007 Conference assessed the role of TDOs and "overwhelmingly pointed to the appreciation in the Districts for the work of TDOs, for two main reasons: (1) the capacity to do vital work that having a TDO provides and (2) the way in which the TDOs strengthen a sense of connexionalism within the Church." However the report also concluded "that the current TDO scheme is unnecessarily complex in its management structure."

64 The conclusion of a number of reports to the 2007 Conference was that the training and development functions previously held together within the role of the TDOs should be split into two distinct roles, that of the District Development Enabler and that of the Training Officer.

65 The District Development Enabler role was:

- to facilitate and organise the District's implementation of initiatives arising from the *Priorities for the Methodist Church*
- to facilitate changes within the District in response to the changing context of its mission and ministry, including support for the *Regrouping for Mission: Mapping a Way Forward* process
- to encourage the implementation of these initiatives across the District and within the Circuits, in particular the use of resources – people, property, and finance.

66 Each English District received funding for a half-time District Development Enabler with separate arrangements being made for Scotland, Wales and the Island Districts. Twenty-one District Development Enablers were appointed in England, nine of whom had been TDOs.

67 The District Development Enabler posts are funded as a fixed-term project, finishing at the end of 2012/2013.

- 68 The creation of the role of Training Officer was closely tied to the simultaneous creation, by the 2007 Conference, of Regional Training Networks. The report of the Training Institutions Review Group to the 2007 Conference led to the creation of five Regional Training Networks in England and one each in Scotland and Wales.¹³ The Networks were to:
- assess the training needs of the region
 - deliberate on the distribution of connexional and other resources to meet those needs across the network
 - maintain the best possible training systems for the region
 - be connexionally accountable to the Methodist Council
 - coordinate the work of the Training Officers.
- 69 Each English Regional Training Network received funding for two full-time Training Officers, whose role was “to assist the network in the delivery of connexional needs for the whole people of God.” It was assumed that Training Officers would be regional officers, working collaboratively across the network, but the underlying District structure made this difficult, and most officers were based in one or two Districts. Eighteen Training Officers were appointed in England, seven of whom had been TDOs, and separate arrangements were again made for Scotland, Wales and the Island Districts.
- 70 The outcome of discussions in Scotland and Wales was the appointment in each case of three officers to cover both the role of the District Development Enabler and the role of the Training Officer, one of whom was to be the director or manager, coordinating the work of the other two officers. The Island Districts responded in different ways, some utilising staff and others funding more localised input.
- Participation Project Managers***
- 71 One of the integral parts of the Youth Participation Strategy, as identified by a report to the 2007 Conference, was that each of the Regional Training Networks would also have at least one youth participation worker, whose role would be:
- supporting youth enablers, now known as One Programme Participants (OPPs)
 - delivering training at Local Church, Circuit, District and connexional levels
 - project development and networking with external and ecumenical bodies and agencies
 - providing additional support to Training Officers and institutions, colleges and centres for children’s and youth work training and coordination.
- 72 These posts were entitled Participation Project Managers (PPMs). Each English Regional Training Network has a full-time PPM; however, funding was not available for the envisaged roles in Scotland and Wales in the wake of reductions made to the overall budget of the Youth Participation Strategy.
- 73 The PPM posts are funded as a fixed-term project, finishing at the end of 2012/2013.

¹³ The five Regional Training Networks (RTNs) in England are: North-West RTN (districts 6, 9, 11, 15, 18, 19 and 21); the Yorkshire and North-East RTN (13, 16, 20, 25, 27 and 29); Midlands RTN (5, 17, 22, 23 and 28); South and South-West RTN (7, 10, 12, 24 and 26); South-East RTN (14, 34, 35 and 36).

Other District posts

- 74 It should be noted that, over recent years, most Districts have moved to employ administrators, and some have created salaried posts for other specialities (eg youth, safeguarding, property and finance).

Places: Institutions, colleges and centres

- 75 John Wesley spent part of March 1749 at Kingswood School. His journal for that time notes:
My design was to have as many of our preachers here during the Lent as could be spared: and to read lectures to them every day, as I did to my pupils in Oxford. I had 17 of them in all. These I divided into two classes, and read to one Bishop Pearson *On the Creed*, to the other Aldrich's *Logic* and to both *Rules of Action and Utterance*.
- 76 This gathering probably constitutes the first course for Methodist preachers. Something more intense and sustained – indeed, the establishment of a seminary – had been in the mind of the first Conference convened by Wesley in 1744. At the turn of the nineteenth century, there was renewed pressure for “some kind of seminary for educating workmen for the vineyard of our God,” and the 1806 Conference went as far as to circulate a sort of consultation document advocating the same. However it was not until the 1830s that nervousness about the dampening effect of a college on the evangelistic zeal of young preachers gave way to recognition of the need for those younger preachers to be equipped to offer an apologetic to an increasingly literate population within a growing Wesleyan Connexion. The 1834 Wesleyan Conference therefore agreed to the establishment of a theological institution, and, by January 1835, students were beginning their studies at the institution's first home in rented premises in Hoxton. The next 50 years saw a radical growth in learning institutions across the Methodist Connexions. The Wesleyan Methodists opened four large establishments: Didsbury in Manchester; Richmond in Surrey; Headingley in Leeds; Handsworth in Birmingham – all deemed branches of the Wesleyan Theological Institution. The Primitive Methodist Church, the United Methodist Free Churches and the Methodist New Connexion also moved to establish learning institutions, with a strong focus on the north of England.
- 77 A century after the beginnings at Hoxton, and thus a few years after Methodist Union in 1932, Hartley Victoria College in Manchester served the united Church alongside the four original Wesleyan establishments at Didsbury, Richmond, Headingley and Handsworth and the newer Wesleyan foundation of Wesley House, Cambridge.
- 78 Looking beyond institutions for student ministers, Cliff College was, by this time, established at its present site in Derbyshire, having moved from its roots in Bolton and Rochdale; Ilkley College was providing a base for the training and organisation of the Wesley Deaconess Order; Southlands College, from premises in south London, was training female teachers. Also a partnership in Birmingham was allowing some Methodist missionaries to be trained at Kingsmead College; Guy Chester's first gift of land in Muswell Hill in London is only a few years away; and Hilda Porter's vision of a Methodist International House in London is surely in gestation.
- 79 The late 1960s and early 1970s were years of significant change for institutions forming student ministers. The 1967 Conference closed Headingley College, merging its activities with those of Didsbury College, already relocated from Manchester to

Bristol. The 1971 Conference approved a merger of Handsworth College and the Queen's College (an Anglican theological college), to establish what is now known as the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education. Finally, the 1972 Conference elected to close Hartley Victoria College.

- 80 Though the site of Hartley Victoria was sold, the College itself maintained an existence through a pioneering relationship with the Free Churches in Manchester. Luther King House Educational Trust, of which Hartley Victoria College now forms a part, was the first in a series of ecumenical ventures in which the Methodist Church participated, which saw new forms of education for student ministers – pathways which largely did not rely on residence in a college community. This development led to a proliferation in the number of institutions sponsored by the Methodist Church for the delivery of pathways for student ministers. In 1955, six colleges educated student ministers. By 2005, 20 institutions were being used by the Church to educate student ministers – 2 of them recently established by the Methodist Church itself, in the form of the Wesley Study Centre in Durham and the York Institute for Community Theology.
- 81 Major decisions about our learning institutions were made by the 2007 Conference (the 2006 Conference having rejected proposals brought for its consideration). The decision of the 2007 Conference located full-time, bursaried student ministers at three institutions (the 2006 Conference having been asked to locate such pathways at only two institutions). The most recent decision of the Conference in this context was the decision of the 2010 Conference to close Wesley College, Bristol.
- 82 Today's distribution of Methodist-sponsored institutions, colleges and centres is as follows:

Institutions receiving student ministers following full-time pathways

- 82.1 *The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham:* The Queen's Foundation receives student ministers from the Methodist Church and ordinands from the Church of England, the latter as full-time students and, in higher numbers, as part-time students from the Midlands region. It also hosts the Selly Oak Centre for Mission Studies (SOCMS; see paragraph 82.17 below), the Centre for Black Leadership and Ministries (largely sponsored by Anglican funding streams) and a research centre. *Governance:* Independent ecumenical entity with both the Methodist Church and the Church of England having seats on the governing body
- 82.2 *Wesley House, Cambridge:* Wesley House forms part of the Cambridge Theological Federation with ten other Cambridge-based or regional learning institutions from the Anglican, Reformed, Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions; teaching and aspects of common life are shared across the federation. Several of the other institutions rent space within the confines of Wesley House. *Governance:* Independent Methodist entity where the Conference appoints the governing body
- 82.3 *The Wesley Study Centre, Durham:* The Wesley Study Centre is linked by a memorandum of association to St John's College, Durham – a college of Durham University. St John's is also the parent body of Cranmer Hall, a theological college serving the Church of England; teaching and aspects of common life are shared by Cranmer Hall and the Wesley Study Centre. *Governance:* Methodist Council entity

Institutions receiving student ministers following part-time pathways

- 82.4 *The Eastern Region Ministry Course: ERMC is a provider of part-time pathways for the Church of England and the Methodist Church, based in Cambridge and the surrounding region. Governance: Independent ecumenical entity with both the Methodist Church and the Church of England having seats on the governing body*
- 82.5 *Hartley Victoria College, Manchester: Hartley Victoria College is part of Luther King House, within which it works in partnership with the Northern College (serving the United Reformed Church and the Congregational Federation), the Northern Baptist Learning Community and Manchester Unitarian College. Governance: Methodist Council entity*
- 82.6 *The South-East Institute for Theological Education: SEITE is a provider of part-time pathways for the Church of England and the Methodist Church, based in London and Canterbury. Governance: Independent ecumenical entity with both the Methodist Church and the Church of England having seats on the governing body*
- 82.7 *The Southern Theological Education & Training Scheme: STETS is a provider of part-time pathways for the Church of England and the Methodist Church, based in Salisbury. Governance: Independent ecumenical entity with both the Methodist Church and the Church of England having seats on the governing body*
- 82.8 *The South-West Ministry Training Course: SWMTC is a provider of part-time pathways for the Church of England and the Methodist Church, based in Exeter and the surrounding region. Governance: Independent ecumenical entity with both the Methodist Church and the Church of England having seats on the governing body*
- 82.9 *The Urban Theology Unit: UTU is a provider of part-time pathways for the Methodist Church, based in Sheffield. Governance: Independent ecumenical entity*
- 82.10 *Wesley College, Bristol: The 2010 Conference made the decision to close Wesley College, Bristol. Methodist formational activities have now come to an end at the College, even though the College site continues to be used during 2011/2012 for a limited number of academic and commercial purposes. Governance: Methodist Council entity*
- 82.11 *The York Institute for Community Theology: The York Institute for Community Theology is a provider of part-time pathways for the Methodist Church, based within the precincts of York St John University. Governance: Methodist Council entity*
Other connexionally-sponsored institutions associated with formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development
- 82.12 *Cliff College, Derbyshire: Cliff College offers a range of learning opportunities, from summer schools and short courses to residential undergraduate programmes and post-graduate awards. Governance: Methodist Council entity*
- 82.13 *CODEC (the Centre for Biblical Literacy and Communication): CODEC is a research centre in communication in the digital environment. It is a centre within St John's College, Durham and has no legal status apart from St John's.*

- 82.14 *The Guy Chester Centre, London*: The Guy Chester Centre is a major provider of student accommodation. The Centre also provides conferencing facilities, and offers quiet days and retreats along with a range of short courses and day courses in a number of spiritual, pastoral and organisational fields. *Governance*: Methodist Council entity
- 82.15 *The Methodist Diaconal Order Centre, Birmingham*: The Centre provides a base for some of the formational activities of the Methodist Diaconal Order. *Governance*: Methodist Council entity
- 82.16 *Methodist International Centre, London*: MIC is a provider of student accommodation. It is also seeking to establish a bursary fund to support the academic studies of overseas students. MIC's activities are supported by the activities of MIC Ltd, which provides hotel accommodation and conferencing facilities in part of the MIC building. *Governance*: Methodist Council entity
- 82.17 *The Selly Oak Centre for Mission Studies*: SOCMS exists as a centre within the Queen's Foundation. SOCMS provides a base for preparing Mission Partners and pathways for leaders from overseas Partner Churches sponsored for study in Britain as part of the Methodist Church's Scholarship and Leadership Training (SALT) programme. SOCMS has no legal status apart from the Queen's Foundation.
- 82.18 *Southlands Methodist Trust (associated with Southlands College and the University of Roehampton)*: The Trust exists to support research and other activities of relevance to the life and public witness of the Methodist Church through the making of grants and in partnership with the Higher Education sector.
- 82.19 *The Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History*: The Centre, based within the precincts of Oxford Brookes University, supports research-related posts and activities, especially in the field of Methodist history, and hosts a number of archival collections. The Centre was not placed by the Conference within the remit of the project, and the terms on which the Trust is resourced do not enable the 2012 Conference to assess the use of those resources within the context of *The Fruitful Field* project. Its presence and contribution is acknowledged here at the request of its trustees. See also paragraph 248 below.

Archival and heritage-focused institutions or resources

- 82.20 *The Methodist Archives and Research Centre (deposited with the John Rylands University Library, Manchester)*: Historic and contemporary archives pertaining to the life and witness of the Methodist Church in Britain are held for the Church by the John Rylands University Library.
- 82.21 *The Methodist Missionary Society Library (deposited with the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London)*: Historic and contemporary archives pertaining to the overseas missionary work of the Methodist Church are held for the Church by SOAS.
- 82.22 *The New Room, Bristol*: The governing body of the New Room is considering developments on the site in order to be able to improve its educational facilities. In order to enable such developments to be aligned with *The Fruitful Field*, the New Room has, at the request of its trustees, been included within the remit of the project.

Expenditure and funding streams

83 The Church currently spends approximately £6.2 million each year on the learning pathways, expert staff and institutions described above. The division of that expenditure budgeted for 2012/2013 is illustrated in table A.

Table A: Division of expenditure (2012/2013)

<i>Grants and fees to institutions, centres and colleges</i>	<i>£2,232k</i>
<i>Maintenance payments to student ministers</i>	<i>£1,116k</i>
<i>Other ministerial development programmes and costs</i>	<i>£620k</i>
<i>District Evangelism / Mission Enablers</i>	<i>£186k</i>
<i>Training Officers</i>	<i>£930k</i>
<i>District Development Enablers</i>	<i>£868k</i>
<i>Participation Project Managers</i>	<i>£248k</i>
Total	£6,200k

84 It is possible to recategorise the division of expenditure into (a) practitioner staff costs, (b) other costs at institutions, colleges and centres, (c) maintenance payments to student ministers, and (d) pathway and programme costs. This division is illustrated in table B.

Table B: Alternative division of expenditure (2012/2013)

<i>Practitioner staff costs</i>	<i>£3,325k</i>
<i>Non-staff costs at institutions, colleges and centres</i>	<i>£1,139k</i>
<i>Maintenance payments to student ministers</i>	<i>£1,116k</i>
<i>Other pathway and programme costs</i>	<i>£620k</i>
Total	£6,200k

85 These significant costs are met from a number of connexional funding streams, as illustrated in table C. Approximately £3 million is received more or less directly from the District Assessment (contributed by Circuits through Districts). The remainder of the £6.2 million is received from four funds. The Connexional Priority Fund (CPF), the Mission in Britain Fund and the World Mission Fund are three connexional funds which receive income largely from levies (in the case of the CPF) and donations. The remaining contribution from funds is received from the Training Assessment Fund. This was built up at the turn of the millennium and has been used over recent years, with the Conference's permission, to sustain a high level of connexional expenditure on learning pathways, expert staff and institutions.

Table C: Division of funding streams

<i>Methodist Church Fund</i>	<i>£3,038k</i>
<i>The Training Assessment Fund</i>	<i>£1,674k</i>
<i>The Connexional Priority Fund</i>	<i>£1,116k</i>
<i>The Mission in Britain Fund and the World Mission Fund</i>	<i>£372k</i>
Total	£6,200k

Section E: Challenges and Opportunities

86 This section outlines the financial, infrastructural and educational challenges facing the Methodist Church in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development.

Expenditure, funding streams, funds and assets

87 The future of the funding streams which support the Conference's current provision in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development presents a significant challenge. Commitments from the World Mission Fund and the Connexional Priority Fund come to an end in their present form at the end of 2012/2013. These commitments constitute almost 24% of existing funding streams. Similarly, as the Conference no longer solicits donations towards the Training Assessment Fund, the balance of the fund is diminishing, and will be exhausted by the end of 2012/2013. It constitutes 27% of existing funding streams. This is a fundamental challenge to the capacity to fund future costs.

88 As existing funding streams dry up, there is necessarily the challenge of planning for lower expenditure so that the core elements of connexional activities in these fields can be maintained and developed by lower and more sustainable expenditure from connexional funds. Alongside this challenge stands the opportunity to identify and nurture new funding streams. In this context arises the need to assess, with some urgency, the future use of those capital assets which are dedicated to formation, learning and development, to ensure that the Conference's funds held in this way are focused on contemporary needs.

89 This financial climate and the ongoing responsibilities of good stewardship also emphasise the need to ensure that funding streams are used to support effective expenditure. There can be no room for duplication of effort or competition between different components. On the contrary, it is essential to maximise collaboration and coherence in order to exercise wise stewardship of limited but still considerable resources.

Premises and capital expenditure

90 An ongoing challenge for the leaders and governing bodies of institutions, colleges and centres is that of maintaining a balance between expenditure on educational activity and tutorial staff on the one hand, and on bursarial functions (such as administrative staff, domestic activities, and premises) on the other. The proportion of expenditure which many of our institutions have been able to dedicate to educational activity and tutorial staff has been higher than that achieved in the secular sector, which has brought significant benefits. However, it has also meant, within a wider context of tight budgets, that expenditure on premises in particular may not have been as high as it ought to have been to maintain buildings, teaching spaces and student accommodation to a good standard. Added to these is the need to be proactive in meeting new requirements and expectations (eg the 2010 Equality Act enabling disabled students to take part in the full range of activities of student life at learning institutions). Moreover it has rarely been possible to identify or to set aside funds for even moderate capital expenditure projects. Five institutions directly or indirectly governed by the Conference and the Methodist Council currently face the need to embark on projects to maintain, refurbish and improve their premises which involve expenditure of approximately £12.3 million. The free reserves available

within the five institutions to support this work stand at approximately £4.5 million. Other institutions are unable to embark on expansionary projects which require moderate levels of capital expenditure as funds to support these activities are not available.

- 91 This scale of the potential investment opportunities across the Connexion challenges the Conference to respond in a coherent and holistic way to a number of significant decisions within different institutions. The challenge is a bold one – to make sure that we are making the best use of the premises which the Conference dedicates to learning activities.

Changes in the Higher Education sector

- 92 A further set of challenges emerges from the changes taking place within the Higher Education (HE) sector. Government changes to HE funding mean that a form of hidden subsidy which has supported the Church's theological education activities has now been removed. In narrow terms, this means that it is extremely likely that the costs for the Church of engaging with theology departments in the HE sector will increase. It is also very likely that serious questions will be raised about the future of theology departments within many universities. The long-term consequences of the HE sector changes currently being implemented are likely to be more far-reaching still. A more competitive and diverse sector is envisaged by the government's reforms. Therefore, as well as navigating a reactive path through present insecurities as universities absorb the effects of a significant change of culture, the Church will be required to engage with the HE sector in a manner which moves away from established assumptions.

Ecumenical and international partnerships

- 93 Resources in the field of formation, learning and development are often shared with those of other denominations and traditions. Several learning institutions, for example, are deeply embedded in partnerships with other institutions affiliated with the Anglican, Reformed, Baptist, Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions.
- 94 Regional Training Partnerships (RTPs) – which often include learning resources from the Methodist Church, the Church of England and the United Reformed Church – were seen by many as offering the possibility of coherent, systematic ecumenical collaboration across regions in England. However, it is by now clear that RTPs have delivered only patchy and sporadic successes, and are sometimes seen as demanding a disproportionate amount of energy for minimal results. Ecumenical partnerships in Scotland and Wales have often found more effective ways of releasing energy and resources for shared learning and development.
- 95 The success of the *Mission Shaped Intro* and *Mission Shaped Ministry* courses, developed by the Fresh Expressions agency, offers an example of energising pathways which can emerge from ecumenical partnerships.
- 96 Any assessment of connexional learning commitments must take seriously the opportunities offered by ecumenical partnerships, and an alignment of visions across denominational boundaries will be crucial for future growth and development. It is also important to note the opportunities offered by a wider ecumenical agenda. Many of our learning institutions are already reaching out to new ecumenical

partners in the Black Majority Churches, para-church organisations, large non-aligned churches, and smaller denominations in the holiness tradition.

- 97 Similarly, it is important to act on the opportunity for more structured partnerships with the learning activities of overseas Partner Churches. Over recent months, several of our institutions have sought to implement exchange programmes with seminaries which serve the United Methodist Church, with positive results. During the same period the Methodist Church in Britain has been approached by learning institutions which serve other Partner Churches seeking national partnerships and structured collaboration. There are rich opportunities here for the Methodist Church to be able to respond to the desire of our partners for a richer and more accessible British base – a base at which the Methodist family can gather and within which insights and challenges from across the world can be shared and nurtured.

Making the most of our people

- 98 The resources of skilled and knowledgeable staff in institutions and in regional and District teams have been a catalyst for many developments within the life of the Church in recent years. The role of tutors in developing supervision courses for Superintendents, the role of District Development Enablers in the *Regrouping for Mission: Mapping a Way Forward* process, and the role of a range of officers in delivering EDEV pathways are three examples of activities which have made a real impact within Circuits and Local Churches. Expert staff have been able to operate effectively to enable connexional priorities to be interpreted contextually and appropriately within Local Churches, Circuits and Districts.
- 99 As the funding packages for some of these posts come to an end, it is important to seek a secure footing for some of these activities in the future. As this is done, it will be important to include, alongside paid staff, the great contribution made by volunteers within the life of the Church. In this area, as in many others, building up effective teams of lay, ordained, salaried and volunteer individuals will be crucial for future effectiveness and sustainability.

