Methodist Conference

DUBLIN 2014
“MOVING OUT TOGETHER”

AGENDA OF THE REPRESENTATIVE SESSION
(Subject to such modifications as may be necessary)

WEDNESDAY, 11 JUNE

19.30 Constitution of the Conference
ELECTION AND INSTALLATION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE
Christ Church, Leeson Park, Dublin

THURSDAY, 12 JUNE
“WARM HEARTS”

9.15 INTRODUCTION

9.30 BIBLE STUDY
Led by Most Revd Dr Richard L. Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh

10.15 CONVERSATION ON THE WORK OF GOD (I)

10.45 – BREAK

11.15 FACILITATED CIRCUIT CONVERSATIONS

12.45 – LUNCH

14.00 Appointment of Committees
Hours of Sitting
Letters of Sympathy and Greeting
Notices of Motion
Election of Secretary, Assistant Secretaries and Letter Writers
Nomination of Representatives to the British Conference

Greetings from our Guests
Inter Church Relations
Covenant Council

15.00 SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE
15.45 BREAK

16.15 Church Development Board
   Home Missions
   Property Board
   Stipends and Allowances Board
   Connexional Finance Committee
   Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland

18.00 – EVENING MEAL

19.30 EVENING CELEBRATION
   “The Immense Scope of God’s Grace”

FRIDAY, 13 JUNE
“WET FEET”

9.30 BIBLE STUDY
   Led by Most Revd Dr Richard L. Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh

10.15 CONVERSATION ON THE WORK OF GOD (II)

10.45 – BREAK

11.15 Board of Ministry
   Local Preachers
   Edgehill College
   Board of Education
   General Committee (1)

12.45 – LUNCH

14.00 Council for Social Responsibility
   Ministry of Healing
   Prison and Health Care Chaplaincy
   MWI
   World Development and Relief
   MMS I

15.30 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

15.45 – BREAK

16.15 FACILITATED CIRCUIT CONVERSATIONS
18.00 – EVENING MEAL

19.30 EVENING CELEBRATION
“Do Not Fear……Because God”

SATURDAY, 14 JUNE
“TOUGH HANDS”

9.30 BIBLE STUDY
Led by Most Revd Dr Richard L. Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh

10.15 CONVERSATION ON THE WORK OF GOD (III)

10.45 – BREAK

11.15 FACILITATED CIRCUIT CONVERSATIONS

12.45 – LUNCH

14.00 FACILITATED CIRCUIT CONVERSATIONS
Faith and Order

15.15 – BREAK

15.45 Election of District Secretaries
Election to General Committee
I.M.Y.C.
General Committee (2)
Items removed from ‘en bloc’ – Memorials
Business to be taken ‘en bloc’
   Sabbatical Committee
   Communications Committee
   Church Membership Statistics
   City Missions
   Gurteen College
   Methodist College
   Wesley College
   Methodist Widows’ Home – Eastwell
   Methodist Historical Society of Ireland

Appointment of Boards and Committees
Other Uncompleted Business
SUNDAY, 15 JUNE

11.00 CONFERENCE WORSHIP CELEBRATION

12.45 – LUNCH

14.30 Reception Into Full Connexion
Tributes to Ministers Retiring
Commissioning Service

15.45 Prayer Walking

Expressions of Thanks and Signing of the Journal

17.00 – EVENING MEAL

19.00 ORDINATION SERVICE
DUBLIN CONFERENCE 2014

Members of the Representative Session

Revd Dr Heather M.E. Morris, B.Sc., B.D., Ph.D. President of the Conference
Mr J.Kenneth Twyble, BA, Lay Leader of the Conference
Revd Donald P. Ker, B.A., B.D., M.Th., Secretary of the Conference

Representatives from the British Conference:

Revd Ruth M. Gee, (President of the British Conference)
Dr Daleep S. Mukarji (Vice-President of the British Conference)
Revd Dr. Jonathan Hustler
Ms Jenny Jackson

Observers from the Church of Ireland:

Rt Revd Harold C. Miller
Revd Asa Bjork Olafsdottir

Observers from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland:

Very Revd Dr Robert Craig
Mr Stuart Ferguson

Observer from the Religious Society of Friends:

Ms Joan C. Johnston

Observer from the Moravian Church:

Revd Patsy Holdsworth

Observer from the Irish Council of Churches:

Revd Dr Donald J. Watts
DUBLIN DISTRICT

Rvd Bain, D.C.  Revd Nicoll, J.  Ms Barbour, B. (1)
Rvd Dougherty, A.J.  Revd Nixon, D.H.  Mr Parsons, J. (2)
Rvd Forsyth, M.S.  Revd Owens, I.N.  Mr Dardner, D. (3)
Rvd Foster, S.G.  Revd Stephens, J.  Mrs Judge, R.(4)
Rvd Hamilton, J.I.  Revd Wardlow, A.G.  Mr McMahon, B. (5)
Rvd Kingston (C), P.  Revd Wyse Jackson, V.G.  Mrs McRoberts, L (6)
Rvd Mackey, N.D.  Revd Yambasu, C.  Dr Thorp, M. (7)

MIDLANDS AND SOUTHERN DISTRICT

Rvd Gracie, G.H.W.  Revd Twinem, D.M.  Ms Perrott, L. (15)
Rvd Graham, L.A.M.  Revd Yambasu, S.J,  Mrs Dahm, E. (16)
Rvd Griffin, B.D.  Mrs Graham, I. (9)  Mr Roulston, A. (17)
Rvd Hewitt, M.E.  Ms Oriola, T. (10)  Ms O'Donovan, E. (18)
Rvd Kingston, T.M.  Mrs Davis, V. (11)
Rvd Lindsay, E.R.  Mr Parker, R. (12)
Rvd Mullally, W.D.  Ms Dube, S. (13)
Rvd Olmsted, W.  Mrs Fitzgerald, V. (14)
Rvd Parkin, J.

LAKELANDS DISTRICT

Rvd Hayden, E  Revd Wilson, J.J.  Mrs Gilmore, H. (23)
Rvd Lindsay, R.K.  Revd Woods, S.E.  Mrs Henderson, M. (24)
Rvd Maxwel, P.N.W.  Mr Kingston, S. (19)  Mrs Paterson, C. (26)
Rvd Milligan, C.  Mr Hayden, G. (20)  Mr Taylor, S. (27)
Rvd Taylor, S.R.  Ms Sheridan, K. (21)
Rvd Toner, R.F.  Mrs Ferguson, E. (22)

NORTH WEST DISTRICT

Rvd Alexander, G.J.  Revd. Glenny, J.B.  Mrs Heatherington, J. (28)
Rvd Beacom, J.S.  Revd Henderson, I.D.  Mr Rollins, P. (29)
Rvd Blair, S.W.  Revd Murray, P.D.  Mr Young, A. (30)
Rvd Bryant, R.L.  Revd Newell, W.J.  Mrs Sweeney, D. (31)
Rvd Corrie, J.S.  Revd Purdy, J.W.  Mrs Corrie, J. (32)
Rvd Donald, M.L.  Revd Sweeney, J.M.  Mr Walker, T. (33)
Rvd Fallows, N.A.J.C.  Mr Bell, W. (28)

NORTH EAST DISTRICT

Rvd Davison, W.A.  Revd Lorimer, P.M.  Mrs Robinson, M. (35)
Rvd Ferguson, A.W.  Revd McElhinney, I.R.  Mr Barnett, J. (36)
Rvd Fletcher, W.B.  Revd Millar, G.D.  Mrs McCann, L. (37)
Rvd Gregory, Michael R.  Revd Munce F.L.  Mrs Lipsett, M. (38)
Rvd Harris, C.  Redv Stevenson, T.C.  Mrs Campbell, S. (39)
Rvd Hassard, M.E.  Mr Bruce, K. (34)  Mr Baird, S. (40)

Mr Strong, A. (34)
**BELFAST DISTRICT**

Rev Agnew, H.M.  
Rev Alderdice, J.D.  
Rev Bell, H.N.  
Rev Boucher, A.N.  
Rev Campton, D.A.  
Rev Clarke, T.  
Rev Clutterbuck, D.S.  
Rev Clutterbuck, R.N.  
Rev Duncan, C.J.  
Rev Ewing, M.G.  
Rev Ferguson, M.A.  
Rev Johnston, D.J.  
Rev Johnston, R.C.  
Rev Ker, D.P.  
Rev Kingston, P. (B)  
Rev Lorimer, A.W.  
Rev McKnight, T.R.  
Rev Mason, G.J.  
Rev Morris, H.M.E.  
Rev Neilands, D.G.  
Rev Patterson, R.E.  
Rev Rea, W.J.  
Rev Rock, W.D.  
Rev Sherrin, S.  
Rev Spence, K.J.  
Rev Sweeney, D.J.  
Rev Unsworth, J.M.  
Rev Waugh, R.W.D.  
Rev Weatherill, B.W.  
Miss Boland, H. (41)  
Mr Costello, J. (42)  
Mr Scott, J. (43)  
Mrs Sillery, E. (44)  
Miss Swinton, M. (45)  
Mr Dorman, W. (46)  
Mr Cochrane, D. (47)  
Mr Kelly J. (48)  
Mr Waring, B. (51)  
Mrs Kennedy, P. (52)  
Mr Millar, D. (52)  
Mr Donaghy, W. (53)  

**DOWN DISTRICT**

Rev Agew, W.P.  
Rev Anderson, B.B.  
Rev Buchanan, W.T.  
Revdeo Cooper, R.  
Rev Craig, R.  
Rev Gallucci, P.J.  
Rev Gracie, C.D.  
Rev Harte, R.J.  
Rev Kingston, A.G.  
Rev Mawhinney, E.T.I.  
Rev McCrea, F.R.  
Rev McKibben, R.N.  
Rev Mercer, P.C.  
Rev Montgomery, A.R.  
Rev Todd, S.K.  
Rev Turtle, D.L.  
Rev Williamson, J.  
Rev Wilson, K.A.  
Mr Burrows, C. (55)  
Mrs McCloskey,M. (55)  
Mr Wright, J. (56)  
Mrs Hazley, N. (57)  
Mrs Thompson, G. (58)  
Mrs Brown, A. (59)  
Mrs Turner, H. (60)  
Miss England, R. (61)  
Dr Gracie, A. (61)  

**PORTADOWN DISTRICT**

Rev Bowes, G.  
Rev Cardwell, J.N.  
Rev Cleland, S.R.F.  
Rev Clemens, D.G.  
Rev Deacon, T.R.  
Rev Laverty, J.A.M.  
Rev Loney, R.T.  
Rev Maguire, D.M.  
Rev McKnight, N.D.  
Rev Mullan, D.  
Rev Parke, E.J.  
Rev Robinson, K.J.  
Rev Spence, G.L.  
Rev Sweeney, B.T.  
Rev Webster, C.D.  
Mrs Wright, M. (62)  
Mr McConnell, R. (63)  
Miss McIlroy, C. (65)  
Mrs McKay, J. (66)  
Mr Henning, G. (67)  
Ms Somerville, D. (68)  
Mr Dreaming, R. (69)  
(70)  
Mrs Cardwell, S. (71)  
Mr Chiddick, L. (72)  

**LAY LEADER**

Mr J. Kenneth Twyble

**DISTRICT YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES**

Dublin District  
Midlands and Southern District  
Lakelands District  
NorthWest District  
NorthEast District  
Belfast District  
Down District  
Portadown District  
Ms Sinead O’Ferrall  
Mr Howard Bateman  
Miss Kerrie Brown  
Mr Timothy Spence  
Miss Leah McKibben  
Mr James Farmer
LAY REPRESENTATIVES TO THE LAST BRITISH CONFERENCE
Mrs Lesley Rankin       Mrs Maureen Weir

LAY REPRESENTATIVES TO THE NEXT BRITISH CONFERENCE
Miss Gladys Colvin       Dr Ian Taylor

LAY TREASURERS OF CONNEXIONAL FUNDS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapel Fund and Church Extension</td>
<td>Mr Stewart J. Wilson</td>
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<td>Child Care Society</td>
<td>Mrs Margaret Copeland</td>
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<td>Children’s Fund</td>
<td>Mr Glyn Capper</td>
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<td>Council on Social Responsibility</td>
<td>Mr William Parkinson</td>
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<td>General Education Fund</td>
<td>Mr J. Kenneth Twyble</td>
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<td>General Purposes Fund</td>
<td>Mr J. Stanley Graham</td>
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<td>Home Mission Fund</td>
<td>Mr Thomas G. Wilson</td>
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<td>Methodist Women in Ireland</td>
<td>Mrs Nan McDowell</td>
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<td>Ministerial Training Fund</td>
<td>Mr R. Alan Ker</td>
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<td>Methodist Missionary Society (Ireland)</td>
<td>Mrs Audrey Dickson</td>
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<td>Irish Methodist Ministers’ Retirement</td>
<td>Mr Desmond Mitchell</td>
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<td>Mr Neil E. Morris</td>
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<td>Department of Youth &amp; Children’s Work</td>
<td>Mr Mark McElhinney</td>
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<tr>
<td>World Development &amp; Relief</td>
<td>Mr Jonathan Best</td>
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LAY SECRETARY OF PRECEDING CONFERENCE
Mrs Elaine Barnett

REPRESENTATIVES OF DEPARTMENTS
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<tr>
<th>Department</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church Development Board</td>
<td>Mr David Twyble</td>
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<td>Stipends and Allowances Board</td>
<td>Mr Kevin Kingston</td>
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<td>Connexional Finance Committee</td>
<td>Mr Neil Payne</td>
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<td>Faith and Order Committee</td>
<td>Dr Fergus O’Ferrall</td>
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<td>Council on Social Responsibility</td>
<td>Mrs Hazel Baird</td>
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<td>Council on Social Responsibility</td>
<td>Ms Heidi Good</td>
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<td>Edgehill College</td>
<td>Mr David McKendry</td>
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<td>Wesley College</td>
<td>Dr John Harris</td>
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<td>Local Preachers’ Committee</td>
<td>Mr David Allen</td>
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<td>Methodist Women in Ireland</td>
<td>Mrs Charlotte Maye</td>
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<td>Mrs Barbara Fennell</td>
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<td>Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland</td>
<td>Mr Hal Hosford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irish Methodist Youth and Children</td>
<td>Mrs Janette McCormick</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Committee</td>
<td>Ms Gillian Kingston</td>
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<td>Mr David English</td>
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<td>Mr Stephen McCann</td>
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<td>Miss Laura Ewing</td>
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SUGGESTED NAMES FOR COMMITTEES
TO BE ELECTED BY THE CONFERENCE

COMMITTEE OF SCRUTINEERS

Revds M.L. Donald, S.G. Foster, M.E. Hassard, J. W. Purdy, T. C. Stevenson, S.E.Woods, Miss G. Colvin, Mrs V. Galloway, Mr J. Kelly, Mr S. McCann, Mr T. Spence, Miss M. Swinton.

Convener: Revd T.C. Stevenson

MEMORIALS COMMITTEE

The President, Lay Leader, ex-President, President Designate and Secretary of the Conference, Revd J.M. Unsworth, Revd J.A.M. Laverty, Dr I. Taylor, Ms G.M. Kingston.

Convener: Revd J.A.M. Laverty

PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The President, Lay Leader, ex President and Secretary of the Conference, Revd D.C. Bain, Mr J.G. Clarke and Ms G.M. Kingston.

TO ATTEST THE DAILY RECORD

Revd J.N. Cardwell, Revd R.E. Patterson, Mr D. English and Mrs M. Copeland,

TO PREPARE THE CONFERENCE ALLOCATION

The President, Lay Leader and Secretary of the Conference, Revd T.R. Deacon, and Mr T.G. Wilson.

Convener: Revd M.G. Ewing
NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

TO NOMINATE THE PRESIDENT- DESIGNATE,
THE LAY LEADER OF THE CONFERENCE (when required)
AND THE SUPERINTENDENTS OF DISTRICTS

The President, the Lay Leader and the Secretary of the Conference
The Officers of the Home Mission Fund

District Representatives

Dublin: Revd Alan G. Wardlow: Dr Joyce Picket
Midlands & Southern: Revd Laurence A.M. Graham: Ms Gillian Kingston
Lakelands: Revd Eleanor Hayden: Mr Gareth Hayden
North West: Revd John Purdy: Miss Gladys Colvin
North East: Rev William A Davison: Miss Elizabeth Curry
Belfast: Revd Colin J. Duncan
Down: Revd Colin D. Gracie: Mrs Helen Turner
Portadown: Revd Thomas R. Deacon: Mrs Mgt Copeland

The Committee will meet on Wednesday 8th October in Belfast and thereafter as required.

GENERAL COMMITTEE

Nominations from District Synods:

Dublin: Mrs Roisin Whiting
Midlands & Southern: M Lorna Shier
Lakelands: Mr Joe Kennedy
North West: Mr John Buchanan
North East: Mrs Patricia Gawn
Belfast: Mrs Lesley Moreland
Down: Mr Colin Burrows
Portadown: Mrs Irene Dickson
Reports on the Work of God

DUBLIN DISTRICT

Theologian Bryan Stone writes: "Ironically, it may be that it is precisely from a position of marginality that the church is best able to announce peace and to bear witness to God's peaceable reign in such a way as to invite others to take seriously the subversive implications of that reign. It may be that through humility repentance and disavowal of its former advantages, so that those things that were once 'gains' to the church now become regarded as 'loss', that a church at the periphery of the world may yet be a church for the world."

The sense of God fashioning God's Kingdom, through 'a church at the side,' is palpable in the reports that have been shared concerning what God is up to amongst Dublin Methodism. We, in many ways are a church on the margins - a minority protestant church; in a country where during my lifetime regular church attendance has dropped from 91% (Ireland, 1972) to less than 20% (Ireland 2012); whose political and social voice is more often than not discarded; and whose resources have been greatly diminished. And yet, as happens so often in Scripture, God does God's best work at the margins.

As one reads through the testimony of our circuits, one sees new ventures, a growth in partnerships, a challenge to prayer and fasting being met, emerging leadership, and connections with those outside the sphere of the Sunday service. All these are signposts of the Spirit of God pushing and prompting us.

In new venues one can see Lucan opening itself to community events, and Centenary starting a new Young Adult gathering. Urban Junction's new 'living room' project for those aged 50-70 is a step out of the comfort zone for a ministry that began amongst young people. New ventures have also continued to be explored in Trinity College where students have been involved in alternative worship gatherings at Easter and Christmas, and where several students are being discipled through involvement in a missional imagination project. The Empire youth initiative in Gorey has grown in terms of its connection with teenagers over the past year. And in Clontarf there is a new women's prayer gathering - a positive result from completing a Christianity Explored course. Dave Gardner, has been employed in that circuit as a Youth Pastor & Church development worker there, and is assisted by Naomi Stanley, a volunteer who serves two days a week. This work is focusing in particular on the mentoring of young people, with the hope of raising leadership from the younger generations on the circuit. This concept of raising and encouraging leadership is also prevalent in Centenary and DCM circuits, and Trinity College chaplaincy, as well as the North Dublin circuit, where local preachers courses and/or leadership development is taking place.
Growth in partnerships with other churches and external bodies is hugely encouraging, reminding us that God often works best outside the confines of our own processes. Bray church were able to demonstrate the generosity and embrace of God by giving Christmas hampers to families that previously would have known little positive contact from the church - it is significant that the giving of these gifts was facilitated in conjunction with the local Garda. Tallaght again used their Carol Service and Nativity Play to involve members of the local community alongside members of their own congregation. Rathgar continues to connect wonderfully with the local community through music, the coffee dock, and through publishing, as they are connecting ecumenically in applauding 140 years of witness in the community. Meditation and bible study groups in Rathgar also help to keep those links strong. Lucan is connecting with a Congolese congregation, Trinity students are connecting with the YMCA, Centenary is connecting with the Korean congregation, Gorey is connecting with the local high school, and Dun Laoghaire is connecting with others in the community to provide hot meals for local people in need. Through God's Storehouse Tallaght is also doing this, connecting with needy families in the congregation and wider community by providing foodstuffs. Urban Junction is connecting its young people with other Methodist young people from all over Ireland through the IMYC events. Sandymount are also seeing growth in local partnerships where people are gathering to explore the Psalms together, share in a monthly craft market and cafe, and are rejoicing in unexpected invitations to add to the life of the local community whether by pumpkin-carving or scarecrow-making! They are thankful for the physical resources to share life with the local community. Gorey are exited about finding ways to engage the international sheep-shearing competition on its way to the town soon.

Many parts of our district are also rising to the challenge to seeking God through prayer. Fasting and/or prayer initiatives are presently being observed in Dun Laoghaire, North Dublin, Urban Junction, DCM, Trinity chaplaincy, and Dundrum; and thankfulness prayers are being offered for growth amongst youth and children's ministry in Centenary, North Dublin, Lucan and Dundrum. Tallaght is holding vision days to seek guidance and inspiration for the future. Dundrum is being thankful for 40 years in that community, and is building for the next 40 years by taking a call to engage the community seriously - they have employed a community engagement officer, and more significantly, several in the congregation are trying small experiments in loving their neighbours. The learning from these experiments should encourage more within the congregation to take more risky steps in helping the construction of God's kingdom. And DCM is also thankful for a circuit visit to the Holy Land where many people were deeply encouraged.

After the challenge of new initiatives being met in North Dublin, and the Christianity Explored course was completed, one of the comments made was> "We can't go back to the way church was before!" This is a narrative of life at
the edge. While we may be a small church, with a small voice, and small resources, we have a big God. And this big God works best at the thresholds. In many ways the comment from North Dublin is right -there is no going back to the way things were before - that world of 40 years ago, simply, no longer exists. How exciting it is to witness around our district, small steps, usually from the margins, being met by a big God. 'Your Kingdom come, Your will be done.'

**MIDLANDS AND SOUTHERN DISTRICT**

Some words of John Wesley come to mind as we consider the Work of God on this District. In his sermon A Catholic Spirit, Wesley challenges us with these words:

"Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion?"

And so it is good to report on a wide range of events that have taken place in our various Circuits, answering Wesley's question with a "Yes".

Birr, Tullamore & Athlone continue to maintain strong ecumenical links with a variety of events including 'Prayers and coffee' for Advent and Christian Unity Week led by a priest with the minister in the Athlone church. Birr continues to work with the Irish School of Ecumenics. Roscrea Methodist Church will be the hosting an Ecumenical Lenten Series: "Is Christianity and the Church still credible?" The guest speakers, Rev David Cooper; Bishop Kieran O'Reilly, Dom Richard Purcell, and The Rt Rev Trevor Williams, will be interviewed by the Rev Brian Griffin on current issues, and encouraged to share their personal faith journey and experiences in Priesthood and Ministry. Finally the Portlaoise Circuit took their ecumenism to the outdoors and fresh air. Among a variety of events held there were a witness walk in Mountmellick and a sunrise service in Athy, both involving other churches. Adare and Ballingrane circuit is part of an interchurch initiative seeking to foster better relations with the settled Travellers and other residents in Rathkeale.

In her presidential address, Rev Heather Morris challenged us to be a people who get their feet wet, and so it is good to report that there are some rather soggy sandalled Methodists on this District! Millstreet has now taken possession of the shop premises on the Main Square, to be named "Lighthouse". Laurence Graham or any of the Millstreet people are delighted to share the wonderful story of how God chose that name. Bible study meetings have already begun in the premises and people in the local area are already beginning to talk about it. The soon-to-be delivered Christian magazines in all the homes in Millstreet, are hoped to spark even greater interest. Dingle has now had the first few evening meetings at the Gairdin Mhuire Day Care Centre, taking place on the second Sunday of each month at
7pm. Castleisland has now decided to hold a monthly meeting in a public venue: An Rfocht Health & Leisure club. Killarney held a 'public' Bible study in a coffee shop in the Outlet Centre after Christmas and continues to ask God to guide them as to how they can further reach people who might never come into their building.

Portlaoise has commissioned 2 new Local preachers with 5 more working through the course. Waterford continues with the renovation of St Patrick's as a multi-purpose community hall. The hope is that April 2014 will see the development's completion. A Dedication Service is planned for 24th May when the President, Rev Heather Morris will be with them. Tullamore has begun a new prayer meeting - small but regular! Athlone has started a weekly Bible Study. So now all three churches on the Birr Circuit hold a Bible study.

Carlow and Kilkenny have both undertaken outreach initiatives. Kilkenny has been hosting an 'Art and Coffee' drop in time every Thursday morning. Carlow has operated an anonymous food distribution scheme that distributed 343 packages of food to people in need in 2013. The Golden Vale group continues to meet once a month, rotating between Tipperary town, Cahir and Mitchelstown. Between eating, discussing, children's time and prayer, 3 hours' church time is the norm on these Friday evenings.

Christ Church Limerick have launched the Central Buildings Community Project. It makes space available to organisations, projects and people at an affordable rate. Already in place are Doras Luimni, an organisation which supports the migrant community; Music Generation which empowers youth and community through music; Honest Arts Production Company which works with community through film, drama, street theatre and festival and Christ Church's youth worker. The street front space hosts exhibitions, pop-up cafes, community projects and whatever else works!

Speaking to young people in Rio, Pope Francis said:

_I ask you, instead, to be revolutionaries, to swim against the tide; yes, I am asking you to rebel against this culture that sees everything as temporary and that ultimately believes that you are incapable of responsibility, that you are incapable of true love. Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life...........The Church needs you, your enthusiasm, your creativity and the joy that is so characteristic of you._

In those words Pope Francis captures the essence of the gift of young people and so it is good to be able to report on this District's enthusiasm for them.

The Youth Club in Kenmare, now well established, meets two Saturdays each month and "Praise and Play" meetings for young children and their parents, run by the Church of Ireland, now meet at Gateway. Kingdom Krew kids club and Impact youth club in Killarney continue to meet on alternate weeks. Kilkenny has been involved in some considerable fundraising for a youth
employment scheme in Sierra Leone. In early spring 2014 eight people from the circuit volunteered time and skills by travelling to the ‘Emmaus centre’ outside Freetown, which was founded by their minister Sahr Yambasu. Jono and Beth Griffin continue to get their feet wet......literally and spiritually, in the surf ministry based in Clare.

In all the reports received the one common thread was the call to prayer: prayer for healing, encouragement, guidance, courage, wisdom. Max Lucado gives sound advice: "When we work, we work; but when we pray, God works."

LAKELANDS DISTRICT

Enniskillen circuit: Worship and service continues faithfully across the circuit. Opportunities for Bible study & prayer continue to be an important focus with prayer meetings and home groups around the circuit well attended, although there is always room for growth. Special celebrations such as Christmas and Harvest are a great blessing and very well attended. Darling Street has had a particularly difficult time with the loss of eleven prominent members within the last 6 months of 2013. There continues to be a valuable work with Children around the circuit. Sunday schools, Bible classes, CE, Boys brigade and 2 Girls Brigade Companies are all a real blessing to our circuit. The Circuit youth fellowship has grown and continues to nurture our young people. This year 10 young people attended Autumn Soul and 15 children went to Soul Mates. Our circuit has also been blessed by 6 young people being received into full membership at Darling St. with another 7 to be received at Blacklion and Letterbreen this March. Other highlights around the circuit have included; G8 Prayer Summit weekend; Circuit BBQ at Castle Archdale; ‘There is Hope’ outreach events at Florencecourt; family fun evenings; Gospel Concerts at Darling Street and Letterbreen; and a very successful Team on Mission visit. It is a busy circuit and we praise God for the work that is being carried out faithfully and for the many blessings we are receiving.

Springfield & Church Hill: Morning worship continues to be well attended across the Circuit, with the Youth Orchestra leading worship in our united services. The Prayer and Bible study group gather faithfully and have had a joint study with our COI neighbours helping to grow the covenant between our churches. The Friendship Club continues to enjoy fellowship on Tuesday mornings. ‘Fit 4 Life’ is now an annual event and reaches out to the whole community. During April Springfield celebrated 175yrs of worship with a weekend of celebration. Over 250 people gathered on the Saturday evening for praise and worship and to enjoy a BBQ! The Coffee Bar continues on Sunday evenings with various groups and speakers proclaiming the Gospel. Harvest Thanksgiving services are well attended across the circuit with Kilcoco continuing to shine brightly with its Tilley Lamps.
Lisbellaw, Maguiresbridge and Tempo Circuit. All societies enjoy good Sunday attendance with Maguiresbridge continuing to see an increase of those who regularly attend. The Sunday schools, circuit CE’s and the youth club are also well attended. Maguiresbridge ‘Friday Nite at the Bridge’ and Tempo Coffee Bar continue to be very popular with young people, with a week of special mission meetings at Tempo planned for February. The circuit Bible study continues and three different women’s groups meet once a month. A men’s evening is planned for March. We have continued to set up 24/7 prayer rooms with the one over weekend before Christmas using our new hall in Maguiresbridge for the first time! Many have found these to be a blessing. Last summer an ecumenical open air service of thanksgiving was held in Lisbellaw to thank God following all the prayers that had been raised during the wet winter and spring. This was well attended and the request was that we should continue this every year.  

Upper Erne: Work continues in the 4 Churches on the circuit. Along with our regular services and bible studies, a monthly Circuit Prayer & Healing service has also been introduced, providing opportunities for intercessory prayer & personal prayer for healing. Lisnaskea’s monthly youth service, ‘ACTS’ is attracting more people and we are especially encouraged by the commitment of the small group of young people who help plan these services. Sunday school across the circuit continues to be a blessing, with notable growth in Brookeborough, which has also seen a growth in its Christian Endeavour. Newtownbutler’s summer holiday bible club was well attended and connected with many children from outside of the Church. Brookeborough celebrates its 175th anniversary in 2014. Various special events are planned and began with a special service of celebration which welcomed back a former Circuit superintendent the Rev Dudley Cooney, who brought a challenging message calling us all to worship ‘in spirit & in truth’ not only in our building but outside in the community. Some young people from Drumady took part in an inter-Church cross-community youth project to explore ways of building better relationships between communities. This was a positive experience and has already led to a number of cross community events. Brookeborough also hosted the ‘Riverbrooke’ community carol service this year, a cross border cross community initiative which was well attended and was an encouraging evening for all.  

Pettigo and Irvinestown Circuit; continues to celebrate many aspects of Church Life. The Holiday Bible Club alongside Christian Endeavour, Girls Brigade and Boys Brigade are all delighted with the new premises in Pettigo (Peace III Development) opened last November during the 175th Anniversary of Pettigo Methodist Church. Ministry in the circuit continues with various Ladies Groups, Bowling Club, Bible Study and Prayer and Praise meetings. Our Healing Service and Pastoral Prayer Teams provide much comfort and support for many individuals. The annual ‘Fit 4 Life’ programme And community groups such as ‘Faith and Friendship’ and ‘The Arc Healthy Living
Centre’ continue to be highly successful. We rejoice in the gifts, talents and abilities demonstrated by many or our congregation which enhance the growth, development and Spiritual well-being of our Circuit.

**Fivemiletown Circuit**: Following the unexpected resignation of Rev. R Birnie, circuit life has been blessed by the appointment of Mr Sam Campbell as lay pastor. A new membership class /Alpha course has begun with 7 teenagers and 4 adults attending. There are also plans for a new Bible study for younger teenagers on a Sunday before the morning service. In addition, a new home Bible study group for younger adults has about 10 meeting regularly. Their vision is to put their faith into action and to take what they are learning out to the community. They have plans to share in work among the homeless in Belfast with the hope that they might be able to do similar outreach locally. Between the new Bible study groups, the ongoing the women’s Bible study, The Bible study at the manse and the Creagh Bible study we have over fifty people meeting weekly to learn from God’s Word outside of the regular church services. The praise group is also growing, and is enabling members to utilise their gifts to enhance the worship each Sunday. Plans are also under way to hold “Reactive Church” (similar to “messy church”) in conjunction with Fivemiletown Primary School in the week before Holy Week.

**Ballinamallard and Trillick**: The Work of God continues on the Circuit. 2013 was a very difficult year for the Circuit with the deaths of 10 people. Many of them were elderly, but some were only in their 70’s. All were key members of the circuit and are greatly missed. The Trillick congregation continues to grow numerically with new children being added each year. Music is a problem however. 3 years ago, we had a team of 6 musicians but for various reasons are now down to one. A set of DVD’s with words and music has been purchased recently and they are very good, but in general is a retrograde step. During this winter, an Alpha course has been run in both churches and altogether about 25 people have been involved. Step Forward Bible study course continues to be used by two groups in Ballinamallard. Up to 12 people are now part of the afternoon group and about 8 meet on alternate Tuesday evenings. One of our members has been challenged by the Inspire ministry of Phil Meadows and is attending the training sessions. One Band has been formed which includes people from both churches. A Ballinamallard ladies house group meets on alternate Tuesdays and helps to meet pastoral and fellowship needs for a few women from outside the congregation.

**Cavan and Longford**: It has been a challenging year for the Circuit as difficult decisions have to be made regarding the future of ministry in Cavan and Longford. Despite this regular activities have continued faithfully. In Longford we continue to be blessed with an average of over 20 children and young people attending the church, with a group of 11 travelling to the Soulmates Weekend. A successful Holiday Bible Camp (with TOM team) was held at
Easter with an average of 25 children coming each morning along with well attended youth activities in the evening. Also in Longford a new parent and toddler group has been started by two ladies in the church. This has been very successfully with 12-14 parents and toddlers attending weekly with only one of them being a member of the church.

**North Connacht Circuit:** Funding from The PEACE III Capacity Building Project, has resulted in several outreach events including: student events; multi-national meal celebrating diversity; photo exhibition; family fun day and a community audit to help better understand the needs in our community. The Coffee Bar in Sligo continues to serve the community and provides many opportunities for witness. It is a real encouragement to have four new Local Preachers in training. This is especially important given the number of preaching appointments required each week and we thank God for his faithful provision and for the blessing they have already been to ministry on the Circuit. Sligo, Ballina and Manorhamilton have all benefited from retreat days to facilitate a vision for growth in health. Plans are also underway for a Circuit Weekend in Rossnowlagh which will be led by Rev. Phil Meadows. The Sligo congregation continues to collaborate with other local churches to provide a series of outreach and worship events during Holy Week this year under the title “Spring to Life”. In Carrick-on-Shannon the annual ‘No Limits’ youth camp at Lough Allen adventure Centre was again well attended as was The annual District Youth Weekend. It was a great success with some 80 people in attendance including team from Missionary Ventures in Florida who helped to run the programme.

**NORTH WEST DISTRICT**

**Clooney Hall:** The work of the Circuit and Mission continue with regular worship and meetings for Bible Study, prayer, MWI, men's fellowship, youth fellowship and youth clubs. The NWMM is actively seeking partnerships with other providers of care for the homeless to seek ways of reducing the demand for accommodation for the homeless and are hoping to employ an education officer to work in this area. They are also seeking ways to support the needy through a churches' food bank in the city. The Methodist church in Londonderry is at the forefront of a prayer initiative which is organising prayer evenings for the city to which all Christians are invited. These evenings are being run in a city centre hotel.

The churches of **Innishowen and Moville** seek to be a worshipping and witnessing community and this has led them to engage in various activities. For two days during Advent the entire hall was turned into a prayer room which was an opportunity for both the congregations and the local community to engage with the real meaning of Christmas. As a result many experienced the blessing of communion with God. The weekend ended with a special
service of prayer and reflection in an ecumenical act of worship. At the end of January the two churches also participated in the connexional Night and Day of prayer.

For the first time the week of prayer for Christian Unity was celebrated in Moville. Clergy from the Catholic, Church of Ireland, Methodist and Presbyterian all led a special ecumenical service which was well attended. Afterwards the Methodist Church hosted tea and everyone appreciated the opportunity to meet with other Christian sisters and brothers. The response from the community was very positive and it is hoped this will continue annually.

Other opportunities to offer hospitality to the community include teas for visitors to Moville especially during the regatta; for guests at a wedding; and for Global Vision. The Mothers and Toddlers group continues to meet, as does the Bible study and youth fellowship. It is really encouraging to see many of the young people use their musical gifts and help to lead worship, especially at the monthly all-age services. Some of the young people have also started a leadership training course. The circuit is currently working through the connexional request to discern their purpose and vision. They are seeking to identify gifts and strengths, as well as weaknesses, as they discern where God is at work in their midst.

Members of the Carlisle Road congregation have been greatly encouraged by the Inspire Training and this along with considering the Conference directive on our "reason for existence" challenged everyone to look more closely at themselves and to consider their response. Participation by the young people in monthly family services has also been very encouraging. The Men's Club welcomed the Moderator of the General Assembly, Rev Dr Rob Craig, while Planet Youth and Youth Fellowship all continue to be well supported. A walking group has recently been formed to encourage fellowship on an informal basis.

At Christmas the congregation staged a play entitled 'While Shepherd Watched.' It was very successful and the topic of conversation for weeks afterwards. The two big fund-raising efforts were catering for Lundy and the open day and Craft fair. Both were well supported with singing by the children from Nazareth House, Steelstown and Sacred Heart primary school choirs.

During the month of December Limavady Methodist Church met with other Churches in the town each Friday for short Advent reflections followed by a lunch supplied by the hosting Church. On Sunday 22nd December the Sunday school led the family service and their theme was "No room at the Inn." This was particularly impressive considering there are only 4 children in the Sunday School. Prayer and Bible study continues regularly and there was also a Celebration of Friendship evening for the Ladies.
Ballymoney church has been very involved in opening up the "Ballymoney Foodbank." This is a joint project between members of several churches in the town along with the Trussel Trust who run several hundred foodbanks in the UK. Already people have been referred to the food bank by the social services. Local churches, council and business have been very generous to this project. Volunteers are being sought that can be put through the Trussel Trust training course.

In Coleraine the "Passion for Life" project is arousing much interest. This is a town wide mission event involving 12 churches and 2 para church groups. Already a series of meetings have brought the churches together to pray for the town. It is truly amazing to see large numbers of people gathered together in prayer. A series of outreach events are coming up including Barry Sloan's bus spending a day in the centre of town. There will also be a week of Mission in April.

The Portrush congregation are looking forward to a new season of work with the "Surf Project", with quite a few dates in the diary so far. This project has a lot of support right across the circuit already. Portstewart are in the early stages of exploring with the other churches in the town how they can gain funding in order to make life better for all the people of the town.

The 24/7 Night and Day of Prayer in Dunkineely and Ardara was well attended by all ages in both churches. The youth and children's work continues to flourish and is reaching out to all in the Dunkineely community. 50 children from SW Donegal attended Soul Mates in Lurgan while there were also quite a few teens - from all church backgrounds - present at Autumn Soul and TeenStreet (Germany). Dunkineely Methodist continue to be a very positive influence in the local area in its social witness, peace building, and community development programmes. The Methodist-influenced Dunkineely Community Ltd is giving training and opportunities to the whole community while in Ardara the annual open air continues to be a witness in the area. The recent acceptance of three local preachers in training from the circuit is also very encouraging.

The Work of God in Donegal, Ballintra & Inver continues to be very encouraging. In addition to the normal Sunday services there are also Circuit Bible Study/Prayer Meetings, MWI, Mums and Tots and a thriving Boys Brigade. Both the Inver Tea Meeting and the Doorin Rock Open Air Service continue to be a valuable source of outreach in the area. The community use of church property allows further opportunities for witness and influence to the groups who meet there. These include Alcoholics Anonymous, Senior Citizen's Committee, Cubs and Speech & Drama group.

Increased fellowship right across the Castlederg Circuit is very encouraging and the bible Study continues to grow with a total of 28 people attending each week. The monthly services in Aghyaran are also ongoing. Youth work is
prospering with a total of 5 young people from across the Circuit currently undergoing a recognised training programme. The Circuit Hall is providing great opportunities and is used on a frequent basis. Volunteers are increasing in all aspects of circuit Work.

Youth work in Togherdoo continues to thrive with a healthy CE and Youth Club. The annual Holiday Bible Club attracts many youngsters from a wide area who fill the church during the first week of summer. The church remains a strong witness in the locality and many members have involved themselves in the outreach programme 'Christian Vision for Men'. Drumquin Flower Festival attracted large numbers of people from all over the Province who came to enjoy the exotic displays under the theme 'Serve the Lord with Gladness'. Weekly worship continues enthusiastically in the church. Fintona celebrated 150 years of witness in November when a month of celebration saw the church well filled on a number of occasions with both visitors and folk from the local community being present. Relationships with other denominations remain incredibly good and many joint ventures take place including interdenominational Lent services, organised by the Methodist church, in Fintona town.

Omagh and Mayne enjoy good attendance at Sunday worship and a recently opened monthly Coffee Bar in Omagh attracts large numbers of people of all ages, many of which are foreign nationals. Omagh also enjoys good relations with the other church in the town with many joint events taking place, especially in the run up to Easter. With large renovation projects in the pipeline both churches are very enthusiastic about the future.

NORTH EAST DISTRICT

Ballyclare Circuit
- Doagh are celebrating 170th anniversary year in 2014. A wide range of events are planned for the year. Former ministers and Lay Evangelists will be speaking at Invitational midweek meetings each month. We had a very successful "Johnny Cash Experience" night with Country and Western supper in February. A Bible week is planned in November to round off the year, and many spiritual and fellowship building fun events are planned.

- We have the encouragement of 2 candidates for ministry this year. One for the non-stipendary ministry of the church, the other as a Local Preacher in preparation for candidating when LP training is completed.

- A 24/7 Prayer Event has been held 24 Feb - 1 March. In conjunction with the other churches in Ballyclare and surrounding area, a shop in Main St Ballyclare was rented and turned into a drop-in prayer space. Much blessing was the result of this event and further joint events are in the pipeline by the churches.
A Family and Children’s Worker is planned for the circuit. We hope this appointment will be in place by Summer 2014.

Newtownabbey Mission
The outreach to young people continues to grow within the life of the Mission. On Friday evening there are upwards of 108 young people who attend the Youth Club. The Mission is grateful for the 24 dedicated leaders who make this outreach possible each week. The junior and senior Youth fellowship has 26 members who attend regularly. The GB and BB companies are strong, as is the Mother and Toddler Group.

A unique pilot project entitled ‘Sharing the Care’ was launched with help from the Department for Social Development and supported by the Rathcoole Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership.

The project was devised and delivered by Miss Mary Henderson Pastoral Assistant and Project Co-ordinator. The Project has involved 20 ‘Sharing the Care/The Caring Journey’ Workshops with Certification on completion all of which were designed and delivered by Mary.

A group of 28 carers were involved in 8 Musical Workshops for Mental Health. The songs and poetry on the CD reflect the voice of carers and those who support them.

The Mission had a weekend of prayer and fasting seeking God’s blessing for all the work that happens each week in the area.

Glengormley
We recently ran a course entitled "Lost for Words" which focused our attention on mission and outreach. This assisted to prepare us for a Mission entitled "Re-Rou+e" which we conducted from 1-9th March 2014. We had a visiting team led by Roger Murphy. The team included Paul Woodman skilled at escapology. The programme of events was designed to attract various ages and to be fun. At each event the Gospel message was presented and a call to respond made. Events include: Barn Dance, Daughter and mums pamper night, Family Pancake Party, Friends and Neighbours lunch, Table Quiz, Childrens event, Youth event, "Puttin` on the Ritz" for ladies, and an all age "Men`s Nite". There was also various worship activities including "Cafe Church" cabaret style on Sunday night. The team also conducted classes in the High School, and assemblies in a number of local Primary Schools.

We are currently advertising for an assistant minister (Lay) to develop the work among those aged 20-40. We are grateful to have many families and know they need more attention and input.

Greencastle
We plan to have our first Messy Church (joint C of I, Presbyterian and us) in White City Community Centre on Palm Sunday from 3-5pm.
We have planned a series of All Age Worship Services to try to encourage the families connected to our Sunday School and GB and Bowling Club to come to church. The first one was a Christingle Service and was well attended. The next one will be on Palm Sunday (morning worship).

We are looking at the "Way Forward" for Greencastle and Alan Wardlow has facilitated one meeting with Church Council and will facilitate another one in April. This will then be followed by a meeting open to the whole congregation.

We are looking at the possibility of becoming a satellite church for the North Belfast Food Bank.

To encourage the church family to a deeper walk with God we are looking at the possibility of more Bible Study/Prayer Groups/House Groups and to encourage greater fellowship, particularly amongst the men we plan to have a monthly men's 'outing' (eg bowls, crazy golf, cinema) followed by a meal.

We are looking at ways to 'develop' the evening service.

**Whiteabbey**

Much of our outreach work is done through Whiteabbey Churches Together. We have a dedicated team of people who work with teams from Whiteabbey Presbyterian and St Patrick's Church of Ireland, to reach out to people in the area. Our Storehouse project is now a joint project of the three churches and is going from strength to strength.

Joint outreach events are planned for Easter and Pentecost.

A 24/7 prayer event was held at the end of January. Also the church is open all day on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday with daily prayers at 10, 12 and 3 o'clock. We want our church to be a House of prayer!

A Torch Fellowship group for the blind has started meeting in our church and we are delighted to have them with us.

A.A. meets in our halls 4 nights a week and we count ourselves privileged to have them.

**Mossley and Hydepark**

Mossley continues to work on the development of 'bands.' This involves groups of three people meeting together for bible study, contemplation and silence. The idea is that after a certain period of time the three divide and go and form their own band of three, and in this way, the fellowship of the church is deepened, as is the spiritual life of those who take part.

The youth work continues to blossom under the leadership of our youth worker, Simon Gowdy.

Hydepark continues to survive in very difficult circumstances. It may be the smallest church on the District but has loyal, faithful, committed members who should be commended for their tenacity in keeping the church going!
Carrickfergus
We believe that faithful witness and good work goes on in all the weekly routine work -

- Public Worship
- Adult Fellowship Groups and Activities
- Children’s and Youth Ministry
- Pastoral Care
- The Friendship Centre

The Junior and Senior Impact Youth Clubs with approximately 150+ members on the lists (many of them from non-church families) continues to do good work each Friday evening.

We take the opportunity to mention a few special events-

- The Holiday Bible Club last August went very well with an average of 65/70 children attending each evening.
- In September 2013 a Community Information and Fun Day saw the church make connections with hundreds from the local community.
- A Lay Witness week-end in November 2013 brought blessing, encouragement and refreshment.
- On the evening of Carrick’s Christmas Lights Switch hundreds were served Tea, Coffee and Friendship from our church restaurant.
- A Community Information Evening on knife crime is being planned for an evening in March.
- Carrick Methodist Church will host the town’s joint Holy Week Services with guest preachers – Bishop Ken Clarke and Pastor Fred McClaughlin.

Greenisland
We hosted the Big Bus from Germany for a day in February of coffeehouse-style outreach to people of all ages in Greenisland community.

We also hosted the Tom Team in October for a weekend of outreach to children and youth in community.

3 regular long-term church attenders were received into full membership in January.

We supported local and global mission by making practical donations to Container Ministry for Belize, the Christmas toy appeal for Newtownabbey Methodist Mission, and Christmas food hamper for Christians Against Poverty

Greenisland become more intentional as a church in growing in passionate spirituality by developing our prayer life; new prayer group formed in January.

Whitehead/Islandmagee
In Whitehead, new families joining and the enthusiastic focus on plans for the building of an extension to our Balmoral Avenue property are keeping us active - it is envisaged that the extension will allow greater hands-on
involvement in the life of Whitehead society, and expand the work opportunities of the congregation. The Sunday School has been invigorated by new leaders keen to work with our children on a rota basis, and the congregation takes every opportunity to engage with the community around us.

In Islandmagee the small congregation is looking at new ways of being church in a rural part of Ulster. We host regular community events such as the Cancer Research Stew day, and the Big Breakfast. Recently the Bible study group has embarked on the Community Bible Experience with our neighbours on the Island.

**Antrim**

Our new L.O.G.I.C group has been effective in subsidising community fun day, Healthy Eating Courses, First Aid, Cooking classes and now preparing to run computer classes for the community. This group also has linked in with Police, Social services, Woman’s Aid, Counselling services and other agencies, to provide much needed help through our food bank and many practical ways supporting the vulnerable.

We will continue to build on this work making the gospel meaningful through our caring. Our other work in Sunday school among young people is challenging as is all our work to connect with members of the church on the fringes. We hope through our plans to prayerfully seek God’s guidance as we consider the reasons for our existence. That we will be a church under God that is not only relevant but moving forward directed by God’s Holy Spirit.

**Larne Circuit**

The launch of the “Dare to Hope” in Oct 2013, commissioned by 5 local clergy, has drawn favourable support from across the community and has lead on to some work with the Irish Churches Peace Project. This work will include an audit / mapping of the Borough in the hope of establishing what services are currently being offered by a wide variety of groups across the community. This is being done in the hope that links can be established between groups doing similar work in different areas and also to establish what resources (Buildings) the churches may offer for community use.

Larne Foodbank has now been in operation for just under a year; in that time it has provided food for over 700 people. While the Foodbank is to be seen as a blessing to the community, it has had a spin off for the volunteers and churches involved, in that the level of fellowship and connections between them has developed and grown.

The Youth of Carnlough Connect Club is developing well. The club now meets in two sections, Junior and Senior, with a steady membership of 25-30 juniors and 10 – 15 seniors. To advance this work an over-night trip is planned, for the seniors, and a Holiday Bible Club is being scheduled for August.
Cullybackey
All the organisations in the church continue to develop well.

Over the last couple of years a puppet ministry has developed which is now having more opportunity to share in our worship services. The children as well as many adults thoroughly enjoy this and it gives many people young and old an opportunity to use their gifts.

Our Mother and Toddlers group is growing in strength every year and is a wonderful point of contact with many families in our community.

The work of our GB, BB and youth club remain strong. They are well supplied with leaders from our church, who have a desire to see young lives, many of whom who have no other church connection, won and shaped by the gospel.

We have recently started a discipleship explored course, with a group of 8 people varying in age from 16 to about 60. They are greatly benefiting from this and are growing in their relationship and walk with Jesus Christ through it.

Our outreach team continues to do their regular rubbish pick up around the village and they also offer a prayer ministry around all the homes in the village. They seek to develop their work and engage more of our congregation in it.

We have started a monthly lunch club this year in which many people in the village have found great fellowship and friendship. There is also a monthly knitting club in which some of our ladies come together to knit clothes for babies in 3rd world countries.

We have 5 or 6 small prayer groups who find great comfort and growth in their faith in sharing and praying together. They are seeking to grow this prayer movement in our church.

