



The purpose of the Union

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In the second instalment of Faith and Finance, the multifaceted nature of the British Union Conference (BUC) was explored as it operates within the realms of a church, a corporation, and a charity. With this framework in mind, understanding the structure of the Adventist Church in the UK and Ireland becomes more relevant.

First established in 1902, the BUC was formed to create an impact in the British Isles from the already fervent movement of Adventism that was sweeping the United States of America.

From the first records of 1903 that show a humble membership of 1,160 and an annual tithes of £3,080 across the newly formed union, the BUC has grown significantly, yet the purpose of the BUC and the benefits of having a centralised system of leadership in the British Isles might have been lost over time.

According to policy, the purpose of the BUC 'is to proclaim the everlasting Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to teach the commandments of God as the supreme rule of life, and to persuade people to become His disciples and

responsible members of the church and to support charitable work which is in harmony with the doctrines and principles of Seventh-day Adventists'. Beyond these stated purposes, the BUC serves as a guiding force, providing support and advice to its subsidiaries, which include its membership, two conferences, three missions, a publishing house, seven school institutions, and more than 400 employees.

The centralised structure, inherited from the General Conference, has been in place since the inception of the BUC, proving effective in ensuring consistency in operations, policies, procedures, and standards across all subsidiaries.

By establishing consistent policies and procedures, inefficiencies can be identified and rectified early on, enhancing the overall quality and reliability of services offered by the organisation. Moreover, the centralised structure offers a robust platform for risk management and mitigation.

By having clearly defined lines of responsibility and accountability, potential risks can be identified, assessed, and addressed in a systematic manner, meaning that this proactive approach to risk management not only safeguards the interests of the organisation and its stakeholders, but also fosters a culture of resilience and adaptability in the face of uncertainty as best practices and lessons learned can be disseminated to subsidiaries, driving organisational growth and development.

Centralisation also provides a framework for strategic decision-making as consolidating

decision-making at the organisational level enables the BUC to align its activities with its overarching mission and vision. This ensures that decisions taken at various levels of the organisation are coherent and consistent, contributing to the achievement of long-term strategic objectives.

This kind of cohesion also facilitates resource allocation and management across subsidiaries. By pooling resources at the organisational level, the BUC can optimise resource utilisation and allocate funds strategically to support initiatives that align with its strategic priorities, allowing for more efficient use of resources and enhancing the organisation's ability to respond effectively to emerging opportunities and challenges in the external environment.

While centralisation may be perceived as potentially inhibiting creativity and agility, the reality is far more nuanced and dynamic when managed adeptly. Centralisation acts as a catalyst for innovation by providing a fertile ground for cross-pollination of ideas and the exploration of novel approaches to complex challenges by promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing among subsidiaries. By breaking down silos and encouraging cross-functional teamwork, centralisation can foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

By leveraging the strengths of centralisation while mitigating its potential drawbacks, the BUC continues to foster a culture of open communication, empowerment, and continuous learning, ensuring that the benefits of centralised leadership are maximised while addressing its limitations.