

## 25. Review of the post of Secretary of the Conference and General Secretary of the Methodist Church

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<b>Resolutions</b>	25/A. The Conference receives the Report.  25/1. The Conference adopts the structure for the senior officers of the Conference as set out in the Report.  25/2. The Conference directs the Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee to take the steps necessary to implement the model.

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	Review of the post of Secretary of the Conference and General Secretary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current roles and responsibilities of the post</li> <li>• Relationships with posts in Governance Support, other parts of the Connexional Team and the District Chairs</li> <li>• Relationship between the post and the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary</li> </ul>
<b>Main Points</b>	Recommendation to introduce new model for the senior structure of the three officers of the Conference. The Secretary of the Conference would be the senior person in a three senior person team where the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary would report to him/her. There will be no post designated General Secretary. If approved the necessary changes to be implemented as appropriate through the proper procedures.
<b>Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)</b>	A review of the post was carried out in 2007 and it was suggested that this be undertaken again in five years. This review attempts to reclaim the key role of the Conference and its Secretary while allowing for focus and some delegation to related senior roles. There is a list of key documents examined by the Working Party appended to the report.
<b>Consultations</b>	A questionnaire was sent to a representative group of 80 people in the Connexion.  Nine senior officials were formally interviewed, special sessions were held at the Chairs' Meeting and Methodist Council meeting in January and a brief report was taken to the Strategy and Resources Committee in March.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Standing Orders</b>	Possible changes to SO 114, 300 and 304
<b>Financial</b>	The recommendation is budget neutral as it stands
<b>Personnel</b>	Development & Personnel have been kept informed of the process and the possible implications. The key post holders have been consulted and kept informed of the recommendations.

# Review of the post of Secretary of the Conference and General Secretary of the Methodist Church

## A. Introduction

1. In October 2013 the Methodist Council appointed a Working Party to review the post of the Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary of the Methodist Church and directed the Group to report to the Council in April 2014 (MC/13/61). The working party comprised: Dr Daleep Mukarji (Chair), Deacon Eunice Attwood, the Revd Dr Keith Davies, Professor Peter D Howdle, Miss Elizabeth Ovey, the Revd Alison F Tomlin. This was to be a review of the post, not the present or past holders of the post, and the Working Party was very sensitive to this. The present post holder and the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee to whom he is accountable were supportive of the review.
2. The report to the Methodist Council in October 2013 suggested the following points for the Group to consider:
  - i. The current roles and responsibilities of the post;
  - ii. Relationships with posts in Governance Support (ie the Conference Office), other parts of the Connexional Team and the District Chairs;
  - iii. Relationships between the post and the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary;
  - iv. Past reviews of senior leadership (although the Working Party was not expected to undertake another major review);
  - v. Feedback from the current leaders in the Connexion and the relevant post holders.
3. The report to the Council in October 2013 noted that the review of the post would be beneficial at this time, ten years since the creation of the post, and with two people having undertaken the role. The Working Party was also aware that the review was being conducted in the context that many people were seeking some clarity in the roles and responsibilities of the three key posts (the Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary of the Methodist Church, the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary). The report of the Methodist Council to the Conference in 2007, when the post of General Secretary was affirmed, recommended that the next incumbent “be appointed for five years to enable the next stage of development in the leadership structures of the Church to be achieved.” (Report to the 2007 Conference: *Senior Leadership in the Methodist Church* Para 63). Other reviews were taking place and still others were planned. In the same report the Council recommended “that a further review of Senior Leadership in the Methodist Church be brought to the Conference in 2011.” Such a review has not taken place at the very senior level and this review commissioned by the Council is a step in that direction.
4. “The Conference is the governing body of the Methodist Church under God. It has responsibility for what the Deed of Union calls the government, discipline, management and administration of its affairs.....Overall it is responsible for exercising oversight. Much of this is in the form of governance ie exercising final authority over things. Another major expression of that oversight is in the form of exercising leadership ie inspiring Methodist people to be imaginative, to articulate vision and to act faithfully and courageously (from *Expectations of Various Groups*. 2013). The Methodist people expect an effective, efficient and productive leadership that is motivational, collegial, collaborative and empowering and that inspires the whole Connexion about the future. It is crucial that the senior leadership helps the Conference and the Church to work for unity, mission, evangelism and worship. It is important that there

are adequate and appropriate consultations with Districts, Circuits and local churches in order to share a vision of mission that excites and motivates the whole Church about its future. This enables greater ownership of major changes as the whole Church faces new challenges and opportunities. This review has explored what is the most appropriate form of leadership for the Church today.

5. The Working Party met five times to discuss the task, to plan a consultation process and to prepare the report to the Council and the Conference. The Working Party also worked through electronic correspondence. The remainder of this report:
  - i. discusses the documents examined by the Working Party;
  - ii. reflects on leadership in the Methodist Church;
  - iii. sets out the affirmations or principles on the basis of which the Working Party makes its recommendations;
  - iv. summarises the consultation process followed by the Working Party;
  - v. outlines the responses received to the consultation process (identifying some additional concerns, outside the scope of this report);
  - vi. makes its recommendations.
6. The Working Party wants wholeheartedly to recognise and applaud the hard work and commitment of the individuals currently holding the three key posts and their predecessors, and the fact that so much has changed for the better since 2002.

