

Connexions

A report by the General Committee to the Methodist Conference 2004

Report of the Steering Group

1. The Connexions Steering Group has continued its work, meeting on nine occasions during the year, including one residential session. Following her acceptance as a Candidate for Local Non-Stipendiary Ministry at the Conference of 2003, Mrs Maureen Hassard withdrew from the Steering Group. Three new members were co-opted during the year: Miss Gillian Best, Rev. Richard Johnston, Mrs Val Mullally.

Re: Call retreat

2. The *Re:Call* retreat for ministers, held in Donegal in February was aimed at building confidence, inspiring hope, developing skills and strengthening the fellowship of ordained people. It was not about giving everyone a laid out plan for the future, but a few pointers and equipment for their own ministry which will be of benefit as they seek to lead congregations on their various Connexions journeys. The Keynote speaker was Rt Rev John Finney, past Bishop of Pontefract and author of several books on Church Leadership and coauthor of *Emmaus: the Way of Faith*, a nurture and discipleship resource. Pastor Paul Reid, founder of Lifelink Network of Churches, led the morning Bible Studies.

Connexional Committees

3. Over the last year, at the request of many of the Connexional Committees, representatives from the Steering Group have met with members of the committees to explore the aim of 'a lighter structure', and possible ways of moving towards the four Co-ordinating Teams proposed in the Report "Connexions - linking dreams to action". As a result of these consultations, a reconsideration of the proposed new structure is presented this year.

Circuits and Connexions

4. Since the publication of the Report in 2002, over 40 of the 73 circuits have requested, and received, a presentation on the Connexions Report. These meetings have been well attended and appear to have helped Leaders and members of congregations appreciate the themes and rationale behind the recommendations.

5. The Report, "*Connexions — linking dreams to action*", is a series of ideas aimed at helping both local Churches, Circuits and the Connexion as a whole to rise to the challenge of sharing God's love in a changing world. Some of the ideas require Conference to pass legislation whilst others are options available to local Societies. These are listed on the Menu, on page 19 of the Report, and are being developed and extended. One of the most relevant at present is entitled, "Getting a Picture of Your Church". Several congregations have already embarked on this process, which has involved them in spending a half day in identifying their dreams, drawbacks and opportunities. The purpose of the day is to provide the raw material for drafting a Mission Statement, which will become the direction for the Leaders' Meeting. The new Church Council legislation presupposes that each Church will have such a Statement, or if it has not, it will be among the first tasks of the Council to undertake the development of one, along with accompanying short and longer-term aims.

6. Some Circuits on the North West, Down, Midlands and Southern and Portadown Districts are already piloting the Church Council system in some or all Societies on the Circuit. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the changes have been welcomed, are developing well as people approach them with an attitude of openness and adventure.

7. Connexions is as much about a spirit of movement, as it is about specific programmes. The use of other guidance material or programmes such as "Clearing your Vision" (Evangelical Ministries) is to be commended, so long as the process brings about identifiable progress.

Connexions Facilitator

8. The Conference of 2002 designated Rev. Des Bain as full time Facilitator for the Connexions programme. The Steering Group wishes to place on record its sincere thanks to him for the hard work, enthusiasm, energy and commitment with which he has fulfilled this role, and to the Home Mission Department for the way in which it adapted to enable this designation to take place. A journey of change such as that being undertaken by the Methodist Church in Ireland will, of necessity, need time for its development. The Steering Group therefore requests that Mr Bain be allowed to continue for a further period of one year as Facilitator, and notes with gratitude the offer of the majority of the funding for this from the Home Mission Department.

Resolutions

C7. The Conference receives the report.

C8. The Conference approves that Rev. D. C. Bain continue in his role as Facilitator of the Connexions process for a further year.

Connexional Committees

1. Introduction

1.1 The Connexions Report submitted to Conference in 2002 proposed that four co-ordinating teams (along with General Committee) could take over the functions of all the current main Connexional committees. As the Steering Group commenced a process of working with the existing committees to devise an appropriate transition strategy, it became clear that the original proposal would not work effectively in the manner proposed. There was therefore a need to re-evaluate and reconsider this aspect of the Connexions Report (i.e. Proposal 7). This report outlines the revised approach now suggested as a replacement for that previous proposal.