Learning in communities

- 100 An important opportunity arises from the hunger discerned across the Connexion for more of the work of learning and formation to take place within a greater number of communities. Such an appetite is, in many ways, a natural corollary of an emphasis on the Church as a discipleship movement shaped for mission. This invites the widest range of people to receive and share in the ministry of God, and invites the whole Connexion, in turn, to prioritise the wherewithal to equip and resource this vibrant activity.
- 101 The result is a need for resources to be deployed to sustain or create a wide range of formational communities. In addition to the collegiate communities at institutions, colleges and centres, and in addition to the ad hoc gathered communities required for certain training events, there is a widely-discerned desire to nurture and sustain formational communities within the Circuit, District or region, and as web-based virtual communities. Our tradition of small groups, classes and bands gives us rich examples of what it means to have and to support formational communities within the life of Circuits and Local Churches.

102 A vision for a wider and more dispersed group of learners chimes with the desires expressed both by student ministers and also by institutions, colleges and centres for a greater proportion of formal learning activity to take place in local contexts. There will always be a place for institutions, colleges and centres configured as stable communities of faith and formation. However, qualitative evidence also suggests a growing desire within the Methodist Church for the development of distributive learning programmes, where learning for lay and ordained people has, as its primary locus, the context in which ministry is being exercised and in which disciples are being formed.

Local Preachers and Worship Leaders – a case study

103 Patterns of resourcing and ministry across the Connexion are changing, and the support offered to emerging expressions of ministry must be effective and apposite. However, there is an equal need to provide support of the highest quality for established ministries within the life of the Church. Local Preachers and Worship Leaders make an immense contribution to the life of the Connexion. It is hard to overestimate the strategic importance of these ministries as a crucial public face of the Methodist Church, and as catalysts for the discipleship and mission of the whole people of God. This sub-section looks at the particular challenges of the Church's existing arrangements for forming and training those called to preach and lead worship.

104 The existing pathways for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders are outlined above in paragraphs 52-53. A proportion of people report a very positive experience of the current mainstream courses: *Faith & Worship* and the *Worship Leaders Training Pack*. However, there is widespread acknowledgement that existing pathways for forming and training Local Preachers and Worship Leaders need significant revision. This is seen in the number of Memorials to Conference addressing this area in recent years, as well as in the results of several consultation processes which have informed this section of the report.

105 Some concerns focus on the accessibility of the pathways which are offered. This is particularly the case for pathways for forming and training Local Preachers. Although many people report that studying *Faith & Worship* was a good experience, at least a comparable number say that *Faith & Worship* has been a significant barrier or hurdle.

105.1 Much of this may be to do with learning styles that do not match the way in which *Faith & Worship* is delivered and assessed. Some tutors manage to do excellent work in adapting delivery and supporting those on note and on trial in their care. However, there is evidence that considerable numbers of people who sense a call to preach find *Faith & Worship* an unrealistically time-consuming process. It was originally intended that *Faith & Worship* would take, on average, two years to complete. Based on connexional data for the 990 people who went on note from January 2000 onwards and have since been accredited as Local Preachers, the average time to complete is now a little over four years and four months (from on note to admittance), with an average of nine and a half months of that time on note. Nearly a fifth (191) required an extension to the five-year limit. One participant in a consultation meeting noted that "I felt a strong call to preach but the course was too much to cope with whilst having a young family... I felt extremely guilty stopping the

preaching but that didn't mean I was no longer called, it just meant that the time was difficult."

- 105.2 Others find *Faith & Worship* too 'academic' – which, when this is explored further with those expressing dissatisfaction, is not a criticism of a pathway which has theological depth and rigour, but a concern about the style of formation, training and assessment. *Faith & Worship* "only has one learning style: reading and writing," says one person who was consulted; "this isn't how I learn." "The course material is dry and boring – it needs bringing alive," noted another who was consulted. Another noted that *Faith & Worship* and its assessment "is based too much on words... When submitting details of my service I can only supply the written script which takes no account of the slides and music that I used."
- 105.3 Various groups find the style of *Faith & Worship* particularly inaccessible, including: (a) younger people, whose experience is usually of a very different style of education; (b) people with less experience of formal learning; (c) those with dyslexia; and (d) people for whom English is an additional language (who may be competent speakers of English, but find it difficult to study and write in English).
- 105.4 It is worth noting that becoming a Local Preacher is a pre-requisite for being recommended to the Conference as a candidate for presbyteral ministry, so potential hurdles for preachers also inevitably hinder people following a call to presbyteral ministry.
- 105.5 As well as affecting the lives and calling of these individuals, there is a particular and specific impact on some linguistic and culturally-distinctive fellowships and societies, who report difficulty in finding preachers, or in offering accessible pathways for those within their congregations who discern a call to preach.
- 105.6 Given these pressures, some fail to complete *Faith & Worship*. It should be acknowledged that any discerning formational process, however accessible, will result in a proportion of people deciding that preaching is not for them. However, stories have been shared about preachers 'dropping out' because they run out of time, will and energy, rather than through positively discerning that their call lies elsewhere. This is not helpful pastorally, and does not demonstrate a godly valuing of the people involved.
- 106 Other concerns focus on the content of *Faith & Worship* and the *Worship Leaders Training Pack*. New forms of worship have developed that were not envisaged at the time the materials were written, and both Local Preachers and Worship Leaders find themselves operating in contexts which are very different from those of 20 years ago. New hymns, worship styles and technological developments also have an impact on the way we worship. There is an increased awareness of the need to lead effective worship at services intended primarily for young people. Some areas of life and worship that are increasingly significant (for example all-age worship, declining levels of biblical literacy, or living in a multi-faith society) have a relatively low profile in the study materials. Equipping Local Preachers and Worship Leaders to become reflective practitioners is a key factor in enabling ministry in increasingly diverse contexts.

- 107 Other concerns focus on the preparation offered for collaborative working between ministries. The authorisation of Worship Leaders is a relatively new development in the life of the Methodist Church. Pathways for forming and training Worship Leaders have developed independently from those for Local Preachers, but, given the overlap of the roles, it may be appropriate for common elements to be shared. This also presents an opportunity to see pathways shared with those who are being formed or trained for other ministries or roles. Moreover, there is a crucially important opportunity here to see pathways shared with the wider Circuit and Local Church community, and to configure and present some of these pathways as opportunities to deepen discipleship and knowledge of the story of the faith.
- 108 Other concerns focus on supporting the delivery and resourcing of the pathways. Many tutors do excellent work, but some Circuits have difficulty recruiting tutors, and there is a lack of support and development opportunities for tutors themselves. Group study can often offer the better experience for most people, but many of those on trial report a sense of isolation, and the existing system does little proactively to encourage the establishment of cohorts or groups across a wider area than the Circuit. The potential for the use of virtual learning environments has grown, and needs to be explored alongside more traditional delivery methods.
- 109 Other concerns have focused on the emphasis placed, in the case of Local Preachers, on onerous initial formation and training, which potentially results in a diminished emphasis on continuing development. In a fast-changing world there is a need to find ways of promoting, resourcing and enabling continuing development for existing Local Preachers and Worship Leaders.
- 110 Finally, consultations highlight concerns about perceptions. For many people across the Connexion, *Faith & Worship* is no longer an attractive and energising proposition. However, there are also some who are positive about *Faith & Worship*, and suspicious of “alternative routes” and changes that they perceive as a “dumbing down” of the formation and training of preachers. An urgent and comprehensive solution is required, and the report returns to this matter specifically in paragraphs 132-147.
- 111 This case study demonstrates an area of particular need. More generally, it also demonstrates the need to dedicate greater resources to support strategically important but historically under-supported ministries within the life of the Connexion. However, it also begins to indicate some of the benefits which may accrue for the Methodist people if it is possible to weave together the resources and the skills which successful formation and training require. By coordinating and networking these resources and skills, and by prioritising collaboration and openness in their ongoing use, it is possible to see energy for formation and training being shared widely and generously within and across the lives of Circuits and Local Churches. These motifs are explored further in section G below.

Section F: Steps towards a Way Forward

- 112 Section C has already outlined the processes which the Committee adopted during the current connexional year. A central component of the committee’s work was the production of two key public documents, one of which shared a vision of the future and invited comments from all interested parties, and the second of which offered a

response to the comments shared with the Committee about its vision. The full versions of the documents remain available at www.methodist.org.uk/fruitfulfield. This section contains extracts from these two documents, thereby formally placing these elements of the Committee's work before the Conference.

The vision outlined in the consultation document

113 The consultation document published in October 2011 concluded by outlining the Ministries Committee's vision for the future of the Church's priorities, commitments and resources in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development. It did so as follows:

Pathways

113.1 We should seek to establish high quality, flexible connexional pathways, which can be delivered in a number of different communities and contexts, and which meet the needs of a discipleship movement shaped for mission and the needs of the ministries of the whole people of God.

Why?

113.2 We envisage pathways which help us as a Church to become a better discipleship movement shaped for mission. We therefore envisage pathways which help to deepen the discipleship of the Methodist people. We envisage pathways which will help us to be more confident in making new disciples of Jesus Christ. We envisage pathways which can equip and nurture the ministries of the whole people of God – including the ministry of Circuit leadership teams, small group leaders, Local Preachers and Worship Leaders, ministry among children and young adults, and the ministry of those in pastoral roles. We envisage pathways which will help us to identify, train and resource those appointed to be Superintendent ministers. We envisage pathways which serve a new world where 'pastoral charge' is also necessarily 'missional charge' – pathways which will help all who exercise ministries within the life of our Church to provide a renewed focus of pastoral and missional identity within our churches and communities. We envisage pathways which equip and support the patterns of leadership required to sustain the growth and development of fresh expressions of Church and the new communities which are flowering among us. We envisage pathways which will support the work of the Connexion as we seek to revitalise our worship, enhance our evangelism and make better use of our resources for kingdom purposes.

113.3 We envisage pathways which can be delivered in a number of different communities – the local community of the Circuit, the regional community of the District or region, the virtual community of the Internet, and the gathered community of a learning hub. We envisage pathways which can be delivered by a number of different people and by effective teams of lay, ordained, salaried and volunteer individuals.

113.4 We envisage pathways which are flexible and coherent enough to encourage and enable initial and continuing learning. Whereas our existing learning pathways (for example, for Local Preachers) focus on initial learning, having flexible and coherent pathways for continuing and ongoing learning will enable greater access and a more balanced pattern of growth and development in ministry over several years.

113.5 We envisage pathways of a consistently high quality, which are supported by sufficient resources to ensure that quality can continually be assessed and enhanced.

What else did we consider?

113.6 We considered maintaining our existing ad hoc approach to the development of pathways. New pathways are currently developed by individuals or groups within

Local Churches, Circuits, Districts, learning institutions and the Connexional Team in response to a discerned need. Such developments can easily be reactive, as opposed to being a proactive response designed to help us meet declared outcomes or visions. Such developments can also frequently lead to under-resourced pathways being developed simultaneously across the Connexion, with insufficient sharing of knowledge and skills. Such an approach can easily starve new developments – such as online learning – of the energy and resources required to get them off the ground. We envisaged that the coherence which would be provided by the establishment of connexional pathways would release energy and enable much greater collaboration.

People

113.7 We should seek to establish a single connexional network of skilled and knowledgeable staff, including both regional staff (coordinated and resourced within regional teams) and tutorial staff based in a learning hub.

Why?

113.8 *Connexional:* We envisage a network which is focused on the priorities of the Church – focused on equipping the Church, equipping the Methodist movement, and equipping God’s people. We envisage a network which is coherently coordinated so as to enable information to be shared between colleagues (both tutors and trainers) and across regional and institutional boundaries. We envisage this contributing to the design and implementation of connexional pathways, and avoiding duplication of work. We envisage some of the energy released by this way of working enabling a greater focus on the needs of Circuits and Local Churches.

113.9 *Open:* We envisage a network which shares its knowledge and skills with lay, ordained, salaried and volunteer individuals across the Connexion, and which learns from their experiences. We envisage a network with the capacity to nurture effective links with ecumenical partners within regions and localities, taking the initiative to instigate and create such links where they don’t already exist. We envisage a network which can develop knowledge of and links with best practice both within and outside the Church.

113.10 *Broad:* We envisage a network which includes a broad range of knowledge and skills among its practitioners in the fields of learning, formation, training, theological education and development. We envisage a network which has the capacity to make the Church think, and to do some creative thinking and some detailed research and development on the Church’s behalf. We envisage a network which can continue to assist our Districts, Circuits and Local Churches as they change and grow. We envisage a network which can strive to be representative of the diversity of the Church, and which can engage with the diversity of the Church, helping us all to belong together.

113.11 *Sustainable:* We envisage a network marked by warm collegueship, collaboration and mutual support. We envisage a network which draws on the experience of good and weak practice over recent years, so as to minimise the need for radical overhaul in the near future. We envisage a network which, as an organic unit, can respond in an evolutionary manner to the changing needs of the Church.

113.12 *Excellent:* We envisage a network made up of appropriately qualified practitioners, ably managed and coordinated. We envisage a network of individuals interested in their own professional development, and whose professional development is resourced. We envisage a network which can create and sustain an ethos of quality assurance and enhancement – a network which can design, deliver and offer pathways of the highest quality for the Methodist people.

What else did we consider?

- 113.13 We considered a radical reduction in the level of connexional resources dedicated to dispersed staff posts. We recognised the financial savings which this would produce, and we envisaged that some Districts would be able to resource some provision from their own funds. However we also acknowledged the level of acceptance and high regard for dispersed officers which has grown since the creation of Training and Development Officers in 1996. We also acknowledged the ethos of connexionalism which undergirds the provision of such officers, funded from connexional resources and distributed with a degree of parity across the Connexion. We also acknowledged a crucial role for a dispersed staff function in supporting a desire to enable greater learning and development in Circuits and local communities.
- 113.14 We considered maintaining the status quo, acknowledging that doing so would see the District Development Enabler and Participation Project Manager posts cease at the end of the 2012/2013 connexional year. We believed that wider change should be considered in order not to lose an emphasis on development, change and growth within our connexional learning resources. We also believed that wider change was required in order to seek to bring together our tutors and our dispersed staff within one network. Maintaining the status quo would risk maintaining an existing divide between ‘tutors’ and ‘trainers’.
- 113.15 We considered alternative patterns of coordination. We acknowledged that there would always be a tension between connexional coordination and more local management patterns. We believed that grouping dispersed staff in regional teams, while ensuring that those teams were also part of a connexional network alongside tutorial staff, would sustain the links with local needs while also enabling involvement in the development and implementation of connexional pathways and policies. We emphasised the importance of drawing on the experience of good and weak coordinating practice over recent years.

Places

- 113.16 We should seek to establish a single connexional hub on one site.

Why?

- 113.17 *Connexional:* We envisage a hub which is focused on the priorities of the Church – focused on equipping the Church, equipping the Methodist movement, and equipping God’s people. We envisage a hub which is configured to equip, support and challenge Circuits in their work of discipleship and mission. We envisage a hub which is responsive and accountable to the Conference – and whose well-being is also the responsibility of the Conference. We envisage a hub of which the Methodist people can be proud – and a hub, at the heart of a network of learning, which can worthily appeal to the generosity of the Methodist people for support. We acknowledge that such a hub will play a new and distinctive part in the life of our Connexion, and envisage much care being taken to locate its activity and charisms within our existing patterns of life, witness and leadership.
- 113.18 *Open:* We envisage a hub which can choose to dedicate its resources to initiate and sustain key partnerships. We envisage a hub which is open to links with partner denominations and with Partner Churches, at home and overseas. We envisage a hub which can nurture intentional and mutually-beneficial links with the Higher Education sector, allowing the Church to listen to and learn from theologians and academics in the secular sphere, and enabling the Church to contribute to the discourses of academic theology and professional practice. We envisage a hub which can help the Church to be a presence in the world, not least by helping the Church to update its apologetic and to exist in places where culture is formed.

113.19 *Broad*: We envisage a hub which has the capacity to engage in activities across the fields of learning, formation, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development. We envisage a hub which is comfortable equipping the discipleship of the Methodist people, and which is comfortable supporting both lay and ordained ministry. We envisage a hub which, working through the connexional network of skilled and knowledgeable staff, can have an impact across the Connexion. We envisage a hub which is representative of the theological breadth of Methodism. We envisage a hub which can strive to be representative of the diversity of the Church, and which can engage with the diversity of the Church, helping us all to belong together.

113.20 *Sustainable*: We envisage a hub with a sound educational and business model, set up to succeed for 25-35 years, not 3 or 5. We envisage a hub which, as an organic unit, can respond in an evolutionary manner to the changing needs of the Church.

113.21 *Excellent*: We envisage a hub which is an excellent environment for learning and formation. We envisage a hub which can offer accessible hospitality to the Methodist people, and to our partners, colleagues and friends. We envisage a hub which, through the design and operation of its premises, helps us to reduce our carbon footprint. We envisage a hub steeped in an ethos of quality assurance and enhancement, designing, delivering and offering pathways of the highest quality for the Methodist people. We envisage a hub which can be a beacon of excellence for the Methodist Church and even for other denominations and traditions.

113.22 We acknowledged the advantages of locating the hub within a new and customised space, designed and properly configured to meet today's learning needs. We acknowledged that energy and resources might be released by the creation of the hub on a new site. We considered issues of geographical location and accessibility. However we did not move to make a recommendation at this stage, as it was our preference to focus in the first instance on the principles and ethos of the hub and on the needs which it will meet, before moving on to consider the secondary issues of location and configuration.

What else did we consider?

113.23 We considered the radical option of not maintaining any connexional hub or learning institution, relying instead on patterns of regional and dispersed learning supported through a range of networks and partnerships. However we acknowledged our tradition of gathering together connexionally and our need for a place which can help us to be formed as connexional people. We acknowledged that the ability to offer connexional hospitality of this sort was not only important for our common life, but as a base from which to build relationships with partner denominations and Partner Churches. We also acknowledged the pragmatic need to house and care for the physical resources which we presently hold connexionally, including libraries and collections.

113.24 We considered maintaining the status quo, acknowledging that budgeting pressures and issues of institutional viability would, in all likelihood, lead to some attrition and institutional failure over coming years. Such an outcome would inevitably prove very painful for the institutions concerned. We wished to exercise our duty of care for our institutions in a more proactive, strategic and holistic manner than could be envisaged within such a laissez-faire approach. Maintaining the status quo would also potentially mean that the Connexion would be forced to revisit the issue of the use of learning institutions again in the near future, as several systemic challenges would be left unaddressed. We were eager to identify a vision at this stage which had lasting potential and the promise of stability.

113.25 We grouped our existing institutions in various ways, and considered alternative patterns of future use, favouring some groupings over others. As part of this exercise we also considered the possibility of supporting more than one connexional hub. We acknowledged the risks of being tempted by newness, and we acknowledged the powerful ties of history, tradition, collegiality and partnership. However we also acknowledged the territorialism and competition which can exist between institutions, and the complications which the Church faces as it relates to institutions which are differently configured and controlled. We acknowledged the opportunities and challenges which we face, and believed that our desire to respond with vigour to the hope set before us made the identification or establishment of more than one hub counter-intuitive.

The reflections contained in the interim response to the consultation

114 In February 2012, the Committee published an interim response to the consultation. The document began by summarising the key reflections drawn by the Ministries Committee from the consultation submissions. It did so as follows:

Pathways: Opportunities, programmes and resources

114.1 The consultation submissions have helped the Ministries Committee to discern the importance of pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources which: (a) have at their heart a commitment to the formation of transformed and transforming disciples, ministries and communities; (b) are drawn from a deep understanding of the missiological and ecclesiological purpose of the Methodist Church; (c) are focused on equipping God's people to be Christ-like disciples in the world; (d) are focused on equipping those called to a wide range of ministries within the Church; (e) support change, growth and organisational development within and across Circuits and Local Churches; (f) encourage widespread participation by being accessible, contextual, responsive, well-communicated and excellent; (g) are developed through interactive relationships and dialogue with local communities – their diverse and continually developing contexts, needs and aspirations; (h) are coherent and comprehensive, incorporating the breadth and diversity of Methodism; (i) can be experienced and delivered through a range of methods and in diverse contexts, including within and across Circuits and Local Churches, and in virtual learning environments; (j) enable practice-based formation for a significant number of student ministers preparing for ordained ministry; (k) emphasise ongoing (as well as initial) formation within a wide range of ministries; (l) nurture apt and excellent scholarship and research, in partnership with the Higher Education sector; (m) can be developed alongside and shared with ecumenical partners wherever possible; (n) are authorised in an appropriate manner.

114.2 The Committee will therefore: (o) oversee work to identify and develop the principles and values of such pathways; (p) oversee work to identify and develop a framework and scenarios for such pathways, with an emphasis in the first instance on contemporary discipleship formation, formation for accredited lay ministries (including Local Preachers and Worship Leaders) and initial ministerial formation; (q) oversee work to develop these principles, values and frameworks in collaboration with ecumenical partners.

People: A team of expert staff

114.3 The consultation submissions have helped the Ministries Committee to discern the importance of a team of expert staff: (a) which has at its heart a commitment to the formation of transformed and transforming disciples, ministries and communities; (b)

which has an intentional impact within Local Churches and Circuits; (c) with skills across the team in formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship and organisational development; (d) which is connexionally coordinated and developed; (e) which has both a dispersed presence across the Connexion (including across and within the nations and jurisdictions of the Connexion), and a gathered presence across and within centres; (f) which builds on current strengths and good practice across the Connexion.

114.4 The Committee will therefore oversee work to develop and cost a model for such a team.

Places: Centres and spaces

114.5 The consultation submissions have helped the Committee to discern: (a) the importance of places, centres and spaces which have at their heart a commitment to the formation of transformed and transforming disciples, ministries and communities; (b) the importance of nurturing Learning Churches and Circuits as beacons of excellence in formation, learning and development; (c) the need for far-reaching changes to ensure viable, sustainable and excellent centres which are able to focus on the formation of disciples, ministries and communities; (d) the importance of effective and intentional connections between centres and Learning Churches and Circuits; (e) the importance of centres which can connect with partners across the World Church; (f) the importance of centres which allow deep sharing with ecumenical partners; (g) the importance of centres which can nurture apt and excellent scholarship and research, in partnership with the Higher Education sector; (h) the importance of centres which can appropriately house connexional archives and other historic resources; (i) the need for a shared and common governance framework for all centres; (j) the need for a range of spaces for formation, learning and development across the Connexion; (k) the importance of learning from current strengths and good practice; (l) the importance of and demand for the work of Cliff College, especially in the field of mission and evangelism, and especially in the field of lay formation.

