

# Memorials to the Conference

## Notes for the guidance of members of the Conference

### 1. Introduction to memorials

Memorials are messages from Circuit Meetings and District Synods to the Conference. They suggest that the Conference takes action or makes a statement on an issue. The memorials received since the last Conference are listed in this report. These memorials may help members of the Conference to judge the main concerns currently felt in the Connexion, and the strength of opinion they represent.

Each year the Methodist Council is required to appoint a Memorials Committee made up of representatives from Districts to aid the Conference in replying to each memorial. The replies to these memorials have been drafted by members of the Connexional Team and officers of other relevant bodies. They have been scrutinised by the Memorials Committee and amended where the committee felt it was appropriate.

The committee recommends to the Conference the replies printed in the Agenda under each memorial. The Conference binds itself either to agree this reply, to amend it, or to agree an alternative reply (see SO 133(4), printed in the Rules of Procedure on p12 of the Agenda).

In some of its responses, the committee makes no comment on the substance of a memorial, but indicates that the reply of the Conference is given in other resolutions of the Conference. This kind of response does not mean that the committee has not taken seriously the points made in the memorial. It means that another report deals with the issue more fully. Debate on that report gives the Conference an opportunity to discuss the issues raised by the memorial.

### 2. Consideration of the memorials by the Conference

Any member of the Conference has the right to move an amendment to the reply recommended by the committee, or to propose that it is substituted by a different reply. Amendments to replies should be submitted in the form of a notice of motion, the deadline for which is 12:30pm on Tuesday 1 July, or 4:30pm on the day before the memorial is due to be debated, whichever is earlier. However, members are urged to give notice of their intention to move an amendment as early as possible and not to wait until the deadline.

If the Conference rejects a reply, an acceptable alternative must, then or later, be put to and agreed by the Conference. In addition, any two members of the Conference may, by notice of motion submitted on the first day of the relevant session, propose that, instead of dealing with the committee's recommended replies in the ordinary course of business, the Conference shall debate a resolution based on one or more of the memorials.

This year, the Memorials Committee has recommended to the Conference Business Committee that the replies to any memorials which relate to other items of business in the Agenda be taken at the same time as that business, and that the remaining replies should be taken *en bloc*. Any recommended reply to a memorial which is the subject of an amending notice of motion will automatically be removed from *en bloc* business (see Standing Order 134A(1)(c), Agenda p13).

Members of the Conference with questions on any matter affecting memorials should consult the Memorials Secretary, Martin Harker. For example, if any member wishes to change the recommended reply of the committee, the Memorials Secretary would be happy to advise on how and when to propose either an amendment or the substitution of a different reply.

The Memorials Secretary will notify each Synod and Circuit of the reply the Conference has made to its memorial.

## **M1 Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales**

The Wales Synod (R) (Present: 126; Voting: 73 for, 23 against) is firmly committed to the unity of the Church according to the mind of Christ. It rejoices in the work of God in bringing Christians closer together. In that spirit, it reflects upon the October 2012 report of the Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales. It was able to consider the report in its representative session for the first time in September 2013, after the Conference of that year had received a report regarding the proposals and consultation upon them. With deep regret, the Synod finds many of the proposals troubling, including the suggestion that its ministers should submit to some manner of further ceremony of the laying on of hands beyond their existing ordination. The Wales Synod therefore requests that the Conference:

- (a) reaffirm that ministers in the Methodist Church are already ordained to the diaconate or the presbyterate of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and no further ordination to the relevant order is necessary or possible. While the Synod is ready to enter into conversation about future patterns of ordination, it requests the Conference to make clear that mutual acceptance of, and respect for, one another's ordained ministries are pre-requisites of such conversations not their end point.
- (b) explore ways that the ordained ministry of covenant partners can be fully acknowledged within Methodist structures. To this end the Synod requests the Conference to explore the granting of Authorised to Serve or Associate status to all ordained ministers of the covenant partners in Wales "as a symbolic gesture within the context of the Covenant, which could make a contribution towards the goal of visible unity" (*Ecumenical Ordination* report to the 1996 Conference, paragraph 14).

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Wales Synod for its memorial.

The proposed response of the Conference to the two discussion papers launched by the Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales at The Gathering in October 2012 can be found elsewhere in the Conference Agenda. It refers to this memorial in paragraph 8, notes the comments of some of the District Policy Committees to the recommended "act of reconciliation" in paragraph 12, and records that in paragraph 9 of its response Y Cyngor noted "significant disquiet about the recommendation for an 'act of reconciliation', which to many respondents seemed to imply a rejection of Methodist orders and the prospect of 're-ordination'."

In response to the first of the Synod's requests, the Conference draws attention to the introduction to the Ordination Services in *The Methodist Worship Book* which says (p298):

In common with other churches, in the ordination of presbyters and deacons, the Methodist Church intends to ordain, not to a denomination, but to the presbyterate and the diaconate in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. It looks for the day when, in communion with the whole Church, such ministries are recognized and exercised in common.

This understanding, and therefore the principle articulated in point (a) of the memorial, is clear in a number of reports adopted by the Conference over many years and in the Ordinals it has authorised. So, for example, *Ordination in the Methodist Church* (1960) says "Ministers of the Methodist Church are Ministers, not of the Methodist Church only, but of the Holy Catholic Church" (*Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order: Volume One: 1933-1983* (second edition), p106); the Ordinals of 1936 and 1974 (both for the ordination of those now known as 'presbyters') use the expression "a Minister in the Church of Christ", and in the Ordinals of 1998 the President says "Sisters and brothers in Christ, these are

the persons whom we intend, in God's name, to ordain to the Ministry of Christ's holy Church in the Order of *Presbyters/Deacons*" (paragraph 12 on p301 and p316).

The Conference also draws attention to the fifth of the seven pairs of "recognitions" and "intentions" in the text of the 1975 Covenant ([www.cytun.org.uk/covenant75.html](http://www.cytun.org.uk/covenant75.html)):

- (a) We recognise the ordained ministries of all our churches as true ministries of word and sacraments, through which God's love is proclaimed, his grace mediated, and his Fatherly care exercised.
- (b) We intend to seek an agreed pattern of ordained ministry which will serve the gospel in unity, manifest its continuity throughout the ages, and be accepted as far as may be by the Church throughout the world.

In drawing attention to the text of the 1975 Covenant, the Conference notes two things: first, although in 1993 it agreed that the Methodist Church recognises and has received from God two orders of ministry, the presbyteral and the diaconal, it understands only the former as a ministry of word and sacraments; secondly, in a discussion of mutual recognition of ordained ministries, alongside the above "recognition" it is appropriate to place the fourth and fifth affirmations in *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant*.

Turning to the Synod's second request, the ordained ministries of the covenanted churches in Wales are, with others, recognised by the Methodist Church. Such recognition is a condition for the authorisation of individuals to serve the Methodist Church as presbyters or deacons and for granting individuals the status of associate presbyter or deacon. Those individuals who are authorised to serve are "appointed by the Conference to fulfil presbyteral or diaconal duties in a circuit or other appointment within the control of the Church" (Standing Order 733(5)) and those who are granted the status of associate presbyter or deacon are "permitted by the Conference to undertake specific acts of ministry in and on behalf of particular Local Churches or institutions" (Standing Order 733A(3)). In its response to the recommendations of the Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales, Y Cyngor spoke of its concern to focus on "deepening existing relationships and exploring what is possible under existing agreements" and suggested, as an example of what that might mean in practice, "a serious attempt to explore the possibilities available, but hardly used, of the ecumenical canons of the Church in Wales" (paragraphs 15-16). Another example might be to consider whether the provisions of Standing Orders 733 and 733A could be used more extensively.

The Conference, therefore, declines the specific requests in the memorial, believing that previous statements of the Conference articulate the view expressed in point (a) and that existing Standing Orders reflect the nature of how the Conference believes authorisation should relate to specific acts of ministry.

## **M2 Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales**

The Cymru Synod (R) (Present: 34; Voting: 19 for, 6 against) is firmly committed to the unity of the Church according to the mind of Christ. It rejoices in the work of God in bringing Christians closer together. In that spirit, it reflects upon the October 2012 report of the Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales. The report has been considered at its representative session, Circuit and Ardal meetings, as part of the engagement with the consultation process undertaken by Y Cyngor. The Synod submits this memorial in addition to that work, and covering issues not directly addressed in the consultation. With deep regret, the Synod finds some of the proposals troubling, including the suggestion that its ministers should submit to some manner of further ceremony of the laying on of hands beyond their existing ordination. This being contrary to the already highly developed Area Ministry schemes and extensive sharing of ordained ministers between the Welsh speaking denominations with whom the Synod works. The Cymru Synod therefore requests that the Conference:

- (a) reaffirm that ministers in the Methodist Church are already ordained to the diaconate or the presbyterate of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and no further ordination to the relevant order is necessary or possible. We also recognise the ordination of ministers from other denominations within the Covenant and beyond. While the Synod is ready to enter into conversation

about future patterns of ordination, it requests the Conference to make clear that mutual acceptance of, and respect for, one another's ordained ministries are pre-requisites of such conversations not their end point.

- (b) explore ways that the ordained ministry of covenant partners can be fully acknowledged within Methodist structures. To this end the Synod requests the Conference to explore the granting of Authorised to Serve or Associate status to all ordained ministers of the covenant partners in Wales “as a symbolic gesture within the context of the Covenant, which could make a contribution towards the goal of visible unity”.