1.2 The basic concepts underlying the original recommendations remain valid. These are principally:

- A need for a simpler structure and lighter committees. Feedback from across the connexion still strongly supports this goal, and there is agreement that in many cases the work of committees can be done by a much smaller task focused group.
- Committees should have an emphasis on providing support and resources to underpin the work of local congregations rather than on direction.
- They should also provide leadership and develop a strategic vision for their area of responsibility (in addition of course to the role of some committees in granting permissions, or making operational decisions).
- The need for a better means of ensuring the necessary wide consultation and input from across the connexion for many key committees. There may be a variety of suitable mechanisms to achieve this, depending on the particular mandate of each committee.

1.3 The success, or otherwise, of these measures should be reviewed after five years, and regularly thereafter.

2. General Committee

2.1 It is proposed that the role of the General Committee should be retained and re-affirmed as the central co-ordinating body for the effective administration of the Church, and thus as 'the Conference between Conferences'. Its primary role shall be to provide leadership and vision for the Church as a whole, while assisting the Secretary in the co-ordination of Church matters and ensuring that the directions of Conference are carried out. It should have a membership of not more than 35 people.

2.2 In line with its leadership role, membership will be primarily composed, ex-officio, of those in senior leadership positions within the Connexion:

- (a) The President, the Secretary of Conference, Ex-President and President-designate (4)
- (b) The Superintendent of each District (8)
- (c) The General Secretaries elected by Conference for Home Missions and DYCW,

and other similar appointments as Conference may determine in the future (2)

(d) One officer/representative of each of the other main committees outlined below in sections 3.3 to 3.5 (11)

In addition, Conference may appoint not more than eight additional members, but these must be for reasons of clearly specified experience or expertise and/or to ensure an appropriate balance in relation to age, gender or cultural background. All such appointments should be subject to the general rotation rules defined. [This would give a total of 33 members as against the current 62]

2.3 As is the case with Conference, membership of General Committee shall be composed of equal numbers of lay and ordained members.

2.4 All Connexional Committees of the Church, as outlined in section 3 below, shall normally be responsible for their own business and decisions within their defined area of competence and responsibility, according to their terms of reference. However, they shall refer any matter requiring attention beyond their mandate/terms of reference to the General Committee for consideration and decision between Conferences.

2.5 The General Committee shall continue the current practice of establishing formal sub-committees for specific purposes in order to undertake tasks referred by Conference. Initially, these are:

- Connexions Steering Group (this is an example of an existing subcommittee set up by Conference for a specific purpose, but reporting back through General Committee - and which will cease to exist when its work is completed)
- Communications and Website Committees
- Authorisations Committee

2.6 The General Committee shall also bring forward nominations for appointments to inter-church and ecumenical bodies. Such appointees shall report annually to General Committee on the work of those bodies.

3. The principal Committees

3.1 The general business of the Church can be handled by 13 main committees, as outlined below — a substantial reduction from the present arrangements. Where no comment is made, no change is proposed from the present position other than the general need to lighten/streamline the structure, and consider alternative dissemination/consultation mechanisms as appropriate. In several cases, the thrust of such a proposed refinement is already becoming clear, and is so indicated.

3.2 In addition, the committees are grouped for convenience into three broad categories, suggesting that there is some commonality or overlap between the responsibilities within each group. Over time, experience may suggest further mechanisms for more effectively reflecting that fact.

3.3 Administering the Church

- Trustees of the Methodist Church
- Property Board

- **Connexional Finance Committee**

The existing Budget and Connexional Finance Committees should be abolished and replaced by a new Connexional Finance Committee. The membership should reflect the need for significant financial expertise, knowledge of the Connexional structures and practices, a spiritual vision for the Church, and, given the sensitive nature of their work, enjoy the confidence of the Church. It would be composed of a Convener (probably a lay person, but someone with significant financial expertise), along with a maximum of nine other people, also chosen for their relevant expertise or experience, and with an appropriate geographical spread.