114.6 The Committee will therefore oversee work to investigate: (m) ways of enabling Learning Churches and Circuits to develop as beacons of excellence in formation, learning and development; (n) the feasibility and configuration of two connexional centres which (i) are communities of faith with expertise in formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship and organisational development; (ii) have at their heart the formation of disciples, ministries and communities; (iii) are interconnected with Learning Churches and Circuits; and (iv) share a common governance framework and staff team; (o) the feasibility and configuration of other appropriate and effective spaces for formation, learning and development across the Connexion, also overseen within a common framework; (p) the feasibility of enabling much greater use of virtual learning environments as virtual spaces for formation, learning and development; (q) ways of capturing and learning from current strengths and good practice; (r) the ways in which Cliff College can be best resourced and developed in order to continue its work and take its place as one of the two connexional centres.

Change and transition

114.7 The consultation submissions have helped the Committee: (a) to discern the importance of a flexible yet stable overall framework, which is both responsive to the needs of the Church as well as being capable of nurturing deep and transforming experiences and communities; (b) to understand the pressures and insecurities which a number of colleagues and institutions are facing at this time; (c) to appreciate that

the work of *The Fruitful Field* should not add any more insecurity than is strictly necessary to these existing pressures; (d) to discern that far-reaching changes, which will have a significant impact on current arrangements and partnerships, are nevertheless necessary; (e) to discern and appreciate the need for careful investigation of the implications of the changes which the Committee will propose in this area.

114.8 The Committee will therefore oversee detailed work to investigate the financial and infrastructural implications of the changes implied above, so that transitional arrangements and timelines may be designed and clearly communicated.

Part 2: Our Recommendations

Section G: A Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network

Recommendation: The establishment of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network.

115 The Ministries Committee has sought to “be ardent in spirit” over recent months. We have sought to engage prayerfully and thoroughly with significant quantities of data and analysis drawn from a wide range of sources. We have sought to do justice to the information and the reflections which were shared with us during the consultation period and beyond. We have sought to keep before God in prayer all those who are likely to be affected by our recommendations. Above all we have sought the Spirit’s guidance in our discerning and our conferring.

116 The outcome of our reflections and deliberations is a primary and over-arching recommendation: the establishment of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network. The Network is a gathering together of pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources; it is a connecting together of expert resources: staff, spaces, centres, funds and assets; it is a means of coordinating the development and delivery of a range of pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources; it is a sharing of energy, enthusiasm and expertise across the Connexion to better serve the Methodist people.

Purposes

117 We recommend that the purposes of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network should be as follows:

Discipleship development

118 ***The first core purpose of the Network is to support discipleship development across the Connexion: supporting Circuits and Local Churches to nurture and equip the Methodist people to be Christ-like disciples in an often un-Christ-like but never Christ-less world. “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.”¹⁴***

119 As a submission from a grouping of Superintendents made during the consultation period noted, “it is important that the whole people of God are offered learning pathways. It is right to end any suggestion that only ministers matter. Equipping people to engage in ministry both in church but, even more importantly, in their

¹⁴ Romans 12:2

everyday life and work is vital.” This will involve, as a regional forum’s submission noted, a “re-focussing [of] resources on the spiritual formation of lay people as disciples and evangelists, thus making concrete the Methodist commitment to the ministry of the whole people of God.”

Ministry development

120 ***The second core purpose of the Network is to support ministry development, in all its forms, across the Connexion:*** forming and equipping lay and ordained Methodists who share in the ministry of God within the life of the Methodist Church to be effective leaders, servants and partners in God’s mission. “For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.”¹⁵

121 Submissions received during the consultation period noted the need to support the development of those exercising a wide range of ministries and roles within, and reaching beyond, the life of the Church. These ministries and roles include those of deacons, presbyters, those preparing for ordained ministry, and those holding office as Superintendents and District Chairs. As a tutor’s submission noted, “if initial theological education of student ministers does its job properly, it will equip [ordained ministers] as a theological resource for the whole people of God: they become those who can, as part of their role, enable the formation of disciples of Jesus Christ.”

122 However, submissions received during the consultation period also noted other ministries and roles which must, with equal care and dedication, be supported by the Network. Among the ministries and roles identified were those of Local Preachers; Worship Leaders; Circuit and Church Stewards; children, youth and family workers; chaplains, evangelists and outreach workers; lay pastoral ministers and leaders; small group leaders; class leaders and pastoral visitors; administrators; Circuit and District Treasurers; safeguarding officers; and those who are members of Circuit and District leadership teams. The consultation submissions also emphasised the importance of support for those who undertake these ministries and roles as volunteers, as well as those who are salaried or supported by stipends.

Church and community development

123 ***The third core purpose of the Network is to support church and community development across the Connexion:*** challenging and equipping Circuits and Local Churches as they change and grow as mission-focused Christian communities of faith, hope and love. “Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.”¹⁶

124 As a submission made by a District officer noted, it is important to support Circuits and Local Churches as they “reflect on the nature of their current discipleship, on their engagement with mission in their localities, and on how the Circuits and Local

¹⁵ Romans 12:4-8

¹⁶ Romans 12:11

Churches need to make changes to the way in which they have operated in recent decades, in order to face up to the challenges of being Methodism in the current century.” Support offered here will, as a District officer’s submission noted, need to “recognise the impact of recent and on-going changes in ministry within Circuits. The Church will need ordained and lay people who are trained in approaches to collaborative ministry (in all its forms) in the new types of Circuit and Circuit missional aims and structures which are emerging in very different ways across the Connexion. This includes very different sizes of Circuits in different places, for good missional reasons. The pattern of the Church across the Circuits is now far less homogeneous and far more complex, with the level of complexity and difference developing rapidly.” The focus must be on the mission-focused context of Circuits and Local Churches, and on supporting apt and effective witness and presence in changing circumstances. As a District officer’s submission noted, “to be a discipleship movement shaped for mission that will be here in 20 to 30 years time, the Church, and therefore its training and development, needs to be culturally and contextually relevant to the emerging cultures.”

Scholarship, research and innovation

125 ***The final core purpose of the Network is to nurture apt and excellent scholarship, research and innovation within the Network to inform, equip and challenge the Connexion: supporting academic studies and research projects, intentionally enabling and encouraging innovative and creative thinking across the Network, and ensuring that insights and outcomes are shared across and beyond the Network and the Church.***

126 As a submission from a tutor made during the consultation period noted, “the jury is out when it comes to the long term survival of theology as an academic discipline within the university. Nevertheless, the Church should be committed to the highest form of intellectual inquiry, and this would undoubtedly remain within the vocation of some people, places and pathways, but much more firmly rooted in the Church.” The Methodist Church has a strong tradition of work in this area. A Circuit’s submission noted that British Methodism has “punched above its weight” in several theological disciplines, producing, for example, “...biblical scholars of international stature such as Arthur Peake, Norman Snaith, Morna Hooker or James Dunn. Historically, the discipleship ethos of British Methodism has encouraged our people, ordained and lay (and three of the above names were not ordained), to excel in academic and other study.” Nurturing apt and excellent scholarship, research and innovation as a core purpose of the Network will ensure that these activities can be supported with renewed vigour, while also being aligned with the mission-focused needs of the Circuits and Local Churches and the developmental priorities of contemporary Methodism. By supporting scholarship, research and innovation “intentionally and as part of our missional strategy,” so might we, in the words of one Circuit’s submission, “obey the command to love the Lord our God with all our mind, as well as with all our heart and soul and strength.”

Values

127 The Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network will take the lead in designing, offering and overseeing a range of pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources. We recommend that these pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources should share and demonstrate the following values:

- 127.1 ***They will be accessible, contextual, responsive, well-communicated, coherent, comprehensive and excellent.*** As a submission from a Local Preachers' Meeting noted, it is important to "recognise and facilitate a variety of models and styles of teaching and learning, recognising that people learn differently." As a tutor's submission noted, "each element of a pathway [should] contain a sufficient range of alternative learning materials to ensure that different learning styles were taken into account. For example, the current *Faith & Worship* course tends to assume that all learners complete similar tasks and exercises. There is much potential for developing more creative and varied resources which give alternative ways for exploring each element of a topic, enabling people to engage with the material in a variety of ways, and helping people to relate their learning to their particular circumstances, contexts and needs." As a District meeting's submission noted, we "need to make it attractive for people to learn how to be better stewards, treasurers, secretaries, etc."
- 127.2 ***They will be developed through interactive relationships and in dialogue with local communities – their diverse and continually developing contexts, needs and aspirations.*** It will be vitally important, as a submission from a Local Preachers' Meeting made during the consultation period noted, to "listen to the requests of the churches." As a tutor's submission noted, "if the whole people of God (in all of our colourful diversity, dispersed existence and contextualised expressions) are to be equipped then there is arguably no way that this can be done through a model which is centralised and homogenised in its location and expression... To be truly connexional surely means to be diversely spread yet purposefully joined; loosely but vitally connected." As a submission from a District officers' meeting noted, there will be a need "to consider the differing local contexts for mission and ministry and the impact they should have on the nature and content of courses and learning experiences."
- 127.3 ***They will be developed so that they can be offered through a range of methods and in diverse contexts, including within and across Circuits and Local Churches.*** This includes the development of material which could be offered within a small group setting, in the context of a Local Preachers' Meeting, as a seasonal study course, as part of a sermon series, as a day event organised across a Circuit, District or region, or through a virtual learning environment.
- 127.4 ***They will emphasise and enable continuing (as well as initial) formation for a wide range of ministries.*** This includes an emphasis on the continuing development of ordained ministers (including those preparing to undertake the role of Superintendent), and the continuing development of those exercising other ministries and roles within and beyond the life of the Church (including Local Preachers and Worship Leaders).
- 127.5 ***They will be developed alongside and in partnership with ecumenical partners wherever possible.*** As a District officer notes in their submission made during the consultation period, "our development as disciples of Christ has to be based on a broad awareness of the Church as a whole, and not just how we as Methodists understand that calling." We also hear with humility and thankfulness a submission from a partner organisation, which noted that "the Methodist Church has great riches to bring to the 'Kingdom table', riches which don't obviously come from elsewhere."

Goals

- 128 We recommend that some of the early goals of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network should be the following:

- 128.1 ***Supporting the development of Learning Circuits and Local Churches as beacons of excellence.*** Learning Circuits and Local Churches are loving, participative, rooted, pioneering and contextual church communities, which are able to focus their energy and resources on sustaining an environment which enables formation, learning and development. As a submission made during the consultation period noted, “the Church’s resources for formation should be set within the context of the whole Church growing in faithful understanding of God. Just as Jesus prepared the Twelve for their ministry by keeping them in close fellowship with him, so too discipleship today is typically learnt in a community environment by people committed to his fellowship and hence to fellowship with each other. The essential principle is that communities of faith, devotion and shared learning are the normal context for formation. The Church, as a community of learning and understanding, must share with the academy; as a community of service it must be deeply engaged with the life and needs of society; and as a community of mission it must know and understand the world in which it has to reveal the world to come.” Work in this area will need to draw on current strengths and good practice across the Connexion, as well as identifying necessary cultural and organisational changes.¹⁷
- 128.2 ***Designing and implementing new pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders*** – see paragraphs 132-147 below.
- 128.3 ***Supporting full-time, residential pathways and part-time pathways for those preparing for ordained ministry, alongside the development of practice-based formational pathways for a number of those preparing for ordained ministry.*** As a submission made by a learning institution during the consultation period noted, “we believe that the ordained ministers of the Methodist Church as it is currently constituted are its key strategic leaders, its core teachers of sacred memory, and its essential space-makers for holy imagination. We believe that to station ministers in local communities entrusts those individuals with a great deal of power and with the authority to act in the name of the Methodist Church and of God in Christ. We believe that to fail to train adequately such ministers not only potentially stunts the mission of the Church but puts at risk those whom the Church seeks to serve in the world.” Alongside this strong commitment to the importance of robust pathways for those preparing for ordained ministry is the need to ensure that such pathways are accessible and enable a diverse range of people to hear and act on God’s call. As noted in paragraphs 100-102 above, and as implied in the discussion of Learning Circuits and Local Churches in paragraph 128.1, there is also much to be gained from the development of practice-based formational pathways for a number of those preparing for ordained ministry. Within this model, sometimes called “apprenticeship-style formation”, the primary (though not the sole) context of formation, learning and development is the context in which ministry is being exercised and in which disciples are being formed. There is a crucial role for centres and expert staff from outside the immediate context, as well as for Learning Circuits

¹⁷ The 2009 Conference, in Notice of Motion 228 (entitled “Centres of Excellence”), noted that “alongside the welcome support within the Connexion to develop fresh expressions of church and areas for pioneer ministry, the Conference is concerned also to promote the excellent work being undertaken in Methodism’s traditional strengths, for example, preaching, social action and discipleship. Such work serves to showcase Methodism to the wider world, provides hope and encouragement to other Methodists, and opens new opportunities for engagement and mission. The Conference wishes to honour and support such excellence and is therefore concerned that Circuit structures and the stationing system promote and do not undermine this work.” Supporting the development of Learning Circuits and Local Churches as beacons of excellence forms part of the commitment expressed in the Notice of Motion.

and Local Churches, in supporting and enabling practice-based formation. Work in this area will need to draw on learning and good practice from ecumenical partners, as well as identifying necessary internal cultural and organisational changes.

Further core recommendations

- 129 In order to enable the Network to fulfil these purposes and achieve these goals, the Committee makes four further core recommendations. To each of these core recommendations we have dedicated a section of our report. Within each section, we outline the changes and developments which will be required to enable the respective core recommendation to be adopted, embraced and embedded within the life of the Methodist Church.
- 130 Our core recommendations are:
- The establishment of a Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network staff team, located across the Connexion and serving the whole Church – see section H
 - The identification of appropriate gathering spaces for formation, learning and development across the Connexion, and the development of a virtual space for formation, learning and development – see section I
 - The establishment of two connexional centres, one based at Cliff College and the other based at the Queen’s Foundation – see section J
 - The establishment of a single governance structure for the Network – see section K.
- 131 The remainder of this section offers reflections on one of the early goals identified above for the Network, and on one of the Network’s important values.

An early goal: The design and implementation of new pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders

- 132 The current provision for those preparing to be Local Preachers and Worship Leaders is outlined above in paragraphs 52-53, and the challenges posed by this current provision are outlined in paragraphs 103-111. It is evident from these challenges that a comprehensive redevelopment of pathways for those preparing to be Local Preachers and Worship Leaders is required, as well as the development of pathways for the continuing development of existing Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. Such a redevelopment has been commissioned by the Ministries Committee. This sub-section reflects on the key elements of such a redevelopment, and places the redevelopment within the context of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network – its purposes, its values and its recommended infrastructure.
- 133 Core to the redevelopment is a flexible, modular pattern of formation and training for those on note or on trial or preparing to be Worship Leaders, which can be adapted and developed in response to particular contexts, needs and aspirations, and which can be accessed through a range of methods. The following paragraphs outline its key elements.
- 134 One key element of the redevelopment will be a new set of learning outcomes with a greater emphasis on the skills required for preaching and leading worship. Current *Faith & Worship* learning outcomes are in large part an outline of the current course content, and offer little room for growth, development and change. They also shy away from offering an energising description of the foundational formational aspects

of being a Local Preacher. New learning outcomes will be attentive to individuals' personal discipleship and their knowledge of the story of the faith, to their skills as preachers and/or leaders of worship, and to their attitude as individuals who help others to grow as disciples and to share in God's mission.

- 135 Another key element will be the development of new course content within a modular framework. Core and extension modules, with some level of flexibility and choice, will enable learners to specialise in areas of particular need or interest, and will allow those with prior learning and experience to study areas of existing knowledge or expertise in greater depth. New material will need to address those important contemporary and missional areas which are currently absent. As new areas of theology and practice become important for the Church, it will be possible, due to the modular framework, to add new modules to the framework as extension modules. It should also be possible to revise existing modules individually and without major upheaval. New material will also need to emphasise reflective skills, equipping individuals to adapt as preachers and leaders of worship in changing contexts. The educational approach and the way in which information is presented also needs to be addressed. Modules should be designed in a way which is permissive and enabling, not prescriptive, so that tutors are supported by high quality resources, but not 'de-skilled', and so that material can be adapted and developed within local contexts.
- 136 Modular material will also be shaped for flexible delivery, so that modules can be used, for example, in local small groups, at District or regional study days, as weekend blocks delivered within centres, or at Local Preachers' Meetings. As well as being available in printed form, it will be a goal to make all modular material available within the Network's virtual learning environment (see paragraphs 194-196 below), both as material which supports module delivery in groups or one-to-one sessions, and as material which is directly accessible to individual learners. As part of creating the virtual learning environment, the potential support offered through virtual networks (as currently seen at work in the "Faith & Worship (UK Methodists)" Facebook group) will be explored and developed. Flexibility of delivery will enable learners to access the mode of study that best fits with their practical and educational needs. If personal circumstances change (for example, a new job makes it difficult to attend study days) learners will not be locked in to a particular mode of study.
- 137 Developing this emphasis on the accessibility of modules further, the majority of modules will be of wider interest, and shaped so that they are suitable for the continuing development of existing Local Preachers and Worship Leaders, relevant for a range of other ministries and roles. They will also be shaped so that they can be used as resources for discipleship development. Within such a framework, it will also be possible to explore a formal bringing together of some of the core aspects of Local Preacher and Worship Leader formation and training, so that common elements can be studied together.
- 138 A redevelopment which emphasises accessibility in these ways has the potential to encourage a culture of learning in Circuits and Local Churches, including among those who are not intending to become Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. Participation by increased numbers of people has the potential to make viable study groups both

locally and at District or regional level, increasing the options for everyone. Mixed study groups (including, for example, preachers, Worship Leaders, small group leaders, children and youth leaders, and those participating to deepen their discipleship) encourage a sharing of different perspectives, as well as collaborative working.

- 139 Another key element will be the development of a new form of assessment. Contemporary education practice increasingly acknowledges that it is important for forms of assessment to be appropriate to the sort of knowledge, skills and attitudes being acquired, and to recognise the way in which the learning will be used in practice. Written submissions are relatively easy to administrate and assess, but the ability to write should not be equated too closely with the ability to think theologically, preach and lead worship. A new form of assessment will focus on a portfolio model, making substantial use of preaching and worship leading materials, service reports and reflections, and will rely less on essay-style questions. This will enable assessment to focus more closely on preaching and worship leading skills, reflection and understanding, rather than writing skills. By being attentive to individuals' personal discipleship and their knowledge of the story of the faith, to their skills as preachers or leaders of worship, and to their attitude as individuals who help others to grow as disciples and to share in God's mission, this new form of assessment will also be both more holistic and more flexible than *Faith & Worship*, for example, allows. It will not be too closely tied to specific modules, thereby making it possible to incorporate a range of study routes and to take account of prior experience and learning, valuing the skills and understanding which learners already have. It will also clearly recognise that preparation for becoming a Local Preacher or a Worship Leader requires formation as well as study. Supporting Circuits as they exercise their responsibility in overseeing those who are preparing to become Local Preachers and Worship Leaders will need to include guidance on their role in deciding whether a person is suitable, ready and formed. Portfolio assessment can become very unwieldy and burdensome to both learners and assessors if attempts to ensure parity of assessment lead to rigidly defined expectations. Care will need to be taken to find the right balance.
- 140 Another key element is the rebalancing of initial formation and training and continuing development. As noted in paragraphs 105 and 109 above, the present heavy emphasis on initial formation and training can result in feelings of alienation among learners, and can be a disincentive for following a call to preach. It can also implicitly lead to a diminished emphasis on continuing development. An emphasis on accessible and shared initial formation and training needs to be accompanied by a complementary emphasis on, and the enabling of, continuing development. Reducing the demands of initial formation and training and increasing the expectation for continuing development need not be a lowering of standards when seen within the context of a Network which explicitly values and resources continuing (as well as initial) formation for a wide range of ministries, and the development of the whole of a person's ministry.
- 141 A final key element is the web of roles which will be required to support these redeveloped pathways. Within the Circuit or the Local Church, a Preaching or Worship Leading Mentor will help individuals to explore and develop their practical skills as a preacher or Worship Leader. A Pathway Mentor will help individuals to plan

their learning and choose the most appropriate modes of study, while holding the 'big picture' of the learner's progress and guiding them in the production of their portfolio. A Pathway Mentor may also act as module tutor for some modules in a variety of contexts. Across Circuits, Districts and regions, volunteer tutors will support the delivery of modules, relying heavily on the Network's published materials or adapting them significantly to meet local contexts and needs, or, in most cases, necessarily opting for a combination of both processes. Some modules may also be 'self-led' in small groups using the Network's materials.