### **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M1.*

### **M3 Review of stationing procedures**

The Doncaster (25/14) Circuit Meeting (Present: 70; Voting: 68 for, 2 against) requests the Conference urgently to instruct that a review of stationing procedures be undertaken in order that they might more effectively serve the mission of the Church. It believes that the following aspects should be given particular attention:

- (a) To conduct a qualitative survey of all those involved in the stationing process in 2013/14 to assess how effectively ministers are matched to stations where mission is emphasised and growth a real possibility.
- (b) To study how closely the rankings of ministers and Circuits were matched to assess the effectiveness of the ranking system.
- (c) To investigate the use of ICT so that where Circuits and ministers select one another, those selections can be dealt with first.
- (d) To make an assessment of the effectiveness of prescribing up to five matches for ministers and Circuits.
- (e) To consider the desirability of corroborative evidence to accompany the profiles provided by ministers and Circuits.
- (f) To research whether there is a demand by lay people from the matched station to be allowed to visit in order to hear a matched minister lead worship and preach. At present Circuits remain seriously in ignorance of this vital aspect of the work of a possible match's ministry.
- (g) To change the advice given to Circuits that ministers matched should not be interviewed and to allow a full and respectful discussion of all aspects of the station together with the minister's preference and emphases so that both parties are free to ask all suitable questions.

We desire the best possible match of ministers to Circuits and our request is solely for that purpose.

### **Reply**

The Stationing Committee is constantly reviewing the principles and protocols that determine our stationing matching processes and is grateful to the Doncaster Circuit for this memorial. The Conference notes that a comprehensive review of stationing matching processes was undertaken in 2008 and that the far-reaching changes made in response to the conclusions of this review have been implemented over the course of several years. Many of the points raised in the memorial were considered as part of that review.

An effective partnership between Circuits and presbyters, and the District Chair and District Lay Stationing Representative is absolutely essential in the matching process. It is within this relationship that the hopes and aspirations of presbyters and Circuits are identified. The effective mission of the Church in each place is the key priority and the Stationing Committee is currently exploring the issue of how we address mission priorities in stationing matching.

Within the matching process, the order in which appointments are called is determined in two ways. Districts are called in an order agreed by the members of the Stationing Matching Group (currently by an agreed formula). Each District Chair determines the order in which Circuits in their own District are then called. It is here that choices can be made about what the memorial describes as the “rankings of ministers and Circuits”.

Conversations continue between the District Chair, Lay Stationing Representative, Circuits and presbyters throughout the process of stationing matching. Any lists of what are considered to be suitable matches are not intended to be definitive – they are indicative lists, in other words, they indicate the kind of appointment or presbyter that is being sought. The lists fulfil their purpose in helping Circuits, presbyters and District Chairs to be clear about the hopes and aspirations of Circuits and presbyters. The reality is that the same names of both presbyters and Circuits are common to many lists.

The published profiles are purposefully brief so that presbyters and Circuits can easily sift through the information. However, additional corroborative information and evidence often emerges during conversations within the District prior to stationing matching and can be agreed in writing.

The practice of Circuit Stewards “hearing people preach” has been strongly discouraged over many years on the grounds that the hearing of a person on one occasion by a small group of people did not help Circuits to reach an informed and objective decision about the suitability of the presbyter concerned.

Our current guidelines allow “a full and respectful discussion of all aspects of the station together with the minister's preference and emphases”, and the visit is undertaken on the basis of a mutual exploration of compatibility between the parties involved.

The Stationing Committee continues to keep the *Code of Practice* and protocols under review. The Conference however declines the specific request for a further urgent review.

#### **M4 Review of stationing procedures**

The East Solent and Downs (26/7) Circuit Meeting (Present: 48; Voting: unanimous) calls upon the Conference to review the current stationing *Code of Practice* and the relevant sections of CPD to take account of the increased size of Circuits and Circuit Invitation Committees and the increased probability that more than one stationing appointment will be considered simultaneously. These factors combine to make compliance with the exceedingly tight timescales required impossible.

#### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the East Solent and Downs Circuit Meeting for its memorial and notes with concern the difficulties experienced by the Circuit as regards the logistics associated with the timing of visits when a number of appointments are being sought.

The creation of larger Circuits presents a number of challenges to our stationing matching processes, which are being kept under review by the Stationing Committee.

The Stationing Committee considered this matter at its April 2014 meeting and believes that this particular issue can be dealt with case by case (as has been the practice in the past). Where it is clear that a Circuit is dealing with a number of new appointments in any one year the Circuit should be able to seek permission via the Chair of District from the Stationing Matching Group to arrange visits over an extended period. The Conference believes that no change is needed to the stationing *Code of Practice* in this regard and the memorial is therefore declined.

#### **M5 Sabbaticals**

The Bury St Edmunds (14/3) Circuit Meeting (Present: 33; Voting: unanimous) requests that the Conference amends Standing Order 744(3) as follows:

Subject to Standing Order 807A(6), the years in which sabbaticals may be taken shall normally be the tenth and each seventh year of travel after it, but sabbaticals may for good reason be taken one year earlier or later and in particular shall not be taken in the first year of a new appointment ***or in the final year before becoming a supernumerary***. Special permission shall be required for any greater departure from the normal dates.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Bury St Edmunds Circuit Meeting for its memorial. The Conference notes that an explanation for this proposed change to Standing Order 744 is not provided, and, whilst the Conference appreciates that enabling sabbaticals can sometimes pose difficulties for Circuits, the requested amendment does not highlight or specifically address that particular concern.

Ministers do not cease their ministry whilst they are on sabbatical but, instead, exercise it in different ways, while finding refreshment in an opportunity to stand back from previous rhythms and routine commitments. A sabbatical shortly before becoming a supernumerary may, in some cases, provide an important opportunity for the minister to reflect and re-focus their ministry before sitting down. Further, the provision to enable sabbaticals to be taken one year earlier than the normal interval between sabbaticals means that it is possible to avoid the taking of a sabbatical in the final year. It is to be hoped that a constructive conversation can take place between the Circuit and those ministers for whom this possibility applies in order to determine what arrangement will be of most benefit.

The Conference therefore declines to amend Standing Order 744.

### **M6 Reinstatement**

The East Solent and Downs (26/7) Circuit Meeting (Present: 44; Voting: unanimous) draws the Conference's attention to two aspects of the current procedure in relation to the reinstatement of a minister into Full Connexion.

It is possible under the present regulations for someone seeking reinstatement to be recommended by a panel for reinstatement and stationing, only to have the recommendation overturned by the Conference. Both the individual and the Circuit to which they have been stationed will have begun to make practical arrangements for the following connexional year by the time the Conference makes its decision. Not only is the candidate left bereft, but the Circuit suddenly finds itself without a minister at a stage when a replacement is unlikely to be found.

The current process does not allow those seeking reinstatement to know what is being written or spoken about them, or to attend or to know the content of the Closed Session at which their case is considered. This makes it impossible either for the candidate or anyone offering them pastoral support to work on any issues raised either by the reinstatement panel or the Closed Session.

The Circuit Meeting therefore requests the Conference to set up an urgent, and immediate, review of the process for the reinstatement of ministers to ensure that best practice is adopted by the Conference which allows the minister to be fully involved in the process and proper time to be available for decisions concerning future ministry.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the East Solent and Downs Circuit for the memorial and the concern which it represents for those seeking reinstatement as ministers in Full Connexion with the Conference.

The process for reinstatement is set out in Standing Order 761, which is explained to all who seek reinstatement. This makes it clear that the interviewing committee appointed to consider the application is charged with considering the case and making a recommendation to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Diaconal Committee of the Conference. It is then for the Presbyteral Session or the Diaconal Committee to decide whether or not it wishes to accept the recommendation and in turn make a recommendation to the Representative Session. The Conference, in considering the report made to it will wish to weigh the appropriateness of the recommendation and act accordingly. This mirrors a number of other processes, such as the recommendation of the Candidates Selection Committees, connexional Review Committees (appointed under Section 03 of Standing Orders). In all of these processes the person concerned is not present at the Conference, but is aware of what report will be made to the Conference. In the case of reinstatements it is important that the applicant is aware of the precise nature of the report being made to the Presbyteral Session or Diaconal Committee; steps have been taken to ensure that there is now greater consistency in how the applicant is told of the report that will be made to the Presbyteral Session or Diaconal Committee. When a recommendation is declined, assuming that points have been articulated by the members of the Conference or Conference Committee – and sometimes it moves to vote without discussion – there is no reason why a person seeking reinstatement cannot be told the reasons why the recommendation has been declined.

The Conference is confident that those charged with administering the processes set out in Standing Order 761 keep under review the way in which information is communicated to the person seeking to be reinstated should the Conference or Committee decline a recommendation. Such review has been particularly acute in the past year when the Conference declined to accept a recommendation for reinstatement.

The Conference regrets very much that the memorial implies that stationing matching can take place between a recommendation being made and the recommendation being considered by the Conference. It is important that no such matching takes place until the Conference has reached a decision on the recommendation. While it might be possible to identify a possible match ahead of the decision of the Conference, no steps should be taken to suggest to either the applicant or a Circuit that a match will take place until the Conference has made a decision on the recommendation. It is necessarily the case that a person may therefore be required to be without appointment if they are seeking reinstatement to the active work. Equally, it may be possible for the President to act under the provision of the Deed of Union and station a newly reinstated minister to an appointment soon after the Conference adjourns should such an appointment be available.

The points raised by the memorial are kept under review and the Conference therefore declines the memorial.

## **M7 Membership of supernumerary ministers**

The Nidd Valley (16/22) Circuit Meeting (Present: 48; Voting: 37 for, 2 against), whilst recognising that all Methodist ministers (both presbyteral and diaconal) undertake a lifelong commitment to the collegial responsibilities of ministry, remain under the discipline of the Methodist Conference, and have their membership of the Methodist Church recorded connexionally, nevertheless believes that in retirement they would more appropriately be counted as members of a local church for the purposes of the annual statistics for mission.