The duties of this committee shall be:

1. Establish an appropriate budget and financial strategy for the Church, in line with the strategy and vision determined by the Conference and the General Committee.
2. Undertake financial planning, in particular in relation to anticipated additional expenditure.
3. Undertake overall monitoring and control of the Church's finances (on behalf of the General Committee), and communicate this to all committees/departments outlining the implications.
4. Any connexional committee that receives income primarily from the Comprehensive Assessment shall consult with the Finance Committee and agree financial projections in keeping with the defined budget and strategy in time to allow proper budgetary recommendations to be made to Conference each year for the ensuing financial year.
5. Any business being brought to Conference that has additional financial implications shall include either (a) a statement from the Finance Committee showing that the proposal is in keeping with the financial strategy; or (b) a statement from the Finance Committee why it believes that not to be the case, and the implications arising as a consequence. (The intention of this is not to make finance the primary consideration for acceptance or rejection of any proposal, but rather to ensure that no business can be processed by Conference without a full recognition of the financial implications of so doing.)

- **Stipends & Allowances Board**

This should incorporate the work of the Child Care Society into its existing mandate.

3.4 Resourcing and Supporting Mission

- **Church Development**

Given the emphasis within the Connexions programme on the role of local congregations as the focus for mission, a new Committee should be established which incorporates the role of developing, co-ordinating and implementing strategies for mission which support such an emphasis. This would include the work done at present by Home Mission, Mission Ireland and the existing Church Development Board. This new committee should also encourage and oversee practical local ecumenical initiatives - including the working out of the Methodist/Anglican Covenant, as well as arrangements for Shared Schemes, and Alternating Ministry agreements.

In addition, local congregations are encouraged to see social outreach as an important component of their mission. In keeping with that perspective, City Missions should also undertake their work in conjunction with this new Church Development Committee, and their on-going work might also be sensibly reported to Conference together with that committee, thus allowing a more complete overall perspective of social outreach initiatives throughout the Connexion.

[Also, as a specific issue relating to the City Missions, it is worth exploring whether the work of Eastwell Residential Home should be incorporated into the work of DCM, given their geographical proximity and their overlap in role.]

- **World Church**

Currently MMS(I). The existing committee should be replaced by a small executive group. In addition, the committee should organize appropriate seminars or information events each year to communicate its work, provide information and generate interest in world mission.

- **Development and Training for Mission**

In line with the Connexions recommendations regarding training, there should be a new Training Committee to develop and oversee a strategy and vision for all aspects of the education and training needs in support of the Church's mission, taking account of the overall human resources within the Connexion (ministers, lay staff, local preachers, etc) in order to maximise the mission and witness of the Church. It should also address the issue of the resources necessary to implement such a strategy.

This committee should include representation from Edgehill and ECEC, as key bodies in the implementation of many aspects of such a strategy. It should also consider how best to incorporate the existing work of other committees which impinge on this role, in particular: Local Preachers Committee, Self-Appraisal Group, Sabbatical Committee, the Prison & Hospital Chaplaincy Committee, the Navy Army & Air Forces Board, the Lay Employment Advisory Group, the Church's Ministry of Healing, Board of Examiners and Pastoral Efficiency.

- **Youth and Children**

Currently DYCW

- **Methodist Women in Ireland**

Following the creation of MWI in 2002, a strategy for its future direction and focus is currently being developed.

- **Faith and Order**

The work of this committee shall include, where so authorised by the Conference, responsibility for involvement and participation in inter-church and ecumenical theological working parties or committees.

3.5 Church and Society

- **Council on Social Responsibility**

The existing CSR committee can be significantly reduced in size, with a simpler officer structure and a smaller membership. The Council's terms of reference can also be updated to reflect current circumstances more effectively. In addition, CSR should actively interact with a network of contact people in local congregations.

- **World Development and Relief Committee**

This committee has undertaken a recent re-appraisal of its structure and mode of working, which is endorsed. While WDRC has had particular links with MMS and with MDRF, it currently sees its role as separate from them, while maintaining good liaison with them as required.

- **Board of Education**

The role of the Board is primarily to interact with the State educational structures in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. This can be undertaken with a lighter structure whereby the whole Board can deal with overall administrative and financial matters, and designated members (from within the Board) dealing with the educational authorities and structures within their jurisdictions.

4. Other Committees

There is a number of other committees and Boards, which can be considered separately from the general consideration of committees, as outlined above.

4.1 Those bodies that have a specific legal identity, such as the Boards of Governors of the colleges, should continue to submit a written report to Conference each year. Substantive discussion can take place if a strategic direction or a specific decision is required.