Ballymena
The focus in Ballymena has continued to be on "we are family" this year - through working groups / teaching/worship we have attempted to address aspects of family life in the context of church family. In concrete terms this has meant -

- Facilitating a prison family support group
- A developing relationship with the women's aid refuge in the town
- A inter faith clergy project which has brought 4 churches together on a number of events - a flash mob (70) folk singing carols in the tower centre & sharing a number of big breakfasts where we have explored our respective heritages
- We will also be sending 4 folk as part of a team of 14 from across the town to build in Ethiopia with Habitat for Humanity. Again this is a cross community project.
- We have also been actively involved in an embrace cafe in the town.
BELFAST DISTRICT

There is a very evident increase throughout the district in efforts to pray together and for the community. Churches have special services for prayer and healing, drop-in for prayer in the week, or phone and e-mail chains through the year. Many circuits are looking with great focus at the way they can work together to share in ministry and prayer together. Church leaders and ministers are praying for what might be the shape of the future and are gaining great hope for mission in their local area. Our city missions, chaplains, and many other church workers express care in a broad range of places.

Outreach and caring ministry
Sydenham saw the whole community working together with the threat of floods! Chaplains continue to exercise helpful ministries in education, healthcare & prisons. Finaghy's new youth club for boys has started. It is called “Impact” and seeks to reach out to boys in the Finaghy area. Storehouse ministry is supported by Sydenham, Knock, Braniel, and Belfast South. Belfast South had their Annual “Living with Loss” Service and have a Bereavement Group in partnership with Windsor Presbyterian. Mountpottinger are screening their Sunday Services over the internet every week to those who cannot be at church and also creating DVDs of these services for distribution. Knockbreda's prayer life and Bible studies like their sister churches are well attended and a great source of encouragement..... the house Bible Study groups and Wednesday Morning and which for Lent is changing to 'Experiencing Easter'. The employing of a Family Worker has been exciting and rewarding enabling extra pastoral visiting which is so appreciated, with fresh ideas inspiring and blessing the congregation, such as 'Messy Church' starting on the last Friday in March and continuing each month. Further new initiatives are Youth Alpha, senior's cinema, second Sundays'....a family service led by the worker and the young people, and a change to our Sunday Evenings from traditional style service to an evening of Reflection & Prayer with supper which has encouraged many more to come, and looking ahead, a Summer holiday club. Sandy Row commissions this spring a Community Outreach Worker focused on children’s work, the drop-in prayer, and new connections in the community. There is new work with Mothers and Toddlers in Cregagh. Along with ongoing children’s and youth work, Braniel have commenced a monthly youth club. Donegal Road Methodist offers help distributing food baskets in the local community.

Vision and Leadership
Jennymount continues to be encouraged as we witness the love and mercy of God in Lower North Belfast. The Church Council launched its 20/20ForwardTogether vision strategy for the next 5 years at a special Service in September 2013. This strategy has three strands: Church Family
(worshipping community) – Extended Family (family connections through the variety of activities provided) – Wider Community (initiatives to welcoming the stranger).

Jennymount Church Council and Cavehill Church Council have concluded in a decision by both Circuit Executives to form one Circuit. Several churches are seeking training or planning for the future like Finaghy using the Natural Church Development Survey. Joanmount engages with their community through Christians Against Poverty and Irish and Churches Project. Belfast Central Mission have launched their new flagship project for their 125th anniversary in the plan of building Copelands Dementia Care home in Millisle, with a new approach to dementia care…. and thus the Grosvenor Hall congregation are enthused to fundraise toward its chapel/quiet room. Both Woodvale and Shankill churches continue to seek God’s vision for the local community. There has been some good progress in how they work together and they have joint Bible Studies, evening services and shared Community Mission projects. Together they have partnered with Tear Fund in using their Discovery Programme to help them to continue to explore our mission in the community.

Prayer
Coffee Kindness is at Sydenham train station. Relationships with commuters have developed, prayer requests have been received, and most recently we have begun to use this as a means for listening to the needs of the community. An increase in anti-social activity led them to be involved in 3 prayer events for East Belfast with 700 people attending the first event. They prayed for God’s blessing on the area. Mountpottinger continues a ministry of the past five years in a Friday church opening. This has been a very blessed time, with an immense debt owed to the team of volunteers who devote time week by week to be there for people at their point of need: those who want prayer, those who want to be cared for and loved, and the curious who want to see the historic building or who have family connections with the church. Drop-in prayer and a Lay Pastoral Team are being developed in Finaghy.

Growing Disciples
Many churches report feeling encouraged about new Bible studies like Biblica in Knock. Knock reports several special services like Back to church Sunday and evening services under the leadership of their young people and choir. Youth work remains very strong in the Shankill Church while Woodvale has a different emphasis on community engagement through our drop in café, Little Steps and WAGS. It is a joy to report that the Worship and prayer life of the Ballynahfeigh circuit is so rich and healthy, each fellowship trying to discern God’s will, seeking to win souls for the Kingdom while serving the risen Saviour with thankful hearts. Ballynafeigh has been encouraged with their new Bible Studies, as with the presence of some younger families at worship and Sunday School and a small increase in children attending Youth clubs, Alpha
and Guides. The engaging of a part time lay pastoral assistant has been received warmly. After much prayer and organization the Cairnshill congregation felt very blessed by their recent Lay Witness Weekend. Cregagh and Braniel have appreciated the encouragement of Inspire events and hope to set up bands.

**DOWN DISTRICT**

God is at work in the small things of life: God's Spirit is the oil that enables relationships to gracefully be restored after an argument, the fire that empowers resistance to an individual's addiction, the wind that nudges a person to share a story that impacts the listener in beautiful ways that could never have been imagined. God is in the smile, the gift, the word of appreciation, the warm embrace.

But God is also at work as we worship, serve and share together as God's people. Following are some short sketches from around the Down District of God's people growing in holiness, engaging in compassionate social action, being moved to bold evangelism...

In Lisburn, Damask provides many opportunities for the church to engage with the marginalised, particularly through advice and befriending. The Damask youth programme is helping to draw together young people from different social backgrounds.

Priesthill's CE group shows a growing hunger for God, leading an encouraging Sunday morning service recently and with plans for some members to go to Germany for a CE camp in the Summer.

Dromore's youth work has progressed, drawing together church and non-church participants for the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, a Youth Forum for the town, and young people's training in conjunction with the Education and Library Board.

God has been at work in the growing Life Groups connected to Ballynahinch, with deepening relationships and a desire to know more of God. The formation of a Prayer Ministry Team has brought God's encouragement and peace to people participating in Sunday evening services, and the monthly Messy Church gathering is helping church folks connect with families from the community.

In Newtownards, the Regent Street society conducted a Natural Church Development survey, identifying Holistic Small Groups as the most urgent area of need. The Just 10 course was selected and over the winter three groups met, gathering approximately 75 women, men and young people. There was no tailing off in numbers, and everyone seemed to benefit from the
sharing and prayer around tables. In the future they hope to move out of the church premises to launch Share and Prayer groups in homes.

In planning for a renovated kitchen the Newcastle society have been looking for ways that this could be a blessing to the community. It is hoped that the property will be used as a distribution point for a new foodbank for the area. The church members hope to use the new kitchen to offer tea/coffee (eventually soup, etc.) for those folk having need of the food bank, giving real contact with those in the community who are in need.

The Bangor and Holywood Circuit are exploring their future, excited that there is a real passion and desire to be a community that is mission-centred. Where God takes them is yet to be revealed, but they are united in seeking his will.

Carnalea home groups have been using the 'Inspire' materials, which have challenged them regarding the superficiality of their discipleship and enabling many to go deeper with God. This has resulted in fellowship that has more accountability and spiritual support.

Queen's Parade started a new CE in October and have seen 13 children come along regularly, many of whom have little or no real church involvement or experience. Some of them weren't even sure what the Bible was but are really excited to attend and not to miss Monday nights.

Ballyholme is responding well to the opportunity for united Bible Study, sharing with Queen's Parade in the morning and hosting one in the evening. It has been encouraging to see a good number of people engaging with God's word and wrestling with its application to their own lives.

There are also stories to be told of prayer initiatives in Portaferry, church coffee mornings being held outdoors on the high street in Comber; The Kitchen missional community in Newcastle; an Alpha course in a local Italian restaurant; a fresh approach to youth work at Holywood; vibrancy and growth at Trinity; local Methodists planning trips to Kenya, Calcutta and Everest; committed youth leaders in Broomhedge, retired ministers discipling teenagers over a coffee; a shift towards a missional culture at Moviila Abbey and the setting up of missional community groups; people answering God's call from auditioning for worship bands to lay pastor posts to name a few!

PORTADOWN DISTRICT

Glenavy/Moira Circuit
We continue to progress as a circuit. Recently we had a celebration service in Glenavy when our new church hall facility was finally debt free. Maghaberry finally became the first “Covenant Church" on our Portadown District. After two years of careful discussion and gracious negotiation we finally became a single united fellowship with a common vision to reach the unchurched for
Christ. Already we are seeing people coming to Christ. Craigmore is a bustling fellowship with enormous potential. We have just finalised a new model of Church management which introduces the principles of Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Evangelism and Communication as the 6 principles upon which we desire to build our ministries as we move into the future. Moira is looking to the future and is considering the possibility of a new building on the site. The old manse is already demolished and it is hoped that a new Church Development process may begin in earnest.

**Dungannon Circuit**
The Dungannon Circuit is feeling a touch of God's hand of blessing. Youth and children's work is going very well and numbers attending the Junior CE that meets at Laghey have risen significantly this year. Several new folk and families have recently joined both the Dungannon and Laghey congregations. A generous response to a special gift appeal is enabling the Dungannon church to move on towards the completion of a significant programme of property repairs and renovations. A new evening circuit Praise Service is being commenced.

**Tandragee**
Tandragee has started an outreach called Happy Days. Happy Days is a baby and toddler group which is held fortnightly and is run by church members. It is open for all the community. The hall is filled with mums, dads, grandparents and toddlers (there are up to 40 children).

**Thomas Street**
A Family night was held for the Chinese community to help them celebrate their New Year. During the month of February, 'Love Week' was held in the church when approximately 1200 were reached out to through a series of special events. A vacant shop has been acquired in Portadown and is being used to serve tea and coffee while offering prayer during the build up to Easter. A Quilt Festival celebrating 'New Life' will be held over Bank Holiday weekend (23-26 May).

**Battlehill, Epworth and Mahon**
A BBQ was held by Battlehill and an invitation was extended to the local community which resulted in 150 people turning up. Battlehill visited local homes before Christmas and offered a bag of coal or 2 bottles of juice as a gift from the church. Epworth held a community night at the bonfire to reach out to the community on the 11th July, while members of the church helped to prevent the throwing of missiles over a peace wall. Mahon continues to offer hospitality through a BBQ for non-attenders.

**Cookstown & South Derry Circuit**
The Cookstown & South Derry Circuit now consists of two churches - Magherafelt and Cookstown. Each Church has a Sunday morning service with a regular good attendance, and lay people share in the service each
week through Bible reading, prayers and leading praise. Magherafelt has recently commenced a monthly Fellowship evening, and we look forward with anticipation to how God will use this to encourage and build up His people in their faith. The Church Council are earnestly praying as to what other openings God may have for us to serve him in the Church and community.

**Armagh**
In Armagh we continue to prepare for 'A Passion for Life' with lead in events at the Marketplace Theatre with John Blanchard and at Armagh City Hotel with John Lennox. We had good attendances at our Holiday Bible Club and our weekly Youth Club in Killylea. We have started a Young at Heart and a Men's Fellowship in Armagh.

**Richhill**
Instead of trying to get more people into the church we are trying to get the church out to the people. We have run 3 events with this purpose in mind. 1) Alternative Halloween. This a community event which attracted over 500 people from the community, 2) Carols at the Castle: A community event based in the grounds of the castle. We sang traditional carols, drank hot chocolate and ate hot dogs. 3) The Giro d’Italia, the second biggest cycle race in the world, came through Richhill in May. We were present in our pink t-shirts, befriending, and offering free drinks and mini-pizzas.
Inter-Church Relations

The Connexional Inter-Church Relations Committee has met twice during this year. There has been a further meeting, held jointly with the Church Relations Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The Committee has received a number of reports

- on the World Methodist Council and the European Methodist Council (September 2013), each of which had been attended by the Secretary of Conference and the Convenor in differing capacities.

- on the World Council of Churches General Assembly at Busan, Korea, October / November, 2013, attended by Tina Barnett. The theme of the Assembly was ‘God of Life, lead us to Justice and Peace.’ The WCC welcomes the participation of young people as stewards at a variety of its meetings. Those interested in this experience should contact Tina Barnett.

- on ecumenical relations in the Pettigo and Irvinestown area of the Lakelands District, from the Revd Eleanor Heyden

Following related discussions, the Committee proposes to study the recent World Council of Churches statement on evangelism, Together Towards Life: mission and evangelism in changing landscapes. This statement appeared at much the same time as Evangeli Gaudium, Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World. This coincidence was not lost on the Committee.

The joint meeting with the Church Relations Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland was convened to discuss matters of mutual interest, including the various alternating ministries schemes and implications of the Covenant between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland. The Convenor has been appointed interim Vice Chair of the World Methodist Council, following the untimely death of the serving Vice Chair, Bishop Sarah Davis.

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the Report
2. The Conference appoints the following as our Representatives:
   (a) Churches Together in Britain and Ireland – Senior Representatives
       Meeting: Revd Donald P. Ker
   (b) Irish Council of Churches: To be confirmed:
   (c) Irish Inter-Church Committee: Revds Donald P. Ker, Dr Heather Morris and Dr John Stephens, Mr Doug Edmondson, Ms Gillian Kingston
The Covenant Council

The Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland

MEMBERSHIP
Church of Ireland
The Most Rev Dr Richard Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh (Co-Chair)
Ms Elva Byrne
Very Rev Nigel Dunne
Rev Dr Maurice Elliott
Rev Barry Forde (Secretary)
Rev Canon Ginnie Kennerley
Rev Dr Peter Thompson
Vacant

Methodist
Rev Winston Graham (Co-Chair)
Rev Donald Ker
Rev Andrew Dougherty
Rev Janet Unsworth
Rev Louise Donald
Ms Gillian Kingston
Dr Fergus O’Ferrall
Mr Nigel Beattie

Interchangeability of Ministry
The primary focus of the Covenant Council has been on the proposals on Interchangeability of Ministry. The Bill before General Synod in 2014 builds on the Agreed Principles presented to, and received by, the General Synod in 2010 and 2011. It is the considered opinion of the Covenant Council that the Bill is a reflection of the mind of Synod to take a significant step forward in realising the aspirations of the 2002 Covenant between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland. If passed, it will open up new doors of ecumenical opportunity for both traditions as we seek to carry out the mission of God in Ireland. It is the hope of the Covenant Council that General Synod continues to affirm the journey we have been on together, and provides for the interchangeability of ordained ministries between our two denominations. The Covenant Council is aware that, if the Bill on interchangeability is passed, it will help pave the way for further development and consideration of how lay ministries might work together, recognising the potential role that the Covenant may play in the Church of Ireland Commission on Ministry and Pioneer Ministry.

Local Covenant Partnerships and Projects
The Covenant Council is delighted to see links continue to grow between the
There are a number of partnerships and projects that continue to grow. In January 2014, the Church on the Hill in Maghaberry took a significant step forward in a service of celebration to mark the signing of a Local Covenant Partnership, signed by the Rt Rev Harold Miller, Bishop of Down and Dromore and Rev Kenneth Robinson, District Superintendent for the Portadown District. The Church of the Good Shepherd and Primacy in Bangor continue to further the work of the Covenant, whilst the Covenant at Queen’s University, Belfast continues to be further consolidated. During Holy Week 2013 a team from QUB Chaplaincy participated in a week of outreach by the Church of Ireland parish and the Methodist church in the town of Strabane, and in 2014 a similar week of outreach took place in the Joint Project at Glencairn, in North Belfast. The Covenant Council continues to encourage all dioceses and parishes to look for opportunities in which the Covenant might be of assistance for ministry and mission.

Membership
The Covenant Council is thankful for the role of Rev Denis Campbell who acted as Presbyterian Observer on Council for a number of years and looks forward to his successor being appointed by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in due course. Covenant Council also wishes to propose Mr Harold Giboney as a Church of Ireland successor to the role vacated by Mr Cyril McElhinney.

Website
The Covenant Council website, www.covenantcouncil.com has been revised, with a forum page for Covenant Facilitators and worship resources and Covenant Council booklets available for download.

Covenant Celebration
The Covenant Council is conscious that the month of September is a very busy month in the life of many parishes. Covenant Council has previously encouraged congregations to celebrate the Covenant relationship with neighbouring Methodist congregations on or around September 26 each year. Following deliberation Covenant Council agreed that an alternative date in the year might prove more accessible for many congregations. It was agreed that the 24th May, John Wesley Day in the Church of England, is a suitable date...
and Covenant Council encourages all churches to consider celebrating the Covenant on or around this date.

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the report.

2. The Conference re-appoints its members to the Council: Revds Winston Graham (Co-Chair), Donald Ker, Andrew Dougherty, Janet Unsworth, Louise Donald, Ms Gillian Kingston, Dr Fergus O'Ferrall, Mr Nigel Beattie
William Dennis Davison Cooke, B.A., B.D., M.Th., Ph.D., who was born in Grenada, West Indies, on 3rd December 1938. He was the youngest of three sons of missionary parents, the Rev. Henry and Mrs Jean Cooke. On his family’s return to Ireland in 1945 he continued his education at Methodist College and then at Queen’s University where he obtained his B.A. in 1960 and was accepted as a candidate for the ministry. His first clear sense of God’s forgiving love came at a service his father led at Clones when he was aged nine. It crystallised in his sense of call to ministry and to the belief that the mission of Jesus is inextricably bound up with the unity of His Church. On his first pre-Collegiate appointment in Castlederg he crossed the street to invite Fr. Edward Daly to his home for coffee and conversation which in pre-Vatican II days was unusual and controversial. After a further year in Enniskillen he was sent to Edgehill in 1962 where he spent three years followed by a year at Lexington Theological Seminary, Kentucky, gaining his B.D. and M.Th. In 1966 he was appointed to Glenburn and while there he met his future wife, Joan Edwards. They were married in 1968. Their first married appointment was Portstewart where he was instrumental in founding an inter-church group to provide holidays for Catholic and Protestant children from deprived areas of Belfast. Inspired by the ideals of Corrymeela he was among the founder members of the Glencree Centre for Reconciliation in County Wicklow during his next appointment at Dublin Centenary circuit. In 1975 he had leave to study for two years during which he undertook work for his Ph.D., which he completed on his return to pastoral work at Woodvale, Belfast. In 1980 he was appointed Senior Tutor at Edgehill College and Principal in 1984. For the next twenty years the College’s work expanded greatly. The goal of the College of becoming a centre for lay as well as ministerial students came to fruition. His vision for bridge-building became a reality through the appointment of a Reconciliation Officer, based in the College. He also co-founded with Mater Dei Institute a programme of studies in theology for Catholics and Protestants called ‘Exploring Theology Together’. It was essentially through his prompting that the major extension and refurbishment of the College was completed in 2003. He was a leader, teacher, and friend to staff and students of the Edgehill community and was consistently supported by his wife, Joan. He served the Church on the Board of Examiners, Faith and Order Committee, Tripartite Consultation, as Trustee, and as a Governor of Methodist College. Soon after his retirement in 2004 he completed his second major biography. Not long afterwards he was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease which he and his family faced with courage and dignity. His last sermon in July 2011 based on the Book of Job was a testament of faith. He was lovingly supported throughout by his wife and children, Jacqueline, Stephen and Peter. He died in the Ulster Hospital on 13th March 2014 in the seventy-sixth year of his age and the fifty-first year of his ministry. His body was cremated at Roselawn Cemetery.
Armour George McFarland, who was born near Omagh on 13\textsuperscript{th} June 1935, one of eight children of Charles George and Mary Jane McFarland (nee Hassan). His home church was Mountjoy Presbyterian Church. He began his working life on the family farm. At the age of 21 he gave his life to Jesus Christ at a mission led by George McAnirn, with whom he then travelled as an assistant. Following studies at Emmanuel Bible College in Birkenhead he was accepted as a missionary to Argentina where, in 1965, he was ordained by the Church of the Nazarene. In the course of his mission work he was instrumental in the conversion of Loida Baez who subsequently became his wife and very ably supported his ministry with a passion for Christ which continues to fire their family, Mary, Charles and Armour.

In 1987 he returned to Ireland serving as a circuit evangelist on the Omagh and Fintona Circuit before transferring to the ministry of the Methodist Church in Ireland in 1990. He was stationed on the Enniskillen, Carlow/Kilkenny and Fivemiletown circuits. He was a clear and attractive preacher with a wonderful sense of humour. He was also a gifted linguist with a passion for the gospel, bringing a simple message of God’s love and forgiveness, encouraging many to hand over their lives to Jesus. George embodied God’s love and compassion for everyone through his rich pastoral ministry. On retirement he and Loida resided in Spain for some years before returning to Carlow. Almost immediately he was diagnosed with cancer of the oesophagus, an illness he fought bravely. His last words were: “if the Lord heals me, you will see His glory … if the Lord doesn’t heal me, I will see His glory.” He died in St James Hospital in Dublin on Easter Sunday, 20\textsuperscript{th} April 2014 in the 79\textsuperscript{th} year of his age and the 24\textsuperscript{th} year of his Methodist ministry. His body was buried in the cemetery adjoining Mountjoy Presbyterian Church in Omagh.
Church Development Board

The Church Development Board continues to support and encourage the work undertaken by our Home Mission Department, Property Board, Pioneer Mission Committee, and Prison and Healthcare Chaplaincy Committee. The Board seeks not only to be reactive in response to proposals for new developments and redevelopments throughout our connexion but also to be proactive, seeking new opportunities for mission and outreach.

Therefore during this year the Executive committee of the Board has given further consideration to the process of granting ‘Church Development Status’ to a circuit seeking to undertake a major development project. The committee wishes to endorse this process and to encourage circuits to make early contact with the Board, outlining their needs and aspirations. The granting of ‘Church Development Status’ affirms to all the stakeholders the support and encouragement of the whole connexion and assures the circuit that all available resources in the form of advice, guidance and financial support will be allocated to the circuit.

This year the Board has been delighted to support the opening of the new Methodist Centre for the Blanchardstown Society, the establishment of the pioneer ‘Well.com’ project in north Belfast, and the progress of our new society in Millstreet, Co. Cork, as well as many other projects large and small, too numerous to list here.

PIONEER MISSION COMMITTEE
The committee continues to provide oversight on behalf of the Church Development Board for new ventures in mission throughout Ireland. Ongoing support is currently given to three such ventures; Mark Forsyth in Dunboyne; Alan Lorimer in Well.com and Jonathan Griffin in the Surf Project.

Dates of Board Meetings: 7th October 2014 (Belfast) and 13th April (Dublin)

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the report of the Church Development Board.
HOME MISSION DEPARTMENT

The Home Mission Department (HMD) seeks to encourage the development of worship, witness and leadership throughout the Connexion. The Home Mission Fund provides essential financial assistance to Circuits which are unable to support the ministers appointed to them. The Mission Ireland Fund supports approved mission ventures.

JOURNEYING ON…

1. The Conference of 2012 passed a resolution requiring that all churches would present the reasons for their existence to the Conference 2014. This resolution was precipitated by two factors. A) Several groups assigned work by the Conference were expressing the desire that more effective means of sharing in mission and ministry might be developed across the Connexion. These working groups included: the training of ministers and lay people; the need to set priorities in stationing of ministers; the emergence of Pioneer mission; the worrying financial pressures on the whole Church; the search by local Societies for church growth. B) The overwhelming yearning of young adults to participate in God’s mission through the Methodist Church and the strong commitment to prayer which has influenced the life of the Connexion since 2006.

2. The special business at Conference 2013 signposted themes for the future and these, together with the Faith and Order paper, “God’s Mission; Our Mission” has dovetailed with the call of 2012. Guidelines to assist Circuits, who wished for such help in developing their reasons, were issued in January.

3. The 24.7 Prayer team produced resources for Circuits to follow up the Covenant theme during the month of January. This was in support of the President’s call to make January a time of reflection on God’s Covenant with us.

4. In seeking to be “a people invited to follow” this year, we are indebted to the members of working groups who have invested much prayerful time in seeking to discern more clearly the Spirit’s leading for the Methodist part of God’s Church. It is hoped that the format and contributions of many people in Conference this year will give further impetus to exploring God’s mission together.

INSPIRE

5. Dr Phil Meadows was a keynote speaker at Conference 2013 who challenged us to re-discover the kind of disciples God has called Methodist people to be. In offering to help nurture us in the mould pioneered by the founders of Methodism, Phil and Sam Meadows have tirelessly given themselves to promoting a spirituality for mission
shaped disciples of Christ. “Schools” have taken place in Dublin, Belfast and Derry, running in December, January, March and May. Each of these has offered an afternoon of training for leaders and an evening Retreat for those exploring the establishment of a small band of people who will seek to grow in holiness, use prayerful disciplines and actively recognise God’s mission in the world.

6. During the year, over 200 people met in these sessions or in personal conversations through Inspire in Ireland. The Home Mission Fund will invest in arranging to repeat the introductory programme in 2014-15, hopefully outside the three centres mentioned. It is intended also that those involved this year should be enabled to move forward in their Inspire journeys as Phil and Sam extend the time they will spend in Ireland during the year. Methodists are strongly urged to visit the Inspire website and ministers will be notified well in advance of the fresh season of four sessions which will begin in the early Autumn. Visit www.inspiremovement.org where there is an Ireland section to the website.

CIRCUIT CHANGES

7. In 2010 the strong demand on Home Mission finances led to a moratorium being placed on new Mission Ireland grants. Loss of income from property rentals in Belfast has meant that Ordinary Grants, which help to support smaller Circuits have also been reduced for the last three years. This has exacerbated the vicious cycle which smaller and geographically scattered Circuits often find themselves in, as their attempts to sacrificially increase giving have resulted in an automatically increased Assessment.

8. The difficult, but we trust fruitful outcome for some Circuits, has been the taking of courageous steps to work more closely with others. In Dublin, Midlands and Southern, Lakelands and Belfast Districts, Circuits have entered discussions about new partnerships in ministry. It is with gratitude to the District Superintendents concerned and their Home Mission teams that we bring to this Conference requests to change some Circuit boundaries and acknowledge that in other places ministry and mission is being shared across lowered boundaries. The strength of being a Methodist family is demonstrated and we are discovering that God can use the fiscal stumbling blocks as spiritual stepping stones!

PRESENT FINANCIAL SITUATION

9. At Conference 2012 HMD reported a deficit of £221,000 for the year 2011. In 2012 that amount was almost halved. In 2013 there is no deficit, largely due to the fact that a manse sale has covered the cost of manse grants during the year.
10. It remains notable that the Circuits most indebted to Home Missions and facing the greatest challenges economically and in personnel, are by far the most generous when it comes to contributing to mission in Ireland.

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the Home Mission report.

2. The Conference expresses thanks:
   • to collectors, and members of JMA for their efforts for Mission Ireland. This year the Home Mission portion of JMA will contribute to the development of IMYC’s programmes for young people with learning difficulties. We appreciate the special donations and bequests made to the Department in 2013 which totalled just over £6,850
   • to members of congregations who have made contributions though Gift Aid and Income Tax Relief
   • to all those who voluntarily engage in and support mission projects around Ireland.
   • to Ken Galloway, who has given a most generous allocation of his time and professional expertise to advise on the finances of the Department and prepare accounts.

3. 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.

4. 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.

Home Mission Collections, Accounts and Applications for Grants

5. The Conference directs:
   • that all collections and subscriptions for the Fund shall, immediately on their receipt by the Circuit Treasurer or Superintendent, shall be forwarded to a Treasurer of the Fund.
   • that Sunday 16th November 2014 be observed as Home Mission Sunday and that as far as possible the Home Mission resources prepared for that Sunday be made known and available at least one week in advance.
   • that all Circuits arrange Home Mission services with speakers from another Circuit, and preferably from a different District.
   • that Circuit Accounts for Home Missions be closed by the 12th December, 2014 and that Schedules and remittances be forwarded to: The Treasurer, 71B, Brighton Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6.
• that all Applications for Ordinary and Mission Ireland Grants for the year 2015 be sent to the Secretary of the District Home Mission Committee not later than 1st September 2014.
• That applications follow the guidelines provided by the Department and accompanied by a full set of circuit accounts and a detailed budget of how any grant will be used.

6. The Conference directs that all permissions to expend on manses shall be sought through the Property Board which shall consult with the Home Mission Dept in processing all such applications. Home Missions shall continue to have responsibility for grants and receive income from lettings.

7. The Conference appoints Rev. Dr Heather Morris as General Secretary and Ministerial Treasurer of the Home Mission Department.

8. The Conference appoints Mr. Doug Edmondson as Lay Treasurer of the Home Mission Fund.

9. The Conference expresses its gratitude to Rev. Desmond Bain who has served as General Secretary and Ministerial Treasurer since 1998 and directs the following tribute to be printed in the Minutes of Conference.

Rev Desmond C Bain was appointed as General Secretary and Ministerial Treasurer of the Home Mission Department in 1998. Since then he has been hugely instrumental in initiating, encouraging and supporting mission throughout the whole island. Displaying enthusiasm and energy, he has offered leadership and support at Circuit, District and Connexional level. He has been inspirational, spiritually perceptive and his gentle manner has encouraged many congregations in the Methodist Church and beyond to seek his wisdom for a new direction for mission.

While in office, he has led the church through the Connexions process, invited societies to have Days of Discovery and make use of the Natural Church Development programme. He has built teams of others with necessary gifts to develop the 24-7 prayer movement within Methodism and encouraged participation in the Prayer Summits.

His sacrificial giving of time and gifts to many committees has brought clarity of thought to many discussions and his willingness to travel the length and breadth of the island has meant that he has been to many the face of MCI. The Conference places on record its deepest appreciation of the dedicated service of the Rev Desmond C Bain as General Secretary and Ministerial Treasurer of the Home Mission Department.

10. The Conference expresses its gratitude to Mr Tom Wilson who has served as Lay Treasurer since 2004 and directs the following tribute to be printed in the Minutes of Conference.
Mr Tom Wilson has completed ten years as Lay Treasurer of the Home Mission Fund. He has given willingly of himself far and beyond the normal demands of this role, including acting as Secretary to the Home Mission Forum and the Purpose and Leadership Group planning Conference programmes. He has been the Methodist representative to the Church of Ireland Council on Mission. His gifts of faith and insight contributed greatly to decision-making processes. His constant, prayerful encouragement to mission partners in Ireland and abroad has been deeply appreciated. Tom’s quiet diligence ensured that financial and administrative details were not overlooked during times of rapid mission expansion and as resources have decreased his wisdom has been invaluable. He has been a most supportive colleague and Conference places on record its immense gratitude to him.

11. The Conference directs that the Car Loan scheme for ministers and probationers be discontinued. In the event of extreme difficulty for Probationers leaving College, a case for assistance in the form of a loan, may be made to the Home Mission Fund, through the Ministerial Training Fund. Ministers moving from the Republic to Northern Ireland may also request assistance. In both cases, any loans made will be at the discretion of the Home Mission Finance Team appointed by the Church Development Board.

12. The Conference directs that the Church Development Board Executive audits the Home Mission Accounts.

RESOLUTIONS FROM THE DISTRICTS

13. The Conference receives the Dublin Korean Community Church as a Methodist Society on the Dublin District and directs that in redrawing Circuit boundaries, the District makes suitable arrangements for the Society to be incorporated in a Circuit with the Lesson Park Society.

14. The Conference approves the changes in Circuit boundaries on the Lakelands District in relation to the Longford Circuit which includes, Longford, Corlespratten and Tullyboy as well as the building in Ballyconnell and resolves that -

- the Longford Society joins the North Connacht Circuit;
- the enlarged Circuit be known as the North Connacht and Longford Circuit;
- the members of the Tullyboy Society join with the Corlespratten Society to form a new Society on the Upper Erne Circuit, with the Tullyboy church remaining as a “Preaching Place”;
- the Upper Erne Circuit also takes responsibility for the Ballyconnell church building.
15. The Conference approves that the Cavehill and Jennymount become one Circuit from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014 and be known as the Cavehill and Jennymount Circuit.

16. The Conference approves that for the Circuits named in 13 and 14 above, all their Circuit Accounts for 2014 will remain separate until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014.

17. The Conference directs the Mission Partnership Forum to review the purpose of and principles underlying the operation of the Alternating Ministry Scheme between the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in Ireland, and to bring proposals regarding the future of the Scheme to the Conference in 2015.

18. The Conference directs that the Minsters’ Relocation Allowance, for incidental expenses referred to in the Manual para 12.07 shall be €400 or £300, and administered through the General Purposes Fund. This is a charge on the General Assessment.

19. The Conference directs that grants from the Home Mission Fund to Circuits, for whatever reason, shall be exempt in the calculation of the General Assessment.

PROPERTY BOARD

The 2013/14 Connexional year was one in which noticeably fewer large schemes came before the Property Board. However the on-going work of maintaining and renovating our buildings has continued and the Plans Committee have been kept busy. The Board would once again commend all Circuits for their ongoing commitment to the upkeep of their property.

Circuits are reminded of the need to seek and gain approval for projects before work is undertaken. Whilst all initial applications for approvals should be made through the District Property Committees, it is advisable, where larger projects are being considered, that outline proposals/drawings etc., along with estimated costs should be forwarded to the Plans Committee of the Board at the earliest possible stage of the planning process.

Many Circuits have found guidance and advice from the Plans Committee at an early stage very helpful and even of financial benefit. The members of the Plans Committee are prepared to consider and comment on all proposals submitted to them. The Board places on record their appreciation of the expertise and time freely given in service to the Church, by many professional people right across the Connexion.
In future, when schemes are being submitted for approval, in addition to copies of audited accounts from the previous two years a statement of how the proposed work will impact upon the mission of the Circuit/Society will also be required.

There are guidance notes available, for Circuits/Societies seeking to undertake building or renovation works from the Methodist Church in Ireland website under the ‘Property Board’ section.

Manses:
Circuits are reminded that all applications relating to the purchase, sale or renovations/repairs to manses are now made through the Property Board. The Home Mission Department retains the responsibility for the administration of the grants for manse furnishings etc..

Landlord Registration Scheme:
Circuits with property in Northern Ireland should note that this scheme comes into force in April 2015. The Methodist Church in Ireland will be registered as a Landlord of all our property therefore it is vital that every Circuit provides a detailed record of all property which they rent, lease or licence.

The Joseph Rank Trust:
Each year representatives from the Joseph Rank Trust visit circuits across Ireland to assess schemes for which grant applications have been made. On behalf of all those Circuits the Property Board offers thanks to the Rank Trust for the ongoing support and encouragement which they provide to Circuits across the Connexion.

Summary of the District Property Returns at the 31st December 2013

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Churches</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Halls</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Manses</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Schools</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of other buildings</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of Insurance Cover</td>
<td>£ 210.45m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>€ 121.72m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of debt reported as at December 2012</td>
<td>£ 1,834,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>€ 80,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount spent on repairs /renovations/new buildings</td>
<td>£ 973,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>€ 2,066,032</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Amount of debt reported as at December 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>£</th>
<th>€</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,529,932</td>
<td>114,117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sale of Property:

Avoca Church
240 Newtownards Road, Belfast.
Grogey Church
15 Windmill Hill Portaferry.

Property Acquired:

NONE

Dates of next Board Meetings:
Thursday 25th September 2014 in Portadown and Thursday 26th March 2015 in Dublin.

AGENDA

1. The Conference adopts the report of the Property Board.

2. The Conference re-appoints Mr. Stewart Wilson, as the Lay Treasurer and Rev. Thomas Clarke as the Ministerial Treasurer of the Chapel and Church Development Funds.

3. The Conference directs that 15% of the income from the Property Board Loan Fund is allocated to the Chapel Fund and that 15% be allocated to the Church Development Fund.

4. The Conference reminds Circuits of their requirement to maintain, and establish where they do not already exist, Risk Assessment; Fire Risk Assessment; and Asbestos Registers for all their premises.

5. The Conference reminds Circuits of the need to establish and maintain records of the testing of all Electrical installations, Fire Alarm Systems and Emergency Lighting Installation. Records relating to the testing of Portable Electrical Appliances also need to be kept up to date.

6. The Conference directs that all Circuits complete “Appendix A” which is attached to the Property D form and returned to their District Property Secretary.

7. The Conference re-appoints the Secretary of the Methodist Church in Ireland as the Registrar of Deeds and Documents.

8. The Conference re-appoints Miss Elizabeth Curry, Secretary of the Visitation Commissions.
9. The Conference once again expresses its thanks to the Trustees of the Joseph Rank Benevolent Trust for their on-going generous financial support for the work of the Methodist Church in Ireland.
The Stipends and Allowances Board was established to co-ordinate the work of the Funds which make financial provision for ministers and their families. These include the Retirement Funds, Medical Fund and Children’s Fund.

In the period up until the onset of the recent economic recession, the Board had pursued a policy of delivering real growth in Stipends on an annual basis and after consideration of three key indicators:

- the movement in average earnings;
- inflation rates; and
- relative exchange rates.

In 2009, the Board suspended the policy of delivering increases in Stipends at rates above inflation in recognition of the need for financial prudence at a time of such economic uncertainty.

It was subsequently agreed at the Conference of 2010 that the growth in Stipends over the three years from 2011 to 2013 should not exceed the overall level of RPI plus 0.25% per annum.

The actual growth in Stipends subsequently agreed by Conference each year since 2010 has been well within this limit and below the overall rate of inflation. The underlying real movement in Stipends in recent years has therefore been negative.

We continue to be mindful of the ongoing economic crisis and its impact on the members of our congregations, the wider financial pressures on the Church and our obligation to provide an acceptable standard of living for our Ministers.

For the coming year, we are recommending an increase in Stipends which is once again below the current rate of inflation at the time of writing this report. Our proposal is therefore an increase of 1.5% in Northern Ireland and for no increase in the Republic of Ireland.

We remain very grateful for the continuing assistance of Mrs Dorothy Cranston and Mr David English, the two independent administrators who facilitate the operation of the Methodist Ministers Retirement Income Augmentation Fund.
Thanks to Rev Robin Waugh
The Conference expresses its sincere thanks to Rev Robin Waugh on his retirement as Secretary and Ministerial Treasurer of the Methodist Ministers' Children's Fund. He has exercised his duties in a warm and thoughtful manner and the Board greatly appreciates the caring approach that he has always demonstrated in the role.

Thanks to Mr Kevin Kingston
The Conference expresses its thanks to Mr. Kevin Kingston on his retirement as Chairman of the Stipends and Allowances Board having served since 2002. Mr Kingston has a wealth of business experience and expertise and this has been graciously and freely given for the benefit of the Connexion during a time of unprecedented economic recession. The Church is deeply indebted to him for his knowledge, wisdom and experience exercised in the Board’s affairs. Ministers and their families have reason to be grateful for the work undertaken and the personal interest shown by Mr. Kingston.
MINISTERIAL STIPENDS AND ALLOWANCES

1. **Minimum Stipends**

   Conference directs that commencing on 1\textsuperscript{st} January 2015, the following scale of **minimum** stipends be paid:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministers, including Probationers</th>
<th>Northern Ireland</th>
<th>Republic of Ireland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10 years travelling</td>
<td>£22,402</td>
<td>€33,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 20 years travelling</td>
<td>£23,212</td>
<td>€34,436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 30 years travelling</td>
<td>£24,112</td>
<td>€35,685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 years onwards</td>
<td>£25,000</td>
<td>€36,691</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Regulations for Ministers who will have travelled less than 40 years before normal retirement date**

Our present assumption is of a 40-year norm for service as a Methodist Minister, with four incremental bands for stipends. In respect of Ministers who, because of their age at the time of entry into the Ministry, will serve less than 40 years, assuming a normal retirement age of 65, a sliding scale will be superimposed on the incremental bands. This sliding scale works by grouping Ministers into six age categories based on their age when they entered the Ministry, namely: 25-29; 30-34; 35-39; 40-44; 45-49; and 50 plus years of age. The number of years that a Minister is paid at each incremental band reduces by one year for every five years of age over 25 and is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age on entering the Ministry</th>
<th>No. of years in each incremental band</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 – 29</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 34</td>
<td>9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 – 39</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 – 44</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 – 49</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 +</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To determine what incremental band a Minister is in at any given time, the total number of years to be served (i.e. 65 minus age on entering the Ministry) is worked out. The total number of years to be served is divided up into portions according to the number of years to be paid at each incremental band, counting back from the normal retirement date.
2. Allowances from July, 2014

Northern Ireland

(a) Taxable Car Allowance: £1000

(b) Circuit Mileage (including Non-Stipendiary Ministers)

**HM Revenue and Customs Rates**

- First 10000 business miles: 45.0p per mile
- Over 10000 business miles: 25.0p per mile

**Motor Cycle**

- All business miles: 24.0p per mile

**Bicycle**

- All business miles: 20.0p per mile

(c) Connexional travel

- All mileage: 25.0p per mile

(d) Local Non-Stipendiary Ministers

Local Non-Stipendiary Ministers receive circuit mileage as (b).

Taxable Car Allowance is not payable

(e) Retired Ministers – Allowances for Services of Worship

£37 minimum per service, plus travel at 33p per mile

(f) Light, Heat and Telephone (Landline, Mobile & Broadband) Subject to Guidelines**

Republic of Ireland

All rates are calculated in cents per kilometre

(a) Taxable Car Allowance €1500

(b) Circuit Mileage (including Non-Stipendiary Ministers)

**Mid Rate** Civil Service Motor rates from 5th March 2009

- Up to 6437km: 46.51 cent per km
- 6438km and over: 23.75 cent per km

**Motor Cycle**

- All business travel: 18 cent per km

**Bicycle**

- All business travel: 15 cent per km
(b) Connexional travel
All mileage 20.0 cent per km

(c) Retired Ministers – Allowances for Services of Worship
€48 minimum per service, plus travel at 26.72 cent per km

(c) Light, Heat and Telephone(Landline, Mobile & Broadband) **Subject to Guidelines

**Guidelines on Telephone Expenses
Guidelines on Telephone Expenses
Allocation of costs between business and personal expenses can be challenged by the Revenue Authorities and must therefore be justifiable on a case by case basis.

Dispensation has been granted by HMRC as follows:
Reimbursement of the cost of business calls made from a private home telephone or employee’s personal mobile phone, where justified by reference to the itemised bills.
The line rental remains the personal liability of the subscriber.

Specific points that may assist are:
Telephone Line Rental – 100% of the Line Rental is claimable as business if the contract is in the name of the Church.
  • The Minister can still be the name in the Telephone Directory
  • Line Rental should be paid by a Circuit Official
  • If Line Rental is in the name of the Minister then no rental cost can be claimed.

Reimbursement of the cost of business calls made from Church telephone or Minister’s personal mobile phone, where justified by reference to the itemised bills, shall be reimbursed and be paid by Circuit Officials.

Guidelines on Light and Heat Expenses
Guidelines on Light and Heat Expenses
Allocation of costs between business and personal expenses can be challenged by the Revenue Authorities and must therefore be justifiable on a case by case basis.

Dispensation has been granted by HMRC for payments as follows:
Manse expenses paid, with supporting documentation, in respect of heat and light, insurance, cleaning and maintenance costs etc, which have been proven to relate to church/business use.
As all Heat and Light expenses must relate to church/business use Ministers and Circuit Officials should review all such expenditure and agree the amount to be reimbursed. This should reflect heat and light costs incurred by the Minister only on church business.

Factors to be considered should include:

- Cost of light/heat of the Study/Office only not the Manse as a whole
- Cost of light/heat for rooms within the Manse used for church meetings

3. Vocational Lay Employees
   i. Scales
   The scales that the Stipend and Allowances Board set down are to be the minimum for the post. Two levels are to be established – for those with no qualifications and those who have qualifications for their post.

   Minimum Stipend/Salary from 1st January 2015

   Level 1 (unqualified) £19,363 €27,638
   Level 2 (qualified) £20,413 €29,829

   It is stressed that these are minimum payments and that churches are free to pay above the minimum if they so desire.

   ii. Trustees Department
   Circuits, Departments, etc. who employ Vocational Lay Workers who are paid through the Trustees Office are reminded that it is their responsibility to inform the Trustees when there is any change to the amount being paid to their employee.

   iii. Mileage Allowance
   Mileage should be paid either at the rate of 33p per mile in NI and 26.72 cents per km in ROI or at HM Revenue and Customs (Revenue Commissioners) rates, at discretion of Circuit.

   iv. Other Allowances
   Circuits may wish to take other allowances into account for their Vocational Lay Employee. Examples of those, which should be considered, include: Housing; Office Expenses; Telephone; Out of Pocket Expenses; Hospitality; Training Courses; Resources; etc.
It is important to consider how these extra expenses will be met, and how the employee will have access to them. The payment of expenses can sometimes create tension, although it should be easy enough to set up a straightforward system. Advice on these should be sought from the Lay Employment Advisory Group or Irish Methodist Youth and Children.

**AGENDA**

1. The Conference adopts the report.

2. The Conference directs that commencing on the 1\textsuperscript{st} January 2015 the scale of \textbf{minimum} stipends be as detailed in the report, and that the scale of allowances as set out in the report be paid with effect from 1\textsuperscript{st} July 2014.

3. The Conference appoints the Chairman, Mr. John Buchanan and the Lay Secretary, Mr. Wilson Stewart.

4. The Conference re-appoints the Rev. Andrew N. Boucher as Ministerial Secretary of the Stipends and Allowances Board.

5. The Conference re-appoints Rev. Mark S. Forsyth as Ministerial Treasurer and Secretary to Retirement Funds.
Retirement Funds

1. IRISH METHODIST MINISTERS RETIREMENT FUND
At 1st January 2014 there were 37 recipients of Church Allowances and a further 18 recipients with In Lieu of Serps Allowances only. There are 3 recipients of In Lieu of State Allowances.

The proposed increases in Allowances are 2.5% in Northern Ireland, and 1% in the Republic. Increases in the “In Lieu of Serps” and “In Lieu of State” benefits will be based on the actual increase rate for Serps and State pension benefits respectively.

**Proposed scale of Allowances as from 1st April 2014**
Retired Ministers: £5,738 in Northern Ireland and €7,411 in the Republic of Ireland.
Minister’s Widows: £5,174 in Northern Ireland and €6,702 in the Republic of Ireland.

The Fund shall contribute £8,500 to the Irish Methodist Ministers Housing Society for each additional house purchased for a Retired Minister or Minister's Widow.

The IMMRF pays an “In lieu of State” benefit for ministers and spouses to top up the state pension of those who do not qualify for a full state pension due to insufficient contributions. These payments increase in April each year, in line with the general increases in state pensions.

The IMMRF pays an “In lieu of Serps” benefit for ministers and spouses, where a minister was stationed in the Republic and lost out on benefits arising from Serps contributions.

The IMMRF pays a discretionary Supplementary Pension to those pensioners whose RBS pension has fallen below the IMMRF.

2. RETIREMENT BENEFITS SCHEME
In addition to the Trustees mentioned below who retired before the end of the Scheme Year 30th June 2013, there have been some additional resignations after that date, and the Scheme is actively seeking new Trustees. The existing Trustees and the Stipends & Allowances Board would like to convey their sincere thanks to those who are stepping down, some of whom have served for many years.
Trustees Report
The Trustees’ Report in respect of the Scheme year ended 30 June 2013.

SPONSORING EMPLOYER
The Methodist Church in Ireland, 1 Fountainville Avenue, Belfast BT9 6AN

TRUSTEES AND PROFESSIONAL ADVISERS

Trustees at 30 June 2013
Mr J Buchanan, Mr J Edgar, Mr K Kingston, Mr D Mitchell, Rev M Forsyth, Rev S R F Cleland (MNT), Rev K H Thompson (MNT), Rev R K Lindsay (MNT), Rev S W Blair (MNT), Rev T R McKnight (MNT), Rev J Hamilton (MNT)

Pension Advisers to the Trustees
Kerr Henderson (Consultants and Actuaries) Ltd., 29-32 College Gardens, Belfast BT9 6BT

Scheme Actuary
P Murray FIA, Kerr Henderson (Consultants and Actuaries) Ltd., 29-32 College Gardens, Belfast BT9 6BT

Auditors
KPMG, Stokes House, 17 – 25 College Square East, Belfast BT1 6DH

Bankers
Danske Bank, Donegall Square West, Belfast BT1 6JS

Investment Managers and Custodians

Manager
Standard Life Investments Ltd
1 George Street
Edinburgh
EH2 2LL

Legal & General Investment Management
One Coleman Street
London
EC2R 5AA

Insurers
Unum Limited, Milton Court, Dorking, Surrey RH4 3LZ

Custodian
Citigroup
1 Calton Square
Edinburgh
EH1 3AJ

Citibank
25 Canada Square
Canary Wharf
London
E14 5LB
Legal Advisers
McGrigors LLP, 141 Bothwell Street, Glasgow G2 7EQ, DX GW 135

Scheme registration number
10019454

The Retirement Benefits Scheme
The scheme is administered in accordance with the provisions of a Trust Deed dated 1 July 1984, amended by a supplemental deed dated 22 December 1992, the Definitive Trust Deed and Rules dated 23 September 1996 and the Deed of Amendment dated 24 June 2010.

Prior to 6 April 2006 the Fund was treated by the Inland Revenue as an “exempt approved” scheme for the purpose of Chapter I Part XIV of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 under reference SF13/041618.

On 6 April 2006 the Fund automatically became a registered pension scheme by virtue of Schedule 36 of the Finance Act 2004 (being an existing “approved” scheme at 5 April 2006). The Fund’s Pension Scheme Tax Reference (PSTR) as issued by HM Revenue & Customs (HMPC) is now 00111327RC.

The Trustees have no reason to believe that the Fund’s current taxation status as a registered pension scheme will in any way be affected or compromised in the future. Accordingly no provision for taxation has been included.

The Trustees
The power to remove and appoint new Trustees rests with The Methodist Church in Ireland as the principal employer.

There were two changes to the Trustee body during the year to 30 June 2013, with the resignations of Mr N Tennant and Rev D Mullan.

During the year to 30 June 2013 there were three meetings of the Trustees and no meetings of the sub committee, the Liaison Committee.

Decisions at Trustee meetings, in accordance with the Scheme Rules, are taken by a majority of the votes of the Trustees present.