- 142 There is an important role here for the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network. As well as having a significant role in the design and development of new materials, and in delivering modules across Districts and regions, the Network's expert staff will have a crucial coordinating role across Circuits and Districts. In part this will be organisational, working with District Local Preachers' Secretaries to coordinate the availability of opportunities and resources, and being an accessible point of contact for mentors, tutors and Circuit officers. In part it will be an encouraging and enabling role, actively supporting the development of new provision and contextually-appropriate opportunities for formation and development across the region, and supporting individuals and groups to access the best of available opportunities and resources. In part it will also be inspirational, working alongside District Local Preachers' Secretaries to advocate the importance of initial formation and training as well as continuing development, the importance of engagement with contemporary and missional areas, and the importance of the contribution which a range of well-supported ministries can make to the growth of a mission-focused Circuit. A flexible, modular pattern of initial formation and training for those on note or on trial or preparing to be Worship Leaders, alongside a renewed emphasis on continuing development, is necessarily a complex redevelopment, and the resulting system risks being knotty and fragmented. There is therefore a key role for the Network's expert staff in holding the 'big picture' within the region, and in being the 'face' of a new and accessible framework, guiding learners and those who give so much of their own time to support the learning and growth of others. There is a clear link here to the regional post proposed below, in paragraph 164.1 – a connexionally funded post within each region with a clear mandate to support, enable and develop the ministries of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders.
- 143 What might the redevelopment proposed above, carefully coordinated and supported, look like for some individuals on note and on trial? Paragraphs 143.1-143.3 below offer three scenarios.
- 143.1 Ama is able to commit to a number of Saturday study days, and is well-motivated to work independently between sessions. She attends an introductory study day (perhaps with her Pathway Mentor), coordinated by the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network's regional staff team, and designed to help her explore a sense of call to preach. It also introduces available pathways, study methods, and reflective practice. Further modules are delivered via quarterly study days over two years, again coordinated by the regional staff team. In between, Ama keeps in touch with others via an online discussion forum, and is supported locally by her Pathway Mentor and Preaching Mentor as she prepares her portfolio for assessment.
- 143.2 Wes decides that weekday evening sessions will work best for him. He feels daunted by the prospect of study as he left school at 16, and wants the support of regular sessions. He works through the introductory module on a one-to-one basis with his

Pathway Mentor. Members of his housegroup decide that they want to be involved with and support his formation and training, so they commit to study with him in some of their meetings over the course of a year. They are interested in the modules that explore the Bible and biblical interpretation, the Christian story, and aspects of spirituality and discipleship. Wes's Circuit works together with a neighbouring Circuit, with support from the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network's regional staff team, to offer modules on preaching (offered as a 'refresher' for existing preachers as well) and practical skills for worship (offered for Worship Leaders and Local Preachers, as well as some exploring these ministries). Wes is also able to attend a continuing development study day in another nearby Circuit, which looks at issues of Christian ethics and faith in the workplace. All these various elements feed into Wes's preparation of his portfolio.

- 143.3 Liz already has a theology degree which has given her a good grounding in biblical interpretation and Church history. She attends an introductory session run in her Circuit as an exploration day, and then meets with the Pathway Mentor to discuss her formation and training. They look over the module materials that cover "Bible and interpretation" and "The Christian story" (these are illustrative module titles), and decide that Liz does not need to study these, but that her portfolio will be able to demonstrate her prior learning. However, Liz decides that she would like to take two extension modules that would deepen her understanding of prophecy and Methodist origins. The Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network's regional staff team is able to link Liz up with a couple of experienced Local Preachers who want to study these modules as part of their continuing development, as well as a member from a neighbouring Circuit who is exploring a call to the diaconate. With her Preaching Mentor, Liz works through modules covering "Preaching", and "Practical skills for worship". Liz opts to attend a study weekend at Cliff College to explore the "Discipleship and spirituality" and "People and context" modules. In the preparation of her portfolio, Liz is able to draw on both her prior theological study and her more recent learning to show her ability to connect learning and practice.
- 144 During 2012/2013, the Committee will continue to oversee the work which it has commissioned to redevelop the pathways for those preparing to be Local Preachers and Worship Leaders and for the continuing development of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders.
- 145 The Committee will seek to work collaboratively with the Faith and Order Committee to develop learning outcomes for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders, ensuring that these learning outcomes are firmly rooted in an understanding of the roles of Local Preacher and Worship Leader. Work has already commenced to look in detail at new forms of assessment and to pilot a portfolio model of assessment. In the development of course content (particularly for extension modules) there is the potential to incorporate and build upon the wide range of learning resources already in use across the Connexion. Work on the development of new forms of assessment as well as new course content is already happening in collaboration with those responsible for the alternative courses to *Faith & Worship* being used in the Bristol District, the Darlington and Newcastle upon Tyne Districts (in conjunction with the Lindisfarne Regional Training Partnership), the London District, the Lincoln & Grimsby District, Cliff College, the South North West Training Partnership (SNWTP) and the York Institute for Community Theology. The Committee is grateful to representatives

from these Districts and institutions, as well as to many others with expertise in these areas, who have shared their reflections with the Committee.

- 146 Although there are clear pressures to redevelop Local Preacher and Worship Leader pathways with some urgency, care needs to be taken that the transition from *Faith & Worship* in particular is well managed, with realistic timescales, and with Circuits and Districts kept well informed about the progress of the work. Some learners studying the current form of *Faith & Worship* will continue to need support for some years to come. Others may wish to make the transition to the new model, and thought will be given to enabling this.
- 147 The design and implementation of new pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders is clearly identified as a key early goal for the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network. Even as work to establish the infrastructural components of the Network is undertaken, the Committee is confident that work on pathways for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders can be developed to take their important place within the wider work of the Network, with significant progress being made by the end of 2012/2013.¹⁸

An important value: Developing pathways alongside and in partnership with ecumenical partners wherever possible

- 148 In its preparatory work during the current connexional year, the Committee has sought to work closely with ecumenical partners in a number of different contexts. One such context, which is likely to have a significant impact on the life of the Network, deserves closer attention at this stage.
- 149 Alongside the work undertaken by the Committee during the current connexional year, the Church of England has embarked on a project to develop a new system of approval for Anglican pathways into ordained ministry and Reader ministry. A core component of this new system is to be “a suite of HE [Higher Education] Awards with a single validating HE partnership which would provide the main highway of training and formation for IME 1-3 [the first three years of initial ministerial education – ie pre-ordination training], which would also provide dioceses with an option for IME 4-7 [the period of curacy – ie post-ordination training] and for Reader [the lay office of Reader] training; and would also make provision for independent students pursuing a variety of vocations in discipleship and ministry.”¹⁹ In essence, under this new system, all Anglican theological colleges (with the exception of a small number of courses within some colleges) will share one validating university, which will validate the suite of awards which will form the basis of the pre-ordination pathways offered at each of the colleges.
- 150 The motivations of the Church of England in this context can be seen to complement the purposes and values of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network. For example, the working party chaired by the Bishop of Sheffield which has oversight of

¹⁸ This sub-section, along with paragraphs 52-53 and 103-111, constitutes the report which the Conference directed be made in the context of the Ministries Committee’s work on *The Fruitful Field* in the Conference’s reply to Memorials M34 (2009), M5 (2010) and M23 (2010). The sub-section also constitutes the report which the Conference directed be made in Resolution 13/2 (2009).

¹⁹ Paper issued by the Ministry Division of the Archbishops’ Council of the Church of England, “Formation for Ministry and a Framework for Higher Education Validation: Phase 2 Report”, p.2

this work has written of the “common standard of formation” which it hopes will flow from a single suite of awards:

The discernment of the House of Bishops, the training institutions and the General Synod at the present time seems to indicate a deep desire to emphasise unity and to bring into clearer focus the common elements of our training. This is in part a natural development after a generation of emphasising local and diverse patterns of training. It is in part a response to the rapidly changing context for mission and the need for the Church of England as a whole to be able to respond to those changes with confidence and creativity. It is in part also simply good stewardship to be able to make the best use of limited resources and to encourage collaboration in teaching and learning.²⁰

151 The working party has also written of the potential for the single suite of awards to play a part in the learning and formation of the whole people of God:

The possibility of a common suite of awards for different forms of training and formation opens up the real possibility of pathways to Diploma, Degree and Masters level with a focus on lay discipleship rather than just a focus on recognised lay or ordained ministry, and of shared teaching and learning in this across a number of institutions. Several of our present institutions have indicated that they believe the degrees we offer will become increasingly attractive to independent students in the coming years because of the funding changes across Higher Education generally.²¹

152 The working party has been clear about the level of excellence which will be sought from the university partner:

This suite of awards would not in any sense be a lowest common denominator or lower value set of awards than those currently available in any part of the sector. We are looking for a robust partnership with a strong HE provider such that these awards become the Gold Standard for lay and ordained learning and formation for many years to come.²²

153 The working party has also been clear about its wish to proceed “in as ecumenical a way as possible, balancing the need to give clarity and direction to formation and training in the Church of England with the need to create and preserve space for growing ecumenical participation in the new awards at both national and local level, as seems most appropriate to our partners.”²³ As well as inviting the Methodist Church’s involvement, the Church of England is also working with the United Reformed Church and colleges aligned with the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The Committee is grateful to the Church of England for its willingness to work in this ecumenical manner, and the Committee has sought to accompany and feed into the Church of England’s processes at every stage. Over recent months, this has become a more formal partnership, with full Methodist representation on the working party which is developing the detail of the suite of awards and Methodist staff support incorporated into the processes for identifying a university partner. It is expected that the university partner will be identified in late May or early June 2012.

²⁰ “Formation for Ministry: Phase 2 Report”, ¶16

²¹ “Formation for Ministry: Phase 2 Report”, ¶34

²² “Formation for Ministry: Phase 2 Report”, ¶8

²³ “Formation for Ministry: Phase 2 Report”, ¶45

- 154 The Committee is committed to the development of pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources alongside and in partnership with ecumenical partners wherever possible, and sees this as a central value of the Network (see paragraph 127.5 above). The Committee consequently anticipates that the university partner identified through the processes discussed above will be a university which could also, within an ecumenically negotiated validating partnership with the university, serve a significant portion of the validating needs of the Network. It would, in many ways, be a backward step if Methodist student ministers and Anglican ordinands were not to be able to follow pathways within the same suite of awards. There are also many positive, developmental aspects to Methodist participation. Not least among these is that participation within the same Higher Education partnership as the Church of England (and, potentially, the United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain) will make ecumenical collaboration in the development of future pathways and resources much easier – both for ordained ministry, and also for a wider range of ministries and for discipleship development more generally. The Committee is therefore very pleased that it seems likely, at the time of writing, that it will be able to recommend that the Network enter into the partnership which emerges from the current processes. The *Priorities of the Methodist Church* commit us to working “in partnership with others wherever possible,” and the Network’s participation within an ecumenical Higher Education partnership is a good instance of strong and mutually-beneficial partnership working.
- 155 Such an ecumenical Higher Education partnership does, however, have repercussions for other parts of the Network’s structures, policies and procedures. In some ways it will necessarily limit the autonomy of the Network within the Higher Education partnership, as the partnership between the Network and the university will be mediated by an ecumenical management body. It is likely that careful planning during the early stages of the partnership will mitigate any disadvantages here.
- 156 However, the mediated nature of the relationship between the Methodist Church, the Network and its centres on the one hand and the university partner on the other does have another significant planning ramification for the Network’s structures. The ecumenical Higher Education partnership will, necessarily, be one which is capable of supporting a partnership between the university and several institutions, colleges and centres no matter where the latter are located. In the past, church institutions and their university partners have tended to be geographically proximate. Due to the geographic distribution of Anglican theological colleges, the university partner in this case will need to be able to support programmes delivered within institutions which are far away from the university’s own base. The nature of the ecumenical Higher Education partnership, and the ways in which its supporting mechanisms are structured, will consequently need to be configured to enable well-resourced relationships to be sustained across significant distances. This therefore has the potential to make available to the Network and its centres a “strong HE provider” whose awards will be recognised as “the Gold Standard for lay and ordained learning and formation,” regardless of the location of those centres. This permits the Network to focus more closely on the quality of its learning environments without those considerations needing to be constrained by some issues of geographical location. This is a factor discussed again in paragraphs 196, 200.5 and 240.5 below.

Section H: A Team of Expert Staff

Recommendation: The establishment of a Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network staff team, located across the Connexion.

One staff team

- 157 In order to support the work of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network, we recommend the establishment of a single team of expert staff. This team's goals will be the same as the goals of the Network as a whole:
- discipleship development: supporting Circuits and Local Churches to nurture and equip the Methodist people to be Christ-like disciples in the world
 - ministry development, in all its forms: forming and equipping lay and ordained Methodists who share in the ministry of God within the life of the Methodist Church to be effective leaders, servants and partners in God's mission
 - church and community development: challenging and equipping Circuits and Local Churches as they change and grow as mission-focused Christian communities of faith, hope and love.
- 158 As with the Network as a whole, the team will:
- focus on serving and supporting Circuits, Local Churches and Districts, working with all those who lead and serve Circuits, Local Churches and Districts
 - work through interactive relationships and in dialogue with local communities – their diverse and continually developing contexts, needs and aspirations
 - provide a coherent, comprehensive and excellent service through embodying a breadth of knowledge and skills, through working to enhance the quality of its work, and through being well-coordinated.
- 159 The establishment of one staff team was prefigured both in the consultation document and in the Committee's interim response. The Committee was particularly pleased to note the warm reception given to the concept by those already working for the Church within institutions and existing expert staff posts. A submission made by a tutor during the consultation period noted that "the vision of a single connexional network of skilled and knowledgeable staff is exciting and energising, enabling the sharing of skills, resources, expertise and stimulating creativity and debate. There is the potential for more engagement with the diversity of the Church; for avoiding duplication of work; for enabling creative thinking through releasing resources and linking different people; and for using and encouraging a greater variety of people's skills, gifts and expertise." A regional forum's submission similarly noted that "integration of all the people involved in training and development would be desirable and strengthen the Church." A learning institution's submission noted that "the concept of a connexional network is welcomed... [It] can be a means of bringing together the wide range of professional expertise, knowledge and theological awareness from a range of bodies and institutions from across the regions that will enable cross-fertilisation in a way which has always been intended, but not always implemented." Another institution noted that "we support the vision of a single network of skilled and knowledgeable staff. We see the current disconnection between regional/ District officers and learning institutions as profoundly unhelpful. The experience of forming 'networks' at regional level over the last four years demonstrates that this is far from easy and just how quickly territorial mentalities emerge."

160 The Committee also notes the challenges of successfully establishing such a team. A submission made by a District officer during the consultation period noted “that this approach is very different to that adopted when District Development Enablers were introduced. From that experience I concur wholeheartedly with the value of coordination, however I observe that as an organisation we will need to learn many new skills if we are to become accomplished as a Connexion in working to a level of excellence in this coordinated way. We can learn much from the strengths of the regional District Development Enabler networks and from the benefits which District Development Enablers as a national group have [recently] enjoyed.”

161 The posts within the team will be grouped:

- in regional teams across the Connexion, to which we recommend allocating 70% of the team’s posts
- within centres (see section J below), where we recommend locating 20% of the team’s posts
- within a coordinating team, to which we recommend allocating 10% of the team’s posts.

This represents a strong and welcome bias towards dispersed, regional working. This capacity is described in more detail in paragraphs 163-179 below.

162 This team of expert staff is the Network’s key resource. Valuing, developing and investing in such an expert staff team is a significant and worthwhile commitment of resources. In this respect, the Committee agrees with a consultation submission from a regional forum, which affirmed the importance of “funding well-resourced people rather than under-resourced institutions.”

Regional teams

163 We recommend the establishment of teams of regionally-deployed staff within the single team of expert staff. Again, this was prefigured both in the consultation document and in the Committee’s interim response. The Committee was particularly pleased in this instance to note the warm reception given to the concept by those who have experience of working closely with regionally-deployed expert staff at the moment. A submission made by a District committee during the consultation period noted that regionally deployed staff posts are “vital because they are located within reach of each church and Circuit and vital because they can form a body which can ensure the sharing of best connexional practice.” A submission from a District Chair noted the importance of “effective networking more locally in ‘regional’ areas, and the capacity to deliver learning programmes well. This points to the need for investment to be made in regionally deployed personnel, rather than buildings. A common factor in the current training regions that feel they are functioning less effectively is the lack of capacity to cover the geographical area equally well.” A District leadership team wrote of the importance of “access to a multi-disciplinary team of skilled people who will work in churches and Circuits in partnership with the District Chairs and other officers. Methodism has always faced the dangers of such people and resources being too thinly spread and isolated; the quality of the resources available to the Church will be greatly increased if they are genuinely part of a collaborative team, but this requires considerable ingenuity to achieve.”

164 We recommend that regional teams should normally be made up of five full-time posts. It will be important for these five postholders to work closely together, acting

as a team and providing a coherent service to the region. A submission made by a District officer during the consultation period noted that “the plan for an integrated approach within teams across larger areas than current Districts is... to be welcomed, provided that this retains the recognition that there are differing skills which are needed in these teams. We will need collaborative, interdisciplinary teams in the regions, recognising and playing to different strengths, expertise and gifts, matched to the varying needs of both the wider Church and the specific localities.” However, it is also possible to affirm five core areas of expertise within the regional teams, and we consequently recommend configuring the five regional posts as follows:

- 164.1 *A post focusing on the development of lay ministries and roles:* helping to train, form and equip those who exercise lay ministries and roles within the lives of Circuits and Local Churches, with a particular focus in the first instance on the initial and continuing development of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders; working carefully to support and collaborate with volunteers and office-holders (such as Circuit and District Local Preachers’ Secretaries).
 - 164.2 *A post focusing on the development of ordained ministries and roles:* helping to train, form and equip those who are preparing for diaconal and presbyteral ministry (as student ministers and probationers), supporting the continuing development of those who serve in Circuit appointments, including as Superintendents, and accompanying those candidating for ordained ministry; working carefully to support and collaborate with volunteers and office-holders (such as District Candidates’ Secretaries).
 - 164.3 *A post focusing on the development of the gathered ministry of the church community:* equipping and challenging Circuits and Local Churches to use and align their energies and resources for discipleship, mission, worship, learning and caring, including supporting and accompanying Circuits and Local Churches as they make deliberate and planned changes to enable growth and in response to the changing context of mission.
 - 164.4 *A post focusing on the development of the dispersed ministry of the church community:* equipping and challenging Circuits and Local Churches to use and align their energies and resources for discipleship, mission, service and evangelism, including supporting and accompanying Circuits and Local Churches as they develop fresh expressions of church, fresh ways of being church, chaplaincy projects and initiatives, evangelism and Christian witness projects, and social justice, social action and community development projects.
 - 164.5 *A post focusing on the development of the diversity of the church community:* equipping and challenging Circuits and Local Churches to make deliberate and planned changes to welcome and embrace a wide range of ages (including children, young people, young families, the ‘missing generations’ and the elderly) and a wide range of diverse backgrounds and cultures (including the widening range of ethnic, linguistic and cultural expressions of British Methodism).
- 165 We recognise that the balance of expert knowledge, skills and experience within the five core areas will not be identical across the regional teams. For example, within some regional teams, the post focusing on the development of the dispersed ministry of the church community may be undertaken by somebody with a deep expertise in chaplaincy development and social outreach, whereas in another region it may be undertaken by somebody with a deep expertise in developing fresh expressions of church. The challenge here is the same challenge which will face the whole staff

team: ensuring that knowledge, skills and experience can be effectively shared, and prioritising strong and effective dialogue and communication.

- 166 In addition to the five core areas of expertise described above, we recommend that each post within the regional teams should include capacity for some of the following activities, to which staff should be able to dedicate up to 25% of their time:
- 166.1 *Discipleship development*: contributing to the Network's goal of designing, delivering and evaluating pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources which focus on discipleship development – supporting Circuits and Local Churches to nurture and equip the Methodist people to be Christ-like disciples in the world, and, in particular, building on the work of the *Extending Discipleship, Exploring Vocation (EDEV)* initiative
- 166.2 *Scholarship, research and innovation*: engaging in academic study projects, research projects or innovative and creative thinking, thus ensuring that all posts have protected space within them for creative thinking and for nurturing new thoughts and insights
- 166.3 *Working in partnership across the Church*: nurturing links with volunteers, office-holders within Circuits and Districts, District Policy Committees and District Chairs; engaging with the development of connexional policies and strategies in relevant areas of expertise
- 166.4 *Working in partnership beyond the Methodist Church*: nurturing links with ecumenical partners and other partner organisations
- 166.5 *Quality assurance and enhancement*: working to enhance the quality and effectiveness of pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources through enhancing their design and their delivery.
- 167 We recommend that, within each regional team, one postholder should be identified as the regional team's coordinator, assuming responsibilities (a) for enabling a collaborative and supportive way of working within the regional team, (b) for the performance, efficiency and effectiveness of the regional team, (c) for the regional team's overall contribution towards the goals of the Network, and (d) for being a primary point of contact with the Network's coordinating team (see paragraph 178.3 below). This coordinating role draws on good practice currently seen in the Learning and Development Network of the Methodist Church in Scotland and the Wales Training Network, where benefits have been identified to having a manager or director who coordinates the work of the other members of staff who work across the nations.
- 168 We recommend that the regional teams work across regions which are bigger than Districts but smaller than the existing Regional Training Networks in England (see paragraph 68 above). A recommendation about the number of regional teams, and consequently about the size of the regions which the team should serve, is necessarily strongly dependent upon the financial resources which can be dedicated to supporting regional posts. It has long been evident to the Committee that it would not be possible to support 31 teams, one serving each District. However, it has also been evident to the Committee that some of the Regional Training Networks in England have struggled, for reasons both of geography and workload, to support posts at the regional level which are capable of providing a service across the region. Efficient and realistic teams could therefore be envisaged working across regions

which are bigger than Districts but smaller than the existing Regional Training Networks in England.