#### **B. Past reviews, reports and documents examined**

7. The Working Party examined many reports and documents of the Methodist Church starting with the report *Leadership in the Methodist Church* (2002) which sets out the basis on which the post was first created. The report recommended that “the Secretary of the Conference, the senior officer of the Conference, after the President and Vice-President, be given the responsibility for leading the unified team.” (Para 9.2) “The Secretary of the Conference has a critical role on behalf of the Conference in relation to the Districts and the oversight of the ministry.” (Para 9.1). It recommended that the Secretary of the Conference, a presbyter, be given the additional role and designation General Secretary of the Methodist Church (see SO 300) and that the new appointment as both the Secretary of the Conference and General Secretary of the Methodist Church should take effect from 2003 on the retirement of the Revd Nigel Collinson as the Secretary of the Conference. This was agreed at the Conference of 2002. The report expected the “person holding this post to work in an obviously collaborative manner to unite the team.” (Para 9.2)
8. In October 2006 the Methodist Council appointed a group to review the specific role of General Secretary of the Methodist Church. The group’s principal conclusion was that “the role of the General Secretary has worked well to combine ‘spiritual and moral leadership’ as well as leadership in the most effective way of managing resources.” (Report MC/07/35: Para 5) The subsequent Council report to the 2007 Conference on *Senior Leadership in the Methodist Church* acknowledged, in addition to those strengths, the perceived weaknesses of the structure at that time (Paras 15 to 18). The report spoke of the burden of work, the demands of oversight of the whole Methodist Church, the multiplicity of roles and “a lack of understanding in the Circuits and Districts of the role of the General Secretary” (Para 16).
9. Since 2002 there have been several other reports and reviews that have looked at leadership, governance, the Presidency and the senior leadership of the Connexional Staff Team. There have also been reviews of the Conference, the Connexional Leadership Team (now the

Connexional Leaders' Forum), the Methodist Council, the Team Focus process, a review of "The Nature of Oversight: Leadership, Management and Governance in the Methodist Church" and others. The useful document *Expectations of Various Groups* (referred to in paragraph 4 above) was prepared for information to help various connexional bodies "to exercise their general responsibilities and to fulfil their proper roles in relation to each other in the oversight of the life, work and mission of the Methodist Church. It is essentially a restating of what is set out in Standing Orders."

10. The current Working Party looked at the Standing Orders that relate to the Secretary of the Conference (SO 114, 116, 116A) and the General Secretary of the Methodist Church (SO 300). It also looked at the Standing Order relating to the Connexional Secretaries and the Senior Leadership Group of the Connexional Team (SO 304) and the appropriate organisational charts of the Methodist Church and Connexional Team. It had access to the job descriptions of the three senior roles, the Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary (although that job description was recognised to be out of date), the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary.

### **C. Leadership in the Methodist Church**

11. Leadership styles and the expectations of the Church from its leaders are vital in reviewing this post and the report to the 2002 Conference *Leadership in the Methodist Church* makes some important observations. A few extracts follow:
  - i. "The Methodist Church recognises that the Methodist people are looking for spiritual and moral leadership in the most effective way of managing the resources available to us for our mission. The Methodist Church is both a faith community and a mission organisation." (A3)
  - ii. "We cannot find our way through this complexity simply by drawing analogies with secular organisations or even other Churches, though we can learn from them." (A4)
  - iii. "Leadership in a faith community is about helping people to hold fast to their roots in such a way that they can discover and redefine their task in each new generation. It nurtures the Story: recalling each generation to our 'core belief', reminding us who we are and, on present terms, inspiring us to embrace all that is intended by Our Calling." (A5)
  - iv. "Leadership in a mission organisation is about mobilising and equipping people for mission. It involves: determining priorities, agreeing strategies and managing resources." (A6)
  - v. "Leadership is the articulation of a vision and the inspiring of others to share that vision. Leaders need to concentrate on the big picture, to think strategically, and therefore they have to delegate the details to others. Leadership is not about giving orders, but bringing others along. Through their vision and interaction with others, effective leaders create conditions in which people want to follow." (B3.2.1)
  - vi. "Leadership may be through individuals or corporate bodies but in practice it is rare for people to be inspired to follow a committee." (B3.2.2)
  - vii. "Methodists want leaders who are spiritual people, inspiring, energetic, enthusiastic and prophetic; who will encourage, enable and nurture God's people. They need to be thoughtful and compassionate as well as reliable in the tasks they undertake. They should offer vision and direction, providing a focus for unity for the whole church." (B3.1)
  - viii. "Leadership is needed at all levels within the church." (B3.2.4)
12. These references to leadership were not specific to just one person as leader. The Methodist Church values the concept of a small group working together collectively and collegially to

provide leadership and to act as a team. In the 2002 report which gave form to the concept of the post of General Secretary, it was hoped “that the two essential elements of leadership in our life together [ie leadership in a faith community and leadership in a mission organisation] should be held in the office of ‘General Secretary’. In our developing understanding of the leadership we seek under God, we believe it is now right to give to that person the distinctive role and task of unifying these elements, holding the circle, becoming the crucial link between the Methodist Church as a faith community and as a mission organisation.” (Para A7). The stated preference was that the “Secretary of the Conference, the senior officer of the Conference after the President and the Vice-President, be given the responsibility for leading the unified team.” Thus the Secretary of the Conference was also to be the General Secretary of the Church.

