

VOLUMES
1, 2 and 3



Agenda

The Conference 2023

Presbyteral and Representative Sessions

By direction of the Conference, this Agenda has been sent by post
to each member of the Representative Session.

The President and Vice-President confidently appeal to all representatives
to join, as far as they possibly can, in all the devotions of the Conference.

Chaplains will be available throughout the Conference.

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Conference Rules of Procedure

The rules governing the procedures of the Conference are set out in the following Standing Orders.

130 Introductory.

The rules of debate comprising the clauses of Standing Order 131 shall regulate the proceedings of the Conference, except that since much of the business of the Conference may be conducted in the form of conversations clauses (3) and (9) to (14) shall apply only when a formal resolution is under consideration.

131 Rules of Debate.

(1) In this Standing Order 'the President' means the person presiding for the time being over the Conference in accordance with the provisions of clause 28 of the Deed of Union.

(1A) Any member who wishes to speak shall catch the President's eye but shall not proceed further until called upon by the President.

(2) Every speaker shall address the President.

(3) No member may speak more than once on the same question without leave of the Conference, except in the exercise of a right of reply under clause (18) below. For this purpose an amendment or procedural motion raises a fresh question.

(4) (a) Subject to sub-clause (b) below every resolution or amendment shall be circulated beforehand in writing in the Agenda, or by other form of official report, or by notice of motion.

(b) Sub-clause (a) does not apply:

(i) to procedural motions under clause (11) below or resolutions to extend sittings of the Conference beyond the time already determined;

(ii) to resolutions submitted by the Law and Polity Sub-committee under clause (25) below;

(iii) to business taken in closed session;

(iv) to further amendments moved after a resolution has already been amended;

(v) where the Conference has dispensed with circulation under clause (19)(a)(ii) below or Standing Order 129(4)(b) or 129A or otherwise;

(vi) if the President judges it necessary for the effective conclusion of a debate to admit a resolution or amendment without prior notice.

(c) Where sub-clause (b) applies, except by virtue of head (i), the resolution or amendment shall be produced in writing when proposed, and immediately handed to the Secretary.

(5) Every resolution or amendment, except a resolution moved on behalf of a body authorised to report to the Conference, requires to be seconded in order to be submitted to the Conference. With the same exception, all movers and seconders of resolutions or amendments must be members of the Conference.

Conference Rules of Procedure

- (6) Persons presenting reports may speak to the resolutions in them and may give information on any development of major importance which has arisen since publication. Otherwise reports circulated in the Agenda or otherwise shall be presented without introductory speeches.
- (7) When a resolution or amendment has been duly submitted it may not be withdrawn without the leave of the Conference.
- (8) The seconder of a resolution or amendment may reserve the right to speak.
- (9) (a) Any amendment of the terms of a resolution may be proposed if it is relevant to the subject-matter of the resolution, unless the same result could be achieved by the rejection of the resolution.
- (b) If an amendment is carried the resolution as amended becomes the substantive motion, and as such may itself be amended under this clause.
- (c) When an amendment has been duly submitted no other amendment may be moved until it has been disposed of, but any member may give notice of a proposed amendment and may state whether it is to be moved in any event or if not in what circumstances.
- (10) A resolution may be disposed of by adoption (with or without amendment), rejection or withdrawal. Until it has been so disposed of no other resolution may be submitted except a procedural motion.
- (11) The following are procedural motions, which may be adopted by the Conference at any time:
- (i) that the vote be now taken;
 - (ii) that the question be not put;
 - (iii) that the question be referred to the Methodist Council or a committee;
 - (iv) that the debate be adjourned;
 - (v) that the Conference adjourn.
- (12) If a resolution and amendment are before the Conference:
- (i) a motion that the vote be now taken relates only to the amendment;
 - (ii) a motion that the question be referred or that the debate be adjourned relates to both;
 - (iii) a person moving that the question be not put must state whether that motion relates to both or only to the amendment.
- (13) A motion that the vote be now taken requires a majority of two thirds and shall be voted upon without discussion, but the President shall not be bound to put it to the vote if of the opinion that there has not been adequate opportunity for necessary debate.
- (14) A motion that the question be not put may be discussed concurrently with the question to which it relates.
- (15) A motion that the debate be adjourned may specify the time of resumption or be a motion for adjournment to a time to be resolved upon later.
- (16) A motion for the adjournment of the Conference shall specify the time of resumption.

(17) (a) Subject to any Standing Order relating specifically to particular forms of report a report contained in the Agenda or in a document supplemental to the Agenda shall be dealt with as a whole or as to each part by a resolution in one of the following forms:

- (i) that it be referred back to the reporting body or referred to the Methodist Council or a committee;
- (ii) that it be received;
- (iii) that it be adopted.

(b) A resolution in any of these forms may contain or be accompanied by directions as to the publication or study of or any other action in relation to the report or (where appropriate) that no action be taken.

(c) Except as provided in (d) below or expressed in the resolution itself, no such resolution imports any endorsement by the Conference of any statement, opinion or recommendation in the report.

(d) By adopting a report the Conference endorses its recommendations or conclusions but not (without so stating) any reasons given for them.

(e) The Conference may qualify or limit any such adoption but shall not alter the text of any report except:

- (i) to rectify any manifest factual error; or
- (ii) to amend the terms of any passage which it is asked to endorse (whether expressly or by the operation of (d) above).

(f) The Conference may on a single motion deal en bloc with more than one resolution attached to a report, or with the resolutions to more than one report, but whenever:

- (i) an amendment is proposed to any such resolution; or
- (ii) there is a procedural motion under clause (11) above which in its original form or by a proposed amendment relates to less than all the matters before the Conference;

any matters which require to be put separately shall be so put.

(18) (a) When a vote falls to be taken, whether or not by the adoption of a motion under clause (11)(i) above, the following persons have a right to speak, and if more than one in the following order:

- (i) the seconder of the resolution or amendment to be put, if he or she has reserved the right to speak and has not already exercised that right;
- (ii) the mover of the substantive resolution, unless the question to be put is an amendment to which he or she has already spoken;
- (iii) if the question to be put is an amendment, the mover of the amendment.

(b) The person entitled to speak last under sub-clause (a) above may deal only with questions or arguments put during the debate.

(c) Before putting the question the President shall call the Conference to order and read the resolution or amendment to be put. Except on a point of order no member shall speak after the question has been put until the vote has been taken.

(19) (a) Subject to sub-clause (b) below, no decision of the current meeting of the

Conference Rules of Procedure

Conference may be rescinded except by substantive resolution, and no such resolution shall be adopted unless either:

- (i) it is submitted on behalf of the Law and Polity Sub-Committee under clause (25) below; or
- (ii) it is moved upon notice in writing previously given and officially circulated (unless by a majority of two thirds the Conference has dispensed with notice) and obtains a majority of two thirds.

For the purposes of this sub-clause a resolution rescinds a previous resolution if, and only if, it is expressed to do so, or it directly reverses the previous resolution, or the President rules that in substance it is inconsistent with the intention of the Conference in adopting the previous resolution.

(b) Any resolution which, on the advice of the financial committee given in accordance with Standing Order 136A, would result in amendment of the provisions of the connexional budget for the Methodist Church Fund proposed under Standing Order 212(2) shall, if moved after the budget has been adopted, require a majority of two thirds, and, if carried, shall have the effect of amending the Conference's resolution on the budget without the operation of sub-clause (a) above.

(20) A resolution to suspend a rule of debate or other provision within the Conference rules of procedure, as contained in Standing Orders 122, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134(3) and (4), 134A, 136(2C) and 136A(3) requires a majority of two thirds.

(21) The President shall call to order any speaker who departs from the question or violates the courtesies of debate.

(22) Any member may raise a point of order on the ground that the rules of debate or regulations of the Conference have been violated. The speaker then addressing the Conference shall give way until the point of order has been decided. The President decides all questions of order.

(23) (a) The following interventions in the ordinary course of business may occur, but only for substantial cause and by leave of the President:

- (i) a member who thinks himself or herself misrepresented may interrupt the speaker to correct the misrepresentation;
- (ii) a member may interrupt the speaker or intervene at the end of a speech to ask of the speaker a question of fact immediately connected with what is being or has been said;
- (iii) brief information on uncontested matters of fact germane to the business of the Conference may be given between speeches or between items of business.

(b) A member permitted to intervene under this clause must not enter into argument nor speak to the merits of the question.

(24) Questions which relate to the rights and privileges of the Conference or of individual members, or to the order of business, have precedence.

(25) The Conference may at any time entertain without notice any resolution moved on

behalf of the Conference Sub-Committee of the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity which arises out of an earlier resolution of the current meeting of the Conference, in that or an earlier session, and which seeks:

- (i) to make consequential provisions; or
- (ii) to amend the earlier resolution for the purpose only of – clarification, or reconciliation with the requirements of the law or of Methodist polity, or the avoidance of unintended results, or the better achievement of the intention of the Conference, or the correction of factual error, or any other purpose considered by the Conference to be within the scope of the functions of the Law and Polity Committee; or
- (iii) to rescind the earlier resolution on the ground of illegality, irregularity or impossibility or any other ground considered by the Conference to be within the scope of the above functions.

(25A) The Conference may also entertain any resolution contained in the report of the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity which arises out of a resolution of an earlier Conference and which seeks:

- (i) to amend the earlier resolution for a purpose within head (ii) of clause (25) above; or
- (ii) to rescind the earlier resolution on a ground within head (iii) of clause (25) above.

(26) The response of the Conference shall not normally be conveyed by clapping.

132 Notices of Motion.

(1) Subject to Standing Order 131(4) any two members may upon notice of motion complying with this Standing Order bring before the Conference any lawful resolution within the competence of the Conference.

(1A) Every notice of motion shall be handed to the Secretary in written form and signed by the following persons:

- (i) where the proposal is to amend a resolution and those responsible for presenting that business to the Conference are prepared to accept it, the proposer and seconder of the motion;
- (ii) where such a proposal to amend is not accepted by those responsible, the proposer and seconder and four other persons;
- (iii) in all other cases, the proposer and seconder and eight other persons.

(2) Only on matters of urgency, so judged by the President after consultation with the Vice-President, shall notices of motion in the Representative Session be accepted after 4:30pm on the third day of the session, except that a notice of motion proposing to amend a resolution circulated or materially altered on or after the first day of the session shall be accepted if lodged before the close of business on the day before the resolution is to be dealt with.

Conference Rules of Procedure

133 Memorials.

- (1) The Conference may adopt, with or without amendment, or reject any reply proposed by the Memorials Committee or (if Standing Order 134(4) applies) by its convener.
- (2) In relation to any one or more memorials to which replies have been proposed by the committee any two members of the Conference may, on notice of motion submitted on the first day of the relevant session, move that instead of dealing with the committee's proposed reply in the ordinary course of business the Conference shall debate a resolution based on the relevant memorials, and if such a motion is carried the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Conference shall make arrangements accordingly.
- (3) If there is a debate pursuant to Standing Order 138(5) or clause (2) above any resolution or amended resolution then adopted by the Conference is its reply to the relevant memorials.
- (4) Subject to clause (5) below the Conference shall reply to every memorial, although it is open to the Conference as its interim reply to refer the memorial to the Methodist Council or a committee for consideration and report. Rejection of a proposal that a memorial be declined is not itself a reply. It is the responsibility of the convener of the committee to ensure that if the Conference rejects the proposed reply of the committee under clause (1) above or fails to adopt any resolution under clause (3) above consideration of the matter is not closed until a reply has been adopted.
- (5) The committee may recommend that the Conference instead of replying to a memorial refer the questions raised to Synods and/or to Circuit Meetings for consideration or action without itself expressing a judgment on the substance of the issue. In such a case, the committee shall recommend whether Synods and Circuit Meetings are to report their conclusions to the Conference and, if so, a timetable for such report.

