

1. THE OVERALL VISION FOR THE CONNEXIONS PROCESS

The Connexions Report, accepted by Conference (2002), presented the vision of every Church 'existing to glorify God in worship and witness' in ways that are fresh, relevant and faithful to our calling.

Connexions is the process by which we seek to be enriched by God's Spirit and together develop the worship and witness of the Church, at both local, district and national levels.

***The Church is all the people of God.
Worship should warm the hearts and renew the minds of worshippers.
Witness includes evangelism, service, justice and stewardship of the world.***

During the last four years, the Steering Groups that have been appointed by the Conference have sought to provide support and guidance as Churches develop this vision in their own settings.

Many changes have been taking place. The most obvious of these has been in the leadership and structures of Irish Methodism.

1.1. Overview

Some of the new structures for governance of the Church are already in place. Church Councils and Circuit Executives are now part of 'the way we are'. Other recommendations of the 2002 Report are yet to be developed and implemented, but it is felt that this Folder could draw together the different strands of the structural and legislative side of the process which is already in place for local Churches.

As further developments take place and new resources take shape, additional material will be added for use throughout the Church.

Since 2004, Circuits have been adopting this new style of leadership through the introduction of local Church Councils and Circuit Executives. For some it has been difficult, especially where office has been held for many years by people who have given sterling service to their circuits. Most of those making the changes have found them to be both liberating and renewing. Local Church Councils particularly are facing challenges that were not unknown to the Churches of the New Testament era! – asking questions like, 'In what ways can we discover deeper love for one another?' and 'What steps are necessary to uncover and use the gifts God has given everyone?'

The establishment of small Church Councils has meant the introduction of a system of leadership that is different from that often found in the larger Leaders' Meetings of the past. Instead of a 'parliamentary' style of governance where each interest group had representatives to uphold their needs and views, the Church Council is a co-ordinating body to enable each grouping in the Church to undertake its work effectively and in co-operation with others.

Ensuring adequate communication within and beyond the Church is also a responsibility of the Church Council and Circuit Executive.