13. The Church has tested this model over ten years and the feedback from our review shows that many appreciate that this approach has had some measure of success in holding together the strategic leadership and governance roles. It has brought continuity and leadership in one person and there is very much better coordination of the connexional staff clusters and the Governance Support Cluster (previously named the Conference Office). The review also showed however that there are still some tensions and this structure may now not be working for the Church as well as it could. In the light of experience since 2002 it is now possible to build on the achievements and develop the next phase in the leadership of the Church.
14. The Conference Statement adopted in 1999 *Called to Love and Praise*, expresses the Conference’s understanding of the nature and purpose of the Church. One of the distinctive characteristics of the Methodist Church is the “connexional principle” and how Methodist ecclesiology consequently affects Church structures. “The connexional principle...has been intrinsic to Methodism since its origins....it enshrines a vital truth about the nature of the Church. It witnesses to a mutuality and interdependence which derive from the participation of all Christians through Christ in the very life of God himself.” (Para 4.6.1) The report goes on to state that the “Church should be structured for mission, and able to respond pragmatically, when new needs and opportunities arise.” (Para 4.7.1). This leads to “the conviction that the Holy Spirit leads the Church to adapt its structures as it faces new situations and challenges.” (Para 4.7.11). The Working Party notes also that “Connexionalism therefore characterises an experience of belonging that is shaped both by inter-dependence and also by sharing in holiness and witness, worship and mission.” (*The Nature of Oversight* report to the 2005 Conference Para 2.3).
15. The Working Party felt it could not look at leadership structures and models in isolation from the nature and purpose of that leadership and structure. It is vision, mission and an overall purpose that defines the nature of the leadership and the appropriate structure. In many organisations most structures can be made to operate with sufficient sensitivity and goodwill amongst the people and clear roles, responsibilities and accountability of key personnel. No structure is perfect but an effective organisational structure must reflect the values, beliefs and ways of working that are important to the organisation. Thus for the Methodist Church the structure must reflect the nature and self-understanding of the Church as a Connexion and of the Conference as central to its life and purpose.
16. The Connexional Team is thus a servant of the Methodist Conference and Council, carrying forward and implementing their decisions and helping the Church to fulfil its calling and priorities. Recently the Connexional Team has set out its vision “to be a highly professional and distinctively Christian workforce to assist the Methodist Church in furthering its purposes, in particular enabling it better to fulfil its calling of responding to God’s love in Christ and working

out its discipleship in mission and worship.” (From *the Vision Statement of the Connexional Team 2013*).

17. The Working Party believes that the present situation and the opportunity of the review means that this is an appropriate time for the Church to consider alternatives and the best way forward in keeping with its theology, traditions, heritage, ecclesiology and calling.

#### **D. Affirmations before looking at structure**

18. In reviewing various models for the future it was necessary to set out a few affirmations or principles that, in the view of the Working Party, were vital to the Methodist Church in exploring the way forward. These are summarised below:
  - i. Connexionalism is fundamental to the Methodist way of being Church. Methodists cherish connexionalism as part of the tradition and gift which they have inherited. It describes a way of relating in which individual people, fellowship groups, Local Churches, Circuits, Districts, denominational institutions, offices etc do not exist for themselves but for others. This is not a matter of co-existence but of shared existence.
  - ii. The vital role of the Conference in exercising oversight, building vision, inspiring confidence, determining priorities and envisioning good governance in the Church should not be lost.
  - iii. The leadership and the connexional staff are servants of the Conference and Council and thus leadership must ensure that policies, priorities and directions determined upon by the Conference are followed and implemented.
  - iv. The Methodist Church expects collegial, collaborative and corporate leadership where people work well together. It also values the key representative roles of the President and Vice-President as part of the senior leadership team.
  - v. There is an important constitutional, organisational and executive role for the Secretary of the Conference who also needs to be a good listener, a delegator and a pastoral leader. The person fulfilling the presbyteral parts of the roles of the Secretary of the Conference (and the General Secretary) exercises executive oversight connected with the carrying forward of the life and work of the whole Church (*The Nature of Oversight*, Para 3.29).
  - vi. Observance of Methodist practice and discipline is not purely a matter of keeping to rules. It extends much more widely and involves oversight of the whole mission and work of the Church, mutual accountability and mutual support, the enabling of change through the development of structures which will also permit change to be sustained and the equipping and supporting of those in the front line, by whom any vision is to be anchored in reality.
  - vii. Those in leadership roles must have clarity about their roles and job descriptions, accountability and responsibilities, with the necessary delegated authority to carry out the role assigned.