In a growing number of Districts there are now more supernumeraries than ministers in the active work. Most supernumeraries, on their retirement, become very much part of a local community and many undertake a wide range of responsibilities within the life of their local church alongside their lay colleagues. In so doing, whilst still fulfilling their ministry, they are effectively acting as members of the church in a local rather than itinerant capacity, and we believe that it would be a more appropriate recognition of that fact if

they were included in the number of local church members for the purposes of the annual statistical returns, especially since those statistics are now seen as a tool for the Church's mission.

We therefore request that the Conference refers this matter for further consideration and action.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Nidd Valley Circuit Meeting for the opportunity to affirm the ministry of supernumeraries.

Those who are called to be presbyters and deacons are set aside by the Church in ordination to ministry that is life-long and representative. Ordained ministers focus, express and enable the ministry of the whole people of God. By being received into Full Connexion, they enter into a covenant relationship with the Conference "in which they are held accountable by the Church" in respect of their ministry and Christian discipleship, and are "accounted for by the Church in respect of their deployment and the support they require for their ministry" (Standing Orders 700(2) and 701(2)).

Supernumeraries continue to exercise their ministry as they are able according to their circumstances. The ways in which they do this are varied: for example, some undertake a wide range of responsibilities within the life of one local church alongside their lay colleagues, some undertake responsibilities within a Circuit, some undertake chaplaincy roles, and many exercise their ministry in other ways. All supernumeraries continue to be stationed annually by the Conference and they "remain accountable to and accounted for by the Church" (Standing Orders 700(5) and 701(6)).

Although some supernumeraries exercise their ministry by undertaking particular responsibilities within one local church community, the nature of their relationship with the Church is different from that of a local church member. The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

### **M8 Church stewards and lay leadership**

The Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District Synod (R) (Present: 101; Voting: unanimous) believes that the time is right for a review of the Standing Orders relating to the duties and responsibilities of church stewards. In the past 20 years there have been significant changes to the exercise of leadership in local churches and this has impacted on the duties and responsibilities of stewards. Also, pragmatically, it is often challenging to find people who are comfortable with all the differing aspects of the role: some are willing and able to accomplish the 'Vestry' duties but are unwilling, or feel unsuited, to take on the leadership responsibilities. At the same time, there are people with leadership gifts who are not able, by virtue of other roles they hold, to do the 'Vestry' duties. Some churches have developed (non-executive) leadership teams which may have a minority of members who are stewards. In some churches it is the worship leader, rather than steward, who contacts the visiting preacher. Yet when new stewards are brought together for training, which at its most helpful is done across churches or even Circuits, then such training must focus on the responsibilities and duties as set out by Standing Orders 633 and 634.

The Synod notes this variety in practice across its local churches. It also believes that training is essential and should be relevant. It therefore asks the Conference to instigate a review of the Standing Orders governing church stewards, together with the wider issue of the exercise of lay leadership in the local church.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District Synod for its memorial and welcomes the opportunity to pay attention to the exercise of lay leadership within the life of the Methodist Church. The Conference wishes to affirm the significance of lay leadership in all its forms and notes the commitments in

the *Fruitful Field* report to the 2012 Conference to the development of pathways which equip and nurture the ministries of the whole people of God (para 113.2).

The Conference is committed to reviewing the provision of learning and development opportunities for all forms of lay leadership in the Methodist Church including church stewards. The Conference notes the work of the Faith and Order Committee, working in collaboration with the Ministries Committee, on ministry which will help to clarify the focus of various forms of lay ministry within the Methodist Church.

The Conference notes that during the next connexional year the Ministries Committee will be considering a number of significant priorities relating to lay ministry, including the piloting of the new programme for local preachers and worship leaders, support for pioneer ministries and reviews of probationer studies and continuing development in ministry (both lay and ordained).

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial and directs the Faith and Order Committee to ensure that a review of the role and responsibilities of church stewards and other forms of lay leadership is included in the review of ministry in the Methodist Church and directs the Ministries Committee to review patterns of learning and development in this area.

#### **M9 Youth President – membership of the Methodist Council**

The Portland (26/22) Circuit Meeting (Present: 16; Voting: unanimous) requests that the Conference directs that immediate arrangements be made for the Youth President to have a voting seat on the Methodist Council, in addition to the existing number of youth representatives, as part of its encouragement of youth participation in the life of the Methodist Church and in the belief that having agreed the role of Youth President it is only natural that the person holding this role should be present at the Council to advocate and represent the voice of young people around the Connexion, in the unique way that this role means that they can.

#### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Portland Circuit Meeting for its memorial.

The Conference notes that the constitution of the Council includes two voting members who are nominated by the Children and Youth Assembly. The Conference has previously affirmed that youth participation in all areas of church life, and in particular in its governance bodies, is not limited to the full-time role of the Youth President. The Children and Youth Assembly nominate four representatives (including the Youth President) to the Conference, and therefore the Assembly already has a proportionally higher representation on the Council than it does on the Conference. Of course, any addition to the membership of the Council carries with it budgetary implications as well as concerns about increasing the size of a trustee body. The Conference is aware that the Assembly could elect the Youth President as one of its two voting members, if it wished. It also notes that the Youth President is a member of the Connexional Leaders' Forum, which is an alternative and very appropriate means by which the Youth President is involved in the leadership of the Church.

The Conference further notes that the Youth President is an employee of the Council, and that membership of the Council could bring with it a conflict of interest. In recent years the Conference has sought to ensure that as few employees of the Council as possible serve on the Council itself. There is one exception to this in that Connexional Secretaries (of which there is at present only one) may be members of the Council. The Conference is of the opinion that no steps should be taken to increase the number of employees who serve on the employing body.

The Conference has also been invited to address this issue through a resolution brought by the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly, proposing to amend SO 210(7) to give the Youth President the right to attend

and speak at meetings of the Methodist Council but not to be a voting member. The Conference refers the Circuit Meeting to its response to that resolution, but declines this memorial.

**M10** The Bolsover and Staveley (25/11) Circuit Meeting (Present: 40; Voting: unanimous)

*This memorial was received with the same text as M9. The Conference adopts the same reply.*

**M11** The Sheffield District Synod (R) (Present: 94; Voting: 80 for, 0 against)

*This memorial was received with the same text as M9. The Conference adopts the same reply.*

### **M12 Evangelical faith**

The Portland (26/22) Circuit Meeting (Present: 16; Voting: unanimous) invites the Conference to affirm the valued place of evangelicals within the diverse life of the Methodist Church, celebrating the rich contribution that has been made, and which continues to be made, by those of an evangelical faith.

#### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Portland Circuit Meeting for its memorial, and for the opportunity to remember, in the words of the Deed of Union, “that in the providence of God Methodism was raised up to spread scriptural holiness through the land by the proclamation of the evangelical faith” and to declare “its unfaltering resolve to be true to its divinely appointed mission” (Clause 4). The Deed of Union also reminds us that from the beginning Methodism has held the doctrines of the evangelical faith as “contained in Wesley’s Notes on the New Testament and the first four volumes of his sermons”. Within this framework, the Conference gladly affirms the valued place within the Methodist Church of all “who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and accept the obligation to serve him in the life of the Church and the world” (Clause 8(a)).

### **M13 Connexional Allowances Committee**

The Cornwall District Synod (R) (Present: 106; Voting: 101 for, 0 against), aware of the far-reaching changes to stipends, allowances and fees being proposed by the Connexional Allowances Committee, is concerned by the lack of consultation within the Church about these changes, and urges the Conference to defer any decision on these proposals until the Conference of 2015, thus allowing for due consultation to take place.

#### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Cornwall District Synod for its memorial, and advises the Synod that the Methodist Council has already agreed actions along the lines indicated in the memorial, namely, to engage in a process of consultation before the Connexional Allowances Committee brings further recommendations through the Council to the Conference at a later date.

### **M14 Connexional Allowances Committee**

The Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod (R) (Present: 125; Voting: 123 for, 1 against) is concerned that:

- (a) there has been insufficient consultation with ministers as part of the review of allowances and fees;
- (b) the report did not come out in time for discussion at Presbyteral Synods; and
- (c) the report proposes that changes to fees should come in immediately, not giving time for ministers to make any necessary adjustments to finances.

It therefore asks the Conference to reject the present proposals and formulate new ones with appropriate consultation.

### **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M13.*

### **M15 Connexional Central Services Budget**

Recognising the need for the Conference to budget for the Methodist Church Fund for three years and also that many churches and Circuits are struggling to maintain their financial commitments, especially in the light of declining membership, the Tiverton and Wellington (24/16) Circuit Meeting (Present: 27; Voting: unanimous) urges the Conference to prepare a budget to be enacted from 1 September 2017 which will reduce the burden on Districts and Circuits in real terms in line with reducing membership.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Tiverton and Wellington Circuit Meeting for its memorial. It recognises the difficulties faced by some Circuits in meeting the assessment, and the pressures this can bring.

One of the reasons for moving to the preparation of three year budgets is to promote longer-term thinking regarding the Church's finances, as reflected in this memorial. It is important to note that each year the Conference adopts only year one of the Connexional Central Services Budget presented; years two and three being forecasts that will subsequently be revised for the following year.

The 2013 Conference agreed that the total Methodist Church Fund (MCF) assessment will increase by 2% per annum for three years, commencing in September 2014. This percentage is fixed, irrespective of changes to inflation, interest rates, wages growth or any other economic factors. At the same time, the Methodist Council's Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) has worked towards producing a balanced MCF budget each year which itself brings an appropriate level of financial discipline.

Aside from uncertainty in the wider economy, the connexional pension schemes for ministers and lay employees are both due for their triennial valuation on 31 August 2014. Any impact that the outcomes of these valuations have on either connexional or local Methodist funds will be known in time for the 2015 budget preparation cycle.