Statement of trustees’ responsibilities for the financial statements
The audited financial statements, which are to be prepared in accordance with UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (UK GAAP), are the responsibility of the trustees. Pension scheme regulations require the trustees to make available to scheme members, beneficiaries and certain other parties, audited financial statements for each scheme year which:
show a true and fair view, of the financial transactions of the scheme during the scheme year and of the amount and disposition at the end of the scheme year of the assets and liabilities, other than liabilities to pay pensions and benefits after the end of the scheme year; and

contain the information specified in the Schedule to the Occupational Pension Schemes (Requirement to obtain Audited Accounts and a Statement from the Auditor) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996, including a statement whether the accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice, ‘Financial Reports of Pension Schemes’.

The trustees have supervised the preparation of the financial statements and have agreed suitable accounting policies, to be applied consistently, making estimates and judgements on a reasonable and prudent basis. They are also responsible for making available each year, commonly in the form of a trustees’ annual report, information about the scheme prescribed by pensions legislation, which they should ensure is consistent with the financial statements it accompanies.

The trustees also have certain responsibilities in respect of contributions which are set out in the statement of trustees’ responsibilities accompanying the trustees’ summary of contributions.

The trustees have a general responsibility for ensuring that adequate accounting records are kept and for taking such steps as are reasonably open to them to safeguard the assets of the scheme and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities, including the maintenance of appropriate internal controls.

Changes to the Scheme

There were no changes to the Scheme during the year to 30 June 2013, apart from changing the definition of “The Index” from RPI to CPI, with effect from 1st July 2013.

Eligibility

Subject as hereinafter provided, all males and females in receipt of a Stipend, including missionaries, who are aged not less than 18 years and not more than 65 years, who do not have permission to be without pastoral charge and are either Ministers or Probationers are the persons eligible to join the Scheme.

Life Assurance

The life assurance element of the Scheme and the spouses’ death in service pensions are insured with Unum Limited.
**Membership at 30 June 2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributory Members</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members who have left service but retain deferred pensions in the scheme</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members in postponed retirement</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired Members</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The scheme also has 73 pensioners and spouse pensioners whose pensions are paid from annuities held in the name of the Trustees, or paid from the Scheme itself.

**Actuarial Valuation**

It is a requirement that there should be a full actuarial valuation at least once every three years. The most recently completed valuation was carried out as at 1 July 2012. The next actuarial valuation is due as at 1 July 2015. Copies of the actuarial certificates from the valuation as at 1 July 2012 are available on request to the Trustees.

**Contributions**

All contributions to the Scheme have been calculated in accordance with the Rules and at the rates recommended by the Actuary.

**Pension Increases**

That part of the pension relating to pensionable service after 1 July 1992 up to 30 June 2010 increases in payment at the rate of the lesser of CPI and 5% p.a. compound. For pensionable service after 1 July 2010 the rate of increase will be in line with the increase in CPI subject to a maximum of 2.5% p.a. compound. These pension increase rates also apply to deferred pensions.

**Transfer values**

Transfers out have been calculated in accordance with the regulations under the Pension Schemes Act 1993.

**Investment Performance**

The day-to-day management of the Scheme investments has been delegated by the Trustees to:-

- Standard Life Investments Ltd
- Legal & General Investment Management

In previous years Investments were also managed by F&C Managed Pension Funds Limited. During the year the funds held with this investment manager...
were transferred to Standard Life Investments Limited and Legal & General Investment Management.

The investment managers are rewarded by way of a charge related to the value of the investment under their management.

**Custodians**
The custody and safekeeping of the assets of the Scheme is provided by the custodians appointed by the investment manager. As part of their Statement of Investment Principles, the Trustees have determined that the custodian will supply (where appropriate) a statement to the effect that all dividends, interest payments and tax repayments due to the Scheme have been collected and all transactions settled in a timely manner. The Trustees will also review the suitability of the custodians and arrange for their replacement where necessary.

**Employer Related Investments**
There are no employer related investments.

Investments are in accordance with the Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment of Scheme’s Resources) Regulations (Northern Ireland) Order 1992.

**Statement of Investment Principles**
The Trustees have produced a Statement of Investment Principles in accordance with Section 35 of the Pensions Act 1995. In preparing their Statement the Trustees have obtained appropriate professional advice; they have also consulted the principal employer.

There are currently no Scheme investments which are not in accordance with the Statement of Investment Principles. A copy of the Statement of Investment Principles is available for inspection on request to the Trustees.

The Trustees consider that the investment philosophy set out in the Statement of the Investment Principles remains in the best long term interests of the Scheme.

**Investment Performance Review**
Details of the investment performance are included in the reports from the investment managers, available on request to the Trustees.

**Complaints/Dispute Resolution Procedure**
Any complaints about the Scheme should be addressed in the first instance to the Nominated Person for the Scheme, Mr Desmond Mitchell, c/o 1 Fountainville Avenue, Belfast, BT9 6AN.
Enquiries about the Scheme
Enquiries about the Scheme should be addressed to the Trustees, c/o Kerr Henderson (Consultants and Actuaries) Ltd, 29-32 College Gardens, Belfast, BT9 6BT.

Presentation Of Accounts
The Pension Act 1995 requires accounts to be made up to the anniversary date of the Scheme. The accounts can be inspected at 1 Fountainville Avenue, Belfast, BT9 6AN.

Provisions Of The Scheme

1. Normal Retirement Pension
   a) Members who joined the Scheme on 1 July 1984 (Scheme commencement date): 1% of the Final Stipend x Pensionable Service, subject to a minimum of 38% of Final Stipend.
   b) Members who joined the Scheme after 1 July 1984: 1% of Final Stipend x Pensionable Service.
   c) Pension accrued on or after 1 July 1992 increases at the rate of 5% per annum or the annual increase in the Consumer Price Index if less.
   d) Pension accrued on or after 1 July 2010 increases at the rate of 2.5% per annum or the annual increase in the Consumer Price Index if less.

2. Cash Lump Sum
   a) Members who joined the Scheme on 1 July 1984: 1.67% of Final Stipend x Pensionable Service subject to a minimum of two thirds of final stipend.
   b) Members who joined the Scheme after 1 July 1984: 1.67% of Final Stipend x Pensionable Service.
   c) Lump Sum accrued on or after 1 July 2010: 2% of Final Stipend x Pensionable Service.

3. Death In Service
   a) A lump sum of 1.5 times top stipend.
   b) A spouse’s pension of 23.5% of top stipend.
   c) A refund of the member’s contributions.

4. Spouse’s Benefit
   a) A pension of two thirds of the member’s pension.
b) If a member dies within 5 years of his/her retirement a lump sum equal to the discounted value of the remainder of the five years instalments of pension will also be paid.

3. MINISTERS’ DISABILITY FUND
The fund was set up in 1995 and enhanced in 1998 to provide financial support when a minister is unable, through sickness or disability to perform the duties of the ministry. Details in relation to the Fund are contained in the minutes of Conference, 1998, pages 43-44 paragraph 11.

There are two changes proposed to the Fund:

(1) The Stipends & Allowances Board is aware that in certain circumstances, the standard benefits of the Disability Fund may not be adequate to provide for a minister and their family. To deal with this, the proposal is to add the following paragraph to the end of Section 31:38 in the Manual of Laws:

*The Fund Administrators shall have discretion to pay an additional benefit (reviewable annually) on a means tested basis.*

(2) Where a minister retires early due to ill-health, and wishes to take their pension immediately rather than availing of the Disability Fund until normal retirement, the RBS normally pays benefits without an actuarial early retirement reduction factor. In these circumstances, the Church has traditionally paid an amount into the fund to reflect the cost of not applying this factor. The proposal is that this amount should come from the Disability Fund, requiring the following paragraph (Section 31:33) to be the added to the Manual of Laws:

*Where a minister qualifies for benefits from the Disability Fund but instead elects to take ill-health early retirement from the Retirement Benefits Scheme, the Fund will contribute an amount to the Retirement Benefits Scheme, as determined by the Scheme Actuary. This amount will reflect the cost to the Scheme of not applying an early retirement reduction factor to the minister’s Scheme benefits.*

4. METHODIST MINISTERS RETIREMENT INCOME AUGMENTATION FUND.
   a) The Fund was set up in 2003 and ensures that ministers and Widows/Widowers should have a minimum income from all sources as set down by the Conference from year to year. The minimum income levels recommended as from 1 April 2014 are as follows: -
Northern Ireland    Republic of Ireland
Married couple      £16,642     €20,013
Widow/Widower       £14,027     €16,872

b) Eligibility and other criteria are detailed in the Minutes of Conference 2011, page 71.

c) Potential applicants should make contact with either of the two independent Administrators:
   Mrs. Dorothy Cranston Tel: (028) 4482 8347
   Mr. David English Tel: (01) 2805221

d) In cases of need, the independent Administrators can use their discretion to increase the benefits (consulting with the Stipends & Allowances Board if necessary). In particular, this applies where an applicant’s accommodation costs are higher than the rent charged by the Methodist Ministers Housing Society.

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the report of the Irish Methodist Ministers’ Retirement Fund and approves the scale of Allowances.

2. The Conference receives the report of the Retirement Benefits Scheme.

3. The Conference receives the report of the Minister’s Disability Fund and approves the proposed changes to the Manual of Laws.

4. The Conference confirms the levels of minimum income in relation to the Augmentation Fund.

5. The Conference refers to the Stipends and Allowances Board the determining of any question relating to special allowances.

6. The Conference approves the reprinting of the paragraphs in the Minutes of Conference with necessary changes.

7. The Conference re-appoints Mr Desmond Mitchell as Lay Treasurer.
Methodist Ministers’ Children’s Fund

The number of children who received allowances or benefits from the Children’s Fund during 2013-14 is detailed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allowance/Benefit</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance Allowance</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Grant</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsistence Allowance</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Allowance to University in Great Britain</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance with fees at Wesley College</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance with boarding fees at Wesley College</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Allowance</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We propose an increase in the Maintenance Allowances and Extended Benefits of 3% in Northern Ireland and a 2% in the Republic of Ireland.

Recommended figures are as follows:

**Maintenance Allowances**

**For Northern Ireland**
- for each child under 11 from 1 January 2015: £1,300
- for each child 11 or over from 1 January 2015: £1,816

**For Republic of Ireland**
- for each child under 11 from 1 January 2015: €2,212
- for each child 11 or over from 1 January 2015: €3,020
- for each boarder 11 or over on 1 July 2014: €1,700
- Initial outfit allowance for each boarder 11 or over on 1 July 2014: €800

**Educational Allowances**

**Northern Ireland**
- Shall not exceed: £900

**Republic of Ireland**
- Shall not exceed: €1,300
- A Grant towards costs of books for any child not receiving free books: €200

**Extended Benefits**

**For Northern Ireland**
- (a) Travel Grant to University outside of Ireland: £590
- (b) Subsistence Grant towards living expenses: £540
For Republic of Ireland
(a) Travel Grant to University outside of Ireland €684
(b) Subsistence Grant towards living expenses €624

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the report.

2. The Conference approves the Maintenance Allowances.

3. The Conference approves the Educational Allowances.

4. The Conference approves the payment of the Extended Benefits Grants comprising Travel and Subsistence Allowances, where applicable.

5. The Conference directs that the paragraphs in the Minutes of Conference be reprinted with the necessary changes.

6. The Conference appoints the Rev. Colin Gracie as Secretary and Ministerial Treasurer.

   Reasoned Statement:
   Rev. Colin Gracie has travelled for 12 years and currently serves on the Lisburn and Dromore Circuit. He serves as Secretary of his District Synod so is a competent administrator. Colin has knowledge of financial matters and as a father is sensitive to the needs of ministers with children.

7. The Conference re-appoints Mr. Glyn Capper as Lay Treasurer.
Methodist Ministers’ Medical Fund

The medical fund continues to offer grant help towards general medical expenses for all ministers and their dependents including the widows of deceased ministers. This help is greatly appreciated especially by our retired ministers and the widows of ministers, who often express thanks for grants received.

The aim of the fund is to provide grant help towards basic medical expenses in the following areas: Medical fees, prescription charges, dental and optical expenses as well as providing help towards funeral expenses. If any expenditure is to exceed £500 in Northern Ireland or €800 in the Republic of Ireland, the officers of the fund should be contacted **before treatment begins** if a grant is being applied for. This is to avoid any embarrassment to those who have embarked on an expensive course of treatment and are expecting grant help which cannot be offered due to financial restrictions on the fund. There is provision to apply for a grant towards such extraordinary expenditure in exceptional circumstances. All applicants are reminded that an application form is required for each individual claim and are available from the Ministerial Treasurer either by post or e-mail accompanied, and then returned with all relevant receipts.

Mr John Buchanan, our Lay Treasurer is having to step down from his position as Lay Treasurer of the Medical Fund to become with Conference approval the new Chairman of the Stipends and Allowances board. We are grateful for his contribution in helping to administer the fund in the past two years. The committee are delighted that Mr Brian Gray has agreed to let his name go forward for appointment by conference as the new Lay Treasurer of the Medical fund.

**AGENDA**

1. The Conference receives the report.

2. The Conference directs that the paragraphs in the Minutes of Conference be reprinted with all the necessary changes.

3. The Conference appoints Mr Brian Gray as the new Lay Treasurer of the Ministers Medical fund.

4. The Conference re-appoints the Rev. Harold M. Agnew as Secretary and Ministerial Treasurer.
Connexional Finance - Budget Committee

Overview of Budget requests: The Connexional Finance Committee met in February and recommended that the Comprehensive Assessment for 2015 be set at £1,470,560. This is a reduction of 4.15% on the 2014 figure. This was mainly due to a change in the contribution to the Ministers Retired Benefit Scheme, from 2015 the Assessment will allocate 10.6% (down from 13.5%) and the Circuit’s contribution will increase to 15.4%. So although the Assessment is down by £77,000, this amount will be contributed directly by Churches with Ministers.

The allocation to the various Church Funds is as follows:

The Ministers’ Pension Fund (IMMRF Old Scheme) required an allocation of £65,000 to fund the 59 recipients along with £10,000 for the Supplementary Fund.

The Augmentation Fund has a present annual demand of £3,000 and was allocated this amount from the Budget.

The present Pension Scheme (RBS) as mentioned above will receive 10.6% of the ministerial stipend for 2015 from the Assessment. An additional sum for PPF Levy of £15,000 is also provided from the Budget. Assuming increases in stipend of 2.25% for 2014 and 2.5% for 2015 the amount required for 2015 would be £296,000.

The Disability Fund has presently three claimants of around £17,000 and requires no funding for 2015.

Ministers’ Children’s Fund: - The last increase in allowances was 2013 and the treasurer would be requesting the Stipends and Allowances Board to increase the amounts by 3% in 2015. This would mean a requirement of £215,000 but as in the previous two years reserves would be used to reduce the request to £180,000.

Ministerial Training Fund: - This Fund lost the income from No.9 Resource Centre which has now closed, there was also a drop in rents from Koinonia House which is now being occupied by more theological students. By using some of the reserves the request from the Assessment was reduced to £317,000 for the Training Fund and £30,000 for Adult Christian Education.

Candidates Grants Fund: - The number of students eligible to receive grants in the current academic year is twelve (eight qualifying for the higher married rate). This was fewer than predicted in last year’s request so a lower amount will be required for 2015. The amount allocated for 2015 was £85,000.
Church Extension Fund:- The current projects, Blanchardstown (DCM) requiring €29,000, Millstreet Cork €10,000, and Pioneer Mission Projects £21,000. New projects allowance £30,000. An amount of **£30,000** was allocated to cover the estimated shortfall.

Chapel Fund:- No funding is required from the 2015 Budget.

Methodist Youth and Children’s Department:- The Department had successful events during the year such as Autumn Soul with around 650 and Soul Mates in Lurgan with 370. Training continues with the major Children’s Ministry conference, “Building Blocks” in Ballymena and Dublin along with joint training days with the Church of Ireland Youth Department. Child Protection / Safeguarding continues to be a major part of their work with around 700 people receiving training last year. As training has to be renewed every 3 years this will be an ongoing process. “Saltmine” and IMYCD have agreed to be partners in a programme around “Bullying and Cyberbullying in Primary and Secondary Schools in the Republic of Ireland and have applied to the European Union for funding.

IMYC expect to have their R of I funding cut by around €1,500. To maintain the current programme an allocation of **£215,000** was granted, an increase of 1.5% on 2014.

General Purposes Fund :- This Fund had a deficit of £20,000 in 2013 due to a number of factors, the increase in relocation expenses of around £11,600, admin costs of £10,000 in legal fees, the upgrade of MCI web site and covering the loss in “Singing the Faith “ concert. The cost of Conference 2013, with the extra day, was more expensive than previous years. An allocation of **£150,000** was made to meet the estimated expenses of 2015.

Council on Social Responsibility:- Most of the reserves in this Fund had been used over the past few years in helping to keep the Assessment down. A more realistic figure of **£4,000** was allocated for 2015.

Methodist General Education Fund:- The number of students in the R of I requiring support was down on the previous year, this meant the Fund finished the year with a surplus of around £1,400. A request had been received from Rev Andrew Dougherty for funding to help refurbish a toilet block at Rathgar School in Dublin. This has been agreed in principle.

A grant of **£11,000** from the Comprehensive Assessment was made to boost their Fund.

The following are the amounts recommended from the Assessment for the year 2015 with the 2014 figures for comparison.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund</th>
<th>2014 Approved</th>
<th>2015 Recommended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministers Retirement Fund(IMMRF)</td>
<td>£69,500</td>
<td>£65,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(IMMRF) Contingency Fund</td>
<td>£5,500</td>
<td>£10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.M.R.I. Augmentation Fund</td>
<td>£3,000</td>
<td>£3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement Benefits Scheme (RBS)</td>
<td>£373,000</td>
<td>£296,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministers' Disability Fund</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministers' Children’s Fund</td>
<td>£180,000</td>
<td>£180,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministerial Training Fund</td>
<td>£310,000</td>
<td>£317,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Christian Education</td>
<td>£30,000</td>
<td>£30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidates’ Grants Fund</td>
<td>£123,000</td>
<td>£85,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapel Fund</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Extension</td>
<td>£30,000</td>
<td>£30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth &amp; Children’s Department (MYCD)</td>
<td>£212,000</td>
<td>£215,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Purposes Fund</td>
<td>£140,000</td>
<td>£150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit Fees</td>
<td></td>
<td>£30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Purposes (Special Fund)</td>
<td>£30,000</td>
<td>£30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council on Social Responsibility</td>
<td>£2,000</td>
<td>£4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist Education Fund</td>
<td>£11,000</td>
<td>£11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub Total</td>
<td>£1,519,000</td>
<td>£1,456,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1% added for World Development</td>
<td>£15,190</td>
<td>£14,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£1,534,190</td>
<td>£1,470,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AGENDA**

1. The Conference receives the report.

2. The Conference directs that the amount of the Comprehensive Assessment for 2015 be £1,470,560.

3. The Conference directs that the amounts to be contributed by the Circuits in the year 2015 shall be as detailed on the following pages.

4. The Conference reappoints Mr. Derek Hampton secretary of the Connexional Finance Committee.
Comprehensive Assessment

1. The following amounts shall be contributed by the Circuits in the year 2015:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dublin District</th>
<th>€</th>
<th>£</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centenary, Leeson Park</td>
<td>10,744</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin Central Mission</td>
<td>19,793</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin North</td>
<td>22,116</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin West</td>
<td>7,501</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin South</td>
<td>33,790</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dun Laoghaire</td>
<td>43,280</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicklow, Arklow and Gorey</td>
<td>19,482</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Midlands and Southern District</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kilkenny and Carlow</td>
<td>15,051</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford</td>
<td>7,898</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portlaoise</td>
<td>14,402</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Tipperary</td>
<td>13,482</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birr, Athlone and Tullamore</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork South and Kerry</td>
<td>37,817</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Cork</td>
<td>23,300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick</td>
<td>7,228</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adare and Ballingrane</td>
<td>10,547</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lakelands District</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enniskillen</td>
<td>26,986</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springfield and Church Hill</td>
<td>8,572</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisbellaw, Maguiresbridge and Tempo</td>
<td>11,310</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Erne</td>
<td>21,730</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fivemiletown</td>
<td>10,369</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pettigo and Irvinestown</td>
<td>10,702</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballinamallard and Trillick</td>
<td>14,443</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavan and Longford</td>
<td>9,422</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Connacht</td>
<td>23,312</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### North West District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North West Methodist Mission</td>
<td>32,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleraine, Portrush, Portstewart and Ballymoney</td>
<td>29,418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlederg</td>
<td>10,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omagh and Fintona</td>
<td>24,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegal, Ballintra and Inver</td>
<td>13,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunkineely and Ardara</td>
<td>10,985</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### North East District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newtownabbey Mission</td>
<td>81,111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballyclare</td>
<td>20,704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrickfergus</td>
<td>48,633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larne</td>
<td>24,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antrim</td>
<td>12,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballymena</td>
<td>16,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cullybackey</td>
<td>17,508</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Belfast District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cavehill</td>
<td>5,258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennymount</td>
<td>17,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanmount</td>
<td>7,887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belfast South</td>
<td>15,827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegall Road</td>
<td>10,874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Shankill</td>
<td>23,363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballynafeigh, Knockbreda, Belvoir and Cairnshill</td>
<td>41,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountpottinger and Bloomfield</td>
<td>34,968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cregagh and Glenburn</td>
<td>46,719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Belfast Mission</td>
<td>5,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydenham</td>
<td>14,934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knock</td>
<td>59,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finaghy and Seymour Hill</td>
<td>24,238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belfast Central Mission</td>
<td>11,169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Down District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangor and Holywood</td>
<td>89,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donaghadee</td>
<td>14,491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newtownards, Movilla Abbey and Comber</td>
<td>44,752</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glastry and Portaferry 10,804
Ballynahinch 11,335
Dundrum, Newcastle and Downpatrick 9,934
Lisburn and Dromore 79,361

**Portadown District**
Portadown 59,305
Newry 12,171
Charlemont and Cranagill 13,258
Dungannon 18,431
Cookstown and South Derry 12,321
Armagh 11,957
Aughnacloy and Monaghan 8,531
Lurgan 46,042
Glenavy and Moira 17,572
Tandragee and Richhill 29,218
Banbridge and Donacloney 16,323
Connexional Finance - Audit Committee Report

The Connexional Finance / Audit Committee met frequently during the year to:

a) Oversee the preparation of Unaudited Consolidated Accounts for the Methodist Church in Ireland for the year ended 31 December 2013. We propose to present summary information from these accounts to Conference 2014. Full sets of the Unaudited Accounts will be available on request.

b) Continue the wide ranging review of all Church Finances (Connexional and Circuit).

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the report.

2. The Conference accepts the unaudited accounts of the Methodist Church for 2013.

3. The Conference agrees that the President and Secretary of Conference may sign audited consolidated accounts for the Methodist Church in Ireland for the year ended 31 December 2014, if requested to do so by the Connexional Finance Committee.

4. The Conference authorizes the Connexional Finance Committee to continue with its detailed review of church finances with a view to bring a further report(s) and recommendations to a subsequent Conference.

5. The Conference places on record its sincere thanks to Me Neil H. Payne. As part of his service to the Methodist Church in Ireland Mr Payne has served as Chair of the Budget/Connexional Finance and Audit Committee for the past sixteen years. During this time he has sought to enable the Connexion to think carefully, strategically and collaboratively about its finances. His stewardship of this responsibility has been exercised through periods of financial optimism in Ireland and also through the more recent financial crisis, as well as during the introduction of new charity legislation with its required financial reporting. His constant encouragement to the Connexion to think and act wisely in financial matters has been informed both by his professional expertise and his passion for the mission of Christ. As he steps down from this office he can be assured that the changes which he has overseen have left the Connexion in a better place to face the future.
Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland

The Trustees present their annual report for the year ended 31 December 2013.

Reference and Administrative details
The information with respect to Trustees, officers and advisors set out on page 1 forms part of this report. The accounts comply with the rules laid down by Conference, applicable Accounting Standards in the United Kingdom and the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" issued in 2005.

The day to day affairs of the Trustees continue to be managed by Mrs Gillian Skillen, Mrs Donna Ahrens, Mrs Carol Gilmore, and Mr Sean Cunningham. The Trustees appreciate that they are very well served by this team, and are grateful for their continued dedication to the work. Mr Neil Morris, the Lay Treasurer, also acts as a part-time consultant to the Trustees, who have again benefitted particularly from his knowledge and insight in the areas of financial management, personnel matters and Trustee training.

The work of the staff, the Secretary of Conference, the Standing Committee and Mr Morris include the following areas of work: processing of Gift Aid donations in Northern Ireland on behalf of approximately 90 churches and five Connexional Funds, which produced tax refunds of £458,000 in 2013; the computation, collection and distribution to the Funds concerned of almost £1.5 million in connection with the Comprehensive Assessment; the management, together with our investment managers, of the Trustees’ investment portfolio of £16.9 million as at 31 December 2013; the collection and payment annually of £4.3 million to ministers and over 40 other full time staff on the payroll, together with the related administrative work in connection with general enquiries, changes in stipends, mileage rates and other allowances. It is a wide-ranging general administration for the Church, in that the Trustees’ office is also that of the Secretary of Conference.

The Trustees’ office also has the day-to-day administration of the Ministers’ Retirement Funds, the Ministers’ Disability Fund, and the payments from the Ministers’ Children’s Fund, all of which are reported separately.

During the year Revd J. Winston Good and Mr Joe Edgar tendered their resignation as trustees. They have each served for many years and the Trustees will miss the wisdom and commitment which they each brought to their responsibilities. The Trustees wish them and their families well.

Mr David Best and Mrs Lesley Rankin have been appointed Trustees.
Structure, governance and management
The Methodist Church in Ireland Act 1915 formally constituted the Methodist Church in Ireland as one body and incorporated the Trustees. (The Methodist Church in Ireland Acts Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, 1928 formally recognised the Methodist Church in Ireland in both jurisdictions after partition).

The Trustees are part of the Methodist Church in Ireland and are governed by the Methodist Church in Ireland Act 1928. Its management committee and officers are appointed annually by the Methodist Conference under the Act. The Trustees also report annually to the Methodist Conference on their activities.

The Methodist Church in Ireland is registered with HM Revenue & Customs as a Northern Ireland recognised charity, reference XN69890. In the Republic of Ireland the equivalent charity reference number is CHY 253. The Trustees meet for a general meeting twice a year, usually in April and November, and report to Conference each year. The general meeting recommends to Conference trustees for appointment. The standing committee normally meets 3 times a year to deal with the day-to-day operations. The governance committee meets once a year to recommend appointments to the annual general meeting and to oversee the training of Trustees.

Owing to one resignation following the Methodist Conference the number of trustees fell to thirty five at year end. This matter will be rectified in 2014.

Risk management
The Trustees have assessed the major risks, to which the Trust is exposed, in particular those related to the operations and finances of the Trust. Major Risks have been identified under four headings, namely sustainability, operational, reputational and environment. The Trustees took time at their general meeting in November to ensure that their assessment was up to date, and remain satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate any exposure to major risks.

Training
During the year the Trustees have received training on risk management.

Objectives and activities
The primary object of the Trust is the administration of certain properties and funds, vested to the Trust under the Act, for the Methodist Church in Ireland. The Trustees have delegated day-to-day operations to the standing committee. The terms of reference of the standing Trustees are agreed by the general Trustees.
Achivements and performance

The investment funds

The Trustees’ investments are held with Epworth Investment Management Limited.

Epworth’s Fixed Interest Affirmative Fund

The investment parameters for this fund were reviewed by the Trustees at their meeting on 6 November 2013 and agreed as follows:

Affirmative Fixed Interest Fund Gilts 70 – 100%; Corporate Bonds 0 – 30%; Cash 0 – 5%

At 1 January 2013 there were 8,415,261 units in the fixed interest affirmative fund, valued at £10,123,560. During the year £65,000 was invested, and £2,543,000 was redeemed. The position at 31 December 2013, therefore, was as follows: 6,322,432 units in the fixed interest affirmative fund valued at £7,112,735, each unit being valued at 112.5p (2012: 120.3p).

In the Affirmative Corporate Bonds £1,448,932 was invested during the year. At 31 December 2013 there were 1,273,935 Affirmative Corporate Bond units valued at £1,378,398, each unit being valued at 108.2p.

There was a negative return on the fund was 3.8% over the year, which lagged the benchmark index of FTSE All Stock Gilt Index (68%) and iBoxx non-Gilt Index AAA (9.6%) AA (12.8%) A(8%) BBB(1.6%) by 0.9%. Over the last 3 years a return of 4.5% pa which was behind the benchmark. Since 1997 the Fund with a return of 6.6%pa has out-performed the benchmark by 0.3%pa.

Epworth’s Equity Affirmative Fund

The investment parameters for this fund were reviewed by the Trustees at their meeting on 6 November 2013 and agreed as follows:

Affirmative Equity Fund 90-100%, Non UK Equities 0-10% and Cash 0-5%

At 1 January 2013 there were 5,274,773 units in the Equity Affirmative Fund, valued at £5,960,493. During the year £1,204,523 was invested, and £215,000 was redeemed. The position at 31 December 2013, therefore, was as follows: 6,089,068 units in the Equity Affirmative Fund valued at £8,189,796, each unit being valued at 134.5p (2012: 113.0p).

In the Developed World ex UK Portfolio the valuation at 1 January 2013 was £64,856. The valuation at 31 December 2013 was £85,488.

The total return of the fund of 22.5% under-performed the benchmark index of FTSE All Share Index (90%) and FT AW All World (ex UK) Index (10%) by 0.9%. Since 1997 a return of 7.4% pa has been earned, 0.4% pa above that of the benchmark.

Managed fund

The investment parameters for this fund were reviewed by the Trustees at their meeting on 6 November 2013 and agreed as follows:
Equity Fund 40 – 70 %: Fixed Interest Fund 30 – 60 %: Affirmative Deposit 0 – 5 %

At 31 December 2013 the proportion of the managed fund was 87.2% of the total fund. There were 6,394,279 units in the managed fund valued at £14,750,681, each unit being valued at 230.7p (2012: 224.0p).

The total return of the fund of 5.9% over the year which was behind the benchmark index of Ethically adjusted FTSE All Stock Gilt Index (36%), FTSE All Share Index (40.8%), FTSE All World – ex UK (4%) and iBoxx non-Gilt Indices (19.2%), by 0.2%.

Our policy on ethical investment does have an impact on the returns, reflecting avoidance of sectors such as alcohol, defence and tobacco, and also stock selection where we would have a preference for stocks with relatively higher ethical standards. The Trustees, at their general meeting, considered these matters in detail with Mr Bill Seddon, our investment manager. They are also represented on the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment, which reports formally to the Methodist Church in Britain. The Secretary of the Trustees has also been involved in conversations on Ethical Investment with representatives from other churches in Ireland.

**Other Trusts**

During the year the Trustees have drawn particular attention to the section of the Donegall Square Trust which makes small grants available for special projects furthering the mission of the church. The response to this information has been encouraging, although the Trustees may not be in a position to meet every request.

**Gift aid donations and tax relief for donations to eligible charities**

Local church funds and Connexional funds continue to benefit greatly through the use of Gift Aid. Many churches are active in claiming the refund offered. However, in most churches, there is still room for an increase in the number of those who sign a Gift Aid declaration. The Trustees would remind those who sign a Gift Aid declaration for the first time that, under the scheme, they can claim Gift Aid on their donations for the previous four years, provided they pay Income Tax.

During the year work has been undertaken to help churches benefit from the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme, which became operative for the tax year beginning April 2013. The first claims under this scheme will be made following the end of the tax year in April 2014. There has been considerable interest in the scheme and the Trustees are hopeful that it will bring some additional financial benefit to our churches.
In the Republic of Ireland the revised arrangements for tax relief on charitable donations are now in place. The Trustees would encourage churches to explore fully how they can benefit from this scheme.

The method of making a Gift Aid Declaration directly with the Trustees is still available. By this method, the subscriber pays the Trustees e.g. annually, monthly, or by standing order. The Trustees claim the tax refund and the original donation and refunds are available to the subscriber to allocate subscriptions to churches, connexional funds and any other charities of the subscriber’s choice, by the use of a voucher book.

Financial Review

The accounts deal with those funds of the Methodist Church in Ireland which are administered by the Trustees of the Church.

The Statement of Financial Activities for the year is set out on page 8 of the accounts, which summarise all of the activities financed, which are noted under our Achievements and Performance section above. We have seen an increase in the valuation of our investments.

The Trustees’ policy is to retain a level of unrestricted reserves, within the Administration Fund, which matches the needs of the Trust both at the current time and in the foreseeable future. The reserves required will be sufficient to meet the running costs for a period equivalent to at least one year’s expenditure. The Standing Committee has developed a plan to establish and maintain at least this level of reserves, and will distribute any excess reserves over certain limits, to connexional funds, that will be determined as required.

The trustees have adopted an investment policy that is consistent with the moral stance and teachings of the Christian faith. The investment managers have been directed to adopt a social, environmental and ethical stance, which is consistent with the aims of the Methodist Church.

Other Matters

The officers of the Trustees, along with representatives from the Connexional Finance Committee of the Conference, currently form an Audit Committee which oversees the preparation of consolidated accounts for the Methodist Church in Ireland. This committee is serviced by Mr Stuart Blythman, whose professional services are purchased by the Trustees. The Church will register with the Charity Commissioners for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland when required to do so.
Trustees' responsibilities
The Trustees are required to prepare financial statements for each financial year that give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Trust and of its incoming resources and application of resources for that period.
In preparing those financial statements the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis, unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Trust will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Trust. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Trust and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

AGENDA

1. The Conference adopts the report of the Trustees.

2. The Conference re-appoints Rev David Mullan as Ministerial Treasurer and Mr Neil E. Morris as Lay Treasurer.

3. The Conference directs that the income from the Foundation of the Ministers’ Sons’ Fund for the coming year be paid to the Ministers’ Children’s Fund, designated for payment to Wesley College Dublin for Boarder Foundationers.

4. The Conference commends the scheme for Gift Aid donations in Northern Ireland and the Scheme for Tax Relief for donations to eligible charities in the Republic of Ireland to those of our people who are in a position to make such donations.

5. The Conference re-appoints Rev Donald Ker as Secretary.

6. The Conference appoints Mr. John G. Clarke as a Trustee.

7. The Conference approves the re-printing of the relevant paragraphs in the Minutes of Conference.
8. The following are the members of the Standing Committee for the year 2014-2015: Revs Desmond C. Bain, Shaun R.F. Cleland, Mark S. Forsyth, Donald P. Ker, Edmund T.I. Mawhinney, Heather M.E. Morris, David Mullan, S. Kenneth Todd, Mrs. Irene Dickson, Messrs J. Stanley Graham, Thomas H. Millar, Neil Morris, Albert J. Sherrard, William J. Stafford. (The Secretary of the Trustees is ex-officio Secretary of any committee)
Conference 2013 accepted in principle the setting up of a Board of Ministry within the Methodist Church in Ireland (MCI). This was considered in the context of the discipleship of the whole people of God and a recognised need for a 'seamless robe' approach to ministry both lay and ordained. Over recent years clear strategy and criteria have been developed for the candidating, student and probation phases of training for the ordained ministry. Within Irish Methodist Youth and Children's Department (IMYC) there are well-established principles for the training and development of youth and children's ministry from which the wider church could benefit. Further, MCI values, supports and encourages lay ministry, both paid and voluntary amongst adults, but training and development is done on a local and more ad hoc basis. A Board of Ministry would provide a context to consider all ministry within and without MCI with an aim to examine issues regarding ethos, expectation, training and recognition.

The aim of the working group established by the General Committee was neither to set up an unnecessary new level of bureaucracy, nor simply a talking shop. What is proposed is a Board with the ability to envision, develop strategy, and implement policy with a view to enabling effective ministry throughout the Connexion.

**Remit of the Board of Ministry (BofM)**
The BofM is tasked with the responsibility of the development and oversight of ministry, lay and ordained, within MCI. It is not envisaged that it should get involved in the minutiae of implementation and administration of ministry issues, but rather it will work at the macro level of policy and strategy. Central in its thinking would be the encouragement of personal and corporate discipleship principles.

The shape of this would be as follows:

- Collaboration across all the departments dealing with ministry and discipleship - understanding and learning from the expertise of one another
- Coordination to ensure that ministry in MCI has clear principles of ethos, training, recognition and practice across the Connexion
- Vision and direction allowing the development of ministry within MCI, along with issues of policy and strategy
- Accountability - each area of ministry to be more accountable to the Connexion. It is important to ask the question, 'is what we do working?'
It is recognised that a number of departments within MCI have an input into ministry across the Connexion. A BofM would seek to relate to those areas within their work that impact ministry and discipleship across the Connexion.

The following Connexional Committees would be central to the work of a BofM:

1. **The Ordained Ministry Committee** (replacing the current Board of Examiners) will continue to be responsible for the following aspects of the ordained ministry;
   a. exploring ordained ministry and the candidating process
   b. overseeing the progress of ministerial students and probationers
   c. working with Edgehill Theological College (Edgehill) and the Districts on probationer training and making recommendations regarding those to be ordained
   d. working with Edgehill in the continuing development of ordained ministers (Continuing Development in Ministry)
   e. working with the Sabbaticals Committee
   f. supporting those exercising ordained ministry

2. **Lay Ministry Committee**
   In the context of discipleship this committee would be established to facilitate the ministry of lay people in MCI and help them to become who God wants them to be, through the provision of opportunities and resources for learning and growth. Its aims would include:
   - recognising the value of vocational lay employees through the provision of training, support and resourcing;
   - allowing for greater co-ordination among the different people and departments of MCI who have responsibility for lay ministry; its provision of training and learning opportunities.

The remit of the Committee will involve:
- The support, training and resourcing of vocational lay employees and volunteers exercising specific roles and ministries;
- The encouragement and support of good practice among those providing training and learning opportunities.

A new Lay Ministry Committee would be established whose membership shall consist of:

(a) The President and the Secretary of Conference;
(b) The Lay Leader of the Conference, who shall chair the Committee;
(c) Two representatives appointed by the connexional Local Preachers’ Committee;
(d) The General Secretary of the Irish Methodist Youth and Children’s Department (IMYC);
(e) A representative appointed by the IMYC Executive;
(f) The Training and Development Officer, who shall act as convener.

The Committee shall have the power to co-opt additional members as required.

3. **The Board of Governors of Edgehill** – in relating to the BofM will continue to be responsible (in collaboration with other bodies) for the development of appropriate educational and training programmes for both lay and ordained ministers, particularly ministerial students and probationers.

4. **Pioneer Mission Committee** – would be responsible for exploring and supporting pioneer mission opportunities and bringing recommendations to the BofM and Conference.

**Finance**

At Conference 2013 an indication was given that the financial implications in relation to the proposed BofM required consideration and detailed work. The initial assumption was that a BofM would be responsible for a fund which would receive an allocation from the Connexional Finance Committee to meet the costs involved in the oversight, training and development of ordained and lay ministry. The thinking was that the funds already included in the allocations to other Departments and Committees currently providing training would be redirected into a proposed Board of Ministry Fund.

On further reflection, however, the Working Party now believes that to establish such a fund at this point would be premature for the following reasons:

- The new Board should be given time to determine, develop and cost its policy and strategy for the future.

- The constituent sections that will contribute to the work of the new Board should be given the opportunity to develop greater collaboration in its method of working which could have consequent implications for costs.
In the proposed new arrangements for the use of Edgehill premises, several of those areas of church life currently involved in training will be operating from the one site. It is expected that these developments will involve new financial arrangements. More importantly, from the aspect of this report, the physical proximity of some of those involved in training will provide an opportunity for more collaboration.

For these reasons the Working Party is reluctant to recommend new financial arrangements. Until a point has been reached, therefore, when the Board of Ministry is able to present a budget for its work, the Working Party recommends no change in the current financial arrangements whereby the costs of training are included in the allocations made to the appropriate departments.

Membership of the Board of Ministry
The membership of the BofM needs to be on the basis of expertise and representative of the departments engaging in ministry and discipleship. Wider connexional representation is established through committees that relate to the BofM.

Proposed Membership: The Board of Ministry shall be appointed annually by Conference and consist of:

(a) The President, the Lay Leader, the Secretary of Conference, and the President-Designate;
(b) The Chair of the Board of Ministry, appointed by the Conference;
(c) The Secretaries of the Ordained Ministry Committee, representing that Committee;
(d) The Training and Development Officer, representing the Lay Ministry Committee;
(e) The General Secretary of the Irish Methodist Youth and Children’s Department;
(f) The Chair of the Board of Governors of Edgehill Theological College, or a substitute appointed by that Board;
(g) The Principal of Edgehill Theological College;
(h) The General Secretary of the Home Mission Department;
(i) A representative of the Pioneer Mission Committee, designated by the Church Development Board;
(k) The Connexional Ministerial Local Preachers’ Secretary;
(l) The Director of Ministry, who shall convene and facilitate the Board.

AGENDA

1. The Conference adopts the report

2. The Conference receives as a Notice of Motion to the Conference of 2015 the following amendments to the Manual of Laws (adjusted as necessary in line with amendments to the Manual of Laws made by the present Conference):

The Conference amends Chapter 4 to read as follows:

CHAPTER 4
MINISTRY

4.01 The Methodist Church in Ireland affirms that the whole body of Christ is called to share in his priestly ministry of reconciliation. It is a ministry exercised within the community of faith as well as within and for the wider sphere of community, society and world. Within this general calling, the individual members of the Church express their shared ministry in a variety of ways. Some (often simply referred to as ‘ministers’) are set aside for life and ordained as ministers of Word, sacrament and pastoral oversight. Some (for example, Local Preachers) are appointed to a particular office which they exercise with the authority and under the discipline of the Church as a whole. Others exercise a role within the ministry of the local Church or Circuit which may reflect a formal appointment (for example, as Steward, Sunday School Teacher or Pastoral Visitor) or may reflect (for example in the case of members of a choir or prayer ministry team) less formal, but still essential, aspects of the Church’s ministry.

The Board of Ministry

4.02 The Board of Ministry shall meet at least twice in each Connexional year and have responsibility for the development and oversight of lay and ordained ministry within the Methodist Church in Ireland, in accordance with the directives of Conference.
The Board of Ministry shall be appointed annually by Conference and consist of:

(a) The President, the Lay Leader, the Secretary of Conference, and the President-Designate;
(b) The Chair of the Board of Ministry, appointed by the Conference;
(c) The Secretaries of the Ordained Ministry Committee, representing that Committee;
(d) The Training and Development Officer, representing the Lay Ministry Committee;
(e) The General Secretary of the Irish Methodist Youth and Children’s Department;
(f) The Chair of the Board of Governors of Edgehill Theological College, or a substitute appointed by that Board;
(g) The Principal of Edgehill Theological College;
(h) The General Secretary of the Home Mission Department;
(i) A representative of the Pioneer Mission Committee, designated by the Church Development Board;
(k) The Connexional Ministerial Local Preachers’ Secretary;
(l) The Director of Ministry, who shall convene and facilitate the Board.

The Board shall have the following constituent Committees:

(a) Ordained Ministry Committee (see Chapter 5)
(b) Lay Ministry Committee (see Chapter 6)

The following also relate to the Board:

(a) Edgehill Theological College (see Chapter 24)
(b) Irish Methodist Youth and Children’s Department (see Chapter 19)
(c) Pioneer Mission Committee
The Conference amends Chapter 5 to read as follows, and, while so doing, replaces “Board of Examiners” (or “Board”) with “Ordained Ministry Committee” and adds the word “ordained” before “minister” or “ministers” as required. Any reference within the Manual of Laws to any re-numbered legislation is adjusted appropriately.

CHAPTER 5
ORDAINED MINISTRY

Contents
5A The Office and Duty of an Ordained Minister
5B Ordained Ministry Committee
5C Candidacy
5D Training, Probation, and Ordination
5E Discipline and Advisory Committee
5F Itinerancy
5G Modes of Ordained Ministry
5H Leave from Ordained Ministry
5I Special Committee
5J Resignation and Reinstatement
5K Retirement and Death
5L Disciplinary Proceedings
5M Ministerial Supply in Emergencies

5A The Office and Duty of an Ordained Minister
5A.01 to 5A.04 previously 4A.01 to 4A.04.

5B Ordained Ministry Committee
5B.01 The Ordained Ministry Committee shall have responsibility for aspects of the ordained ministry, including:
(a) discernment and testing of the call to ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland;
(b) the ongoing training of Probationers;
(c) the continuing development of those in ordained ministry;
(d) support for those exercising ordained ministry.

5B.02 The Committee shall be appointed by the Conference and consist of:
(a) The President, the Lay Leader, the Ex-President, the Secretary of Conference, and the President-Designate;
(b) The General Secretary of the Home Mission Department;
(c) District Superintendents

(d) The Ministerial Secretary of the Local Preachers’ Committee

(e) The Principal and Tutor(s) of Edgehill Theological College (if in Full Connexion)

(f) Twelve Six ordained ministers elected by the Conference, who shall have travelled at least five years after ordination, selected as follows:

(i) three shall be co-opted by the Ordained Ministry Committee;

(ii) three shall be elected by the Ministerial Session of Conference.

(g) Thirteen Six lay persons, who shall be at least twenty-five years of age and have been members of the Methodist Church in Ireland for at least three years, selected as follows:

(i) one shall be nominated by the Board of Governors of Edgehill Theological College from the membership of that Board;

(ii) ten three shall be elected by the Ministerial Session of the Conference;

(iii) two shall be co-opted by the Ordained Ministry Committee.

5B.03 The Committee shall appoint from amongst its members two Secretaries, a Senior and a Junior, a Secretary and an Assistant Secretary whose duties shall be regulated by the Committee from time to time.

5B.04 A vacancy on the Committee shall be filled by the vote of the Conference from the names of three ordained ministers or lay persons, as required, nominated by the Committee, and any additional nominations in the Conference.

Meetings and duties of the Ordained Ministry Committee

5B.05 The Committee shall:

(a) normally meet in October, January and April;

(b) oversee the process for those candidating for the ordained ministry and make recommendations to the Ministerial Session of the Conference;
(c) in consultation with the Discipline and Advisory Committee, monitor the progress of all those in training for the ordained ministry through to ordination and make recommendations to the Ministerial Session of the Conference;

(d) in consultation with Edgehill Theological College determine the required studies and reading for Probationer ministers;

(e) appoint a Ministerial Psychological Assessor to oversee the psychological testing of all candidates and psychological formation during training;

(f) appoint the officers of the Committee along with the Director of Ministry to consider all matters relevant to the Committee between meetings of the Committee;

(g) and (h) previously 4B.03 (f) and (g)

5C Candidacy
5C.01 to 5C.18 previously 4B.04 to 4B.21

5D Training, Probation, and Ordination
Training
5D.01 to 5D.06 previously 4B.22 to 4B.27, deleting the former 4B.24(b) and in the former 4B.24(a) replacing “itinerant” with “ordained”.

Probation
5D.07 to 5D.13 previously 4B.29 to 4B.32, deleting the word “woman” from the former 4B.31(a) and changing “her” to “her/his” in the former 4B.31(a) and (b), and dividing 4B.29 into two paragraphs and 4B.30 into three.

Reception into Full Connexion and Ordination
5D.14 previously 4B.33

Recognition of Ordained Ministers of Other Churches
5D.15 to 5D.16 previously 4B.34 to 4B.36

Acceptance of Students and Candidates for Elder of the United Methodist Church
5D.17 previously 4B.37, replacing “deacons” with “candidates for elder” and “appropriate authority” with “Bishop”.

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5E Discipline and Advisory Committee

5E.01 The Discipline and Advisory Committee shall:

(a) work with the staff of Edgehill Theological College to monitor the progress of students preparing for ordained ministry and shall assist them in the guidance of that progress;

(b) work with the Officers of the Ordained Ministry Committee and the Director of Ministry to monitor the progress of probationers and shall assist them in the guidance of that progress;

5E.02 The Committee shall be appointed annually by Conference and consist of:

(a) the President, the Lay Leader, the Secretary of the Conference;

(b) the Senior and Junior Secretaries of the Ordained Ministry Committee;

(c) the full-time ministerial staff of Edgehill College;

(d) the Ministerial Psychological Assessor;

(e) two members of the Edgehill College Board of Governors (one ministerial and one lay) who shall be nominated by that Board and serve for a period of three years;

(f) two members of the Ordained Ministry Committee (one ministerial and one lay) who shall be nominated by that Committee and serve for a period of three years;

(g) four others, two of whom shall be ministers and two of whom shall be lay persons who shall reflect areas of interest and expertise pertaining to the business of the committee, and who shall serve for a period of three years.

5E.03 On occasions when a matter of discipline arises among those within the Committee’s jurisdiction, the ministerial members of the committee may function as a ministerial session of Synod.

5E.04 In its duties, the Committee shall not in any case interfere with those of the Governors of Edgehill Theological College, as laid down in the Methodist College (Northern Ireland) Act 1928.

5F Itinerancy

5F.01 to 5F.08 previously 4C.01 to 4C.08
5G Modes of Ordained Ministry
5G.01 to 5G.15  previously 4C.09 to 4C.24

5H Leave from Ordained Ministry
5H.01 to 5H.11  previously 4D.01 to 4D.11
5H.012 to 5H.20  previously 4D.18 to 4D.26

5I Special Committee
5I.01 to 5I.07  previously 4D.12 to 4D.17

5J Resignation and Reinstatement
5J.01 to 5J.07  previously 4E.01 to 4E.07

5K Retirement and Death
5K.01 to 5K.14  previously 4F.01 to 4F.14

5L Disciplinary Proceedings for Ordained Ministers
5L.01  Discipline in the Church is an exercise of that spiritual authority which the Lord Jesus has appointed in His Church. The ends contemplated by discipline are the maintenance of the purity of the Church, the spiritual benefit of the members and the honour of our Lord. All members and ministers of the Church are subject to its government and discipline and are under the care of its Courts, which, for disciplinary purposes, are:

(a)  in the case of members - the Church Council (see Chapter 2)
(b)  in the case of local preachers – the Circuit Executive, the District Disciplinary Committee, the District Synod and the Conference. (see Chapter 6)
(c)  in the case of ordained ministers – the District Pastoral Committee, the District Disciplinary Committee, the District Synod, and the Conference, as described below.
5L.02 to 5L.04  previously 5.13 to 5.15

District Pastoral Committee
The District Pastoral Committee shall be appointed at the Ministerial Session of the Spring Synod each year.