#### **E. The consultation process**

19. The Working Party agreed to interview key people and this included the past and present post holders, members of the Senior Leadership Group, the Chair of the Methodist Council and others. These nine people were formally interviewed. Many others spoke to members of the group privately as there was an open invitation to contact members of the group.
20. It was agreed to send out a questionnaire to a representative group of people around the Connexion and this was undertaken in December 2013. The questionnaire was sent to 80 people who included 59% (47) lay people and 24% (19) senior connexional staff members. 39% (31) were women. The recipients included all Synod Secretaries, the Principals of the two training colleges and four specific District Chairs with key additional roles. A few past, present

and designate Presidents and Vice-Presidents were also consulted. Completed questionnaires were returned by 55 people and another 8 said they were too new in the roles to submit an informed response. This was a 79% response rate which is considered a good response rate for this type of survey. Of the 55 completed questionnaires, 22 were from ordained respondents (40%) and 33 from lay respondents (60%). The present three key post holders were interviewed and consulted throughout the process individually and collectively.

21. In all the questionnaires and interviews, people were asked for their opinion on the strengths and limitations of the present senior leadership arrangements and model and for their expectations from those in post. They were asked what they would consider the best way forward for the future on the basis of the following options: (i) no change, (ii) no change in structure but changes in the ways of working and clarity of roles, responsibilities and authority and (iii) a split of the combined roles or some changes in the structures. They were asked to give reasons for their choices for the future.
22. In addition all the District Chairs were invited to send in comments to the member of the Working Party who was a District Chair. At the Chairs' Meeting in mid January 2014 a special session to hear their views was arranged. The Warden of the Diaconal Order was present. The Methodist Council had a session at its meeting at the end of January 2014. Both these discussions enabled key groups to be involved and contribute to the process of review. Reports from these discussions were made and used by the Working Party. The Strategy and Resources Committee was kept informed of the process with a brief update at their meeting on 5-6 March.

#### **F. Some results, observations and feedback**

23. This section covers the points the Working Party heard or read in the responses to the questionnaires, the interviews and the group discussions at the meetings of the District Chairs and Council. It is a summary of the observations and the messages received and a reflection of the views expressed. Although not all those views are separately set out below, the Working Party has sought in what follows fairly to represent the range of views expressed to them:

##### **a) Strengths of the present arrangements/model**

- Many respondents stated that the present arrangements were a great improvement on the pre 2002 situation when they felt there were serious tensions between the Conference Office and the then Connexional Secretaries and staff.
- Since the decisions made by the 2012 Conference and subsequent changes, the model had improved and was working more effectively.
- The post of Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary of the Methodist Church had brought unity, continuity and leadership in the one person.
- The person now had a broad oversight of the Conference and the whole Church.
- Staff, members of the Church and the wider ecumenical movement knew who the executive leader was and who to go to when they wanted to contact the leadership of the Church.
- People felt it was possible for this one person to articulate the vision and direction of the Church and inspire others.
- There was clarity about who was the CEO of the Connexional Team.
- There was a perception that this person has a brokering role when there are differences within the Senior Leadership Group or in the staff team.

- The individual is able to delegate tasks to the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary, thus sharing some of the burden in what many said is “an impossible job”
24. People recognised the excellent work of the present three senior staff/officers of the Church (ie the Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary of the Methodist Church, the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary).
25. More than 90% of the respondents and those who participated in group meetings and interviews indicated there was an urgent need for change. There was a strong indication that the present status quo should not continue.

**b) Limitations of the present arrangements/model**

26. There were many who shared serious concerns about the present arrangements and limitations of the model even though improvements had been made in the last two years (since the decisions of the Conference of 2012).
- The job was considered too large for any one post holder with the work load being too onerous and inimical to the health of the post holder.
  - There was a perception that the two roles required very different skills and it was asking too much for one person to perform both roles fully.
  - There were inherent tensions in the two roles, between the executive side of the task and the legislative and governance side. On the one hand there was a desire to change policies and move faster in new directions and then to deal with polity. On the other hand was the need to observe what was allowed or expected by Methodist constitution and legal practice. There is a lack of clear distinction between the responsibilities of oversight, pastoral care and discipline and the role of policy setting and strategic management. The tension was part of the nature of a Church with two cultures, one to do the right things and move forward, and the other to do things in the right way. The risk was that those responsible for governance came to be perceived as people who blocked change. The tension between the two cultures could be creative and it was necessary to find a way to work with this tension.
  - Some felt that the pressure of work and unclear procedures may have resulted in a difficulty in giving consistent attention to pastoral care.
  - Many felt that the present Assistant Secretary of the Conference had become effectively the Secretary of the Conference without clarity of role, responsibilities and authority.
  - The primary role and authority of the Conference and of the Secretary of the Conference appeared to be diminished with people feeling this was most visible when the previous and present incumbents of the office of Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary sat with staff on the floor of the Conference. Many felt that the Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary should be more neutral when giving advice to the Conference.
  - For some the General Secretary role had developed as more the CEO of the staff team and not the General Secretary of the wider Methodist Church. Thus they felt that staff and their interests and plans were dominating the agenda of the Connexional Leaders’ Forum, the Council and eventually the Conference.
  - Some respondents felt there was too much power in one person.
  - The roles and the leadership of the President and Vice-President seemed diminished over the years. They needed to be consulted more on policy and procedures and have regular meetings with the Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary.
  - A view was expressed that the present structure was not functioning as well as it could.