The next review of the formula for calculating the MCF assessment is due to be undertaken by the 2016 Conference and so the Conference is not minded to decide in 2014 what the outcome of that review might be. However, it recognises that the three year budget proposed to the 2015 Conference will include a forecast in year three of the possible level of MCF assessment, and instructs the Methodist Council to continue to take account of the factors raised in this memorial when considering that forecast.

**M16** The Teignbridge (24/28) Circuit Meeting (Present: 45; Voting: unanimous)

*This memorial was received with the same text as M15. The Conference adopts the same reply.*

**M17** The Plymouth and Exeter District Synod (R) (Present: 96; Voting: 49 for, 32 against)

*This memorial was received with the same text as M15. The Conference adopts the same reply.*

**M18** The South Petherton and Crewkerne (24/18) Circuit Meeting (Present: 29; Voting: unanimous)

*This memorial was received with the same text as M15. The Conference adopts the same reply.*

**M19** The West Somerset (24/25) Circuit Meeting (Present: 36; Voting: 35 for, 0 against)

*This memorial was received with the same text as M15. The Conference adopts the same reply.*

**M20 District assessments**

The Cumbria District Synod (R) (Present: 100; Voting: 57 for, 23 against) expresses its concern at the ongoing rise in the Cumbria District assessment against the backdrop of declining memberships, ageing congregations and falling real incomes.

Over the last three years Cumbria's contribution to the Methodist Church Fund has increased by 14%. Cumbria's membership has declined by 19% in the same period. Until this year the District has moderated the impact on Circuits by reductions in the district budget but this could only be a short-term measure. The District's contribution to the Methodist Church Fund will form nearly 80% of its budgeted expenditure in 2014/15. In many churches members are elderly and have been adversely affected by the severe reductions in investment income in recent years. There is growth in mission in many churches, including work with schools, Messy Church and Fresh Expressions – often these do not increase the level of giving but rather require increased input of resources from churches and Circuits.

The Synod requests the Conference, in setting the connexional budget for the following three years, to have greater regard to these and other factors affecting the ability of congregations to pay.

**Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M15.*

**M21 Standardised formula for assessments**

The Stoke-on-Trent (North) (11/15) Circuit Meeting (Present: 43; Voting: unanimous) request the Conference to provide a formula for the raising of assessments and so create a standard mechanism for use across the Church.

**Reply**

The Conference recognises the challenges faced when deciding how to apportion assessments between local churches or Circuits and thanks the Stoke-on-Trent (North) Circuit Meeting for raising this issue.

The Church works on the principle that in order to maximise the freedom for mission and ministry to be carried out effectively, decisions should be taken as near as possible to the point of impact. It is for this reason that Districts are able to determine the formula by which assessments are apportioned between Circuits, which are in turn able to determine how they are apportioned between churches. This enables a flexible approach across the whole Connexion, with agreements that are suited to local circumstances. District Treasurers are encouraged to share their experiences and best practice at their annual Practitioner Forum and informally through their network, but this informs voluntary decision-making, rather than supporting a compulsory structure.

Naturally this approach brings challenges when previously separate bodies amalgamate, but the Conference considers that this is more than outweighed by the freedom that currently exists for formulae to be adopted that suit each context. A wide range of methodologies are in use, and for the Conference to force change to a single connexional approach would bring significant change, and thus work, across the Connexion for little discernable overall benefit in terms of mission and ministry.

The memorial is therefore declined.

## **M22 JMA**

The Plymouth and Exeter District Synod (R) (Present: 81; Voting: 65 for, 12 against) thankfully recognises the role JMA has played in enthusing children and young people in World Church and Global Justice issues. Many of them will have gone on to offer themselves for service in these areas. As a Church we need to continue to offer our children and young people today the same wider vision of God's world.

We believe the continued development of JMA is essential to allow this to happen and therefore request that the Conference directs the Methodist Council to release the resources that will enable JMA to be effective once more.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Plymouth and Exeter District Synod for its passion and commitment to this important area of ministry with children. The Conference notes the support for the development of JMA within the Connexional Team work plan and the continuing and consistent allocation of significant budget and staff resources to the development of this work.

Each year a budget is allocated for the creation and provision of resources and administrative support for JMA in the Connexional Team work plan. This work is facilitated by the Discipleship and Ministries Cluster working collaboratively with the World Church and Fundraising Teams.

The details of available resources are included in:

- Rainbow Magazine, under "JMA Secretaries information and news"
- The Well network newsletter and emails for those who work with children, young people and families in the Methodist Church
- The Methodist Church website and the Children and Youth website.

All JMA resources are available from Methodist Publishing.

In the connexional year 2013/14 the resources provided for children and JMA Secretaries and other activities aimed at enabling children to 'Learn, pray and serve with the worldwide Church of Jesus Christ' included:

- An increase in provision from two to three editions of Rainbow magazine per year (winter, spring and summer) packed with activities and ways to engage children and local churches in mission through World Church partnerships and projects and Mission in Britain projects. Rainbow includes information for JMA Secretaries and details about where to obtain further JMA resources and support information.
- An annual JMA Challenge Chart full of information, activities and ideas to enable and encourage local churches, JMA Secretaries and children to engage with JMA.
- JMA Certificates (in English and Welsh) and badges for presentation each year.
- JMA Prayer Cards.
- An annual JMA dedication service material to increase awareness in local churches of the Mission in Britain Fund and World Mission Fund and the work they support. The service recognises the work of children and JMA Secretaries who raise awareness and funds to support JMA.
- A wealth of supporting material and resources provided by the World Church and Fundraising Teams can be used to promote and support the work of JMA Secretaries and the work of the World Mission Fund and Mission in Britain Fund. This material includes videos, Mission Matters, posters, the Annual Report for the World Mission Fund, letters from Mission Partners and the World Church Blog. Mission Partners are available to talk to churches and groups by arrangement with the World Church Team.
- The Youth President's Sri Lanka visit video.
- A focus at 3Generate Children and Youth Assembly on global issues and mission, and support for the Street Child World Cup Project.

Two new resources currently under development will be available in 2014/15:

- A JMA game that can be used at church or at home.
- A set of conversation and activity cards for church children's and youth groups.

The Conference therefore believes that the funding now in place allows JMA to be effective.

### **M23 JMA**

The Cornwall District Synod (R) (Present: 107; Voting: 105 for, 0 against) thankfully recognises the role JMA has played in enthusing children and young people in World Church and Global Justice issues. Many of them will have gone on to offer themselves for service in these areas. As a Church we need to continue to offer our children and young people today the same wider vision of God's world.

We believe the continued development of JMA is essential to allow this to happen and ask the Conference to direct World Church Relationships to report to the Conference of 2015 on its progress in developing work with young people.

### **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M22.*

### **M24 JMA**

The Cumbria District Synod (R) (Present: 100; Voting: 76 for, 0 against) notes that the Conference of 2007 affirmed the importance of the work of JMA by accepting the following request: "Conference requests that JMA continues to be developed as a valuable educational, discipleship and fundraising element in the one ministry of the Methodist Church, and continues to be integrated into the Church's ministry among children both inside and outside the Church."

JMA has enthused children and young people in World Church and Global Justice Issues. Many have then offered for service in these areas.

We ask the Conference of 2014 to direct that specific resources be identified to ensure the valuable work of JMA will continue.

### **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M22.*

### **M25 JMA**

The Southampton District Synod (R) (Present: 122; Voting: 115 for, 0 against) thankfully recognises the role JMA has played in enthusing children and young people in World Church and Global Justice issues. Many of them will have gone on to offer themselves for service in these areas. As a Church we need to offer our children and young people the same wider vision of God's world today.

We believe the continued resourcing and development of JMA is essential to allow this to happen. We ask the Conference to accept this memorial.

### **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M22.*

## **M26 JMA**

The Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District Synod (R) (Present: 105; Voting: unanimous) is grateful for the work done by the One Mission Working party. The Synod celebrates the work done by JMA over many years and is glad to see the proposed new SO 1003 which encourages the continuing development of this work. It also notes the responsibilities of the Connexional Team which will result from the adoption of the Working Party's report.

The Synod requests that JMA be an explicitly identified part of this responsibility, leading to the production of resources to enable Districts, Circuits and Churches to fulfil their role.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Chester and Stoke District Synod for its passion and commitment to this important area of ministry with children and young people. The reply to memorial M22 outlines existing work by the Connexional Team which supports JMA through the development of resources which support work in local churches, Circuits and Districts.

The Conference supports the addition of support for JMA to the responsibilities of the Connexional Team as set out in paragraphs 21 and 22 of the One Mission report, p338 of the Agenda, and refers the memorial to the Methodist Council for any further consideration that may be required as it considers the work plan of the Connexional Team.

## **M27 TMCP**

The Plymouth and Exeter District Synod (R) (Present: 96; Voting: 90 for, 0 against) recognises and values the important work carried out by Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) on behalf of the Methodist Church. However we remain concerned that the excessive workload on legal officers leads to long delays in processing even urgent requests for permission, for example to lease part of a property to tenants. Such delays threaten the financial viability and mission of local churches. We request the Conference to:

- direct that sufficient resources be deployed with TMCP to deal with the workload, and that appropriate service and delivery standard are set and monitored to ensure that churches needing permission from TMCP can operate in what is a competitive and fast moving marketplace.
- direct that leases conforming to standard conditions imposed by TMCP do not require further permission from the custodian trustees provided that the managing trustees use the services of a suitably qualified solicitor to draw up the lease on behalf of the Methodist Church.
- clarify the nature of the authority of the Methodist Council in imposing additional legal restrictions which are not approved by the Conference.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Plymouth and Exeter Synod for the memorial and the concern which it expresses.