The Committee shall consist of the District Superintendent (except where he/she is the subject of a reference to the committee in which case the President of the Conference shall appoint a minister not necessarily stationed on the District, and that minister shall in respect of the matter affecting the District Superintendent exercise all the functions powers and duties exercisable by the District Superintendent under this Chapter), two ministers neither of whom shall be eligible to serve on a District Disciplinary Committee whilst members of a District Pastoral Committee.

The Committee shall be convened by the District Superintendent when a complaint or charge has been received under the provisions, unless he/she decides that it is not desirable to convene such a meeting of the District Pastoral Committee, in which case he/she shall notify the person or persons making the complaint or charge who may then, if they so desire, request a hearing before the District Disciplinary Committee.

The District Superintendent shall also convene such a meeting when he/she considers it to be desirable following preliminary inquiry and counselling relating to any belief allegation or concern that a minister or probationer is in need of help, or may not be observing the discipline or the moral standards required of a minister or probationer.

The Committee shall consider the complaint or charge or hear the belief allegation or concern and decide if the matter should proceed to the District Disciplinary Committee.

If the matter is to proceed to the District Disciplinary Committee, the Committee shall formulate a charge to be preferred by the Secretary of the District Synod or other minister appointed by the District Pastoral Committee, within ten days of the decision of the District Pastoral Committee having been made.

If the decision is not to proceed to hearing by a District Disciplinary Committee, the Committee shall notify the person or persons who brought to the attention of the District Superintendent the complaint or charge, the belief allegation or concern, who shall then be free, if they so desire, to invoke the
appropriate provisions for the hearing of the matter by a District Disciplinary Committee.

**District Disciplinary Committee**

5L.07  (a) previously 5.18

(b) The District Disciplinary Committee shall consist of not less than seven ordained ministers, who shall, if possible, be chosen from the District in which the accused person resides, as follows:

- the District Superintendent (or where he/she is an interested party, a minister nominated by the President of the Conference);
- two ordained ministers chosen by the accuser;
- two ordained ministers chosen by the accused;
- two by the District Superintendent or minister appointed by the President.

(c) Should either the accuser or accused neglect or refuse to nominate ministers within seven days after being called upon to do so, the District Superintendent or minister appointed by the President shall choose ministers to complete the constitution of the District Disciplinary Committee.

(d) The Committee shall be convened by the District Superintendent within ten days of the District Pastoral Committee having considered the matter and decided to refer a charge to the District Disciplinary Committee.

(e) The District Superintendent shall give to each of the parties concerned at least seven clear days’ notice of the time and place appointed for the meeting of such District Disciplinary Committee.

(f) The District superintendent shall transmit to the person against whom a charge has been preferred an exact copy of the charge made against her/him together with the name or names of the person or persons by whom the charge is preferred.

(g) The District Disciplinary Committee shall apply the rules of procedure for the hearing of a charge or complaint against a Local Preacher before the Circuit Executive (See Chapter 6).

(h) The Committee shall have power, if it sees fit, to suspend the accused minister or probationer until the ensuing Spring Synod or until the Conference. A minister or probationer under
suspension shall not be entitled to sit or vote in the Synod or in the Conference while her/his suspension is continued, but shall be entitled to be present while the charge made against her/him is under consideration.

(i) If the hearing is held before the Spring Synod, the Committee shall report to that Synod its proceedings and recommendations and with such report transmit to the Secretary of Synod its duly confirmed minutes.

(j) If the hearing is held in the interval between the Spring Synod and the Conference, the Committee shall report directly to the Ministerial Session of the Conference unless notice of appeal has been given (in which case the procedure outlined below under “Hearing of appeal at the Conference” shall be followed). The Conference shall consider the report and recommendations of the District Disciplinary Committee, confining discussion to the matters already established in evidence as disclosed in the report and minutes before it. No re-hearing or additional evidence shall be introduced or heard. The Conference shall pronounce final judgement thereon.

(k) When a charge or complaint is preferred against a minister or probationer who has removed from the District in which the subject of the charge or complaint took place, and a serious hindrance would be caused to the attendance of witnesses, it is in the power of the President of the Conference to direct, if he/she thinks fit, that the case be tried in a District Disciplinary Committee of that District from which the charge or complaint is preferred, but the proceedings shall be fully reported to the Superintendent of the District in which the minister or probationer is stationed, to the Spring Synod of that District, and to the President of the Conference.

Hearing at the District Synod
5L.08  (a) The District Synod, in its Ministerial Session, shall consider the report of the District Disciplinary Committee. The proceedings shall be confined to a motion for the adoption of the report. The discussion thereon shall be confined to matters included in the report and minutes without hearing any evidence, additional or otherwise, and without any matter of fact, or alleged matter of fact, being introduced or referred to in the discussion which has not been given in evidence before the District Disciplinary Committee. The Synod may confirm or dissent from the report, wholly or in part, or may vary any of its recommendations.
(b) Ministers who have been members of the District Disciplinary Committee shall not be precluded from taking part in the proceedings of the Spring Synod while the proceedings of such District Disciplinary Committee are under consideration, nor shall the Superintendent of the District be precluded from presiding during the consideration of the proceedings of the District Disciplinary Committee, unless he/she is either the accuser or the accused.

**Hearing of appeal at the Conference**

5L.09  (a) If either party shall desire to have the charge re-heard by the Conference he/she shall give notice of appeal in the manner provided with reference to charges against Local Preachers (see Chapter 6), and the same course of procedure shall then be followed as provided with reference to such charges. No appeal from the decision of a Synod or District Disciplinary Committee shall be entertained by any Conference save that immediately following the meeting of the Synod or District Disciplinary Committee concerned, except by special leave of the Conference, on the recommendation of a committee appointed to investigate the application to entertain such appeal.

(b) No charge brought by one ordained minister or probationer against another shall be heard in the Conference unless it has been dealt with in accordance with the foregoing procedures relating to charges, or unless the matter alleged in such charge be so recent as to render such prior investigation impossible.

(c) The Conference shall take into consideration the report and recommendations of the Spring Synod, or a District Disciplinary Committee, with reference to proceedings founded upon a charge or complaint, and shall pronounce final judgment thereon. The discussion in the Conference shall be confined to the matters already established in evidence as disclosed by the reports and minutes before it, and there shall be no rehearing and no additional evidence introduced or heard.

5L.10 to 5L.11  *previously* 5.26 to 5.27

5L.12 (a) to (d)  *previously* 5.28 to 5.31

**Discipline of District Superintendents**

5L.13 (a) to (d)  *previously* 5.32 to 5.35

**Disciplinary proceedings involving the President**

5L.14  *previously* 5.36
The Conference adds the following new Chapter 6 to the Manual of Laws. All subsequent chapters of the Manual of Laws are re-numbered accordingly and any reference within the Manual of Laws to any re-numbered legislation is adjusted appropriately.

CHAPTER 6
LAY MINISTRY

Contents
6A Lay Ministry Committee
6B Local Preachers
6C Disciplinary Proceedings for Local Preachers
6D Lay Presidency at the Lord’s Supper
6E Lay Employment

6A Lay Ministry Committee

6A.01 The Lay Ministry Committee has been established to facilitate the discipleship of lay people in the Methodist Church in Ireland and to help them become who God wants them to be, through the provision of opportunities and resources for learning and growth.

(a) The Lay Ministry Committee aims to recognise the value of vocational lay employees through the provision of training, support and resourcing, and to allow for greater co-ordination among the different people and departments of the Methodist Church in Ireland who are concerned with the provision of training and learning opportunities for lay people.

(b) The work of the Lay Ministry Committee involves the support, training and resourcing of vocational lay employees and volunteers exercising specific roles and ministries, and the encouragement and support of good practice among those providing training and learning opportunities.

6A.02 The Lay Ministry Committee shall consist of:

(a) The President and the Secretary of Conference;

(b) The Lay Leader of the Conference, who shall chair the Committee;
(c) Two representatives appointed by the connexional Local Preachers’ Committee;

(d) The General Secretary of the Irish Methodist Youth and Children’s Department (IMYC);

(e) A representative appointed by the IMYC Executive;

(f) The Training and Development Officer, who shall act as convener.

6A.03 The Committee shall have the power to co-opt additional members as required.

6B Local Preachers

6B.01 previously 4G.01

6B.02 previously 27.01

Nomination and Appointment

6B.03 to 6B.16 previously 4G.02 to 4G.15

District Secretaries

6B.10 to 6B.12 previously 27.02 to 27.04

6B.13 The Sunday following Easter shall be recognised as Local Preachers’ Sunday, on which as far as possible pulpits shall be occupied by Local Preachers.

Regulations concerning circuit Local Preachers’ Meetings are found in Chapter 10 CIRCUIT ORGANISATION.

6C Disciplinary Proceedings for Local Preachers

6C.01 to 6C.11 previously 5.02 to 5.12

6D Lay Presidency at the Lord’s Supper

6D.01 to 6D.06 previously 4G.16 to 4G.21

6E Lay Employment

6E.01 to 6E.06 previously 4H.01 to 4H.06

The Conference deletes Chapter 27 LOCAL PREACHERS and re-numbers the subsequent chapters accordingly.
Local Preachers’ Committee

We are very grateful for the opportunity to report on the ongoing work of Local Preachers throughout the Methodist Church in Ireland. Every year the Committee is enormously encouraged by the number of men and women who offer for this ministry and for the many who after successfully completing their studies have been awarded their “Fully Accredited” certificates at Services of Recognition.

The importance of this ministry is reflected in the rigorous preparation and study involved in the training process. Each Local Preacher in training will:

- Complete Faith & Worship with all the assignments;
- Produce a Worship Portfolio containing: Personal reflections on four acts of worship at which s/he was present but not responsible for worship; reports on two acts of worship for which the student was responsible and a transcript of a sermon from one of the reported services.
- Keep a Log of Practical Experience recording contributions to services and sermons preached, accompanied by reports and evidence of other courses/training completed;
- Complete eight exegeses of set passages;
- Read at least four books from the reading list;
- Conduct an appraisal service;
- Be interviewed by the Circuit Executive on their journey of faith, call to preach, and Methodist doctrine and practice and give a brief synopsis of one of Wesley’s sermons.

This is no inconsiderable ministry and the Committee wonders whether, as a church, we always value and appreciate the contribution our local preachers bring to our worship. After completing such a rigorous and meticulous training course, it is essential that our Local Preachers are afforded the colleagueship they deserve and are given every opportunity to lead worship and preach, enabling them to fulfil their call. If we think only of our Local Preachers as filling gaps in the preaching plan when the minister is not available or wants a Sunday off, then we do our preachers a great disservice, indeed denying them the opportunity to develop their ministry and robbing the local church of the gifts and graces they bring to this ministry. Rather, the ministry of local preachers complements and enhances the worship life of our churches. One of the overarching themes of the review has been to ‘revalue’ Local Preachers and an added extra has been a new appreciation of the ‘Office’ of Local Preacher in the life and witness of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

In our Review we have said that becoming a ‘Fully Accredited’ Local Preacher will always involve more than just taking a course. Relevant practical
experience, and reflection on that practice, represents an integral part of the process. It is therefore expected that each Local Preacher in training will both be offered and avail themselves of every opportunity to lead worship, preach and otherwise engage with related areas of work and witness within their local church.

**Edgehill Faith & Worship and Local Tutors:** The Committee continues to appreciate the Faith and Worship Class that runs every year at Edgehill College. We are grateful to the Tutor who offers more than just support and encouragement to students and to Edgehill College for making available the space to deliver this course. This is an excellent resource and one that is used widely by Local Preachers in training and others besides. The Committee also wants to express its gratitude to our band of Local Tutors who have offered to support and mentor students locally. Theirs is a very considerable and significant role as they help students work through all the necessary steps towards becoming ‘Fully Accredited’ Local Preachers.

**District Local Preachers Secretaries:** We are very grateful for the service and commitment District Local Preacher Secretaries make to Local Preaching. The Committee acknowledges and appreciates our District Local Preachers Secretaries as they continue to provide on the ground support and encouragement to colleagues and as they initiate opportunities for Local Preachers to come together at District level for fellowship and training.

**Services of Recognition:** The Ministerial Secretary had the privilege of speaking at a number of Services of Recognition for Local Preachers throughout Ireland. These services are enormously important for both the Local Preacher and the local congregation. They are services of public worship where the ‘Office’ of Local Preacher is honoured and where the Local Preacher is commissioned and affirmed in her/his ministry, ‘sent out’ as God’s messenger and ‘Recognised’ by the local Circuit in which s/he will serve, but also ‘Recognised’ by the Methodist Church In Ireland. This is a very important event in the Local Preacher’s life and in the life of our Church and the Committee wants to encourage all Circuit Superintendents to ensure that all our LPs are recognised in this way.

There can be no doubt that as a church we are truly blessed as men and women with varying skills, gifts and personalities support colleagues in our endeavour to make known abroad the grace and mercy of God. As a church we are eternally grateful to God for continuing to call men and women to this ministry and deeply appreciative that men and women hear that call and respond. We are very aware of the sacrifice offered as they commit to study to equip and enable themselves for this particular service.
The Preachers Meeting: Circuit Superintendents are being encouraged to establish Preachers Meetings on their Circuits. There is a paragraph repeated several times in the ‘Review’ documents that we feel is necessary to repeat here as well: "...in Circuits where there is no functioning Local Preachers’ Meeting...the Circuit Executive will assume the responsibilities of the Local Preachers’ Meeting..." This paragraph should not be necessary if ‘Preachers’ meetings were in place. It’s surprising, given the importance of such a meeting that there are still Circuits where they do not exist and Circuit Executives are being asked to pick up the slack. There is compelling evidence that Circuits that have Preachers Meetings find them an invaluable resource of support and pastoral care providing opportunities for stimulating, building up, encouraging and disciplining all preachers on the Circuit. These meetings provide safe places for preachers, ordained and lay to discuss the business in hand and enjoy fellowship together. The ‘Recommendations and Guidelines’ below seek, in the strongest terms possible to encourage that where no such meeting exists on a Circuit, one should be established.

Signed Declarations: One of the changes to Local Preacher procedures is the requirement for local preachers to sign a declaration confirming their willingness to preach and teach our doctrines and observe the discipline of the Methodist Church in Ireland. This is not all that different from what was previously asked of Local Preachers, that if they couldn’t be present at a Preachers’ meeting that they confirm in writing their allegiance to the doctrines and discipline of our church. Given the value of the Office of Local Preachers within Irish Methodism I cannot foresee a situation where anyone would not want to make such a declaration.

The ‘Review’ has taken us three years to get to this point. The Committee commends it to you in deep appreciation to all who gave of their time and expertise to ensure that Local Preaching in the Methodist Church In Ireland continues to complement the life and witness of the local church.

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the report.
2. The Conference re-appoints Rev Mervyn G. Ewing as Ministerial Secretary.
3. The Conference re-appoints Mr David Allen as Lay Secretary.
4. The Conference amends paragraph 27.01 of the Manual of Laws (2004, revised 2011) as follows,
27.01 A Committee shall be appointed annually by the Conference, to promote the efficiency and work of Local Preachers. It shall be constituted as follows:

- The President of the Conference
- The Lay Leader of the Conference
- The Secretary of the Conference,
- The Ex-President of the Conference
- The Secretaries of the Committee,

A member of the staff The Principal of Edgehill Theological College, Belfast,
The District Secretaries for Local Preachers,

One Secretary The Secretaries of the Board of Examiners,

Up to two Three ministers and four eight lay members elected by the Conference.

The ministerial and lay secretaries shall be appointed annually by the Conference.

5. The Conference amends chapter 27.02 of the Manual of Laws (2004, revised 2011) by replacing paragraphs 27.02 – 27.06 with the following,

**District Secretaries**

27.02 The Spring Synod shall appoint a Local Preacher as District Secretary, who shall collect information concerning the work of Local Preachers on the District. The appointed person shall be an ex-officio member of the Synod and shall present a report at the Spring Synod. District Secretaries for Local Preachers shall keep a list of all Local Preachers on their Districts, which shall be presented annually to the Synod. They shall be responsible for arranging the appointments on the District for Local Preachers' Sunday.

27.03 District Local Preachers' Secretaries shall forward copies of their reports, through the Secretaries of Districts, to the Lay Secretary of the Local Preachers' Committee, immediately after they have been presented to the District Synods.

27.04 The statistical returns shall show as active Local Preachers all those who are able and willing to take appointments.

**District Monitors**

27.05 The District Synod shall appoint a District Monitor to facilitate the 10 year Review Process for all Local Preachers, as defined in the 'Regulations & Guidelines for Local Preachers' published annually in the Minutes of Conference.
The role of the District Monitor, who shall not be a Local Preacher, is to facilitate the process of Review by providing support and guidance to Local Preachers and, in conjunction with the District Local Preachers’ Secretary, to ensure that reviews are undertaken and completed within the required timeframe.

27.06 The regulations concerning the appointment of Local Preachers are found in paragraphs 4G.01 - 4G.18.

27.07 The regulations concerning Local Preachers’ Meetings are found in paragraphs 10.46 - 10.48.


4G.02 When an individual believes that God is calling her/him to become a Local Preacher and wants to test this call she/he will first have a conversation with her/his local Minister, who in turn shall inform the Superintendent Minister. Superintendent Ministers shall give special attention to suitable men and women in their Circuits, and, in co-operation with other Ministers and Local Preachers, as far as possible, assist in preparing them for this office.

4G.03 The Superintendent Minister shall have the responsibility of presenting, to the Local Preachers’ Meeting, as candidates for appointment as Local Preachers, persons who:

a. are able to give an account of their Journey of faith and call to preach

b. give evidence of genuine piety,

c. are zealous in promoting the work of God,

d. have the ability to express themselves with sufficient readiness and clearness,

e. intend to complete the training prescribed by Conference in the time allocated.

At the same time the Superintendent shall inform the Connexional Ministerial Local Preachers’ Secretary of the applicant's name and contact details so that they may be sent an Application Pack.

The Local Preachers’ Meeting shall examine the applicant using the set pro-forma questions. If satisfied that the applicant is suitable, it shall recommend to the Circuit Executive that the applicant be received as a ‘Local Preacher in Training’.
If the Circuit Executive agrees then the applicant will complete the Application Form and submit it, together with all supporting documentation to their Superintendent Minister.

In any circuit where there is no Local Preachers’ Meeting the duties of the Local Preachers’ Meeting shall be undertaken by the Circuit Executive.

**4G.04** The Superintendent Minister shall:

a. immediately after the Circuit Executive, forward the applicant’s Application Form and all supporting documentation (names of referees and any application for accreditation of prior learning) to the Connexional Local Preachers’ Ministerial Secretary.

b. in consultation with the Connexional Local Preachers’ Committee, appoint suitable persons as Local Tutors who shall supervise, and where appropriate teach, the prescribed training pathway as specified by the Committee.

c. in December of each year submit a written report on each Local Preacher in Training to the Connexional Local Preachers’ Ministerial Secretary.

**4G.05** The Connexional Local Preachers’ Committee shall:

a. scrutinise the application and confirm, or not, the recommendation of the Circuit Executive,

b. assess any application for accreditation of prior learning,

c. specify the training pathway that is best suited in the form of a Learning Plan,

d. agree the appointment of a Local Tutor,

e. review and assess the written reports submitted by the Circuit Superintendent each December.

**4G.06** Local Preachers in Training are required to:

a. undertake training as prescribed by the Connexional Local Preachers Committee and defined in the ‘Regulations & Guidelines for Local Preachers’, with the assistance of her/his Local Tutor.

b. study diligently the Word of God.

c. keep a Worship Portfolio as defined in the ‘Regulations & Guidelines for Local Preachers’.

d. keep a Log of Practical Experience as defined in the ‘Regulations & Guidelines for Local Preachers’.
e. write a synopsis of one of John Wesley’s Sermons which she/he shall choose from the list published in the Local Preachers’ section of the Methodist Church in Ireland’s website.

f. submit exegeses of set passages, as prescribed by their Learning Plan

g. read at least four books from the list published in the current Minutes of Conference.

The ‘Regulations & Guidelines for Local Preachers’ are published annually in the Minutes of Conference.

4G.07 The period in training shall normally not be less than one year and not more than four years, at the end of which the Local Preacher in training shall:

a. conduct an appraisal service, as arranged by the Superintendent Minister.

b. present to the Local Preachers’ Meeting
   I. her/his Log of Practical Experience,
   II. her/his Worship Portfolio
   III. a list of the books read
   IV. her/his written synopsis of one of John Wesley’s sermons

c. undergo, in the Local Preachers’ Meeting, an interview conducted by the Superintendent Minister or under her/his direction, using the pro-forma set of questions relating to her/his
   I. journey of faith,
   II. call to preach,
   III. Worship Portfolio and Log of Practical Experience,
   IV. the books she/he has read,
   V. synopsis of one of John Wesley’s sermons,
   VI. knowledge of and loyalty to Methodist doctrine in particular and Christian doctrine in general,
   VII. willingness to submit to Methodist discipline.

In any circuit where there is no Local Preachers’ Meeting the duties of the Local Preachers’ Meeting shall be undertaken by the Circuit Executive.

4G.08 When the candidate has satisfactorily completed the requirements in paragraphs 4G.06 and 4G.07 the Superintendent Minister shall report accordingly to the Circuit Executive and if the candidate’s general
effectiveness in preaching and in Christian work and her/his personal character are considered satisfactory by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting, the Circuit Executive shall recommend to the Connexional Local Preachers’ Committee that the candidate be received as a ‘fully accredited’ Local Preacher.

The Superintendent Minister shall then forward to the Connexional Local Preachers’ Ministerial Secretary:

a. the standard Report Form,
b. the candidate’s Worship Portfolio,
c. the candidate's Log of Practical Experience
d. the marks given in the candidate’s chosen training pathway

The Connexional Local Preacher’s Committee shall examine all the material and, if satisfied, shall issue a Certificate of Accreditation, to be presented at a recognition service locally.

The names of ‘fully accredited’ Local Preachers accepted during that Connexional year shall be recorded in the ensuing Minutes of Conference.

4G.09 If a candidate has not completed the requirements set out in paragraphs 4G.06 and 4G.07 above by the end of the four-year period, he/she may apply through the Local Preachers’ Meeting to the Circuit Executive to remain in training for an extended period, renewable annually. This renewal will be on the recommendation of the Circuit Local Preacher’s Meeting and with the approval of the Circuit Executive. The applicant shall be required to explain why the requirements have not been met. Only in exceptional circumstances, and with the consent of the Connexional Local Preachers’ Committee, shall the total period in training exceed eight years. If after this further period the requirements are still not completed, he/she shall cease to be regarded as a Local Preacher in training.

4G.10 Each Local Preacher is required to:

a. attend frequently fellowship meetings of the Church and the Lord’s Supper.
b. affirm annually, by completing and signing a declaration, that he/she continues to believe and preach our doctrines and to observe the discipline of the Church. This shall be countersigned by the Superintendent Minister and presented to the ensuing Circuit Executive in advance of the Spring Synod.

At the Spring Synod the Superintendent’s Questionnaire shall include the question, “Please confirm that the Local Preachers on your Circuit have
signed the Declaration affirming that they continue to believe and preach our doctrines and observe the discipline of the Methodist Church in Ireland and that this has been noted by the March Circuit Executive”.

4G.11 Each Local Preacher who has not retired is required to:

a. commit to 15 hours of further learning or training per year.

b. undergo a Review every 10 years.

4G.12 If the Local Preacher is unwilling to sign the Declaration required by paragraph 4G.10 above this will result in the name of the Local Preacher being removed from the Circuit Preaching Plan and the Connexional list of Local Preachers.

In a case where the Local Preacher does sign the Declaration but the Circuit Executive has reason to doubt her/him, the matter shall be reported to the District Synod which shall then arrange to convene a District Disciplinary Committee.

4G.13 If a Local Preacher behaves in a manner considered by the Circuit Executive to be inappropriate or a charge is made against a Local Preacher, she/he will be subject to the Disciplinary Procedures set out in Chapter 5.

4G.14 When a Local Preacher has resigned because he/she has been unable to subscribe to Methodist doctrine and discipline and seeks to be reinstated as a Local Preacher he/she shall:

a. make application through the Superintendent Minister to the Circuit Executive. Such application shall not be made until two years have elapsed from her/his re-admission to Membership of the Methodist Church, or if membership has not ceased, until two years from the date of her/his resignation.

b. be examined at the Circuit Executive. Re-instatement shall require a two-thirds majority in favour of the application of those present and voting.

4G.15 When a Local Preacher has been asked to resign, or been removed, due to behaviour thought to be inappropriate for anyone called to be a preacher of the Gospel, and seeks to be re-instated she/he shall:

a. make application through the Superintendent Minister to the Circuit Executive. Such application shall not be made until five years have elapsed from her/his re-admission to Membership of the Methodist Church, or if membership has not ceased, until five years from the date of her/his resignation or removal.
b. have her/his application for re-instatement referred to the District Disciplinary Committee, the report from which shall be considered before the application proceeds to the Circuit Executive.

c. be examined at the Circuit Executive. Re-instatement shall require a two-thirds majority in favour of the application of those present and voting.

4G.16 No person who has been suspended or expelled from the Ministry shall be employed as a Local Preacher without the consent of the Conference.

4G.17 A Local Preacher removing from one Circuit to another shall, on production of her/his Certificate of Accreditation as a Local Preacher, together with a letter from the Superintendent Minister stating that she/he is in good standing, be placed on the plan of the latter Circuit.

4G.18 Circuit and Society Treasurers shall be responsible for the payment of travelling expenses to all Local Preachers who conduct services on their Circuits, as outlined in the Minutes of Conference.


10.47 The business of the Local Preachers' Meeting shall be to:-
a. appoint a Secretary from among the members of the Meeting.
b. arrange, under the direction of the Superintendent Minister, and for such a period as may be determined, a plan of the appointments to be supplied by the Local Preachers.
c. enquire into the efficiency and faithfulness of the Local Preachers on the Plan.
d. judge the suitability of persons nominated to be admitted as Local Preachers in training, or to be fully accredited as Local Preachers, and to receive or reject them, subject to the conditions specified in paragraphs 4G.03 and 4G.07.
e. make general arrangements for the carrying on of the work, and for the increase of the efficiency of its members.

10.48 The Sunday following Easter shall be recognised as Local Preachers' Sunday, on which as far as possible worship shall be led by Local Preachers.

8. The Conference approves the printing of the following “Regulations & Guidelines for Local Preachers” in the Minutes of Conference.
REGULATIONS & GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL PREACHERS

A. TRAINING & ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Circuit Superintendent
1. The Superintendent Minister will have the responsibility of:
   a. Prayerfully considering the applicant’s call to the office of Local Preacher.
   b. Informing the Ministerial Secretary of the Connexional Local Preachers’ Committee of the name and contact details of the applicant.
   c. Presenting the applicant to the Circuit Local Preachers’ Meeting.
   d. Forwarding the applicant’s application with accompanying documentation to the Ministerial Secretary of the Connexional Local Preachers’ Committee.
   e. In consultation with the Accreditation Sub-committee, appointing a Local Tutor for the Local Preacher in Training.
   f. Sending a written report on each Local Preacher in Training to the Ministerial Secretary of the Connexional Local Preachers’ Committee in December of each year, for scrutiny by the Accreditation Sub-Committee.

Accreditation Sub-Committee
2. Appointed by the Connexional Local Preachers’ Committee this Sub-committee will act on the Committee’s behalf to:
   a. Supervise the process;
   b. Scrutinise all applications for the office of Local Preacher;
   c. Assess requests for accreditation of prior learning;
   d. Specify a training pathway for each applicant;
   e. In consultation with Circuit Superintendents, appoint a suitable Local Tutor for each Local Preacher in Training and provide her/him with a Local Tutor’s Handbook;
   f. Moderate the marks given in respect of the assessed elements of each training plan;
   g. Review & assess the written reports submitted by the Circuit Superintendent each December;
   h. Review the recommendations of Circuit Executives on the completion of training;
   i. Issue Certificates of Accreditation.

Application Process
3. Anyone sensing a call to become a Local Preacher should, in the first instance, discuss this with their local minister.
4. If both parties agree that it is appropriate to proceed then the minister will inform the Superintendent Minister, who in turn will inform the Ministerial
Secretary of the Connexional Local Preachers’ Committee, providing the name and contact details of the potential applicant.

5. On receipt of the applicant’s details the Ministerial Secretary will forward an ‘Application Pack’ to her/him. This will consist of an application form together with other supporting information. This application pack is also available at http://www.irishmethodist.org/local-preachers

6. Having prayerfully considered that the applicant may indeed have a call to the office of Local Preacher, the Superintendent Minister will bring her/his name to the ensuing Circuit Local Preachers’ Meeting where the applicant will be examined, using a pro forma set of questions, with regard to her/his call and journey of faith.

7. If the Local Preachers’ Meeting is satisfied then it will recommend to the Circuit Executive that the applicant be received as a ‘Local Preacher in Training’. If the Circuit Executive agrees then the Applicant will be invited to complete the application form that was included in the application pack.

8. In Circuits where there is no Local Preachers’ Meeting the duties of the Local Preachers’ Meeting will be undertaken by the Circuit Executive.

9. The application form with the names of two referees and all the attachments (see ‘Accreditation of Prior Learning’ below) should then be returned to the Ministerial Secretary of the Connexional Local Preachers’ Committee by the Circuit Superintendent.

10. The Accreditation Sub-Committee of the Connexional Local Preachers’ Committee will scrutinise the application and, if satisfied, accept the applicant as a ‘Local Preacher in Training’.

Accreditation of Prior Learning

11. If the applicant wishes that existing study/learning experience be taken into consideration through the accreditation of prior learning, they should indicate this on the application form. The applicant should include with the application evidence of the learning (e.g. copies of transcripts, a list of subjects and marks, with details of the accrediting College/University) together with a 300 word statement outlining the learning experience and demonstrating its relevance to Local Preacher training.

12. The application for accreditation of prior learning will always be against aspects of the training in either of the Training Pathways and never against the Worship Portfolio or Portfolio of practical experience.

13. Where accreditation of prior learning is sought against a university accredited course, this is always subject to the regulations of the university concerned and at their discretion.

14. Where accreditation of prior learning is sought against the Faith and Worship course the applicant will be required to demonstrate a degree of knowledge and understanding of the Christian scriptures. Each application will be considered independently, measured against the learning outcomes detailed in the Faith and Worship course material, and at the discretion of the Accreditation Sub-Committee.
Training Phase
15. The Accreditation Sub-Committee will produce a Learning Plan for each Local Preacher in Training, specifying the most suitable Training Pathway and taking into consideration any application for accreditation of prior learning.
16. The Circuit Superintendent, in consultation with the Accreditation Sub-Committee, will appoint a Local Tutor to supervise and guide the Local Preacher in Training and undertake any other duties that are specified by the selected Training Pathway. The Local Tutor need not be a minister but must have the ability to teach, understand the commitment to a lengthy period of work and be willing to undertake mandatory training.
17. Regardless of the chosen Training Pathway, each Local Preacher in Training will be required to:
   a. Produce a Worship Portfolio containing:
      • Personal reflections on four acts of worship at which she/he was present but not responsible for worship;
      • Reports, presented to the student, on two acts of worship for which she/he was responsible;
      • A statement indicating how she/he will address any issues identified by these reports;
      • A transcript of a sermon from one of the reported services.
   b. Keep a ‘Log of Practical Experience’ recording practical experiences of training, including contributions to services and sermons preached, accompanied with reports and evidence of other courses/training completed. This portfolio should be started immediately on commencement of training.
   c. Write a synopsis of one of John Wesley’s sermons which she/he will choose from the list published at http://www.irishmethodist.org/local-preachers
   d. Two exegeses of set passages, making eight in total; these are published each year at www.irishmethodist.org/local-preachers
   e. Read at least four books from the Reading List, published at http://www.irishmethodist.org/local-preachers
18. It is important to emphasise the fact that becoming a ‘Fully Accredited’ Local Preacher will always involve more than just taking a course. Relevant practical experience, and reflection on that practice, represents an integral part of the process. It is therefore expected that each Local Preacher in training will both be offered and avail themselves of every opportunity to lead worship, preach and otherwise engage with related areas of work and witness within their local church.

Training Pathway ‘A’
19. The training course for Pathway ‘A’ is ‘Faith & Worship’.
a. Students are expected to complete the course in not less than 2 years and not more than 4 years.
b. The assigned Local Tutor will supervise and, where appropriate, teach the course, ensuring that she/he has all the supporting course materials; downloadable from http://www.irishmethodist.org/local-preachers
c. Each student must have the course material, the cost of which is borne by the Circuit.
d. For each section of Faith & Worship (of which there are four) the student will be required to submit the following for the purposes of assessment:
   i. The assignments, if any, as specified by the Learning Plan;
   ii. The exegeses of set passages as prescribed in 17d above.
e. The assignments that are to be completed in each part of Faith & Worship will be as specified in the student’s Learning Plan as produced by the Accreditation Sub-Committee.

Training Pathway ‘B’
20. Pathway ‘B’ will offer the student an opportunity to study a course which leads, or has the potential to lead, to a university accredited qualification.
21. This course will be taken through Edgehill Theological College and will be agreed between the student and the Accreditation Sub-Committee in consultation with the Director of Studies and/or the Principal of Edgehill.
22. Whatever course of study is chosen the subjects of Methodist theology and practice, worship and preaching and the Old and New Testaments must be covered.

Accreditation Process
23. In order to be fully accredited the Local Preacher in Training must successfully complete assessment by the Circuit Local Preachers’ Meeting and be recommended for accreditation by the Circuit Executive. This process is designed to test the call, character and competency of the Local Preacher in Training.
24. Each candidate for accreditation as a Local Preacher will conduct an appraisal service during which they will be responsible for the conduct of worship and will preach. The service will be assessed against standardised criteria by a panel appointed by the Local Preachers’ Meeting. This panel will consist of two ministers and two Local Preachers, one of whom will be the District Secretary for Local Preachers or their nominee. The panel will submit their report to the Local Preachers’ Meeting.
25. The candidate for accreditation will present to the Local Preachers’ Meeting:
   a. Evidence that they have successfully completed the specified Training Pathway (including marks for assignments, modules etc.)
b. Their Worship Portfolio.
c. Their ‘Log of Practical Experience’.
d. A list of the books from the Reading List that they have read.
e. A brief synopsis in their own words of one of John Wesley’s sermons, selected by the candidate from the list published at http://www.irishmethodist.org/local-preachers

26. Each candidate for accreditation as a Local Preacher will be interviewed by the Circuit Local Preachers’ Meeting using pro-forma set questions which will cover: all that they have submitted (above); their journey of faith and call to preach; and Methodist doctrine and practice.

27. The Local Preachers’ Meeting will report its conclusions to the Circuit Executive in the form of a recommendation that the candidate for accreditation be received, or not, as a Local Preacher.

28. The Circuit Executive will consider the report of the Local Preachers’ Meeting and either accept or reject the report; the decision must be agreed by two-thirds of those present and voting at the Circuit Executive.

29. After the meeting of the Circuit Executive, the Superintendent Minister will forward to the Ministerial Secretary of the Connexional Local Preachers’ Committee, for consideration by the Accreditation Sub-Committee, all of the documentation that was considered by the Local Preachers’ Meeting, the report of the Local Preachers’ Meeting and the decision of the Circuit Executive using the standard report form.

30. The Accreditation Sub-Committee will examine all of the material and if satisfied a Certificate of Accreditation will be issued, by the Connexional Local Preachers Committee, to be presented at a Service of Recognition locally.

31. Throughout the accreditation process, in Circuits where there is no functioning Local Preachers’ Meeting, or where other circumstances make it desirable, the Circuit Executive will assume the responsibilities of the Local Preachers’ Meeting. Where a functioning Local Preachers’ Meeting exists and the Circuit Executive assumes any or all of the responsibilities of that Meeting, the Circuit Superintendent will ensure that the Local Preachers’ Meeting is kept fully informed and that no fewer than 50% of the Local Preachers within the Circuit are invited to be present at the interview.

B. REVIEW AND LIFELONG LEARNING

32. It is recommended that Circuits take the opportunity annually to affirm and celebrate the ministry of Local Preachers at a service of public worship.

33. The Connexional Local Preachers' Committee appreciates the value of District Local Preachers’ gatherings and recommends that District Local Preachers’ Committees should consider holding two District gatherings per year, one for fellowship and one for training.

Local Preachers

34. Each Local Preacher is required to:
a. Attend frequently fellowship meetings of the Church and the Lord’s Supper;
b. Affirm annually, by completing and signing a declaration, that she/he continues to believe and preach our doctrines and observes the discipline of the Church.

35. Each Local Preacher who has not retired is required to:
   a. Commit to 15 hours of further learning or training per year;
   b. Undergo a Review every 10 years;

**Circuit Superintendents**

36. The Superintendent Minister is required to:
   a. Countersign the Local Preachers’ declaration, if she/he is in agreement, and present it to the ensuing Circuit Executive in advance of the Spring Synod.
   b. At the Spring Synod answer the question relating to Local Preachers on the Superintendents’ Questionnaire.

**10 Year Review Process**

37. The District Synod will appoint a District Monitor who will be both independent of and sympathetic to the office of a Local Preacher.

38. The role of the District Monitor will be to facilitate the process of Review by providing support and guidance to Local Preachers and, in conjunction with the District Local Preachers’ Secretary, to ensure that reviews are undertaken and completed within the required timeframe.

39. The District Monitor will be provided with Review Guidelines by the Ministerial Secretary of the Connexional Local Preachers’ Committee. The Review will seek to affirm and encourage the Local Preacher in her/his ministry. It will involve self-appraisal and peer supervision and will ascertain call, sense of fulfilment, opportunities for further learning, courses attended and refreshment.

40. The District Monitor will keep confidential records of the Review process for each Local Preacher on her/his District.

For directions regarding Local Preachers and Local Preachers Meetings see Manual of Laws paras. 4G.01 – 4G.18, 5.02 – 5.12 & 10.46 – 10.48
Edgehill Theological College

Edgehill has had another rewarding, though challenging year. We have sought to fulfil our role as the training arm of the Methodist Church in Ireland as we provide learning opportunities for lay people, student ministers and those who continue in Christian ministry. In addition we have continued to pursue the idea of making Edgehill the home for the headquarters for the Methodist Church in Ireland. At the time of writing we anticipate applying for planning permission in the very near future.

Ministerial Training
This year we hope that 6 Edgehill students will be commissioned as probationer ministers and begin to serve the Conference across the island of Ireland. They come from a variety of backgrounds, have a wide age range and offer many gifts. We hope and pray that the Church will find them worthy and gifted servants and that they will find this new phase of Christian service rich and rewarding.

Our main source of training courses for student ministers has been St John’s College Nottingham and we have tutored for their Theology for Ministry degrees, validated by the University of Chester. However, we always tailor-make courses for students as they come with such a variety of prior learning and experience. In the coming year St John’s are changing their validation to the University of Durham and this will mean some changes in our own courses. At the same time we are actively pursuing new possibilities of working with our partners here in Ireland, particularly the Church of Ireland.

Ministerial and University Teaching Arrangements
We are, as ever, grateful for those many people beyond full-time staff of the College who share responsibility for teaching in our University-validated modules and in other workshops and courses. This has been particularly the case in a year when our colleague Heather Morris has been absent because of her presidential duties. We thank, in particular, Mrs Lyn Gallagher (Voice Production), The Revd Dr Jim Williamson (Old Testament), The Revd Alan Lorimer (Pastoral Theology), The Revd Diane Clutterbuck (Leadership and Teamwork), Dr Anita Gracie (World Religions), Mr Alan Ker (Greek) and the Revd Britt Gilmore (Tutorial support and Pastoral Studies). We have welcomed Mrs Alison Gilmore for a major workshop on listening skills as well as many speakers from both the Methodist Church and further afield. We continue to enjoy our partnership with colleagues in the Mater Dei Institute of Education in Dublin and the SMA Fathers at Dromantine (Exploring Theology Together).

Thanks to Circuits and Supervisors
The Governors are grateful to those many people who have helped ministerial training through supervising placements, whether in Circuits or
other contexts. We have continued to share in the life of the Connexion through Edgehill Sundays in the Dublin North and Dungannon Circuits. We are sometimes able to fill appointments in the Districts and Circuits and would always welcome enquiries about this.

The Board of Governors wishes to acknowledge the work of the Principal who has carried extra teaching and administrative responsibilities recently when the teaching staff has been depleted in number. In addition to his usual teaching and pastoral responsibilities he has been required to respond to a variety of changes in the curricular and administrative requirements of our partner institutions. He has also been instrumental in exploring ways toward the most effective use of the College premises. With vision and commitment, Dr Clutterbuck continues to develop the work of the college.

Continuing Ministerial Development
The courses in pastoral supervision skills continued to be well supported and much appreciated. They are now ecumenical, welcoming participants from the Church of Ireland as well as the Methodist Church. In addition, a programme of workshops in different aspects of ministry and theology were held at Edgehill over the year.

Christian Education and Training
This year the lay training courses have been particularly well supported and indeed some have been full to capacity. ‘Walk in the Word’ continues to be a popular daytime course under the strong leadership of Hazel Loney. Heather Boland has continued to use her gifts of teaching and understanding in leading Faith and Worship. It attracts people who are training to be local preachers, but also those who use the course as a way of enriching their own faith and understanding. Other groups have attended courses on hospital visiting, on prayer ministry and pastoral care.

No9 Resource Centre
We were sorry that, in November, the No9 Resource Centre had to close because of adverse trading conditions over a long period. We are grateful to Mr Sam Campbell for his hard work in the role of manager.

Reconciliation Programme
It is sad to report that after fourteen years the Reconciliation Programme, founded through the energy and vision of Dennis Cooke has come to an end, as its funding stream from the EU Peace III initiative has run its course. Nevertheless, it is important that we celebrate this piece of work which has enriched the College and also made a difference in many situations across Ireland. In recent years there has been greater focus on the work of enriching ministerial training, for instance, through short visits to Bosnia to take part in reconciliation work there. There have also been creative initiatives that have produced animated films based on the testimony of young offenders or
immigrants to Ireland. The College and indeed the whole Church are very much in the debt of Dr Scott Boldt, whose leadership of the Programme for the last 8 years has been outstandingly creative and always self-giving. Ashleigh Hunter, who shares in the work with administration, has also taken an active part in the work of the Programme, which has given great support to the organisation EMBRACE through which churches have begun to engage with those who have made their home in Ireland. This year we have been grateful for Zachary Schmidt who has worked as an enthusiastic volunteer with particular gifts in music.

Exploring Theology Together
This ecumenical venture, based at the Dromantine Retreat Centre near Newry and delivered in partnership with the Mater Dei Institute, the Dublin City University and the SMA Fathers, has had another good year. Some students have been completing a full degree course while others have been finishing off their Certificate course. We hope that the relationship will continue, though we will no longer have the financial support that has come through the Reconciliation Programme.

Appreciation
Edgehill is very much a branch of the Methodist Church in Ireland. It serves the Church and it represents it. It trains people for ministry of many kinds. It also seeks to promote and develop thinking about the Christian faith and about our engagement with the world into which we are now emerging.

AGENDA
1. The Conference receives the report.

2. The Conference reappoints Revd Dr Richard Clutterbuck as Principal.


4. The Conference reappoints Revd Janet Unsworth as Director of Studies.

5. The Conference reappoints Revd David Neilands as Ministerial Treasurer of the Ministerial Training Fund.

6. The Conference reappoints Mr Alan Ker as Lay Treasurer of the Ministerial Training Fund.

7. The Conference expresses its thanks and appreciation to Revd Dr Heather Morris who, after ten years as the Director of Ministry, relinquishes that post in order to take up the post of General Secretary of the Home Missions Department. Heather came into a post that was new and made it her own. She brought to it a wide variety of gifts and has used them unsparingly and
sacrificially over these ten years. As a first class pastoral theologian Heather has taught and supervised many students in Edgehill and far beyond. As a pastor she has worked with probationers and candidates and ministers in ways that have encouraged growth with discernment and understanding. As a preacher and teacher she has used her rich gifts within the College and now much further afield. We are delighted that these gifts have been recognised through the position of President of the Methodist Church in Ireland and we wish Heather and Neil every blessing in the work to which they now go.
1. Challenging times:
The academic year of 2013-2014 has once again been very challenging for everyone involved in the management of schools including Boards of Management, school Principals and teachers. Over the last three years, given the international recession, the Irish Government has had to struggle with the general need to impose austerity measures designed to reduce overall expenditure in order to stabilize the economy generally. To do so they had to impose measures demanded by the International Monetary Fund and the European Union. As Education is one of the largest spending departments the Government has been forced to make major cutbacks year by year in this area. At both primary and secondary levels this resulted in steadily reducing teacher numbers paid by the State and raising pupil numbers in classes. Tensions between the Minister of Education and the teacher unions resulted in complex negotiations which resulted in threats of industrial action and which at one point led to secondary school teachers withdrawing their co-operation from certain aspects of their normal work, including refusing to meet parents outside normal school hours. The general position remains uncertain however.

2. Primary level:
There is no doubt that the increases in class sizes impose major pressures on primary teachers. The amounts of funding given from the government to school Boards of Management have been reduced forcing them to try to raise funds locally. These problems impose particular difficulties in the case of very small schools with perhaps only 2 or 3 teachers. There are many such schools, particularly those serving Protestant families, where amalgamating with other schools in order to achieve more viable units would result in such pupils having to travel long distances each day in order to get to and from school.

3. Issues of Church and State
As reported last year issues relating to school patronage can be controversial. There has been some development whereby some new schools starting up are more likely than heretofore not to be under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Church. There have been some changes made whereby that Church is now willing to hand over some of their former schools to other patron bodies. The Minister for Education, Ruairi Quinn, has been keen to support a principle of giving parents a choice of patronage when new schools are being established. It is likely that schools categorised as “multidenominational” or “non-denominational” will be supported in some cases. The number of schools under the heading “Educate Together schools” has been on the
increase for some time. This is all part of the Minister’s determination to promote a pluralist model when establishing new schools. He has created some controversy in recent days by proposing that time spent on religious education and preparation for sacraments should give way to more time being given to core subjects such as reading and writing. He has taken a view that parents should arrange for the teaching of religion to be only a matter for families and churches.

4. Post-Primary issues:
Over the last few years cutbacks in funding have been steadily resulting in less and less financial support from the Government being given to all schools. In the case of the fee-charging secondary schools these have been hit much harder than other school categories. There has been a pattern of reducing the pupil-teacher ratio year by year, resulting in these schools having to meet the cost of paying for more and more of the teachers’ salaries from fee income. In anticipation of this happening again for the 2014 national budget a campaign was launched among the schools and parents in this sector arguing strongly that there should be no further increase in the pupil-teacher-ratio (PTR). There was a real fear that further cuts would be brought in. Fortunately, as it happened, the Minister managed to avoid having to impose any further increases of this kind this year.

5. Support for the SEC:
At the same time, however, the level of Government support for the Secondary Education Committee’s grant fund has been maintained for the present school year. Nevertheless this fund is due to be reviewed for the next academic year and beyond. This is very important as many families depend upon the grants received from the SEC and from such other sources as they may find elsewhere. Methodist families who qualify for an SEC grant can also apply to the Methodist Education fund for some further assistance. While this is a very limited fund it can nonetheless make a real difference in determining whether or not the parents concerned can afford to send their children to a Protestant school.

6. The Minister Plans Curriculum Reform:
The Minister for Education has been active in introducing a number of new initiatives designed to improve the overall standards of teaching and learning. For example, he has decided to abolish the Junior Certificate Examination which, over the years, has been taken by all pupils at the end of the junior cycle, i.e. after the first three second-level years. Mr Quinn believes that such a measure would enable pupils to achieve a more effective overall programme of teaching and learning and would reduce the stress of having to take a national examination at an inappropriately young age. This proposal has not been met with enthusiasm from the secondary teachers unions, particularly as they feel he is rushing far too quickly before introducing such a fundamental
change. This is likely to lead to further confrontation between the Minister and the teaching unions.

7. New Legislation Considered
Another issue causing concern arose when the Minister introduced what was called a “Draft General Scheme of an Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2013”. The general aim of what seems to be proposed is a regulation of policies which would be established to ensure overall fairness in the ways that schools should operate when selecting new pupils. This was presented with little time being given to analysing the details of what was being considered. There is a great fear that such a scheme might undermine the rights and duties of the members of Boards of Management when determining and implementing their admission policies. As might be expected the whole educational sector is likely to study very carefully the details and implications of what may prove to be highly controversial. For further information about this see the SEC issues which are attached to this report.

There is no doubt that there has been a broad range of initiatives for change coming through in recent years. It has not, however, been at all easy to expect that a willingness will be available to implement new initiatives at a time while cut-backs in basic funding have been imposing new pressures on all sectors of education. There may well be good ideas being generated but it will be essential to tread carefully to avoid these being thwarted by overactive enthusiasm.

8. A special tribute
This report would not be complete without praising the amazing achievement of the Wesley College pupils, teachers, parents and others (over 200 in all) who travelled to Romania last summer where they achieved the outstanding feat of building ten houses there all within a period of one week. The inspiration for this remarkable challenge was conceived and inspired by the Chaplain of the College the Rev. Nigel Mackey but all involved rose to the challenge with enthusiasm and well-earned success.

SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Membership

Church of Ireland
The Rt Rev Dr WP Colton, Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross (Chairman)
Mrs J.M. Bruton
Mr ER Lindsay
Mrs P O'Malley
Rev BJG O'Rourke
Ms EE Oldham
Mr AG Oughton
Mr G Perrin
The Presbyterian Church
Rev CM Hunter (Deputy Chairman)
Mrs E Petrie

The Methodist Church
Rev N Mackey
Dr JW Harris

The Religious Society of Friends
Mr AG Harrison
Mr DM Grubb

Secretary to the Board and to the Company
Dr KW Fennelly

Administrator (Grants Scheme)
Mr DJ Wynne

Secondary Education Committee
The Secondary Education Committee (SEC) is a corporate body comprising representatives from the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church in Ireland, The Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Religious Society of Friends.

The Committee derives its authority from a resolution passed by the sponsoring Churches in 1965.

The functions of the SEC are twofold. The distribution of a Block Grant provided by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to ensure necessitous Protestant children may attend Protestant secondary schools and the representation simultaneously of the interests of the member churches in the post-primary education system.

The Committee operates as a limited company thus allowing both the corporate body and the liability of individual members to be appropriately insured, with members of the committee being simultaneously directors of the company.