- There was awareness that the present incumbent as Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary did not have sufficient time to play an outward facing role in relation to the wider Church, the ecumenical movement and sister churches in Britain and overseas due to the pressure of work. People also felt that the gifts of the incumbent were perhaps not being used as well as they could.
- A few respondents saw greater unity now and questioned whether the Church today still needed a General Secretary ten years after the introduction of the role, given the recent improvements in the working of the Connexional Team and the introduction of several leadership changes.

#### **G. Other concerns expressed during the consultation process**

27. The feedback enabled many to share wider concerns about the Church, the nature of leadership, their hopes and expectations of the leadership and their feelings about the wider and long term future of the Methodist Church in Britain today. People wondered if we were too inward looking, constantly reviewing our ways of working and structures. Others felt that the approach to the review could have been more holistic as there was so much in the leadership models and styles in the Methodist Church that was interrelated and interdependent so that one could not look at the post of the Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary in isolation and without looking at the Connexional Leaders' Forum, the Conference, the Council, the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Presidency. Some of the respondents felt exhausted by endless reviews and hoped for a period of stability.
28. People expressed a desire for the Conference to provide leadership, vision, unity, mission and a coherent strategy for the future of the Church.

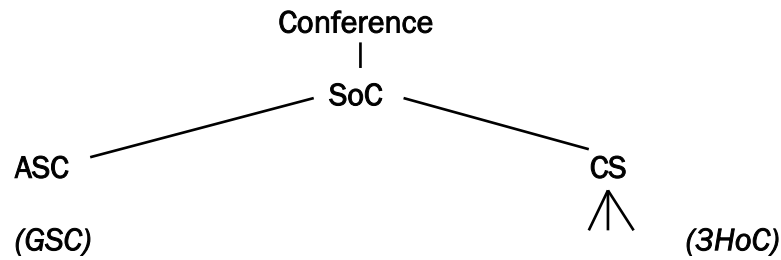
#### **H. The Conference and the role of the Secretary of the Conference**

29. Respondents also mentioned that the Conference needed to give time to the larger issues of the purpose and the mission of the Church, setting out general directions and priorities for the Methodist Council and Connexional Team to follow up in the implementation of Conference decisions. The importance, nature, membership and agenda of the Conference were the subject of some suggestions for change. This is not a task for this Working Party. However it was noted that the Secretary of the Conference is, with the President and Vice-President, one of the key Officers of the Conference and the one who protects and promotes the interests of the Conference as the source of "episcopate" of the whole Methodist Church. "The governing body of the Methodist Church shall be the Conference" (Deed of Union Section 4: clause 11). It fulfils its responsibility through a process of "Christian conferring" and exercising oversight through collective decision making while discerning the will of God. Many felt that changes to the Conference ways of working were urgent and important.
30. This concern for the authority, importance and good working of the Conference was mentioned many times and in different ways. Many felt that the primary role of the post as Secretary of the Conference needed to be asserted and reclaimed. It was the Secretary of the Conference who was to be the General Secretary of the Church (SO 300). Even in the 2002 report it was recorded that people felt that "The Secretary of the Conference is expected to have knowledge of the whole Church and his/her finger on the pulse. He/she is expected to be a good administrator, a provider of continuity and someone who enables the implementation of vision. He/she is expected to be a spokesperson, a voice heard by the Church and speaking on behalf of the Church to the world." (*Leadership in the Methodist Church*, Appendix 1)

31. Some noted the title of the role in the job description had changed from Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary of the Methodist Church to General Secretary of the Methodist Church/Secretary of the Conference. The Council report to the 2007 Conference on *Senior Leadership in the Methodist Church* almost exclusively refers to the role of the General Secretary with little mention of the other role of the Secretary of the Conference. That no doubt stems largely from the fact that the report followed a review of the role of the General Secretary but the Working Party noted the statement “It was further decided that the General Secretary of the Methodist Church should also be the Secretary of the Conference” (Para 13). In fact it was the other way round as the Secretary of the Conference was also to be the General Secretary. (SO 300).
32. It is the Secretary of the Conference who is executive officer of the Conference and he/she “shall play a part in the oversight and leadership of the Church and in particular shall be responsible for encouraging good governance in connexional bodies, Districts, Circuits, local churches and Methodist institutions.” (SO 114(1))
33. The report on *Senior Leadership in the Methodist Church* also states that “The roles of the General Secretary of the Church and the Secretary of the Conference have vital parts to play in the oversight of the Connexion. Both are leadership roles. Both are executive roles. But above all, they are complementary roles with the Secretary of the Conference having a strong but not exclusive emphasis upon governance and the General Secretary having a strong but not exclusive emphasis on developing vision and exercising strategic management.”(Para. 31). The Council and Conference accepted in 2007 “that these processes of unification need to be continued and extended.”(Ibid.) Is this still true in 2014, given that unity in the Connexional Team is much more of a reality now? Could the two roles be combined/integrated into one new single Standing Order (a combination of 114 and 300) to give a truly new role for a Secretary of the Conference who covers both aspects with responsible support colleagues who have clarity of roles, authority and accountability?
34. With all the changes for the better in the overall working of leadership since 2007 as expected by Conference, is it time to review the need for the General Secretary, now that so much of the development of leadership has been implemented and embedded? Or is it too early for renewed change?