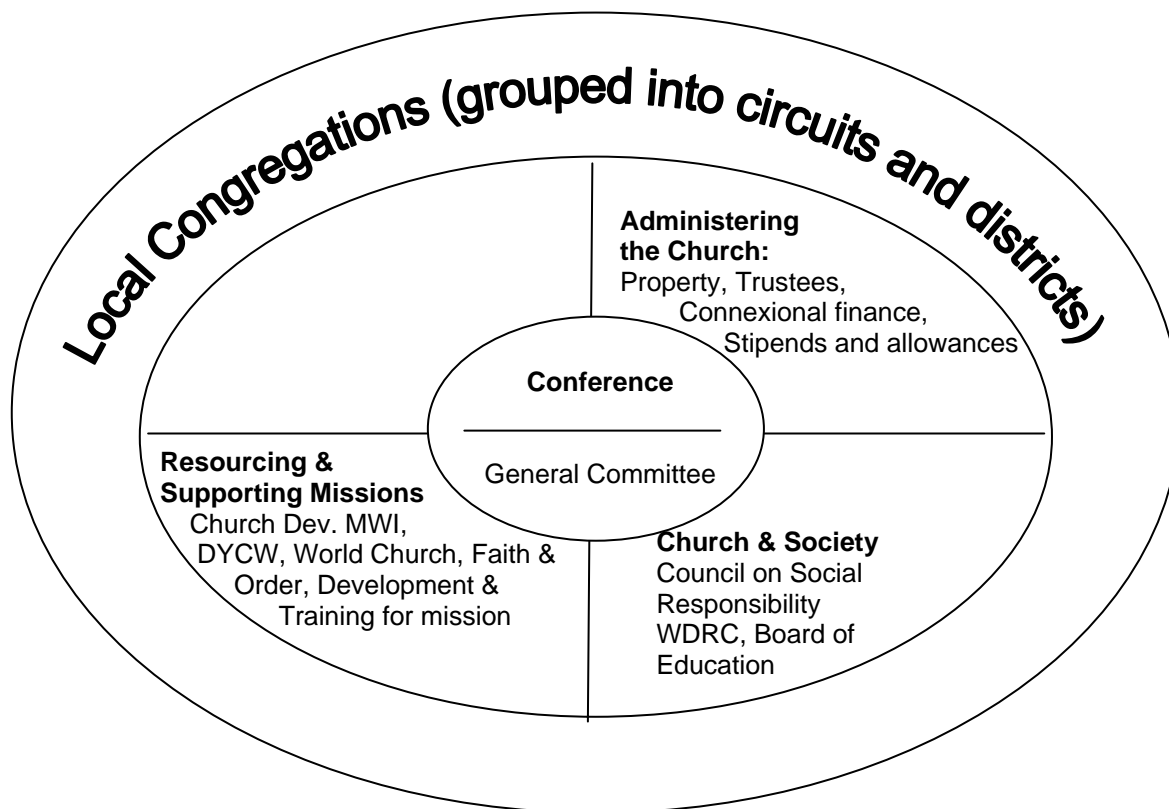
4.2 Wesley Historical Society: This should continue to submit a written report to Conference.

4.3 Ministerial Session Committees: There is a number of specialist committees reporting to the Ministerial Session of the Conference. These, because of their specialist function (and often sensitive business) should in general remain as at present (but with some suggested rationalisation as outlined below). As with all committees, the composition and mode of operation of all should be critically reviewed. The committees concerned are:

- Stationing Committee
- Discipline & Advisory Committee
- Education and Training for Mission - this new committee, as outlined earlier, shall also be responsible for relevant matters to be brought to the Ministerial Session especially those previously handled by the Board of Examiners and Pastoral Efficiency
- Special Service Committee - this is a proposed consolidation of the roles of the Special Committee and the Overseas Service Committee -both of which are concerned, in different ways, with applications to serve outside the circuit ministry in Ireland.

5. Graphical perspective

Given this analysis, a diagrammatic outline of the main thrust of these proposals is shown below.



Resolution

- C9. The Conference receives the report and directs each Connexional Committee concerned to review its purpose and structure in line with the report and bring amended legislation to Conference 2005. The Conference gives permission for the structure outlined in the report to be used during the year 2004-2005 on an experimental basis.