134 District Resolutions.

- (1) Resolutions and reports submitted under Standing Order 419(2) in due time shall be printed in the Agenda. If a report is included the cost of printing shall be a charge on the District.
- (2) [revoked]
- (3) Such resolutions shall be moved and seconded in the Conference by representatives of the District and shall, subject to any recommendation from the Business Committee, be debated.
- (4) If it appears likely to the Business Committee that the Conference will not, in the time available, be able to debate all such resolutions adequately, it may recommend to the Conference that one or more of such resolutions be dealt with instead as memorials. If the Conference adopts such a recommendation, the convener of the Memorials Committee shall, after such consultation as he or she thinks appropriate, frame a proposed reply, which shall be printed for the Conference in an order paper.

134A En Bloc Business.

(1)(a) The Business Committee shall consider, taking into account the recommendations of the Memorials Committee made under Standing Order 138(5A), which resolutions to which sub-clause (b) of this Standing Order applies are unlikely to become provisional resolutions or to give rise to opposition or debate or to require amendment other than within sub-clause (e) below. It shall, no later than the opening of the Representative Session, table a list of such resolutions with notice of its intention to invite the Conference in due course to adopt all such resolutions en bloc.

(b) This clause applies to all resolutions in the Agenda or otherwise circulated before the opening of the Conference except those for the confirmation of provisional resolutions, or for the adoption or confirmation of special resolutions under Standing Order 126, and except resolutions relating to Conference Statements under Standing Order 129.

(c) Subject to sub-clause (e) below any resolution, including any recommended reply to a memorial, which becomes the subject of an amending notice of motion shall be removed from the list. In addition, by giving notice to the Secretary of the Conference in writing before the close of business on the third day of the Representative Session, any six members of the Conference may, without proposing an amendment, require any item or items, except a recommended reply to a memorial, to be removed from the list. The Business Committee itself shall be free at any time before the resolutions are moved to remove any item or items from the list.

(d) The resolutions remaining in the list shall not earlier than the fourth day of the Representative Session be moved en bloc and voted upon without discussion.

(e) A need to make minor corrections to the text of any resolution on the list shall not necessitate its removal, and it may be moved under sub-clause (d) above as corrected. The Business Committee shall decide all questions as to the application of this sub-clause.

(2) The Business Committee may also advise, in the exercise of its functions under Standing Order 136(2A)(c), that such resolutions based upon the recommendations of reference groups as it considers appropriate for such procedure should also be moved en bloc and voted upon without discussion. Sub-clause (1) c) shall apply to the removal of any resolution from that procedure, provided the notice is duly given before the close of business on the day upon which such advice is circulated to the Conference.

135 Closed Sessions.

(1) The Conference may at any time meet in closed session and shall do so when hearing any appeal arising out of any charge within Part 11.

(2) [revoked]

(3) During any closed session other than one for the hearing of an appeal within Part 11 no one may be present except members of the Conference entitled to vote on the business under consideration and any other persons or classes of persons whom the Conference may for the time being resolve to admit.

Conference Rules of Procedure

136 Conference Business Committee.

(1) There shall be a Business Committee for the Representative Session of the Conference, consisting of:

- (i) an ex-President or ex-Vice-President, appointed by the previous Conference upon the nomination of the Methodist Council to serve for a period of three years, who shall chair the committee and who shall, whether or not a member in any other capacity, be a member of the Conference during the period of appointment; and
- (ii) three ministerial and three lay members of the Conference elected in accordance with clause (1A) or appointed under clause (1C).

The Secretary and assistant secretary of the Conference shall be in attendance but without a vote and a connexional Treasurer and the connexional Press Officer shall attend as consultants when required.

(1A) Where there will be a vacancy in the elected membership of the committee for the next Conference, an election shall be held after nomination by members of the current Conference. Each nomination shall be signed by a proposer and seconder. It shall contain the District and Circuit in which the person being nominated is stationed or is a member, current appointment or current offices within the church, age, occupation, and any other relevant information (up to fifteen words). No member shall nominate more than one person. In electing such members, the Conference shall consider the composition of the committee with regard to age, sex and ethnic origin. The election shall be by single transferable vote and the chair of the Business Committee or his or her representative shall be the returning officer. The returning officer shall declare the persons elected to serve, together with two persons in each category as reserves in the event of any person who received a higher number of votes, or a continuing member under clause (1B), not being a member of the next Conference or not being able or willing to attend. Such reserves shall serve for the period for which the person originally elected would have served and shall not be eligible for immediate re-election.

(1B) Committee members shall be elected for three years and shall not be eligible for immediate re-election. If an elected member is not a member of or is unable to attend the next ensuing or one of the subsequent Conferences the appointment shall lapse and the vacancy shall be filled in accordance with clause (1A) or (1C).

(1C) If it becomes clear during the course of the connexional year that there will be a vacancy on the committee which cannot be filled in accordance with the above provisions, the Methodist Council shall have the power to appoint a member from amongst the members of the next Conference. Such appointment shall be for that Conference only.

(2) The committee shall meet before and during the sessions of the Conference as may be necessary and shall have the following responsibilities:

- (i) to draw up the order of business in the Conference and to allocate time to each item;
- (ia) to identify the resolutions which it proposes shall be moved en bloc under

Standing Order 134A;

(ii) to recommend to the Conference which notices of motion should be debated in the Conference and at what time, and which should be dealt with in some other way, and for what reason;

(iii) to review at the end of each day the business allocated to the day but not completed and to advise the Conference how it should be dealt with;

(iv) to recommend to the President and Vice-President items of business for which they might invite members of the Conference to indicate to the committee in advance a wish to speak, and to offer advice to the President and Vice-President so as to enable a representative range of views to be heard in any such debates;

(v) to identify matters which are appropriate to be dealt with through any of the processes set out in clause (2A) below and to make the necessary arrangements, including assigning the members of the Conference to such groups as may be required.

(2A) (a) The committee may arrange for matters of general concern, not being dealt with in the formal business of the Conference, to be discussed in workshops or similar groups and shall advise the Conference on the procedure by which any issues raised in those discussions may be taken forward.

(b) The committee may identify items of Conference business which, because of the detail involved or the complexity of the issues, can profitably be explored in depth in hearings or group discussion before being debated in full Conference, and may advise the Conference whether, and if so how, the results of such exploration are to be reported.

(c) The committee may advise that certain items in the business of the Conference be dealt with in reference groups, with the expectation that the recommendations of such groups will be dealt with by the Conference en bloc under Standing Order 134A(2). (2B) The committee may recommend that the Conference deal with any business by referring the questions raised to Synods and/or to Circuit Meetings for consideration or action without itself expressing a judgment on the substance of the issue. In such a case, the committee shall recommend whether Synods and Circuit Meetings are to report their conclusions to the Conference and, if so, a timetable for such reports.

(2C) The committee shall arrange for the budget for the Methodist Church Fund proposed by the Methodist Council under Standing Order 212(2) to be presented and considered not later than the fourth day of the Representative Session. The formal resolution for its adoption, and the consequent resolution as to the allocation to the respective Districts of the assessments, shall be moved on the final day of the Representative Session.

(3) All recommendations of the committee shall be reported daily to the Conference for approval or amendment. The person presiding shall have the power to limit the length of any debate on procedural questions arising from the committee's report.

Conference Rules of Procedure

136A Financial Committee.

(1) The Methodist Council, with a view to the discharge of its functions under Standing Orders 211(3)(vii) and 212(2) during the periods of the Conference, shall appoint a financial committee annually, consisting of the lead connexional Treasurer or his or her representative, the Connexional Secretary responsible for central services, three other members of the council who are also members of the Conference, together with such other members of the Connexional Team in an advisory capacity as the council may decide.

(2) The committee shall meet before and during the sessions of the Conference as necessary, shall identify all resolutions in the Agenda or otherwise circulated to the Conference which would have financial implications, other than those for which provision has already been made in the budget, and shall notify the Conference accordingly.

(3) In relation to all such resolutions which, if adopted, would result in increased costs the committee shall advise the Conference, prior to any debate or vote upon them,

(i) whether, if adopted, the costs can be accommodated within the Council's proposed budget;

(ii) if not, what additional resources are estimated to be required to carry them out, and the timescale within which the work might be started and completed;

(iii) whether the cost of the proposal, if adopted, should be substituted for some other item of expenditure, or treated as an addition, and, in the latter case, the source of the additional funds required;

(iv) if there are several such proposals before the committee, what priority should be given to each.

The committee's advice shall, except in emergencies, be conveyed to the Conference in writing.

122 Provisional Resolutions.

(1) If the Conference judges that any resolution which it has adopted is of such significance that it ought to be considered by the Synods and confirmed before coming into effect it may declare that it shall be a provisional resolution. If the resolution is being dealt with as shared business under clause 24(c) of the Deed of Union, such a declaration by the Conference in either of the sessions dealing with the business shall be effective.

(2) Notice shall be given of any motion for such a declaration either by means of a notice of motion which complies with Standing Order 132 or by the inclusion of a resolution to that effect in the report upon that business contained in the Agenda. Where notice is given before the adoption of the substantive resolution to which it relates the motion shall not be considered by the Conference until after such adoption.

(3) Provisional resolutions shall be submitted to the Synods of the home Districts and to the Law and Polity Committee, each of which may approve, disapprove or approve with amendments. Provisional resolutions shall be submitted for confirmation to the next

annual meeting of the Conference with a report of the opinions of the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee, and shall take effect only if then confirmed.

(4) The Conference may direct that the whole or some specified part of the text of any report leading to the adoption of a provisional resolution be submitted with it to the Synods. Unless it does so the Secretary of the Conference shall ensure that a brief summary of the arguments for and against the resolution and of the implications of adopting or declining it is prepared for the same purpose. The resolution and the above text or summary, as the case may be, shall be distributed by the district officers to all members of the Synod before its meeting. The district Policy Committee may arrange for such consultation within the District as it thinks fit before the Synod expresses its judgment.

(5) Provisional resolutions submitted to the Synods under clause (3) above shall be dealt with in their Representative Sessions and, if falling within one or more of the categories defined in heads (i), (ii) and (iii) of sub-clause 24(c) of the Deed of Union and dealt with under that clause, also in their Presbyteral Sessions.

(6) On receiving the reports of the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee upon a provisional resolution the Conference may confirm it unamended or may decline to confirm it, or may confirm it with amendments, and in the last event may, by the procedure of clauses (1) and (2) above, declare that the resolution as so amended shall itself be a provisional resolution.

NOTE: Throughout this Agenda, in amendments to the Deed of Union, Model Trusts and Standing Orders, matter to be deleted is usually shown ~~thus~~ and matter to be inserted **thus**. The surrounding text is printed to show the context of the proposed amendments, where this is not otherwise plain.

Foreword to the 2023 Conference Agenda

The Agenda of the 2023 Conference brings together a number of critical reports and recommendations that will affect the future of the Church. Behind each of the reports stands a considerable amount of work by the Council, committees, working parties, members of the Connexional Team, and willing and generous volunteers. Following each report there will be a considerable amount of work for the Council, committees, working parties, members of the Connexional Team, and willing and generous volunteers. At times, it can feel as though some of this industry is performed in isolation from other work and therefore as though there is disjunction in the work of the Church. It can also feel as though the work of the Conference is to receive recommendations from one group of hardworking people and to give work to other groups of hardworking people.

Perhaps it would help as we prepare for the Conference to bear in mind two things. Firstly we continue to be shaped by and committed to the vision of the Church's work set out in 'Our Calling', which was reaffirmed as the strategic driver of the Church's work in 2021. We are here to respond to the Gospel of God's Love in Christ through our Worship, Learning and Caring, Service, and Evangelism. Our Strategy for Evangelism and Growth (2020) recognizes that we can only do that if we are an inclusive, evangelistic and justice-seeking Church. In receiving the programme plans the Conference affirmed that with those guiding principles we would be able once again to become a growing Church: growing spiritually, growing in terms of our outreach and influence, growing in the depth of our commitment, and growing numerically.

