

Methodist Council

The Council met on October 21st-22nd at The Hayes, Swanwick for its first face to face meeting since January 2020. There have also been three additional meetings of the Council called over the summer months to deal with some urgent matters. Zoom enabled this to happen easily and in one case may have avoided the calling of an extraordinary physical meeting and the associated costs involved in doing that.

Looking forward the Council agreed that only one of its three scheduled meetings each year should be physical, and usually that would be the March/April meeting since that is the longer meeting and the Council's preparation for the Conference would benefit from conversations in person at the time of year. It was also agreed to formally delegate to the Chair of the Council authority to determine in what form the Council meets each time. A protocol for how decisions are made was agreed, this outlines the matters that need to be considered at a scheduled meeting, those matters that require an additional meeting to be called and those matters that can be decided by email and reported to the Council at a later meeting.

Gill Baker's term of office as Chair of Council finishes at the end of this connexional year. A nominations panel was established with the responsibility of bringing a nomination of the next Chair of the Council to the Council in April 2022 for appointment at the 2022 Conference. Eligible for appointment are those persons who took office as President or Vice-President during any of the five Conferences preceding the appointing Conference who are not members of the Connexional Team.

A number of task groups were established to further much of the work brought to the October meeting and terms of reference agreed for each, these include:

1. **District Reviews** – Draft terms of reference for this group had been brought to an earlier meeting of the Council but deferred pending a conversation at the Connexional Leaders' Forum. The Council agree revised terms which do not preempt the outcome of the reviews.
2. **Looking to the Future** – The Conference received the Secretary of the Conference's Report, *Looking to the Future* and commended it and a record of its conversation about it to the Council for further deliberation and action. One of the questions members of the Conference were asked to explore is 'Has the time come radically to rethink the funding of stipends by assessing Circuits by criteria other than the number of ministers?' The Conference indicated a willingness to consider some radical alternatives to the current system so that the number of ministers stationed to a circuit might no longer depend on the ability of the circuit to fund those appointments. The group appointed will scope this proposal in further detail.
3. **Review of the size of Conference** – This is part of the ongoing work around 'Oversight and Trusteeship'. The group is tasked with producing a report, with recommendations on the number of members and ways of working of the Conference, for the Council meeting in January 2022 and a final report for the Conference in 2022.
4. **Action for Hope – A Path to Net Zero Carbon Emissions for the Methodist Church** – In relation to the commitment to becoming a net-zero carbon emission organization, this group, made up of members of the Connexional Team, is asked to develop a 'Methodist Faith Plan'. The Faith Plans programme is a global interfaith initiative run by FaithInvest and the World Wildlife Fund. It works to help faiths – as the biggest organised sector of civil society in the world – to use their assets, investments and influence to drive practical action to benefit people and planet. Included in the proposed activities for the group are:
 - Creation of resources and guidance to support progress against the aims, particularly building on resources already available via A Rocha, the Climate Coalition, JPIT and the Methodist website
 - Meeting with representatives from the Central Finance Board, Chapel Aid, Methodist Insurance and the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes to explore options for green funding,

Other matters on the agenda of the Council included Safeguarding Policy Update and Theology of Safeguarding resources, Appeals Process review, Replacement project criteria and Justice, Dignity and Solidarity implementation.

Full reports of non-confidential business are available on the Methodist Church website

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-conference/methodist-council/latest-council-papers/>

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