The Conference has no power to direct either the Board or staff of TMCP either in terms of budget provision or operational matters. However the Methodist Church Fund does, through the Central Services Budget, contribute 35% of the staff costs of the legal team and therefore members of the Connexional Team regularly engage with the Chief Executive of TMCP about the use of financial resources, the services which TMCP provides on behalf of the Team and any concerns which from time to time may be raised with the Team about the timescale within which TMCP is able to operate. The Conference notes that members of the Connexional Team have raised with the Chief Executive a number of recent concerns about response times and have been assured that the implementation of a new staffing structure for the legal team, which is being introduced with the support of the Board, is expected to significantly improve the service TMCP can provide. The Conference further notes that over the last five years TMCP has increased its investment

in the provision of legal services to reflect the growing expectations on the part of many managing trustee bodies. The Conference is assured that the Board takes its responsibilities seriously and will ensure that the new plans are implemented effectively.

The Conference underlines the need for certain standard conditions in leases as the most effective way of protecting the long term interests of managing trustees. The experience of TMCP both when it is acting on behalf of the Connexional Team and when it fulfils its duty as Custodian Trustee is that standard clauses of a lease which are designed to reflect the particular requirements of the Model Trust are frequently omitted or incorrectly applied. Experience makes clear that the number of solicitors who pay detailed attention to the precise requirements of the Model Trusts and Standing Orders is such that the checking of leases continues to be required in line with Standing Order 931(3) where TMCP are acting on behalf of the Team and not as Custodian Trustee. The Conference therefore declines to alter this condition.

Regarding the final point in the memorial, the Methodist Council acts to take policy decisions when members of the Connexional Team discover that no existing direction of the Conference or the Council covers a specific issue. The Council then reports its actions to the Conference.

### **M28 Access to data collection processes**

The Epworth and Scunthorpe (17/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 65; Voting: unanimous) expresses its extreme concern that the Connexional Team has introduced new methods of data collection without full and sufficient advance notice, and without consideration for those fellowships that may not have the access, nor the skills, to be able to provide the data over the internet. This relates especially to the consequences of the annual property returns initiated in 2013, where many local churches felt demeaned and regarded as something less than partners in a united Church.

We request that the Connexional Team makes changes to procedures only when fully aware of the demands put upon fellowships, particularly those in rural areas and those at the older end of the age scale, and the consequent adverse effect upon finding people willing to hold office. The consequence of such decisions is to put unnecessary pressure on the Circuit to employ competent persons to complete the data returns and fulfil other administrative duties, detracting from the mission of the Church and diverting funds. It also threatens the continued existence of some churches, not due to lack of funds or congregation, but because there are no members who are willing to take on offices within the Church that require such a level of technical expertise.

Will the Connexional Team please give this assurance? Will it enable a paper alternative to be available?

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Epworth and Scunthorpe Circuit Meeting for its memorial, and recognises the challenges faced by many in completing the annual returns. It acknowledges the hard work put in across the Connexion, frequently by volunteers over many years, to the care and maintenance of the Church's properties.

The Conference of 2012, in response to memorial M41 reiterated its commitment to the effective collection of data in order to further mission. The move to online annual returns is seen by many as the natural next step in this process and is designed specifically to facilitate more effective maintenance and use of buildings for mission. The data collected from managing trustees is stored in one central database for use by those with oversight of properties at circuit and district levels. There is no benefit to the Connexional Team of collecting data centrally and electronically; rather it has facilitated the introduction of the online system in order to provide the maximum amount of information to enable informed decisions to be taken locally. The system enables Church Councils, Circuit Meetings and District Property Secretaries to more efficiently fulfil the requirements of Standing Orders 941(iii), 941(vi), 953 and 964.

The design and implementation of the online system was driven by a reference group of volunteers drawn from across the Connexion that worked with Team staff in order to ensure that the system was suitable for use by managing trustees. The initial launch of the system was widely advertised as being at the Resourcing Mission Forum in May 2013, where district representatives were able to 'try out' the pilot system alongside Team staff.

The work of the reference group did not cease with implementation; it has met to review the operation of the system in 2013 so that improvements can be made ahead of the 2014 cycle in response to comments from users across the Connexion. There has been an additional opportunity for further feedback at the Resourcing Mission Forum in May 2014. There will be a similar review in early 2015 to ensure that there is constant learning from users in order to deliver maximum benefit to trustees across the Connexion.

Mindful of the challenge for some of utilising web-based systems, the annual returns process utilises exactly the same web portal, layout and structure as the consents, circuit profiles and statistics for mission websites. This was a conscious decision to ensure that local trustees only need to become familiar with one site and that through regular use they would gain more confidence in using it. In SO 930 the Conference has already determined that consent must be obtained electronically from Districts for the purchase or disposition of Model Trust property – using the same system to collect annual returns data is a progression on this.

The Conference recognises that there are particular challenges with the move to an online system. A number of Circuits and Districts have made arrangements to support churches lacking the facilities to undertake the returns electronically themselves and the Conference encourages such measures where required. The provision of standing data from one year to the next means that completing the online forms will in many cases be significantly quicker than using paper forms which always have to be started from scratch. Facility remains for some connexional processes, such as the annual statistics for mission returns and gift aid claims to be conducted on paper forms available from the Connexional Team.

The paper schedules themselves were not universally popular, with one of the prime complaints being the amount of work needed to access the data they contain. Online schedules have been introduced partly as a solution to this problem. One of the unforeseen effects of the change has been that it has highlighted the large number of churches that had not been complying with standing orders regarding Property Schedules, which the Conference sees as a positive step.

The electronic collection of annual returns is designed to provide easy access to the information collected to those with oversight of property at circuit and district levels. The Conference believes that this is an efficient and effective means by which the proper care of property and its use in mission can be monitored in accordance with Standing Orders, and so declines the memorial.

## **M29 Access to data collection processes**

The Cannock Chase (28/08) Circuit Meeting (Present: 53; Voting: 51 for, 0 against) is concerned that the Connexional Team is introducing new methods of data collection without sufficient advance notice and without consideration for those fellowships that may not have access nor the skills to be able to provide the data over the internet.

We request that the Connexional Team provides an alternative means for collecting the data, such as a complete, printable form that could be input at a later stage. There will still be a requirement to seek a suitably competent person to do this. The Connexional Team should recognise the demands being put upon fellowships, particularly those in rural areas and those at the older end of the age scale and the effect upon finding people willing to hold office. It has been most difficult prior to the current changes. We believe this puts unnecessary pressure on the Circuit to employ competent persons to complete the data returns and fulfil other administrative duties, detracting from the mission of the church and diverting funds. It may also mean that some local churches may close, not due to lack of funds or congregation, but because there are

no members who are willing to take on offices within the church that require such a level of technical expertise.

### **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M28.*

### **M30 Access to data collection processes**

The Erewash Valley (22/20) Circuit Meeting (Present: 19; Voting: unanimous) recognises the importance of information technology in the work of the Church, including the use of online submission of information. The Circuit Meeting regrets that the new system for the online submission of Property Schedules was introduced without sufficient time for preparation at local church level. The Circuit Meeting requests the Conference to direct the Connexional Team that whenever IT changes are required the Team should ensure that all the information is in the hands of the Circuits by the end of January prior to implementation in September, to allow time for the recruitment and training of those who will use the system in the Circuits and local churches.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Erewash Valley Circuit Meeting for affirming the importance of information technology in the work of the Church. It acknowledges the time and work put in by many across the Connexion when new systems are implemented. The Conference understands that every attempt is made to provide the degree of notice that this memorial requests. It agrees that as far as is possible information should reach Circuits by the end of January prior to implementation in September, whilst acknowledging that there will be occasions where circumstances prevent this.

**M31** The Amber Valley (22/14) Circuit Meeting (Present: 48; Voting: 44 for, 0 against)

*This memorial was received with the same text as M30. The Conference adopts the same reply.*

**M32** The Derbyshire Dales (22/25) Circuit Meeting (Present: 18; Voting: unanimous)

*This memorial was received with the same text as M30. The Conference adopts the same reply.*

### **M33 Access to church resources**

The United North East (13/4) Circuit Meeting (Present: 32; Voting: unanimous) expresses its concern that the only access to Conference materials – forms and schedules in particular – is online. Not all churches have people who have access to the internet and as a result are unable to access this material. We urge the Conference to ensure that all materials are also available via postal and telephone services.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the United North East Circuit Meeting for its memorial. It notes that facilities remain for some connexional processes, such as the annual statistics for mission returns and gift aid claims, to be conducted on paper forms available from the Connexional Team. On the specific issue of online annual returns, the Conference refers the Circuit Meeting to its reply to memorial M28 to this Conference.

### **M34 Standardised job descriptions**

The Southend and Leigh (34/10) Circuit Meeting (Present: 46; Voting: 36 for, 1 against), being aware of the requirement in the new safeguarding materials and training for there to be job descriptions or role outlines for church officers, and children's and youth workers, asks the Conference to direct the relevant

connexional officers to prepare templates for such job descriptions and make these available on the Methodist Church website. Whereas we realise that the jobs will be church-specific, there should be sufficient similarities for sample job descriptions to be prepared. The benefit of this work being done centrally would be in reducing the duplication of effort in every church and Circuit throughout the Connexion.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Southend and Leigh Circuit Meeting for raising this issue and for reminding the Church of the importance of providing appropriate job descriptions for all lay employees and role outlines for volunteer office holders. It also reminds all trustees that whenever a lay person is employed under a contract of service by a District, Circuit or local body of the Church or Local Ecumenical Partnership this must be undertaken in accordance with Standing Orders 438A and 570.