This understanding of the Methodist Church in Great Britain provides the context for other initiatives that we have adopted or are being asked to adopt. The 'Walking with Micah' report sets out the principles, priorities and practices that define our justice-seeking. The 'Justice, Dignity and Solidarity' strategy, the Part 11 Review (regarding complaints and discipline processes) and our work on Safeguarding express the truth that unless we practise justice in every aspect of our life we shall not be able to seek or to proclaim the justice of God. The recommendations on our work with 'Place for Hope' (in the Council's report) affirm the priority of reconciliation. Without both justice and reconciliation, we cannot be authentic witnesses to the Good News of God's love in Christ. The Council report on the work of the Connexional Team invites us to focus diminishing resources in those areas and causes that need us most. The work on Oversight and Trusteeship can helpfully be described as the pruning that is essential in the life of the Church (cf John 15:2), enabling us to respond more quickly to a rapidly changing world and giving us greater confidence in ourselves and our institutions as the basis of our missional work. All of this is thoroughly Wesleyan in a Church that once more is determined (as the 1743 'Rules of the Society' express it) to do no harm, to do all the good that we can, and to attend to the ordinances of God.

The second thing that we bear in mind this year is that the Conference in 2021 adopted a resolution directing us to consider the impact of any decision that is before us. Within

Foreword to the 2023 Conference Agenda

the Council report (in volume 2) there will be a series of recommendations to help the Conference to do that consideration prior to the establishment of a Conference scrutiny committee. Throughout the Conference, the question before each of us as we consider the resolutions has to be 'Who is going to do what has to be done to make this resolution a reality?' That might mean that there are some worthy suggestions to which the Conference has to say no, not because they are not meritorious nor because they are unimportant, but because it is not essential that we do them. It would be better to decline to act than to resolve to do so and then not to be able to perform what we had committed the Connexion to doing, or because we recognize that something we cannot let go would have to be sacrificed to make the new work happen. Our task will be difficult: we will need to adopt resolutions that enable the Connexion effectively to share in God's mission whilst trying to ensure that we do not overburden already busy people. As always, we shall need to be people of prayer, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discern what we must, what we can, what we might, and what we need not do.

The Conference does not only make difficult decisions about the Connexion's future; we also celebrate the work of God that we have witnessed and to which we have contributed. One cause for celebration is the account (in the Triennial Membership Returns report) of the reception of our 'There is Room' campaign in Advent. 'There is Room' can be a guiding star for our work as the Conference – there is room for many more people in the life of the Methodist Church and we want to throw wide the gates with confidence that people will find a genuine welcome, a place of safety, freedom from any form of discrimination, support in their discipleship, and, above all, the Good News of God's love in Christ. I hope and pray that the outcomes of our Conference are such that we are enabled to articulate that we meet in the strength that is God's grace, seek to follow the rule of God's word, and have before us the end which is God's glory.

Jonathan R Hustler
Secretary of the Conference.

1. Election and Induction of the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference

1. THE ELECTION AND DECLARATION

After a brief explanation of the procedure to be followed, the Secretary of the Conference moves the resolution for the election of the President.

***RESOLUTION

- 1/1. The Conference elects the Reverend Gillian Mary Newton to be the President of the Conference.**

A standing vote is taken.

The President says:

I declare that **the Reverend Gillian Mary Newton** has been duly elected to be the President of the Conference.

The Conference is invited to sit.

The Secretary moves the resolution for the election of the Vice-President.

***RESOLUTION

- 1/2. The Conference elects Deacon Kerry Ruth Scarlett to be the Vice-President of the Conference.**

A standing vote is taken.

The Vice-President says:

I declare that **Deacon Kerry Ruth Scarlett** has been duly elected to be the Vice-President of the Conference.

2. THE INDUCTION

The President and Vice-President enter together.

The Conference is invited to sit.

The Ex-President says:

Gillian and Kerry, the Conference has elected you to the offices of President and Vice-President. In its sessions you are to preside over its worship, its conferring and its taking of decisions. You will be its representatives, embodying its authority and acting on its behalf as authorised by the Deed of

1. Election and Induction of the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference

Union and Standing Orders. You are called to share with others in the oversight and leadership of the Church. You are called to a ministry of visitation in the Districts and Circuits and with partners across the world, to encourage the Methodist people in their calling and strengthen the bonds that connect them with each other. In all this you are to exercise, in collaboration, the particular gifts God has given you as a presbyter and a deacon in the Church.

In the presence of God and of this Conference we therefore ask you: do you trust that God who has called you into his service has now called you to this ministry and will give you the grace to undertake it?

The President and Vice-President respond:

I do so trust.

The Ex-Vice-President says:

Gillian and Kerry, will you endeavour to hold before the Church a vision of its calling to proclaim and respond to the grace and love of God in worship, mission and service?

They respond:

I will, God being my helper.

The Ex-President says:

Will you work with all who are in leadership of the Church in equipping God's people to fulfil their calling?

They respond:

I will, God being my helper.

The Ex-Vice-President says:

Will you work with ecumenical partners in pursuing the greater unity of Christ's Church and in the encouraging of a common witness to God's reconciling love?

They respond:

I will, God being my helper.

1. Election and Induction of the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference

The Ex-President addresses his successor:

Gillian, will you be faithful in living out your calling as a presbyter in the service of this Conference and all the Methodist people?

Will you work with the Vice-President to offer a ministry that affirms and encourages the gifts of all God's people?

The President replies:

I will, God being my helper.

The Ex-Vice-President addresses his successor:

Kerry, will you faithfully exercise the gifts God has given you in the service of this Conference and all the Methodist people?

Will you work with the President to offer a ministry that affirms and encourages the gifts of all God's people?

The Vice-President replies:

I will, God being my helper.

3. THE PRAYERS

The Ex-Vice-President says:

Let us pray.

Gracious God, in Jesus Christ you have called your Church to be a sign of and witness to your kingdom in the world, and through the gifts of the Holy Spirit you guide and inspire it.

We give you thanks for these your servants now called to the offices of President and Vice-President of the Conference. We bless you for the ways in which you have led them to this moment and for the gifts with which you have inspired them.

Send your Holy Spirit upon them that they may build up your people in love and service, to the glory of your name. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

1. Election and Induction of the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference

4. THE GIVING OF SYMBOLS

The Ex-President invests the President with the Presidential Cross and hands to her John Wesley's Bible.

The Ex-Vice-President invests the Vice-President with the Vice-Presidential Cross and hands to her a first edition copy of John and Charles Wesley's Hymns and Sacred Songs.

Each in turn then briefly expresses the thanks of the Conference to her predecessor and presents him with a replica of the Presidential/Vice-Presidential Cross.

A hymn is sung and the Conference continues its business.

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Loraine N Mellor Chair of the Conference Business Committee loraine.mellor@cornwallmethodists.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

1. **Membership of the Conference Business Committee**

The Conference Business Committee for 2023 comprises Ms Barbara Easton, Mr Dudley J Coates, Ms Katrin Hackett, the Revd Philip Jackson, the Revd Stephen J Lindridge, the Revd Loraine N Mellor (chair), the Revd Stephanie Njeru.

2. **Meetings and reports**

- The Business Committee will meet on Saturday 24 June at the close of business, following the Scrutineers' briefing.
- The Scrutineers are asked to meet for a briefing on Saturday 24 June immediately at the close of business.
- The Business Committee will report each day in the Order Paper. It will indicate any variations to the outline schedule printed in the Agenda.

3. **Length of speeches**

It is recommended that presenters of business have four minutes and speakers two and a half minutes. The Committee proposes a speech limit of two and a half minutes as a means of facilitating the business which this Conference has before it, and enabling the Conference to hear a range of speakers and views in debates. Depending on the timing of the business, these allocations may be increased or decreased with the approval of the President and Vice-President. Where there is a number of resolutions attached to a report, the Committee recommends that presenters are allowed four minutes to introduce the report as a whole, and a further minute to introduce each subsequent resolution should that be required.

4. **Use of time**

- 4.1 Members of the Conference will want to ensure that their time is spent wisely and effectively. To this end, the Business Committee will endeavour to ensure that as far as possible, business follows the schedule published. As well as those who visit the Conference for particular debates, increasing numbers of people watch its proceedings on the Internet, especially when the Conference debates items on specific matters of interest, and rely on the published schedule being observed. Therefore, without wishing to curtail debate unhelpfully, the Business Committee strongly urges members of the Conference to maintain the discipline of keeping to its schedule. It is unfair to have to foreshorten business scheduled for later in the week because earlier items have overrun.

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

4.2 With this in mind, the Business Committee asks that:

- speeches are not made unnecessarily when it is evident that the outcome is clear;
- representatives refrain from making speeches or comments that have already been made and from repeating what has been said and heard; and
- the Conference focuses on reaching decisions with the minimum necessary debate that does the subject justice.

4.3 The Committee asks members of the Conference to bear in mind that web streaming enables a wider audience for Conference debates; representatives are therefore asked to consider their contributions to debates in the light of that. However, speeches should be addressed to members of the Conference and not those watching either from the public gallery or via the live stream. Therefore, representatives should begin with 'Madam President' or 'Madam Vice-President' as appropriate, and then introduce themselves with their name and the capacity in which they are a member of the Conference.

4.4 The Committee proposes the following hours of session from Monday 26 June: 9:15-11:00; 11:30-13:00; 14:15-16:15; 16:45-18:30.

The Conference will adjourn no later than 13:00 on Thursday 29 June.

5. Notices of Motion

Standing Order 132 reads as follows:

132 Notices of Motion. (1) Subject to Standing Order 131(4) any two members may upon notice of motion complying with this Standing Order bring before the Conference any lawful resolution within the competence of the Conference.

(1A) Every notice of motion shall be handed to the Secretary in written form and signed by the following persons:

- (i) where the proposal is to amend a resolution and those responsible for presenting that business to the Conference are prepared to accept it, the proposer and seconder of the motion;
- (ii) where such a proposal to amend is not accepted by those responsible, the proposer and seconder and four other persons;
- (iii) in all other cases, the proposer and seconder and eight other persons.

(2) Only on matters of urgency, so judged by the President after consultation with the Vice-President, shall notices of motion in the Representative Session be accepted after 4.30pm on the third day of the session, except that a notice of motion proposing to amend a resolution circulated or materially altered on or

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

after the first day of the session shall be accepted if lodged before the close of business on the day before the resolution is to be dealt with.

- 5.1 The 2013 Conference agreed that it should be mandatory for proposers of Notices of Motion to complete a 'Submission of a Notice of Motion' form, including information about budgetary implications. The form is available to download from the website and from the Conference Office (email conferenceoffice@methodistchurch.org.uk) prior to the Conference or from the Help Desk at the Conference.
- 5.2 The Committee encourages members of the Conference to adhere to the following principles when bringing Notices of Motion:
- (a) The Notice of Motion must be brought about a matter that is urgent and could not have been brought as a memorial or district resolution;
 - (b) The Notice of Motion must be within the competence of the Conference and if it requests something of another body over which it does not have jurisdiction (eg MHA, Action for Children), it must be phrased in an appropriate way;
 - (c) The Notice of Motion must be properly researched beforehand – it is not possible for those advising the Conference (including the officers of the Conference) to undertake background work in the time available;
 - (d) The Notice of Motion must be drafted in such a way, that if passed by the Conference, it can be implemented;
 - (e) The Notice of Motion must not require the Conference to make a policy decision without adequate background information and thought given to the consequences;
 - (f) The Notice of Motion, if passed, must not require such a level of resource that would require resources (human and financial) to be diverted from other areas of agreed work. To this extent if the Conference Financial Committee rules that the Notice of Motion cannot be accommodated within the contingency provided in the Central Services Budget, the Business Committee might need to rule that the Notice of Motion cannot be put before the Conference without further work on the part of the movers on how resources might be found.