Circuit Meeting, Executive and Church Council

Resolution

- CI0. Conference receives as a Notice of Motion to the Conference of 2005 the following amendments to the Manual of Laws (1976). Circuits and Societies are encouraged to use this legislation on a trial basis during the Connexional Year 2004-2005.

Delete paragraphs 369-384 and replace as follows:

CHAPTER 10: CIRCUIT ORGANISATION

10.01 The official meetings of a Circuit shall be:

- The Congregational Meeting,
- The Church Council,
- The Circuit Meeting,
- The Circuit Executive,
- The Trustees' Meeting, where appropriate.

The Congregational Meeting

10.02 At least once each year, the Church Council shall arrange a Congregational Meeting for fellowship and inspiration.

10.03 The Congregational Meeting shall:

- (a) Review the previous twelve months and celebrate advances made,
- (b) Set out goals for the next twelve months,
- (c) Discuss the vision of the Church for the ensuing five years,
- (d) Ratify the appointment of Church Officials upon the nomination of the Minister,
- (e) Elect members of the Church Council upon the nomination of the Minister, as required,
- (f) Through the Secretary convey to the Church Council for its consideration concerns expressed or recommendations made.

The Church Council

10.04 The aim of every congregation is to glorify God through its worship and its witness within its community. Methodist congregations achieve this with the encouragement of, and by commitment to, the Methodist Church in Ireland.

10.05 To ensure that this aim is achieved, every Society shall be governed by a Church Council. (A Church Council may govern more than one Society.) The Council shall:

- (a) Produce a succinct Mission Statement to encapsulate the direction the Church wishes to take,
- (b) Review this Mission Statement from time to time,
- (c) Annually set achievable goals for the fulfilment of the Church's mission within the terms of the Mission Statement,
- (d) Establish Working Groups, with clear guidelines and sufficient authority to achieve the specific goals assigned to them,
- (e) Assist the members of the congregation in using their gifts and experience to serve the kingdom of God,
- (f) Annually guide the congregation in celebrating the advances of the previous twelve months and in identifying the next steps in the fulfilment of its mission,
- (g) Consider and promote the spiritual life of the Society,
- (h) Promote and extend the mission of the Society in the local community,
- (i) Encourage Council Members, through mutual consultation and prayer, to discharge their duties more effectively.

- 10.06 The Church Council shall be responsible for the oversight of the work of God in the Society, including:
- (a) Arrangements for worship,
 - (b) Pastoral care, nurturing and discipling of the congregation,
 - (c) Identification of training needs and the implementation of training within the Society,
 - (d) Reception, discipline and exclusion of members as required by the laws of the Church (Chapter 5),
 - (e) Work with children and young people,
 - (f) The role of the Society within the Circuit and the Connexion, including Connexional activities, publications and funds,
 - (g) Evangelism and witness of the society in the local community, including co-operation with other Churches,
 - (h) Arranging at least one Congregational Meeting each year, which shall be announced on the four Sundays prior to the meeting
 - (i) The finance of the Society,
 - (j) Maintenance, letting and insurance of all property entrusted to the Society, subject to such rights and obligations, if any, as may be vested in Local Trustees,
 - (k) Communication with the congregation relating to the work of the Council.
- 10.07 The Council shall meet at least four times each year. No meeting of the Council shall be convened without the prior approval of the Minister.
- 10.08 The quorum required for a meeting of the Church Council shall be one-third of the total membership of the Council.
- 10.09 The Council may appoint individual members of the Council or working parties, which need not be exclusively composed of members of the Council, to undertake specific tasks relating to the responsibilities of the Council.
- (a) Each individual or working party shall be given specific terms of reference and shall report to the Council.
 - (b) A working party may, if circumstances warrant, be given powers to act on behalf of the Council and the Society within clearly specified parameters.
- 10.10 In Societies with worshipping congregations of up to about thirty people the congregation itself may be the Church Council, subject to the provisions of para 10.24, below.
- 10.11 The term "Church Council" shall henceforth be deemed to include the term "Leaders' Meeting" where appropriate throughout the Manual of Laws.

Constitution of the Church Council

- 10.12 The Council shall be constituted as follows:
- (a) The Minister responsible for the Society, who shall preside at meetings of the Council, or delegate the responsibility of presiding to another minister or member of the Council,
 - (b) Other ministers and probationers in the active work assigned to the work of the Society,
 - (c) The Church Officials (as listed in para 10.22),
 - (d) The elected members (as described in para 10.17-10.21).