- 169 Given the desire to bias the allocation of resources towards the support of expert staff, the Committee is able to recommend the establishment of the equivalent of ten regional teams made up of five full-time posts each. The Committee recognises the likelihood that it will not be proportionate to maintain a regional staff team of five full-time posts within every region, should some of the regions cover smaller areas or a lower number of members than others. The Committee is particularly conscious of the need to provide appropriate provision for Scotland and Wales and for the Island Districts, and of the need to explore the best type of regional configuration to support activities in these Districts and Synods. In the case of the Scotland and Shetland Districts and the Cymru and Wales Synods, for example, it is realistic to ask smaller national teams to serve each respective nation, while acknowledging that such teams would need sufficient capacity to support the distinctive cultural, linguistic and geographical needs of the Methodist people in those nations (and that, within Wales, this will need to include Welsh-language provision). However, even within smaller teams, it is anticipated that responsibility for each of the five core areas described above will be allocated to individuals within the team. The Committee therefore wishes to recommend the establishment of a regionally-deployed staff cohort of fifty posts, which are likely to be coordinated within approximately ten to thirteen regional teams.
- 170 Further work during 2012/2013 is needed to establish the boundaries of the regions to be served by the teams. The Committee has been conscious during its deliberations about regionally-deployed staff posts of the work being undertaken by the Methodist Council's "larger than Circuit" working party. As noted in the Methodist Council's report to the Conference, the working party was established by the Council to oversee the processes by which the *Regrouping for Mission* initiative can be developed at the level of the Districts. The working party's paper to the Methodist Council built on work already being undertaken across the Connexion, and discussed the history and constitutional position of Districts and District Chairs, as well as highlighting a number of recent developments which have had an effect on the responsibilities and functions of both Districts and District Chairs. The paper also outlined the processes which the working party will now adopt to enable proposals to be brought to the 2013 Conference.
- 171 The Committee has welcomed the opportunity to feed into the deliberations of the working party, and is grateful that the working party has identified the work of *The Fruitful Field* as being an important part of its considerations as it prepares its proposals for the 2013 Conference. The Committee's hope is that the working party's proposals to the 2013 Conference will assist the establishment of the regions across which it is realistic to deploy the regional teams which are recommended here. The Committee acknowledges that this aligned development may not be possible, and that further work will be required on the Committee's part during 2012/2013 if it is unlikely that the working party will be able to offer a complete picture to the 2013 Conference. However, we reiterate our hope that strategic and collaborative working will deliver mutually-beneficial outcomes by the time of the 2013 Conference, and we therefore further recommend that the concept and nature of the regional teams

be an important consideration for the Methodist Council's "larger than Circuit" working party.

Posts based in centres

172 We recommend the establishment of staff teams within centres. The centre-based staff teams will form part of the single team of expert staff, and, as with the whole of the staff team, will focus on serving and supporting Circuits and Local Churches. The context within which they will do so is developed further in section J below, where the role of centres is discussed. These paragraphs emphasise that the centre staff will:

- work within the context of a community of resident and visiting students, learners and guests
- have a particular responsibility for developing and maintaining centres as communities which can connect with partners across the World Church
- have a particular responsibility for developing and maintaining centres as communities of deep sharing with ecumenical partners
- have a particular responsibility for developing and maintaining centres as communities of apt and excellent scholarship and research, working in partnership with the Higher Education sector.

173 We therefore recommend that each post within the centres should have as its primary focus:

173.1 *either ministry development, in all its forms:* forming and equipping lay and ordained Methodists who share in the ministry of God within the life of the Church to be effective leaders, servants and partners in God's mission; helping to train, form and equip those who exercise lay ministries and roles within the lives of Circuits and Local Churches, with a particular focus in the first instance on the initial and continuing development of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders; helping to train, form and equip those who are preparing for diaconal and presbyteral ministry (as student ministers and probationers), supporting the continuing development of those who serve in Circuit appointments, including Superintendents, and accompanying those candidating for ordained ministry

173.2 *or church and community development:* challenging and equipping Circuits and Local Churches as they change and grow as mission-focused Christian communities of faith, hope and love; supporting and accompanying those who lead and serve Circuits and Local Churches as they make deliberate and planned changes to enable growth and in response to the changing context of mission; supporting and accompanying those who lead and serve Circuits and Local Churches as they develop fresh expressions of church, fresh ways of being church, chaplaincy projects and initiatives, evangelism and Christian witness projects, and social justice, social action and community development projects; equipping and challenging those who lead and serve Circuits and Local Churches to make deliberate and planned changes to welcome and embrace a wide range of ages (including children, young people, young families, the 'missing generations' and the elderly) and a wide range of diverse backgrounds and cultures (including the widening range of ethnic, linguistic and cultural expressions of British Methodism).

174 In addition to the primary focus described above, we recommend that each post within the centres should include capacity for some of the following activities, to which staff should be able to dedicate between 25% and 50% of their time:

- 174.1 *Discipleship development*: contributing to the Network's goal of designing and delivering pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources which focus on discipleship development – including delivering within the centres a range of pathways and programmes which nurture and equip a wide range of participants to be Christ-like disciples in the world
- 174.2 *Scholarship, research and innovation*: leading academic study projects, research projects and innovative and creative thinking
- 174.3 *Working in partnership within the Church*: nurturing links, in collaboration with colleagues across the team, with those who lead and serve Circuits, Districts and connexional committees
- 174.4 *Working in partnership beyond the Methodist Church in Britain*: nurturing links with ecumenical partners, Partner Churches across the World Church and other partner organisations
- 174.5 *Quality assurance and enhancement*: working to enhance the quality and effectiveness of pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources through enhancing their design and their delivery.
- 175 We recommend that 16 such posts should be provided within the centres. Combined with two coordinating posts for the directors (principals) of the two centres (see paragraphs 178.1-178.2 below), this maintains a level of staffing with the centre-based staff teams which is broadly similar to the staffing level recommended by the 2007 Conference primarily to oversee the education and formation of student ministers. Clearly the responsibilities of the centre-based staff teams within the Network are far from limited to the education and formation of student ministers; equally capacity has been built into the regional teams to support the education and formation of student ministers. Consequently the Committee is confident that the provision of 16 posts across the centre-based staff teams is both a prudent and sufficient investment of resources.
- 176 Both Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation already support a number of staff posts which are not funded by the Methodist Church. This reflects the fact that both centres already serve significant constituencies outside and beyond the life of the Methodist Church – self-supporting students in the case of Cliff College and, in the case of the Queen's Foundation, a mixture of Anglican ordinands and self-supporting students. While the Committee expects that posts sustained through fee income and other partnerships within the centres will be seen as posts within the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network of the Methodist Church, it is also recognised that posts sustained in this way to serve needs which are outside the goals of the Network will be additional posts within the centre-based staff teams to the 16 posts identified here. The Committee expects that bonds of collegueship and the exchange of ideas and expertise among the Network's staff – whatever their location and whatever the source of the funding which supports their particular post – will be a welcome, energising and connexional mark of the Network.
- 177 Both of the centres identified below have and will continue to require bursarial staff, working to support administrative, domestic, premises-based and other bursarial functions. For the avoidance of doubt, these are not included within the posts discussed here, which are practitioner-educationalist posts. An allowance for bursarial staff is made within the financial arrangements proposed for the centres.

The coordinating team

- 178 We recommend the establishment of a coordinating team within the single team of expert staff. The coordinating team will be made up of eight posts:
- 178.1 *A director (principal) of Cliff College:* with responsibility for overseeing the community of faith at Cliff College, for the performance, efficiency and effectiveness of the centre and its staff team, and for the centre's contribution towards the goals of the Network; with responsibility also for the aspects of the life of the centre which serve significant constituencies outside and beyond the life of the Methodist Church.
- 178.2 *A director (principal) of the Queen's Foundation:* with responsibility for overseeing the community of faith at the Queen's Foundation, for the performance, efficiency and effectiveness of the centre and its staff team, and for the centre's contribution towards the goals of the Network; with responsibility also for the aspects of the life of the centre which serve significant constituencies outside and beyond the life of the Methodist Church.
- 178.3 *A director of the regional teams:* with responsibility for directly overseeing the coordinators of the regional teams (see paragraph 167 above), for the performance, efficiency and effectiveness of the regional teams, and for their contribution towards the goals of the Network.
- 178.4 *A director of discipleship development:* with responsibility for coordinating the pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources offered by the Network in the field of discipleship development (see paragraphs 166.1 and 174.1 above); with responsibility also for advising connexional committees about policies and strategies in this field.
- 178.5 *A director of ministry development:* with responsibility for coordinating the pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources offered by the Network in the field of ministry development, in all its forms (see paragraphs 164.1-164.2 and 173.1 above); with responsibility also for advising connexional committees about policies and strategies in this field.
- 178.6 *A director of church and community development:* with responsibility for coordinating the pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources offered by the Network in the field of church and community development (see paragraphs 164.1-164.3 and 173.2 above); with responsibility also for advising connexional committees about policies and strategies in these fields.
- 178.7 *A director of scholarship, research and innovation:* with responsibility for coordinating academic study projects, research projects and innovative and creative thinking across the Network (see, for example, paragraphs 166.2 and 174.2); with primary responsibility for the Network's Higher Education sector links; with responsibility also for making the insights and outcomes of research and development known across and beyond the Network and accessible to the Methodist Church more broadly as the Conference develops policies and strategies about all aspects of its nature and mission.
- 178.8 *A director of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network:* with overall responsibility for the performance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Network, and for enabling and developing the values, purposes, goals and direction of the Network; with responsibility also for liaising with the governance structure of the Network, the Ministries Committee and other senior colleagues in the Connexional Team; with overall responsibility for coordinating the work of the other seven directors, and for leading a collaborative coordinating staff team.

179 The coordinating staff team brings together those who have coordinating responsibilities both in terms of pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources, and in terms of staff and centre management, coordination and development. The purpose and goals of the Network are such that the Committee believes that a coordinating team of this size and nature is required. Furthermore, the Committee believes that collaboration within the coordinating team is essential. Such collaboration is vital if the necessary synergy is to be achieved across the Network; it also models a collaborative way of working which needs to be a mark of the staff team as a whole. Vital to the success and efficiency of the Network is the ability of the staff team to work cohesively as a single team and to work jointly with a number of volunteers and those who lead and serve Districts, Circuits, Local Churches and connexional committees.

The work of the Discipleship & Ministries Cluster of the Connexional Team

180 As the Committee developed the concept of one staff team, serving the whole Connexion and based regionally and in centres, the Committee was also able to reflect on the relationship between this proposed staff team and the Connexional Team.

181 The relationship between the outcomes of *The Fruitful Field* and the work of the Connexional Team had been raised during some consultation submissions, in direct and indirect ways, including in feedback from the deliberations of the Methodist Council. Most directly, some consultation submissions advocated that certain functions of the Connexional Team should be included within the remit of the project as they were very closely related to work undertaken within institutions or by staff posts which were within the remit of the project. More indirectly, several consultation submissions raised concerns about the Connexional Team and connexionalism in the context of centralisation. A District's submission noted the importance of "accessibility – [it is] important to ensure a real understanding of regional need so that we don't fall into the centralisation trap." A Circuit leadership team's submission noted that "an integrated network for delivery of training should be an advantage so long as it does not lead to centralisation which precludes people from accessing local and affordable resources." Reflections such as these were relevant factors when the Committee discussed the need for the pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources offered by the Network to be developed through interactive relationships and in dialogue with local communities – their diverse and continually developing contexts, needs and aspirations. They were also relevant to the Committee's deliberations about the concept and nature of spaces and centres, as outlined in sections I and J below. However, they have been particularly important in the Committee's consideration of the relationship between the proposed staff team and certain functions currently located within the Connexional Team, in particular the work located within the Discipleship & Ministries Cluster of the Connexional Team.

182 The Discipleship & Ministries Cluster of the Connexional Team operates in four key areas: chaplaincy; children and youth; evangelism, spirituality and discipleship; and ministries, learning and development. There is a strong alignment between these functions and purposes of the Network, to the extent that, in the Committee's judgement, it is not feasible to envisage these functions being supported and delivered by the Discipleship & Ministries Cluster in a manner which is detached from

the Network. Of particular relevance to this judgement was the strong regional model of working for the proposed staff team. The Committee judged that this strong regional way of working offered the opportunity to bring certain functions currently located within one location closer to Circuits and Districts. This has the potential to aid collaboration and responsiveness, and to address concerns about centralisation, distance and duplication of work.

- 183 We are therefore able to recommend that the majority of the work currently undertaken within the Discipleship & Ministries Cluster of the Connexional Team be incorporated within the Network.
- 184 As further work is undertaken during 2012/2013, it will be important to ensure that this integration of the work of this Cluster of the Team within the Network is careful and considered. It is already possible to see some areas where the synergies between what we have proposed above and the existing work of the Cluster are strong and robust. In other areas, further work will need to be undertaken to ensure that those aspects of the Cluster's work which have a distinctive and cherished place for the Methodist people – such as the Children & Youth Team's work and the activities which it supports, such as the Youth Assembly and the work of the Youth President – can be robustly supported within the Network.
- 185 It will also be important, as further work is undertaken during 2012/2013, to ensure that the Network's structures, policies and procedures embed a close working relationship between the whole of the Network's staff team and the remainder of the Connexional Team. It is already possible to see some areas where procedural links will necessarily be strong and robust – for example the areas of financial management and Human Resource support. In other areas, further work will be needed in order to ensure that the Network and the remainder of the Connexional Team operate as a holistic group serving the whole of the Methodist Church. Beyond all structures, policies and procedures, the Network and the remainder of the Connexional Team will best serve the Connexion when strong bonds of collegueship exist between expert staff employed and deployed by the Church, regardless of their location or the immediate context of their work. Allowing such bonds of collegueship to be nurtured and strengthened will be an important early task for those who will lead the Network and the remainder of the Connexional Team.

Implementation

- 186 The Committee's recommendations in this section outline the shape of a team of expert staff. Establishing and moulding such a team is a complex task. Careful processes will need to be put in place as existing activities are incorporated within the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network. These processes will be developed and scrutinised by the Methodist Council and the Development and Personnel Sub-Committee of the Strategy and Resources Committee as soon as possible. As noted in paragraphs 170-171 above, timelines will also need to take account of the work of the Methodist Council's "larger than Circuit" working party. During this period, and as further developments take place from the spring of 2013 onwards, it will be important to communicate clearly and effectively with a number of colleagues who will face insecurity and significant pressures, and to continue to value and support their important ministry within the life of the Methodist Church. It will also be

important to ensure that current strengths and good practice across the Connexion are protected, developed and retained.

Section I: Spaces

Recommendation: The identification of appropriate gathering spaces for formation, learning and development across the Connexion, and the development of a virtual space for formation, learning and development.

Gathering spaces for formation, learning and development

187 We recommend the identification of a number of gathering and learning spaces across the Connexion which will support the work of the Network, and of the regional teams in particular. As is outlined in section J below, the Committee has concluded that a significant reduction in the number of institutions, colleges and centres sponsored by the Methodist Church is required. However, there is a distinction to be made between a move away from the sponsorship of a number of institutions across the Connexion towards a model which includes two centres, and seeing those two centres as the only gathering and learning spaces offered by the Network. The task is to identify and, where necessary, create the right sort of 'spaces' across the Connexion where a range of learners and participants can gather for formation, learning and development. The Committee's recommendation is that it is unnecessary for those gathering and learning spaces to be set up as fully-fledged institutions, colleges or centres.

188 The need for such gathering and learning spaces across the Connexion was identified by several submissions made during the consultation period. A submission from a District officer noted that "I see the sense in concentrating resources and of one [centre] through which the training is coordinated and held coherently and cohesively. However, Methodism traditionally is a multi-faceted movement which may still require more intimate settings through which this diversity can continue to be taken forward, nurtured and thrive... Sweeping away all existing institutions may appear the most cost effective solution today but might we regret this in a few years time when we struggle to find suitable places to gather?" Another District officer's submission noted that "it is understood that regional networks are key to [the] success of this model – I am just hoping that these 'networks' will include learning centres (like satellites, linked to the hub but spread around the regions) so that local people who are unable to travel to a centralised hub (or unable to stay away from home due to home/work commitments) can still access these broad pathways that will be open to them. They need to share with others training in person – and not just by remote 'e-learning' type solutions." Another District officer's submission notes that "if we are to offer hospitality and be welcoming then we may need more than one hub and need to retain appropriate places where folks can be gathered be they from within the Connexion, the wider Christian communities or the even broader secular society. Also, if we are to become more proactive, strategic and holistic this cries out for discipleship that is not fixed to one place, one institution, one ivory tower, one temple (even one virtual hub) but is a fluid form of discipleship which is not called to gather but rather sent out to witness to the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ." A tutor's submission notes that "the excellent environment for learning and formation that is envisaged for the hub could also be creatively envisaged in different places across the Connexion, particularly if the majority of learning does not happen at the single hub location... Experience of blended learning... has highlighted

the limitations of solely relying on tutorials via Skype and occasional weekend residential courses for those training for ministry.” A partner organisation’s submission noted that “we affirm the need for ‘quiet restful places’ where space and time can be offered for theological reflection and where events can take place which encourage and enrich the discipleship life of the Methodist people.”

- 189 The establishment of such “quiet, restful places” where learners and participants can gather is not an alien concept for the Methodist people. Local Churches are themselves, by their very nature and purpose, gathering spaces for formation, learning and development. Many Circuits and Local Churches are investing in adaptations to existing premises, or in building new premises, which are better configured as environments for study and sharing. Within some Districts, larger churches, central halls or other notable buildings within the life of the District are already developing as gathering spaces for formation, learning and development serving a wide area. Development plans being explored by the trustees of the New Room, Bristol include the potential for developments on the site to create intentionally appropriate space for study and sharing, with the necessary ancillary facilities to make the experience of gathering for study and sharing both comfortable and attractive.
- 190 It is therefore already possible to see ways in which a recommendation by the Committee to identify appropriate gathering spaces for formation, learning and development can draw on existing experience and developments, and on a willingness across the Connexion to use our premises more strategically as a key resource for mission and growth.
- 191 Drawing on the developments already explored by some Districts, it is possible to imagine learning and gathering spaces being developed alongside District administration hubs, so that the gathering space can be used for a multitude of purposes within the life of the District or region. Drawing on the experience of the explorations being undertaken by the trustees of the New Room, it is also possible to imagine the development of gathering spaces in the historic bases of Bristol and London, for instance, which draw on the rich opportunities to establish links between the learning space and the history of Methodism, emphasising the spiritual and relational aspects of gathering spaces as well as their more functional purposes.
- 192 As those who act as managing trustees for a range of premises across the Connexion realise, spaces for gathering and learning need to be safe, sustaining, welcoming – spaces with personality within which people find room to reflect and to be inspired. Size, form, location, accessibility, technological facilities, acoustics and furniture are all appropriate and necessary considerations.
- 193 The Committee believes there is much to be gained from taking a systematic and informed approach to developments in this area, and is confident that it will be possible to identify a number of apt and excellent spaces for gathering and learning across the Connexion. This necessarily involves a redirection of attention away from sponsoring a number of institutions, colleges and centres across the Connexion towards the development of spaces, on the understanding that such spaces will be able to provide the flexible and appropriately-configured resource which will complement the regional teams and which may also be able to provide a base for

other types of Methodist activity in Districts and regions. There is also strong potential for future developments to tie into the discussions of the Methodist Council's "larger than Circuit" working party, as it considers how best to resource other activities and responsibilities within the lives of Districts and regions. These considerations provide the context for the implementation of this component of the core recommendation.

Virtual spaces

- 194 A number of institutions, colleges and centres already make use of virtual learning environments. Such environments enable a range of learning resources (including articles, extracts from books, digital copies of archival material, recordings of lectures, programme handbooks, forms and supporting materials) to be more easily accessible. An increasing range of software packages and improved hardware also enable interaction (through discussion boards and real time seminars), thus allowing virtual learning environments to be spaces of collaborative learning as well as a means of distributing information. Rarely if ever is engagement through a virtual learning environment the sole means of delivering programmes, with institutions, colleges and centres opting for a blend of virtual and face-to-face interaction.
- 195 The Committee therefore recommends that the Network should develop a robust, accessible and excellent virtual space. This will enable the Network to complement other types of formation, learning and development with apt online resources and interaction. This will also enable pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources to be more accessible, including to those who, for reasons of distance or other commitments, find it difficult to gather together with other learners on a regular basis or at particular times. Care will need to be taken to ensure that the development of a virtual space does not disadvantage those in parts of the Connexion whose civic infrastructure does not support broadband internet access and those who do not have ready access to, or familiarity with, electronic devices. Care will also need to be taken to see that the virtual space sits alongside other spaces and experiences, and that the value of face-to-face interaction with fellow learners and expert staff is not undermined. However, the Committee wishes to see the Network enabled to engage in cutting edge developments in this field, not least because of the potential for engaging more effectively with children and young people. Developing a coherent virtual space through the Network will also avoid the duplication of development costs and support costs which will occur if individual institutions, colleges and centres invest in the establishment and maintenance of separate systems. Above all, a virtual space will provide an important means of sharing information widely, between expert staff, across the Connexion and, indeed, beyond. The Committee noted a submission made by an institutional representative during the consultation period which reflected on John Wesley's educational vision. It noted that "much of [Wesley's] work in that field was directed to producing educational materials that could be used nationally (his *Christian Library*, his sermons, Charles's hymns, etc). I am therefore sure that today he would be fully utilising online learning."
- 196 The Committee recommends that implementation of this component of the core recommendation should, if possible, take place in collaboration with a university partner. Working in partnership in this way is likely to make a large pool of expertise and good practice available to the Network in a rapidly changing discipline. It is also

recommended that consultations continue with the United Methodist Church (UMC), whose E-Academy programme, based in Switzerland but serving large parts of the Central Conferences of the UMC, provides a base for further collaboration and mutually-beneficial development.

Section J: Centres

Recommendation: The establishment of two connexional centres, one based at Cliff College and the other based at the Queen's Foundation.

197 In order to support the work of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network, we recommend that the Network should sustain and invest in two centres only, and that these centres should be based at and develop from the present activities of Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation.

The role of centres

198 As outlined above in section D, the Methodist Church has, in its recent history, sponsored a number of institutions, colleges and centres to provide a range of services and opportunities in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development. However, the rationale for sponsorship of such a high number of institutions and communities has not always been clearly articulated, nor has a clear account always been given of that which the Church hopes to achieve through its sponsorship of particular institutions, colleges and centres and of institutions, colleges and centres in general.

199 To aid its reflections on the contribution of institutions, colleges and centres to the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network, the Committee sought to identify the unique role which centres can play within the life of the Church and the Network. In doing so, the Committee sought to be realistic about its prior decision to focus its resources on an expert staff team in the first instance, but also realistic about those things which, within the wider educational context, can only be achieved through a centre and its associated infrastructure. In all of this the Committee drew heavily on its understanding of the life and witness of those institutions, colleges and centres currently sponsored by the Church and on the submissions made during the consultation period.