#### **I. Proposed model for the future**

35. The Working Party reviewed the feedback on the future structural ideas and explored a few possibilities considering their strengths and limitations. It did not look at structure alone; it also considered related issues around job descriptions, roles and responsibilities, accountability, titles for the job and ways of working. A variety of models were considered by the Working Party and by the Methodist Council. The models were presented to the Council in an interim report in January 2014 for consideration and feedback. Council members critiqued each of the models presented to them and made some constructive comments on each of them. After feedback from the January 2014 Council the Working Party made a further report to the April 2014 Council to enable the Council to make recommendations to the Conference.
36. **The Council now recommends the following structure:  
The Secretary of the Conference would be the senior person in a three person senior team where the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary would report to him/her.**



**Key:**

- SoC Secretary of the Conference
- ASC Assistant Secretary of the Conference
- CS Connexional Secretary
- GSC Governance Support Cluster
- HoC Heads of Cluster

The Secretary of the Conference would be the senior member of the team and would cover the roles and responsibilities of the Secretary of the Conference as in the relevant Standing Orders. Here certain aspects of Standing Order 300 would be brought into Standing Order 114. The Assistant Secretary of the Conference would have formally and officially delegated to him/her certain functions of the Secretary of the Conference to cover areas such as managing the Governance Support Cluster (which the Working Party suggests should be renamed the Conference Office: see below), advising the Districts, Circuits, local churches and Methodist institutions on good governance and any other tasks and responsibilities formally delegated to the post. This Assistant Secretary of the Conference would be responsible for these tasks given, with authority for them, and yet be accountable to the Secretary of the Conference for everything in his/her revised job description. The Connexional Secretary would be the CEO of the Connexional Team and particularly of the three clusters reporting through the cluster heads. The Secretary of the Conference would act as the Chair of a senior leadership team with the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and Connexional Secretary as full members of the team and with regular invitations to the members of the Presidency. There would still be a Senior Leadership Group as at present. (Further details of the recommended model can be found in the diagram in Appendix 1.)

37. In this model the office of the General Secretary of the Methodist Church will cease to exist as a distinct office. Yet the essential activities suggested for the General Secretary in SO 300 will be given to the Secretary of the Conference but with some suggested differences in ways of working. Besides the functions given by SO 114, the Secretary of the Conference will have responsibility for leading the corporate development of “the mission and strategy of the Church....and the Church’s vision of unity, mission, evangelism and worship”. As noted, this would mean amendments to Standing Orders to combine aspects of SO 114 with some of SO 300.

38. It is suggested that as well as working with the Assistant Secretary of the Conference, the Connexional Secretary and other members of the Senior Leadership Group, the Secretary of the Conference should work collaboratively and in close cooperation with the President and Vice-President when possible to lead the Conference and the Church together. It is also suggested that the Governance Support Cluster be again called the Conference Office. (Appendix 1)

39. Strengths:

- It is more in keeping with Methodist theology to locate the executive as well as the governance responsibility in the role of the Secretary of the Conference. The Conference and Church would have one senior executive and that would be the Secretary of the Conference.

This is in keeping with the importance of the Conference and the expected role of the Secretary of the Conference in Methodist ecclesiology;

- The amended Standing Orders would still allow one person to have appropriate responsibility, but working with others, for enabling the vision, mission, unity and worship of the Church;
- There would be an Assistant Secretary of the Conference working with the Secretary of the Conference with clearly delegated roles and responsibilities and with a Conference Office to help him/her;
- The Connexional Secretary would be the CEO of the staff teams and the Connexional Team with strategic responsibility for the resources, the budget, accounts and the routine running of the central offices etc. The Connexional Secretary would work under the general direction of the Secretary of the Conference and would work collaboratively with all leaders across the Connexion;
- The Secretary of the Conference would be available to advise and support the President and Vice-President at the Conference and throughout the year, allowing them to work closely together as the leaders of the Church and members of the senior leadership team;
- The Secretary of the Conference would be available to travel occasionally through the Connexion and support people in their roles and responsibilities. The Secretary of the Conference would facilitate the collaborative and collegial model of leadership envisioned in the Methodist Church;
- **The Secretary of the Conference would be seen, in this model, as substantially more than the promoter of good governance and the enforcer of rules**, thus allowing the Church to reclaim the important role and authority of the Conference and Secretary of the Conference;
- So much has improved in the working of the Church since 2002 and 2012 and now is the time to get back to essentials and move forward together;
- Tensions between staff and teams could be managed possibly better within the three senior leaders of the team. The Secretary of the Conference would still be overseen by the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee/Chair of the Council;
- This option is budget neutral.