Block Grant Scheme
Enrolments in the twenty fee charging schools totalled 7,773 Day Pupils (7,732 in the previous year); 2,108 boarders (2,071); 9,881 in total (9,803). The figure does not include the five comprehensive schools. In the school year the audited accounts showed the total amount, received from the DES, was €6,500,000, (€6,500,000), the grant in aid of fees totalled €6,457,363
The net cost of administrating the SEC scheme was €146,642 (€145,807). There is no grant to assist the running of the office.

The following numbers of grants were awarded in respect of 2013/14 school year; 1,505 day grants (1,623), 821 boarding grants (819), in total 2,326 (2,442). The drop in Day Grants was caused by the entry of Kilkenny College into the ‘Free Scheme’.

While retaining the maximum grants, the committee were forced to reduce the ceiling of reckonable income to €40,000 (€1074 - €50,000) and to revise the grants for the school year 2013/14 on a scale for boarding from €1095 to €7767(€1074 - €7767) day €339 - €2820 (€414 - €2820). This resulted in reduced access to grants for a number of families.

The administrator, Mr Wynne and Mrs McAuley, Administrative Assistant, attended a number of open days at the request of schools and took the opportunity to discuss issues with individual parents. Mr Wynne also made contact with each school to discuss the functioning of the grants scheme.

Second Level Educational Developments
2013 saw the publication by the Minister for Education and Skills of ‘Fee-Charging School-Analysis of Fee Income’. This Analysis was conducted by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in 2012 and was based on a simple calculation of the schools’ stated fee income multiplied by the number of students in the school. One of the findings of the Analysis claimed that on average each fee-charging school (which account for 6% of all secondary schools) had €1.48 million “discretionary” income although the Analysis also indicated that such “discretionary” income varied from school to school “ranging from €112,000 for one relatively small school to €4.7 million for a large school” (Analysis, page 3). However, in response, the JMB highlighted that a PWC study has shown that the cost to the State on an annual basis for a pupil educated in a fee charging school is €4,552 compared to €8,035 in a free education school. In the course of a debate at the Joint Committee on Education in July 2013 on the issue, the Minister for Education and Skills advised that, on average, €103 milion is allocated from State funds to pay the salaries of teachers in such schools, an allocation would be paid regardless of whether or not the schools were free or private.

The SEC, through the Committee on Management, made a detailed submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education regarding the Draft General Scheme on an Education Act (Admission to Schools Bill), 2013. This ‘Admissions’ Bill proposes a number of changes to the operation of admissions to schools and is particularly relevant to Protestant secondary schools as it deals with such factors as the admission of siblings, past pupils and restrictions on boarding numbers. The Bill also makes provision for the
enrolment policy of a school to be determined by the Minister and, in certain circumstances, for the admissions to the school to be controlled by the Minister. It also proposes the abolition of the “Section 29” appeals process. The Bill has been considered at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education who have made a number of observations. The Bill has gone back to the Department of Education and Skills for re-consideration before being introduced in the Oireachtas at a later date.

The SEC notes again the announcement by Kilkenny College to join the free scheme and understands that a number of schools are engaged in similar negotiations with the DES regarding their futures. It should be highlighted that while some schools are involved in active negotiations, others are not in that position and may have come to another conclusion following discussions with the DES. In that regard the SEC notes that the Kings Hospital School, Palmerstown, Dublin issued a statement in February 2014 that, after much consideration, the Board of Governors have discounted any proposal to enter the free scheme.

The Memorandum of Agreement between the SEC and the DES will conclude in 2015. The SEC is in discussions regarding its renewal and the DES has assured the SEC that the annual amount of €6.5 million is secure. However, the SEC will naturally be seeking an increase in this amount in its negotiations with the DES.

The SEC notes that a number of principal level positions have seen change over the last year, including Mr Michael Hall moving to Sligo Grammar School from The Kings Hospital School in Palmerstown, Dublin; Mr Alan Cox moving from East Glendalough Comprehensive, Co. Wicklow to Temple Carrig Secondary School, Greystones, Co. Wicklow; Mr Peter Fraser to St Andrews College, Dublin and the appointment of Mr Craig Petrie to East Glendalough, Co. Wicklow.

The SEC wishes each well in their new appointments.

The SEC also wishes its Committee member Mr Adrian Oughton well in his retirement from Wilson’s Hospital School, Multyfarnham, Co. Westmeath, which will take effect from the end of the 2013/14 school year (as a nominee of the Church of Ireland Mr Oughton’s retirement does not affect his continuing role on the SEC). The members of the SEC wish Mr Oughton every happiness in his retirement.

The SEC is a Committee appointed by the four Protestant Churches who have involvement in second level schools. In this regard, the SEC wishes to highlight the 500th Anniversary of the promulgation by Rev. Martin Luther of his “95thesis” by nailing them to the door of Wittenburg Cathedral on the 31st
October 1517, commonly understood as the beginning of the Reformation movement in Western Christianity. To mark the anniversary the Protestant Churches in Europe are promoting an international project to connect online Protestant schools across Europe and beyond. Special events are also being planned to mark the anniversary including a youth camp in Wittenberg, Germany in 2017. Further information can be found at www.schools500reformation.net

Administration
The Committee appreciates the work of the Administrator, Mr David Wynne and the Administrative Assistant Ms Bridie McCauley. A number of administrative support staff are engaged during the busy processing period. The office is under the management of the (company) Secretary Dr Ken Fennelly. The committee is also grateful for the advice and assistance it receives throughout the year from its auditors Deloitte and in particular Mr Tom Cassin, Partner, Deloitte.

NORTHERN EXECUTIVE

Introduction
Working in partnership with other sister churches through its membership of the Transferor Representatives’ Council (TRC), the Methodist Church Board of Education Northern Executive seeks to maintain and develop a clear and shared vision of education in Northern Ireland shaped by core values of the Christian faith.

The Education and Skills Authority (ESA)
Although ESA was proposed some 8 years ago to replace 8 existing bodies involved in education – the 5 Education and Library Boards, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, the Youth Service, and the Staff Commission – and an Education Bill to create it was eventually laid before the Assembly in October 2012, regrettably, there is still no political will to deliver it. The existing bodies, either re-established or given an extension of tenure, have struggled particularly under staff vacancy controls to deliver the service, and it is a concern that the continuing uncertainty may well have a detrimental effect on the welfare of children.

Some small progress has been made in the establishment of the Executive Board to run ESA, and the nomination from Conference of Miss Rosemary Rainey OBE to be one of the four members representing the three main Transferor Churches of the Controlled Sector has been accepted by the Minister.
The Controlled Sector Support Body (CSSB)
There was an intention to establish a CSSB as part of the ESA package, to give equality of support to the Controlled Sector schools alongside similar previously existing Bodies in support of the Catholic Maintained, Integrated and Irish Medium Sectors. Regrettably, the Education Minister has now withdrawn funding from the working party that he had appointed to advise him on the purposes, finance and functionality of this Body, and the working party has effectively been stood down in the absence of the wider progress.

Shared Education
Significant debate has been maintained on this topic and a Ministerial Advisory Group for the Advancement of Shared Education has been engaging in wide consultation with stakeholders. It remains a key strand in the Programme for Government with the aim of ensuring that all children have the opportunity of participation in shared education programmes, and that schools are encouraged to share facilities and activities in “Area Learning Communities.” TRC representatives, on behalf of the Controlled Sector Churches, and the Roman Catholic Church have continued to take part in discussions with DE officials, in support of this initiative.

The Teaching of Religious Education
The Northern Executive continues to express its concerns about the extent of RE support services to Controlled schools in the present and future governance structures. Currently, due to retirements or redeployment, there is only one of the 5 ELBs with a Curriculum Advisor who has direct responsibility for supporting RE teachers in their subject. There is a fear that the subject will be further marginalized and school ethos damaged, and it was hoped that this would have been a key subject to be addressed by the Controlled Sector Support Body.

Area Based Planning
For some years the Education and Library Boards have been tasked with the responsibility of producing viability audits for schools in their areas with recommendations regarding school estates. In many cases quite radical Area Based Planning proposals, often involving possible amalgamations, collegiates and closures, have been suggested for debate and consultation and, to some, such as the proposals for the “Dickson Plan” in the Craigavon area, there has been major public reaction.

Pastoral Support for Schools
The Board of Education is convinced that schools are vibrant and essential parts of our community, but that staff, parents and children need and value encouragement and support from the Church. It would therefore continue to encourage all ministers to explore appropriate ways to offer pastoral ministry.
In particular, the Board regularly considers the area of Special Education and would wish to remind churches to be particularly aware of any Special schools which may be in their area.

**Reconstitution of Boards of Governors**

On instruction from the Department of Education, the ELBs have begun the process of appointing or reappointing members of the public to enable them to reconstitute Boards of Governors in schools in their areas. The Methodist Church, as one of the main Transferor churches, has been asked to nominate representatives where required, and, in this context, the Northern Executive, on behalf of the wider Church, would wish to express its deep appreciation to the many who have served, and will continue to serve, in this field of service. Particularly in the context of additional governance and accountability responsibility being placed on the shoulders of Governors, it is important that the Church acknowledges, appreciates and supports its representatives in prayer.

**AGENDA**

1. The Conference receives the report

2. The Conference re-appoints the General Secretary and Convenor of the Southern Executive: Dr John W. Harris.

3. The Conference appoints the Ministerial Treasurer and Convenor of the Northern Executive: Rev.

4. The Conference re-appoints the Lay Treasurer: Mr Kenneth Twyble.

5. Ulster Royal Schools: The Conference appoints the following representatives of the Methodist Church on the Protestant Local Boards for the coming year: Local Board of Armagh: Mr Henry McMullan; Local Board of Tyrone: Mrs Susan McQueen; Local Board of Fermanagh: Mr Peter M.C. Little.

6. The Conference endorses the following appointments as representatives of the Transferor Representatives’ Council: Rev. __________ , Miss Rosemary Rainey and Mr Kenneth Twyble.

7. Nominations: The Conference directs the Board of Education to nominate representatives of the Methodist Church in Ireland on the Boards of Governors/Management of schools, Area Boards or any succeeding body. The appointment of Transferor Representatives shall continue to be made as heretofore.
8. The Conference re-appoints Ms Daphne Wood as Methodist Observer to the Church of Ireland Board of Education.

9. The Conference re-appoints Rev. Nigel Mackey and Dr John W. Harris as the Methodist Representatives of the Methodist Church on the Secondary Education Committee for Protestant schools in the Republic of Ireland.

10. The Conference notes with deep concern the continued disadvantaged position of Controlled Schools throughout Northern Ireland due to a lack of dedicated advocacy and support body and calls upon the Minister of Education to take steps to resolve this injustice and ensure equality of treatment for all schools.

11. The Conference warmly supports the ongoing development of Shared Education in Northern Ireland and calls upon the Department of Education to ensure that its policies and schemes provide a range of incentivised options to encourage and facilitate schools to participate in models of sharing appropriate for their local community.
General Committee

A. Thanks to Revd Dr Heather M.E. Morris, President of the Conference.

The Methodist Conference on behalf of the Methodist people throughout Ireland, expresses its sincere thanks, and deep appreciation, to Rev. Dr. Heather M. E. Morris for the lead she has given the Church, and the wider community, in the past year.

Heather took as her theme “A people invited to follow,” and the various elements of this were carefully unpacked at a “Conference with a difference,” She continued to develop her theme throughout the Connexion during the year, encouraging us to be a people with “warm hearts, tough hands and wet feet” as we work for and witness to Jesus. Very helpfully, she provided study/sermon material for the month of January to follow the Covenant service. By encouraging churches to use it, the Connexional bond was strengthened.

In chairing of committees, Heather made careful preparations for each meeting; the devotions always reflected some part of the business. During meetings, she frequently called for a period of prayer, helping those present to remember that they were doing God’s work and not their own.

We have been greatly privileged and honoured as a church to be able to set a pattern by having the first woman Church Leader in this Island. Much note of this was taken by the wider public following Heather’s installation and she was often asked about being in this position. Her responses evidenced both conviction and sensitivity. Her Presidency has enabled the whole church to gain a fuller understanding of the ministry of women and men together.

Heather represented our church in Ghana and travelled extensively there in partnership with Christian Aid.

Her visits to Circuits and to the Lakelands and North East Districts have been much appreciated and a great source of encouragement. Her warm personality and her clear, courageous presentation of the Gospel have been a blessing to all who heard her.

Heather has enjoyed the support of her husband, Neil, as she travelled throughout the year, and he has been very much engaged in meeting people and sharing with them. Together they have been an impressive team as they have represented our church at home and abroad. The Conference and the Methodist people throughout Ireland wish her well as she takes up the key appointment as Home Mission Secretary for our church.
B. Actions taken by the Committee

B1. The Following Observers were appointed:
   - The General Synod: The President, Ms Gillian M. Kingston
   - The General Assembly: The Ex-President, Mr David Twyble
   - The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends: Revd Andrew J. Dougherty

B2. Appointed as Chairmen of Boards
   - The Church Development Board: Mr David Twyble for a second year;
   - The Property Board: Rev Colin J. Duncan for a second year;
   - The Stipends and Allowances Board: Mr John Buchanan for a first year
   - The Connexional Finance Committee: Mr J. Harold Baird for a first year

B3. Appointed as members of the Assessment Appeal Panel:
   - The President, Mr Thomas H. Millar (Convener), ; Substitutes: Mr Hamilton Blain and Mrs Irene Dickson.

C. Recommendations to the Conference

C1. GRANTS
   - The Conference directs that the following grants be paid during the year 2014-2015:
     - World Council of Churches £ 2550
     - Churches Together in Britain and Ireland £ 1000
     - The Irish Council of Churches £ 7959
     - The Conference of European Churches € 1600
     - The World Methodist Council $ 2000
     - The European Methodist Council € 5700
     - PACT € 350
     - Methodist Historical Society of Ireland £ 100
     - Churches’ Council on Healing £ 100
     - Council for Christians and Jews € 150
     - Irish School of Ecumenics € 2775
C2.  TREASURERS OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES FUND

The Conference re-appoints Rev Aian W. Ferguson and Mr J. Stanley Graham as Treasurers.

C3.  DESIGNATION OF SECRETARY OF CONFERENCE

See Report at D1 below.

C4.  CONNEXIONAL COMMITTEE EXPENSES

The Conference Directs:

(a) That expenses incurred in attending Connexional Committees be defrayed at the following rates: Overnight accommodation £50 per night; Meals: One Meal £7.50, or £15 per day.

(b) That additional expenses for Committee meetings etc. shall not be incurred without prior arrangement with the Treasurers of the General Purposes Fund.

C5.  DATES OF SYNOD, GENERAL COMMITTEE AND CONFERENCE

The Conference approves the following dates for meetings during 2014-2015

Dates of Synods, General Committee and Conference 2014 - 2015

District Synods:
Autumn 2014: During the fortnight beginning 7 September 2014.
Spring 2015: During the week beginning 8 March 2015

General Committee:
Wednesday 8 October 2014 (Belfast)
Thursday 8 January 2015 (Belfast)
Tuesday 14 April 2015 (Dublin)

Conference:
10 June 2015 (Ministerial) and 10 June 2015 (Representative) in Belfast District.
D. Designations and Appointments to Connexional Offices

D1 Designation of Secretary of Conference and Secretary of the Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

The Conference of 2013 received notice from Revd Donald Ker of his intention to retire in 2015. As required the Conference approved a job description for his successor and appointed a panel to bring a designation to this Conference. The panel reports as follows:

The panel has pleasure in bringing the name of Revd Dr John Stephens, B.Sc.; B.D.; D.Min. for designation as Secretary of Conference and of the Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

We believe that Dr. Stephens best fulfils the criteria set out in the Job Description for this appointment.

Dr. Stephens has excellent administrative skills, organisational ability and leadership qualities. He has had managerial experience both in secular employment and in Circuit ministry.

He has a wide knowledge of the Connexion and we believe that he will bring to the post of Secretary wisdom and a pastoral heart for colleagues and for Circuits. He also has an awareness of the issues that will face the Methodist Church in the immediate future and beyond.

He has experience of the ecumenical scene, of the cultural diversity in Ireland and a recognition of the importance of the representative role of the Church in the wider community.

Resolution D1: The Conference designates Revd Dr John Stephens as Secretary of Conference and Secretary of the Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland from 1st July 2015.

D2: Appointment of the Director of Ministry

The Conference of 2013 designated Revd Dr Heather M.E. Morris as General Secretary and Ministerial Treasurer of the Home Mission Department from 1st July 2014, thus causing a vacancy in the position of Director of Ministry. The Conference then approved a job description for her successor, appointed a panel and authorised the General Committee to receive the panel’s report and bring a nomination for appointment from 1st July 2014. The panel reported to
the General Committee in October on the process it followed, which was in accordance with our regulations. Following its interviews it unanimously proposed that Revd John D. Alderdice be appointed Director of Ministry from 1st July 2014. The General Committee unanimously endorsed this nomination and now brings the name of Mr Alderdice to the Conference for formal appointment.

**Resolution D2:** The Conference appoints Revd John D. Alderdice as Director of Ministry from 1st July 2014.

**E. Extensions of Separated Appointments**

**E.1 Irish Methodist Youth and Children**

At the 2014 Conference, Rev Dr David Rock was granted an extension to his current appointment as Team Leader of IMYC until 2016. As the IMYC Executive has reflected on the way forward it brings the following report:

Over the past twenty-five years the work carried out by the Youth and Children’s department has grown and developed significantly. The impact of the work of the department on the Methodist Church in Ireland and its influence beyond Methodism has been enormous. Its role in discipleship and shaping the spiritual and emotional lives of children and young people has been incalculable.

The department now operates in a more challenging context and is involved in increasingly complex work. Key amongst this work is the oversight of the process by which the Methodist Church oversees its compliance with legislation relating to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. In addition to this the department is responsible for the most successful year out programme run on the island of Ireland, it runs three major events and a host of other events each year, it delivers training for paid and volunteer youth and children’s workers, it offers advice, support and resources to local churches in relation to their youth and children’s ministry, it oversees the management of the child care society, and it acts as a representative voice for many departments and committees of the church. Beyond Methodism, the department has a key influence with its equivalents in the other denominations; it works with numerous para-church organisations and is held in high regard by statutory and voluntary youth and children’s bodies both north and south of the border. There is now a team of eight people working for the department across the island, and it manages an annual budget of over £200,000.
The current IMYC General Secretary's tenure is due to finish at the end of June 2016. Given how the department has evolved over the last fifteen years especially, the IMYC executive, rather than bring a draft job description and profile for the General Secretary to the Conference of 2014 instead felt that this now provided an opportunity to think through the development of the department and engage in a conversation about the future direction of the department. The executive sought the permission of the General Committee to set up a review of the work of the department and report to the General Committee by January 2015. Following this process the Executive will then bring further proposals to the General Committee and Conference regarding staffing and leadership.

The executive notes that amongst the key issues to consider are:

- The overall vision for the resourcing of youth and children’s ministry across the MCI, with a particular emphasis on the support for youth and children’s work ‘on the ground’ in local churches.
- How the department can best resource local churches to grapple with contemporary issues in youth culture, child development, family life and parenting.
- The place of large-scale youth and children’s events within the remit of the department and a reflection on their benefit to the work of the church.
- The future development of the work of the TOM team, and other models for the development of young leaders.
- The relationship between IMYC and Home and Overseas Missions, and the development of pioneer mission.
- The role of the department in relation to child protection and vulnerable adult legislation.
- The role of the General Secretary within the wider church.

The Executive recognises the need to hear from as many interested parties as possible drawing participation from those working with children and young people, both in voluntary and paid capacities in circuits and districts, and from the key relationships the department has within and beyond Methodism. Recruiting an outside facilitator will be key to completing this process successfully. Most importantly prayerful reflection will be required as the future development of youth and children’s ministry is immensely valuable to the church.

**Resolution E.1** The Conference receives the report and authorizes the Executive of Irish Methodist Youth and Children to proceed with its review, in consultation with the General Committee, and bring a full report to the Conference of 2015.
F. Matters remitted to the Committee by the Conference.

F1: Implementation of Panel to Address Unresolved Tensions

The 2013 Conference received, with much appreciation, a report on the reconciliation of unresolved tensions within the life of the church. The General Committee was tasked with implementing recommendations from the report.

The working group on Accountability and Discipline for Ordained Ministers is considering some of the issues which the report addresses. There are, however, two other tasks.

The first is to keep on record the process for addressing unresolved tensions as outlined in the report. The Committee believes that this is best done by including the relevant section of the report (with some editing) as an appendix to the Manual of Laws.

The second is to nominate, for Conference appointment, a Connexional Advisory Panel, from which the Secretary of Conference can draw as need arises.

Resolution F1: The Conference receives the report and directs that the process for implementing unresolved tensions be printed as an appendix to the Manual of Laws.

Resolution F2: The Conference appoints the Connexional Advisory Panel as follows,
The members of the President’s Advisory Committee, Revd Brian Anderson, Revd William Mullally, Revd Tom McKnight, together with four lay persons with particular mediation, human resources or legal expertise.

G. Other Connexional Matters.

G.1 Review of Position of Lay Leader of Conference
The Conference of 2010 installed our first Lay Leader, and her successor has now been in office for almost one year. It has seemed an opportune time, therefore, to review the role and consider whether our legislation needs any amendment.

Although a number of Methodist Churches throughout the world, including our closest neighbour in Britain, have structures in which a lay person sits alongside an ordained presbyter in leadership, the introduction of the position of Lay Leader has been “a first” for Irish churches. It is therefore highly
significant, expressing the role and responsibility of lay people in leadership as in other aspects of our church life.

We have now had a Lay Leader for four years but there appears to be limited awareness among Irish Methodists of the role. It needs to be further earthed into the life of our people. Such an ‘earthing’ might start with a fuller recognition of the office holder on her/his District and Circuit. It may also be helpful to combine the President’s and Lay Leader’s prayer cards into one publication.

Role of the Lay Leader
The duties and responsibilities of the Lay Leader are set out in Manual of Laws 6.26. The stipulated duties refer largely to duties during the meeting of the Conference and of the General Committee. In addition the Lay Leader is ex officio member of a number of Connexional Committees.

The Committee does not propose any changes to these duties and responsibilities. It recognizes that Lay Leaders fulfill a much wider ministry on behalf of the Connexion than the tasks itemized in the Manual. However any attempt to expand the list runs the risk of confining the flexibility which each office bearer can bring to the role. It is natural that different Lay Leaders will have different gifts, and different networks through which they may be called to exercise their representative responsibility. Furthermore the ministry of the Lay Leader should be seen as complementary to that of the President, and not as in a deputizing role.

Title of the Lay Leader
When the office of Lay Leader was first introduced to the Conference in 2006 the Irish President was Vice President of the Conference. This fact may have influenced the choice of title for the Lay Leader. Now that the Irish President is President of the Conference the question of title for the Lay Leader may be reconsidered.

The Committee was convinced of the ongoing importance of the term “Lay” in the title, stressing that leadership arises from the laity as from the clergy.

The term “Leader” caused more discussion. There is some evidence that it has caused confusion. The term “Lay President” might be a helpful alternative, but runs the risk of identifying the Lay role more closely to that of the President than is justified.

It should also be noted that, since the term “Lay Leader” is included in the Constitution of the Church, it will take a Special Resolution of the Conference (effectively a three-year process) to amend it.
Given these difficulties the Committee is proposing that we retain the title “Lay Leader”.

Tenure of Office
Currently the Lay Leader is designated by Conference a year in advance of taking up the office, and then serves for three years. It is natural that, following designation, a Lay Leader will wish to orientate her/himself, particularly in preparation for the business of the forthcoming Conference and the ongoing work of the General Committee. The Committee therefore recommends that the Lay Leader designate should be an ex officio member of the General Committee. In effect, the person designated and then elected as Lay Leader is connexionally committed for four years. This is a long period.

The Committee recognizes that there is value in a Lay Leader holding office for more than one year. In part this allows the Lay Leader to have a firmer grasp of Connexional matters. Equally important, it offers the Connexion a fuller opportunity to recognize, understand and respond to the ministry of the Lay Leader, given that he/she will probably not have as high a profile as the President.

However the review panel would suggest that a two-year tenure of office would be better. There are two reasons for this. It would be a more manageable commitment for the office holder, and it would allow a wider number of people to have the privilege of serving in the role.

Finally the review panel would place on record its appreciation of the ministry of the two people who have to date held this highly significant office.

Resolution G1.1: The Conference receives the report.

Resolution G1.2: The Conference gives notice of motion to the Conference of 2015 to amend Manual of Laws paragraph 8.02 to include The Lay Leader-Designate of the Conference.

Resolution G1.3: The Conference amends Manual of Laws paragraph 6.23 to read “The Lay Leader of the Conference shall be elected by the Conference for a period of three two years……

G.2 Formation of Audit Committee:
Over recent years the Methodist Church in Ireland has been working towards the preparation of consolidated accounts which give a picture of the whole financial situation of the Connexional and can be formally signed off when registration with the Charity Commissions finally takes place. As part of this work the need for a formally structured Audit Committee for the Connexion
has been identified, and so the proposed membership and responsibilities of such a committee are now presented.

A: CONSTITUTION
The Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland (MCI) approves the establishment of a Committee to be known as the “Audit Committee” (hereafter referred to as “the Committee”)

B: MEMBERSHIP
1. The Chair and members of the Committee shall be appointed by the Conference after recommendation from the General Committee
2. The Committee shall draw on best practices which apply in the public and in the private sectors as are relevant to an organisation such as MCI
3. The Committee is a committee of the Conference and shall report to it through the Connexional Finance Committee.
4. The Committee shall have 7 members – three Trustees of MCI and three members of the Connexional Finance Committee and the Secretary of the Methodist Conference
5. The quorum for meetings shall be four members including the Chair
6. The President of Conference shall not be eligible for appointment as Chair of the Committee but may be in attendance as and when required.
7. Any appointment to the Committee shall be a period of three years, but individuals may be re-appointed for additional periods of up to three years at a time. However the Conference may terminate an appointment at any time.
8. The Committee will appoint its own Secretary
9. The Secretary will circulate minutes of meetings of the Committee to all members of the Committee.

C: ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS
The Chief Financial Officer of the MCI will normally attend the meetings of the Committee. Other Connexional Treasurers shall attend if requested by the Committee.

D: FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS
1. The Committee shall meet at least three times per year.
2. A meeting may be called by any member of the Committee or by the Secretary

E: AUTHORITY
1. The Committee is an advisory body with no executive powers. However it is authorised by the Conference to investigate any
activity within its terms of reference, and to seek any information it requires from clergy and/or lay staff, who are required to cooperate with the Committee in the conduct of its enquiries. Committee requests for work, and reports received by the Committee from internal audit will be channelled through the Conference Secretary.

2. The Committee is authorised, subject to consultation with the Treasurer of the General Purposes Fund, to obtain independent professional advice and to secure the attendance of persons with relevant experience and expertise, as it considers such to be necessary.

F: DUTIES
The specific duties of the Committee shall be:

a) To review management’s annual financial statements and reports to ensure they reflect best practice

b) To discuss with the External Auditors the nature and scope of each forthcoming audit and to ensure that they have the full cooperation of staff

c) To consider adequacy of the processes used to prepare relevant reports, including Strategic Plans; Risk registers; Budgets; Management accounts; the Annual accounts; and, if so applicable and any other reports including responses by Management, issued by the Auditors, and to consider the implications of such reports with respect to governance and risk monitoring and to make recommendations to Conference.

d) To review the effectiveness of the Internal Control system and Risk management processes to ensure that the aims, financial results and key performance targets are achieved in the most accurate, efficient and timely manner possible across the Connexion

e) To ensure, in the absence of an internal audit function, that a scoping exercise is coordinated with the External Auditors – or a similar Accountancy entity – at least annually, with the areas to be examined having been previously agreed with the Committee. Such exercise is to be additional to the external annual audit conducted by the External Auditors

f) To review where appropriate the adequacy of the tendering process for items of expenditure (either specifically or grouped as part of a series of similar transactions) in excess of £50,000 (or other such sum as may from time to time be deemed appropriate) and to make recommendations for improvement as the Committee see fit

g) To meet with external auditors at least once a year without staff being present
h) To review and advise the Conference on best practice in relation to Corporate Governance
i) To consider and advise the Conference as to the adequacy and scoping requirements of the Committee
j) To review annually the Connexional treasurers’ policies and procedures manuals and make recommendations for improvements/additions in line with best practice
k) To consider the adequacy of MCI procedures and policies on capital expenditure, alteration of buildings, centralisation and custody over title deeds and investments, adequacy of insurance arrangements, cash handling and banking procedures and investment benchmarking and custody arrangements
l) To consider in conjunction with the relevant officers of the Conference and the external auditors the appropriateness of the key accounting policies; the impact of any changes to accounting policies; the basis for arriving at any significant estimate judgements applied in the financial statements, to give consideration to the appropriateness of the going concern concept conclusions and the key overall financial and operational risks to which the organisation is exposed
m) To consider the completeness and accuracy of all financial returns prepared by Societies, Circuits, Missions and Connexional Funds personnel in conjunction with management and the training arrangements operated by management to train treasurers to prepare accurate and complete proforma returns
n) To consider the adequacy of systems maintained by other departments to ensure compliance with laws and regulations (including but not restricted to environmental; health and safety; fire regulations; data protection; employment; pension; child protection; taxation and charity laws
o) To ensure there is an adequate whistle blowing policy for clergy, lay staff and volunteers in place
p) To consider any other matters when requested to do so by the Conference
q) To make a statement in the Annual report about its activities, membership of the Committee and number of meetings over the course of the year
r) To report annually to Conference on the discharge of its duties
s) Where any of the above provisions require consideration or review of any matter they shall be deemed to include the required provision of the appropriate recommendations for action where this is not already specifically stated.
Resolution G2.1 The Conference gives Notice of Motion to the Conference of 2015 for the establishment of an Audit Committee as constituted above and directs the General Committee to prepare the necessary legislation during the forthcoming Connexional year.

G.3 Board of Governors of Methodist College Belfast:
The Governors of Methodist College wish to bring to Conference a request to amend the constitution of the Board of Governors as it is found in the Methodist College Act (1928, as amended in 1985). This request is channeled through the General Committee.

The Board consists of 27 members. Of these six are appointed by the Department of Education, three are elected by the parents and three are elected by the teachers. The remaining fifteen are appointed by the Conference. Three of them are ex-officio, namely the President, the Secretary of Conference and the Ministerial Treasurer of the Children’s Fund. The remaining twelve are elected on a rotating basis.

In referring to the fifteen governors appointed by the Methodist Church in Ireland the Act (as amended in 1985) currently reads as follows:

“Three ex-officio Governors and twelve elected Governors who shall be appointed by the Conference as hereinafter provided and shall hold office for three years. Such elected Governors shall consist of six Ministers and six Laymen who shall profess themselves to be members of such church, provided, however, that at least one of such elected Governors shall, at the date of his or her appointment be the parent of a pupil studying at the College.”

The proposed amendment would read:

“Fifteen Governors who shall be appointed by the Conference as hereinafter provided and shall hold office for three years. Such elected Governors shall consist of the Secretary of the Conference, at least five other Ministers in Full Connexion with the Methodist Church in Ireland and at least six laypersons who shall profess themselves to be members of such church, provided, however, that at least one of such elected Governors shall, at the date of his or her appointment be the parent of a pupil studying at the College.”

A subsequent reference in the same paragraph to “ex officio governors” would also be deleted.
The reasons for change are, first, to recognize that, with the closure of the Boarding Department, the Ministerial Treasurer of the Ministers’ Children’s Fund has now no formal role within the College.

Furthermore since a President can only serve on the Board for one year her/his ability to contribute to the oversight of the College is severely limited. The Board would still welcome the President to be ‘in attendance’ at any of its meetings during the year.

Finally the flexibility which the new arrangement brings is intended to extend the skills and knowledge base available to the Board, while ensuring that the school retains its distinctive ethos and has strong links with the other parts of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

Resolution G3.1: The Conference confirms that the Methodist College Act Part II, Section 3, paragraph (1) (a) be amended to read

“Fifteen Governors who shall be appointed by the Conference as hereinafter provided and shall hold office for three years. Such elected Governors shall consist of the Secretary of the Conference, at least five other Ministers in Full Connexion with the Methodist Church in Ireland and at least six laypersons who shall profess themselves to be members of such church, provided, however, that at least one of such elected Governors shall, at the date of his or her appointment be the parent of a pupil studying at the College.”

and further confirms that the Methodist College Act Part II, Section 3 paragraph 2, referring to Ex Officio Governors, be deleted.

G.4 Wesley College Dublin Indemnity
When the Department of Education first funded the buildings on the grounds at Wesley College in the late 1960s a legal arrangement was put in place whereby three individuals were appointed by the Department, on the nomination of the Wesley Governors, to act as Trustees to ensure that the premises were used for educational purposes. One of those individuals has since died and the other two wish to retire. It is the intention of the Wesley Board that three new Trustees be appointed. However it is also essential that those who have held or will hold this responsibility are indemnified by the Statutory Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland, so that they will not be held personally responsible in the very unlikely event of the school not fulfilling its responsibilities to the Department. The Statutory Trustees are in full agreement to the offering this indemnity, and are assured that the level of risk in so doing is minimal, but legal advice suggests that they need the authority of the Conference to do so. Therefore the Conference is asked to pass the following resolution:
Resolution G4.1: The Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland, meeting in Dublin on June 14th 2014, hereby authorizes the Statutory Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland to fully and effectually indemnify, and keep indemnified, those who may act under the indenture of lease dated 3rd of June 1975 (hereinafter “the Trustees”), made between the Statutory Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland of the first part, the Trustees of the second part, and the Minister for Education of the third part.

H. Matters still under consideration by the Committee:

H1 Stationing Procedures

H2 Accountability and Discipline for Ordained Ministers
Introduction
The Council ‘aims to understand and analyse a range of social, political, economic and constitutional issues. It attempts to consider these issues with theological insight and to provide realistic and practical recommendations for action.’ This happens at various levels, but presently we are concerned to engage the church membership more interactively with the work of CSR. There will always be a need to lay out our considerations on paper. However, this year we hosted two seminars on Poverty and have begun looking at how many of our membership could engage on issues through a Facebook page. We are also seeking to be more active in the content of the Methodist Newsletter.

In the last 12 months Northern Ireland has experienced increasing civil unrest related to flag protests, contentious parades and terrorist incidents by emerging dissident republican groups. CSR recognises the need for the Church to try to understand the issues for disaffected communities, the challenges for policing and the difficult leadership choices for MLAs.

During the last year Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland has seldom been out of the headlines, with continual pressure in Emergency Departments, media scrutiny of cases where care has not met expectations and reports of a bullying culture throughout organisations. Morale in medical and nursing staff is reported to be at an all time low. CSR believes that in a climate of increasing demand for service and reductions in public spending, it is imperative for the Northern Ireland public to use services responsibly and support and encourage the many excellent staff who work in pressurised healthcare environments. The continual undermining of staff and managers in the most scrutinised specialities will only make recruitment to these areas even more difficult if not impossible and result in further reduction in service standards.

The changes at all levels in the Republic of Ireland over the space of a generation can potentially mask the rapid changes in society and its attitudes in very recent years. The challenge for the church is joyfully and confidently to continue to be all that God has called us to be, but also to re-examine how we engage with today’s realities. For the most part people are glad to have institutions around, but only when necessary. However, it is part of our one mission to engage compassionately and intelligently with the issues occupying Irish society today.

Political developments in Northern Ireland
The Haass process has dominated the political landscape in Northern Ireland for most of the Connexional year. The President along with representatives of the Council and wider Methodism met with Dr Haass and Professor O’Sullivan.
The Church's submission centred around five main principles; those being developing trust, offering generosity, being accountable, acting responsibly and seeking the common ground. In the post-Haass period, the President and Council representatives have sought to engage with many political parties and other relevant stake-holders to encourage a continuation of dialogue, a deepening of understanding of the other's position, tradition and cultural identity and a resumption of negotiation.

The Council trusts that the judicial enquiry into the vexed issue of “On the Runs” will clarify the situation and set the record straight. It is right for all relevant information to be brought out into the public domain and all will need time to reflect on the Report with careful consideration. This issue highlights a number of important principles that are germane to dealing with the past:

- Sensitive issues must be dealt with integrity;
- Transparency is important at all times;
- As we live in a parliamentary democracy, the need for public accountability, through Parliament, is essential; and,
- In order to achieve widespread confidence, equity of approach is imperative.

The first thoughts, of all, however, should be with the victims and survivors. To lose a relative is heart-rending; for the perpetrator to be outside the jurisdiction, whilst galling, still provides some hope of capture and prosecution but to be informed publicly that a deal was done some time ago that appears to waive the prospect of prosecution and, therefore, the prospect of justice compounds the grief.

The recent Smithwick Commission Report and the Hyde Park judgement surely suggest that dealing with the past, including those aspects that are difficult, is still an imperative and needs to include both sovereign governments as well as the parties in Northern Ireland. All parties are urged to continue to rise to the challenge and complete the unfinished business commenced by Dr Haass and Professor O'Sullivan. The Council encourages the parties to build on the recommendations concerning victims and survivors as outlined in the final Haass draft and recommends a more sensitive, humane and pastoral approach as the prospect of restoring broken relationships and healing the hurts should also be grasped.

It goes without saying, at present, that agreed mechanisms for dealing with the past and the other contentious issues still continue to be elusive yet the needs of victims and survivors are ever present. The Council was, therefore, somewhat heartened by the announcement from the Office of First Minister / Deputy First Minister accepting the recommendations made by the Victims’ Commissioner to improve the Victims and Survivors Service.
Until agreement on flags, parades and dealing with the past can be reached, there is always the potential for new issues to surface that could have a serious de-stabilising effect. The task of political and civic leadership, including the Churches, is to face present challenges while at the same time continue to work in partnership for the common good.

Flesh and Blood Campaign
This campaign seeks to enlist churches to promote blood and organ donation as a form of Christian stewardship and a practical expression of love for your neighbour. In the UK approximately 1,000 die every year as a result of organ shortage and 7,000 units of blood are needed every day to meet demand. Although the data and the campaign are UK based, the need is just as great in the ROI. Churches which register to become donor church’s commit to promoting organ and blood donation within their church community. This can be done by displaying posters, holding an awareness day, offering the church premises as a donation venue and registering for organ and blood donation as a group. Visit www.fleshandblood.org for more information on how to become a donor church.

Poverty
In 2013 Conference received the CSR report on Poverty and Deprivation as a resource document for the connexion. CSR has sought to raise awareness of poverty in Ireland by hosting the Global vision events in both Craigavon and Enniskillen and preparing a short paper with four bible passages and questions to get you thinking about poverty and truth telling. This will be distributed through the Methodist News Letter, post conference. We would urge societies to use this resource in their mid week groups.

Pornography
CSR continues to consider pornography and related issues. There has been considerable progress since the “Uninvited Guest” was adopted by Conference in 2012; Government pressure prompted providers to introduce additional safeguards to prevent young people accessing unauthorised sites and there has been significant media coverage of the concerns for young people “sexting” and viewing pornography. CSR is having exploratory discussions with XIT to identify if there is potential to partner them in the campaign to “Create a porn free culture” for young people.

Flourish
Flourish is a Northern Ireland based churches’ initiative on suicide developed by the Churches’ Community Work Alliance NI, Lighthouse Ireland and clergy from across the Christian churches in Northern Ireland. There are six objectives involved in its aim of supporting churches in addressing the needs of people affected by suicide:
• To support churches to develop a focused and shared approach to addressing the needs of people affected by suicide.
• To develop and provide appropriate training and good practice guidelines for clergy / church leaders / pastoral teams.
• To raise awareness of suicide prevention and support services through churches.
• To work together and with other agencies to increase access to support services for families recently bereaved by suicide.
• To develop and offer appropriate opportunities for reflection and remembrance for people bereaved by suicide.
• To support churches to work collaboratively with other groups and agencies on the issue of suicide.

**Work Programme 2014/15**

**Same Sex Marriage Referendum**
In 2015 the ROI will hold a Referendum on same sex marriage. CSR is forming a working group to look at and consider the issues involved ahead of the Referendum.

**Domestic Violence**
Domestic Violence continues to blight our society with devastating effects on women (sometimes men) and children. CSR will prepare a statement about domestic violence, addressing theological concepts that could be used to condone it. Some of our churches have already been recognised by Women’s Aid as “Safe Places” for victims of domestic violence, others will be encouraged to gain this recognition.

**AGENDA**

1. The Conference receives the report of Council
2. The Conference approves registration for the Flesh and Blood campaign.
3. The Conference endorses and commends the suicide prevention initiative, “Flourish”
4. The Conference recommends that the attention of our people be drawn to our Social Responsibility standards and the work of CSR on the first Sunday in Lent, 22nd February 2015 or on a Sunday as near to that date as local circumstances permit.
5. The Conference further recommends that if possible;
   Creation-tide be observed in September and early October
   Racial Justice Sunday be observed on 14th September 2014
   Poverty and Homelessness Action Week be observed from Sunday
   25 January to Sunday 1 February 2015

6. The Conference appoints the Rev Dr David Clements as Joint
   Chairperson and Chair of the Northern Executive.

   **Reasoned Statement – Rev Dr David Clements**
   Rev Dr David Clements has served on the Northern Executive for 10
   years. He brings wisdom, experience and a commitment to apply
   biblical standards to the social concerns addressed by the Council. He
   has been actively involved in the WAVE Trauma Centre and has
   spoken with authority on Victims issues to a wide range of audiences.
   David also has a keen interest in medical ethics and is very well
   equipped to do so on behalf of the Council.
   The Council is delighted to commend David as Chair of the Northern
   Executive.

7. The Conference expresses its thanks to Rev Dr Wesley Blair and to Miss
   Heidi Good and directs that the tributes appended be printed in the
   Minutes of Conference.

   **Thanks to Rev Dr Wesley Blair**
   The Council wishes to place on record, its deep appreciation to the
   Rev Dr Wesley Blair who has served on the Northern Executive for
   twenty five years and in the position of Chair for the last six of these.
   Wesley brought to the work of the Council a deep concern for those
   affected by the Northern Ireland conflict and a desire to be a catalyst
   for change in the political landscape of the country. He was prepared
   to take risks and selflessly gave of his time to meet with politicians,
   quietly encouraging small steps towards peace. On behalf of CSR,
   Wesley was amongst the first from any of the Churches to
   officially meet with Sinn Fein. Wesley is a scholar and a theologian
   with a heart for people from every background. Through CSR he has
   advocated for the disadvantaged and brought theological insight to
   complex social concerns. We wish him well and pray for improved
   health in the years ahead.

   **Thanks to Miss Heidi Good**
   The Conference expresses its gratitude to Miss Heidi Good who has
   served as Secretary of the Southern Executive for the past two years.
   Heidi has enthusiastically and faithfully exercised her administrative
   gifts for the benefit of the Council. She has enabled the voice of the
church to be put across well at various levels, with great joy and passion. In particular, Heidi articulated the Methodist church’s position at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on abortion legislation with great skill. We know that God will continue to give Heidi the joy and courage to serve him and his Kingdom in today’s world.
The Ministry of Healing

1. The Committee met on two occasions during the Connexional year. We continued our study under the overarching theme of the links between mental health, emotional well-being and spiritual life. The purpose of this study is to enable us to offer guidance to those involved in the healing ministry. The recent focus has been to follow through on Churches Council of Health and Healing Seminar led by Rev Dr Heather Morris in February 2013 on the theme ‘Loving Kindness in the Land of Forgetfulness’ from which we intend to produce guidance notes for churches on the pastoral ministry to people suffering from dementia.

2. In November some members of the Committee attended the seminar arranged by the Presbyterian Church Panel on Healing on the theme “God in the Shadows – Ministering to those with depression”. The speaker, Mrs Lena Morrow spoke of the potential ‘shadows’ of prejudices, fears, ignorance and rejection which surrounds depression and the difficulties experienced by people with depression, leading to an exploration of the God who is met in the shadows. Following this theme the Committee is also exploring guidance notes on pastoral issues for churches on the subject of depression and hopes to have this available by Conference 2015.

3. Rev Des Bain is retiring from membership of the Committee on Healing on which he has served for 18 years, 5 of them as secretary. His thoughtful and sensitive contributions to discussion together with his administrative ability have been much appreciated by the Committee. The Conference records its thanks for this distinctive service.

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the report.

2. The Conference re-appoints the Rev. Colin Duncan as Chairperson and appoints the Rev. Fiona R. McCrea as Secretary of the Committee.

Prison & Healthcare Chaplaincy Committee

“To support and promote Christian chaplaincy ministries of healing, care and restoration among vulnerable people.”

1. The Committee met three times during 2013/14.

2. The Committee has a limited fund to develop its work. We are very grateful to Rank Trust (£10,000), Donegall Square Trust (£2500) and MWI (£1000) for their generous support. To date we have been able to give financial support to several ex-offenders towards re-housing costs and small grants towards other support schemes. Contributions can be made to the Home Mission Fund.

3. The review of Prison chaplaincy in NI is still ongoing. We are concerned with the proposed, and very significant, reductions in the funded Chaplaincy hours within our prisons.

4. In February 2014 members of the committee visited Beaumont Hospital in Dublin where we met the chaplaincy team and their managers.

5. A response was sent to the Health Service Executive (HSE - Dublin) in relation to a review of healthcare chaplaincy.

6. We are aware of delays in appointing new chaplains at several NI hospitals. Despite attempts to resolve this, no progress has been made.

7. The Committee affirms its support for interdenominational/ecumenical chaplaincy approach where appropriate.

8. It is intended to offer the opportunity for healthcare/prison chaplains in NI and RoI to meet together once per year for discussion, sharing & training.

9. The Committee wrote to all healthcare and prison chaplains in November 2013 to express the gratitude and support of the Church for their ministries and to inform them of the funding secured.

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the report.

2. The Conference expresses thanks to Mr Osmond Mulligan who is stepping down as Chairperson from December 2014 and Dame Mary Uprichard who is retiring from the Committee.

3. The Conference affirms the valuable contribution made by all chaplains, paid and honorary.
Methodist Women in Ireland
“To Know Christ and to make Him known.”

1. MWI year started in an ‘untraditional’ manner this year. Our Installation service was held in November instead of the usual September date. This was due to a combination of factors. With Charlotte away for most of September, availability of premises and the diary commitments of our MCI President, Rev Dr Heather Morris, the date took us to the 9th November in Carlisle Road Methodist Church. Charlotte’s service was very well attended with ladies and gentlemen travelling from all over Ireland. Charlotte’s theme, “Shine for Jesus – Share God’s Love” set each one of us a challenge for the incoming two years.

2. Apart from General Officers meetings, there are three business meetings held each year – General Executive in October, MWI Forum in January and Central Committee in April. Decisions are taken at all these meetings regarding finances, events and news. Resources and ideas are shared by the Districts and with other organizations. These meetings remind us that we do not work in isolation but as part of the Methodist Connexion in Ireland. This year our meetings were held in Fivemiletown, Portadown and Jennymount and we say ‘thank you’ to the various churches and ministers who have welcomed us and who are always willing to allow us to use their premises and show us wonderful hospitality.

3. Throughout Ireland, MWI members continue to give generously to World Mission through Easter Offerings, Mission boxes and special projects. In 2013 we sent £94,904.10 & €12567.85 to World Church in London for the work of our Mission Partners overseas. This year the Past President’s project reached a total of £4605.50 & €826.

Our World Mission Secretary Mrs. Angela Nelson keeps the General Officers and MWI District Mission Secretaries up to date on the work and needs of our Mission Partners. Angela has attended World Mission meetings in London and Leeds as the representative of MWI.

4. Each year MWI has the privilege of being able to send two representatives to the World Mission Conference in Swanwick. In 2013 Gillian Johnston and Vera Metcalfe from Portadown District attended and in June 2014 Elsie McDonnell and Lucy Bateman from Midlands & Southern district will be the delegates. The Theme for this year’s Conference is “Injustice in South Asia”.

5. At the MWI Forum in Fivemiletown it was agreed that MWI would set January 2014 as our month of prayer - we plan to do this on an annual basis. Some of the points we were asked to concentrate on were, (a) positions of responsibility, (b) God’s vision for women working together, (c) new thinking,
relationships, (d) encouraging younger women, and (e) groups who are closing through lack of interest or who have no leadership.

6. £3871.44 has already been sent to the Jamaica National Children’s Home which is Charlotte’s project for her two years in office. It was decided at Forum that the 20th Century fund interest should be sent to Pat Jameson - £1340 – for her continuing work with women. £1000 was sent to Laura Gordon who spent some time in Philippines training and discipling young women with YWAM.

7. MWI continues to support financially other projects at home and overseas as is evident in the financial report.

8. We continue to keep the Connexion informed about MWI events through information and articles in the Newsletter and our MWI website. We are grateful to Mrs. Barbara Fennell who takes the responsibility of collating the information and forwarding it to the Newsletter and our grateful thanks also go to Mrs. Joan Young for her excellent work on the website.

9. The dedicated work of the Irish Unit of World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women continues. We are indebted to Mrs. Maureen Young and to Mrs. Sandra Dickson for all their hard work promoting the work of WFM&UCW throughout our Connexion. During meetings with World Federation, plans were worked on for the 9th Joint Area Seminar which is being held from 5th to the 9th June 2014 in Pomezia Italy. Fifteen ladies from Ireland are hoping to attend where their theme is “Forward together…in Hope”. We continue to support the Helen Kim scholar, Rachel Fallows, who remains a wonderful ambassador for Ireland.

10. We appreciate your continued prayers and support for all the District Officers and the General Officers, especially our incoming General Treasurer, Mrs. Barbara Fennell. We say a very sincere ‘thank you’ to Mrs. Nan McDowell who has finished her term of office as Treasurer and to whom we will always be indebted for the patient and thorough way she looked after the MWI accounts. We say a very warm welcome to Mrs. Irene Boyd who is our new Assistant General Secretary. We continue to know Christ and to make Him known through the work of MWI.

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the report.

2. The Conference appoints Mrs. Barbara Fennell as MWI General Treasurer from 1st January 2014.
3. The Conference appoints Mrs. Irene Boyd as Assistant Secretary.

4. The Conference expresses its thanks to retiring Treasurer, Mrs. Nan McDowell.

5. The Conference endorses the following amendment to the financial regulations of MWI: “The General Treasurer receives from Districts all income designated for mission outreach and forwards this to the Fund for World Mission at World Church Office, London the treasurer of the Methodist Missionary Society (Ireland). This includes all money from Easter Offering, Missionary Boxes, Gift Aid, Tax Relief and Allocated Gifts.