200 The Committee concluded that a centre should be able to make the following unique contributions to the life of the Methodist Church and the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network:

200.1 *A centre should be a community of faith which nurtures and supports a deep expertise in formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development.* Such a centre will benefit from the synergy between different activities and from the interaction between different learners; it will engender a prayerful community which allows students, learners, guests and staff to affirm, share and engage with diverse insights, cultures and convictions.

200.2 *A centre should provide a home and a gathering place for a community of students and learners (resident and visiting, full-time and part-time), guests and staff (teaching and research staff; administrative staff; domestic and maintenance staff; and visiting colleagues from across the Network); and should be able to provide residential hospitality for short and longer periods of time.* Such a centre will be able to offer a base to support the broad and dispersed activities of the Network. Such a centre will

also be able to support a broad range of pathways, including those which will rely on periods of residence. As a learning institution noted in its submission made during the consultation period, such a centre will also be able to sustain “the fundamental rhythms of prayer and study and common life which remain central to our understanding and practice of Christian formation.”

- 200.3 *A centre (through its structures, resources and partnerships) should be able to connect with partners across the World Church.* A connexional committee, in its submission made during the consultation period, challenged the Connexion “to raise its eyes beyond the traditional and historic boundaries of learning provision and to incorporate a broader world view. We also challenge the Connexion to engender a culture of learning which is outward-facing, world-engaged and global in its understanding of participation in God’s mission. We challenge the Connexion to develop an expression of discipleship which expands horizons and embraces the wide-ranging perspectives of our World Church partners.” As a submission from a learning institution noted, “we need an institution in the UK that helps the world wide family of Methodists to be shaped together for mission, to learn with and from each other, to be a partner with other institutions [across the World Church] to build their capacity and to receive their wisdom and insights.”
- 200.4 *A centre (through its structures, resources and partnerships) should be able to allow deep sharing with ecumenical partners.* As a tutor noted in their submission made during the consultation period, “there is a richness to be derived from training in community with partner denominations and this requires students to sit together and learn together.” Directing us towards a wide understanding of the role of centres in the context of ecumenical working, a postholder in a partner organisation noted that “my observation is that [newer denominations and] churches in particular, look to the historic churches as possessors of theological and educational resources which they do not have, and are eager to develop relationships so that those resources can be shared... In other words part of the synergy is what the historic churches have and can bring to the table.” As a partner organisation noted, “in a post-denominational future we... see the increasing need for institutions in good standing across the wider Church, offering training with a rich ecumenical mix, whilst at the same time offering Methodist charisms as a gift to the Church universal.”
- 200.5 *A centre (through its structures, resources and partnerships) should be able to nurture apt and excellent scholarship and research, in partnership with the Higher Education sector.* As a tutor noted in their submission made during the consultation period, “the Methodist Church needs a university validated institution where some of the core areas of Methodism can be academically researched and studied. This is to provide accessible scholarship to further enrich the people of God and enable the Methodist Church in Britain to continue to make a wider contribution within Christianity and the world.” As a submission from a Higher Education practitioner noted, it will be important to engage with “the kind of models used by the leading universities of today – the importance of research-led teaching, international relationships, diversity of delivery, etc. These should be major parts of a strategy for the long term development of Methodist training.” The possibility of an ecumenical Higher Education partnership, and its implications in terms of shared resources across the denominations and regardless of geographical proximity, is a significant developmental feature here (see paragraphs 148-156 above).

The number of centres

201 The Committee's judgement was that only a very limited number of such centres can and should be supported by the Church. A consultation submission from a postholder in a partner organisation provided a wider context for some of the Committee's considerations in this area:

Methodism faces a similar problem to most of the historic denominations in England. It is burdened by a history of inadequately maintained college buildings which do not meet the demands of either modern education practice or indeed legislation. Those buildings were designed to provide for the needs of communities of full-time ordinands and those who taught them. As the number of full-time ordinands has diminished over the last 30 years, the educational and training needs of the Church have diversified. Theological education is one of the most emotionally charged parts of church life because denominational identity is partly expressed through its institutions, and because these institutions form people at critical moments in their spiritual lives. This will not be a pain free business for those charged with a review.

202 Taking a broader view, beyond institutions focused on student ministers, several consultation submissions from within Methodism similarly argued for a significant and necessary consolidation. A learning institution's submission noted the need for a "radical consolidation of the number of institutions in which the Connexion has investment of capital assets, personnel and expertise." Another learning institution's submission noted that "we acknowledge that the multiplicity of institutions has contributed to fragmented, uncoordinated provision and sometimes to competitive attitudes between institutions. We confess that training institutions have often not been willing or able to work together effectively. We recognise that the current provision does not make efficient use of resources and is not sustainable. We agree that radical change is needed." A researcher and lecturer's submission noted that "it has always been clear, from the early conversations [in 2005] that change was needed. The replication and multiplication of resources for theological training provided a rich field of opportunities for training. However, the greenhouse growth of those resources has been shown to reflect some poor stewardship of our resources. The vine was not pruned as it grew and now the fruit is shown to be wanting." The Committee concurred with this widely shared judgement that sponsorship of a range of institutions, colleges and centres was leading to replication, fragmented provision, missed opportunities for cross-fertilisation across and between activities, and an inefficient use of resources.

203 The Committee's deliberations about other aspects of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network also argue for a limited number of centres. A focus on equipping and supporting regional teams dictates a necessarily limited focus on centres. Given a limited focus, and a consequently limited pool of resources, there is a significant risk that the dispersal of already limited resources across a number of centres would restrict their effectiveness and diminish their long-term sustainability.

204 Furthermore, the Committee's description of the marks of centres (see paragraph 200 above) clearly indicated to the Committee that centres structured along these lines were complex institutions. A focused commitment to the responsible use of energy and resources is required to establish sustainable centres which can deliver this broad range of activities to the highest standards. Coordination of these

activities across a number of centres would be extremely complex, and it would be extremely likely that provision would again become fragmented.

Reducing the number of centres

205 The recommendation to establish a Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network, containing within it a strictly limited number of centres configured to make contributions along the lines outlined in paragraph 200 above, allowed the Committee to make, in turn, some initial recommendations about the Conference's sponsorship of a number of institutions, colleges and centres.

ERMC, SEITE, STETS and SWMTC

206 The Committee recommends that the Methodist Church should, in an organised and structured manner, withdraw its sponsorship from the Eastern Region Ministry Course (ERMC), the South-East Institute for Theological Education (SEITE), the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme (STETS) and the South-West Ministry Training Course (SWMTC). The Committee is confident that, within the wider Network, including through the posts within the regional teams focusing on the development of ordained ministries and roles, capacity will be available to support the types of pathways which are currently being offered through these institutions – specifically, pathways for student ministers studying on a part-time basis alongside other work or family commitments. The Committee would not wish this recommendation to be seen as an adverse judgement about the quality of the formational pathways offered within these institutions at present. However, the incorporation of the pathways currently offered through these institutions within the Network (a) will establish more robust Methodist formational communities than those currently experienced by some of the student ministers on these pathways; (b) will bring a reduction in the number of independent partners involved in a number of connexional processes (eg candidating, the allocation of student ministers, student minister and probationer oversight), thus making those processes more streamlined and efficient; (c) will enable resources which are currently dedicated towards the maintenance of capacity within these institutions as their governing bodies direct to be used more flexibly within the Network; (d) will make it easier to share and distribute some of the resources which are current exclusively developed and made available for student ministers more widely. The Committee hopes that bonds of collegiality and collaboration can be developed between regional teams and these institutions, and, in doing so, echoes the hopes for such links mentioned in the submissions made by some of the institutions concerned during the consultation period. The Committee has assessed the risks and costs for the Methodist Church of withdrawal from the institutions concerned, and consideration has been given to the impact of withdrawal on the institutions themselves. In both cases, the Committee is confident that its recommendation is sound and reasonable. The Committee records its thanks to ERMC, SEITE, STETS and SWMTC for their ready partnership with the Methodist Church, and will wish to express its gratitude through other representations over coming months.

Hartley Victoria College, Manchester, the York Institute for Community Theology and the Urban Theology Unit, Sheffield

207 The Committee also recommends that the Methodist Church should, in an organised and structured manner, move to end its activities at Hartley Victoria College, Manchester, the York Institute for Community Theology and the Urban Theology

Unit, Sheffield, and move to incorporate their activities within the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network. The rationale for doing so is similar to that offered in paragraph 206 above – namely that the pathways offered by these institutions could, with confidence, be offered through the Network in a manner which is more efficient and robust. Given that both Hartley Victoria College and the York Institute for Community Theology are institutions which operate under the auspices of the Methodist Council, the Church owes a particular duty of care towards these institutions, and in particular towards the staff stationed and appointed to them. Careful processes will need to be put in place as their activities are incorporated within the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network. Additionally, there are many creative resources developed within these institutions which the Committee would wish to secure and retain; the York Institute for Community Theology, for example, provides a number of programmes in the fields of leadership and consultancy which could very beneficially be incorporated within the Network; similarly, Hartley Victoria College has developed an expertise in the planning and development of blended formational pathways for student ministers which, again, should be incorporated within the Network. Again, the Committee has, to the best of its capacity, assessed the risks and costs for the Methodist Church of ending its activities within these institutions in this way, and consideration has also been given to the impact of withdrawal on partners and other stakeholders. In both cases, the Committee is confident that its recommendation is sound and reasonable. The Committee records its thanks to the Luther King House Educational Trust, UTU and York St John University for their ready partnership with the Methodist Church, and will wish to express its gratitude through other representations over coming months.

The Methodist Church in Scotland Learning and Development Network and the Wales Training Network

208 The Committee recommends that student ministers are no longer allocated to the Methodist Church in Scotland Learning and Development Network and the Wales Training Network. Provision was made for the allocation of student ministers to the Scottish and Welsh networks by the Conference in 2007. The rationale for moving to end this arrangement is similar to that offered in paragraph 206 above – namely that the pathways offered by these institutions can, with confidence, be offered through the Network without the need for the networks to continue to act as virtual institutions. The Committee acknowledges with gratitude the partnership which has existed with the Church in Wales through St Michael's College, Llandaff over recent years, and again hopes that bonds of collegiality and collaboration can be maintained between regional staff members and the College's tutors and leaders.

The Methodist Diaconal Order Centre

209 The Committee recommends that the broad formational activities which currently have their base at the Methodist Diaconal Order Centre should be incorporated within the Network. The Committee is grateful to the Methodist Diaconal Order for organising a consultation meeting at the Centre during the consultation period, during which those gathered from within the Order were able to reflect on the role and purpose of the Centre and to envisage some of the characteristics which the Network, especially through its centres, would need to nurture and develop in order to enable those aspects of the Centre's life which are currently highly valued to be incorporated within the Network. The Committee was confident that this could be

done, and welcomes the enthusiasm and collaborative spirit shown by those who gathered at the consultation meeting.

The Southlands Methodist Trust

210 The Committee recommends that the activities of the Southlands Methodist Trust are incorporated within the Network. The most significant component of the Trust's activities is its role in supporting the development of Christian (specifically Methodist) understanding and appreciation of contemporary issues of local, national and global significance for the Church and society, and in facilitating the public dissemination of such developments, all in partnership with the Higher Education sector. The Trust currently achieves these aims through awarding grants for fixed-term projects, working in close partnership with the University of Roehampton. The Committee is confident that the most significant activities of the Trust can be achieved through the Network in a coordinated manner. The Committee has, to the best of its capacity, assessed the impact of such an incorporation on the Trust and its existing partners, and the Committee is confident that its recommendation is sound and reasonable.

SOCMS

211 The Committee recommends that the activities of the Selly Oak Centre for Mission Studies are incorporated within the Network. SOCMS currently prepares Mission Partners for service overseas and acts as a British base at which leaders from Partner Churches undertake a Masters course in mission and leadership studies. Several parties have noted the benefits which have already been gained by incorporating the work of SOCMS within the Queen's Foundation, thereby permitting cross-fertilisation between the overseas mission-focused work of SOCMS and the Foundation's ministerial development activities. It is now appropriate to take this a step further by enabling the Network to undertake the activities currently undertaken by SOCMS as a core element of its activities, without the need to maintain a separate institutional infrastructure.

CODEC

212 The Committee recommends that the objectives which the Methodist Church currently achieves through its sponsorship of CODEC (the Centre for Biblical Literacy and Communication) are achieved within and through the Network. The Church's sponsorship of CODEC is a welcome manifestation of the Church's commitment to support scholarship, research and innovation. As noted in paragraphs 125-126, 166.2, 174.2 and 178.7 above and 264 below, capacity will be created and sustained within and through the Network to undertake academic study projects, research projects, and innovative and creative thinking. The Church's sponsorship of CODEC is also a welcome manifestation of the Church's commitment to support the development of the means for apt and effective witness and presence in our contemporary society, using contemporary means. As noted in paragraphs 124, 164.4, 173.2 and 178.6 above, capacity will be created and sustained within and through the Network to focus innovatively on such needs. Again, coordinating such activities within the Network will permit welcome cross-fertilisation between these and other activities. The Committee has given consideration to the impact of such a change on CODEC and St John's College, and the Ministries Committee is confident that its recommendation is sound and reasonable. Further discussions about the implementation of this recommendation will be able to be taken forward by the

Methodist Council's representatives on CODEC's Management Committee; however, the Committee wishes here to record its thanks to St John's College for its ready partnership in this context.

MIC

213 The Committee recommends that the Methodist Church should, in an organised and structured manner, move to designate Methodist International Centre as an institution which generates an income to support the wider activities of the Network.

214 The charitable activity currently undertaken at MIC – the provision of student and educational accommodation – has its roots in the 1950s, when a committee was maintained by the Conference (the Committee for the Care of Overseas Students) in order to oversee the provision of affordable and secure accommodation for students, and especially students from overseas or from non-urban backgrounds, studying in London and other major conurbations. Over the years countless students have acknowledged their gratitude for the support they have received in the Christian environments supported by the Committee and the Church. However, over recent decades, the nature of the student accommodation market and the profile of overseas students have changed significantly. Several commercial providers now provide high-quality student accommodation, and several universities have developed their own student accommodation services in order to enhance the quality of the student experience. The Methodist Church's own experiences both at the University of Roehampton (through Southlands College) and at Oxford Brookes University (through Westminster College) testify to the advances in the provision of appropriate student accommodation, either by universities themselves or by third party providers and on commercial terms. Similarly, the profile of overseas students has changed. The Management Committee of MIC reviewed its activities in this sphere in 2010 and reported to the Methodist Council:

The world of student needs and accommodation has changed beyond recognition in the last ten to fifteen years. Today, the foreign student is part of a vast student market, highly sought after and very well provided for by universities and the private sector and at levels of comfort and with a range of facilities beyond that which MIC could provide. The students at MIC are from wealthy families and / or supported by growing economies in Asia and even parts of Africa.

Therefore the [Management Committee has] had to face the fact that the original reasons for MIC providing student accommodation support have now all but disappeared. Such issues have been at the heart of the search of the [management Committee] to discern the Will of God for this place over the last few years.²⁴

Furthermore, the provision of student accommodation as a separate activity and on separate sites to the Church's own activities which regularly require residential and conference accommodation (namely those learning institutions undertaking ministerial formation and delivering other courses) does not allow for a cross-fertilisation of activities and a considered use of residential space on a cross-institutional basis.

215 Consequently it is advisable to discontinue the provision of subsidised student accommodation at MIC, and to continue to develop the site's existing successful

²⁴ MC/10/53, "Spirituality of Hospitality: A 21st Century Interpretation of Hilda Porter's vision"

activities as a social enterprise hotel. This will enable MIC to become an institution which generates an income to support the wider activities of the Network, including supporting the valuable role of the centres within the Network as places which are able to provide residential hospitality for short and longer periods of time, and as places which are able to connect with partners across the World Church and members from Partner Churches who are part of the Methodist Church in Britain for longer or shorter periods of time (see paragraphs 200.1-200.3 above). The Committee has, to the best of its capacity, made an initial assessment of the impact of such a change on MIC. Further discussions about the implementation of this recommendation should be taken forward with the Management Committee and the directors of MIC Ltd, the trading company which is already in place to manage the commercial activity undertaken on the site. The Committee is confident that its recommendation is sound and reasonable.

The Guy Chester Centre

- 216 The Committee recommends that the Methodist Church should, in an organised and structured manner, move to incorporate the spirituality and training activities undertaken at the Guy Chester Centre within the wider Network, while designating the Centre as an institution which generates an income to support the wider activities of the Network.
- 217 The Centre's spirituality and training activities include the provision of quiet days, retreats and a range of short courses and day courses in a number of spiritual, pastoral and organisational fields. The Committee is confident that such activities can be incorporated within the Network. The rationale for doing so is similar to that offered in paragraph 206 above – namely that the pathways offered by the Centre could, through their incorporation, be offered through the Network in a manner which is more efficient and robust, allowing them to be shared more widely and removing the need for a separate infrastructural framework to support their delivery. There are many creative resources which have been developed and delivered within the Centre which the Committee would wish to secure and retain in their present form, and careful processes will need to be put in place as these activities are incorporated within the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network.
- 218 The Centre's other activities (which account for 90-95% of the Centre's overall activity) focus on the provision of accommodation for students and a smaller number of career-starters. The tranquil gardens and grounds of the North Bank Estate, which currently houses the Guy Chester Centre, are also maintained by its trustees for the benefit of the students, as well as a number of other users, including the membership of Muswell Hill Methodist Church and the residents of two MHA homes which are adjacent to the site. The rationale for reassessing the provision of student accommodation at the Centre is similar to that offered in paragraphs 214 above when discussing the provision of a similar service at MIC. As is the case within MIC, there is undoubted value for the students and career-starters who benefit from the current provision offered by the Guy Chester Centre. The accommodation offered there provides a safe and supportive place to live, and can allow access to advice and life-skills input within a Methodist environment. However, the use of the Centre's site as a base for these activities constitutes a significant connexional investment in a relatively small number of individuals. The purposes and values of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network envisage the use of resources to support widely

accessible opportunities across the Connexion. This includes a strong emphasis on supporting the ways in which Circuits and Local Churches can welcome and embrace young people and young families from a wide range of diverse backgrounds and cultures (see paragraph 164.5 above). It also includes, through the intentional establishment of gathering and learning spaces, a strong emphasis on supporting a number of safe, sustaining, welcoming, gathering and learning spaces across the Connexion (see paragraphs 187-193 above). The Network also envisages its two centres established as communities of faith which can provide a home and a hospitable gathering place for a community of students, learners and guests (see paragraphs 200.1-200.3 above). As such, these centres provide the primary context for the Network's investment in and subsidised support for centres as communities of faith and hospitality.

- 219 Consequently it is advisable to reassess the provision of subsidised student accommodation at the Guy Chester Centre, and to reconfigure the site's activities so that it becomes an income-generating institution for the wider Network. It is possible that such a reconfiguration may lead to significant changes at the Centre. These require further investigation depending upon the nature of the income-generating use made of the site, and, in the first instance, upon whether the existing model of providing student accommodation can be undertaken on a business-related basis. The Committee has, to the best of its capacity, made an initial assessment of the impact of such a change on the Guy Chester Centre. Further discussions about the implementation of this recommendation should be taken forward with the managing trustees of the Centre and, as necessary, with the managing trustees of Muswell Hill Methodist Church and the trustees of MHA. The Committee is confident that its recommendation is sound and reasonable.

The identification of Cliff College

- 220 The vision contained within the consultation document proposed the establishment of a single centre on one site, and the Committee remains sympathetic to the focused and sustainable use of resources which such proposal ensures (see paragraphs 113.16-113.25 above). However, the Committee also noted carefully the concerns raised about the consolidation into one centre outlined in the consultation document. A large number of these concerns focused on the risk of confusing connexionalism with centralisation, as discussed in paragraph 181 above. A connexional committee's submission noted that "the centralisation proposed (one single hub) is excessive. The Methodist Church is a Connexion and, as such, requires a focus on regional, District and Circuit level that a single stand-alone hub would not be able to provide... Wesley never envisaged creating just one educational base – rather he adopted both a regional approach (with libraries in Bristol, Newcastle and London) and a local approach (with the education delivered within societies)." While the Committee believes that the deployment of regional teams, the careful dispersal of work currently undertaken within the Connexional Team and the creative use of spaces will alleviate some of these concerns, the Committee judged that these concerns about the use of only one centre should be taken very seriously.
- 221 The Committee also noted the importance of, and the demand for, the work of Cliff College. This strong affirmation of the work of Cliff College was evident in the consultation submissions, which demonstrated a unique and advanced appreciation within the Methodist Church of the work of Cliff College – appreciation found in

consultation submissions from individuals, Circuits, Districts and other groupings. This affirmation is also evident in the steady but significant growth in self-funding student numbers at Cliff College over several years. It is also seen in the stable, self-sustaining business model, largely funded by fees from self-supporting students, which Cliff College has been able to develop.

