

# Home Mission Department

**Raison d'être** - The Home Mission Department was set up to provide support for Circuits who, without such support, could not continue to exist. It is responsible for promoting evangelism and enabling mission, principally through the Mission Ireland programme.

## Home Missions and Connexions

1. The Conference of 1998 passed a resolution directing, "that the Secretary of the Home Mission Department gives priority to his role as director of evangelism so that ideas identified at the Renewing the Church Conference (1997) can be further developed". The Connexions Report (2002) had its roots in the Renewing the Church Conference and has emphasised the centrality of witness and worship to the life of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

2. At the Conference of 2002 the General Secretary of Home Missions was seconded to act as Facilitator for the Connexions process, for two years. These twin responsibilities have enabled the spirit of the 1998 resolution to move towards fulfilment, as many of the areas of renewal sought on the Connexions journey, are in harmony with the Department's aims.

3. This has led to a rethinking of the future management of the various tasks committed to Home Missions. In addition to developing mission these include: property, (including manses); finance, (especially Ordinary Grants); the work of Mission Ireland which involves raising and administering funds for the support of new projects; training, which is usually organised in conjunction with other departments; and the role Secretary has, as the mission member of several Connexional Committees.

## Suggested Structural Changes

4. The Connexions Report recommends that the Church should lighten and streamline its structures. It is in accordance with this recommendation that we now propose that, during the year 2004/05, the Home Mission Department should work in co-operation with the Church Development Board. The aim of this period of co-operation will be to form a new constitution for the Board, which would eventually co-ordinate and oversee the work of Home Missions, Property and Church Extension.

5. The reasons behind this suggestion are:

- All three groups are concerned with the mission of the Church throughout Ireland.
- They already work closely together. Projects are often taken along in parallel.
- There is a considerable overlap of personnel.

- Much of the work is done by Executive groups which report to the larger bodies, who in turn report to the General Committee.

6. The advantages from a Home Mission point of view are:

- The opportunity to participate in the development of an overall strategy for mission with clearly identified priorities.
- The better use of personnel and financial resources as a result of such a strategy being in place.
- The sharing of responsibility in the decision-making with regard to expenditure.
- More incisive accountability for the Officers.

### **What is being sought from Conference?**

7. In conjunction with the other Departments (Church Development, Property, Church Extension) we are asking for permission to work more closely together, with a view to bringing proposals to merge our work to the Conference of 2005.

8. To that end we suggest that Conference gives approval for the Home Mission Department to report to the Church Development Board during the ensuing year, and ask that the General Committee allocate authority for the approval of all grants and expenditure to the Church Development Board, on the understanding that the Church Development Board will report to the General Committee on the decisions taken.

9. Any proposed alterations in policy will be brought to the General Committee for approval.

### **What implications does this have for the present Mission Ireland Committees?**

10. The Mission Ireland Committee (with Synod representatives) will be called for consultation in the early autumn (as in 2003).

11. The Mission Ireland Forum will be merged with the Church Development Board for this year and until the membership of a new body is agreed by Conference. (The Forum is the group which discusses and recommends Mission Ireland grants).

### **Further Implications**

12. The Connexions Steering Committee is requesting that the General Secretary for Home Missions continue as Facilitator for a further year. If this is agreed, then it is hoped that this would open the possibility of eventually combining the relevant sections of the Steering Group's journey and work with that of the Home Mission Department.

13. It is envisaged that this would mean that the administrative responsibilities of the Department will have to be carried by engaging an additional member of staff, as has been the case since 2002. Up until this year, this has been a cost on the General Assessment, for which no provision has been made beyond July 2004. It is proposed that this cost be borne by Home Missions in the realisation that it may become an ongoing part of an increased budget for administration within the Department.

### **AGENDA**

1. The Conference adopts the report.
2. In accordance with the recommendations of the Connexions Report, the Conference directs the Home Mission Department to work with the Church Development Board with a view to developing a new body which will adopt suitable procedures, reporting practices and membership to strategically develop and resource the mission of the whole Church. This trial period is to be completed by the Conference of 2006.
3. The Conference directs that the Home Mission Department make the necessary arrangements to ensure that the administrative responsibilities of the Department are adequately covered.

The Conference directs:

4. That the name of the Enniskillen and Sligo District be changed to "The Lakeland District".
5. That the "line" be removed from the Upper Erne Circuit (22).
6. That Sunday 13th March 2005 be observed as a Day of Prayer for Ireland and that Methodists be encouraged to fast at this and other times.
7. That the maximum Car Loans be ~8,890 and £5,500. Loans over ~6,350 or £4,000 are repayable over three years.
8. That all Collections and Subscriptions for the Fund shall, immediately upon their receipt, be forwarded to the Ministerial Treasurer of the Fund.
9. That Circuit Accounts for Home Missions be closed by 10th December 2004, and that Schedules and remittances be forwarded to the Administrator, 71B Brighton Road, Dublin 6.
10. That all Applications for Ordinary and Mission Ireland grants be sent to the Secretary of the District Home Mission Committee not later than 11th February 2005. Such applications shall be made on the forms provided, and accompanied by a full set of audited circuit accounts.

11. That Rev. Desmond Bain be re-appointed General Secretary and Ministerial Treasurer of the Home Mission Department.
12. That Mr. Thomas Wilson be appointed as Lay Treasurer of the Home Mission Department.

### **Reasoned Statement**

The task of Honorary Treasurer of the Home Mission Department is one that demands a deep commitment to the financial, practical and spiritual life of the whole Church. A wide knowledge of the Connexion, together with a willingness to turn attention to the details of property and to monitor the high financial turnover, are all essential requirements. Having been a school principal, Treasurer of the Board of Education of the Methodist Church and with a long involvement in Lay Witness, Mr Tom Wilson is ideally suited to fulfilling this role. His name is presented to Conference with confidence and gratitude for his willingness to undertake this task.

13. The Conference expresses gratitude to all collectors, including JMA, and to all those who made special donations to the Department; to members of congregations who by allocations from special efforts have helped the Fund.
14. The Conference expresses its deep appreciation of the work done by Mr. Ken Galloway whose advice and work on the Department's financial obligations is greatly appreciated.
15. The Conference expresses its gratitude to the outgoing Treasurer, Mr. T. Osmond Mulligan F.R.C.S. and directs that the following tribute be printed in the Minutes.

### **Tribute**

The Conference is indebted to Mr. Osmond Mulligan for his six years of service as Honorary Treasurer of the Home Mission Department. He has involved himself fully in all aspects of Home Mission. He has given meticulous attention to the detail of administration, especially in Northern Ireland, and participated fully in the various committees this role requires. He has taken a lively and inspirational interest in the development of mission throughout Ireland and his encouragement to ministers and their families has been given with unobtrusive faithfulness. The working party, which is currently preparing changes in manse legislation, was set up largely due to his desire to establish equitable and high standards for manses across the island. His prayerful collegueship, helpful counsel and incisive action are greatly appreciated.

### **Changes in Stations**

16. The Conference resolves that in cases of vacancies in Stations and rearrangement of Circuits, the Officers of the Fund shall have authority to adjust the grants to the Circuits concerned.

### **Grants from Local Authorities**

17. The Conference directs that in all cases where major repairs and/or improvements are contemplated in respect of Trust property, application be made for such grants as may be available from the Local Authority.