#### 40. Weaknesses:

- Staff and some others may feel that the role of a person for vision and direction for the Church would be lost; some would mourn the loss of the post of General Secretary as such;
- There could be a perception that governance and the keeping of the discipline and practices of the Church could suffocate growth, change and moving forward to deal with the challenges of today;
- Some may ask whether this model would have enough capacity at the senior level for all the expectations of the Church;
- Some may feel the Church wants to protect its survival, traditions and ways of working at the expense of mission, adapting to challenges and bringing young and new people into the Church. This model may appear to be out of date;
- Some could feel this model is more of the same and would put blocks in the way of rapid change needed by the Church to respond to the challenges and opportunities of today;
- Others may ask why change is proposed when the Senior Leadership Group appears to be working well together and the recent changes from 2012 have improved the functioning of the Connexional Team.

#### J. Exploring the model further

41. If this model is to be more than the existing structure with loss of part of a job title, or even part of a job, people will need to see the Secretary of the Conference in a new way. The office holder

must be seen to have both the traditional roles of the Secretary of the Conference (which has recently been seen as narrower than was formerly the case) and greater and more explicit responsibility for developing the Church's vision for growth, mission and service. In reality the Conference and the Council need to rediscover their respective roles and responsibilities in developing the strategic management and the Church's vision of unity, mission, evangelism and worship.

42. This Secretary of the Conference would not only be available for consultation with the Districts and Circuits and others but will also actively consult both the wider Connexion and the Connexional Team, to develop a corporate vision for the future. He/she would work with the Senior Leadership Group to lead corporately the Connexional Leaders' Forum in such a way that it is the place where people listen to each other and where the needs, concerns, insights and difficulties of the Church are shared and dealt with together. If the Secretary of the Conference were able formally to delegate some tasks as proposed above, he/she would have the time to travel occasionally, attend key meetings and work with others (such as the Presidency) on the external and representative roles. He/she would then be seen and known in the Districts and Circuits and would always be available to the President and Vice-President.
43. While there would be no post of a designated General Secretary in this model it envisions that the revised and widened role of the Secretary of the Conference would take on much of what is involved in the expected functions of the General Secretary as "the executive officer responsible for leading the mission and strategy of the Church and in particular...responsible for developing...the Church's vision of unity, mission, evangelism and worship." (SO 300), but would do so with greater emphasis on developing that vision corporately, so that it is owned throughout the Connexion. Consistent with this approach, it would be the Secretary of the Conference who would lead and direct the Connexional Leaders' Forum, but in consultation with the President and Vice-President, the Senior Leadership Group and the Chair of the Chairs' Meeting.
44. The Secretary of the Conference would be the senior person in a leadership team that is visionary, enabling, empowering, inspirational and collegial. His/her work in developing a corporate vision, mission and direction for the Church would enable the Conference to make decisions for taking that vision forward, set priorities and prepare for the future with a sense that the Connexion supports what is being done. This leadership team would then ensure the Connexional Team works on the priorities set by the Conference and develops strategic plans to serve, equip and "assist the Methodist Church in furthering its purposes, in particular enabling it better to fulfil its calling." (From *Vision Statement of the Connexional Team 2013*).
45. The responsibilities of the Secretary of the Conference for oversight and discipline in the widest sense would require him/her to be seen to act as the Secretary at the Conference and the Council, supporting the Presidency or the Chair of the Council and involved with the Assistant Secretary of the Conference in the preparation and scrutiny of the Agenda. Those responsibilities would also require substantial involvement in the processes for nominating Chairs and in their pastoral support and oversight and in the work of the Stationing Matching Group, so that he/she is able to assure the Conference that the processes have been fairly and properly undertaken. He/she would also need to develop relationships with the Warden of the Diaconal Order and with the Faith and Order and Law and Polity committees.
46. The Secretary of the Conference would take a lead in embodying the Conference when it is not in session and upholding its privileges and discipline. Here discipline should be seen as a positive expression of its common life for the whole Connexion and includes relating back to the

Conference those situations when changes in polity would better serve the needs of the Church and the proclamation of the gospel.