- 222 The Committee's analysis of Cliff College also identified a number of other aspects of Cliff College's life as a community of faith which the Committee felt nurtured and supported forms of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development which are currently of great benefit to the Methodist Church, and which would be of great benefit to the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network. In particular, the Committee noted Cliff College's historic commitment to lay formation and its mature understanding of the importance of equipping the whole people of God for discipleship and mission. The Committee also noted Cliff College's historic and ongoing commitment both to reflection on the practice of mission and evangelism in a changing culture, and to enabling people to pioneer new forms of church appropriate for the future. The Committee also noted that Cliff College sustains a range of ecumenical and other partnerships, including new and non-traditional ecumenical partnerships. In terms of the Committee's description of the role of centres within the life of the Network (see paragraph 200 above), the Committee noted that these aspects of Cliff College's life and witness demonstrated that the College was fulfilling important aspects of such a role.
- 223 Furthermore, the Committee noted that Cliff has long experience of adaptation and change in which a pattern of entrepreneurial innovation has enabled the College to respond rapidly and effectively to the needs of a changing Church. Indeed, the College's consultation submission demonstrated a readiness to work creatively and innovatively to better serve the Church in the context of the vision put forward by the Ministries Committee. Further still, the Committee noted that Cliff College has not always been central to the Connexion's activities in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development, and that this had been a loss to the Connexion as well as to the College.
- 224 The Committee therefore saw few risks and many benefits to the identification of Cliff College as a centre within the proposed Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network, thus allowing Cliff College to develop as a fully-fledged centre within the Network, while also allowing the Connexion to benefit from Cliff's ongoing engagement in a range of partnerships and programmes which have a life and a strong impact beyond Methodism. The Committee noted during its deliberations about Cliff College that the College did not have a history of forming and educating student ministers. It also noted that it would not be possible to expect the College, given its historic emphases and current expertise, to represent the breadth and diversity of Methodist theology. Consequently, the identification of Cliff College as a centre was only possible if more than one centre was to be recommended to the Conference.
- 225 While considering these reflections early in 2012, the Committee was also conscious that Cliff College was, in some ways, uniquely vulnerable to a sustained period of insecurity about its future. The Committee has always recognised that *The Fruitful Field* project would usher in a period of insecurity for a number of postholders and

institutions, but has also wanted to keep such insecurity to a strict minimum (see paragraph 14.7 above). Because of Cliff College's reliance on self-funding student fee income and the limited degree of connexional grant support offered to the College compared to other institutions, Cliff College was particularly vulnerable to a potential drop in student recruitment caused by student insecurity about the College's future in the light of *The Fruitful Field's* work. This risk was identified by the Committee's own assessment of the impact of its work on the institutions within the remit of the project, and the Committee felt its responsibility to limit such a risk, should that be possible without damaging the integrity of the wider project.

- 226 In the light of these reflections, both about the desirable degree of consolidation and about the appropriateness of Cliff College as a centre, the Committee determined that its interim response to the consultation document would indicate its intention to explore the feasibility of two centres as opposed to one centre only, and would also identify Cliff College as one of the centres which the Committee would recommend to the Conference (see the extract from the interim response in paragraphs 114.5-114.6 above).

Focusing on identifying a second centre

- 227 The Committee, in its considerations of a location for a second centre, took as its starting point the marks of a centre identified in paragraph 200 above. To these, three other marks were added by the Committee in order to reflect the Committee's stewardship both of existing good practice and of past and future financial investment, and these appear in paragraphs 228.6-228.8 below.
- 228 The Committee therefore established the following marks of the contribution which two centres should be able to provide to the Church and to the wider Network:
- 228.1 The centres should be communities of faith which nurture and support a deep expertise in formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development.
- 228.2 The centres should be able to provide a home and a gathering place for communities of students and learners (resident and visiting), guests and staff (teaching and research staff; administrative staff; domestic and maintenance staff; and visiting colleagues from across the Network); and should be able to provide residential hospitality for short and longer periods of time.
- 228.3 The centres (through their structures, resources and partnerships) should be able to connect with partners across the World Church.
- 228.4 The centres (through their structures, resources and partnerships) should be able to allow deep sharing with ecumenical partners.
- 228.5 The centres (through their structures, resources and partnerships) should be able to nurture apt and excellent scholarship and research, in partnership with the Higher Education sector.
- 228.6 The centres should be able to draw on the strengths and good practice of existing institutions in appropriate ways.
- 228.7 The centres should be able to offer realistic accessibility from across the Connexion.
- 228.8 The centres, as premises and assets as well as communities of faith, should demonstrate good stewardship of the Methodist people's past and continuing investment of resources.

- 229 The Committee proceeded to make assessments of the contribution which several combinations of institutions and locations would be able to make, based on the marks of the contribution which two centres should be able to provide to the Church and to the wider Network.
- 230 To aid its consideration of institutions and locations, information about existing institutions and locations – drawn from research, analysis and the submissions made by institutions themselves during the consultation period – was ordered in the following categories:
- Existing and (institution-specific or location-specific) potential connections with World Church partners
 - Existing and (institution-specific or location-specific) potential connections with ecumenical partners
 - Existing and (institution-specific or location-specific) potential connections with research universities and institutes
 - The governance arrangements of the institution
 - The status of the institution's occupation of its premises/the institution-specific or location-specific potential for new premises
 - The maintenance outlook for the institution's premises
 - The financial outlook of the institution
 - Any other factors pertaining to the institution's assets
 - Any other institution-specific or location-specific development opportunities
 - Any other risk factors pertaining to the institution or location
 - An assessment of the impact of withdrawal on the institution and its partners
- 231 The process of assessment and discernment took place in two rounds. The first round included the following institutions and locations, drawn from the institutions currently sponsored by the Church, from suggestions made in consultation submissions, and from further research and analysis. In response to suggestions made to the Committee during some institutional consultation submissions and in further reflections gathered from institutional leaders in the wake of the publication of the Committee's interim response to the consultation, configurations involving three centres were also included at this stage.
- The existing site of Wesley College, Bristol; and Cliff College
 - A location in Manchester; and Cliff College
 - A location in London; and Cliff College
 - The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham; and Cliff College
 - Wesley House, Cambridge (as currently configured, as a centre within other premises in Cambridge, and operating on two sites (in Cambridge and London)); and Cliff College
 - The Wesley Study Centre, Durham (as currently configured, as a centre within other premises in Durham, and operating on two sites (in Durham and London)); and Cliff College
 - The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham; Wesley House, Cambridge (as currently configured and as a centre within other premises in Cambridge); and Cliff College
 - The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham; the Wesley Study Centre, Durham (as currently configured and as a centre within other premises in Durham); and Cliff College

- Wesley House, Cambridge (as currently configured and as a centre within other premises in Cambridge); the Wesley Study Centre, Durham (as currently configured and as a centre within other premises in Durham); and Cliff College

- 232 For the second round, the first three configurations were removed, as deliberations during the first round had identified them as being the weakest configurations. In the case of the existing site of Wesley College, Bristol, the committee noted that the decision of the 2007 Conference to withdraw full-time student ministers from the College, and the decision of the 2010 Conference to close the College, had necessarily meant that relationships with local ecumenical partners and with local Higher Education sector partners had diminished, and that the College was no longer a centre of good practice in ministerial formation and development. Significant capital expenditure would be required to renovate the premises for use as a centre. Furthermore, in accordance with the mandate of the 2011 Conference, the market for the site is being promisingly tested, and the Committee concluded that there was insufficient evidence to suggest that the Conference should alter its view of the site as an investment asset. In the case of locations in Manchester and London, the accessibility of both locations was noted. However, the developmental work and the very significant capital expenditure which would be likely to be required to establish a centre in either location was also noted by the Committee, as was the possible loss to the Methodist Church of the use of the premises and assets currently available at both Birmingham and Cambridge should a new centre be established in new premises in Manchester or London.
- 233 Configurations during the second round consequently focused on two or three centres, one of which was Cliff College and the other of which was one or more of the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham, Wesley House, Cambridge and the Wesley Study Centre, Durham.
- 234 An assessment of configurations involving the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham noted, among other strengths: (a) the contribution which would be made by a continuing association with the expertise in cross-cultural and international engagement at the Queen's Foundation, flowing from the Foundation's association with the Selly Oak Centre for Mission Studies, the United College of the Ascension and Kingsmead College; (b) the contribution which would be made by a continuing association with the ecumenical venture at the Queen's Foundation, which was established as an ecumenical educational enterprise jointly and organically by the Methodist Church and a theological college of the Church of England in the early 1970s; (c) the accessibility of Birmingham as a large city in the West Midlands served by good transport links; (d) the moderate to significant investment made by the Methodist Church over several decades at the Queen's Foundation and in its trust; (e) the minimal to moderate levels of capital expenditure required to adapt the Foundation for use as a centre. However, an assessment of configurations involving the Queen's Foundation also noted, among other weaknesses: (a) the weakness of existing links between the Queen's Foundation and a research university and the absence of a local research university which is likely to be willing to develop projects or partnerships at the level of scholarship and research activity; (b) the leasehold possession of the premises in Birmingham (the premises are held on a 99-year term from 1963 to 2062 at an annual rent of £75.00).

- 235 An assessment of configurations involving Wesley House, Cambridge noted, among other strengths: (a) the contribution which would be made by a continuing association with the Cambridge Theological Federation, bringing links with ten other institutions which represent the Anglican, Orthodox, Reformed and Roman Catholic traditions, and which would enable bilateral and broad engagement with ecumenical partners; (b) the potential for the development of stronger links with the University of Cambridge, particularly at the level of scholarship and research activity; (c) the very significant investment made by Wesley House's founders and by the Methodist Church over several decades at Wesley House and in its trust. However, an assessment of configurations involving Wesley House also noted, among other weaknesses: (a) the significant capital expenditure which would be required to renovate the premises at Wesley House, or the dislocation, developmental work and associated capital expenditure which would be required to establish new premises in Cambridge; (b) the weakness of existing links between Wesley House and the University of Cambridge, as demonstrated by the low number of Wesley House students studying for University of Cambridge awards and by the lack of developed projects or partnerships with the university at the level of scholarship and research activity.
- 236 An assessment of configurations involving the Wesley Study Centre, Durham noted, among other strengths, the contribution which would be made by a continuing association with Durham University, its theology faculty and St John's College, all of which have taken a proactive interest in establishing robust and long-lasting links with the Wesley Study Centre and the Methodist Church. However, an assessment of configurations involving the Wesley Study Centre also noted, among other weaknesses: (a) the developmental work and the very significant capital expenditure which would be likely to be required to establish a centre within a context where the Wesley Study Centre currently occupies limited space within St John's College; (b) the difficulties which some across the south of the Connexion would experience in travelling to Durham, especially given the location of Cliff College in Calver, Derbyshire; (c) the loss to the Methodist Church of the use of the premises and assets currently available at both Birmingham and Cambridge in favour of establishing new premises in Durham, and the associated risk of not being able to redirect assets from the other two locations to Durham.
- 237 An assessment of configurations involving three centres noted the improved accessibility in terms of transport links which naturally flows from having a third centre. However, such an assessment also noted two overriding weaknesses: (a) the very significant capital expenditure which would be required to renovate the premises, or the dislocation, developmental work and associated capital expenditure which would be required to establish new premises at two of the centres; (b) the increased risk of replication, fragmented provision, missed opportunities for cross-fertilisation across and between activities, and an inefficient use of resources, as discussed at greater length in paragraphs 201-204 above.
- 238 The Committee was grateful to a tutor whose submission, made during the consultation period, noted that "the Ministries Committee has not shirked its responsibility to be radical and to challenge all of us working in the sector, and I welcome that after the frustrations of working within the framework of the previous review of training institutions." However, when it came to make a final decision

about the location of a second centre, the Committee was particularly conscious of the grave responsibility placed on its shoulders, the more so if it was to seek the Connexion's blessing to continue to be radical and challenging. The discernment which it was called to exercise in this instance was, in many ways, a culmination of nine months of engagement with a wide range of data, legal and property-related advice, cogent argument and detailed consultation submissions. This information had, in turn, been digested during private study, during discussions within small groups and during plenary sessions of the Committee.

- 239 Two groups, comprising between them all the members of the Committee in attendance, undertook a final assessment of the configurations outlined in paragraphs 233-237 above at the committee's April 2012 meeting. Both groups came, independently of one another, to the conclusion that the relative strengths and weaknesses of the configuration which includes the Queen's Foundation and Cliff College were preferable to those of any of the other configurations which had been considered. Further interrogation of this conclusion took place during a lengthy plenary session.
- 240 Having assessed and reflected on the marks of the contribution which two centres at Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation should be able to provide to the Church and to the wider Network, the Committee highlighted the following considerations:
- 240.1 The Committee was confident that centres at Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation could serve as communities of faith which nurture and support a deep expertise in formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship and organisational development. In terms of their particular contribution to the Network, the Committee highlights the following: (a) Cliff College's experience of offering support to over 230 dispersed students through a pattern of intensive modular training weeks delivered at the College combined with virtual or telephone individual tutorial support, and the College's experience of supporting and delivering a number of modular, non-validated courses; (b) Cliff College's expertise in nurturing a collegiate sense among a diverse cohort of students and friends – including residential students, part-time students, those who attend shorter courses, and those who attend the Cliff College Festival and other gatherings of supporters and alumni; (c) the Queen's Foundation's experience of operating as a "foundation" consisting of a number of centres (including the Centre for Ministerial Formation, the Graduate and Research Centre, the Selly Oak Centre for Mission Studies, and the Centre for Black Ministries and Leadership), where each centre has its particular focus and area of responsibility, but all centres work together, drawing on the strengths of a single staff team and the resources of a common campus and support team. The benefits include a synergy between different activities, which fosters mutual dependence within a single staff team and which enables interaction and interdependence among different learners; (d) Cliff College's valued and peaceful location, complementing the Queen's Foundation's location within a global, diverse, multi-cultural and multi-faith city.
- 240.2 The Committee was confident that centres at Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation would be able to provide a home and a gathering place for communities of students and learners (resident and visiting, full-time and part-time), guests and staff (teaching and research staff; administrative staff; domestic and maintenance staff; and visiting colleagues from across the Network), including through providing residential hospitality for short and longer periods of time. In terms of their particular

contribution to the Network, the Committee highlights the following: (a) Cliff College's recent renovation of 34 en-suite rooms and three self-contained flats within its main building, its recent successful planning application to build a new 20-room en-suite facility, and its costed rolling programme for upgrading all of the facilities on the campus; (b) the space for further future development in the central area of the Cliff College campus; (c) although there is a need for improvement to the Queen's Foundation's residential accommodation and its ecological footprint, there is no need for major new building projects to improve the campus there, and a cash endowment exists within the Foundation's funds which could meet a significant portion of the costs of renovations; (d) Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation offer two campuses which can already be used without the need for major new building projects, which would absorb energy and result in a longer implementation period. In this context, the Committee noted the developmental work, the very significant capital expenditure and the consequent dislocation which would be likely to be required to provide a similar, sustainable gathering place either at Wesley House, Cambridge or at the Wesley Study Centre, Durham.

- 240.3 The Committee was confident that centres at Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation would be able (through their structures, resources and partnerships) to connect with partners across the World Church. In terms of their particular contribution to the Network, the Committee highlights the following: (a) Cliff College's work through its International Training Centre. The Centre's current programme in Nigeria is supporting 510 students over the 6-year duration of the programme; (b) in addition to the work of the Selly Oak Centre for Mission Studies at the Queen's Foundation, the Foundation's long-term association with Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary in South India, and the Foundation's recent work with the Ecumenical Theological Education programme of the World Council of Churches.
- 240.4 The Committee was confident that centres at Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation would be able (through their structures, resources and partnerships) to allow deep sharing with ecumenical partners. In terms of their particular contribution to the Network, the Committee highlights the following: (a) Cliff College's diverse student body, including within it students from the Methodist, Anglican, Baptist, Congregationalist, Lutheran, Nazarene Pentecostal and Roman Catholic traditions, and from the Assemblies of God, the Salvation Army, and a number of community churches and independent free churches; (b) The Queen's Foundation's sustained ecumenical vision, leading to a depth and consistency of ecumenical life within the Foundation. The Committee noted the strong contribution which the location of a centre at Wesley House, Cambridge would have made in this context. This would have included a continuing association with the Cambridge Theological Federation, and consequently with colleagues within other Cambridge-based institutions which represent the Anglican, Orthodox, Reformed and Roman Catholic traditions. The loss of this contribution is a consequence of the Committee's recommendation which must be acknowledged. However, the Committee was content that the contribution which will be made by the retention and development of rich ecumenical links at Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation will be able to meet the Network's needs in this context.
- 240.5 The Committee was confident that centres at Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation would be able (through their structures, resources and partnerships) to nurture apt and excellent scholarship and research, in partnership with the Higher Education sector. In terms of their particular contribution to the Network, the Committee highlights the following: (a) Cliff College's successful validation

partnership with the University of Manchester. The College's most recent revalidation process resulted in unconditional validation by the University. The University's academic standing is a positive factor in the College's recruitment of postgraduate students, especially internationally; (b) the Queen's Foundation's Graduate and Research Centre, which supports 30 doctoral research students and 50 MA students; (c) the Queen's Foundation's participation in discussions to establish a new ecumenical Higher Education partnership (see paragraphs 148-156 above). The Committee noted the strong contribution which the location of a centre at the Wesley Study Centre, Durham would have made in this context. This would have included the potential for a strong partnership with Durham University, its theology faculty and St John's College. The loss of this contribution is another consequence of the Committee's recommendation which must be acknowledged. However, the Committee was content that the contribution which will be made by centres at Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation will be able to meet the Network's needs in this context. The proposed development of an ecumenical Higher Education partnership is a critical factor here (again, see paragraphs 148-156 above), in that it has the possibility to enable the Network, and the Queen's Foundation in particular, to work in close and efficient partnership with a Higher Education partner of the highest quality within the stable and mutually-beneficial environment established by the involvement of the Church of England, its theological colleges and the Methodist Church. The Committee also welcomed the possibility that, though the Church may regrettably have to move to end its activities at the Wesley Study Centre, it may be possible to retain a partnership with the University of Durham.

- 240.6 The Committee was confident that centres at Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation would be able to offer realistic accessibility from across the Connexion. In terms of their particular contribution to the Network, the Committee highlights the following: (a) Whereas there can be no doubt that Cliff College's rural location poses accessibility issues, its location is geographically central and it is an hour's travelling distance from Manchester and East Midlands airports; (b) Cliff College's existing activities demonstrate that its location is not a disadvantage for a number of learners and friends who are prepared to travel to the College for high quality experiences. This includes over 280 students who currently travel to Cliff College from across the United Kingdom and Ireland, as well as from Europe and further afield, as well as 2,000 people who regularly attend the Cliff College Festival; (c) the Queen's Foundation's urban location in the Midlands is served by strong road, rail and air transport links.
- 240.7 The Committee was also confident that centres at Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation, as premises and assets as well as communities of faith, demonstrate good stewardship of the Methodist people's past and continuing investment of resources. In terms of their particular contribution to the Network, the Committee highlights the following: (a) Cliff College's financially sound current operational model; (b) an appropriate identification of the authority of the Methodist Council and the Conference within Cliff College's trusts; (c) the Queen's Foundation's readiness to explore revised governance and ownership arrangements (see paragraph 254 below). The Committee also notes the Foundation's willingness to explore the possibility of a change of name so that the Foundation's name can capture both what the Network values in one of its centres as well as what an ecumenical institution aspires to be. In this context, the Committee noted the very significant investment made by Wesley House's founders and by the Methodist Church over several decades at Wesley House and in its Trusts. The Committee

discussed the Trusts' purposes at length, and the Committee hopes that it will be possible for the Trusts to continue to serve the Methodist Church and the Network's activities, albeit in a different context.

- 241 At the end of its final interrogation of the configurations, the Committee members present voted unanimously to recommend to the Conference the establishment of two connexional centres, one based at Cliff College and the other based at the Queen's Foundation.
- 242 This recommendation is accompanied by the recommendation that the Methodist Church should, in an organised and structured manner, move to end its activities at Wesley House, Cambridge and the Wesley Study Centre, Durham. Given that the Wesley Study Centre operates under the auspices of the Methodist Council, and given the close relationship between Wesley House and the Methodist Conference, the Church owes a particular duty of care towards these institutions, and in particular towards the staff stationed and appointed to them. Careful processes will need to be put in place as their activities are incorporated within the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network. The Committee has assessed the risks and costs for the Methodist Church of withdrawal from the institutions concerned, and consideration has been given to the impact of withdrawal on partners and other stakeholders. In both cases, the Committee is confident that its recommendation is sound and reasonable. The Committee records its thanks to St John's College, Durham and the Cambridge Theological Federation, and will wish to express its gratitude for their ready partnership with the Methodist Church through appropriate representations over coming months.

Implementation

- 243 Implementing the recommendations outlined above will be a complex task, not least because it will properly involve further discussions and negotiations with a number of parties, some of whom are independent of the Conference and other Methodist governance bodies.
- 244 Key priorities which will guide implementation include ensuring that those currently following pathways at institutions, centres and colleges (for example, and most notably, existing student ministers) can complete those pathways during a time of transition and change with confidence and security, and with full levels of support. Another key priority will be to ensure that partnerships and associations which will cease during the implementation of various recommendations can be brought to an end in an ordered and considerate manner. It is also a priority, as noted above in section H, to ensure that careful processes can be put in place for those who hold posts which may be affected by the implementation of the recommendations, including those who hold posts within institutions, centres and colleges. A final key priority will be to ensure that the two identified centres draw on the strengths and good practice of existing institutions, centres and colleges in appropriate ways. Processes have already begun to be put in place to enable this to happen.
- 245 Recommendations regarding governance and oversight during the implementation period are included in paragraphs 255-258 below. In the immediate wake of the Conference, as interim governance structures are put in place, it is recommended that the Committee, in consultation with the Methodist Council and acting where

necessary through its officers and supported by the Connexional Team, should take the lead in discussions and negotiations with the relevant parties within each institution, centre and college to agree implementation plans within the boundaries of the recommendations outlined above.

- 246 While acknowledging a proper desire to see this important component of the Network's work established as swiftly as possible, the priorities outlined in paragraph 244 must take priority. The Committee therefore anticipates that 2012/2013 will be a year of intense preparation ahead of the implementation of significant changes during 2013/2014. This will necessarily have an impact on the meeting of the panel which allocates student ministers to learning institutions, and the Committee will seek to complete, before the end of the 2012 calendar year, a review of the protocols for the panel.
- 247 As noted in paragraphs 87-89 above, key funding packages come to an end in August 2013. Interim arrangements will need to be put in place for 2013/2014 in order to support the continued use of some institutions, centres and colleges, and it is probable that some measure of continuing interim provision will also be required for a limited number of institutions, centres and colleges during 2014/2015. An outline of envisaged transitional and implementation expenditure, as well as future processes regarding capital expenditure at the two centres, are included below in paragraphs 274 and 271 respectively.
- 248 The Committee is conscious that two particular areas associated with institutions not been addressed in this report. The first pertains to archives, special collections and heritage-related aspects of the project's remit. The second pertains to the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History. In the case of the former, important consultations with the Methodist Heritage Committee were still ongoing at the time of writing the report. In the case of the latter, the Centre was not placed within the remit of the project by the 2011 Conference, but the trustees of the Westminster College Oxford Trust Ltd, who have governance responsibilities for the Centre, have themselves identified strong links to the work of the project. In both cases, the Committee recommends that it should continue its discussions with the relevant governance bodies in the light of the Conference's decisions about the other recommendations in this report.