- 10.13 Persons appointed by the Circuit who have a pastoral responsibility in the Society(ies) may be invited to give reports from time to time.
- 10.14 The Circuit Superintendent shall be ex-officio a member of the Council.
- 10.15 In the interests of continuity the retiring Society Steward shall be an ex-officio member of the Council for one year following his/her retirement from that office.
- 10.16 Only Members of the Methodist Church in Ireland are eligible to be members of the Church Council.

Elected Members

- 10.17 The number of elected members of the Church Council shall be a multiple of three not exceeding 18 as determined by the Council from time to time.
- 10.18 One-third of the elected members of the Council shall retire each year and normally shall not be eligible for re-election for at least one year.
- 10.19 Each year in the autumn the Council shall appoint three of its members to constitute the Advisory Group to consult with the Minister on nominations and appointments for the ensuing year.
- 10.20 The Minister shall, after consultation with the Advisory Group, nominate suitable Church Members to be listed on the ballot paper for election to the Council by the Congregational Meeting.
- 10.21 In the event of a casual vacancy on the Council, the Council shall co-opt a Member of the Society to fill the vacancy until the next appropriate Congregational Meeting.

Church Officials

- 10.22 A Society shall have the following Church Officials, who shall normally hold office for three years:
 - (a) The Society Steward, who shall be regarded as the official lay representative of the Society and shall support and encourage the Minister(s) and congregation in the development of the Work of God. When necessary, the Society Steward may also serve as Secretary, but not as Treasurer or Property Steward.
 - (b) The Treasurer, who shall be responsible to the Council for all financial income of the Society, for its proper use or transmission as appropriate and for the prompt payment of all accounts. He/she shall keep accurate accounts and submit them for annual audit, according to the requirements of Conference.
 - (c) The Property Steward, who shall be responsible to the Council for the proper maintenance of all property.
 - (d) The Secretary, who shall in conjunction with the Chairperson of the Council prepare the Agenda for meetings and issue notices in writing in good time and shall record the proceedings in a Minute Book for that purpose. He/she shall also act as Secretary to the Congregational Meeting.
- 10.23 A Society Steward-Designate may be nominated one year in advance of a vacancy in that office and may attend Church Council meetings during the year but will not be eligible to vote.

Special Provisions for Small Societies

- 10.24 In Societies with worshipping congregations of up to about thirty people, the congregation itself may be the Church Council.
- (a) Such a congregational Church Council shall be subject to all provisions relating to Church Councils except as indicated below.
 - (b) Notice of congregational Council meetings shall normally be given at least one week in advance and may be by pulpit announcement.
 - (c) Congregational Council meetings may be held following Sunday worship, and all decisions must be minuted and the minutes confirmed and signed.
 - (d) The quorum required for a meeting of a congregational Church Council shall be all those present at a meeting for which proper notice has been given, provided at least four adults are present.

 - (e) The Council shall appoint three of its members to advise the Minister on the nomination of Church Officials.
 - (f) Church Officials may, where necessary, be Members of other Societies.
 - (g) The Council shall ratify the appointment of Church Officials upon the nomination of the Minister.

 - (h) The Church Officials (in consultation with the Minister), or the Council itself, may designate persons in the congregation to undertake specific tasks.

 - (i) The Church Officials, in consultation with the Minister, shall ensure that the congregational Church Council adopts and updates a Mission Statement, sets annual achievable goals, and discharges all responsibilities laid upon the Church Council.

The Circuit Meeting

- 10.25 In a Circuit there shall be a Circuit Meeting for the purpose of:
- (a) Providing mutual support and fellowship;
 - (b) Electing Circuit Officials, upon nomination by the Superintendent Minister assisted by the Circuit Executive;
 - (c) Sharing stories of the work of God, thereby enabling Societies to learn from each other;
 - (d) Passing on information to Societies from the Circuit, District or Connexion.
- 10.26 The Circuit Meeting shall consist of:
- (a) Members of the Church Councils and the Working Parties thereof,
 - (b) Members of the Circuit Executive,
 - (c) Fully accredited local preachers in the active work,
 - (d) Class Leaders or their equivalent,
 - (e) Lay persons employed by the Circuit or its constituents in a pastoral capacity,
 - (f) Members of the Circuit who are local trustees or who hold District or Connexional office or are members of District or Connexional committees, and
 - (g) Ministers on the Circuit, including retired ministers and those without pastoral

- charge.
- 10.27 The Superintendent Minister is responsible for ensuring that the Circuit Meeting is properly chaired.
- 10.28 The Circuit Secretary shall act as secretary of the Circuit Meeting.
- 10.29 The Circuit Meeting shall be held at least once a year, early in the Connexional year.