In addition, the 2022 Conference added to the responsibilities of the Conference Financial Committee the requirement to scrutinise notices of motion to determine, as far as possible, its impact on the whole Connexion in terms of resources, finance, personnel, and workload and to advise the Conference of its conclusions.

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

- 5.3 In enabling Conference members to submit Notices of Motion related to business scheduled for the afternoon and evening of Saturday 24 June, the Business Committee requests that these be submitted by email to batesj@methodistchurch.org.uk to arrive not later than Friday 23 June at 2.00pm. The Committee has determined that it will only require the names (which will be printed on the Order Paper) of a proposer and a seconder to be supplied at this stage: the four further signatories, should the Notice of Motion be resisted by the proposer of the resolution (as per SO 132(1A)(ii)), may therefore be acquired after arrival at the Conference on Saturday 24 June but must be handed to the Record Office by 1.00pm on that day.
- 5.4 Further, for the Business Committee to prepare the business to be conducted on Monday 26 June, members of the Conference who wish to submit Notices of Motion relating to the business to be taken on Monday, or amended replies to any memorials to be taken with it, are requested to hand them to the Record Office by 12.30pm on Sunday 25 June.
- 5.5 Similarly, Notices of Motion relating to items of business to be taken on Tuesday 27 June should be submitted by 12.30pm on Monday. This, and the deadlines in the previous paragraphs, will enable the Business Committee to prepare full and informed Order Papers for the smooth transaction of business.
- 5.6 Having set out in the preceding paragraphs the proposed timings for Notices of Motion in general, the Business Committee wishes to make provision for dealing with any which impact the connexional budget and proposes a specific timetable to that end. Its purpose is to ensure that the Conference is able to take decisions about the budget when all the relevant information is to hand and to avoid the pitfall of making choices or judgements based on partial information. It is therefore recommended that:
- The budget will be presented on Tuesday morning.
 - Any Notices of Motion proposing amendments to the budget shall be submitted by 12.30pm on Monday through the usual channels.
 - The Conference Financial Committee will consider the implications of the proposed amendments at the close of Monday's session and present a report in Tuesday's Order Paper.
 - The Conference will then consider Notices of Motion and memorials which impact the budget on Tuesday morning and will engage in discussion of the budget at that point.
 - The budget will then be formally confirmed and adopted on Thursday morning.

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

In summary, the deadlines for submitting Notices of Motion are as follows:

| Relating to | Submit by |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Saturday's business | Friday 2.00pm |
| Monday's business | Sunday 12.30pm |
| Tuesday's business | Monday 12.30pm |
| Wednesday/Thursday's business | Monday 4.30pm |
| Unrelated to business | Monday 4.30pm |

- 5.7 Those proposing a Notice of Motion should consult with those presenting the business to ascertain whether the Notice of Motion will be accepted or resisted. Lists of those responsible for presenting each item of business are available from the Record Office or the Chair of the Business Committee.
- 5.8 The 2011 Conference approved the principle of enabling those Notices of Motion that do not relate to business already in the Agenda to be prioritised, by means of a ballot, should time not permit all such Notices of Motion to be considered. Should such a ballot be required, it will be held on Tuesday 27 June. Any such Notices of Motion which are not considered during the Conference will be dealt with as in the next paragraph.
- 5.9 The Business Committee may recommend that a particular Notice of Motion is not considered by the Conference but is referred to the Methodist Council in the coming year. The Council is required to report back to the following Conference its judgement on that Notice of Motion.
- 5.10 In order for the Business Committee to test, on the floor of the Conference, its own judgements about which Notices of Motion to refer to the Council without debate, on Wednesday 28 June the Chair of the Business Committee will move that the Conference adopts that section of the Committee's report (which will be printed on the day's Order Paper) which lists those Notices of Motion recommended to be referred to the Council. The Conference will be able to amend the list without the need of a written Notice of Motion.

6. Memorials

It is anticipated that all memorials will be dealt with during the Conference, ie taken with existing business to which they relate, debated separately or the replies adopted *en bloc*, based on the recommendations of the Memorials Committee.

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

7. **Nominations**

All nominees for President-Designate, Vice-President-Designate and Conference-elected representatives are to be photographed and their details displayed on a screen. The arrangements for this will be notified on Saturday's Order Paper at the Conference.

Nominations for designation of **President and Vice-President of the Conference of 2024** must be on the prescribed form and placed in ballot boxes by **5:30pm on Monday 26 June**. They will be displayed on Tuesday; voting will close at 6.00pm on Tuesday; the results will be announced on Wednesday. The Secretary of the Conference will need to contact all nominees for these offices, to confirm that they are willing to serve should they be elected.

Nominations for **Conference-elected representatives**: you are asked to follow **strictly** the instructions on the nomination form. Please ensure that you seek the consent of persons nominated and complete the forms fully and clearly for display. Nomination forms must be placed in the ballot boxes by **2pm on Tuesday 27 June**; voting will close at **5.00pm on Wednesday**; the results will be announced on Thursday morning.

This year, of the three Conference-elected representatives to serve from 2024 to 2026, two will be presbyteral and one will be lay, thus fulfilling SO 103(2A).

Nominations for **Conference Business Committee members**: you are asked to follow **strictly** the instructions on the nomination form. Please ensure that you seek the consent of persons nominated and complete the forms fully and clearly. The election timetable will be the same as for Conference-elected representatives, as above. It should be noted the election to the Conference Business Committee does not carry a right of membership of succeeding Conferences. Members of the Business Committee are required to be members of the Conference, and therefore if they are subsequently not elected as a representative by their Synod they will not be able to take up their place on the Committee. In that event, SO 136(1A) allows for two persons in each category to be nominated as reserves who may serve for the period for which the person elected would have served. Where that is not possible, the Methodist Council has the power to appoint a member from amongst the members of the next Conference; that appointment being for that Conference only.

This year, four Business Committee members, two lay persons and two ministers, are required to be elected and may serve for the three years 2024-2026.

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

In summary, the deadlines for nominations and elections are as follows:

| Election | Nominations close | Voting closes |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------|
| President of the Conference | Monday 5.30pm | Tuesday 6.00pm |
| Vice-President of the Conference | Monday 5.30pm | Tuesday 6.00pm |
| Conference-elected representatives | Tuesday 2.00pm | Wednesday 5.00pm |
| Conference Business Committee: Representative Session | Tuesday 2.00pm | Wednesday 5.00pm |

8. **Provisional legislation**

Under Standing Order 122, any two members, by Notice of Motion, may propose that an item agreed by the Conference be referred to the Synods as a **provisional resolution** before being proposed for final adoption by the Conference next year.

9. **Letter-writing**

Any member of the Conference requesting that a letter be sent on behalf of the Conference should note the following criteria and procedure:

- a. The Conference writes automatically to those who have served in ordained ministry for 70 or more years, and those celebrating the 25th, 50th or 60th anniversaries of their ordinations; their names will be prepared in advance.
- b. The Conference will write, for a specific reason, to those who have a direct link with the Conference, or represent the World Church, or have an ecumenical relationship with the Methodist Church, or have a claim to achievements that are outstanding in the life of the Church or on its behalf.
- c. The letter-writer, with consultation as necessary, will be the appropriate person to give guidance to Conference members as to whether a proposed letter is within the criteria.
- d. Requests for letters to be sent must be submitted on a standard form, giving all the required details, to the Help Desk, who will receive them on behalf of the letter-writer. Forms are available from the Help Desk.
- e. The recipients of letters will be listed in the Daily Record for the information of the Conference.

10. **En bloc items**

The Business Committee will publish its proposed list of items of business to be taken *en bloc* in a separate report in Volume Two of the Conference Agenda.

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

Under the terms of SO 134A, if Notices of Motion are received about items in the *en bloc* list those items will automatically be removed from the list. In addition, by giving notice to the Secretary of the Conference (via Jane Bates at batesj@methodistchurch.org.uk), any six members of the Conference may, without proposing an amendment, require that an item be removed from the list and debated. Such notice must be given before the close of business on Monday 27 June (SO 134A(1)(c)).

***RESOLUTION

2/1. The Conference adopts the Report of the Business Committee.

3. Methodist Council, part 1

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Sonia M Hicks Chair of the Council chaircouncil@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

SECTION A GENERAL REPORT

The Methodist Council is charged under SO 211(2) with responsibility to keep in constant review the life of the Methodist Church, to study its work and witness throughout the Connexion, to indicate what changes are necessary or what steps could be taken to make the work of the Church more effective, to give spiritual leadership to the Church and to report annually to the Conference, bringing to the notice of the Conference matters to which it believes the Conference ought to give urgent attention.

The full range of papers presented to the Council and the outcomes of the Council's deliberations on them are available on the Methodist Church website at www.methodist.org.uk/council

The report to the Conference is presented in two parts, this one in Volume 1 of the Agenda and part two in Volume 2 of the Agenda.

These reports contain those items considered by the Council and not reported elsewhere in the Agenda.

1.1 Governance responsibilities

In accordance with its governance responsibilities, the Council:

- appointed connexional committees, trusts and representatives for the year 2022/2023;
- acting on behalf of the Conference, appointed the Revd Dr Calvin T Samuel as Deputy Chair of the Mission Committee, and thereby to the Council in that capacity;
- received reports from a number of committees and trustee bodies;
- appointed the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group;
- approved the revised list of authorisations and delegations;
- received reports from the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) of the Council at each meeting;
- received reports at each meeting from the Connexional Team on how each objective is being supported;
- adopted an updated risk management policy and the corporate risk register;

3. Methodist Council, part 1

- appointed the Revd Howard J Stringer as a member of the Council for the connexional year 2022/2023;
- received a report from the Connexional Allowances Committee, and agreed to urge all Methodist employing bodies to implement the current Living Wage in line with previous Conference decisions;
- asked the President and Vice-President of the Conference to write a pastoral letter to supernumeraries reminding them of the grants available to those in acute financial need;
- urged all Methodist employing bodies to review their own response to the impact of cost of living issues on lay employees;
- under the terms of SO 315(2), recommended the extension of Deacon Ruth M Richey's appointment as Deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order for a further period of one year from 1 September 2023;
- adopted policy criteria for which Ukrainian refugees entering the UK under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme or the Ukraine Family Scheme may be permitted to occupy Methodist residential property;
- adopted the Modern Slavery Transparency Statement for 2022/2023, and delegated the approval of future Modern Slavery Transparency Statements to the Connexional Secretary;
- received the report of the Pension Fund valuation and ratified the completed actions;
- approved draft terms of reference for the Resourcing Committee;
- received a report concerning the scrutiny of the annual governance returns of Methodist entities;
- approved the revised Memorandum of Understanding with Methodist International Centre Ltd;
- approved the principle of selling 141 Meadow Grove, Dublin;
- adopted the interim vicarious liability claims policy;
- re-approved the Partnership Agreement with the Queen's Foundation with amendments;
- acting on behalf of the Conference, appointed the Connexional Reconciliation Group;
- received a report concerning the Arthur Smith Trust, and agreed to release the capital from two small permanent endowments in line with the Charities Act;
- received a report of a review into the operation of Safeguarding Contracts, five years after their introduction;
- agreed to the provision of a President's Assistant in the Sheffield District for the connexional year 2023/2024.
- agreed to a change in the list of Global Partners invited to the 2023 Conference;
- agreed to recommend to the Conference that the Revd David I H Hardman be

3. Methodist Council, part 1

stationed to the Connexional Team as Coordinator of the Methodist Liaison Office, Jerusalem for three years from 1 September 2023;

- under the terms of SO 315(2), recommended the extension of the Revd Matt Finch's appointment as Pioneering and Church Planting Officer for a period of five years from 1 September 2024.

1.2 Other business

The Council received annual reports from:

- the Property Development Committee;
- Southlands College.

***RESOLUTION

3/1. The Conference receives the General Report of the Council.