In accordance with SO 438A(3) the Connexional Team has developed and maintains the Lay Employment Advisory Information pack which provides guidance on lay employment including the recruitment and selection process. Within the pack there are currently examples of job descriptions and person specifications for two typical posts.

The Conference agrees that in order to ensure legal compliance and employment best practice it would be helpful for churches and Circuits to work on an already prepared outline pro forma job description and person specification.

It also recognises that following the implementation of the *Safer Recruitment Policy* and *10 Steps Procedure for All Recruitment* there is a need to develop further guidelines and provide job description templates that will specifically relate to children, youth and families work. This would also include role outline templates for volunteers, line managers and management groups.

The Conference therefore directs the Methodist Council to ensure that the Connexional Team develops such guideline templates, noting that template job descriptions for lay employees should be incorporated into the Lay Employment Advisory Information pack update in October 2015, and template role outlines for voluntary role made available through the Methodist Church website by the same time.

### **M35 Covenants of Care**

The Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod (R) (Present: 125; Voting: 124 for, 0 against) expresses appreciation for the work undertaken by the staff with responsibilities for safeguarding in the Connexional Team. However we are concerned that, with the pressure of urgent cases, reviews of 'Covenants of Care' where offenders have cooperated with the arrangements for their participation in church activities, have taken an unreasonable amount of time to process.

The Synod calls upon the Conference to review the present arrangements and to create a method by which, using the experience and expertise in Districts, such reviews can be carried out within three months of Circuits requesting such a review.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod for its memorial. It notes the pressure of work in the Connexional Safeguarding Team as a result of dealing with urgent work.

The Conference notes that there is currently no established procedure for the review of Covenants of Care unless they have been set up by a Safeguarding Advisory Panel which has requested such a review. The Synod has helpfully alerted the Conference to the need for thought to be given to the establishment of

more formal arrangements for Covenants of Care. These might include a connexionally held register and a procedure for reporting and reviewing.

The Conference therefore refers this memorial to the Methodist Council and requests that the Council establishes a working group to review the arrangements for Covenants of Care and to formulate proposals. The working group should draw on the experience of the Safeguarding Advisory Panel and expertise within Districts, together with lessons learnt from the Past Cases Review, which is due to report to the 2015 Conference. The Conference requests that the Council report the conclusions of this review to the Conference no later than 2017.

### **M36 Mission Alongside the Poor**

The Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod (R) (Present: 125; Voting: 124 for, 0 against) welcomes the call from the January meeting of the Methodist Council for a review of the Mission Alongside the Poor Programme. Facing as we do the level of deprivation being experienced by the poorest 20% of the population, evidenced in part by the demand for the services of foodbanks, we call upon the Conference to reinvigorate this programme, perhaps under a new name.

We further call upon the Conference to set a target of raising half a million pounds for the Mission Alongside the Poor Fund over the next three years, and additionally utilising connexional resources to thereby provide funds that will enable churches to develop services to respond to the present crisis.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod for its memorial, and for affirming the Church's solidarity alongside people and communities experiencing poverty in Britain.

The Mission Alongside the Poor programme is administered by the Connexional Grants Committee (CGC) from the Mission in Britain Fund under SO 213B. Since 2010 the Mission in Britain budget available to the Connexional Grants Committee has been reduced, and individual grants made under the MAP Programme have necessarily been capped at £30,000.

At the instigation of the CGC, the Conference has been asked by the Methodist Council to consider a proposed review of the Mission Alongside the Poor programme. The review would examine the aims and objectives of the programme, its scope, scale, name and nature, together with the budget and grant-making framework in order to ensure that the programme continues at a meaningful level in relation to the actual and potential demand. It is proposed that this review will make recommendations to the Conference no later than 2016.

The reply to the memorial is therefore contained within the resolutions of the Conference on the Methodist Council report.

In addition, the Conference adopted a target of raising half a million pounds over the next three years specifically for the Mission Alongside the Poor programme (within the Mission in Britain Fund) alongside the proposed review to be undertaken by the Methodist Council.

### **M37 Mission Alongside the Poor**

The Nottingham and Derby District Synod (R) (Present: 143; Voting: 140 for, 0 against) is grateful to the church leaders from Methodism and our ecumenical partners, as well as the Joint Public Issues Team, who have spoken out strongly in the press against the cuts in the welfare budget and changes in its administration, which have led to hunger and destitution in our country.

We feel that this is a justice issue to which the Methodist people should be fully committed and we ask the Conference to address this by raising the profile of the Mission Alongside the Poor Fund.

## Reply

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M36.*

### **M38 Investing in fossil fuels**

The West London Mission (35/2) Circuit Meeting (Present: 24; Voting: 16 for, 1 against) draws the Conference's attention to:

- The Methodist commitment to take seriously our Christian responsibility to care for the planet and address climate change (outlined in *Hope in God's Future*, 2009).
- The overwhelming scientific evidence of the damage being done to the planet through the burning of fossil fuels, which is already being experienced around the world, often affecting poorer nations most.
- The huge reserves held by gas, oil and coal extraction companies that far exceed what can be safely burned in order to hold global warming below the internationally agreed level of two degrees Celsius.
- The significant proportion of the Methodist Church's UK Equity Fund that remains invested in major fossil fuel companies.

And asks the Methodist Conference to:

- (a) Ensure that the stated commitment outlined in *Hope in God's Future* to take urgent and immediate steps to reduce carbon emissions includes a continued review of policy on investment of church funds.
- (b) Request the Central Finance Board to review its ethical investment policy position on climate change.
- (c) Request the Central Finance Board to actively explore opportunities for alternative investment in clean, renewable energy and other low-carbon technologies.

## Reply

The Conference welcomes this memorial from the West London Mission Circuit Meeting.

The Conference Statement *Hope in God's Future* calls on local churches, regional structures and national church institutions to audit and reduce emissions in line with the overall reductions necessary within the UK of 80% by 2050 and acknowledges that "Church policy in many areas, including the investment of church funds, will need to be reviewed in the light of this commitment".

The Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church (CFB), advised by the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) responded to this Conference Statement with the introduction of a policy to guide investment response to climate change. This policy is available on the CFB website. The policy seeks to ensure that the carbon footprint of Methodist Church investments is relatively low and measurably declining over time and also guides the CFB and JACEI in their dialogue with companies to urge action on the reporting and reducing of carbon emissions.

In accordance with the climate change investment policy the CFB has introduced measures to assess carbon emissions related to the investment portfolio. Independent analysis of the CFB UK Equity Fund indicates that it had a carbon footprint 12% lower than that of the FTSE All Share Index in 2013 and has fallen 17% per unit over the past four years. The CFB is active in investing in clean, renewable energy and other low-carbon technologies. A report on other initiatives and discussion of the call to divest from fossil fuels can be found in the 2014 JACEI annual report ([www.methodist.org.uk/JACEI](http://www.methodist.org.uk/JACEI)).

While the CFB climate change policy does not explicitly address the coal, oil and gas extraction sectors or the potential for positive investment in clean, renewable energy and other low-carbon technologies it

nevertheless provides an overall framework for specific guidance to be developed. In the past year JACEI has advised the CFB in relation to policy on electricity generation; this advice is also available on the CFB website. Among its recommendations is the conclusion that “the building of new unabated coal-fired power stations in developed markets would entail emissions that would make the meeting of emissions reduction targets very difficult, and that such investment plans would be inconsistent with the teaching of the Methodist Church”.

The Conference directs the Methodist Council to ensure that JACEI undertake a review of the CFB climate change policy with specific reference to the oil, gas and coal extraction sectors and to provide the 2015 Conference with an update on progress. This review should include consideration of the ethical issues related to investment in coal, oil and gas extraction companies and investment in clean, renewable energy and other low-carbon technologies. The memorial is therefore accepted.

### **M39 Investing in fossil fuels**

The Stratford and Evesham (5/15) Circuit Meeting (Present: 29; Voting: 25 for, 0 against) requests the Methodist Conference to:

- (a) ensure its stated commitment to reduce carbon emissions includes an urgent review of policy on the investment of church funds; and
- (b) encourage the Central Finance Board actively to explore options for investment in clean renewable energy and other low-carbon technologies, not least because these are increasingly likely to become a more secure and productive financial investment.

### **Reply**

The Conference notes the concerns of the Stratford and Evesham Circuit Meeting and commends the Circuit for registering its intention with the Eco-Congregation programme to be accredited as an Eco-Circuit. The Conference accepts the memorial and refers the Stratford and Evesham Circuit Meeting to its reply to memorial M38 on the same subject.

### **M40 Investing in fossil fuels**

The Bradford North (27/32) Circuit Meeting (Present: 52; Voting: 29 for, 7 against) requests the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church to disinvest in firms whose main purpose is the extraction of fossil fuels from the earth.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Bradford North Circuit Meeting for its memorial. It notes the significance of this request and also notes the position outlined by the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) on this issue in its 2014 annual report ([www.methodist.org.uk/JACEI](http://www.methodist.org.uk/JACEI)). The Conference directs JACEI to support the CFB in a review of investment policy in this respect, but without prejudice to a specific commitment to disinvest. The Conference therefore declines the memorial but directs the Bradford North Circuit Meeting to its reply to memorial M38.

### **M41 Investing in fossil fuels**

The Leicester (North) (23/8) Circuit Meeting (Present: 24; Voting: 15 for, 8 against) asks the Conference to request the Central Finance Board to conduct a full review of its ethical investment policy on climate change with the aim of including an explicit commitment to disinvest from companies involved in the extraction of coal as soon as possible, then seeking to disinvest from gas and oil. We also urge the CFB to explore options for investment in clean alternatives to fossil fuels and positive solutions to environmental and social issues.