The Circuit Executive

- 10.30 In each Circuit there shall be a Circuit Executive for the purpose of deliberation and decision-making in relation to matters of Circuit responsibility.
- 10.31 The Circuit Executive shall have responsibility in relation to the following:
- (a) Co-ordination of the work of the Societies, with an emphasis on strategy and vision for the area;
 - (b) Ministerial and remunerated lay appointments in the Circuit;
 - (c) Candidates for the ministry, upon nomination by the Superintendent;
 - (d) Election of Circuit representatives to District Synod and to Conference;
 - (e) Purchase and up-keep of manses on the Circuit;
 - (f) Trustees' business, where appropriate;
 - (g) Local Preachers' business, where appropriate;
 - (h) Annual financial audit of Circuit and society accounts;
 - (i) Management of Circuit accounts and oversight of society accounts;
 - (j) Applications from Societies for Connexional approval or for grants from Connexional bodies;
 - (k) Arrangement of Circuit Meetings;
 - (l) Assisting the Superintendent Minister in the nomination of Circuit Officials for election by the Circuit Meeting.
 - (m) Links with other churches.
- 10.32 The Circuit Executive will meet as necessary, at times and places determined by the Superintendent Minister, and as a minimum at least once each quarter.
- 10.33 The quorum required for a meeting of the Circuit Executive shall be one-third of all members.
- 10.34 The Circuit Secretary shall ensure that the proceedings of the Circuit Executive are duly recorded, and in consultation with the Superintendent Minister, summon the meeting and prepare the agenda.
- 10.35 The Circuit Executive shall be chaired by the Superintendent Minister or by another member of the Circuit Executive designated by the Superintendent Minister.
- 10.36 Within these parameters, the Circuit Executive may establish its own procedures and structure for itself and the Circuit.

Constitution of the Circuit Executive

- 10.37 The Circuit Executive shall consist of:
- (a) Ministers in the active work appointed to work on the various Societies of the Circuit;
 - (b) Circuit Officials, as listed in para 10.39, below;
 - (c) The Society Steward of each society;
 - (d) One other representative of each Society designated by its Church Council.

(e) The Secretary of the Trustees Meeting.

Single Society Circuits

10.38 Where a Circuit consists of a single Society, the Congregational Meeting may undertake the responsibilities of the Circuit Meeting and the Church Council the responsibilities of the Circuit Executive, in which case the Circuit Officials shall be ex-officio members of the Church Council.

Circuit Officials

10.39 A Circuit shall have the following Officials, who shall normally hold office for three years:

(a) Circuit Steward, who shall provide spiritual, pastoral and advisory support to the Superintendent Minister and shall be regarded as the official lay representative of the Circuit at civic and other appropriate occasions.

(b) Circuit Treasurer.

(c) Manse Steward.

(d) Circuit Secretary.

10.40 A Circuit may also have an Assistant Circuit Steward or Circuit Steward-designate, as determined from time-to-time by the Circuit Executive.

10.41 For legal purposes, Society Stewards shall also be considered Officials of the Circuit.

The following legislation will be printed in the Minutes of Conference to facilitate Societies in the change from Leaders' Meetings to Church Council.

The Establishment of a Church Council

1. The aim of every congregation is to glorify God through its worship and its witness within its community. Methodist congregations achieve this with the encouragement of, and by commitment to, the Methodist Church in Ireland. The task of the Church Council is to ensure that this aim is achieved. Before a Church Council is established the congregation shall agree a succinct Mission Statement encapsulating the direction the Church wishes to take. Thereafter the Council will be involved in reviewing the Mission Statement from time to time, annually setting details of the achievable goals for the fulfilment of the Church's mission, within the terms of the Mission Statement and establishing Working Groups, with clear guidelines and sufficient authority to achieve the specific goals assigned to them. By these means the members of the congregation will be assisted in using their gifts and experience to serve the kingdom of God. Each year the Council is expected to guide the congregation in celebrating the advances of the previous twelve months and in identifying the next steps in the fulfilment of its mission.