47. This model reinforces the authority of the Conference and gives clearer expression to the Church's sense of episcopal oversight. All three officers are servants of the Conference. It enshrines a more collaborative approach to leadership whilst giving clarity about the distinctiveness of each role. This model is built on the principle that good governance is as missional as setting out a vision and purpose for the growth, development and influence of the Church. It also gives to the post of the Secretary of the Conference a truly wider brief than the keeping of the rule book, the enforcement of regulations and a role essentially only concerned with the more negative aspects of discipline, law and polity. It captures elements of the role of the Secretary of the Conference which were beginning to be seen as part of the role of the General Secretary but before 2002 were seen as responsibilities of the Secretary of the Conference. This visible and senior leader of the Church working with others in a team reinforces the Methodist understanding of oversight that is essentially shared.
48. There would be some changes in the present job description of the Connexional Secretary, although the title and overall purpose of the role does not change. The post holder would work under the general direction of the Secretary of the Conference and act at all times to support the Secretary of the Conference and uphold the decisions and directions of the Conference. Yet he/she would have responsibility for the strategic management and allocation of resources of the Connexional Team so that they can effectively and efficiently be used for the purposes of the Church. He/she could develop policies and plans in consultation with the Secretary of the Conference and the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and the three would act as the senior leaders together. In practice the Connexional Secretary would be the CEO of the Connexional Team. The Secretary of the Conference would have no role in the day to day running of the teams but would need to hold the Connexional Team to account. Ideally this post would be for a Methodist lay person and in keeping with the Church's commitment to lay leadership.
49. There would also be changes in the job description of the Assistant Secretary of the Conference who would assist the Secretary of the Conference but have clearer authority and responsibility for agreed delegated functions. This post, like the Secretary of the Conference him/herself, should continue to be open only to a presbyter.
50. These changes for both roles must be introduced in consultation with the present post holders through the proper procedures.
51. Clearly, a revised job description for the Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary would be needed and this would be done in consultation with the present incumbent. Amendments to the Standing Orders will also be needed.
52. It should be noted that in what is said above, the Working Party has not sought to give a complete description of every element of the Secretary of the Conference role in the future but rather to express the spirit of its vision.
53. If the Conference approves this model, more work needs to be done on revised job descriptions, titles, Standing Orders and ways of working of the model and the internal management, staffing and organisation of the Connexional Team. It is proposed that the Conference directs the Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee to take the steps necessary for implementation.

54. The Working Party sees these changes as part of an ongoing process from 2002 and the subsequent reports to the Council and the Conference to improve the functioning of the Church with clear ideas for leadership, unity, mission and strategic direction given in the *Our Calling* and *The Priorities of the Methodist Church* reports. Much has improved since 2002 and this was acknowledged in the feedback. There is unity, coherence and good working relationships between the former Conference Office and the other three clusters and all are seen as one Connexional Team. As with any Church and organisation, the passage of time means that there are new problems today and the review can be seen to be beneficial as it prepares the Church and the Connexional Team for the future. The challenge for the new senior team, if agreed, will be to take forward some of the changes suggested in this report and to work together with the President and Vice-President in ways that were agreed to in the report to the 2010 Conference. (*Developing the Presidency of the Conference*).

#### **K . Other areas to be considered**

55. While this review was about the post of the Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary of the Methodist Church related aspects of the leadership of the Methodist Church arose and are shared for the Church to consider further in the future. These were not in the Terms of Reference but are indicated below. However the Working Party believes that the changes recommended will enable the Conference to address these concerns more creatively in the future.

- i. Could there be a review or a better running of the Conference and its agenda to ensure that it plays a role in setting the vision, discussing strategic choices, direction and priorities of the Church and does not get bogged down by too many minute details? Could it put more trust the Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee to do some things on its behalf while keeping its responsibility for oversight and governance?
- ii. Could the Strategy and Resources Committee be considered again as the executive of the Council? There needs to be a more effective process for the scrutiny of reports and papers coming to the Council and the Conference. Could matters coming from the Connexional Team be presented by the Connexional Secretary to the Council and the Conference and matters approved by the Council be presented by the Chair of the Council to the Conference?
- iii. There was a fear that the external relations of the Church, the ecumenical and interfaith dimensions of it, have suffered in recent years. This was not only within Britain but within Europe and the wider world. What could be done about this?
- iv. Recognising that the Conference has repeatedly shown reluctance to move from a one year term for the President and Vice-President, could there be a more creative and regular way to involve them in the Connexional Leaders' Forum, the new senior team and Senior Leadership Group? The Church needs to understand and use the concept of the Presidency more so that those who fall within that description can be more involved in the development of policy and the vision/mission of the Church in the years ahead (there are six people available at any one time).

#### **L. Summary of Recommendations**

**56. The approval of the new model for the senior structure of the three Officers of the Conference as described above.**

**57. If approved the necessary changes to be introduced and implemented as appropriate with changes of job descriptions, titles and clarity of roles and responsibilities particularly for the Connexional Secretary and the Assistant Secretary of the Conference. A new job description to be written up for the post of the Secretary of the Conference.**

- 58. Changes to Standing Orders particularly to bring together 114 and much of 300 and possibly minor change in 304. To go over the references to the General Secretary in Standing Orders and see what needs to be changed and how. Check the job descriptions of the Connexional Team members and see what minor and consequential changes may be needed for others.**
- 59. The Methodist Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee to lead the implementation of the recommendations and changes suggested if approved by the Conference, working with the concerned people using the correct procedures.**

**\*\*\*RESOLUTIONS**

- 25/A. The Conference received the Report.**
- 25/1. The Conference adopted the structure for the senior officers of the Conference as set out in the Report.**
- 25/2. The Conference directed the Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee to take the steps necessary to implement the model.**

*Note*

*The proposed amendments to Standing Orders are printed in Volume Two of the Agenda.*



Context of Senior Leadership in the Methodist Church