Dates of MWI Committees 2014/2015:

The MWI General Executive Committee will meet on Saturday 11\textsuperscript{th} October 2014 in Clontarf Methodist Church, Dublin at 10:30 am.

The MWI Forum will meet on Saturday 31\textsuperscript{st} January 2015 in Finaghy Methodist Church Belfast at 10:30 am.

The MWI Central Committee will meet on Thursday 16\textsuperscript{th} April 2015 in DCM Dublin at 10:30am. (tbc)
World Development and Relief

1 – Nurturing Real Partnerships in Development

‘Partner’ and ‘partnership’ have become rather overused terms in recent years. They are certainly concepts that have been endlessly critiqued in the world of development. The WDR Committee has also been re-examining its partnerships, how they operate and how they are maintained. As a Christian and Methodist organization with Kingdom values, the committee asked itself what the appropriate model of partnership is for us, and those with whom we work.

The Committee already utilises forms, contracts, reporting formats and visits. However, we wish to be not just professional and finance-focused but also relational in our partnerships. To this end, the Committee has now decided to develop deeper and longer-term relationships with fewer organisations. As equal partners, we will walk together, enabling the poor to achieve sustainable improvement. Our partners are appreciative of this approach with one calling it ‘enlightened’. It will also mean that supporters in the Methodist Church in Ireland can get to know partners and the communities where they work. Methodist churches can focus their learning and giving through the ‘Partner a Project’ programme (available from the office).

It is interesting that Irish Methodist World Development & Relief is going through a similar process to what has been happening in the Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF) in Britain. They too have spent time reflecting upon who they are, where they have come from and how their Methodism should influence how they work with others. MRDF has now rebranded itself as ‘All We Can – Methodist relief and development’ with an obvious nod to John Wesley’s statement “Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can”. Indeed the Irish committee spent an excellent evening with All We Can CEO, Mr Maurice Adams, hearing about their recent journey and applying it to Irish Methodist World Development & Relief.

This change in approach will retain the need for professionalism, accountability and transparency but it will equally value the qualities of compassion, understanding and two-way commitment within partnerships. Kopila Nepal is WDR’s partner with the longest unbroken support. The World Mission and Development Officer first met Kopila staff Bina, Prakash and Thirtha in the foothills of the Himalayas some 7 years ago. Their concern for the poor and their commitment to change in a very divided society were evident. As a relationship between Kopila and WDR has developed, we have had conversations and shared ideas outside the funded project. We listen to
each other. It is pleasing that a true relationship has developed which is based on trust; very much another Kingdom value.

During 2012/13 WDR has supported 18 partners in 11 countries. It does this on behalf of the Methodist Church in Ireland and its members. As our Methodist Conference and President has urged us to get our feet wet and step out in faith to do mission, it is wonderful that part of that mission is taking place thousands of miles away through people and organisations that we genuinely know.

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9)

There continues to be massive need in the world. People continue to live in conditions that we cannot imagine. The Committee encourages Methodists not just to respond to the dire and unexpected need of emergencies but to firstly commit long-term to our development partners as they work year after year with struggling communities. By generously supporting the 1% Appeal as part of our planned tithing and giving, the Methodist Church in Ireland can form true partnerships that bring lasting change.

2 – Funding decisions made in 2012/13

**PARTNERSHIPS IN ASIA**

1. **SAFE, Afghanistan**
   Access to clean water  €7,900 / £6,600

2. **Kopila, Nepal**
   Gender advocacy and empowerment  €14,400 / £12,000 pa (1\(^{st}\) of 3)

3. **Ebenezer Women Welfare Society, India**
   HIV/AIDS  €7,800 / £6,500 pa (2\(^{nd}\) of 2)

4. **Church of Bangladesh**
   Christmas Star Project: education  €2,800 / £2,300

5. ***Interdependent Society Surkhet, Nepal**
   Uterine prolapse reduction  €24,000 / £20,000

6. **Society for Community Development Project, India**
   Alternative income for families of child labourers  €7,500 / £6,300 pa (2\(^{nd}\) of 3)

**PARTNERSHIPS IN AFRICA**

7. **Methodist Church in Ghana**
   Agroforestry and woodlot  €6,700 / £5,600
| **8. Open Schools Worldwide, Southern Africa** | Education for children at risk | €14,400 / £12,000 pa (1\textsuperscript{st} of 2) |
| **9. Dabane Trust, Zimbabwe** | Small scale, sustainable vegetable gardens | €15,000 / £12,500 |
| **10. Kituntu Women’s Association, Uganda** | Clean water and sanitation | €6,600 / £5,500 |
| **11. Rural Health Care Foundation, Uganda** | Rural healthcare | €9,000 / £7,500 |
| **12. Phakamisa, South Africa** | Education and orphan caregiver support (HIV/AIDS) | €9,600 / £8,000 pa (1\textsuperscript{st} of 3) |
| **13. *Fambidzanai, Zimbabwe** | Sustainable agriculture | €18,000 / £15,000 |
| **14. *RUHEPAI, Uganda** | Rural healthcare | €15,000 / £12,500 |

**PARTNERSHIPS IN AMERICAS**

| **15. Paz y Esperanza, Peru** | Civil rights and advocacy | €9,600 / £8,000 |
| **16. °ICEFI, Guatemala** | Civil rights and advocacy | €21,000 / £17,500 |
| **17. °Bethania, Guatemala** | Rural healthcare | €21,000 / £17,500 |

**PARTNERSHIPS IN MIDDLE EAST**

| **18. Father Andeweg Institute for the Deaf, Lebanon** | Education for hearing impaired children | €3,000 / £2,500 pa (4\textsuperscript{th} of 5) |

**RELIEF**

| **East Africa** | £40,000 (drought) |

° shared project with Christian Aid Ireland
* shared project with Methodist Relief and Development Fund (Britain)
3. World Mission and Development Officer
Thanks are expressed to Tim Dunwoody for his work in keeping the concerns of the World Development & Relief Committee before the Connexion.

4. Contributions
The Committee is grateful for the donations received from individuals and Circuits and wish to commend all those who give ongoing support.

5. Thanks
The Committee thanks Rev. Dr. John Parkin for acting as Convener during Rev. David Nixon's sabbatical. His knowledge, experience and understanding are highly valued.

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the Report.

2. The Conference reminds all Methodists of the directive to share at least 1% of post tax income for the work of World Development & Relief.

3. The Conference encourages Methodists to use the Gift Aid Scheme in NI and the Charities Tax Relief Scheme in the RoI

4. The Conference commends that each congregation holds a special service based around the work of World Development & Relief on one Sunday of the year.

5. The Conference expresses its thanks to Mrs Angela Nelson and Rev. Robert Russell for their periods of service on the committee and the valuable contributions they made to its work.
Methodist Missionary Society (Ireland)

In January 2014 MMS(I) embarked on a review of its purpose and activities. This began with an overnight residential in January. It continued at the World Mission Forum in April and is still ongoing. However some of the key priorities into the future for MMS(I) are beginning to emerge.

- Exchange of personnel. We reaffirm the crucial importance of people to people exchange across the world be it long term mission partners, mission teams, fraternal visits etc. We also want to increasingly ensure that personnel are exchanged in both directions.

- Direct relationships. In theory the Methodist Church in Ireland through MMS(I) has over sixty Methodist Church partners around the world. However we relate with the vast majority of these partners through the World Church Relationships Office of the Methodist Church in Britain. We continue to greatly cherish our ongoing working relationship with World Church Relationships in London but we also hope to explore the possibilities for the Methodist Church in Ireland to develop some more direct, long term and meaningful relationships with a small number of Methodist Church partners in different areas of the world.

- Facilitating ‘one mission’ thinking and action. There is no essential difference between what used to be called “Home Mission” and “Overseas Mission”. All mission is one and so MMS(I) plans to seek fuller working relationships with other mission departments in our Connexion such as Home Mission Department, IMYC, World Development and Relief etc.

- Celebrating the World Church in Ireland. It is a fact that, particularly in the Republic of Ireland, many of our congregations are now multi-ethnic in nature. This is a wonderful privilege and opportunity for our Connexion and we need to explore how we can better foster integration so as to do mission together while celebrating our diversity.

Please pray for MMS(I) as we continue with this review process and with its subsequent implementation. In the meantime of course, our various programmes of mission continue.

Team visits
Short-term team visits to other countries and partners continues to be an important way in which Irish Methodists can live and learn with brothers and sisters in other parts of the world. There have been no MMS(I) teams in the past 12 months (although two are planned for 2014/15; namely one to Haiti in December 2014/January 2015 and a youth team to the United Methodist
Church in Germany and another). MMS(I) has brought together a small group from the MMS(I), World Development & Relief and IMYC departments in order to look at how the Methodist Church in Ireland does teams. Its purpose is to share knowledge and experience, develop a coordinated approach to team visits, develop guidelines for good practice and possibly act as an advisory panel for the Connexion.

Church Link Programme
Although no churches took advantage of the Church Link Programme during the past 12 months, the opportunity to receive help from MMS(I), where a church has its own connection with a partner church overseas, is still available.

Global Vision – Connexional and District Mission Conferences
The series of Global Vision events throughout Ireland is of huge significance for many of our members. One attendee at GV (Craigavon) said “This year's event was excellent. I always come away challenged and inspired and enjoy the occasion, not only because of the programme, but because there is such a buzz of warm friendliness and renewing of friendships ... one big Methodist family. I travel with two friends and GV is the first highlight on our church calendar. I think we have only missed one year since it began.”

MMS(I) wish to express their sincere thanks to those volunteers who give so much of their time and skill to make these events happen. They do a tremendous job and their efforts bless hundreds throughout Ireland.

Global Vision, Craigavon
Saturday 15th February 2014 at Lismore Comprehensive School, Craigavon
Keynote speaker: Brian Heasley, 24/7 GB
The theme was ‘Mission: New Ways and New Places?’

Seminar programme and speakers:
God’s Mission: Mexico and Ireland (Conrad Hicks), Go for Ghana Again (Neil and Heather Morris), God in the Surf (Jono and Beth Griffin), Middle east Hope (David Middleton, SAT 7), Hearing God (Helen Moorehead), Stepping Out in Faith (Maggie Patchett), Poverty on our Doorstep (Steven Foster and Paul Morrison), Achtung! Mission in 21st Century Germany (Barry Sloan), Prayerful Mission: Reaching Out Without Burning Out (Brian Heasley), Thy Kingdom Come (David Rock) and When the Cameras Have Gone Home (Ciara Loughney and Deborah Doherty – Christian Aid). One seminar, ‘Will the Poor Always be with Us’ (Maurice Adams – MRDF) had to be cancelled.

A highlight of the day was the involvement of Barry, Gillian and Megan Sloan, along with Patrick and Dee who brought ‘Big Yellow’ the mission bus of the United Methodist Church in Germany. Their seminar took place on the bus
and Irish Methodists were exposed to an inflatable church and were able to have their picture taken with ‘Jesus’.

Numbers on the day were significantly up on last year. This was very heartening. Attending adults – 350, youth – 15, children – 18

Global Vision, Lakelands
Lakelands & NorthWest Global Vision in Enniskillen was well attended with all four seminars being received with enthusiasm. Those who were able to make it down to the Yellow Bus were challenged to hear of the outreach work that is happening in Germany and Eastern Europe. Ruth Cooke from International Justice Mission educated us on the scale of people trafficking and what is being done to help them. Open Doors opened the eyes of many as they spoke of the harsh reality many Christians live with today. The seminar on 'Poverty on our Doorstep' challenged us to open our eyes to see the poverty there is around us, in our own towns, cities and countryside.

Global Vision, Midlands and Southern
There was a wonderfully informative and inspirational conference on Saturday 22\textsuperscript{nd} February 2014 at Cork Methodist Church, Ardfallen. Manuel Scemmler, a ministry student from the Methodist Church in Germany shared with us how many local congregations in Germany are using imaginative ways to reach people whom might otherwise bypass the Church. Dr. David Orr from Cork spoke of his recent trip to Palestine where he spent time helping Palestinian farmers pick their olive harvest so as to lessen the chance of the harvest being disrupted by Israeli settlers. The keynote speaker was the Rev. David Nixon who spoke of the wonderful work of the vocational training centre at Chodort in Zambia as well as challenging us all to consider what it means to serve as senders.

‘Inspire’, Global Vision Dublin
Colourful national costumes, tasty international food, worshipful praise and plenty of coffee contributed to the relaxed and expectant atmosphere at our Dublin District Global Vision Day. Rev. Dr. Stephen Skuce taught us much about Islam, its expansion in Ireland and the world, and how it differs from and impacts Christianity. Mr David Turner, Church in Chains, Ireland guided the Conference in learning about and praying for Christians around the world who suffer persecution. Helen Moorehead reported on her journey with God in Kenya, sharing the Gospel and bringing hope and a future into the lives of deaf children.

Mission Advocacy Week
Although some churches were able to organize a speaker with relevant knowledge and experience in relation to our would church partners, most
churches had use of provided material which included powerpoints, sermon notes, children’s talk, prayers etc. The focus was how we can learn from each other within the world church. Stories from several partner churches showed how they do mission and challenged Irish Methodism to learn and do likewise. During the week 15th to 23rd February, Barry Sloan and ‘Big Yellow’, the mission bus from the United Methodist Church in Germany, toured parts of Northern Ireland and took part in outreach events with local congregations.

JMA
Junior Mission for all is an important way to help our children grow up with a knowledge and understanding of the world church and world mission. MMS(I) produces ‘JMA Active’ each year which features information, stories, games, puzzles, craft ideas, powerpoints and videos to engage young people in learning about peers in other church cultures. The focus for 2013 was Ghana and the current focus for 2014 is Belize. Fundraising is for earmarked projects that are explained in the pack. 2013 saw £21903 plus €12362 raised for educational work of the Methodist Church Ghana and school Bible distribution by the Bible Society Ghana. In 2012 the JMA focus was on the Gambia and the monies raised have now been distributed amongst a variety of education and Bible programmes there as well as in Sierra Leone and Ghana because so much was raised that suitable projects could not be found for all of it in the Gambia. Thanks go to all who take the time to champion JMA and integrate it into the church children’s programmes so enabling children to learn, pray and serve. Competition winners for 2013 were Joel Gallucci of Movilla Methodist (under 8s) and Claire Mulholland of Coleraine Methodist (over 8s).

Container Ministry
During 2013/14, amongst others, the following containers were sent: Somaliland, Belize and Romania. The Container Ministry, Containers for World Mission and Development, is a real blessing to many partners around the world. The work continues with its dedicated volunteer team. Many thanks go to them.

Journey With Us / Experience Exchange Programme
Journey With Us is the new name for the EEP and offers 6-12 month placements for volunteers. No one from the Connexion has served with Journey With Us in the last 12 months.

Mission Partners
Serving mission partners:
Rev. Dr. Barry and Mrs. Gillian Sloan (children: Michael and Megan) serving through the United Methodist Church in Germany – pastoral charge. Barry is Director of Evangelism and Theological Director of the Tent Mission. Gillian is involved with various outreach initiatives and is involved in a fresh expressions church plant, ‘Inspire’, in Chemnitz.
Ms. Pat Jamison serving through the Church of Bangladesh – health.

Rev. Mervyn and Mrs Claudette Kilpatrick serving through the Methodist Church Sri Lanka – pastoral care and women and children’s work.

Mission partners with changed status:
Rev. Andrew and Mrs Julie Cunningham (children: Elijah and Hannah), who were serving with Methodist Church Belize, have had to end their term of service due to health issues for Julie. They are currently in Australia where Julie is receiving treatment and where her family are.

Ms Audrey Dickson
Conference places on record its deep appreciation and gratitude to Audrey Dickson who has served as the Lay Treasurer of the Methodist Missionary Society (Ireland) for six years. Audrey fulfilled this task with great commitment and dedicated service to the Irish Methodist Church and to mission work abroad. Audrey has been a faithful steward of managing God’s finance and has applied conscientious management to financial control of mission partners, grants, appeals, projects, local and international affairs and in many other aspects. This significant set of accounts demands a high work load and good financial management skills to control and bring to the point of auditing. We are indebted to Audrey for her colleagueship and leadership in MMS (I). We are grateful to God for Audrey’s dedicated service to His church and pray God’s continued blessing in her life for his glory and honour.

AGENDA

1. The Conference adopts the report.


3. The Conference requests Circuits to inform their District Missionary Secretaries by 1st November 2014 regarding their plans for special services and advocacy.

4. The Conference records its appreciation of:
   a. The World Church Relationships team, London
   b. The convenors and committees appointed by MMS (I)
   c. The Circuit and District World Mission Secretaries
   d. The Ministerial and Lay Treasurers
   e. The World Mission and Development Officer
5. The Conference sends greetings to those serving as Mission Partners with the World Church: Barry and Gillian Sloan and family, Pat Jamison, Mervyn and Claudette Kilpatrick and also to Andrew and Julie Cunningham and family whose service in Belize ended this year.

6. The Conference appreciates the work of M.W.I and J.M.A. for their contributions to the General Fund, and commends these funds for support.

7. The Conference requests circuits to submit their financial contributions and schedules to MMS(I) not later than 1st December each year.

8. The Conference re-appoints:
   a. Rev. William D. Mullally as Ministerial Treasurer of the Methodist Missionary Society (Ireland)
   b. Rev. Laurence A.M. Graham as General Secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society (Ireland)

9. The Conference places on record its thanks to Mrs Audrey Dickson for her contribution to the mission of the church in the world during her period of service as Lay Treasurer of the Methodist Missionary Society (Ireland).

10. The Conference appoints Mr. Ian Patterson as Lay Treasurer of the Methodist Missionary Society (Ireland).

Nominations Committee

Rev. W. Philip Agnew
Rev. W. Philip Agnew has travelled for twenty five years. He is currently stationed as Superintendent on the Bangor and Holywood Circuit, having previously served on the following Circuits: Londonderry City Mission (at Innishowen and Carlisle Road), Dun Laoghaire, Ballinamallard and Trillick.

His previous service to the Connexion includes being a District Stationer of the Lakelands and Down Districts; Secretary of the Dublin and Lakelands Districts. He has served on the General Committee.

He is currently Senior Secretary of the Board of Examiners, member of the Edgehill Board of Governors and of the Pioneer Mission Group.

Rev. Brian B. Anderson
Rev. Brian B. Anderson has travelled for twenty years. He is currently stationed as Superintendent on the Lisburn & Dromore Circuit, having previously served on the following Circuits: South Derry Mission, Cregagh & Glenburn.

His previous service to the Connexion includes being a District Stationer, Chair and Ministerial Treasurer of the Department of Youth and Children’s Work.

He is currently District Superintendent of the Down District. He is also founder and chair of “Horizons”, a support group for those affected by suicide.

Rev. W. David Rock
Rev. W. David Rock has travelled for twenty four years. He is currently stationed as General Secretary and Team Leader of the Irish Methodist Youth and Children’s Department, having previously served on the following Circuits: Aughnacloy and Monaghan, Newtownabbey Mission (at Whiteabbey).

His previous service to the Connexion includes being a member of YET 9; Chaplain to the University of Ulster at Jordanstown, District Youth and Children’s Secretary (Portadown); District Property Secretary (North East).

He has also served on the European Methodist Youth and Children’s Council; as Chair of Youth Link NI on two occasions and currently teaches on the Centre For Youth Ministry Degree and University of Cumbria Degree in Theology offered through Belfast Bible College.
To these names the Conference may, if it desires, add other names. Further nominations shall have the prior approval of the nominee and be supported by six members of the Conference (three ministers and three laypersons). Those nominating additional candidates shall be responsible for the preparation of a reasoned statement of a similar nature to those produced by the Nominations Committee. All further completed nominations must be received by the Secretary of Conference by 12.00 noon on Thursday June 12th 2014.
Irish Methodist Youth And Children
68TH ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction
‘Discipleship in the home is not a very well explored area in the UK. There is plenty on discipling children and even more on discipling adults...At the Messy Fiestas it has been interesting to ask whether people have been brought up in a Christian home and, if they have, how do they know? ‘My parents took me to church’ is the standard answer. Only a very few people reply that their mother or father would pray with them or read the Bible together, even that they would say grace at meal times. No one I have spoken to said that they talked about God at home...But is this very English, very unexpressed assumption of belief the best thing for growing disciples in the next generation?’

Messy Church 2, Lucy Moore, BRF, 2009, p.20.

CHILDREN’S MINISTRY

Building Blocks
Once again, IMYC has been involved in the planning and delivery of Building Blocks in conjunction with colleagues from Scripture Union and the Anglican, Presbyterian and free-church denominations. John Hardwick was an energetic speaker who brought real insight and genuine passion into communicating the gospel. Between the two conferences, there were over 300 people in attendance at All Hallows College in Dublin and Wellington Presbyterian in Ballymena.

CGMC
The Consultative Group among Ministry with Children, an official network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, has a remit for strategic networking between churches, para-church organisations and charities. Nicky & Raymond travelled across to London in April for the CGMC Spring Conference. The topic of the conference was ‘Raising children in a digital age,’ which prompted some interesting practical, philosophical and theological debate. Dr Bex Lewis has written an extremely helpful book on this topic, which is available to buy or borrow from IMYC.

Makaton
Makaton training has proceeded apace, with 60 people having been through the training over the past year. This has proved to be an invaluable asset to many congregations. Makaton is a communication system, which relies of sounds, pictures and hand/ body gestures. For those interested in developing this aspect of ministry, there will continue to be training opportunities made available.
**Play it by ear**

*Play it by ear* are a drama company formed by two former Teams on Mission, Ross Jonas and Chris Neilands. They produce drama resources for churches and help churches develop this ministry. In a joint project with IMYC, *Play it by ear* have been developing Holiday Bible Club material, which will be available to churches in time for summer 2015. IMYC are proud to be associated with *Play it by ear*, and heartily recommend and endorse their ministry.

**Soul Mates Weekend**

The 15th annual Soul Mates Weekend happened once again in Lurgan between several of the churches. Leah McKibben, from Wesley Centenary in Bangor, was our main speaker for the weekend. Her theme was ‘Only Children Allowed’ based on 1st Timothy 4:12 (Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but be an example for the believers, in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.) Leah spoke with clarity about Mary, Josiah, Namaan’s servant girl and Loafy Joe (the renamed hero child from the feeding of the 5000.)

Dave Morris, from Sydenham, was our worship leader for the weekend. Steph Glenn, from Mossley, and Emma-Jayne Speers, from Joanmount, took on leadership of the Prayer Team this year for the first time. Holly Bennett, from Woodvale, led the entertainment at Hurricane Holly’s treat time. Team on Mission 25, and Ross Jonas & Chris Neilands performed the dramas in worship. Cheryl Bruce, from Dundonald, has taken on the role of chair for the Soul Mates Organising Group.

We had a full programme of Seminars & Workshops, with providers mostly being from the wider Methodist family. One notable participant was Chief Inspector Sam Donaldson, a representative of the Christian Police Association, who was involved with the Grill-a-Christian Panel, alongside, Leah, Dave, Rev Dr Heather Morris and IMYC’s Lisa Best. Members of conference will be thrilled to hear that a number of children gave their lives to Christ at this Seminar.

**Soul Mates Road Trip (SMaRT)**

SMaRT is an opportunity to explore aspects of faith in a more intimate, local setting with some of the Soul Mates Weekend team. This year, we headed off to Sligo and Seymour Street looking at the Lord’s Prayer. In a change to the format, we moved to an afternoon slot, which allowed us to run workshops alongside the worship programme. Helen Dunlop (TOM 17) and Mark Hand (TOM 20) were the speakers for us this year.
Star Stories
The Star Stories project has been extremely busy this year. There are three strands to this ministry: Bible stories in Special Schools; Follow the Star at Christmas, for Key Stage 1 from mainstream and special schools generally hosted in and by a local church; Rolled Away at Easter, for Key Stage 2 (normally, but not exclusively from Mainstream schools.) We plan to commence putting Star Stories into an online format with this material being available in this format soon.

Big cats and dirty rats
Telling the story of Daniel in the lions’ den, we were hosted in October by Fleming Fulton who invited a number of local schools to come to 14 sessions over the course of one week. With our army of volunteers, we encountered upwards of 300 children. We are indebted to our volunteers and to Fleming Fulton as our hosts for the week.

Follow the Star
Craigyhill, on the Larne circuit, played host to Follow the Star this year. In all, approximately 320 children came through the programme, with 40 different volunteers involved from across the circuit.

Rolled Away
In April, Ballymena Methodist hosted Rolled Away, an interactive telling of the Easter Story. In an enterprising initiative, Ballymena Academy provided actors for each of the sessions over the course of a week, which both strengthened the church’s link with the school, and allowed congregation members to volunteer in different aspects of the programme.

The Whale’s Tale
The Whale’s Tale is a musical take on the story of Jonah. This is a unique project for Star Stories as it takes the form of a performance by IMYC volunteers, followed up some months later by a performance by some Fleming pupils. Former Teams on Mission member, Mark Tilley, who just happens to be doing an internship with Opera NI, has been involved in work-shopping this project. We are indebted to Carol Mills from Fleming Fulton who consistently encourages innovation in this area of mission.

Soul Mates House Party
2013 was certainly our biggest event yet and we even had to turn some people away because we were so full! 52 children age 9-13 from all over Cork and a few from Kilkenny came to Bandon as well as a whole gang of leaders. Some of these leaders had been at the first few Soul Mates House Party events so it is great to have them back to serve at the weekend.
Our theme of the weekend was all about God talking to us and how we can hear from Him. Holly Bennett fresh from finishing her TOM year, and Peter Morris (son of our president Heather) led our talks in fun and interactive ways. We looked at how God spoke to Samuel and can speak to us too; how God used something like a donkey to speak to Balaam and how God can speak through anything whether it’s nature or situations; we saw how Elijah was spoken to in a whisper not a shout; and how God can challenge us like Peter was challenged in the Book of Acts to listen and do something different by eating with someone that his culture wouldn’t usually allow. During the weekend we also had seminars about how God can speak to us through listening to music and how he can guide us and talk to us as we go through our lives in school, with friends and family. Through our worship music and small group discussions and prayers we felt God speaking and moving too. Our movie making is always a highlight and there was plenty of fun had. Our young leaders were super in helping out with workshops on baking; messy games; playing killer dodgeball; and getting your nails done! There was a huge variety of children at the event from different churches and backgrounds. It would be great if this event had wider representation from around the district.

Summer and Holiday Clubs
5 day clubs in the summer months provide great opportunities for children in churches and for their friends who aren’t involved. Raymond supported a number of these in the Cork area and also hosted a team of young people from America that helped lead the club and were also involved in youth outreach activities. During the year there is continuity with this Children’s club in Dunmanway run between Raymond, the Church of Ireland and Faith Mission regularly has more than 40 children at the evening events.

Soul Mates Big Bash
Took place in Dundrum Methodist in Dublin in November with a mixture of children from around the district. We geared up for Christmas making some different crafts and yummy snowmen biscuits as well as hearing about just how different a King Jesus was.

Messy Church
A number of churches have been exploring the use of the Messy Church model to include families in monthly times of worship. In Clonakilty it’s a Sunday morning event much like an all age service but with activity groups for adults teens and children. In Skibbereen it’s a Friday evening group with interactive story telling and various activities. If churches are looking for ways to include families in worship who feel it difficult to come to church or want to reach out to the families in their community this is an excellent approach. Raymond also participated in a Messy Church training event in Cork and there is now an official Messy Church network in Ireland.
Midlands and Southern Youth Weekend
Midlands and Southern Youth Event this year had a band age 16-19 and a speaker age 22 all who are from the local area and have grown up with going to the event and wider connexional events. There was a good mixture of young people who have been a number of times and people coming for the first time.

EMYC Swop Shop
For the first time Raymond took the lead in organising this international training event with people coming from various Methodist churches in Europe. Stephen also travelled to Hungary to deliver training sessions which we hope will have huge knock on effect on the ministry in churches to children and young people across Europe.

Other speaking:
Raymond has been involved in other All Age services in Blanchardstown and the new church plant in Ashtown as well as working with the Church of Ireland in Skibbereen with their contemporary worship service. He has also spoken to local multi-denominational youth fellowship group, assemblies in local primary school every month; the children’s programme at Midlands and Southern Mission Day

Other events that will happen between writing and Conference include:
A Praise party in Adare with the 2 circuits in Co. Limerick; North Dublin kids club and youth group; Participating in Messy Church training event in Cork; Aldersgate Sunday in Dublin; Child Protection Training in Killarney for Kerry and South Cork churches.

Child Protection Training
This year we have continued the programme of training with sessions in all Districts with around 650 people trained. Changes in legislation have been very slow both in Northern Ireland, where we still await the legislation that will enable an updating service for all who have been vetted, with also now the introduction of e-forms also being spoken about, and in the Republic, with the legislation in place for safeguarding but at the time of writing it still has not been fully enacted. Discussions have also begun to look at the possibility of the role of Safeguarding Officer for MCI being taken away from the General Secretary of IMYCD.

Saltmine Theatre Company
As part of the development of our work in the Republic of Ireland we have been in negotiations with the Saltmine Theatre Company who have been looking to break into the market in the Republic. Together we have applied for
funding from the EU which would mean one of their programmes on bullying and cyberbullying would be run not only in the UK but also in the Republic of Ireland. This would involve engagement with 40 primary schools and 20 secondary schools over a two year period. At the time of writing a decision on the application is imminent. If unsuccessful it may be something that we seek to develop on a smaller scale.

**YOUTH MINISTRY**

**Summer Programme**

Stephen McCann and Lisa McPherson continue to be involved in Castlewellan Holiday Week. Stephen continues to lead the youth and children’s team and Lisa continues to co–ordinate the 12 – 14 programme. IMYC provides training, resources, man power and expertise to facilitate the youth and children’s programme during the family week.

This summer we plan to take a group of 22 young people to Chemnitz in East Germany. We will be supporting the work of the Sloan Family who are our Mission Partners in the city. The team will also be working with the German Tent Missions by using the Mission bus which came to Ireland during Global Vision in February. We are also sending a small team of young adults to work with 24/7 Prayer in Ibiza.

**Autumn Soul**

Autumn Soul continues to provide opportunities for young people and young adults to serve God and grow in their gifts and talents and there is a strong sense of “passing it on” to the next generation. Each year we are surprised and amazed at God’s love and grace and we are able to create space in a large meeting for young people to experience intimacy with God through worship, art, prayer and of course the speaker. The work of Autumn Soul is continuous throughout the calendar year with monthly meetings, band auditions, practices, sub-group work outside main meetings and retreats to focus our minds. Autumn Soul is significant for the life of the Methodist Church as it continues to seek God for the way forward, develops programme and creates connexional community across this island. We will continue to develop space for young people, leaders and volunteers to explore and build strong foundations of faith, as we seek intimacy with the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit, in an environment of significant community. This year we are expanding the leadership through worship. This has come about through band auditions which resulted in us being blessed with two worship bands. The new band is being led by a 17 year old girl. We work hard at supporting, encouraging and developing them.

**Teams on Mission**

TOM 25 has 9 participants. A team of three on the Lurgan circuit, an intern in
Urban junction and a travelling team of 4. The Travelling team this year is Jordan, Olwyn, Bethany and Natasha. They bring life and energy wherever they go, and use their stories to connect with young and old. They are a talented team who has had a varied year travelling North and South, dealing with the ups and downs of team life and getting to see what God is up to across the Island. They comment on how welcome they are made to feel wherever they go, so thank you to all those who have hosted them this year.

The static team this year is on the Lurgan circuit, Aoife, Zoe and Carissa. They have thrown themselves into all areas of work there and have immense energy and creativity and a desire to know God’s heart for the young people and children they work with. Thank you to the Lurgan churches who have worked so hard to look after them and provide them with the opportunities to grow and serve. This year we have one intern. Shannen is working in Urban Junction. Shannen too brings energy and creativity to the work she does and has had the opportunity to do a variety of work in the ongoing programmes and set up new activities. It has been great to have her as part of TOM. Thank you to Urban Junction for all they do to support her.

This year’s training saw them achieve their OCN Level 2 in youth work once more and a continuing partnership with Youth For Christ in training and retreats.

Team On Mission is an exciting programme to be involved in as it continues to develop leaders who contribute to the life of the church and more importantly the Kingdom, long after their year ends. And because of this we are constantly evaluating and developing. By the time you are reading this we hope to have carried out a review of the programme with the desire to implement any changes that might help Team On Mission meet the needs of our changing churches and young people.

**Young Adults**

IMYC provides many volunteer opportunities for young adults to serve and develop their gifts. Alongside this Gillian, along with some young adults, is involved in the Purpose and Leadership group that has sought to involve young adults in Methodist conference, with the sense that their voices are extremely significant and the desire to see them empowered as leaders in their local church and connexionally. This will see some important follow up put in place after Conference this year.

Gillian has just handed in her dissertation for her Masters in Applied Theology. Her dissertation was around young adults and mentoring and has some interesting findings around discipleship for that age group. These findings are available on request. This has led to her doing some training on mentoring, and discipleship for that age group.
Youth Workers
IMYC continues to support youth workers by providing resources, advice, retreats and encouragement. This year once again we have worked alongside CIYD to run a number of training days. These days have focused on issues such as ‘Youth work in a divided society,’ and ‘Creating and influencing culture.’ They are being reassessed at the moment because of the changing landscape of youth work. We have many more now in part-time roles and days like these are difficult to attend. We would appreciate your prayers as we work out new ways to support and resource our youth workers.

This year the ‘Invest Youth’ conference ran for the third time with around 150 participants from the 4 major denominations and other organizations, run in partnership with Youth Link NI. This year’s theme was ‘life to the full – enabling young people to respond to life’s challenges.’ This was a significant day dealing with issues such as working with marginalized young people, sexual identity, social media and mental health.

Overflow
Year 6 of Overflow encouraged us to develop the work of the organising group. We have been able to seek out young adults to be involved in shaping the programme and being responsible for large chunks of the weekend. Numbers increased again in all areas with young people and volunteers making a total of 80 – 100 participants. This weekend provides opportunities for volunteers and seasoned Overflows to move into different roles of service of the weekend. Some helping out in the kitchen, community building, taking workshops, leading small groups, running sound desks, preparing devotional material, organizing small group work and direction and generally being committed. In some ways, ‘It would be easier to do it all ourselves.’ Yet the ethos of Overflow is to pass it on, provide opportunities and develop passions and gifting which in ‘theory’ are to bless the local church, if they are empowered so to do. The hard work, numerous emails and meetings and resourcing are all worth it and God is honoured.

Our speaker this year was Clare Woodward, Director of Youth Ministries in Ballynahinch Presbyterian Church and her theme was Jesus and Overflow. For those in first year, there were workshops on communication, planning and creativity in youth and children’s work. For those in second, third and fourth years we looked at ‘Sharing Our Story.’ Inspiring young leaders to seek God in all they do and try big things with God at the centre of it.

School of Worship
School of worship took place this year at Trinity Church in Lisburn and was attended by about 40 young people with another 30 or so helping to make it happen, lead seminars and workshops which included storytelling, technical
support, drama, various instrument and voice classes alongside worship sessions led by Jud Sweeney and Michael Spence. Overall this was a valuable experience for those who attended and helped encourage them in the gifts and talents which they already have and showed how they can use them to God’s glory.

Other Youth activities
Lisa continues to support and work with Girls Brigade NI in producing their Scripture Course as well as being involved in The Big House Ireland on their board of management and with one of their camps for girls called ‘Beautiful’. She also continues to develop the membership resources for Churches and young people with ministers and youth workers helping her take this material to the next stage in its development and refinement.

Training
During the year the District journeys which members of the IMYC team had begun continued, some more quickly than others. There are some key things that have come from this so far, namely Districts are looking for training in specific areas and support and resourcing to meet the needs of young people and children. To that end IMYC staff will be continuing the journey with Districts to see what specifically can be put in place to help each District as they seek to advance their work.
North West District young people and youth leaders have completed an OCN level 1 in Youth Ministry Skills with help from Youth Link NI and Lisa.

Global Vision
Lisa was again involved in the co-ordinating of the conference in Craigavon with additional responsibilities for running a youth event on the same evening. ‘Autumn Soul Goes Global’. We invited young people to come and engage with the concepts of mission and justice through music, activities, prayer and our speaker Rev. Dr. Barry Sloan. We stepped out in faith with this one and around 100 young people came to be inspired by the theme. We also took this opportunity to pray for those involved in summer teams including those going out to support the Sloan family in East Germany.

EMYC
The EMYC council meeting met back in September in Stuttgart in Germany with many new faces this year, at least one third of the group were there for the first time. This added a new dimension and excitement to the meeting. The highlight for many of us was the final worship session led by the youth delegates where we were inspired and challenged. It was also the final meeting for our President, Rev David Gamble. He will be succeeded by Rev Rosemarie Venner and will preside at the next EMYC council in Valleteri, Italy. In 2015 IMYC will host and organise the European Methodist Youth Camp which is being planned by an EMYC working group at present.
Staff Development
Stephen and Lisa have begun the Arrow Leadership training programme and
Gillian has completed her Masters at the Irish Bible Institute.

Celebrations
During this past year Gillian Best got married to Al Gilmore. We wish them
every blessing for the future.

METHODIST CHILD CARE SOCIETY
(Founded in 1870 as the Methodist Orphan Society)
144th Annual Report

The work of the Child Care Society continued in 2013 with one hundred and
fifty-four children on the Society Roll, a decrease of sixteen children.
The IMYCD Executive, which includes the Officers of the Society, wishes to
place on record its grateful thanks to all the Circuits for their support of the
Society’s work and also to those who left a legacy to the Society. This year
the Sterling income from the Circuits and legacies has exceeded the grants
given by £13382.08 but the income to the Euro account has failed to meet the
grant expenditure by €43698.77 and so the IMYCD Executive would
emphasise the need for increased financial support in order that the Society is
able to give support to the more needy families within the Connexion.
Envelopes enabling Circuits to fully utilise the Gift Aid and Tax Relief schemes
are available from the Society Officers and the IMYCD office.

Grants and Income
During the year, the Society paid grants and bonuses of £53320 (NI) and
€63700 (RoI) to the 154 children on the Roll.
Contributions from the Circuits amounted to £44428 (NI) and €17596 (RoI).

Grants and Bonus Payments
The current annual grant for families is £800 (NI) or €1200 (RoI). In addition,
along with the June and December grants, a bonus payment of £140 (NI) or
€200 (RoI) may be paid for each child on the Roll.

Criteria for Support
The criteria used to assess applications are as follows
  1. The maximum age limit is normally 18 years.
  2. Families whose sole income is from state benefits qualify
     automatically for financial support from the Society, as this is taken as
     an indicator of need.
  3. All other cases are considered on the basis of individual
     circumstances.
Application forms for financial support may be obtained from the Rev. Robin McKibben, Ministerial Treasurer/Secretary, Mrs Margaret Copeland, Lay Treasurer or from the IMYCD page on the MCI website.

AGENDA

1. The Conference adopts the report.

2. The Conference endorses the continued involvement in Youth Link. The following are to act as representatives: Rev. Dr. David Rock, Dr. I. Taylor, Mr. Sam Stanfield and Mrs Lisa Best.

3. The Conference re-appoints Rev. Dr. W. David Rock as General Secretary.

4. The Conference appoints _________________ as Chair of the IMYCD Executive.

5. The Conference re-appoints Mr. Mark McElhinney as Treasurer.

6. Conference directs that all circuits/churches consult with IMYCD when considering employing a youth worker.

7. The Conference re-appoints Rev. Robin McKibben as Ministerial Treasurer/Secretary of the Methodist Child Care Society.

8. The Conference re-appoints Mrs. Margaret Copeland as Lay Treasurer of the Methodist Child Care Society.

9. The Conference approves the re-printing of the paragraphs relating to the Methodist Child Care Society with the necessary changes in the Minutes of Conference.

10. The Conference directs that a copy of the Rules of the Society shall accompany the first payment to beneficiaries.

11. The Conference directs that an annual review shall be made concerning the circumstances of every family receiving benefit and the completed form shall be returned to the Lay Treasurer as soon as possible after receipt.

12. The Conference directs that Circuits shall have an annual collection for the funds of the Society and that the monies collected shall be sent to the Lay Treasurer not later than the 15th January.
13. The Conference directs that Circuits shall give serious consideration to the Gift Aid Scheme in Northern Ireland and the Tax Relief Scheme in the Republic of Ireland for their financial contributions.
Memorials Committee

1. **From the Stationing Committee:**
The Stationing Committee requests that the requirement in the Manual of Laws para. 6.53, that all elected stationers should have travelled at least 10 years, be deleted.

**Memorials Committee Recommendation:**
The Conference agrees to this request and amends the Manual of Laws accordingly.

2. **From the Midlands and Southern District**
The Synod asks the Conference to acknowledge that 11 ministers is the absolute minimum staffing levels for this District.
This District Synod notes that:
- There are problems due to distance from Dublin and Belfast for ministers of the Midlands and Southern District.
- One of the consequences of this is that the District ministers lose two or three days per visit to committees in Belfast or Dublin.
- The existing ministers are stretched to the limit by these factors and the long distances they have to drive within the circuits.
- There are few retired ministers in the District therefore the ‘back up’ is limited.

**Memorials Committee Recommendation.**
The Conference appreciates the District’s concern and requests the Home Mission Department and the Stationing Committee to give it careful consideration.

3. **From the Midlands and Southern District**
The Synod asks the Conference to direct the Budget Committee to bring the assessments into line with the rest of the Connexion so each district pays the same per member.
The District Synod notes that the assessments on the circuits to pay the costs of the ministry and of the Connexion is out of balance. Based on the 2013 Minutes of Conference it can be shown that that the Midlands and Southern District pays **64% more per member** than does the Belfast District. This, added to increased costs of travel in a wide rural district, places an unfair burden on this District.

**Memorials Committee Recommendation**
The Conference understands that the Connexional Finance Committee is currently reviewing the formula used for calculating the Connexional Assessment and refers this memorial to the Committee.
4. **From the Carlow and Kilkenny Circuit Executive**, (present: 6, Voting: Unanimous)
   The Circuit Executive has reexamined the article E.6 on Abortion in the booklet, Methodist Belief. In light of the Statement on the Proposed Abortion legislation for Oireachtas December 2012, we believe that the current format is flawed and does not reflect the right of life for the unborn child, nor does it reflect the true extent of the Gospel, which is one of hope, justice and healing in all situations.
   We therefore would wish to remove the following statement:
   “When the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest,”

   We believe that every unborn child has the right to life, regardless of how they are conceived. The killing of an unborn child should not be seen as an attempt to provide “compassion’ or “relief to a serious crime to the mother”. As a church, we should reflect God’s nature in his passion for justice and to stand for those who have no voice, in this case the unborn child. We should be prepared to support and love the woman through this most difficult time of pregnancy and birth, and the decisions she would make for the welfare of her child, with the hope of ultimately revealing to her God’s compassion and full healing in all situations.
   We therefore would wish to amend the following segment:
   “Where there is risk of grave injury to the physical or mental health of the mother,”

   We believe that the unborn child, though it may be a factor in the mother’s current mental health, is not the root cause. The ending of the life of the unborn child will not deal ultimately with the root causes that have resulted in the mother’s mental health.

   **Memorials Committee Recommendation.**
   The Conference refers this Memorial to the Council on Social Responsibility for consideration.

5. **From the Ministerial Session of the Lakelands District.**
   The Synod requests the Conference to consider a requirement for Continuing Development in Ministry for all vocational lay workers.

   **Memorials Committee Recommendation**
   The Conference directs the Board of Ministry, when it is established, to consider this issue as a matter of urgency.
6. **From the Dundrum, Newcastle and Downpatrick Circuit**
We propose that the stipends of ministers be paid centrally from the Comprehensive Assessment. This would allow the Stationing Committee and Home Missions to place ministers where they are most needed rather than only where they can be afforded.

**Memorials Committee Recommendation.**
The Conference refers this be sent to General Committee for consideration. The Conference also notes the response of Stipends and Allowances Board to a similar memorial from Lakelands District in 2013 Conference Agenda, p.163.
Sabbatical Committee

This past Connexional year there have been ten sabbatical offers taken up, but at the time of writing this report only five of these have been completed. Some ministers did not take up their offer and this was due to a number of factors.

Some ministers have deferred their sabbatical for a year due to being appointed to a new Circuit, while others have done so for family and Circuit commitments. Others declined to take up their offer due to impending retirement from active ministry.

Of the sabbatical offers taken up, one involved a short term placement at Mars Hill Church in Seattle, one of the fastest growing churches in the USA. The purpose of this placement was to learn more about the strategy employed for mission and church planting.

Another sabbatical involved a retreat in Sussex and walking part of the Campino de Santiago. Such walks are becoming a favourite choice for some of our ministers in terms of either enquiry or a sabbatical activity.

Another sabbatical involved a visit to Singapore to discover something of the work of the Methodist Church there. It also included a visit to New Zealand to visit family. That visit also enabled the minister to make contact with families who had emigrated from the Circuit to New Zealand many years before, who still had relatives at home on the Circuit in Ireland.

Other sabbaticals involved an element of study – one on a course of pastoral supervision at Edgehill, another writing up a PhD thesis and a third looking at the practice of the ministry of healing in the church.

In the Connexional year 2014-2015 it is anticipated that there will be up to eighteen sabbaticals due including deferrals from 2013-2014 and one to be taken a year in advance.

AGENDA

1 The Conference receives the report.

2 The Conference appoints Rev. Colin J. Duncan as Sabbatical Officer.

3 The Conference expresses its thanks to Rev Ian D. Henderson.

Rev Ian D. Henderson has completed fifteen years of service as Sabbatical Officer for the Connexion. Throughout this time he has worked
with quiet yet tireless efficiency in facilitating and encouraging his colleagues to benefit from the Sabbaticals which the Church offers. He has helped Sabbaticals to become a normal part of ministry, and the Connexion has benefitted substantially as a result.
Communications Committee

The role of the Communications Committee is to advise on IT and Media, oversee the Connexional website, support the Press Officer, advise Departments, Societies and Circuits how best to achieve their objectives using technology and social media to the best advantage. This is achieved through the Committee meeting twice a year and having oversight of sub groups tasked to work on specific areas.

Amongst the items achieved this year has been help to a number of Societies with the creation of a website and media training has been arranged for ‘Thought for the day’ type programmes. It is hope to extend both these activities next year.

In addition plans are in place to create a network of District Press Liaison Officers who will have the responsibility of press and media contact in their local areas as well as throughout the Connexion

The Committee is anxious that maximum exposure is given to the many good news stories of our Church as well as the good news of the Gospel to a wider audience.

During the year Mr Tom Millar took over as Convener of the Committee from Revd Ross Harte. We express our thanks to Ross for his contribution in seeking to develop the work of the committee and wish him well in his ongoing ministry.

Please contact the Convener of the Committee if you feel there are other areas that could be addressed or if you feel you could serve the Committee in any way.

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the report.

2. The Conference re-appoints Mr Thomas H. Millar as Convener of the Committee and Revd Roy Cooper as Press Officer.

3. The Conference notes the dates of meetings: Thursday 9 October 2014 and Tuesday 10 March 2015.

4. The Conference encourages all Departments of the Church to contribute relevant and timely material to www.irishmethodist.org
1. 2014 is an exciting year for BCM as we engage in a number of events to celebrate 125 years of caring for those who need it most in Belfast and across other regions of Northern Ireland.

2. We are grateful to Mr Wesley Weir for his dedicated and thorough research reflected in the publication of a history of the past 125 years, which many of you will have received with your regular Methodist Newsletter subscription. Additional copies are available. The history, *Through Changing Scenes*, traces the themes which have marked the life of the mission, highlighting the diverse and timely responses reflective of the dedication of each generation to meeting the needs of their time.

3. Looking to the future, BCM is keen to develop *Copelands*, a new view of caring, particularly for those experiencing Dementia or needing specialist nursing care. From a dream, reflected in our reports to Conference over the past few years, to a development currently seeking Planning Permission, it is BCM’s hope that within the next 12 months construction will begin on the old Childhaven site at Millisle.

4. The congregations of BCM continue to strengthen their work together as each seeks to minister in its context. Sandy Row’s re-established Sunday School, called Big Fish, is moving to 2 classes, Reflect Café welcomes the community on Thursdays and Shine after school children’s club goes from strength to strength. Grosvenor Hall congregation is digging deep with ideas and commitment to funding the chapel at the Copelands development in Millisle.

5. Well.com is now well established on Carlisle Circus and its ministry to the local and wider communities reflects a commitment to all experiencing brokenness or psychological distress as it brings together spirituality and cognitive behavioural therapy.

6. City centre ministry continues to be explored through support for and engagement with Belfast Street Pastors and taking a leading role in seeking to establish an ecumenical City Centre Chaplaincy.

7. BCM continues to explore fresh ways of engaging in Social Enterprise as we seek to establish greater independent and unrestricted income streams. Puddleducks, our City Centre Day Nursery continues to surpass expectations at this point in its development, both through the quality of care provided and income generated.
8. During the past 12 months a number of projects have experienced expansion or been newly established:
   a. Our Housing Support for Older People (HSOP) project in Belfast has expanded to cover the whole of Belfast
   b. A new HSOP service has been commissioned in Dungannon and Armagh
   c. A new Parent Support Project has commenced in Dungannon
   d. Expansion of our Housing Support for Young People in Dungannon has taken place

9. Once again we are most grateful for the way in which support for our Christmas Food Parcel and Toy Distribution continues to grow. At Christmas 2013 we were able to distribute a total of 1640 Food Parcels and 3070 Toy Parcels, a significant increase on 2012. We are most grateful for the partnerships that have developed between churches, government departments, businesses and the community as we are given the privilege of making Christmas just a little better for so many families.

10. If you would like to find out more about BCM, support the development of Coplelands or read updates on our work, please check out our web site www.belfastcentralmission.org or visit our Facebook page, BCM NI.

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the report of the Belfast Central Mission

2. Dates of Mission Committee Meetings: Tuesday 2\textsuperscript{nd} September 2014, Tuesday 2\textsuperscript{nd} December 2014, Tuesday 3\textsuperscript{rd} March 2015, Tuesday 2\textsuperscript{nd} June 2015.
East Belfast Mission

Our vision is to be a welcoming, vibrant and peaceful community in which everyone has a sense of belonging and where everyone matters. This year has been a difficult year in many respects but the work of the Mission outlined here has continued to be welcoming and bring vibrancy and peace to the wider community.

Tribute to the work of Rev Dr Gary Mason MBE
Gary has served EBM as Superintendent for the past 14 years. Under his leadership the Mission has grown in understanding of its outreach to a divided and deprived inner city area. In particular his vision of an inner city Christian village was realised in 2012 with the completion of the Skainos project.