## Reply

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M40.*

### **M42 Investing in fossil fuels**

The Bristol District Synod (R) (Present: 90; Voting: 64 for, 10 against) draws the Conference's attention to:

- The Methodist commitment to take seriously our Christian responsibility to care for the planet and address climate change (outlined in *Hope in God's Future*, 2009).
- The overwhelming scientific evidence of the damage being done to the planet through the burning of fossil fuels, which is already being experienced around the world, often affecting poorer nations most.
- The huge reserves held by gas, oil and coal extraction companies that far exceed what can be safely burned in order to hold global warming below the internationally agreed level of 2 degrees Celsius.
- The large proportion of the Methodist Church's UK Equity Fund that remains invested in major fossil fuel companies.
- The urgent moral, scientific and financial imperative to withdraw investments from companies involved in extracting new reserves of gas, oil and coal as outlined in *Bright Now: towards fossil free Churches* (2013) plus other sources.

And asks the Methodist Conference to:

- (a) Ensure that the stated commitment outlined in *Hope in God's Future* to take urgent and immediate steps to reduce carbon emissions includes a continued review of policy on investment of church funds.
- (b) Request the Central Finance Board to review its ethical investment policy position on climate change to make an explicit commitment to disinvest from companies involved in the extraction of oil, coal and gas, as soon as possible.
- (c) Request the Central Finance Board to actively explore opportunities for alternative investment in clean, renewable energy and other low-carbon technologies.

## Reply

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M40.*

### **M43 Investing in fossil fuels**

The Lancashire District Synod (R) (Present: 115; Voting: 76 for, 19 against) requests the Methodist Conference to:

- (a) ensure its stated commitment to reduce carbon emissions includes an urgent review of policy on the investment of church funds;
- (b) urge the Central Finance Board to amend its ethical investment policy on climate change so that it disinvests from companies involved in the extraction of fossil fuels;
- (c) encourage the Central Finance Board actively to invest in clean renewable energy and other low-carbon technologies.

## Reply

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M40.*

### **M44 Climate change**

As climate change is arguably the most important issue facing the world, every effort must be made to urge our politicians to set out in their party manifestos clear steps to reduce UK carbon emissions and to ensure that stronger action is taken internationally. The Sheffield District Synod (R) (Present: 94; Voting: 80 for, 0 against) recognises that letters from individual constituents are a powerful tool and therefore enthusiastically supports the Hope for the Future campaign with its threefold programme of Prayer, Practice and Political Action ([www.hftf.org.uk](http://www.hftf.org.uk)). The Conference is urged to commend Hope for the Future to the Methodist people for urgent and persistent action, including contacting their MP and parliamentary candidates accordingly.

## Reply

The Conference thanks the Sheffield District Synod for this timely memorial.

The Conference has welcomed the introduction of the UK Climate Change Act but expressed its deep concern that the UK Government has not articulated a strategy for achieving the rapid decarbonisation of the economy implied by this legislation and commensurate with the challenge that we face (2009 Conference Agenda 10/1).

The Conference notes the concerns expressed by the independent parliamentary Committee on Climate Change over the delay of a decarbonisation target until 2016 and the current lack of clarity on the part of the UK Government with respect to the UK energy mix beyond 2020. The Chair of the Committee on Climate Change states that these have created uncertainty and contributed to a poor investment climate for clean affordable renewable technology.

The Joint Public Issues Team has set up a web page ([www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/issues/environment/UK-ambition-for-a-low-carbon-future/](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/issues/environment/UK-ambition-for-a-low-carbon-future/)) detailing the current position and actions that Methodists could take.

The Conference affirms the suggestion of the Sheffield District Synod that letters from individual constituents are a powerful tool in addressing this issue and commends Hope for the Future as a further resource for Methodist people.

## M45 Nestlé

The Lancashire District Synod (R) (Present: 115; Voting: 105 for, 0 against) wishes to draw attention to the fact that since 2006 Methodism has profited directly from a million pound investment in Nestlé. This company routinely violates baby milk marketing requirements internationally whilst claiming to be fully compliant with them.

The CFB have said (*Journeying Together*, 2007) “investment in Nestlé could provide an appropriate background for engagement with the company on this important issue” and that “JACEI will continue to monitor the performance of Nestlé, meet with senior executives and report to Methodist Conference.”

Whilst the CFB and JACEI undoubtedly excel in many areas, we are concerned that recent reports to the Conference in 2013 failed to clearly detail the actions or promises of action that meetings with Nestlé executives have brought about, given that the CFB has agreed that engagement with the company is an appropriate way to bring about change. We feel it is important at this stage that the Conference hears about any change in practice that our engagement as an investor has brought about. We are also concerned that JACEI failed to make reference in its report to the Conference in 2013 to recent and significant reports from Save the Children, UNICEF Lao and others which detail examples of aggressive marketing by Nestlé.

Lancashire District Synod recognises that Methodist members may be employed by Nestlé and may not be comfortable taking action. Nevertheless, it is our view that supporting Nestlé through investment is not bringing about the change in practice we should be expecting.

The Lancashire District Synod therefore respectfully requests the Conference to direct the CFB and JACEI to thoroughly review and to report upon the current position with regards to our investment with Nestlé, our hope of change in practice through engagement and to take into account independent reports from agencies such as Save the Children and UNICEF Lao who are reporting more fully on the practices of Nestlé around the world.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Lancashire District Synod for its memorial. In 2005 the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) stated its view that there was sufficient evidence from Nestlé of responsiveness to campaign pressure and investor dialogue to make engagement an appropriate approach for the Central Finance Board. In 2006, in a reply to a memorial from the Birmingham District Synod, the Conference directed JACEI to keep concerns related to Nestlé under review and to report to the Conference on meetings held with the company. Summaries of discussions with Nestlé have been reported to the Conference each year since and are available at [www.methodist.org.uk/mission/public-issues/ethical-investment/nestl%C3%A9-investments](http://www.methodist.org.uk/mission/public-issues/ethical-investment/nestl%C3%A9-investments).

One example of the influence that the Methodist Church has had as an investor is in persuading Nestlé to participate fully in the FTSE4Good process. This has independently verified Nestlé's performance in accordance with the FTSE4Good criteria for the marketing of breast milk substitutes. The verification process has so far been carried out in four countries by PricewaterhouseCoopers and the results have been published and disclosed. This process has resulted in further dialogue with the company at senior levels. Members of the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church and the Joint Public Issues Team have been represented on a panel of stakeholders convened to review this process.

JACEI has continued to assess the concerns related to the marketing of breast milk substitutes. Whilst reports of ongoing concerns are noted, JACEI does not consider that there is sufficient evidence to cause the conclusions arrived at by the 2006 Conference to be revisited.

JACEI has also engaged the company in discussion of a number of other areas including cocoa production and forced labour, water usage, the nutrition and wellness agenda, and human rights assessment.

The Conference accepts the suggestion of the Lancashire District Synod that a further report be brought by JACEI to the 2015 Conference that includes an account of reports from independent agencies such as Save the Children and UNICEF on Nestlé's performance in this area.

## **M46 Caste discrimination**

The Taunton Deane and South Sedgemoor (24/15) Circuit Meeting (Present: 25; Voting: unanimous) thanks the Conference for the work undertaken through World Church Partnerships to support those subject to poverty and injustice, and recognises and celebrates the current partnership between the Church in North India and Methodist Women in Britain.

We wish to express our deep concern over the inhuman system of caste discrimination – or as the UN describes it “discrimination through work and descent” – as practised in India, some other countries of South Asia and certain countries in Africa, as well as in the South Asian diaspora, including the UK, and affecting at least 300 million people worldwide.

We further wish to highlight the challenges facing the Adivasi (indigenous tribal) people through the effects of industrialisation on their homes, the forests, and their way of life.

We ask the Conference to consider restating its 2003 resolution, as a further formal response, by:

- publicly commending the legislation to date by the Indian Government to ameliorate the suffering of Dalit people – for example, the Prevention of Atrocities Act – but regretting that such measures often prove ineffective;
- expressing solidarity with the Church of North India, the Church of South India, the other Churches of South Asia, and the National Council of Churches of India, encouraging them to further challenge discrimination and to empower Dalit and Adivasi communities;
- reiterating the call by Dalit Christians and Muslims to be included in the reservation system for Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Presidential Order, August 1950, paragraph 3)
- working with organisations such as Dalit Solidarity Network UK and the International Dalit Solidarity Network, on encouraging the European Union and UN bodies, such as the Council for Human Rights, to raise caste discrimination at the international level;
- urging the Joint Advisory Committee for Ethical Investment and the Methodist Central Finance Board to promote the Ambedkar Principles and the Dalit Discrimination Check to companies investing in or supplied by a workforce in India;
- encouraging the Indian Government to strengthen their resolve to eradicate the degrading and inhuman system of manual scavenging (originally outlawed in 1972, a law reinforced in 2013), and to address the rehabilitation of the workers;
- expressing in the strongest terms, our concerns for women and girls, and the way in which they are discouraged or prevented from obtaining justice for crimes committed against them;
- encouraging the UK government to move with all speed to implement the law now passed to include caste as an aspect of race (activation of Clause 9(5)(a) in the Equality Act 2010).

## Reply

The Conference is grateful to the Taunton Deane and South Sedgemoor Circuit Meeting for the opportunity to reaffirm its support for efforts to end caste discrimination and bring justice to disadvantaged Dalit and Adivasi peoples, both in South Asia and elsewhere.

The Conference continues to support and value its partnerships with churches in South Asia. It is grateful for the work done by World Church Relationships to partner their efforts in support of justice in the region as well as in undertaking joint advocacy on those issues in the UK and Europe. The current three-year partnership between Methodist Women in Britain and the Church of North India is a significant development from those efforts as are other circuit and district partnerships. Other developments include the policy developed on caste discrimination by the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment as a guide for discussions with transnational companies that have significant operations in South Asia, and the establishment of the Churches Dalit Support Group which seeks to share good practice in individual congregational partnerships.