SECTION B

MEMORIAL M22 (2016): SYSTEMS FOR RECORDING SAFEGUARDING CASES

The 2016 Conference received the following memorial:

M22 Systems for recording safeguarding cases

In light of the revised guidance Safeguarding Records: Joint Practice Guidance for Church of England and The Methodist Church, the Southend and Leigh (34/10) Circuit Meeting (Present: 43; Voting: unanimous) recommends and requests that the Methodist Church develops a secure connexional online system for safeguarding recording and reporting to ensure consistent and effective compliance with data protection legislation, and good practice. This system could be part of the Methodist online suite.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Southend and Leigh Circuit Meeting for highlighting the importance of storing the required safeguarding information and that this be in a secure and compliant environment.

The revised guidance Safeguarding Records: Joint Practice Guidance for Church of England and The Methodist Church should be followed across the Connexion and is available on the Church website at <http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/1517149/Safeguarding%20recording%20guidance16%2012%2014.pdf>.

The Conference directs the Methodist Council to oversee an investigation of the potential feasibility and cost of a system as described in the memorial and to report back no later than the 2018 Conference.

It was reported to the Council that, after thorough research and consultation with practitioners, a contract was signed with a provider so that a system as described in the memorial can be introduced. The Council therefore reports to the Conference that the work it requested is complete.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 3/2. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 3/3. The Conference adopts the Report as its further reply to Memorial M22 (2016).**

SECTION C

MEMORIAL M4 (2019): REVISION OF GUIDELINES IN RELATION TO SO 955

The 2019 Conference received the following memorial:

M4 Revision of guidelines in relation to Standing Order 955

The Manchester and Stockport District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 144; Voting: 141 for, 3 against) draws the Conference's attention to Standing Order 955, regarding payments from circuit model trust funds to the District Advance Fund and asks the Conference to note that, under sub-clause b(iii) "a contribution is not payable on any disposition completed within the last five years, so far as they are employed in or towards a replacement project and consent to the disposition has been granted under Section 93 on that basis."

The Synod further draws attention to the current practice whereby a contribution to the district advance fund is taken from the disposition until such time as a replacement purchase is given consent.

The Synod believes that the current practice is in conflict with the Standing Order and invites the Conference to instruct the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice to revise the guidance, such that contributions are

3. Methodist Council, part 1

not made to the District Advance Funds from dispositions made as part of a replacement project, until the five-year limit has been exceeded.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Manchester and Stockport District Synod for this memorial relating to Standing Order 955 and replacement project classification.

The Conference appreciates the reasons for the District raising these concerns. However, in practice it is not possible to exclude from the circuit model trust fund an unknown amount. In the case to which the memorial refers, the cost of a replacement manse was not known until a new manse had been found and this will be the same where the costs of a redevelopment are unknown until plans are finalised. It is also not possible to know at the point that proceeds of sale go into a circuit model trust fund whether a replacement project will definitely occur even if this is the initial intention or that the replacement project will be given district and connexional authority consent.

The Conference therefore refers the memorial to the Methodist Council to consider the policy issues raised and, if appropriate, to consult the Law and Polity Committee on any amendments to Standing Orders.

- 1 The Council was asked to consider the policy issues raised by the current application of the Circuit Model Trust Fund levy to funds earmarked for a replacement project.
- 2 For clarity, this is different from the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF) levy that is taken on the proceeds of sale at the time of a sale of property. The Circuit Model Trust Fund levy is taken at each 31 August based on the balances held at TMCP on the Model Trust, ie any proceeds of sale that have not been spent on some other purpose would be sitting in TMCP at year end and the levy would be taken. This diminishes the amount of money that is available for the circuit to spend in future. If the circuit is deliberately holding on to monies for the purpose of funding a replacement project, taking the levy may jeopardise the affordability of that project.
- 3 Standing Order 955 is clear that the levy does not apply to replacement projects that have received 'consent'. This matches the current practice in relation to the levy.
- 4 The policy question is whether the current approach achieves the intended outcome, or whether a different policy would achieve a better outcome.

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- 5 Standing Order 955 is clearly designed to redistribute monies sitting in Circuit Model Trust Funds (CMTF) to District Advance Funds ie that is the policy. Sub-clause b(iii) is therefore an exception to the general policy, recognising that once funds are committed to a replacement project (committed because the project has consent) a levy should not fall due.
- 6 To apply an exception to replacement projects that do not have consent would fundamentally change the definition of what a replacement project is. Such a project would exist based on the Circuit confirming such a project existed, not because the project had met the criteria laid down by the Methodist Council (as required by Standing Order 973). This would fundamentally impact the operation of Standing Order 972 Contributions (to the Connexional Priority Fund) as proceeds of property sales intended for a replacement project would be exempt from the CPF levy as well as the CMTF levy.
- 7 The overall impact would be a reduction in funds available to Districts and the Connexional Priority Fund.
- 8 As an alternative approach to extending the exemptions from the levy, it should be noted that the levy does not disappear, it simply redistributes money from Circuits to Districts. It is within the gift of each District to use part of the levy it receives to offer support to Circuits that are developing replacement projects; ie levies taken could be simply returned if that were the will of the District in fulfilling the mission plans of both the District and the Circuit.
- 9 In conclusion:
 - The policy is working as designed.
 - The wider implications of amending the policy are significant and would impact the funding available for connexional and district priorities.
 - As an alternative solution, levy monies could be returned by Districts to circuit replacement projects once they are designated as replacement projects.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 3/4. **The Conference receives the Report.**
- 3/5. **The Conference adopts the Report as its further reply to Memorial M4 from the 2019 Conference.**

3. Methodist Council, part 1

SECTION D METHODIST SCHOOLS COMMITTEE

HEADLINES

- 1 By the time the Conference meets, the first International Methodist Schools Conference, entitled 'Transforming Lives', will have been held in April 2023. This is a joint venture between the International Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges and Universities (IAMSCU) and the Methodist Schools Network to coincide with the 275th anniversary of the founding of Kingswood school. At the time of writing, over 250 people, some from every continent (except Antarctica!), are expected to be present in person, with others joining online. Our hope is that this will be the beginning of further cross continental support between Methodist Schools.
- 2 The Department for Education (DfE) has required the Methodist Church to form a second Multi Academy Trust (MAT) to support Methodist schools that become academies. This has created a large workload for Methodist Schools' staff but it is gratifying to report that they have more than risen to the occasion and made significant progress on this plan. The new MAT, to be known as Inspiring Lives Education Trust (ILET), will be up and running in the early autumn with between two and four schools. Broadly, ILET will serve schools in the South of England, as Epworth Education Trust (EET) serves the North. Both MATs will be open to non-faith schools and able to sponsor new schools in new areas. ILET expects to include a secondary school in its founding group of schools.
- 3 Together with the additions to MIST schools and the establishing of ILET, the number of schools will increase for the first time in decades and, in line with *Transforming Lives*, this increase will continue, over the next few years. The close working together of all our schools also continues to strengthen and our commitment to prioritise those in most need remains a key driver in our expanding work.
- 4 Following the ongoing success of the Anti-racist RE material, further changes in RE teaching are being accompanied by new resources developed through MAST, including new work focused on the Tolpuddle Martyrs.
- 5 The schools group has worked with members of the Connexional Team on initiatives to equip Methodist churches to develop positive working relationships with the community schools in their circuits, in line with the resolutions of the 2021 Transforming Lives report adopted by the Conference.

3. Methodist Council, part 1

- 6 We thank David Humphreys for his eight years as General Secretary of MIST. He has been deeply committed to all our schools working together and had led the planning on the International Schools Conference. We wish him well in retirement. His successor will be Judith Fenn.
- 7 Further details of the above and other information is included in the rest of the report.

MAST

8 Facts and Figures:

- There are currently 66 Methodist maintained schools under the oversight of the Methodist Council, educating approximately 15,000 children.
 - 26 of our schools are solely Methodist and the rest are held in partnership, most commonly with the Church of England. All are in the Primary phase.
 - About a half of our schools are in the North West of England (predominantly in the Districts of Lancashire and Bolton and Rochdale), with the rest scattered across England covering, in all, 40 different Local Authorities and 18 Dioceses
 - Around 10% of our schools have become academies in non-Methodist groups; this requires a particular kind of MAST oversight to ensure that the academy chains are honouring the schools' Methodist tradition.
 - In a development since last year, just under 10% of our schools are now in Methodist-based academy trusts
 - In OFSTED terms, 89% of Methodist schools are currently judged good or outstanding
 - In the Statutory Inspections of Anglican and Methodist Schools (known as SIAMS), all our schools are good or better. Amongst church schools across the country, this is a particularly good marker.
- 9 MAST is now into its fourth year of working as a fully established Methodist schools organisation. We have continued to develop along the pattern established during, and after, the pandemic – although we are a small team with limited resource this seems to be working well. At local level, relationships between MAST and our schools continue to strengthen, supported by the use of our leading headteachers as Regional Leaders in Education. Through regular contact, they are able to create good links with and between the Methodist schools in their areas and respond where particular needs or opportunities develop. Overlaying this is the national programme of webinar training for which MAST has developed a strong reputation. Originally conceived as a creative

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response to the limitations of Covid, the webinars have developed into a major plank of MAST's activity. Although 'live' attendance has dropped through the last year, as schools have returned to 'business as usual' there is continuing good take-up via the library of webinars built up on the Methodist Schools private YouTube channel. This means that the training is accessed when convenient or can be used as a stimulus in a full staff or governors meeting. A development to the webinar programme over the last year has been training for governors, which has drawn a large and appreciative attendance.

- 10 The distinctive ethos of MAST schools (which is a key focus for us as a Religious Provider) remains at the forefront of our work. Training in aspects of ethos is an important aspect of our webinar programme and our sessions on 'What is Methodism' and 'What does it mean to be a Methodist School?' are always popular. MAST is often asked to repeat these at school level, sometimes with a contextual slant such as developing work around John Fletcher and Mary Bosanquet in Telford. Inspection of the school's religious ethos is required under Law and delivered via a framework developed in conjunction with the Church of England under the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS). Two particularly good examples of SIAMS over the last few months are Emmanuel (Sheffield District) and St Mark's (Bristol District) – these and all other SIAMS reports can be found here: <https://www.methodistschools.org.uk/about-us/siams-inspections>. A new SIAMS framework is being developed for introduction from September 2023 and this will become a training priority. This year, ethos training has focused on maintaining quality in Religious Education – an aspect of the curriculum to which Initial Teacher Training for the Primary sector can give little time; likewise, future priorities include collective worship and children's spirituality.
- 11 The world of Religious Education is developing apace. The National Council for Religious Education is promoting a move away from what is termed the 'World Religions paradigm' to a 'Religion and Worldviews' approach with two main drivers – first, to teach about religion in ways that recognise that religions are not monolithic systems, shaped around a Western (largely Protestant) picture of religious believing and, second, to open non-religious standpoints on life to the same scrutiny as religious views. As classrooms become increasingly secular, this is helpful – children cannot simply claim, 'I am not religious' as an opt out from thinking about life's great mysteries. All views are open to probing, exploration and challenge and the slogan, 'Linger longer. Dig deeper' applies to all. With regard to diversity, Methodists will warm both to increasing de-colonisation and to a development which allows for the recognition of wider Christian perspectives, including those of the Free Churches. However, there are some broader philosophical questions to be considered and MAST is working with the National Society in thinking these through. The Methodist Schools'

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'anti-racist Religious Education' initiative, developed on our behalf by REToday in collaboration with the Free Church Education Committee, is now reaching into about 2000 schools across England and Wales. MAST and RE Today are now developing a joint project around social justice and the Tolpuddle Martyrs which will relate both to the RE and History curricula.