Section K: Governance and Oversight

Recommendation: The establishment of a single governance structure for the Network.

- 249 We recommend the establishment of a single governance structure for the Network, with responsibility for directing the affairs of the Network on behalf of the Conference and the Methodist Council.
- 250 Working closely with the coordinating team of the Network, the governance structure will be responsible, on behalf of the Conference and the Methodist Council, for:
- 250.1 *Exercising reflective, collaborative, ambitious and prophetic oversight of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network*
- 250.2 *Overseeing the purposes, values, goals and direction of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network.* The governance structure will exercise this responsibility by: (a)

being clear about the purposes, values, goals and direction of the Network, and ensuring that the Network's strategies and planned activities are in accord with its purposes, values, goals and direction; (b) regularly reviewing the purposes, values, goals and direction of the Network, in collaboration with the Ministries Committee, to ensure that they are up to date and relevant to the needs of Circuits, Local Churches and the wider Methodist Church

- 250.3 *Ensuring that the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network is well-run, efficient, effective and fit for purpose.* The governance structure will exercise this responsibility by: (a) ensuring that the Network's structures, policies and procedures allow the Network to meet its goals; (b) regularly reviewing the operational structure, policies and procedures of the Network; (c) recognising, promoting and valuing equality and diversity across the Network and in all aspects of its work; (d) considering which partnerships and collaborations with other bodies and organisations could improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of the Network; (e) assessing the impact of the Network on the environment, and considering the ways in which the Network can take an environmentally responsible and sustainable approach to its work
- 250.4 *Improving the performance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network, through evaluating its performance and the impact and outcomes of its work, and feeding the outcomes of evaluations into planning processes and discussions about the future direction of the Network.* The governance structure will exercise this responsibility by: (a) considering how to identify, measure and learn from the Network's achievements, including its positive and negative effects; (b) setting achievable targets and indicators against which success and improvement is measured and evaluated based on the Network's purposes, the needs of Circuits and Local Churches and the resources available; (c) welcoming and acting upon positive and challenging feedback from Circuits and Local Churches and all who should benefit from the Network's activities; (d) investigating and assessing innovative and imaginative ways of working towards meeting the Network's purposes and goals; (e) identifying emerging trends within the wider educational context within which the Network operates and identifying opportunities to influence the wider context for the benefit of the mission of the Methodist Church; (f) being ready to share good practice with others
- 250.5 *Exercising robust and prudent financial stewardship of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network and its resources.* The governance structure will exercise this responsibility by: (a) controlling and employing the Network's resources so that they are used to meet the Network's purposes and goals; (b) integrating financial planning with wider connexional planning to ensure that funds are available when the Network needs them and are used in the most effective way to meet the Network's purposes and goals; (c) ensuring financial sustainability as far as is possible through monitoring financial performance, assessing sources of income, diversifying sources of income as far as possible, developing coherent fundraising strategies and activities, and being aware of the financial risks involved with existing and new activities and ventures; (d) working collaboratively with the Methodist Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee on all financial and Human Resource matters, and assisting the Council with its responsibility to make budgetary recommendations to the Conference under Standing Order 212(2)
- 250.6 *Ensuring that the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network is accountable to the Conference and to all who benefit from the Network's activities in a way that is transparent and understandable.* The governance structure will exercise this responsibility by: (a) reporting annually to the Conference, including within the

report an assessment of the performance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Network in meeting its purposes and goals and an outline of its strategies and planned activities; (b) reporting annually to the Methodist Council, and working with the Methodist Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee on all financial and human resource matters; (c) working collaboratively with the Ministries Committee when reviewing the purposes, values, goals and direction of the Network and when developing the strategies and planned activities of the Network; (d) demonstrating how the Network's processes and activities enable accessibility and responsiveness, and enable the Network's activities and ventures to be developed through interactive relationships and in dialogue with local communities – their diverse and continually developing contexts, needs and aspirations; (e) overseeing a communications plan which ensures that accurate and timely information is given to everyone with an interest in the work of the Network.

- 251 Most of these responsibilities are not new responsibilities within the life of the Conference, the Methodist Council and various institutions, colleges and centres. However, they are currently shared across a number of governing bodies and management committees, and are exercised without the guiding framework provided by clearly articulated and shared purposes, values and goals and a clear sense of direction.
- 252 The Committee was assisted by reflections shared during the consultation period about the feasibility of moving from the existing fragmented pattern to a governance system which expresses greater connexionalism, collegiality and coherence. A submission made by a learning institution during the consultation period noted the possibility of establishing “a single council setting strategic direction, consolidated financial accounts..., shared resources and common procurement processes.” Another learning institution noted that “we see the logic and theological rationale of a connexional church structuring its resources, shaping its pathways and deploying its people in connexional ways... While we would wish that the dispersion of resources led naturally to strong and warm collaborative relationships our experience is that the Church and its institutions (not just colleges) quickly adopt territorial, competitive and separatist mentalities. We recognise that at its best a clearer connexional model could aid the development of a network of people and places that would work together; however, without sufficient attention to issues of power and authority the outcome at its worst could be a model of command and control, with the ‘centre’ dominating the ‘margins’.” The Committee is confident that the establishment of a single governance structure will help the Network to achieve the collegiality and coherence which is envisaged in the submissions quoted here. The Committee is also confident that several measures and emphases will ensure that such a governance structure and the Network as a whole will value collaboration and attentiveness to the diverse and contextual needs of the Connexion and guard against centralisation and hierarchy. In terms of the governance structure, these measures and emphases include: (a) working in collaboration with the Network's collaborative coordinating team; (b) a commitment to identifying, measuring and learning from the Network's achievements, including its positive and negative effects; and (c) a commitment to transparent and understandable accountability, including ensuring that the Network's activities are founded on, and develop out of, interaction and collaborative relationships.

- 253 The membership of the governance structure will need to include the mix of skills, knowledge and experience necessary for the efficient and effective administration of the Network.
- 254 The manner in which the governance structure will be able to exercise its responsibilities at the Queen's Foundation will require careful and sensitive consultations with the Governors of the Foundation and with colleagues from the Church of England. The Committee is committed to the principle that oversight of the Network's activities at the Queen's Foundation should be robust and consistent with the governance structure's oversight of the Network's activities elsewhere. The Committee is also committed to the principles (a) that the governance structure should be able to share robustly and consistently in the holistic oversight of the Queen's Foundation, and (b) that the governance structure should be able to exercise clear stewardship of the Network's resources newly deployed there, as well as of the Methodist Church's past and present capital investment at the Queen's Foundation. However, the Committee also wishes to honour and hold fast to the organic ecumenical nature of the Queen's Foundation, where governance is currently exercised by an ecumenical governing body to which the Methodist Church and the Church of England can nominate governors. As noted above in paragraph 240.7, the governing body of the Queen's Foundation has already indicated a willingness to review aspects of the Foundation's current existence, including its governing arrangements, in order to enable the Foundation fully to participate within the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network. Legal advice has already offered routes whereby both a commitment to a single governance structure for the Network and to the ecumenical oversight of the life of the Foundation could be held together without causing undue complexity, unclear understandings of responsibility and accountability, or unproductive levels of bureaucracy.

Implementation

- 255 The Committee recommends a transitional as well as a long-term role for the new governance structure. The governance structure has the potential to be a mechanism which can oversee in some detail much of the wider transitional work which will be required to establish the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network, to codify its structures, policies and procedures, to configure its financial resources, and to implement with care the recommendations made in section J. For this reason, the Committee recommends that the Methodist Council should oversee the establishment of the governance structure during 2012/2013 and make a report to the 2013 Conference.
- 256 The Committee therefore further recommends that the governance structure should, at the earliest opportunity at which the Methodist Council judges it to be appropriate, become the governing body for the following centres, institutions and colleges: Cliff College, the Guy Chester Centre (the North Bank Estate), the Methodist Diaconal Order Centre, MIC and the Southlands Methodist Trust. The Committee also recommends that the governance structure should, if the Methodist Council judges it to be necessary or desirable, adopt the Council's existing responsibilities for the following institutions, colleges and centres: Hartley Victoria College, the York Institute for Community Theology and the Wesley Study Centre. The Committee also recommends that the governance structure should, at the earliest opportunity, consult with the trustees of Wesley House about the future of the Trust, assisting the

trustees with their responsibilities during a period of transition as necessary or appropriate.

- 257 The Committee also recommends that, following further detailed negotiations with the governors of the Queen's Foundation and relevant parties within the Church of England, an appropriate scheme for the governance structure to share robustly and consistently in the holistic oversight of the Queen's Foundation should be prepared and implemented.
- 258 The Committee will, at the earliest opportunity, consult with the chairs of the Methodist Training Forums of the Regional Training Networks (see paragraph 68 above) and will seek to present a joint paper from the chairs and the Committee for consideration by the Methodist Council's "larger than Circuit" working party about the Forums' role as spaces for regional conferring.

Section L: Expenditure, Funding Streams, Funds and Assets

Revenue expenditure

- 259 The Committee recommends that the total costs of the Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network should be £6,033k per annum at 2012/2013 prices. The division of this expenditure is illustrated in table D. This constitutes a reduction of £1,273k (17%) per annum compared to budgeted expenditure during 2012/2013 in these fields.
- 260 This recommended distribution of expenditure enables the Network to support maintenance payments to student ministers (bursaries, dependent child payments and travel expenses) at the same levels as those currently approved by the Conference. While the Committee expects the Network to explore and enable practice-based formation pathways for student ministers, the Committee does not expect such pathways to lead to a reduction in maintenance costs.
- 261 This distribution of expenditure supports incremental administrative, domestic, catering, premises-related and other bursarial costs within Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation. The budgeted allocation draws on analyses of the operational expenditure of existing institutions, colleges and centres, as well as on the ratio of practitioner staff costs to bursarial costs.
- 262 This distribution of expenditure also enables the Network to maintain regional teams consisting of 50 posts, centre-based staff teams consisting of 16 posts and a coordinating team consisting of 8 posts (as outlined in section H above). The practitioner staff costs noted here include an allowance for costs associated with travel and the use of appropriate gathering spaces by regional teams (for gathering spaces, see section I above).
- 263 This distribution of expenditure also supports programme-related expenditure of £204k, to support the accessible delivery of discipleship development pathways and ministry development pathways. This constitutes a significant reduction from current expenditure shown under this budget heading. This reduction is enabled by incorporating the aims of existing discrete programmes within the broader goals of the Network, and consequently meeting some of the associated costs through practitioner staff costs and non-staff costs at the centres.

- 264 This distribution of expenditure also enables £200k to be dedicated to supporting the development and delivery of a number of Higher Education-related academic study projects, research projects and risk-taking innovative projects across the Network. This constitutes a new development: the focused identification of funds explicitly to support scholarship, research and innovation within the life of the Network and the Church.

Table D: Division of total recommended Network expenditure (2012/2013 prices)

	<i>Current</i>	<i>Recommended</i>
Tutors and officers costs	£3,325k	
Connexional Team staff costs	£1,106k	
Total practitioner staff costs	£4,431k	£3,948k
Non-staff costs at centres, institutions and colleges	£1,139k	£651k
Maintenance payments to student ministers	£1,116k	£1,030k
Programme costs	£620k	£204k
Scholarship, research and innovation project costs	£0	£200k
Total	£7,306k	£6,033k

- 265 The Committee's recommendation that the work currently undertaken within the Discipleship & Ministries Cluster of the Connexional Team be located within the Network, (see paragraphs 180-185 above) allows the Committee to recommend that expenditure which currently supports staff posts within the Connexional Team be redirected to support capacity within the Network. This effectively makes additional expenditure of £1,106k available to the Network to meet practitioner staff costs.
- 266 The focused identification of funds explicitly to support scholarship, research and innovation and the inclusion within the Network of work and costs currently located within the Discipleship & Ministries Cluster of the Connexional Team have the effect of increasing the scope of the activities of the Network beyond those supported by the expenditure outlined in paragraphs 83-85 above. Table E compares current and recommended expenditure under the budget headings outlined in paragraphs 83-85, to enable comparisons to be made with the costs outlined in the October 2011 consultation document. This table illustrates that recommended costs constitute a reduction of £1,473k per annum, or 24%, when compared to current expenditure on existing, non-Connexional Team activities.

Table E: Division of recommended Network expenditure compared to areas of existing, non-Connexional Team expenditure

	<i>Current</i>	<i>Recommended</i>
Practitioner staff costs	£3,325k	£2,842k
Non-staff costs at centres, institutions and colleges	£1,139k	£651k
Maintenance payments to student ministers	£1,116k	£1,030k
Programme costs	£620k	£204k
Total	£6,200k	£4,727k

Income, funds and assets

- 267 As outlined in table F, the Committee recommends that 85% of the expenditure outlined in table D continues to be funded by contributions from the Methodist Church Fund, the Connexional Priority Fund and the World Mission Fund. Total

contributions from these funds are recommended to be £5,106k, a reduction of £526k (9%) on current contribution from these funds in this area. Current contributions from the Training Assessment Fund (TAF) stand at £1,674k per annum, which will cease. The Church no longer solicits donations towards the TAF, and its balance is expected to be exhausted by the end of the 2012/2013 connexional year. As illustrated in table G, this constitutes a saving from connexional funds compared to current contributions of £2,200k, or 30%.

Table F: Division of recommended Network funding streams

	<i>Current</i>	<i>Recommended</i>
The Methodist Church Fund	£4,144k	£3,906k
The Connexional Priority Fund	£1,116k	£1,000k
The World Mission Fund (and, for current funding streams only, the Mission in Britain Fund)	£372k	£200k
Total MCF, CPF, WMF, (MiBF)	£5,632k	£5,106k
The Training Assessment Fund	£1,674k	£0
Total MCF, CPF, WMF, TAF, (MiBF)	£7,306k	£5,106k
Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network funds and assets	£0	£927k
Total	£7,306k	£6,033k

Table G: Expenditure from connexional funds

Current contribution from MCF, CPF, WMF, MiBF, TAF	£7,306k
Saving from TAF	-£1,674k
Saving from MCF, CPF, WMF, MiBF	-£526k
Total saving from MCF, CPF, WMF, MiBF, TAF	-£2,200k
Recommended contribution from MCF, CPF, WMF	£5,106k

268 The Committee recommends, as illustrated in table F, that an additional funding stream is established using the funds and assets of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network, providing an income of £927k per annum. Based on the recommendations made by the Committee in section J, the Committee anticipates that the Network's funds and assets will include Cliff College, the Guy Chester Centre (the North Bank Estate), the Methodist Diaconal Order Centre, Methodist International Centre, the Southlands Methodist Trust, the Network's interest in the Queen's Foundation, and, as a permanent endowment, the Trusts associated with Wesley House, Cambridge. The Committee further recommends that the Fund for Training, renamed the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Fund, forms a part of the Network's wider funds; this fund, as the Fund for Training, will receive the proceeds of the sale of Wesley College, Bristol.²⁵ In the case of the Guy Chester Centre, Methodist International Centre, the Southlands Methodist Trust, the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Fund and, potentially, the Trusts associated with Wesley House, Cambridge, these funds and assets will provide an income for the Network, and the Committee anticipates that the income generated will be sufficient to meet the

²⁵ The Fund for Training is currently raised and administered by the Methodist Council under the terms of Standing Order 362. Its purposes are "(i) the provision of initial and further training for ministers, deacons, lay employees and other lay persons; (ii) the provision of maintenance grants for persons undergoing such training and their dependants; (iii) the maintenance, management and staffing of the Methodist theological colleges, and the Methodist contribution to the cost of joint theological colleges; (iv) the examination of candidates for the ministry and the diaconate and of ministerial and diaconal probationers."

annual costs attributed to the Network's funds and assets of £927k. The Committee further recommends that the Network develop a fund and asset management strategy which, as well as enabling revenue costs to be met from the Network's income, will enable the costs of moderate capital expenditure projects at the two centres to be met from the Network's funds (see paragraph 271 below).

- 269 The Committee is aware that this use of funds and assets constitutes a more focused and intentional approach to a number of the Conference's assets than has been the case for a number of years. Some may be troubled by such a focus. However, the Committee is aware of its duty at this time to exercise wise stewardship of the investment by the Methodist people in a number of centres, institutions and colleges, as well as to ensure that this historic investment is configured to assist the development and growth of today's Methodist Church. As well as this responsibility towards connexional assets, the Committee recognises its complementary duty to adopt a realistic attitude towards the income which the Network can expect to receive through the District Assessment and from connexional funds. Consequently, in order to achieve a sustainable income stream which can support the entirety of the Network's purposes and activities, the Committee is confident of the need for the fund and asset management strategy outlined above.
- 270 Acting on the advice of the Connexional Treasurers, the Committee also recommends that this strategy include consideration of fundraising and the encouragement of generous giving to support the Network's activities. The funds contributed by Circuits and Districts during 2001/2007 to establish the Training Assessment Fund may demonstrate a readiness to support focused and intentional fundraising campaigns in this area of the Connexion's life. Grass roots involvement and engagement is essential to the success of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network in many ways. Moreover, interest has already been shown by a number of Partner Churches in collaborating with the life of the Network, and this may also open avenues to other fundraising opportunities. Any such fundraising initiatives will clearly need to exist within the wider connexional fundraising strategy.

Capital expenditure

- 271 Planned preventative maintenance costs at Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation will form part of a developing premises-management strategy for both centres. It is anticipated that these costs will be met from revenue expenditure, including from the budgeted allocation within the Network's expenditure for maintenance and premises-related purposes. However, within both centres, development work will be required both to generate increased capacity and to enhance the quality of the learning environment. These moderate capital projects will be in addition to those capital projects which both centres have already been developing and whose costs the centres anticipate being able to meet from funds already earmarked for the purpose. The Committee recommends that the costs of moderate capital expenditure projects at the two centres should be met from the Network's funds. Prudent management of the funds and assets of the Network will largely determine the magnitude of the additional capital expenditure projects which the Network will be able to support.

Other centre activities

- 272 The two centres at Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation will, as is currently the case, continue to serve significant constituencies outside and beyond the life of the Methodist Church, and to meet goals which are broader than those of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network. From a financial perspective, these subsidiary activities incur costs and generate income for the centres, and both currently present broadly balanced budgets for these non-Methodist funded activities. The recommended expenditure outlined above does not therefore anticipate any subsidy from the Network's funds towards these subsidiary activities, nor do the recommended funding streams include a contribution from these subsidiary activities towards the Network's costs. As overarching medium-term operational and financial strategies are developed for the activities of both centres by the Network's governance structure, the financial relationship between the contribution made by these subsidiary activities and the Network's core activities will necessarily be explored, especially, for example, within the context of the development of a consolidated premises-management strategy. However care will be taken to ensure that the Network's funds do not, directly or indirectly, subsidise subsidiary activities.
- 273 Both centres are currently supported by generous donations from former students and other supporters. The governance structure of the Network will wish to take care to ensure that both centres are able to continue to elicit the support of former students and friends, and that supporters can continue to see the impact which their contribution can make to the development and improvement of cherished premises and activities. As with other trusts and restricted funds in its care, the Network's governance structure will ensure that the intentions of supporters and donors are respected.

Transitional and implementation expenditure

- 274 An allocation of £300k towards anticipated transitional costs during 2012/2013 is included within the Connexional Central Services Budget presented elsewhere in the *Agenda*. In addition to Connexional Team supporting staff costs, the Committee anticipates further transitional and implementation costs of £825k spread over the 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 connexional years. It is a key priority to ensure that those currently following pathways, for example as student ministers, can complete those pathways during a time of transition and change with confidence and security, and with full levels of support. It is also, as noted above, a priority to ensure that careful processes can be put in place and supported for those who hold posts which may be affected by the implementation of the recommendations. Furthermore, it will be important to ensure that partnerships and associations which will cease during the implementation of various recommendations can be brought to an end in an ordered and considerate manner. These considerations lie behind this estimate of transitional and implementation costs. Transitional and implementation expenditure will be met from the Fund for Training, which contains sufficient cash funds to meet these costs.

Section M: Conclusion

- 275 This report has necessarily touched on many aspects of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development within the life of the Methodist Church. It has recorded the great deal of work and many processes involving dedicated committees and very many other Methodists. It brings

recommendations to this Conference and outlines the reasoning and the discernment leading to the recommendations, all offered in an attitude of responsibility and prayer. It closes as it began, setting the work requested by the Conference and undertaken by the Committee within the wider and more significant call of God to those who desire to be disciples of the Lord Jesus and who are invited to partner in the mission of God in a time of change, challenge and potential.

276 To other believers in Christ, long ago, in Ephesus, was written a reminder about the quintessential purpose of the Christian ministry in which we all share – a reminder also of the source and the fulfilment of the gifts with which we are all richly blessed. For the end of all our ardent, zealous striving is to live together within the breadth and length and depth and height of Jesus Christ, whose vast love is ours to know and share.

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NRSV)

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 57/1. The Conference received the report.**
- 57/2. The Conference adopted paragraphs 115-128.3 of section G (“A Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network”).**
- 57/3. The Conference adopted section H (“A Team of Expert Staff”).**
- 57/4. The Conference adopted sections I and J (“Spaces” and “Centres”).**
- 57/5. The Conference adopted sections K and L (“Governance and Oversight” and “Expenditure, Funding Streams, Funds and Assets”), including the recommendation in section L concerning the use of the Connexional Priority Fund. The Conference directs the Methodist Council to oversee such processes as may be required to maintain, develop and promote relationships with university theological departments and the opportunities already available to further Methodist scholarship for the benefit of the whole Church.**
- 57/6. The Conference directed the Methodist Council to oversee such processes as may be required to implement section H of the report.**
- 57/7. The Conference directed the Methodist Council to oversee such work as may be necessary to achieve the establishment of a governance structure for the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network.**
- 57/8. The Conference recorded its deep gratitude to all those across the Connexion who work diligently in the fields of formation, learning, training, theological education, scholarship, research and development, and gave thanks to God for their faithful service and witness.**