2. In the interests of continuity the present Leaders' Meeting shall be responsible for

the establishment of the Church Council. In circumstances where a Church Council shall govern more than one congregation, arrangements for its establishment and operation shall be made by the present Circuit Quarterly Meeting.

3. The Leaders' Meeting (or, where appropriate, the Circuit Quarterly Meeting) shall appoint three persons (to be known as the Advisory Group) to advise the Circuit Superintendent or Minister responsible for the Society on the composition of the new Council.
4. The Minister, following consultation with the Advisory Group, shall nominate the following Church Officials: Society Steward, Treasurer, Property Steward, and Secretary and, where appropriate, conveners of working parties.
5. According to the size of the congregation (i.e., the average attendance at Sunday morning worship) the Minister (after consulting with the Advisory Group) shall recommend to the Leaders' Meeting the number of persons to be elected to the Council (which shall be a multiple of three and not exceed 18).
6. The present members of the Leaders' Meeting shall vote for the required number of elected members of the Council. The list of candidates shall consist of all the current members of the Leaders' Meeting who wish to be candidates and those nominated by the Minister (after consulting with the Advisory Group). Those nominated shall have given their approval to the nomination.
7. The members of the Leaders' Meeting(s) shall each have the number of votes equal to the number of vacancies. When the votes are counted, the candidates shall be arranged in decreasing order of the number of votes received. From this list - in order - one-third of the number of vacancies shall be filled for a period of three years, one-third for a period of two years and one-third for a period of one year. In the event of tied votes for places the Minister shall have the necessary casting votes.

The Establishment of a Circuit Executive

In the interest of continuity, the present Circuit Quarterly Meeting shall be responsible for establishing the Circuit Executive.

2. The Circuit Quarterly Meeting shall, at its penultimate meeting, appoint three persons (the 'Advisory Group') to advise the Circuit Superintendent on the nomination of the Circuit Officials.
3. At this meeting the Superintendent shall remind each Society to nominate, through their Leaders' Meeting or Church Council, one representative to the Circuit Executive, in addition to the Society Steward, and report to the final meeting.
4. The final Circuit Quarterly Meeting shall elect the new Circuit Officials upon the nomination of the Superintendent assisted by the Advisory Group.
5. At this final meeting, the Superintendent shall announce the membership of the new Circuit Executive.

Appendix (For the purposes of illustration):

INITIAL ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO A CHURCH COUNCIL

Assume that a Church Council has six elected members and that the number of candidates is 11, arranged alphabetically on the ballot paper. The Society Steward-Designate acts as Returning Officer, assisted by the Secretary-Designate of the Council. Each member of the Leaders' Meeting (21 members present) has six votes, by marking up to six "X's" on the ballot paper.

Twenty-one ballot papers were examined. One paper had 7 "X's" marked and was ruled "spoiled" and not counted. One paper had 5 "X's" which were counted, giving a total of 119 valid votes. The result of the voting is:

ALLEN, MrsJoan	14
COWAN, Miss Mary	10
DUNCAN, MrJames	12
KAMARA, Mrs Lydia	12
GORDON, Mr Andrew	8
GORDON, Mrs Pauline	4
HAMILTON, Ms Jenny	19
IRVINE, Mr Samuel	15
JAM ISON, Miss Madge	6
JOHNSTON, Mr Tom	15
O'CONNOR, Mr Sean	4

The votes were arranged in descending order. Result declared:

Ms Jenny Hamilton	19	electd	for 3 years
Mr Tom Johnston	15	Tie+1*=16	electd for 3 years
Mr Samuel Irvine	15	J	electd for 2 years
Mrs Joan Allen	14	electd	for 2 years
Mr James Duncan	12	electd	for 1 year
Mrs Lydia Kamara	12	electd	for 1 year
Miss Mary Cowan	10	not	electd
Mr Andrew Gordon	8	"	"
Miss Madge Jamison	6	"	"
Mr Sean O'Connor	4	"	"
Mrs Pauline Gordon	4	"	"

1* indicated the casting vote of the Minister.