- 12 From the beginning of the new school year in 2021, national authorities made it clear that it was 'business as usual'. Ofsted re-launched the full programme of inspections with an adjusted focus including looking at post-Covid recovery. A number of Methodist Schools have been inspected since and our profile remains largely the same. However, MAST's experience bears out the pattern developing across the country: the number of schools being judged 'outstanding' is much reduced and it now appears the top judgement is almost impossible to attain in an urban area and/or areas experiencing deprivation. This is unfortunate for Methodist Schools, whose location and mission intend to 'those who need us most'. Within the group we have schools doing exceptional work in very challenging situations; Ofsted is using the language of 'exceptionality' but, on the ground, this seems to translate into the language of 'perfection'.
- 13 All of the above is consistent with MAST's usual work. However, this year has seen a new and important development: in March 2022, the Department for Education approached the Methodist Church (alongside all other Faith Providers) and asked to see the Church's academisation strategy for all Methodist Schools. This was in the context of the Education White Paper, which was dropped during its passage through Parliament in the Autumn. The White Paper originally required all schools to join a strong academy family by 2030 (in reality 2027) and the Department needed assurance that there was a route for this for all schools – particularly schools of a religious character where the DfE is not solely in control. Although this pressure is now removed, MAST is nevertheless in a better position for having done this very significant piece of work as, regardless of legislation, this is now firmly the direction of travel for the DfE. This means that, although MAST is not requiring its schools to academise, schools which wish to, or are required to by others, now have the security of a high-quality academy route which has the approval of the Regional Directors nationally. It also gives Methodists the capacity to make greater progress on aspects of *Transforming Lives* (Methodist Conference 2021) as it offers a framework for more schools to be established in, embraced by, and supported within, the Methodist ethos.
- 14 After extensive negotiation, the Department for Education has given approval to a Methodist strategy which will have two trusts. The first remains The Epworth Educational Trust, already well established and highly regarded in the North West of England. The DfE now expects Epworth to expand to cover a wider

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geographical area by means of a lively hub structure; they are also encouraging Epworth to become a Mixed MAT – a multi-academy trust that can take in faith and community schools (as well as mixing Primary, Secondary and Special). However, the new, and exciting, development is the establishment of a second trust to work in a similar hub model across the southern part of the country. The first schools working to set this up are an exceptional Methodist/Anglican infant school and a remarkable multi-ethnic community comprehensive boys' school, so this will be a mixed MAT from the beginning. It is hoped that, so long as rapid progress can be made, the second trust will be fully open for business from September 2023. Although community schools that join our MAT do not become faith schools, we are finding that our trusts are attractive to schools outside the faith sector because of the longevity and dependability of our values. The second trust will be called 'Inspiring Lives Education Trust', which MAT feels reflects well the title and ambitions of the Conference paper of 2021.

Epworth Education Trust

15 Facts and Figures:

- There are currently six schools within the Epworth Education Trust (EET) all of which are primary schools.
- Four schools have nursery provision, two of which provide education for 2 year olds alongside provision for 3 year olds and 4 year olds.
- The schools are all solely Methodist Schools and based in the North West of England.
- There are approximately 1500 pupils on roll in the schools.
- There are 230 staff across the Trust.
- EET is commissioned to lead the Westleigh Start Well Family Centre in Wigan. Managing the support for the most vulnerable families and providing some of the safeguarding offer for approximately 25% of the 0-5s in Wigan.
- One school has a resourced provision for up to 15 pupils to provide an education for SEND pupils that are unable to access mainstream provision.
- Within the Trust, with the exception of the sponsored school, all schools are at least good.
- All schools are subject to a SIAMS and they are all judged good or better. Five of the schools have the highest grading of Outstanding/ Excellent.

- 16** The culture and ethos of the trust is strong and firmly embedded since the merger of Acorn Trust and Wesley Trust to establish Epworth Education Trust over 2 years ago. There is strong collaboration across our family of schools with staff in a range of roles sharing best practice and supporting each other both

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informally and formally through the established forums and networks. Within the trust we firmly believe that 'Every child is everybody's responsibility'. As a result, the Headteachers do all they can to not just ensure their own school and pupils flourish, but all schools and pupils across the trust.

- 17** The trust invests heavily in continued professional development (CPD) of all staff and this is recognised as a strength in the trust. A highlight of the CPD offered this year has been the Aspiring Senior Leaders course, a year-long leadership programme developed by the trust. During the course, staff explored the key aspects of school leadership, undertook a project and completed various tasks. The course was so successful that a number of the participants have already secured a promotion. We continue to explore the ways in which ensure we have the best possible staff teaching the children in our care. The trust conference in September 2022 was a huge success, as staff across the trust were able to come together for the first time. We plan to hold another conference in the autumn.
- 18** This year we have launched the Epworth Specialist Leaders (ESLs) initiative. Staff that excel in a particular subject or area of school life are able to utilise that strength to support all schools. The trust has established a rigorous recruitment and training program and are delighted to have 9 ESLs across the trust. This initiative has ensured that schools have access to highly skilled practitioners as they identify an area which could be strengthened; it has also enabled the trust to retain staff who may have sought additional promotion outside of the trust.
- 19** As a Trust, we have seen some changes in leadership across the Trust. There has been a new Headteacher at Rosehill (Gemma Yapp) following the retirement of the previous Headteacher and the acting Headteacher at Westleigh (Karen Chadwick) took up a substantive Headteacher post elsewhere as the Headteacher returned from maternity leave.
- 20** During the last twelve months we have seen a further increase in pupils known to have Special Educational Needs (SEND) across the Trust and we continue to be recognised as a place of strength for SEND provision. The resourced provision at Rosehill has increased its pupil numbers by 50%. Another school has been awarded the Inclusion Award as a result of the high quality provision in the school. They are now also considering a request to open a resourced provision at the school.
- 21** We believe that our inclusive ethos reflects our Methodist ethos and a commitment to go where we are needed most.

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- 22** Since joining the Trust Summerseat has made significant progress and is now providing a good quality of education to all pupils. The trust is immensely proud to celebrate the Headteacher, Julie Whittaker, who was awarded the Headteacher of the Year at the Manchester Evening News Awards, standing out against a large number of applicants from schools across Greater Manchester. This award reflects not just the improvements she has made in the school, but the strong ethos of the school she has created along with strong development of staff. We congratulate Julie on this incredible recognition but also reflect upon the outstanding impact our staff make across our schools, as they continue to relentlessly and passionately 'do all they can' for our pupils and for each other.
- 23** The pupils in the trust have benefited from the collaborative work with Edukids, in which schools sponsor children in Uganda to support their education. The schools have embraced the project and the staff in all schools have also committed to sponsoring an additional child. The project has enabled the pupils to embrace the notion of the world as their parish. EET was delighted that a member of staff, Sarah Taylor, was able to participate in a trip and visit the children sponsored across the trust. Sarah taught the children games and provided books and gifts given by the schools. The visit has strengthened the children's commitment to the project, as Sarah was able to share with them all the hands-on experience.
- 24** As a trust, we place a strong focus on our Christian ethos and supporting schools in the living out of their own Christian ethos, the schools are the church in action in the pastoral care and support they offer. Collective worship has continued to play a central role in the life of our schools and the school family recognise the importance of this time together. Pupils find worship acts as a guide in managing many of the situations they experience; the opportunity to explore the Christian faith helps them in grounding their own belief systems. Chaplains continue to play a pivotal role in this work providing a strong link and joined up working between our schools and the church.
- 25** In Spring 2022, in the run up to the release of the Schools White Paper, the Department of Education (DfE) sought MAST to produce a plan for all Methodist schools to fulfil their aspirations of a fully trust led sector. Whilst this plan was being developed the growth of EET was paused and this was only released late autumn. The MAST plan has led to EET being the trust for the North of England. Since September there has been considerable interest in the trust from both Methodist schools and community schools. We envisage a time of growth will now take place.

MIST

26 Facts and Figures:

- Most Methodist Independent Schools were established by groups of local Methodist communities in the nineteenth and early twentieth century following Wesley's pioneering opening of Kingswood School in 1748 followed by Wesley's successors opening the Wesleyan Academy at Woodhouse Grove in 1812.
- In 1903 most of the schools were brought together by a common Trust Deed and under the ultimate control of the Board of Management for Methodist Schools (BOM). BOM was superseded by the Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) in 2011.
- There are currently 18 independent schools linked in some way to MIST: Trust Schools (10), Associated Schools (3), Affiliated Schools (5) – two of the affiliated schools are overseas and linked to a Trust school (Kent College Dubai and Kent College West Cairo). A full list and details can be found on the website: www.methodistschools.org.uk
- MIST is directly responsible as Trustees for the ten Trust Schools and the General Secretary (CEO) of MIST is a Governor at the Associated Schools and one of the Affiliated Schools.
- There are over 10,000 pupils on roll in Methodist Independent Schools.
- Twelve of the schools have boarders as well as day pupils.
- Two of the schools are for children of nursery and primary age only, two have pupils from 11-18 only and the rest offer continuity of education from 3 to 18.
- All of the schools are inspected by the Independent Schools Inspection Service (ISI) which reports to OFSTED; all such inspections in the past year have confirmed very high standards in all the schools. Copies of independent school inspection reports are published on each school's website and at www.isi.net
- In academic year 2021/22, MIST Trust and Acquired schools provided over £5,150,000 in means-tested bursaries to help hundreds of children to attend the schools whose family circumstances would otherwise restrict access; these bursaries are funded by a mixture of funds raised from using school facilities out of term or school time and from diverting a proportion of the fees paid by all to support the costs of others. In addition, the Methodist Bursary Fund and associated funds made awards for Methodist families attending Methodist Independent Schools of over £150,000.

- 27 Last academic year and this, the schools have gradually returned to normal after the upheaval of the pandemic. School rolls have risen, full extra-curricular programmes have operated, and a wide range of local community activities and partnerships have recovered. That said, there are some lingering effects of Covid. Some of these are positive such as the improved use of technology in teaching

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and learning but others are much more challenging, notably the mental health and wellbeing of pupils and staff. Many schools are addressing these challenges with staff and pupil support groups, specific pastoral support programmes and use of counsellors; the role of chaplains in this process is useful too.

- 28** Since the last annual report, a new Head has taken up his post at Shebbear College (Charlie Jenkins) and new chaplains have started their positions at Woodhouse Grove (the Revd Rob Drost), Kent College Canterbury (the Revd Alison Walker), and Ashville College (Ms Catherine Frieze). The Revd Aubin de Gruchy (currently Chaplain at Truro School) has succeeded the Revd Dr Paul Glass as Pastoral Visitor following Paul's return to circuit ministry in September 2022.
- 29** Moorlands School (Leeds) and Lorenden School (near Faversham) both merged fully with MIST in the past year; so the Trust is growing and welcoming schools not of specifically Methodist foundation in keeping with one of the objectives of the Transforming Lives strategy. The ethos and values of these schools are closely aligned with those of MIST and for several years these schools had been governed by existing MIST schools, namely Woodhouse Grove (Moorlands) and Kent College Canterbury (Lorenden); they now have their own governing bodies reporting directly to MIST.
- 30** Another beneficial impact of the end of the pandemic has been the chance to meet together in person in again (strikes permitting). As well as routine meetings of Trustees, Chairs, Heads and Chaplains we have held our Annual Away Days at the Royal Foundation of St Katherine's. A major focus of one of these days was Equality, Diversity and Inclusion where we were joined by Bevan Powell from the Connexional Team as well as EDI specialists from Farrer & Co. The following day we were delighted to welcome the President of the Conference to preach at our annual service of dedication and later in the day, as well as hearing updates from MAST and the Epworth Education Trust, we discussed our Group Plan target to further increase means-tested bursary support for our schools. Meetings in person are supplemented by meetings over Zoom for Heads, Junior School Heads, Designated Safeguarding Leads, Chairs and Trustees; such meetings keep us connected without the need to travel but are no substitute for meeting together in person.
- 31** A significant change this year has been the move of the Methodist Schools office from Methodist Church House to offices in a building shared with the Free Church Federal Council in Tavistock Square. Thus, the office team can keep an eye on progress with the conversion of the new Methodist Church House nearby and look forward to being able to move to accommodation there in due course.
- 32** Despite the impact of the pandemic, MIST continues to make progress with elements of its Group Plan for 2020-25 in which we are committed to *developing*

a culture that encourages and enables collaboration, communication and co-operation between the schools and MIST. The plan seeks to deliver a financially sustainable, inclusive education that is focused strongly on both the individual and the community experience, shaped by Christian values. Specifically, progress continues to be made with collaboration opportunities between MIST, MAST and the Epworth Trust; the Methodist Schools International Conference will be held in April 2023; “SIAMS for MIST schools” is being piloted, known as SERVE¹; and ongoing consideration of ways in which MIST and the schools can support the objectives of the Transforming Lives report.