Gary has been a faithful pastor to the congregation. In particular his open and accepting attitude to those on the margins of society has seen many people come to faith.

He has earned the respect and trust both of those in government and in the loyalist paramilitary organisations. Through his work in this area of ministry he has had a growing recognition among those working for peace and reconciliation at an international level, especially in the Israeli/Palestine conflict.

As Gary leaves EBM to continue his ministry in a new post where his experience and skills will be greatly used in the work of the Kingdom of God we assure him of our continued prayers and support.

Church Life
Within congregational life, there have been a number of highlights surrounding the on-going rhythm of Sunday worship and midweek fellowship.

In the autumn, the congregation sent 45 people down to Dublin to record a service for RTE, which broadcast on Christmas day. In the new year, the church council led a vision day in January and a congregational weekend away in February at Castlewellan, which offered an abundance of time for conversations, developing relationships among children and adults, and relaxed worship.

A number of people from the congregation continue to volunteer in various ways with the community work at EBM. Another way the church has looked outward has been through several evenings called, "Conversations about God". During these times, a mixture of people from the congregation, other EBM projects, and the local community have shared a meal and talked about questions of faith.
Another theme of the year has been growing partnership with and awareness of other congregations. Within the Methodist Connexion, EBM joined six other societies in East Belfast in reading the gospel of Matthew during lent and reading reflections written by lay people. Within the local community, EBM has participated with dozens of East Belfast churches at joint prayer meetings to lift up the needs of our area.

HOSFORD is the homelessness project of East Belfast Mission providing accommodation and support to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The aim of the project is to support people to break out of homelessness and to prevent people becoming homeless through support in their own homes.

Hosford provides accommodation for 26 people who are homeless. Each resident has a support worker who meets with them regularly to support them with the issues they face and to find their own home.

Hosford also supports over 40 people who have their own homes but are facing problems and could become homeless. This work is about early intervention and preventing homelessness.

In addition Hosford run a number of activities to meet the needs of their clients. These activities are targeting issues such as: isolation, inactivity, lack of confidence, lack of goals, substance misuse, mental health problems and more. Hosford recently received the “More than bricks and mortar” award from the Chartered Institute of Housing.

Current project highlights include:

- NI Street League: a football project reaching over 60 people each week with training and volunteering opportunities and can provide routes into employment.
- Going Green: a gardening and environmental group which runs a community garden and has talks and activities throughout the year.

COMPASS is the community outreach and development project of EBM. They provide opportunities for local people to build sustainable networks with one another as well as access opportunities for personal and community development.

Some current programme highlights are:

- Homework Club for P4’s and P5’s
- *Crosslinks* cross-community and cross-cultural arts programme for 14-21 year olds
- *Turas* project, which links the Protestant community to Irish language and culture through classes, workshops, traditional music and events
- *Care Community Counselling*, a free counselling service for local people

**THE STEPPING STONE (SS)** project provides an employability service to the people of East Belfast. The team works with clients on a one to one basis tailoring the service to the specific needs. Stepping Stone currently work on three government DEL funded programmes LEMIS (Local Employers Intermediary Service) CFSP (Community and Family Support Programme) and ESF (European Social Fund).

During the last twelve months the employability service achieved the following:-
- Engaged with 368 unemployed local people
- Supported 62 people into full time employment
- Supported 14 people into part time employment
- Enabled 58 people to gain 111 qualifications
- Facilitated 6 pre-employment programmes

**Some Current programmes include:**
- **Community and Family Support Programme** - one of the team works intensively with twelve families over a number of months developing their life skills, parenting skills, dealing with conflict within families, handling money and improving communication.
- **Life Coaching**
- **Learner Access Engagement** - Essential Skills classes for clients who want to achieve a recognised qualification in English, Maths or ICT.
- **Benefits Advice Service** - Stepping Stone also provide a benefit advice service to the local community. In particular this year the advice worker successfully secured for one woman a back payment of benefits of £27,000 at tribunal.

**SOCIAL ECONOMY (SE)** is the business side of EBM. This project aims to fulfill social, financial and environmental objectives so all income from these projects is fed directly back into EBM to help sustain the social and community projects of the organization. In June 2013 – EBM was chosen as one of 16 of Deloitte’s Social Innovation Pioneers for this year.
**Current projects:**
- restore – 12 charity shops
- refresh café @ Skainos & refresh @ 174 – a second café opened in Feb 2014 in 174 Trust building in North Belfast
- Re-use projects – refurbishment and recycling projects all under one roof at our Approved Re-use Centre in North Belfast
- Bright Sparks – a purpose built child care nursery in Skainos
- Skill – launched in March 2014 – a project that will share knowledge, innovation, learning and leadership to assist new or small social enterprises or businesses who will learn from our experience and success
- Social Hub host for East Belfast – started May 2014. This is a funded project enabling new Social Enterprises to develop their project through listening to the experience of the SE team at EBM

**SKAINOS**
Skainos was delighted to win a number of awards during the year. The most significant success was at the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Awards. Against very stiff competition Skainos won the Community Benefit category, was highly commended in the Regeneration category, but to delight and surprise then went on to win the RICS Best Overall Project 2013. Skainos represented Northern Ireland at the UK awards in London.

**AGENDA**

1. The Conference adopts the report

2. The Conference directs that the tribute to Rev Dr Gary Mason be printed in the Minutes of Conference.

3. Mission Board meetings will be held on at least a bi-monthly basis from September 2014 to June 2015
Dublin Central Mission

Abbey Street
The Abbey Street congregation has continued to plan for the future and it is hoped to begin work on a major refurbishment of our premises in the summer. It is in the process of employing a fundraiser to help with the task of raising the two million euro required to undertake the project. The congregation continues to offer a welcome for those who have come to live, work or study in the city.

Blanchardstown
It has been encouraging to see the development of this young congregation. The congregation experienced the joy of moving into the Methodist Centre, Tyrrelstown in February and are actively seeking to discern how they might use these premises as a blessing to the community.

Ashtown
During the last year Dublin Central Mission has sought to develop a new project in the Ashtown, Dublin 15. Philip McKinley has been appointed to this work. Ashtown is an area of around 4,000 people with very little community infrastructure and no places of worship. We are seeking to bring worship and service through our involvement in this community.

DCM City Centre Ministry
The Homeless Ministry and English Conversation Classes have continued to develop with around 50 volunteers involved in these activities. Our Abbey Street building continues to be a hub for many self-help groups who use it for their support meetings.

DCM Care of the Older Person
Our two sheltered housing complexes ‘Margaretholme’ and ‘Ailt an Óir’ have about 90 residents in supported independent living arrangements. Mount Tabor Care Centre in Sandymount is home to 45 residents. Full nursing care is provided in a warm and caring atmosphere, sensitive to the resident’s physical and spiritual needs. A wide range of activities is offered to maintain mobility and well-being. We are grateful to the staff in all our centres, whose dedicated caring is so central to achieving these high standards. We continue to value the prayers and support of the Methodist people of Ireland for the work of Dublin Central Mission in the year ahead.

AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the Report.
Newtownabbey Methodist Mission  
116th Annual Report

The Mission is situated in Rathcoole from where it seeks to fulfil the ministry of Christ in the local community and wider Newtownabbey area. Its aim is to be a conduit through which the living Lord can reach out to people with a wide range of needs. The number of families the Mission connects with each week is encouraging. Through its varied work, the Mission is recognised for its Christian response to people in need, and many express their personal appreciation of the work we do. The goal of our work is to reveal God’s grace and extend His Kingdom. Galatians 6: 9 assures us of fruit, "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."

Worshipping Community
The worship of Almighty God is central to the life and witness of the Mission. A good number of lay people contribute to worship through the children's time, prayers and readings. In recent times we have been challenged by a call not only to pray for God's work, but to spend time in fasting as well. Some members joined for a Twenty-four hour prayer and fast to seek God's blessing on the life of the Mission and for spiritual growth. This is something the Mission intends to continue and build on for the future. Small groups meet in homes for fellowship, while Prayer breakfasts are held monthly on Saturday mornings.

Sharing the Care
Over the past year the Mission has sought additional resources for those caring at home for relatives and neighbours suffering from the onset of dementia or care for someone with a chronic illness. We were very conscious from our work in Rathcoole that there are carers in the community who need rest, advice and further support. A unique pilot project entitled ‘Sharing the Care’ was funded by the Department for Social Development and supported by the Rathcoole Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership aimed specifically at Rathcoole. The Project was delivered and implemented by our pastoral assistant, Mary Henderson, under the umbrella of the Mission, with the department monitoring progress.

The Project has involved 20 ‘Sharing the Care/The Caring Journey’ workshops with Certification on completion. It has also incorporated Day Retreats, Information Nights, a 6 week stress control programme which teaches skills plus techniques for managing stress, along with Social and Recreational Activities which include visits to the Theatre, Trips, Coffee treats and Visits to relevant projects.
A wonderful group of 28 carers were involved in 8 Musical Workshops for Mental Health. They produced a CD of poems and songs which reflect the voice of carers and those who support them. The CD launch took place at Newtownabbey Borough Council with 170 in attendance. This cameo picture, in song, of the caring role, is truly inspirational. It gives insight into the stamina, energy, love, compassion, patience, and personal sacrifice that the carer's role demands. The project has enabled many carers, volunteers, pastoral care visitors and others to take part while providing an opportunity to meet others in similar caring situations.

**Youth Work**
The outreach to young people continues to grow with the Friday evening Youth Club attracting upwards of 108 young people who attend the junior section with 28 attending the senior group on a regular basis. The Mission is grateful for the 24 dedicated leaders who make this outreach possible each week.

The junior and senior Youth fellowship has 26 members who attend regularly; the parent and toddler's have a membership of 40 who meet during the week; the BB has an enrolment of 95 boys across the sections and the GB has an enrolment of 76 attending regularly. We owe a very big thank you to all our leaders who faithfully provide a Christian ethos to these young people.

**Pre-school**
The Mission Pre-school has now grown to a point where it has extended its hours to include an afternoon session three times a week, thus providing younger children the opportunity to attend before entering their Pre-school year. Parents have been very supportive and a course was run on respecting differences which was well attended. Those who attended were glad of the opportunity to discuss issues and get to know one another. The Pre-school has dedicated and qualified staff exercising an important role in providing a safe and caring environment where 24 children play and learn together. The Pre School is associated to DENI, Social Services and Early Years, and are developing an Early Years Partnership with other Early Year providers in the area, which is to be launched in August.

**The Friendship Centre**
The Friendship Centre meets twice weekly with approximately 44 senior citizens from the Mission and wider community in attendance. The work is headed up by Two Co-ordinators, fourteen committed volunteers, eight of whom come together to focus on Planning and Promoting the work and witness of the Friendship Centre. What a joy recently to see six new members, accompanied by staff, attend from two of our local Care Homes and Abbeyfield (Supportive Living.) We endeavour to provide a relevant programme taking into consideration the composition of the group, their
interest and in particular those who suffer from early onset of Dementia and those in wheelchairs.

Local Health Care Professionals and Agencies value greatly the support we give to a number of their clients some of whom have completed specific courses and now seek additional support. Our varied programme consists of a monthly sing-along, creative arts, and a group of ladies knitting for missionary work. After a busy morning our members are truly ready for a delicious two course meal prepared and served by our volunteers.

Our members are encouraged to participate in a number of Church and Community Events which are held throughout the year - such as our Holy Week Services, Christmas Tree Celebrations, two day retreat break to Killyhevlin, 6 week Stress Control Programme and Age Awareness Week Activities to name but a few. Our main emphasis is to share the Love of God with our members which we endeavour to do through careful and prayerful planning, pastoral care, Bible reading notes, community and family networking and the wider work of the Mission.

Hopes Shop
The shop has had a busy year both from the sales point of view and from the number of folk calling in for a friendly cup of tea and a chat. It has increased our income over last year, and the goal is to look for greater sales in 2014 to generate even more funds to support the Mission. The sales of furniture account for the vast majority of income, and the shop is always looking for good quality furniture which sells quickly and provides higher levels of revenue. The shop is dependent not only on its manager, but volunteers who have been loyal to us and have put in a tremendous amount of work over the year. We would wish to express our thanks to all who have given willingly of their time in ensuring the success of this work.

Appeals 2013
We are truly grateful to everyone who faithfully supports our annual summer and winter appeals. Last Christmas a total of 219 families received support, with 390 children receiving toys through our appeal. In addition, a total of £15,044 was paid out through our voucher scheme in 2013 to assist families in urgent need of gas, electricity and groceries. This is a significant increase on the previous year which shows that many families are finding it difficult in these times. Once again, thank you to all who responded to our Appeals. Without your donations this would not have been possible. We ask for your continued prayerful and practical support for our work so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified.
**Future Planning**
Over the past few years the Mission has worked very hard to reduce its dependence on financial reserves. This use of reserves was mainly due to staffing costs, so a reduction in the number of full and part time staff has taken place. We are still in the process of working through these difficult issues but further progress is being made with a view to the future. The Mission is engaged in outreach and Mission in the community. We look forward to what the Lord is going to do among us in the future and we ask for your prayers as we seek His guidance for all our work.

**AGENDA**

1. The Conference receives the report.
North West Methodist Mission  
(Formerly the Londonderry City Mission)  
120th Annual Report

It is with deep gratitude to God that we look back over the past year to recognise His blessing during times that are economically very difficult. The leadership on our Mission Board and in Church Councils and Circuit Executive is sound, spiritually directed and fully committed to sharing the Good News with a needy world in both word and deed. So in a year when the economic recession has continued to hit our finances hard we have kept our focus on maintaining the work while we look carefully at how our budget spend is allocated. Mr Liam Milligan, Mission Director, has worked hard in this, the first full financial year of the NWMM, to maximise value for money while maintaining the Mission's focus on meeting the needs of individual people.

The focus of the Board has been in four main areas this year:
1. We have entered into talks with the Clarendon Ladies' Shelter at Northland with a view to exploring how we might provide an improvement in the overall service to homeless people together. Those discussions are on-going at present.

2. We have monitored our progress in implementing the five year Strategic Plan which was adopted last year and begun to assess what changes need to be made.

3. We have looked for ways in which the resettlement of homeless men can be improved in terms of the provision of accommodation and the quality of their support.

4. We have explored ways in which the Mission could help co-ordinate a multi-provider approach to the prevention of homelessness. Each of these areas of work is beginning to show fruit and we hope that these efforts will maintain the quality of provision to the North West.

The Hostel and Drop-in Centre on the Cityside continue to meet the needs of many homeless men. The Clooney Centre in the Waterside provides meeting space and catering for a wide variety of community and church groups, including the Clooney Hall congregation's Sunday worship and mid-week organisations. It is a welcoming community and a vibrant mix of activity.

The Mission Superintendent and the Board of Directors wish to thank the staff and volunteers for their dedicated work. They are also grateful to the many individuals and churches who support the Mission through their financial gifts and prayer. We hope that they will continue to remember us and support us in
these ways so that next year we can report, “Come and see what the Lord has done!”

**AGENDA**

1. The Conference adopts the report.

2. Dates of the Board meetings: the first Mondays of September and December, and the last Tuesdays of February and May.
Gurteen College

The last year at Gurteen College has seen another increase in student applications. The number of applicants for the Level 5 Certificate in Agriculture course exceeded 225 for the 100 places available, although by September only 15 students were left without a place. These were accommodated in other colleges. Equine student numbers remain strong with over 20 students enrolled on the third year of the course for the first time. Early CAO indications are good for next year.

Students continue to take part in a variety of extra curricular activities and over the last few years fundraising for charity has become a significant feature. In the 2013/14 academic year over €6000 was raised and donated to two local charities.

Staffing issues continue to be a challenge as the Government embargo on recruitment is still in place and at present over 300 hours are being taught by contract staff. This has been further compounded by two full time members of staff being off sick for a period of three months.

The renewable energy projects continue to deliver significant savings. Over 75000kw of electricity has been produced over the last year from the wind turbine and the willow crop is now providing most of the colleges heat requirements.

Use of the facilities by a variety of external groups continues to provide much needed funding for the college. Summer 2013 saw over 800 people staying at the college for periods of up to a week making maximum use of all facilities. This included the European Meeting Of Young Farmer Groups.

Chairperson’s comments
As Chairman of the Board of Governors I would like to express the continued appreciation of us all for the dedicated and enthusiastic work of the Principal and all the staff at Gurteen. As mentioned in the report there is particular pressure on teaching staff at present. We hope for changes in the coming year to alleviate this situation. Let us as a Conference continue to pray that Gurteen fulfils its mission statement of, "Working and learning together to create a better life in rural Ireland."

AGENDA
1. The Conference receives the report.
2. The Conference re-appoints James Bennett as Treasurer of the College.
3. The Conference appoints IFAC as Auditors.
Methodist College, Belfast

In late 2012, Methodist College was presented with an Aisling Award for Outstanding Achievement in education, in recognition of its involvement in an educational outreach programme through which supportive partnerships have been developed with primary schools in the nearby ‘Village’ area of inner-city Belfast. The word ‘Aisling’ means ‘hope’ in Irish, and through providing opportunities for pupils to engage in a wide variety of activities, it is the hope of staff and governors to create a wealth of aspiration and a wealth of achievement.

The past year has seen continued success and achievement for members of the M.C.B. community. It was a Methodist College pupil, Hannah Nelson, who was selected to make the speech of welcome to the President of the United States of America and the First Lady, at the Waterfront Hall, on the occasion of their historic visit to Northern Ireland in June 2013. Hannah delivered an inspirational speech to a global audience. The values embodied in her speech, of tolerance, respect, understanding and celebration of diversity were a reflection of the ethos and ideals which the College seeks to promote.

The results of the summer 2013 public examinations provided evidence of the high level of commitment and ability of pupils and staff within the College. At ‘A’ level, 20% of presentations were at A* - the highest grade possible and over 50% were at A* or A. 21 pupils achieved three A*s or better and 97 pupils (over a third of the year group) achieved 3 A* or A grades. As in previous years, M.C.B. pupils were amongst the top candidates in Northern Ireland examinations, with Rebekah Kerr taking first place in C.C.E.A. ‘A’ level French, Ailbhe Rea and Lalana Songra taking second place in French and Clare Gray taking second place in Spanish. In Economics, Jessica Chen took second place and John Finlay third, whilst Tess Davidson took third place in History.

At G.C.S.E., 25% of all presentations achieved the A* grade and 60% were at A* or A. 20% of the year group achieved 10 A* or A grades and 50 % of the year group achieved 7 A* or A grades, or better. At Northern Ireland level, in the C.C.E.A. G.C.S.E. examinations, Emily Marsh was joint first in French, Ryan Cullen joint first in Mathematics, Megan Duncan joint first in Home Economics, Megan Donaldson joint third in Additional Mathematics and Ellen Mooney joint third in Business Studies. Angus McCall came third in Music and attained further success in being selected to play cello with the U.K. Youth Orchestra at the Proms in the Albert Hall.

M.C.B. students and staff have continued to demonstrate success within the creative arts. A number of the College’s Moving Image Arts students had their
work included in the Foyle Film Festival schools competition, with Ruth Roger winning a first prize in one of the GCSE categories and Charlotte Dixon McKnight winning third place. Jake Desmond was first in the AS section and Megan Kealy and Danielle Swindells had their films selected in the A2 category.

Dr. Sheena Wilkinson’s cross-community creative writing group for 6th Formers has brought together young writers from schools across the city, to share, discuss and develop their work. Dr. Wilkinson also won the Children’s Books Ireland Book of the Year Award for her novel ‘Grounded’.

In music, the Girls’ Choir had a spectacularly successful year, winning both the U.K. Youth Choir of the Year and the All Ireland School Choir of the Year competitions. Their young accompanist, Donal McCann won the Fitz Brase cup for piano sight reading, the RTE Lyric FM award, the McCauley Perpetual Cup and the FitzGerald trophy for advanced organ playing. In July 2013, the Chapel Choir had a very successful residency at Westminster Abbey, performing Evensong to a congregation of over a thousand each day. The range of musical opportunities available to students is a particular feature of the College, through the Orchestra, the Band, the Jazz band, the Recorder Group, the Traditional Music Group and a range of choirs, including the first time this year, a Barbershop Quartet. The College’s junior and senior drama groups continued to provide a high level of entertainment (and fun) with their productions of ‘Bugsy Malone’ and ‘Return to the Forbidden Planet’.

Sport is also a strong feature in the College’s curricular and extra-curricular provision. In order to provide a funding stream for the further development of sports facilities at Pirrie Park, a partnership has been agreed between the College and Ulster Rugby. In both 2013 and 2014, the 1st XV won the Danske Bank Ulster Schools’ Cup, with this year’s victory marking the 35th occasion on which the trophy has been awarded to M.C.B. In 2013, the 2nd XV won the Danske Bank Ulster Schools’ 2nd XV Cup and the Medallion team won the Plate competition. 20 pupils were selected to represent Ulster in various teams and four were selected for the Ireland U19 Schools Squad Talent camp. In girls’ hockey, three pupils represented Ulster in the U18 Squad, while Katie Larmour captained the U16 Ulster team. Three pupils were also selected for Irish trials and Katie competed with the victorious Irish U16 squad in a Celtic Cup competition. Gavin Adams, the Boys’ Hockey 1st XI goalkeeper, was selected to play for the Irish Under 18s in the European Nations Tournament in Poland and the Boys’ 1st XI qualified for the Irish Schools’ Championships.

In the District and Ulster Athletics Championships, Kathryn Wallace was 2nd in Ulster in the Senior Hammer, Alix Galbraith 1st in the Junior Shot and 2nd in the Junior High Jump while Phoebe Tan was 1st. Sarah Woods came 2nd in
the Junior Javelin, Naomi Hipson finished 3rd in the 1200m walk, Madison Bowyer took 1st in the 1500m and Anna McCauley was 4th in the 100m. Over 20 M.C.B. pupils qualified to compete in the Irish Schools Athletics Championships. Phoebe Tan won a silver medal in the Junior Girls high jump, Alex Livingston won a bronze medal in the Senior Boys Pole Vault and Joe Kennedy took bronze medal in the Intermediate Boys. In the Senior Boys 100m, Paddy Colhoun took the silver medal and the Senior Boys Relay Team won bronze.

In volleyball, the Girls’ U18 Volleyball Team won the Northern Ireland Cup Competition. In Fencing, Lucy Taylor won the NI U16 Foil series and Richard Cochrane won the U14 event. At the Ulster and Irish School Squash Championships, the U17 Team won the Ulster Schools Cup and were runners up in the Irish Schools Championships. M.C.B. rowers continue to build on past successes. In the Portadown Marascull the boys took silver and bronze in their class and the girls won their class, coming 3rd overall in the event.

Ewan McAteer received an award from The Mary Peters Trust Athletes Academy as recognition of his current achievements and future potential in the sport of gymnastics. Ewan was placed 14th in the Under 18 age section of the UK School Games in Sheffield, competing against opposition who are in contention for Team GB selection for the 2016 Olympics. Another recipient of a Mary Peters Trust Award was judo champion Laura Williamson. Amongst many achievements over the past year, Laura won Gold Medals in U17 and U21 categories of the All Ireland Judo Championships. More success followed at the Northern Ireland Schools' Judo Championships along with 2nd Form pupil, Conor Kelly. Laura and Connor were both unbeaten in their categories taking the title of Northern Ireland Schools Champion 2013 for their respective age groups. At the Northern Ireland Judo Trials Laura won gold in the U17, silver in the U20 and gold in the Over 21s. Connor also won gold in the U14 category, while Tori Kee and Robyn Kelly both achieved a silver in the U17 category.

At the Ulster Grammar School Swimming Championships, Christian Bennison won silver while the relay quartet of Christian, Andrew McCullough and Chris and Daniel Coulter secured 3rd in the medley and freestyle relays. Keelan Logan and Ramesh Wilson were picked to represent Ulster at the 2013 School Inter-pro Championships in Dublin. Keelan won gold in the 200m and bronze in 100m butterfly. Ramesh was runner up in breaststroke event.

In the year in which the Ulster History Society erected a blue plaque to commemorate the achievements of former M.C.B. pupil Sean Lester, the last Secretary General of the League of Nations, the College hosted a very successful Model United Nations conference. Rory Copeland won the final of the prestigious European Parliament Leadership Competition and travelled to
the European Parliament in Strasbourg as part of his prize. A number of pupils participated in the All Ireland Linguistics Olympiad. Four pupils travelled to Dublin for the finals and Alec Fair qualified to represent Ireland at the International Linguistics Olympiad.

Due to the generous travel bursary provided by the Former Pupils Association, two senior pupils participated in projects abroad. Laura Cunningham travelled to Tanzania, visiting orphanages and a remote Masai Tribe, with the aim of helping to raise awareness of health issues. Henry Brett travelled to Ladakh in India, with the British Exploring Society, to work with a team analysing the effect of climate change on the flow of the Indus River.

In spite of financial constraints, the College continues to provide new opportunities for its pupils, where possible. In summer term 2013, extra-mural Irish Language and Culture lessons were offered to pupils in Forms 1 to 4 and a group of Lower 6th pupils travelled to Erding in Germany as part of a new German Language work experience exchange with the Anne Frank School.

As a consequence of its high standards of academic achievement, the College was designated by Cambridge University as the hub school in Northern Ireland for its Higher Education Plus Programme. The aim of this programme is to encourage pupils to apply to Cambridge, Oxford and other Russell Group universities by providing them with opportunities to engage in subject based tutorials, masterclasses and College visits. M.C.B. has been twinned with Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

Aspiration towards excellence is a feature of Methodist College – excellence in the classroom and out of the classroom. Through its breadth and depth of provision, the College seeks to instil values, to build character and to provide opportunities for all its pupils to attain distinction. Through all of its activity, it seeks to build better futures for its pupils and for the wider community and above all, to make a difference.

In conclusion, the Governors would wish to express their gratitude to those members of staff and members of the Board of Governors who have retired during the past year – individuals who have made a difference in ‘Methody’ and through doing so, have made a difference in the lives of many young people. In particular, the Governors wish to acknowledge the outstanding contribution made to the College by Dr. David and Mrs Norma Gallagher, who both retired as Vice-Principals in 2013 and would wish them a long and healthy retirement.

The Governors would also wish to place on record thanks to those of their colleagues who are retiring from the Board. The Governors wish to express their gratitude to a number of Trustee Governors: Rev. W. Winston Graham;
Mrs Katharine Kealey; Rev Dr Edmund Mawhinney, who has served as both Chair and, latterly, as Ministerial Secretary of the Board; Dame Mary Uprichard, who has served as the Lay Secretary of the Board; Revd. Robin Waugh; and Professor Ian Young, who has also served as Chair of the Board. Between them these Governors have provided wise counsel and guidance as they have served the College on behalf of the Church over a long number of years, and we are in their debt. The Governors would also like to express their appreciation to the Staff and Parent Governors who have finished their term of election.

The Governors wish to record their sincere gratitude for the work of the Principal and his Senior Leadership Team, academic and support staff members, the College Chaplain and all who contribute to the life of the Methody community.

**AGENDA**

1. The Conference receives the report.

2. The Conference re-appoints the Revd. David G Neilands as Chaplain to the College.

3. The Conference re-appoints the following as Governors who retire by rotation but are eligible for re-election: Revds. J.D. Alderdice and Dr R.N. Clutterbuck.
Pupil-Teacher Ratio
Following significant engagement with politicians by parents and the wider community prior to the last budget, the pupil-teacher ratio for Wesley College will not increase for the next academic year. It still, however, remains at 23:1, much higher than the 19:1 ratio for the majority of schools in the country. It is the contention of the College that Protestant schools in the Republic provide a service to our community which can only exist with the maintenance of boarding and ancillary facilities which necessitate the charging of fees, and that such additional funding for education should be welcomed by the state. Protestant Secondary Schools do not ask for additional state funding or subsidy; all that is asked for is equality in the provision of teachers.

New Junior Cycle Programme
There is significant national confusion regarding the implementation of the new Junior Cycle Student Award due to commence in August 2014. Wesley College will insist on maintaining the highest of academic standards irrespective of what new syllabi are introduced and will make minimal changes to the courses currently on offer.

Examinations in Wesley College
The 2013 Leaving Certificate results in Wesley College were of an exceptionally high standard. 150 candidates sat the examination. 39% of candidates scored over 500 points, out of a maximum of 625, while 75% scored over 400 points. 67% of higher level papers yielded an A or B grade while 93% of higher level papers yielded an A, B or C. Once again, it is important to note that Wesley College does not select pupils on the basis of ability for entry into the College.

13 students from 2013 were awarded entrance scholarships to Trinity College and UCD. Four past pupils were awarded an Ad Astra Scholarship in UCD, more than awarded to any other school in the country.

Prize Giving
Academic success was celebrated at the annual Prize Distribution held in October last year. Wesley College was delighted to welcome (once again) the President, Rev Dr Heather Morris, as the guest speaker. Dr Morris spoke of her time in the College when she was a pupil, and there was considerable pride in the hall (and in classes that she addressed on the following day) in her achievements to date.
Extra-Curricular Activities

In June 2013, the largest school trip to have taken place from Wesley departed with 238 pupils, past pupils, teachers and parents travelling to the town of Beius in Romania. The goal was to build 10 houses in the space of one week for the charity Habitat for Humanity for families in need. All 10 houses were completed and families now live in these homes. Wesley College was the first school in the Republic to embark on house-building trips and this special trip was the 10th year of our participation with Habitat for Humanity.

The College continues to provide an unrivalled extra-curricular programme for our pupils. There are hockey, rugby, badminton and cricket teams at every level. With seven Choirs and an orchestra as well as numerous chamber groups and rock bands, Wesley students have an exceptional exposure to music. Public speaking is experienced through debating, Model United Nations and Drama Clubs for all ages. Wesley College has possibly the largest school Christian Union group in the country. In addition, students are encouraged to join a host of clubs: Arts and Crafts, Woodwork, Amnesty, Bridge, Dance, the College student magazine, Green Schools, Model-Making, Music Technology, Polocrosse, Textile Fashion and Design as well as our Enterprise Club and Code Club. It is the view of the College that exposure to, and participation in, a range of activities beyond the classroom enhances academic success and contributes to a happy and fulfilling experience for all.

Planning for the future

As the country emerges from the economic difficulties of the last number of years it is worth noting that the number of pupils attending Wesley College has grown. Given the reputation of the College it is no surprise that demand for places in future years is strong.

The Governors have therefore decided to continue the modernisation of the campus started some years ago. Three buildings will have all windows replaced with high quality double glazing and our boarding houses, Embury and Epworth, will have up-graded heating systems installed. Contrary to what may be happening in other schools, the number of boarding pupils has increased and this improvement in our boarding facilities will strengthen boarding considerably.

Additional information about Wesley College can be found at www.wesleycollege.ie.
AGENDA

1. The Conference receives the report of the Governors.
2. The Conference re-appoints Rev Nigel Mackey as Chaplain of the College.
3. The Conference appoints Mr Jonathan Lew as Honorary Treasurer.
4. The Conference re-appoints Ernst and Young as auditors.
Eastwell Residential Home

The Home operates on the basis of a quiet place of residence and commitment for all who reside within. Nevertheless every year brings changes and 2013 has been no exception. Early in the year we welcomed the new Head of Home, Mrs Wendy Whelan. In the Autumn we said goodbye and thank-you to Mrs Gillian Stephens who acted as Hon.Secretary for a number of years and we welcomed Mrs Gillian Hinds as the Home's new Hon. Secretary.

The last number of years have proved challenging for the Home and this continued throughout 2013. For many reasons it is proving difficult to operate with the optimum number of residents and we would ask for your support and prayers that those who would benefit from residence in the Home would become aware of it.

The Administrator, the Head of Home and The Ladies Committee all work with enthusiasm and commitment to ensure the Residents are well cared for, that the Home is well maintained and that the Home is meeting the requirements of such an entity. The Governors and all concerned with the Home are greatly endebted for their efforts.

The Home is now approaching its 250th Anniversary which will be celebrated in 2016. Your suggestions and support for this event would be very welcome.

We would ask Conference to remember the Home and all connected with it in its prayers.

AGENDA

1. The Conference adopts the report of the Governors.
The Methodistic Historical Society Of Ireland

The most notable development during the year has been the launch of a Society website in October 2013. The website which was some time in preparation has attracted a great deal of additional traffic to the Society and has been received favourably by members and visitors. Linked to the website is an online library facility which will eventually list every manuscript and rare book in the Society’s holdings. To date over half of the 6,000 manuscript items held at the archives have been listed and approximately half the rare books and pamphlets. The flow of records from around the Connexion to the Society’s archives at Edgehill College continues to be carefully catalogued and preserved.

The implementation of the website has been the last stage in a series of incremental changes taking place in the work of the Society. The first task, in this programme was the preparation, for the first time, of a constitution which was formally adopted in October 2010. It was followed by the adoption of the Society’s Collection, Preservation and Access Policy together with Rules of Library Usage. These measures together with the most recent website presence has given the Society a good platform from which to continue serving the Connexion and its wider constituency.

During this period the membership of the Society has also continued to grow, by almost seventy-five percent – from 210 in 2009 to 350 in 2014. This together with a growing institutional membership of 30 makes a total membership of 380, the largest in the Society’s history.

In October 2013 the Annual Lecture was delivered by Professor Eugenio Biagini of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge in a most stimulating analysis of Methodist evangelism and changing perceptions in Post-Independent Ireland.

On 1 May 2014, the Rev. Dr Robert Williams General Secretary of the United Methodist Church Commission on Archives and History presented to the MHSI archives the eighteenth century diary of the Irish preacher David Gordon. His visit coincided with the bi-centenary of the death of Dr Thomas Coke. Later in May the Society gladly welcomed the warm invitation of the Dromore, Broomhedge and Priesthill societies to make their churches the location for the 2014 annual pilgrimage.

The Society is most grateful for the continued generous support both financial and prayerful of Circuits throughout the Connexion.

The MHSI sadly records the death of the Rev. Dr. W. Dennis Cooke, at whose initiative the invitation was extended to the Society to move from Aldersgate
House to the custom-designed archives and library in the new Edgehill College extension in 2002.

AGENDA

1. The Conference adopts the Report.

2. The following is the Committee of the Society for the ensuing year:-

   Rev. Ian D. Henderson, President; Rev. Dr Norman W. Taggart, Vice-President; Mrs Jennifer Stutt, Secretary; Mrs Judith McKay, Treasurer; Rev. Robin P. Roddie, Archivist; Revs D.A. Levistone Cooney, Colin D. Gracie, Brian D. Griffin, Paul Kingston (B), Mr Steven C. ffeary-Smyrl, Dr Fergus O’Ferrall, Mrs Nan Frame, Mr George E. Orr, Mr Brian J. O. Pasley, Dr Shelagh Waddington, Miss E. Maureen Weir and Mr J.R. Wesley Weir.

3. The Conference thanks the Societies for their financial support and recommends that every Society should contribute to the funds of the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland.

4. The Conference encourages Methodists to join the Society.

5. The Conference directs that all documents no longer in current use, including print-outs from electronic records, be lodged with a competent authority for safe-keeping and future reference. For this purpose it recommends the use of the archives of the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland.
Appointment of Committees, Boards, Governors and Auditors

1. The Conference appoints the Boards as follows:

(a): Stipends and Allowances Board:
The President, the Lay Leader, the Secretary of Conference, Chairman of the Board: Mr John Buchanan
District Representatives:
Revs Andrew J. Dougherty, Paul N.W. Maxwell, Colin Milligan, __________, __________, Emily Hyland, David L. Turtle, __________
Mr Bruce Mullen, Mrs Avril Hogan, Mr. John Armstrong, __________, Mr. William Parkinson, Mr. Alan Cavan, M________, Mr. Desmond Mitchell.
Together with:

Secretary: Mr. Wilson Stewart
Ministerial Secretary: Rev. Andrew N. Boucher

(b): Property Board:
The President, the Lay Leader, the Secretary of Conference, Chairman of the Board: Revd Collin J. Duncan
District Representatives: Revs, Ivor N. Owens, Denis Maguire, Stephen E. Woods, John Purdy, Edward McDade, Thomas Clarke, Kenneth Connor, Robert Loney, Mr. Clive Scott, Mr. Norman Bateman, Mr. David Gilmore, Mr. Reggie Mills, Mr. Kyle McAdam, Mr. David Ferguson, Mr. David Stewart and Mr. John Clarke.

Officers of the Board: Secretary ____________, Mr. Stewart Wilson, Rev. Thomas M. Clarke and Miss. Elizabeth Curry.

Co-opted members:
Rev. Dr. Heather Morris, Mr. Gordon Kennedy
Plans Committee: Mr David Stewart (Convener), Mr. David Ferguson, Revd Thomas Clarke, Mr. Gordon Kennedy, __________ (who acts as Secretary)

Secretary: ________________

(c): Church Development Board:
The President, the Lay Leader, the Secretary of Conference, Chairman of the Board: Mr David Twyble
The Officers of the Home Mission Department
The Officers of the Property Board
The General Secretary of the Department of Youth and Children’s Work
The District Superintendents
A representative of the General Purposes Fund
A representative of the Connexional Finance Committee
The Convener for Inter Church Relations
Two Representatives from Edgehill College
A Representative from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland
A Representative from the Church of Ireland
District Representatives: Mr. Kenneth, Correll, Mrs. Valerie Fitzgerald, Mr. Trevor Nixon, Miss Gladys Colvin, Mr. James Johnston, Mr. Norman Uprichard, Mr. David Twyble, Mr. David Blevins

Secretary: Mr. David Twyble

(d): Board of Education:
The President, the Lay Leader, the President Designate, the Secretary of Conference,
The Officers of the Board:
General Secretary: Dr. John Harris
Ministerial Treasurer and Convener of the Northern Executive:

Lay Treasurer: Mr. Kenneth Twyble
The Secretary of the Home Mission Department
The General Secretary of Irish Methodist Youth and Children
Elected by the Conference
Revs. Dr. S. Wesley Blair, Andrew J. Dougherty, Thomas M. Kingston
Alan G. Wardlow;
Mrs. Margaret Nelson, Mr. Charles Payne, Miss Rosemary Rainey, Dr. Ian Taylor, Mr. Joseph Uprichard, Ms. Daphne Wood

2. The Conference appoints the Committees as follows:

(a) Communications Committee
The President, the Lay Leader, the Secretary of Conference, the Secretary of the Home Mission Department, the General Secretary of the Department of Youth and Children’s Work, Rev David A. Campton, Rev. Roy Cooper, Dr. Lindsay Easson, Miss Joanne Hamilton, Mrs. Elizabeth Kelly, Mr. Thomas H. Millar, (Convenor), Mrs. Lynda Neilands, Mrs Joan Young.
(b) Connexional Finance Committee
The President, the Lay Leader, the Secretary of Conference, Mr. J. Harold Baird, Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Derek Hampton, Secretary of the Committee,
Treasurer of the Retirement Funds: Rev. Mark S. Forsyth
Treasurer of the Ministers’ Children’s Fund: Rev. Colin D. Gracie
Treasurer of the Ministerial Training Fund: Mr. R. Alan Ker
Treasurer of the Church Development Fund: Mr. Stewart J. Wilson
Treasurer of the General Purposes Fund: Mr. J. Stanley Graham
Treasurer of the Dept of Youth and Childrens’ Work: Mr. Mark McElhinney
Treasurer of the Home Mission Department: Rev. Dr. Heather M.E. Morris
Treasurer of the Trustees: Mr. Neil E. Morris
Together with Revs. Dr. S. Wesley Blair, Ian D. Henderson, Messrs., John Cartwright, Peter M.C. Little. William J. Stafford

(c) Council on Social Responsibility
The President, the Lay Leader, the President Designate, the Secretary of Conference:

Northern Executive: Chairperson; Rev. Dr. David Clements, Lay Secretary; Mrs. Hazel Baird, General Treasurer; Mr William Parkinson, Revs. David A. Campton, Colin J. Duncan, Nicolas D. Mc Knight, Kenneth J. Robinson, Robert W. Wallace, Dr. David Gallagher, Mrs Elaine McDonald, Dr. Mr. Philip Robinson ___________.
Co-opted Rev. Harold Good

Southern Executive: Chairperson; Rev. Steven Foster, Lay Secretary; ___________.
Mrs Lucy Bateman, Mr Joseph Bockarie, Mr Robert Cochran, Miss Heidi Good, Mr James Grannell, Mr Jono Griffin, Mrs Sarah Keogh, Dr Edith Loane, Rev Bill Olmstead

(d) Faith and Order Committee
The President, the Lay Leader, Ex - President, the Secretary of Conference, Revds Dr. Richard N. Clutterbuck, Paul J. Gallucci, Fiona R. McCrea, Dr. W. David Rock, David L. Turtle, Ms. Heidi Good, Dr Katie Heffelfinger, Ms Gillian Kingston, Mr Stephen McCann, Mr Ian Payne, Mr Robert Watson. Co-opted: the President Designate

Convenor: Dr. Fergus O’Ferrall

(e) Home Mission Forum
The President, the Lay Leader, the Secretary of the Conference, the
Officers of the Home Mission Department, Revs John D.Alderdice, Mervyn G. Ewing, Laurence A.M. Graham, Maureen E. Hassard, Richard C. Johnston (Chair), Robin W. D. Waugh, Mrs Elaine Barnett, Mr Jonny Best, Mrs Margaret Copeland, __________, __________, __________, __________. The Ex-President and President Designate are entitled to attend.

(f) Inter-Church Relations Committee
The Secretary of Conference, the Convener for Inter Church Relations, Revs. Roy Cooper, W. Winston Graham, Eleanor Hayden, Stephen Sheerin, Ms. Tina Barnett, Ms. Gillian M. Kingston, Mr. Robert Watson

(g) Irish Methodist Youth and Children Executive
Chair/Convener Revd John D. Alderdice
Connexional Officers Revd W David Rock, Mrs Gillian Gilmore, Mrs Janette McCormick, Mr. Mark McElhinney
Four Reps of Youth and Children’s Work Mrs. Rosemary Dorman, Miss Deirdre McHugh, Rev Fiona McCrea, Ms Nicola Hanna
Four co-opted members Rev Steven Foster, Mr .Jonathan Griffin, Mr Adam Lyner, Mr David Morris
Child Care Society Officers Rev. Robin N McKibben, Mrs. Margaret Copeland

(h) Local Preachers’ Committee
The President, the Lay Leader, the Secretary of Conference, and the ex-President;
The Ministerial and Lay Secretaries of the Committee: Rev Mervyn G. Ewing and Mr David Allen.
The Principal of Edgehill Theological College: Rev. Dr. Richard N. Clutterbuck.
District Secretaries: Mrs Heather Brown, Mr Charles Payne, Mr. John Armstrong, Mrs. Deanna Balmer, Mrs Joan Parkinson, Messrs Gary Crooks, Robert Watson, Mrs Edna Deacon
Together with: Rev. Edward I. McDade, Miss Heather Boland, Mrs Sharon Grey.

(i) Methodist Missionary Society (Ireland) World Mission Committee
General Secretary: Rev. Laurence A.M. Graham
Treasurers: Rev. William D. Mullally and Mr Ian Patterson
World Mission and Development Officer: Mr. Tim Dunwoody
Recording Secretary: Mrs Gail Mercer
Members: Rev. Steven Foster, Mr Martyn Nesbitt, Mr Oliver Hetherington, Rev Ruth Watt.

(j) Methodist Women in Ireland Central Forum
General Officers

    MWI President                Mrs. Charlotte Maye
MWI General Treasurer         Mrs. Barbara Fennell
MWI General Secretary         Mrs. Carmel Irwin
MWI Assistant General Secretary Mrs Irene Boyd
MWI World Mission Secretary   Mrs. Angela Nelson
MWI Past President            Mrs Maureen Weir
MWI Past General Treasurer    Mrs Nan McDowell

Together with:
Mrs Roberta Bailie, Ms Lyn Beatty, Mrs Florence Bowler, Mrs Elizabeth Carville, Mrs Elizabeth Cartwright, Mrs. Heather Christie, Mrs Essie Clarke, Mrs. Sandra Dickson, Mrs. Maureen Edgar, Mrs. Audrey Elder, Mrs. Heather Gandola, Mrs Linda Irwin, Mrs. Corinne Kingston, Dr Edith Loane, Mrs Hazel Magowan, Mrs Sure Maxwell, Mrs. Vera Metcalfe, Mrs May Millen, Mrs. Patricia Miller, Mrs. May Morrow, Mrs Elizabeth MacBean, Mrs. Elsie McDonnell, Mrs. Linda McGuffin, Mrs. Margaret McKee, Mrs. Moira McMurray, Miss Elizabeth McWatters, Mrs Hilary Patterson, Mrs Joan Strong, Mrs. Mona Treanor, Mrs. Phyllis Watters, Rev. Brenda Weatherill, Mrs. Maureen Young.

(k) Ministry of Healing Committee
The President, the Lay Leader, the Secretary of the Conference, Revs Colin J. Duncan (Chair), Fiona R McCrea (Secretary), Alan Meara, _________, Mrs Hazel Baird, Mrs Avril Carroll, Dr. Chris Mathison, _________.

The Churches’ Council for Health and Healing in Ireland: Rev. Colin J. Duncan, and Rev. Alan Meara

(l) Prison and Healthcare Chaplaincy Committee
Revs. Andrew J. Dougherty, J. Brownlee Glenny, Derek J. Johnston (Sec/Convenor), David H. Nixon, G. Leslie Spence, Mr. Kevin Devlin, Mrs. Brenda Duncan, Mr. T. Osmond Mulligan Mrs. Joan Parkinson, Mr. John Warren (Chairperson),

(m) Sabbaticals Committee
The President, the Lay Leader, the Secretary of Conference; a representative of the Ministerial Training Fund; the General Secretary of the Home Mission Department, the Director of Ministry, the Sabbatical
Officer; together with Revs. J. A. Maurice Laverty, Mrs. Margaret Thornes, Messrs. J. Stanley Graham, Stewart J. Wilson.

(n) World Development and Relief Committee
Rev David Nixon (Convener) (2), Mr Jonny Best (Treasurer) (2), Mr. Malcolm Johnston (Secretary) (4), Rev. Laurence Graham (Secretary, MMSI), Rev Diane Clutterbuck (1), Miss Kirsty Dunlop (2), Miss Karen Gillespie (1), Mr. Martin Misangumukini (7), Miss Louise Monroe (1), Rev Dr John Parkin (3), Mr Anton Scheele (1).

Advisors who may attend as non-voting participants: The World Mission and Development Officer, a representative of Christian Aid Ireland, a representative of Methodist Relief and Development

3. The Conference appoints Boards of Governors as follows:

(a) Edgehill College, Belfast
The President, the Secretary of Conference, Rev W Philip Agnew (Senior Secretary of the Board of Examiners), Rev Dr Richard N Clutterbuck (Principal of the College). Rev Dr Heather M E Morris (Secretary of the Home Mission Fund), Rev David G Neilands (Ministerial Treasurer). Revs T David Cooper (Chair), Colin D Gracie, Maureen E Hassard, J A Maurice Laverty, Johnston McMaster, Jeremy Nicoll, Mrs Norma Gallagher, Mrs J Elizabeth Kelly, Mr R Alan Ker, Mrs Emily Logan, Mr David McKendry, Ms Frances McKinney, Dr Jennifer M Meegan.

(b) Methodist College, Belfast
The Secretary of the Conference
Revd. John D Alderdice, Mrs Brenda Callaghan, Mr John Clarke, Revds. Dr Richard N Clutterbuck, Dr Frederick L Munce, Mr William Patterson, Professor Sir Desmond Rea, Revd. Janet M Unsworth, __________, __________, __________, __________, __________.

Members of the Board of Governors appointed by the Department of Education (NI): Mrs Patricia Arneill, Mr Neil Jackson, Ms Rotha Johnston, Mrs Edith Shaw, __________, __________.

Members of the Board of Governors elected by the Staff of the College: Mrs Gillian Morrison, Mrs Nicola Grant-Stevenson, __________.

Members of the Board of Governors elected by the parents of children at the College: Dr Kathryn Fleming, Mr Timothy Lowry, Mr Michael Humphreys.
(c) Wesley College, Dublin
The President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, The Principal of the College Mr Christopher Woods, Revs Andrew J. Dougherty, Donald P Ker, Jeremy Nicoll, Mr Gordon Bothwell, Mrs Clodagh Bowen, Mr David English, Dr John W Harris, Mrs Gillian Kingston, Mr Jonathan Lew, Dr Linde Lunney, Mrs Deirdre Lyons, Mrs Shirley McGurk, Mr Clive Moutray, Mr Rory O’Ferrall, Mr Roy Parker, Mrs Eleanor Petrie, Mr James Thorpe.

(d) Gurteen College, Co. Tipperary
Rev. Steven Foster, Rev. Laurence Graham, Mr. Robert Armitage, Mrs. Victoria Baker, Mrs. Lucy Bateman, Mr. James Bennett, Mr. Martin Cavanagh, Mr. John Cusack, Mr. Ray Dempsey, Mrs. Anne Goodwin, Mr. Clifford Guest, Mr. Richard Jack, Mr. Gordon Nicholson and Mr. John Sandall.

(e) Methodist Widows’ Home - Eastwell
Chairman: Mr. Rory O’Ferrall
Hon. Secretary: Mrs. Gillian Hinds
Administrator: Mr. Alan Shiel
Chairperson of the Ladies Committee: Mrs. Iris Beatty
Representing the Annual General Meeting: Rev. Andrew Dougherty, Mrs. Helen Sheppard, Mr. Derek Seymour

Representing the Dublin Societies
Centenary, Leeson Park: Mrs. Gillian Hinds
Rathgar: Mrs. Wendy Moore
Dun Laoghaire: Mrs. Jean Ferguson
Sandymount: Mr. Steven ffeary-Smyrl
Clontarf: Miss Yvonne Seville
Dublin Central Mission: Mrs. Margaret Boles
Dundrum: Mrs Margaret Payne
Sutton: Dr. Joyce Pickett
Blackrock and Bray: Mrs. Heather Gandola
Lucan and Tallaght

4. The Conference appoints the Committees of the City Missions as follows:

(a) Belfast Central Mission
Revs. Diane S Clutterbuck, Emily A Hyland, David J. Kerr, Alan W. Lorimer, Brenda W. Weatherill,
Mr. Rowan Black, Mr. Victor Browne, Mr. Mervyn Farley, Mr. David Ferguson,
Dr. David Gallagher, Mr. Jonathan Glover, Mr. J. Wesley Hamilton,
Miss Maureen Weir, Mrs. Margaret Williamson, Mr. G. Lester Wood,
Mr. Lester Hanna is the Treasurer of the Mission.
Dr. David Gallagher is the Secretary of the Committee.