As it did in 2003, the Conference commends the efforts of the Indian Government on these matters, it also expresses its continuing solidarity with its partners, the Church of North India, the Church of South India and the National Council of Churches of India in their efforts for justice, including the million postcards campaign which seeks to restore the rights of Christian and Muslim Dalits in the reservation system.

The Conference accepts the memorial.

**M47** The Plymouth and Exeter District Synod (R) (Present: 96; Voting: 89 for, 1 against)

*This memorial was received with the same text as M46. The Conference adopts the same reply.*

**M48 Advertising of gambling and payday loans**

The Lancashire West (18/19) Circuit Meeting (Present: 29; Voting: unanimous) wishes to express its grave concern over the number of TV advertisements on prime time television encouraging people to play on

gambling and bingo websites and to take on payday loans with very high interest rates, which both can lead to families falling into serious debt. The Circuit Meeting requests the Conference to direct the Joint Public Issues Team to petition the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to introduce measures to restrict such advertising.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Lancashire West Circuit Meeting for highlighting the rise in advertising of gambling websites and payday loans. The Conference notes that these forms of advertising are increasing. Recent research by Ofcom shows that gambling accounted for 0.7% of all advertising spots across commercial television in 2006, which rose to 4.1% in 2012. Similarly, the proportion of payday loans adverts rose from 0.1% in 2008 to 1.2% in 2012. More information on the Joint Public Issues Team's work on gambling, including the advertising of gambling, can be found at [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/issues/social-issues/gambling/](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/issues/social-issues/gambling/).

The Conference agrees that encouraging gambling and high interest loans can have harmful social consequences, including unmanageable debt. It therefore accepts this memorial and directs that representations are made to the appropriate government departments and regulatory bodies to express the Conference's concerns.

### **M49 Israel and Palestine**

The Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District Synod (R) (Present: 115; Voting: 70 for, 32 against) believes that central to the Church's mission is a calling to be prophetic; to speak the word of God courageously, honestly and lovingly. The Church is called to be committed to the poor and oppressed.

It therefore urges Conference to:

- (a) embrace *Time for Action*, a British response to the Kairos Palestine document (*A Moment of Truth: a word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering*, prepared by leaders of the Churches in Jerusalem)
- (b) strengthen the Church's commitment to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) as a peaceful and effective method to persuade the State of Israel to end its military occupation of the Palestinian territories (pre-1967 Borders), which it has occupied since 1967, by applying BDS to Israel in addition to the illegal settlements (accepted by the Conference in 2010) until such time as Israel ends the occupation and abides by International law.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent Synod for its memorial. In response to (a) the Conference draws attention to the *Time for Action, A British response to the Kairos Palestine document* and notes that churches and individuals may wish to use it in their prayer, reflection, study and action.

The Conference notes that there is a separate report in the Conference Agenda regarding the arguments for and against the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and the reply to part (b) of the memorial is therefore contained within the resolutions of the Conference relating to that report.

### **M50 UKIP**

The Stoke-on-Trent (South) (11/20) Circuit Meeting (Present: 38; Voting: unanimous) requests that UKIP is included by name within the guidance already given by the Methodist Church in relation to the BNP; and that the criteria and procedure for booking the Methodist Central Hall are made more transparent and detailed, with clear guidelines.

## Reply

The Conference thanks the Stoke-on-Trent (South) Circuit Meeting for its memorial. The rise of political parties which promote racism or xenophobia has long been of concern to the Conference.

The 2010 Conference received a report in response to a Notice of Motion in 2009 "Racism is a denial of the Gospel". The Notice of Motion asked the Methodist Council to explore any changes needed to give effect to a resolution stating that membership of an organisation which promotes racism is inconsistent both with membership of the Methodist Church, and with employment which involves representing or speaking on behalf of the Methodist Church. This Conference report stated that the Methodist Church already has the constitutional framework to enact this policy, but recommended minor revisions to Standing Orders regarding the location of the statement that "racism is a denial of the gospel", and ensuring that membership preparation should include "an introduction to the doctrines, discipline and formal statements of the Methodist Church, including its belief that racism is a denial of the gospel".

A Resource Group on Countering Political Extremism has been established with the purposes of acting as a sounding board for the Church and to offer advice and resources on issues of political extremism. This group has offered encouragement to vote in elections, resources for churches and communities facing social or political extremism, and some resources for reflection and worship.

Recently it has undertaken a piece of work on the UK Independence Party. This is available at [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/politicalextrémism](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/politicalextrémism). This piece offers some pointers which local churches might choose to consider when looking at whether UKIP is a racist party. It suggests that some of the policies promoted by the party play on a negative, even xenophobic narrative, whilst recognising that UKIP is not the only political party to play to this. It also notes that UKIP appears to have a number of high profile candidates representing the party who have expressed views which are discriminatory or offensive in terms of religion, race or disability. Recent research has demonstrated that supporters of UKIP are often those who feel "left behind" by mainstream media and politics, and for whom precise policies are of secondary concern.

However we have not found any substantive evidence that UKIP is constitutionally racist in the way that other extremist political parties are, and so the Resource Group does not recommend that the Church is in the same place in terms of refusing to engage with them as other explicitly racist and extremist parties. The Conference also reminds churches which may be hosting hustings meetings in advance of elections of the requirements of electoral law as relates to the treatment of political parties. The Joint Public Issues Team will issue briefings in advance of the next General Election.

The memorial also asks that the criteria and procedures for booking Westminster Central Hall, be made more transparent and detailed. Westminster Central Hall (the conference centre) is a separate legal entity being a charitable company, Central Hall Westminster Ltd (CHWLtd). Its operations are overseen by the board of trustees which is appointed annually by the Conference. In the past year it has dealt with thousands of enquiries and run 1805 events: 66% relating to church or charity and 34% commercial. There is a clear protocol in place for accepting bookings. The ethical values by which CHWLtd operates ensure that Methodist Standing Orders are followed, as is investment advice which rules out bookings from companies operating in the alcohol, gambling or armament industries. Potentially controversial bookings are referred to the Superintendent, who often seeks wider advice, and then makes a decision based on guidelines for the use of premises. The consequence of this is that over the last year CHWLtd has turned down around £1,200,000 of business for ethical reasons. As the Trustees and CHWLtd already follow the decisions of the Conference with great care, it would seem unnecessary and inappropriate to ask for greater detail and transparency.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial, but encourages churches and Circuits to read the briefing from the Resource Group on Countering Political Extremism and to consider the questions raised and the implications for their area.

## **M51 Use of Methodist premises for political meetings**

In the light of the recent rise in popularity of some political parties which may have a detrimental effect on the peace and unity of the Church and its witness, the Harrow and Hillingdon (35/36) Circuit Meeting (Present: 42; Voting: 40 for, 0 against) requests the Faith and Order Committee to review SO 921, giving particular attention to clause (1) regarding the use of Methodist premises by political parties, and to report back to the Conference of 2015 with any amendments or changes to the current Standing Orders.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Harrow and Hillingdon Circuit Meeting for its memorial.

The Methodist Church has a long tradition of engaging with politics. As Standing Order 921(1) makes clear, such engagement must be non-party political. Many churches are involved in hosting hustings in advance of elections, and will ensure that the main parties are represented, in order to enable people in the church, and beyond, to engage with the political, ethical, economic and social issues of the day. Alongside that, other Methodist property is let to political parties for “occasional use”, such as party conferences, mentioned in the memorial. The Conference believes it is important to maintain our tradition of engagement with political affairs.

The Conference understands the concerns which lie behind the memorial. The reply to memorial M50 sets out the Methodist Church’s recent affirmation that “racism is a denial of the gospel” and the incompatibility of racist views with membership of the Methodist Church. The Resource Group on Countering Political Extremism, set up by the Conference, has produced a paper (available at [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/politicalextremism](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/politicalextremism)) examining the UK Independence Party. It looks at the policies and appeal of UKIP and recommends, for a number of reasons, that they should not be treated in the same way as racist and extremist parties.

With reference to SO 921(1) the paper asks:

Would hiring a room to UKIP (in this particular case, but arguably to other political parties) be detrimental to “the peace and unity of the Church and its witness”? If the question were being asked about the BNP, then the answer would be clear cut as the Methodist Conference and Council have made their minds known about racism. If concerns about UKIP are less clear cut, then the decision must, as it stands, be left to managing trustees, taking into account their own local situation. The managing trustees might wish to ask itself some of the following questions about any political letting:

- What is the reputation of the party, representative or candidate locally (eg have they made unpalatable statements with which the Church would not wish to be associated)?
- Are there measures which can be put in place to ensure that the Church cannot be seen as supporting this (or any) political party?
- Would the local congregation find the policies of the party particularly unacceptable or threatening?

The Conference therefore believes that the provisions of SO 921(1) are sufficient to deal with the concerns raised, and so declines the memorial.

## **M52 Same sex marriage**

The Birmingham District Synod (R) (Present: 95; Voting: 63 for, 25 against) requests that if the Conference decides that same sex marriages will be allowed, then it should apply the same policy, with permission of the local church or other registered building, to same sex marriages as it currently does to the remarriage of divorcees.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District Synod for its memorial.

The Synod is asking the Conference to declare that if (with the Conference's consent) a local church decides to register for the solemnisation of same sex marriages, then – as in cases where one or both parties has been divorced – no authorised person would be obliged to perform such ceremonies, but an authorised person who is not prepared to perform the ceremony would be under a duty to refer the couple to somebody who would.

The Conference has considered the report of the Working Party on Marriage and Civil Partnerships. The reply to the memorial is therefore contained within the resolutions of the Conference on that report.