- 33** Methodist Independent Schools are determined to continue to provide an all-round education infused with a strong Christian ethos informed by their Methodist foundation in an era of political, economic and social scepticism, uncertainty and change. Methodist Independent Schools are committed to doing everything within their power to increase the number of bursaries available to enable the offer of places to as wide a cross section of the community as possible. Financial support provides life-changing opportunities for a number of pupils as schools partner with the Royal Springboard Foundation (www.royalspringboard.org.uk) and in schools with specific programmes such as The Leys’ “Gift of Education” and Woodhouse Grove’s commitment to the One In A Million Academy in Bradford. The likelihood of business rates relief being withdrawn, and the possibility of VAT being applied to school fees threatens to make them less, rather than more, affordable. In the meantime, MIST uses resources carefully to support schools in need of specific help and others that now feel confident to plan essential investment.

*****RESOLUTION**

- 3/6. The Conference receives the Report.**

SECTION E MEMBERSHIP OF THE MEMORIALS COMMITTEE

- 1.** The Memorials Committee is established by SO 138 and meets once year in late May to consider the memorials submitted by Circuits and Districts and to propose the replies which are to be put before the Conference. The current committee membership was revised in 2020 and comprises a number of representatives from key committees and regions.

¹ SERVE stands for: Spiritual, Ethos, Relationships & Values Education

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2. As the Mission Committee has been formed since the new membership of the Memorials Committee was established, the Council wishes to add a representative from the Mission Committee to the Memorials Committee.
3. The proposed amendment to SO 138 is shown below. The Council appointed a member of the Mission Committee to attend the Memorials Committee in May 2023 in a non-voting capacity.

***RESOLUTIONS

3/7. The Conference receives the Report.

3/8. The Conference amends SO 138 as follows:

(2) In addition to the convener appointed by the preceding Conference the committee shall consist of:

- (i) a former President or Vice-President, who shall chair the committee;
- (ii) the Secretary of the Conference and the assistant secretary of the Conference;
- (iii) the Connexional Secretary;
- (iv) the Conference officer for legal and constitutional practice;
- (v) the secretary of the Faith and Order Committee;
- (vi) a member of the Ministries Committee;
- (viA) a member of the Mission Committee;**
- (vii) a member of the Strategy and Resources Committee;
- (viii) one district Chair, two presbyters, one deacon, one synod secretary and two lay persons, each nominated by a district Policy Committee from a different stationing region, according to a rota.

Those appointed under heads (i), (vi), **(viA)**, (vii) and (viii) above shall normally serve for a period of three years. The President-Designate and Vice-President-Designate and the chair of the Business Committee shall attend, but without a vote.

SECTION F STANDING ORDER 111(3)

1. Standing Order 111(3) is in place for the times when a minister's marriage is breaking down. It currently reads:

The President shall be informed by the Chair of the District of every case of the breakdown of the marriage **or civil partnership** of a minister. The

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President shall annually appoint one or more persons to be responsible, on behalf of the President, for ensuring that arrangements are made for such pastoral and material help to be given as may be possible and appropriate in the circumstances, particularly to the *[. . .] spouse or [. . .] civil partner* and family of the minister.

2. The current process is as follows. The Conference Office is informed of the breakdown of a minister's marriage; this can be via letter or e-mail to the President from the District Chair, or via communication to the Secretary of the Conference. The spouse of a minister is then assigned a President's representative to provide support. In the case of the breakdown of a marriage where both parties are ministers, a President's representative should be assigned to each to provide pastoral care. Spouses are currently entitled to a half stipend to assist them. The policy is that a maximum of 50% of the annual stipend is paid from the Auxiliary (Special Purposes) Fund. The financial support required will be discussed with the representative. The Director of Finance and Resources is notified of a breakdown of the marriage and the request for payment of a half stipend.
3. As many societal factors have changed since the SO was introduced and as the Church's understanding of marriage has developed in that period, it was noted that, as it is currently worded, the Standing Order seems to be out of date. The Ministries Committee appointed a small working party to examine the process when a minister's marriage breaks down, to explore if and in what ways the Standing Order should be revised, and to report to the Council. The Council received the report of the working party at its meeting in March 2023, and noted the conclusions of the working party that there needs to be greater clarity around the whole process when a breakdown of a minister's marriage is first notified, especially when both parties are ministers. The group suggested that although it is appropriate to have the President notified in the cases, it would also be beneficial if there were a person involved who knew the parties involved, ideally from the local area. A President's Representative is needed but pastoral support provided in the area is valuable. The group felt there were specific areas that need greater consideration and clarity, particularly:
 - Practical needs: including financial support and housing;
 - Pastoral needs: with care being available to lay parties as well as the ordained;
 - Any additional support that may be required, such as if there are children/dependents involved;
 - Support for the local church/ congregation.It was also felt that further reflection needs to be given to the nature of what is the Church's responsibility and what the required level of financial support might be.

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4. The Council agreed that the Standing Order is out of date. It also recognised that there is now a variety of circumstances in which separating couples find themselves and therefore that it would be helpful for more detail to be offered to the Connexion on how these matters should be handled. However, the Council was not of a mind that any of that needs to be in a Standing Order.
5. The Council therefore recommends to the Conference that SO 111(3) is deleted. The Council also directed the small group to produce draft guidance to be included within CPD clearly to explain the process to be followed from the time that the District Chair is informed of the breakdown of a minister's marriage. The guidance should cover the following areas:
 - Practical support for the minister(s), spouse and the church community;
 - Pastoral support;
 - Financial arrangements (including detail on the arrangement to be made when both parties are ministers);
 - Availability of counselling;
 - the timelines within which help should be made available;
 - Safeguarding matters (dependents involved, mental health and wellbeing aspects, any links to discipline cases);
 - Supervision and support for the President's Representatives.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 3/9. **The Conference receives the Report.**
- 3/10. **The Conference revokes SO 111(3).**

SECTION G

RECONCILIATION AND MEDIATION TEAM AND POSITIVE WORKING TOGETHER

- 1 The three-year Reconciliation and Mediation Team (RMT) Pilot Project which has been run in partnership with Place for Hope is due to come to an end in December 2023. This report reflects on the project and the Positive Working Together (PWT) work with Place for Hope and proposes a way forward from December 2023.

PWT Background

- 2 PWT originated from work undertaken by the Connexional Team in response to Memorial M28 from the Basingstoke Circuit presented the Conference of 2013 with proposals to tackle bullying and harassment across the Church.

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3 In 2015 Conference approved the PWT Guidelines for Promoting Good Working Relationships and Managing Conflict in the Church along with a funding package to implement these guidelines.

4 The key focuses of the work emerged from the resolutions agreed by the 2015 Conference:

40/2 The Conference directed that the Guidelines for promoting good working relationships and managing conflict within the Church be promoted in appropriate ways.

40/3 The Conference directed that each District appoints a suitable person to provide information but not advice about the options available to an individual experiencing bullying and harassment issues.

40/4 The Conference directed each District to ensure that its District Reconciliation Group receives annual training and appropriate support, so that it is equipped to deal with bullying and harassment issues should they arise.

40/5 The Conference directed that a sum of £65,000 be made available in the 2015/16 connexional year from the Fund for Training for the implementation of Positive Working Together, followed by £50,000 in 2016/2017 and £25,000 in 2017/2018 and 2018/2019.

5 Since 2015 the following activity has taken place focused on the development of a number of key areas:

- Dedicated website pages containing resources and sign posting to sources of help - <http://www.methodist.org.uk/for-ministers-and-office-holders/guidance-for-churches/positive-working-together/>
- The production of Positive Working Together: A Short Guide.
- A half day workshop for church councils, local church groups and circuits entitled Shared Commitments exploring good working relationships and effective ways of managing conflict within churches.
- The creation of PowerPoint slides for Synod presentations.
- In June 2016, a PWT conference was held at Cliff College attracting 70 delegates nominated by districts and largely drawn from District Reconciliation Groups.
- A survey of District Reconciliation Groups (DRGs) was undertaken. The survey revealed an extremely patchy picture with some districts supporting well-resourced groups and others offering extremely limited provision and in some cases none. There were also significant differences in the levels

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of 'competence' within groups with some DRGs including members with high levels of relevant experience and skill and others with relatively low levels. There was also a lack of understanding in a number of districts of the purpose of DRGs and this sometimes led to them being under-utilised.

- Partnership working was explored with BridgeBuilders and Place for Hope – a Scottish charity with close historical and organisational links to the Church of Scotland. Place for Hope was ultimately chosen as our preferred partner organisation.
- In partnership with Place for Hope the following modules have been produced, along with the accompanying training for trainers, aimed at supporting the development of local churches and circuits:
 - Growing Through Change and Conflict – an introductory one-day module focused on conflict styles, understanding and transforming conflict.
 - Bullying and Harassment – a one day module exploring the dynamics of bullying and harassment and exploring ways of responding with dignity and respect.
 - Spirituality, Scripture and Conflict – a one day module aimed at deepening our understanding of the impact and wisdom of scripture in transforming conflict, and in transitioning through change.
 - Faith in Change and Conflict – Cliff Certificate – the development of a longer 6 day training programme which is offered as a core training resource for DRGs and the development of intermediate level skills in conflict mediation and transformation
 - Journeying through times of change and transition – a half day training course offering an introductory focus on the ways in which change and transition can be most effectively navigated within the local church context.
 - Leading in times of change and transition – 2 x 3.5hr online sessions. As we see great changes occurring, both inside our faith communities and in society, there is a growing need to better understand how to lead well through such times of change. This course is designed for those involved in leading congregations, communities and other groups through change, but is open to all.
 - Transforming Conflict in Ministry – a two-day course run over four consecutive weeks.

- 6 Since 2019 the Learning Network has funded the ongoing work and further development of PWT in partnership with Place for Hope as a core part of our work. These costs have been part of the 3-year funding agreement with Place for Hope for both PWT and RMT.

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- 7 Memorial M15 from the Birmingham Circuit was presented to the Conference in 2022 highlighting the ongoing need for additional work on promoting and embedding the culture change that PWT had envisaged. The memorial was adopted, and further work is currently underway to take forward the resolutions.
- 8 Anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy information has now been included within section 6.3.4 of the Safeguarding policy of The Methodist Church.
- 9 There are new Shared Commitments resources available on the PWT pages of The Methodist Church website enabling local churches to reproduce poster information and individual information cards for distribution to church members.
- 10 The Learning Network has established a regular pattern of delivery of the core training courses that are now available to anyone across the Connexion through online delivery. Alongside the online delivery a number of courses are held in person within the LN regions for local groups.
- 11 Work on *Positive Working Together* represents a considerable achievement for the Methodist Church. The key learning and development foundations have been put in place and provide an opportunity to widely embed the training and positively impact the culture of the Methodist Church and the ways in which it handles issues of conflict and bullying and harassment.
- 12 Further work is required to consider the most appropriate way for the PWT guidelines to be incorporated into Standing Orders as part of the ongoing review work of the Complaints and Discipline processes.
- 13 As highlighted by memorial M15 there is further work to be done to build on these strong foundations.