(b) East Belfast Mission
Rev. Margaret A. Ferguson, Superintendent of the Mission and Chairman of the Committee.
Nominated by Conference: Mr. Hedley Abernethy, Mr. Gary Crooks, Mrs. Ann Ferguson, Rev. Britt Gilmore, Mr. Jonathan Good, Mrs. Linda Hopley, Mr. Andrew Irvine, Rev. David Kerr, Mrs. Gail Mercer, Mr. Tom Millar, Mrs. Hilary Neill, Dr. Cecilia Smyth,

(c) Dublin Central Mission
The Board of Directors of the Dublin Central Mission Ltd, incorporating the Mission Committee: Rev. Dr. John Stephens (Superintendent of the Mission and Chairman of the Board), Nigel J. Bryan, Avril R. Carroll, Alex. H. Thackaberry, A.C. Varghese, John Parsons, Leslie Buttimer, Kenneth Galloway & Robert Farrar with power to co-opt within the terms of the Articles of Association. David Reynolds is the Chief Executive Officer and David W. Lee is the Financial Director and Company Secretary.

(d) North West Methodist Mission
Rev Peter D. Murray, Superintendent of the Mission and Chairman of the Board, Rev Paul J. Gallucci, Messrs Bill Bell, Hamilton Blain, Tim Bryson, Mrs Joan Doherty, Messrs James Duff, John Gibson, Miss Jane Given, Dr Peter Leeson, Miss Janice McCandless, Mrs Wendy McClay, Mrs Lena Wray and Mrs Maureen Young.

(e) Newtownabbey Methodist Mission Council
Rev. William A. Davison, Superintendent of the Mission, Messrs. David Anderson, Kenneth Anderson, Jim Blair, Ms Alison Cummings, Ms Frances Hunter, Ms Marie Hunter, Mr John Middleton, Ms Gillian Mutch,
Ms Maureen Neely, Ms Hillary Patterson, Ms Emma Ross, Messrs George Smith, Ernie Weatherall, Ms Margaret Weatherall
Mr. Ernie Weatherall is Treasurer of the Mission.

5. The Conference delegates to the Connexional Finance Committee the appointment of Connexional Auditors.
Retirement Tributes

Desmond C. Bain, who has travelled forty-two years. After a period of regular circuit ministry he has served the Church most notably in two strategic appointments. For twelve years he was Superintendent of Dublin Central Mission during which he oversaw the development of two major projects in the care of the elderly. This was followed by sixteen years as Connexional Home Mission Secretary when he helped to shape and implement the Connexions renewal programme. He has given gracious and reflective leadership to the Church and has been a wise and helpful counsellor to those seeking guidance for their ministry or circuit. He was elected President in 2005.

Brian D. Griffin, B.A., B.D., who has travelled forty-one years. He has served in urban and rural circuits in both the north and south of Ireland. He served twice in la Côte D'Ivoire, for a total of twelve years, where he also was Director of the Urban Industrial Mission and Port Chaplain. He served as Chairman of Dublin and Superintendent of Midlands and Southern Districts. His ministry was characterised by thoughtful preaching and faithful pastoral care. A committed ecumenist with a passion for the gospel, he has worked enthusiastically with other Christian traditions throughout his ministry.

M. Elizabeth Hewitt, O.B.E., who has travelled thirty-two years. She has served in urban and rural circuits throughout Ireland. She represented the Church on various ecumenical committees in Ireland and Britain and was Convener for Inter-Church Relations. She was awarded the O.B.E. for her work with children and young people. She worked to create partnerships between church and community, emphasising team work and encouraging people to use their gifts in the service of the Church. Her ministry was characterised by careful preparation resulting in relevant services of worship and a caring ministry wherever she served.

E. Rosemary Lindsay, B.A., B.D., M.A., who has travelled seventeen years. She has served in urban and rural areas in the Republic of Ireland. Her eloquence as a preacher and her warm and friendly personality have endeared her to her congregations and in the wider community. Her deep interest in children and young people was given expression in her service as Chaplain to Gurteen College and her involvement in the Girls’ Brigade. Her gifts in music and singing were recognised when the Conference elected her its Precentor. Her administrative abilities and commitment to Christian judgment on social issues were evident in her appointment as Convener of the Council on Social Responsibility.

R. Kenneth Lindsay, B.Sc., B.Agr., B.D., who has travelled thirty-five years. He entered the ministry following a period of overseas service as a secondary school teacher in Sierra Leone. His ministry was characterised by deep
spirituality, selfless service and attentive pastoral care in every circuit appointment and as a university chaplain in Dublin. During his time in Bangor he was instrumental in the development and planning of the new church at Carnalea. He has consistently embraced and promoted innovative strategies and courses to facilitate the training and development of young people, leaders, local preachers and ministers. The Conference elected him President in 2012.

**John Parkin, B.Sc., Ph.D.,** who has travelled twenty-six years. He entered the ministry following periods as a geologist in Zambia and service with Christian Aid. He has served in city and rural circuits in the Republic of Ireland. As a Secretary of the Council on Social Responsibility, he dealt with the Church’s response to such contemporary challenges as abortion, divorce and homosexuality. As Secretary for the World Development and Relief Committee, he travelled extensively in Africa. He acted as an international monitor of elections in South Africa. His advocacy of justice issues was coupled with pastoral engagement with asylum seekers and others most affected.

**Heather Robb,** who has travelled twenty-three years. Entering the Methodist ministry following service with the Faith Mission, she carried with her the heart of an evangelist and with warmth and conviction has exercised a gracious ministry in several urban circuits. She was always a welcome pastor to old and young alike. Whether at the bedside of an elderly patient or in sometimes daring productions at school assembly, she conveyed the message of the Christian gospel to those to whom she ministered. She served as Ministerial Treasurer of the Ministerial Training Fund for seven years.

**Vanessa G. Wyse Jackson, B.A.**, who has travelled fourteen years. She brought her gifts as a teacher to her calling in the non-stipendiary ministry. Her service has been on circuits within the Dublin District, where she has shown a gift for pastoral care and an aptitude for work with children. Throughout her ministry she has demonstrated a facility for clear thinking and a gift for organisation. She has a passion for both education and ecumenical dialogue, serving on the Methodist Board of Education, on the inter-church marriage preparation panel for ACCORD, and on the Faith and Order Committee.

Their friends and colleagues pray God's blessing for these ministers and their families on their retirement.
Faith And Order Committee

The Faith and Order Committee has devoted substantial attention and time to producing a new Statement on the mission of the Methodist Church in Ireland as directed by Conference in 2013. The Statement, entitled *God’s Mission Our Mission: “Warm Hearts, Tough Hands and Wet Feet- Marks of Our Whole-Life Discipleship”*, is submitted to Conference for approval, circulation and use throughout the Connexion. The Statement is attached at Appendix 1.

The Committee has kept the following matters under review:
(a) the resourcing of *Singing The Faith* and there is now a link to www.singingthefaithplus.org.uk on our the website of the Church
(b) interchangeability of ministry with the Church of Ireland and
(c) the *Guidelines on Baptism*, approved by Conference in 2013, are now on the website of the Church and the booklet, *All This For You*, produced by the Methodist Church in Britain is commended for use.

The Committee also heard reports from:
(a) the Thirtieth Oxford Institute for Methodist Theological Studies,
(b) the Inter-Church Relations Committee and
(c) the Covenant Council established by the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Church of Ireland.

The Faith and Order Committee will continue to review all matters of faith and order, as necessary, in order “to scrutinize and make recommendations regarding any doctrinal statements and documents to be issued in the name of the Church.” [*Manual of Laws*, 26.01 (a)].

**AGENDA**

1. The Conference receives the Report.

2. The Conference approves the Statement on the Mission of the Methodist Church in Ireland, entitled *God’s Mission Our Mission*, and directs that it be circulated to Districts and Circuits in order to serve and guide the mission of the whole Connexion.

3. The Conference re-appoints Dr.Fergus O’Ferrall as Convenor of the Committee.

Dates of Meeting:
Saturday 4th October 2014 (Dublin)
Saturday 24th January 2015 (Belfast)
Appendix 1

THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND

GOD’S MISSION OUR MISSION:
“WARM HEARTS, TOUGH HANDS, AND WET FEET – MARKS OF OUR WHOLE-LIFE DISCIPLESHIP”

STATEMENT ON THE MISSION OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND

Preface

The Conference in 2013 directed that the Faith and Order Committee prepare a new Statement on the mission of the Methodist Church in Ireland for Conference in 2014. The context requiring a fresh expression of our mission reaches back through the journey undertaken by the Methodist Church in Ireland since the 1997 Renewing the Church Conference. This journey has involved a range of important developments culminating in the special Annual Conference in 2013 with the theme ‘A People Invited to Follow’. The Faith and Order Committee contributed A Discussion Paper, ‘A Fresh Expression of Our Mission’ to the deliberations of the special Conference. The purpose of this Statement on the Mission of the Methodist Church in Ireland is to draw together our understanding of God’s mission for our Church in the period ahead: it is an effort to state clearly and concisely ‘what it is that we are about’ having sought to discern God’s will as the proceedings of the special Conference have been considered in the follow up to the Conference at District and Circuit levels since June 2013. This is a Statement concerning mission; it is not intended to treat in detail other related aspects such as the nature of the church or other matters of faith and order which may require or have required separate statements from time to time.¹

We trust that a clear Conference Statement will serve as a bench-mark at both local and Connexional levels for those who are seeking to discern a direction and possible fresh forms of mission and that it will assist in the assessment of the effectiveness of our mission. It is recognised that there will be different, and indeed, unexpected expressions of mission throughout Ireland in the years ahead. The seeds of many of these are already being sown. The very extensive process of prayer, study and reflection which has occurred, which is deepening and which will continue, has brought confirmation and assurance that our Wesleyan theological and spiritual heritage provides a number of distinctive emphases and a framework for theological discernment highly relevant to the very challenging contexts for mission in twenty-first century Ireland. We give thanks to God for the world-wide renewal of Methodist theology in the recent period as the Holy Spirit has
led many of our sister churches into a time of renewal and revival. We believe that God is also inviting us in Ireland to take our full part in His mission.

Contact in regard to this Statement may be made to:
Dr. Fergus O’Ferrall, Convenor, Faith and Order Committee, at ‘foferrall@gmail.com’.

GOD’S MISSION OUR MISSION: “WARM HEARTS, TOUGH HANDS AND WET FEET – MARKS OF OUR WHOLE-LIFE DISCIPLESHIP”

1. WHY DO WE NEED TO REFLECT ON GOD’S CALL TO MISSION?

1.1. The President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Rev. Dr. Heather Morris, at the special Conference of the Church in 2013, described Methodists as those who have “a warm heart, for everything stems from a living relationship with Jesus; tough hands, because they serve; and wet feet, because when God leads we will step out, take risks, be uncomfortable for the sake of God’s kingdom.” This is a memorable description of whole-life discipleship which challenges the Connexion to reflect upon the current context of our Church: are we ‘wandering in a wilderness’ because we have lost sight of God’s invitation to His people to move into His Promised Future?

1.2. Holy Scripture reveals God’s design to gather humanity and all of creation into communion under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The Church is to serve this Promised Future by helping human beings to know Jesus Christ and to become His effective and fruitful disciples – thus achieving the purpose for which they were created- and to mature as disciples by participating in bringing in the reign of Jesus Christ as God’s new society. The characteristics of God’s new society are delineated in Scripture especially in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. As John Stott observes in his commentary on Ephesians:

“It sets forth God’s eternal purpose to create through Jesus Christ a new society which stands out in bright relief against the sombre background of the old world. For God’s new society is characterised by life in place of death, by unity and reconciliation in place of division and alienation, by the wholesome standards of righteousness in place of the corruption of wickedness, by love and peace in the place of hatred and strife, and by unremitting conflict with evil in place of a flabby compromise with it.”
1.3. Are we, in the Methodist Church in Ireland, ‘wandering in a wilderness’ because we have not fully grasped the gracious invitation of God to His people? If so, it is vital that we reflect more profoundly on our motivation for mission. Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ are ‘a people invited to follow’ Him in God’s transformative mission: to ‘follow Him’ requires individual and collective growth until ‘Christ is formed in us’ (Gal.4:19). Why should comfortable well-off Christians, bother? The prime reason is that the one living God wills to be known through us throughout His whole creation. He wills to be known because the good of God’s human creatures requires that His Love be known to them. The good of the whole creation requires that God be known and praised as its Creator. (Romans 8:19-32). Knowing God to be God is the supreme good and blessing for human beings made as we are in God’s image: as John Wesley emphasised refusing or suppressing that knowledge lies at the root of all other kinds of sin. (Romans 1:18-32).

1.4. Therefore, the flourishing of human beings and their societies depends upon the Church of Jesus Christ seeking to fulfil The Great Commission. (Matt.28:16-20). If we have the joy of the Gospel filling our hearts and lives because we have encountered Jesus personally and have accepted His offer of salvation then we have been set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. This joy we have in Christ and the love of Christ compels us to share our new life in Christ with all people. If Jesus is really Lord for us we have no liberty to opt out or be half-hearted in our response to His gracious command. We are to make known the God of love, justice, compassion, truth, integrity, faithfulness and sovereign power if we are to be true to our calling and election. (1 Peter 1:3-10). As Christopher J. H. Wright observes:

‘... all our missional efforts to make God known must be set within the prior framework of God’s own will to be known. We are seeking to accomplish what God himself wills to happen. This is both humbling and reassuring. It is humbling inasmuch as it reminds us that all our efforts would be in vain but for God’s determination to be known. We are neither the initiators of the mission of making God known to the nations nor does it lie in our power to decide how the task will be accomplished or when it may be deemed to be complete. But it is also reassuring. For we know that behind all our fumbling efforts and inadequate communication stands the supreme will of the living God, reaching out in loving self-revelation, incredibly willing to open blind
eyes and reveal his glory through the treasures of the gospel
delivered in the clay pots of his witnesses. (2 Cor.4:1-7).iii

1.5. The mission of the Methodist Church must be understood within
the mission of God as we discover it in Holy Scripture.
Fundamentally our mission – if it is Biblically informed and validated-
consists of our committed participation as God’s people, at God’s
invitation and command, in God’s own mission within the history of God’s
world for the redemption of God’s creation.iv The aim of God in history is
the creation of an all-inclusive community of loving persons with God
himself at the very centre of this community. (Ephesians 2:9-22; 3:10).
Increasingly God’s mission is understood as ‘one mission’, that is no
longer are certain parts of the world termed ‘the mission field’ different
from ‘home missions’: all mission is local mission wherever it happens.
We need to incorporate ‘one mission’ thinking into every aspect of the life
of the Church. Mission today throughout the world is a partnership of
local churches which learn from each other, resource each other,
challenge each other.v Jesus announced His Mission ‘to preach the
gospel to the poor’, ‘to heal the broken-hearted’, ‘to preach deliverance to
the captives and the recovery of sight to the blind’, and ‘to set at liberty
those who are oppressed’ and these key elements must shape our
mission undertaken in His Name too. (Luke 4: 17-21: the key missionary
text in Holy Scripture.) Affirming life in all its fullness is Jesus Christ’s
ultimate concern and mission. (John 10:10). A keynote of Jesus’s mission
might be said to be that of ‘mission from the margins’: God chose the
poor, the foolish and the powerless (1 Cor. 1: 18-31) to further His
mission of love, justice and peace so that life may flourish: ‘mission from
the margins’ rather than ‘mission to the margins’ is so important for
Western Churches which seek to serve God “in a world in which faith in
mammon threatens the credibility of the gospel.vi

The Bible traces the formation of God’s Holy People from creation all the
way to the new heaven and the new earth. (Isaiah 65 and Revelation 21).
We affirm that mission begins with God’s act of creation and continues in
re-creation, by the enlivening power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit,
poured out in tongues of fire at Pentecost, fills our hearts and makes us
into the Church of Jesus Christ. The Spirit which was in Jesus of
Nazareth inspires us to a self-emptying and cross-bearing life-style and
accompanies God’s people as we seek to bear witness to the love of God
in word and deed. The Holy Spirit leads into all truth and empowers us to
defy the demonic powers and speak the truth in love.
It is important for us seek to grasp the vast scope of the mission of God as revealed in Holy Scripture in order to **enlarge our vision** and respond appropriately to God’s invitation and to read the ‘signs of our times’.

1.6. As Wright has noted:

“There are many ordinary and worthy Christians whose personal piety relishes those Scriptures that speak to them of their own salvation and security, that encourage them in times of distress, that guide them in their efforts to walk before the Lord in ways that please him. But it comes as a surprise for them to be confronted with such an array of texts that challenge them in relation to God’s universal purpose for the world and the nations, the multicultural essence of the gospel and the missional essence of the church. **But they need to get over their surprise and hear the burden of the Bible.**”

Therefore what may be at stake is the effective relationship of the Methodist Church in Ireland with the essence of the message of Scripture: **are we being faithful to God’s mission as set forth in Holy Scripture?** The Bible is our primary rule of faith and practice and we read the Scriptures unapologetically through the lens provided by the Risen Jesus Christ. (Luke 24:44-48.) We, as witnesses to Jesus, live in His Resurrection world. We marvel at God’s love and His invitation to us, through Jesus Christ, to participate in this new creation as new creatures in Christ. The implications of this invitation and of what it implies concerning discipleship are profoundly revolutionary in all of contexts we may find ourselves participating in God’s mission. If we have been guilty of an ‘individualistic spirituality’ we need to repent: we cannot be right with God and not be on mission to our neighbour and to the world. Mission spirituality is always transformative for it resists and seeks to transform all life-destroying values and systems wherever these are at work in our economies, our politics and even in our churches. It has been well said that the Church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning: if the Church does not engage in mission it ceases to be the Church.

1.7. The Methodist Church in Ireland claims and cherishes its place in the one holy, catholic and apostolic church of Jesus Christ. The Church of Jesus Christ “finds its origin in the mission of God for the saving transformation of the world.” It is in this endeavour to be faithful to God’s Word and to His mission that our Wesleyan doctrinal emphases are so pertinent: it is not that any particular emphasis is exclusively the property of Methodism but that God has raised up a movement in His Church that, when missionally effective, combines a number of vital aspects of the Christian faith which are necessary for His whole Church. We briefly note here these emphases as our special heritage in the Christian faith and as our particular contribution to the whole Church –
what God is calling us to share with all people as we participate in His mission. To fulfil God’s missionary purpose is the aim of the Church.

1.8. It has become fashionable to discuss the ‘DNA’ of Methodism as we ask the question what is in our spiritual ‘genes’ that will help us now to be more fruitful in our discipleship as we seek to fulfil God’s mission in our twenty-first century contexts? These ‘genes’ have been summarised as follows:

“Methodist DNA is to be
PRAYERFULLY TOGETHER a people of:
PERSONAL HOLINESS-for each person to grow as a disciple of Jesus
COURAGEOUS EVANGELISM – for people to speak boldly the news that Jesus loves and died for all
COMPASSIONATE SOCIAL ACTION –for churches to serve vulnerable people in their communities”

Another identification of our ‘genes’ lists:
Scriptural holiness, Spiritual discipline, Accountable fellowship, Transformative worship, Personal service, Evangelistic witness.

The fruit of practising our faith as determined by these ‘genes’ will be ‘warm hearts’, ‘tough hands’ and ‘wet feet’: in effect what has been termed ‘whole-life discipleship’. The concept of ‘whole-life discipleship’ is one where disciples engage in mission wherever they are every day – at the ‘frontlines’ of everyday life and the local worshipping and nurturing church fully supports and equips such discipleship shaped by and for comprehensive mission: such an understanding provides a rich underpinning for how we might seek to fulfil our mission at local society and District levels in particular but also as a whole Connexion. The key to our appropriation of a Wesleyan contribution to mission is John Wesley’s Sermon, ‘The Scripture Way of Salvation’.

Salvation for Wesley is not ‘the going to heaven, eternal happiness’ – a blessing which ‘lies on the other side of death’- it is ‘a present thing’ – ‘a blessing which, through the free mercy of God, ye are now in possession of’ and which consists of a journey commencing with deliverance from the penalty of sin and going on progressively to deliver from the plague of sin in the Christian’s life and onwards to deliverance from the very presence of sin and its effects. This gradual therapeutic transformation of our lives – sanctification-has been captured by Albert Outler as understanding salvation as a journey from the barely human, to the truly human, to the fully human. Underpinning this journey is prevenient, justifying and sanctifying and perfecting grace which requires our co-operation in the
spiritual means of grace (spiritual disciplines). In his Sermon, ‘On the Working Out Of Our Own Salvation’, Wesley states:

“All experience, as well as Scripture, shows this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified, in the holy, humble, gentle, patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from that moment, as a ‘grain of mustard seed, which at first is the least of all seeds, but’ gradually ‘puts forth large branches’, and becomes a great tree; till in another instant the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love to God and man. But even that love increases more and more, till we ‘grow up in all things into him that is our head’, ‘till we attain the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’.”

This ‘Scripture Way of Salvation’ is powerfully determinative of how we ought to approach ‘whole-life discipleship’ formation whereby we become effective and fruitful in undertaking God’s mission in our everyday contexts.

2. WARM HEARTS : JOY IN THE GOSPEL OF LOVE

2.1. John Wesley’s ‘heart-warming’ experience on the 24th May 1738, has led Methodist people to describe themselves as a people with ‘warm hearts’. This does not mean a people who avoid thinking or delving deeply into Scripture and theology. It does mean we are people who allow experience to aid our understanding of what God is saying to us. In his Preface to the standards sermons, Wesley writes, “I have endeavoured to describe the true, the scriptural, experimental [experiential] religion, so as to omit nothing which is a real part thereof, and to add nothing thereto which is not.” Indeed Wesley’s theology has been described as a “theology of love” which encapsulates both the idea of the heart and the head, in understanding Scripture, in hearing God’s invitation and in discerning His will for His world. **We are called to be a people who joy in the Gospel of Love.**

2.2. Wesley’s theology of prevenient grace is a key element in Wesleyan theology which is most relevant to God’s mission. We find God’s grace already at work in the world as we seek to follow Jesus as His disciples. In his sermon Free Grace Wesley states:

“Whatever good is in man, or is done by man, God is the author and doer of it. Thus is his grace free in all; that is, no way depending on any power or merit in man, but on God alone, who freely gave us
his own Son, and with Him freely giveth us all things. But it is free for ALL, as well as in ALL.”
Therefore we do not dismiss anyone, nor do we declare anyone beyond God’s grace and redeeming love. As Charles Wesley wrote in the well-loved hymn, ‘And Can it be’:

He left His Father’s throne above
So free, so infinite His grace-
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam’s helpless race:
’Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For O my God, it found out me!

Methodism has rightly been called “a discipleship movement shaped for mission”. We are discovering and re-discovering that each local society in the Methodist Church must be a means and a centre for the formation of effective disciples: half-hearted semi-detached attendance by so many from time to time at worship services is a situation demanding radical change. The call to Holy Living is not an option: it is a Scriptural imperative. (I Peter 1:13-2:10; 2 Peter 1:3-11.) Paul comments that he is “in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed” in the Galatian disciples (Gal. 4:19) and we must share this painful and costly loving yearning for each person to become mature disciples.

Personal and social holiness require to be seen as aspects of the one phenomenon: John Wesley had a passion for the needs of the whole person and stated that there was no holiness that was not social holiness. He frequently described holiness as the ‘renewal of the whole image of God’ in each person and this Scriptural Holiness entails changing whatever in our political, economic or social contexts which diminish or hinder the full flourishing of every human being. His opposition to slavery is the classic instance of John Wesley’s time when he responded to the Scriptural requirement of just relationships and the need to convey God’s love for all of humankind. All disciples are to pursue ‘entire sanctification’ in their Christian lives. Methodists are always aware that they are not anything like they should be in Christ but they ought to be on the way to the goal of entire sanctification or ‘perfect love’ by the transforming grace of God. The divine purpose is the restoration of humanity to fullness of life: this provides both the direction and hope of our lives. As Runyon observes “what makes Wesley’s theology distinctive is his ability to hold together in a working union two fundamentally important factors in the Christian life that have often been disconnected” – the renewal of our relationship with God (justification) and the living out of this relation (sanctification), neither of which is possible apart from the other:
“Through the Spirit’s communication God intends that persons actually sense divine affirmation and love, and actually participate in conscious fellowship with their Creator…should not the church convincingly proclaim it, inviting persons to ground their lives in that which not only can comfort and sustain but can place us in the context of God’s continuing renewal of the whole creation? For the divine acceptance given in justification overflows to include the vocation and calling to sanctification, to the perfecting of all things. Salvation consists, therefore, not only in reconciliation but in service, not only in an experienced sense of God’s reality and presence but in a life lived out of that reality, extending divine transforming power into every aspect of both individual and social existence.”

Such ‘faith expressing itself through love’ (Gal.5:6) explains our commitment to social justice. This yearning for right relationships between all God’s people is based upon the character of God and his requirements as revealed in Holy Scripture. This costly personal and collective witness should be the hall-mark of the work of the Methodist Church and of each local society. We start from the perfection of God’s love as we receive it from Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. We do not focus on our own perfection but on the perfection of that which we receive: there is no more ultimate, more complete, more holy love, more self-giving love than that which is directed at us by God.

This love is sheer grace, and it is the love that God shares with those called to be in God’s image. We receive and participate in perfect love. We are invited to reflect and share this perfect love in the world as we fulfil our vocation: our sanctifying is linked to and directed toward the sanctifying of the world. The affirmation that wills the good of the other and which readily sacrifices for the other abhors whatever is destructive of persons, or society, or the good earth. God’s love is therefore a critical principle and provides the basis for the prophetic role of the church and of discipleship. We mobilise for God’s mission to seek “gracious re-creation of both individuals and the social world through the renewal of the image of God in humanity” – our doctrine of perfect love “holds out the promise that through the transforming energy of divine love reflected into the world the future can indeed surpass the present.”

3. **TOUGH HANDS: A DISCIPLESHIP MOVEMENT SHAPED FOR MISSION.**

3.1. In order to participate effectively, as God’s people, in God’s mission, we must engage in lifelong learning and lifelong practice in mission as
disciples of Jesus Christ. John Wesley described the character of a Methodist:

“A Methodist is one who has the Love of God shed abroad in His heart, by the Holy Spirit given unto him: One who loves the Lord His God with all his heart and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. God is the joy of his heart, and the desire of his soul; which is constantly crying out, 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire but Thee! My God and my All! Thou are the Strength of my heart, and my portion for ever!’” xviii

Significantly Wesley goes on to stress our active responses to the love and joy which characterises the Methodist disciple: prayer, assurance, love of neighbour, purity of heart and obedience to the will of God:

“Lastly, as he has time, he does good unto all men; unto neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies. And that in every possible kind, not only to their bodies, by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those that are sick or in prison; but much more does he labour to do good to their souls, as of the ability which God giveth; to awaken those that sleep in death, to bring those who are awakened to the atoning Blood, that being justified by faith, they may have Peace with God, to abound more in Love and good works. And he is willing to spend and be spent herein, even to be offered up on the sacrifice and service of their faith so they may all come unto the Measure of the Stature of the fullness of Christ.”xx

3.2. To meet this Wesleyan demanding characterisation of our discipleship whereby we develop ‘tough hands’ will require ‘tough minds’: being ‘transformed by the renewal of our minds’ is key if we are not to be ‘conformed any longer to the pattern of this world.’ (Romans 12: 1-2). Given the renewed focus on Wesleyan theology and spirituality in recent decades which is providing a solid foundation and focus for missional effectiveness Irish Methodists too must learn ‘to love the Lord with all their minds’. Effective mission is ‘mindful’ not ‘mindless’.

3.3. Our Wesleyan heritage offers some distinctive points of emphasis for considering how a missional church reflects on its own structure. The Missional Nature of the Circuit- developed by the Methodist Church in Britain- helpfully states that Methodist ecclesiology, while having much in common with that of other Christian Churches, has some distinctive emphases:
“These are essentially threefold: first, an emphasis on ‘relatedness’ as essential to the concept of ‘church’, finding expression in the ‘the connexional principle’; second, an emphasis, stemming from Methodism’s societal past, on fellowship and shared discipline, exercised through small groups, and third, the conviction that the Church should be structured for mission, and able to respond pragmatically, when needs or opportunities arise.”

Our Circuits have the missionary task of sharing in the whole ministry of Christ- in their neighbourhoods through worship, teaching, mission, service, social action, and pastoral care within the whole community which lives in the Circuit area. The Circuit system ought to make it possible to deploy resources for mission on a wider basis than our existing local societies: these may be, at present, too focussed upon the maintenance of inherited church buildings and, therefore, not flexible enough for mission today. **Methodists are called to be a movement not an institution.**

Our Methodist history and spiritual heritage encourages experimentation, diversity and flexibility supported by a *methodical approach* to planning and analysing the missional context so *that we go where we are most needed*: we are called to engage in, and focus upon God’s mission not to strive to preserve existing and often declining local church buildings. We use an ‘action-reflection’ methodology as mission-shaped disciples. Local congregations are frontiers and primary agents of mission: led by the Holy Spirit they are impelled to step out of their comfort zones and cross boundaries for the sake of the mission of God.

3.4. The challenge for each local Society is to identify what is preventing us from being the kind of people Wesley and the President describes and that God is inviting us to be. God is offering to empower us to be effective disciples through the Holy Spirit. **Why are we not ‘in step with the Holy Spirit’?** If we are ‘in step’ with the Holy Spirit the fruit of the Holy Spirit will be experienced and evidenced in our lives and witness: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” (Gal.5:22-25). This is the Scriptural bench-mark that each local Society has to use when developing a range of opportunities for discipleship formation. At the special Conference ‘four shifts’ were suggested:

- **Make disciples who seek growth in God’s love**
- **Make disciples who use the spiritual disciplines as a means of grace**
- **Make disciples who share fellowship in the pursuit of God**
- **Make disciples who engage in mission in daily life.**

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3.5. If these shifts are necessary how might they alter and change what local societies of Methodists do to ensure such discipleship formation is taking place and that each person in the society is growing as a disciple? It seems that God is now calling us to develop a new template for local church development by discovering the principles and practices which characterised early Methodism but which now need to be developed in a twenty-first century context.

A new focus on the ‘Local Church Whole-Life Mission Field’ may be helpful in drawing renewed attention on discipleship at the frontline: through the life of our local churches or local societies we need to learn how to grow disciples who live as missionary followers of Jesus in all of life. This involves embracing the mission opportunities afforded by members’ daily contexts- their ‘frontlines’- and equipping them to use such opportunities. The challenge of leading a church into ‘whole-life’ mission is substantial in our current and traditional context where ‘mission’ may be understood as either what happens in and around church buildings or on the international scene. A change from the present ‘minister-centric model’ of ‘mission’ towards a new model of equipping lay disciples to be missionary in their own daily contexts is required.xi

3.6. As a Church we appear to have become seriously discontented with ‘half-hearted discipleship’ and with inward-looking, self-centred local church congregations. There is an urgent need for ‘repentance’, in the sense of a determination to ‘turn to God’ and seek His forgiveness for wasted opportunities in the past because of our complacency; we need to pray for the empowering of His Holy Spirit for more effective discipleship in the future. Conference has already sought that each local church provides a new statement of its mission. There is now urgency in the provision of new approaches to every member development and to challenge each person to participate in discipleship growth through well-planned group-work at all stages of their Christian lives and witness. We need to remember that it is not ‘shepherds’ that produces ‘sheep’- ‘sheep’ produce ‘sheep’: we must recover Methodism as a lay-centred contagious movement.xii

One model which might be helpful in regard to the necessary change process at local church level has six essential elements if the desire is to move towards a ‘whole-life disciplermaking’ church:
1. **Cast a whole-life vision** – use Scripture as a missionary text to a missionary people
2. **Focus on the frontline** – where people in the church spend most of their time and where they have most contact with non-Christians
3. **Develop the Minister-People Contract** – the primary role of ministers is to lead and to facilitate equipping and disciplemaking so that each person grasps their primary identity is that of a disciple of Jesus in the whole of their lives
4. **Grow a Core Team** – develop a small core group to create and sustain momentum for disciplemaking and mission
5. **Make One-Degree Shifts** – making small but strategically important changes, for example regular testimonies from the frontline in services or short ‘This Time Tomorrow’ slots in services where folk can seek support and prayer for their mission opportunities
6. **Share Stories** – how the prayers, conversations, acts of compassion and truth-telling have met with responses and show where God has already been working in so many situations

3.7. The Methodist Church in Ireland has formed an organisational partnership with the Inspire Movement. The vision of Inspire is to develop the spiritual life of mission-shaped disciples who abide deeply with God and live missionally in the world: to help ordinary Christians understand mission as a way of life, rooted in the love of God and neighbour. The Inspire ‘way of life’ has four ingredients:

- **Seeking Growth** in the love of God and neighbour, as Jesus-shaped and Spirit-filled disciples
- **Using Disciplines** of prayer, Holy Scripture, Holy Communion, fasting and service as a means of grace, for growth in love of God and neighbour
- **Sharing fellowship** in small groups called ‘bands’ to help one another grow in God’s love and grace
- **Engaging mission** by sharing God’s love with others in word and deed.

The practice of fellowship bands, which are life-transforming groups of three or four people meeting regularly for mutual support, the exercise of
mutual accountability and group spiritual direction to help one another
discern God’s presence and leading is a crucial recovery of a key ‘gene’
of Wesleyan spirituality. Inspire promotes a ‘rhythm of discipleship’
involving reflecting on our daily walk with God, relating in fellowship
bands, and responding to God’s lead in daily life.

3.8. *We have to be honest before God.* Methodists, like other Christians, can
opt for a comfortable cocoon: the world around us is desperately in need
of our effective witness but we may focus complacently on the irrelevant
or even the idolatrous: we are thrilled to hear good, sound preaching, we
believe in the doctrines of God and even the Kingdom of God but in our
daily lives such may have very little consequence as we remain
indistinguishable from everyone else in our secular culture. Indeed some
of us know that holiness is a beautiful thing – and even read about it in
books and maybe admire it in others- but we feel it is impossible for us to
be holy and thus ‘salt’ and ‘light’ in our daily lives. Instead we conform to
the world and offer God an hour on Sunday.

Maybe we dread personal sacrifice and shrink from self-denial: the
satanic pressures to keep up with the world as it is wins out. We may
have a horror of our acquaintances, family or ‘friends’ considering us
narrow-minded or having ‘got religion’ and ‘carried away’. Others in their
pietistic fervour insist on some favourite theological ‘test’ and are so
fundamentalist about it that many are thereby kept from hearing the Good
News. *It is from such a ‘wandering in the wilderness’ that we believe
God is inviting us as His People to forsake and to enter into His
Promised Future.*

3.9. Local societies, firstly, must become fellowships where people first of all
find the support and help to do battle with besetting sins – ignorance of
God’s Word, laziness, bad temper, excessive self-concern, vanity,
impatience and so forth – and where they are helped to win through to
personal transformation in Christ – not to settle for “Well, that’s just the
way I am”. The spiritual disciplines are required to be developed and
used to help in this aspect of discipleship formation.\textsuperscript{xxv} A widespread
transformation of character through wisely disciplined discipleship to
Christ can transform our world. There is a revival of small-group
discipleship-making in local churches and this is an imperative for our
future mission-effectiveness.\textsuperscript{xxvi} Classes and bands should not be
confused with traditional Bible-study groups which impart information and
doctrine and these have a valuable place in a learning church. Classes
and bands, however, are focussed on the development, growth and
accountability of each disciple as they seek to live out their ‘whole-life'
discipleship.

Secondly, the context for mission which surrounds each local Methodist
Society must be studied and examined so that disciples will seek to
discern God’s will in their own situation and to address the mission
needs. In doing so disciples will ‘learn by doing’ and require classes,
‘bands’, Bible study groups, prayer groups and inspiring preaching and
worship to relate what they are learning, by serving as missionary
disciples, to God’s Word. Our churches need to grow in healthful
discipleship more than simply in size. Through such ‘means of grace’ we
gain the ‘strength to love’, to use Martin Luther King Jr’s phrase, so
essential given the rampant individualistic and consumerist economic and
social context in which we live. Radical and prophetic responses are
required if God’s reign of love and justice is to be our standard for
Christian behaviour.

3.10. A mission statement for each local society needs to reflect the
following overall purpose however it may be couched in local societies:

‘Our mission is to make whole-life disciples who seek growth, use the
spiritual disciplines, share fellowship and engage in God’s mission to
transform our world’

There is an imperative to become a listening and discerning local
fellowship, ‘hearkening to the voice of the Lord’ utilising the Wesleyan
Scripture, Reason, Tradition and Experience framework for theological
reflection in the context of continual prayer. New approaches to Biblical
understanding, such as Lectio Divina, might be profitably employed
where disciples are enabled to ‘listen and hear’ what God may be saying
to them. xxvii We need in the words of the President, Dr. Heather Morris:

“To be a people formed in the power of the Spirit who clearly see the
cost of discipleship and who choose to be disciples.”

4. ‘WET FEET’ – THE CONTEXT FOR MISSION IN IRELAND

4.1. The rapidly changing contexts in which our mission takes place in the
twenty-first century requires careful and detailed analysis. Indeed it is the
rapidly changing contexts of Ireland, North and South, which warrants
this new Statement. We live in a world undergoing constant change. We
live in a time when the prevailing ideas which govern the shape of living
for so many is dominated by materialism – either through greed for more
by the better off or through lack of the materials required for flourishing living by the poorer sections of society. Inequality in the distribution of wealth and income has grown remarkably in the last thirty to forty years in the Western world dominated as it is by markets — especially the financial markets — and by competition in which the weaker sections of society suffer most. It is true that standards of living for many are better than in previous generations but this has been accompanied by a deep-seated individualism trumping social solidarity in many areas of life. This situation is accompanied by many signs of spiritual impoverishment. Amongst such signs are the growing depression and mental illness in our society and indeed levels of suicide. Increased affluence for many is accompanied by the great stress which is placed on personal freedom and much less stress on the need for commitment to others. In our prevailing neo-liberal culture - one in which markets are seen as the prime mechanism for most human interactions the things that money cannot buy are diminished. The role of the Church in forming the moral context for flourishing human living is an underdeveloped one but it is now an urgent task.

Many people are ‘imprisoned’ in a privatised world which is more and more facilitated by the new digital age: lives are more fragmented and complex as links with family, churches and communities have or are being lost for so many. Once accepted patterns of marriage and family structures are now far less common. The secular culture and society which prevails in the Western world is, in Ireland, also an embittered culture in respect of Christianity. The embitterment stems in large part from the gross crimes of child abuse and other related misdeeds by those representing the Christian churches; the long years of violent strife on the island – represented for many the negative influence of Catholicism and Protestantism which appeared to lend cover and to support warring communities. Trust has rapidly declined and not only in relation to Christian Churches but also due the Great Recession since 2008 in political institutions and in banks and other social institutions.

These and other characteristics of the new social, economic and political context for mission require more attention from our Church so that our analysis can bring to bear a Biblical perspective and therefore lay a basis for an effective evangelisation in the future. It is important that each local congregation is led by the Holy Spirit to assess and respond to their own
changing contextual realities. We need to learn how to bring our faith more readily into dialogue with the wider culture in which we now live: the onus is on us, as disciples of Jesus Christ, to take a lead and to create the intellectual space in which Christian belief and behaviour can be taken seriously again.

Rev. Dr. Richard Clutterbuck, in an important paper, has begun to address the particular context in Ireland where so many find Christianity incredible for moral and spiritual reasons more often than other places where atheism purports to be based on rational, scientific fact. He points to value of a Wesleyan evidential understanding of the Christian life – evidence drawn from the witness of the Spirit and the evidence of holy living in such a context. If we are prepared to listen and to have a dialogical engagement with non-Christians then a conversation may occur that enables the Christian to commend the faith. This has credibility when there is the evidence of the assured, sanctified and fruitful Christian life: ‘the best apologetics is personal and social holiness’; this our missional opportunity: to be local Christian communities “with the confident humility to share their Christian experience and to exhibit the kind of holy living the presence of which makes Christianity credible and the absence of which makes it unbelievable.”

4.2. A Biblical perspective will shine a searing light on the idolatry which pervades all of the issues noted briefly above. We are called to ‘turn to God from idols and to serve the living and true God’ (I Thess. 1:9). Secular society is now worshipping ‘Human Constructs’ and we are discovering that even the greatest human achievements cannot solve the deepest human problems. Amongst the ‘Human Constructs’ that is now worshipped in society – that is ascribed the highest worth- are Mammon – in the form of the often out of control financial markets- which national and indeed supernational bodies are unable to control or direct towards human development goals. As the Psalmist notes “All the gods of the nations are idols” (Ps. 96:5). We who live in such a context as Christians have great difficulty in unmasking the idols; we, too, have been led to worship them in daily life and indeed to make many sacrifices to appease them. We need, as Martin Luther King Jr. observed in a famous sermon ‘tough minds’. Paul counsels us:

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy which depends on human tradition and the basic principles
of this world rather than on Christ...Having disarmed the powers and authorities [Christ] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the Cross.” (Col.2: 8, 15).

Isaiah declares this ‘Day of the Lord’:
“The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled;
The Lord alone will be exalted in that day, and the idols will totally disappear” (Isaiah 2:17-18).

4.3. **Idolatry is a prime missional issue.** As disciples of Jesus Christ we reject the human claim that human beings alone have the sovereign right to define for ourselves good and evil: this claim is the source of human pride and sin and the root of all other forms of idolatry. The mission of God is to restore His whole creation to worship Him in His good creation ruled over by a redeemed humanity, giving glory and praise to its Creator. One example might be given: the failure to tackle effectively climate – change by so many people and their governments. This is at root a spiritual problem- the former environmental advisor to President Carter and President Clinton, James Gustave Speth, has said:

“I used to think that the top global environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that with 30 years of good science we could address these problems, but I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy and to deal with these we need a spiritual and cultural transformation and we scientists don’t know how to do that.”

In our time we are invited to participate in this Divine Mission in anticipation of its final accomplishment. We need to work to engage and expose the idols which distort, demean and diminish our humanity. This will involve our Church and all disciples to engage with issues of human rights, inequality between social groups and individuals, poverty, the rights of women, the environment as well as challenges of secularism and religious pluralism. John Wesley understood God’s goal as the transformation of this present age, restoring health and holiness to God’s creation. As Runyon observes:

“For Wesley religion is not humanity’s means of escape to a more tolerable heavenly realm but participation in God’s own redemptive enterprise, God’s new creation, ‘faith working by love’, bringing holiness and happiness to all the earth. But this inevitably means confronting the injustices of the present age.”
The idols always disappoint and always fail. We need to be available to bring blessing into damaged human lives by deep compassion for those oppressed by forces of evil, modelling our behaviour and response on Christ. We are called to be prophetic in the public square.

_We need Christian apologetics and theological argument securely based on the Biblical perspectives for the ‘public square’; we need evangelistic engagement [here St. Paul at Lystra, Athens and Ephesus provides Scriptural models for engaging with non-Christians and false gods (Acts 14:8-20; 17:16-34; 19:23-41); we need pastoral programmes to build mature Christian communities who are enabled to think Biblically and with ‘tough minds’ address the ethical issues in our surrounding culture and we need prophetic warning concerning idol worship both to God’s people and to the hurting wider human society._

5. **WARMING HEARTS, TOUGHENING HANDS AND WETTING FEET.**

5.1. As Methodists we must ever remember that we are a people of God, His new Israel, and we are a people of the New Covenant. Our annual Covenant Service provides the solemn occasion when we are invited to reflect upon our discipleship together as a Christian community and to renew together our Covenant. It is strongly recommended that **God’s Mission Our Mission** be studied and used as part of the preparation for the Annual Covenant Service to assist in the re-examination of the nature of God’s gracious invitation to each person who loves the Lord Jesus and who wishes to serve Him.

As the Methodist Church in Ireland seeks to discern the direction in which God is calling us in the period ahead the following questions may be helpful:

1. As a worshipping community, what do we have to celebrate and lament?
2. As a hospitable community, who are we called to welcome?
3. As a prophetic community, what are we commanded to affirm or challenge?
4. As a witnessing community, what stories do we have to tell?
5. As a serving community, how do we express Christ’s love for the poor?
6. As a holy community, how do we reflect the goodness, truth and beauty of God?
7. As a pilgrim community, what boundaries are we called to cross?
8. As a learning community, to whom do we need to listen?
The process of prayerful discernment and reflection, centred upon the phrase ‘A People invited to follow’, has already identified a number of ‘seeding’ actions or developments that may make the mission of the Methodist Church in Ireland more effective in the light of God’s calling to us for the next stage of our journey as a Connexion. These ‘seeding’ actions are additional to major decisions already approved by Conference which have a bearing on our mission. Many mission related developments are already underway. Deepening the Covenant with the Church of Ireland and enriching our ecumenical relationships with other Christian Churches will give rise to historic opportunities for Christian witness and more effective mission in the period ahead. Conference has approved a new process for the training and development of Local Preachers which aims to increase the effectiveness of our preaching and of our worship in the years to come. Conference is also seeking to put in place a new Board of Ministry which will embrace both ordained and lay ministries. The ‘Hope and History’ project is supported as we, with others, seek the reconciliation of memories and to work with all those who have injured or suffered grievous loss through violence: we seek to make God’s love and forgiveness known and to exemplify such in our discipleship.

5.2. ‘Seeding’ actions or proposals which, building upon the growing prayer and renewal movement in our Church led by the Holy Spirit, include:

- Further ‘risk-taking’ in pioneer mission projects such as the Surf ministry and new local societies being formed in various parts of Ireland
- The central place of individual and corporate prayer has begun to be very widely acknowledged in local church outreach and development
- Our social responsibilities as Christian disciples have always been considered and expressed through the Council for Social Responsibility – there is increasing awareness that every disciple has a social responsibility to witness to the values of God’s Kingdom and to speak out prophetically and to act when these values are at stake in relation to issues such as economic and social inequalities, poverty, consumerism, the need for healthcare, human trafficking, medical ethics and so forth. We are called to oppose anything which is offensive to God and which hinders human flourishing
- Recapturing the ‘band system’, as for example in the Inspire Movement, noted above, and the need for small fellowship groups and supports to assist more effective and accountable discipleship
• Taking a public stand on issues in ‘the public square’ so that all forms of media in the digital age are used to witness to the Gospel and to challenge an often aggressive atheism: Christian apologetics has been discerned as a neglected area of mission.

5.3. It may be helpful, in summary, to use the **Five Marks of Mission** as an easily remembered format to ensure overall balance in mission and as a tool to assess mission at local level:
• To proclaim the good news of the kingdom **TELL**
• To teach, baptise and nurture new believers **TEACH**
• To respond to human need by loving service **TEND**
• To seek to transform unjust structures of society **TRANSFORM**
• To safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth **TREASURE**

6. **CONCLUSION: HEARING THE MUSIC OF GOD’S FUTURE AND DANCING TO IT TODAY.**

6.1. It has been well said that “Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn’t.”[^iv] Praise and worship of the Lord is the dominant reality of the new creation.[^v] Today the worship and praise of the Church energises us for mission: as we worship God we hear the music of God’s future as assured by the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and by His grace we are empowered to dance to it now. We rejoice that Methodism was born in song and we joyfully enter in this heritage of vibrant worship and inspiring Biblical preaching. As a people invited to follow our missionary God we are called to the great adventure of whole-life discipleship in which we grow in Christ as we participate every day in God’s mission where ever each one of us are placed. Our worship is our first priority and our finest service to God is to put God first in our lives: if this is not the case then our mission must fail:

“Sing to the Lord a new song,
Sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord, praise his name;
Proclaim his salvation day after day.
Declare his glory among the nations,
His marvellous deeds among all peoples.” (Psalm 96:1-3).

**With the Psalmist we pray:**
May God be gracious to us and bless us
And make his face shine upon us,
That your ways may be known on earth,
Your salvation among all nations.
May the peoples praise you, O God:
May all the peoples praise you….
(Psalm 67:1-3).

Our prayer

God, loving guide, graciously, and at such cost,
You offer an invitation to all to follow you.
Stir, we pray, in every heart a longing for you:
Grant us discernment that we may recognise your direction;
Grant us courage that we may step out and follow;
Grant us deep trust in you, loving God,
The One who holds and promises never to abandon us.
As we follow You, Lord God, we pray
That in the power of Your Spirit,
You will illumine your people with Your light,
That You will form the lives of those who commit to you,
That every aspect of our lives together will point to Jesus
And that your people will be a blessing to many. Amen

Revd. Dr. Heather Morris, President, Methodist Church in Ireland.xxxvi

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i The British Methodist Conference’s Statement on the Church, Called to Love and Praise, (Methodist Publishing House, 1999) has been referred to in the preparation of God’s Mission Our Mission and provides a valuable resource.


iv This understanding is very clearly set out Wright’s The Mission of God Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative, op.cit.


This is clearly the essence of Wesleyan theology and for a full treatment of this understanding see Theodore Runyon’s *The New Creation John Wesley’s Theology Today* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1998).


See ‘The Scripture Way of Salvation’, in *John Wesley’s Sermons An Anthology*, eds. A. Outler and R.P. Heitzenrater, (Abington Press, Nashville, 1991) pp.351-380; this Sermon is described by the editors as the “most successful summary of the Wesleyan vision of the ‘way of salvation’ in the entire sermon corpus”.

Ibid, p.489.


Runyon, p.231.


See Cotterell and Hudson, op.cit., pp.15-24 for further elaboration on these six elements.

For details see [www.inspiremovement.org](http://www.inspiremovement.org)


For details see, for examples, Kevin M. Watson, *The Class Meeting Reclaiming a Forgotten ( And Essential) Small Group Experience*, ( Seedbed Publishing, [www.seedbed.com](http://www.seedbed.com), 2013) and the work of Inspire noted above.

There are a number of aids and books seeking to introduce Lectio Divina see, for example, Karl A. Schultz, *How to Pray With the Bible The Ancient Prayer Form of Lectio Divina Made Simple*, (Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, Huntington, IN, 2007).


Runyon, op. cit., pp.171-2; Runyon’s chapter ‘Wesley for Today’ is a clear presentation concerning these issues confronting both the Church and our society.


See the important work of systematic theology by the Methodist theologian, Geoffrey Wainwright, entitled *Doxology The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, ( Oxford University Press, New York, 1980).