RMT Background

- 14 As work developed in support of PWT it became clear that there was opportunity to further develop the work of conflict transformation. Discussions took place with Place for Hope about how, and at what cost, a practitioner network might be developed to increase the capacity of the Methodist Church to respond creatively and professionally to conflict, change and transition through the provision of a trained, accredited and supervised team of mediators/facilitators. Place for Hope was already providing a similar service for the Church of Scotland. This work would enable a practitioner network that would be available to respond to significant areas of conflict in local churches, circuits and districts.

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- 15 It was recognised that there is a number of areas of church life in which a practitioner network would be beneficial and work continued developing the idea for a pilot project to enable this to be taken forward.
- 16 Place for Hope produced a project proposal detailing how such a network of practitioners could be established and maintained.
- 17 The RMT pilot project was set up in 2020 with agreement of the Senior Management Group of the Connexional Team.
- 18 The pilot project purpose, content and outcomes were agreed as follows:
- **Purpose**
Place for Hope will oversee a 3-year Reconciliation and Mediation Team Pilot Project (The RMT Project), to pilot the provision of coaching, mediation and facilitated conversations in three Learning Network regions of the Methodist Church, with a view to subsequent roll-out across the Connexion.
 - **RMT Project Content**
The support provided in the RMT Project will include, but not be confined to:
 - Practitioner Training and Support: Ensuring an adequate number of qualified, accredited, trained and supervised Practitioners to meet the need.
 - Coaching: 1:1 support for church leaders through times of change and conflict.
 - Mediation, or Facilitated Conversation: Support people and groups in churches through times of change, transition, or conflict.
 - Positive Working Together: support the continued roll out of training programmes offered through the PWT programme.
 - Other: Any other support required or requested by the Project Steering Group.
 - **RMT Project Outcomes**
Where there is unresolved conflict, churches often look inwards; where they are empowered to deal with change and conflict well, churches look outwards and are more effective missionally. The outcomes of the RMT Project are:
 - Greater understanding and analysis of conflict, its impact, and how it operates in church and faith communities.
 - Strengthened collective and strategic response to faith-based conflict.
 - Conflict, change and transition are navigated in more transformative ways with increased benefits and reduced negative impact.

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- Increased understanding of the dynamics of conflict, brokenness and division leading to culture shift and recognition of the transformational potential of conflict.
 - Reduction in the number of formal complaints being made through the Complaints and Discipline procedure.
- 19** The project draws together different strands of existing and ongoing work within the Methodist Church. It builds on the work already undertaken in developing Positive Working Together, it recognises the need, highlighted by a number of District Chairs, to more effectively resource Districts by being able to offer professional reconciliation/mediation at an early stage in situations of dispute. It also links in with and will be able to inform the work currently being undertaken to review the Complaints and Discipline process.
- 20** In order to provide a suitable size and focus for the pilot project it was agreed that the project would be limited to three of the LN regions.
- 21** The regions selected were North West and Mann, London and East of England regions. This became the Eastern region following the merger of East of England and East Central region in 2020.
- 22** The rationale for choosing the pilot regions for the RMT project was that there was already a cohort of people who had been trained in the Faith in Change and Conflict pilot course and so enabled the initial training cohort to be drawn from those already trained, adding in formal assessment and accreditation with Scottish Mediation, and additional volunteers who were nominated by District Chairs and Learning & Development Coordinators in those initial 3 LN regions.
- 23** The pilot regions for the Faith in Change and Conflict course came from an open invitation to the LN Regions to participate in the pilot programme. A conversation was held with the District Chairs in the three LN regions before progressing with the pilot. The project was also presented to the District Chairs meeting explaining the rationale for choosing the three LN regions and associated districts to form the pilot.
- 24** The Reconciliation and Mediation Team is led by an RMT Project Manager employed by Place for Hope. They have been working closely with the training staff who deliver on Place for Hope's input to PWT. Support services have been provided through Place for Hope to the RMT Project Manager in the areas of finance, administration, line management, business development, client intake, secure data collection, evaluation and communications.

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- 25 A steering group was established to oversee the work of the pilot project with representatives from each of the pilot regions, Place for Hope and the Learning Network.

PWT/RMT funding agreement

- 26 A three-year PWT/RMT funding agreement is currently in place with the following breakdown of costs:

| PWT | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 | 2022/2023 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|
| People costs | £20,889.18 | £21,250.48 | £21,619.05 |
| Other costs including course materials | £9,147.30 | £9,687.62 | £7,279.76 |
| Total PWT Costs | £30,486.48 | £30,938.10 | £28,898.81 |
| RMT | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 | 2022/2023 |
| People costs | £63,491.61 | £64,032.77 | £64,097.51 |
| Training costs | £3,740.00 | £5,890.00 | £4,940.00 |
| Office, equipment, supplies | £2,300.00 | £440.00 | £440.00 |
| Practitioner accreditation, supervision and deployment | £2,873.50 | £9,263.20 | £10,944.00 |
| Advertising, publicity, communication | £1,033.00 | £33.00 | £33.00 |
| Administration and governance | £2,480.00 | £2,480.00 | £2,480.00 |
| Total RMT Costs | £75,918.11 | £82,138.97 | £82,935.95 |

Reconciliation and Mediation Team review

- 27 Launched in July 2021, following a comprehensive 8-month planning period, the reconciliation and mediation service has now been fully operational for 19 months in 3 Learning Network regions: Eastern, London, and North West and Mann.

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28 A total of 20 practitioners were trained and assessed by Place for Hope and accredited through Scottish Mediation in 2021. 18 of these practitioners are now active. 12 individuals responded to the 2022 recruitment drive and 6 have been put forward for training and assessment.

29 Those involved in the project have developed a greater understanding of how conflict operates in faith communities and are sharing this with others as they use their mediation skills to help individuals and groups navigate conflict in more positive ways through the pilot project and their wider ministry.

“As a new practitioner, my ministry and personal life have been challenged and enriched by my encounters as a Mediator. I am more mindful that behind everyone’s interaction is a personal story, and often it takes time for that story to be realised not just by the group but also for the individuals involved. We are all very good at putting masks on and avoiding difficult interaction. One of the most valuable things is that we enable people to feel listened to.” (Deacon Debbie Harkness)

30 It was agreed with the steering group that three facilitated conversations would be offered in each pilot area in 2021-22, and again in 2022-23, to ensure a manageable demand and a limited waiting list. A significant increase of demand has been noted since the project service went live in 2021. It is clear there is a need for mediation. 34 cases have been processed by Place for Hope staff as part of the pilot project to date.

31 Mediation was completed on 11 cases, is ongoing in ten cases and one case is pending. This exceeds the pilot expectations. Two cases did not proceed past the enquiry stage and nine did not go ahead because one or more parties chose not to engage with this voluntary process. One party chose to submit a formal complaint. In Place for Hope’s experience this is not unusual when a service is launched, as long-term, high-level conflicts are often brought initially before the culture of how conflict is dealt with begins to change. Effort has been put into explaining the difference between this independent mediation service and Complaints and Discipline as some parties were looking for ‘justice’ and a party to be ‘blamed’.

32 Client feedback for cases that reached mediation, reveal that the service is meeting the project outcomes as practitioners create environments where people can navigate conflict in more positive ways, understanding of the ‘other’ increases and, in some cases, the formal complaints process is avoided. 83% of clients would highly recommend the service to others.

“The outcome was positive for everyone concerned; it certainly helped and brought a resolution for everyone. Plus, we avoided formal complaints!”
(Feedback from a two-party mediation)

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“It was very liberating for me to be able to say ‘I will refer this to a professional and impartial service but will not be dealing with it myself’ because I don’t have the skills needed. I see too many colleagues trying to sort problems out themselves and it can be so damaging.”
(Feedback from a two-party mediation)

33 Alongside the cases that have been progressed within the pilot regions Place for Hope have also engaged in a number of requests from districts outside of the three pilot regions. At present support has been offered to the following districts:

- Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury x 2
- Plymouth and Exeter x 2
- South East x 3
- Southampton
- Wales Synod Cymru
- Scotland

34 Reconciliation and mediation within Methodism

The pilot project has engaged with a wide variety of stakeholders across Methodism revealing the beginnings of a strengthened collective and strategic response to faith-based conflict. In addition to all relevant District Chairs, the conveners of District Reconciliation Groups and District Stewards, other key partnerships have advanced outcomes in new and complementary ways to the case work undertaken.

35 Complaints and Discipline

A strong, collaborative relationship has developed between the pilot project and Complaints and Discipline to ensure the sharing of information, expertise, and knowledge, and to manage the expectations of parties involved in cases.

‘The impact [. . .] has been very positive and enabled some complaints to be resolved without the need for parties to enter into the formal complaints process. [. . . It] has also provided a resource when there is a need for reconciliation/mediation after the formal complaints process has concluded. Overall, the project has enhanced the general life of the church and the service is very much needed.’
(Deacon Donna Ely, Complaints Worker)

36 Client feedback has explicitly shown that three cases prevented a formal complaint, however, there are not enough data yet to reveal a trend. What is evident is a dramatic rise in Methodist referrals to Place for Hope, a significant number of

high-conflict cases being brought forward, and the passion and commitment of the practitioners recruited through the pilot project to this aspect of their ministry.

37 Facilitated Coaching Conversations

Coaching was offered to the newly ordained in 2021. Focusing on managing change and transition, these conversations had a 100% recommendation rate and 100% of participants indicated they would like to attend Positive Working Together courses. 50% of participants said they felt more confident dealing with conflict in their ministry, with the other 50% saying they 'maybe' felt more confident. An increased understanding of conflict was evident, and participants indicated they would approach conflict in more transformative ways, with one participant saying they realised that avoiding conflict by moving was not a sustainable solution:

"It made me see it is important to deal with it even if I know I'll be leaving, because I'll take it with me. I need to be released [from the conflict] to enable my future ministry."

The impact of one of these conversations was that a presbyter recommended the service to a friend in difficulty, who then asked their District Chair to refer the conflict they are involved in to Place for Hope after their own facilitated coaching conversation. It is currently being mediated.

38 Through the pilot project Place for Hope was invited to:

- Deliver workshops at the Superintendents' Conferences and 3Generate, as well as an online session for the Transformational Leadership teams
 - Feedback was overwhelmingly positive with participants commenting on the expertise of those delivering the workshop and the valuable tools shared for assessing conflict. Speed Leas' Levels of Conflict was a standout for many and enabled participants to reflect on current situations: "The five stages were extremely helpful. Helped me realise I had done all I could to prevent a situation escalating - and now realise an individual is just intent on causing conflict." People also reflected on learning "how to handle a difficult situation so you don't become part of the problem [and] understanding the potential different stages of conflict and how to deal with them."
 - Feedback revealed a significant interest in the topic and a desire for longer workshops and more in-depth exploration of conflict in church situations with participants inspired to take further courses, "it was stimulating and prompted me to want to do more training" and revisit material from ones they had already taken, "I need to revisit the material from when I did Bridgebuilders."

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- Support the Discrimination and Abuse Response Service (DARS) pilot as part of the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity programme

39 Challenges to the pilot project

- Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic: restrictions on in person delivery of training and casework; practitioner and client illness; travel anxiety; lengthy waiting list in 2021
- Referrer expectations
- Implications of stationing on practitioner availability

40 Despite several challenges faced in the first year of the pilot due to the pandemic, there has been an increased demand, satisfaction and requests for complimentary support in the form of training, coaching and integration of reconciliation and conflict transformation into a wide range of Methodist work.

41 Overall, it is pleasing to see at this point in the pilot that the Reconciliation and Mediation Team project is already exceeding its target number of cases, and that with its integrated approach, the support of key regional personnel, and alongside the work of Positive Working Together, is already achieving the outcomes that were envisioned for the project and which enable and embed a transformative approach to faith-based conflict in the three regions of the Methodist Church in Britain.

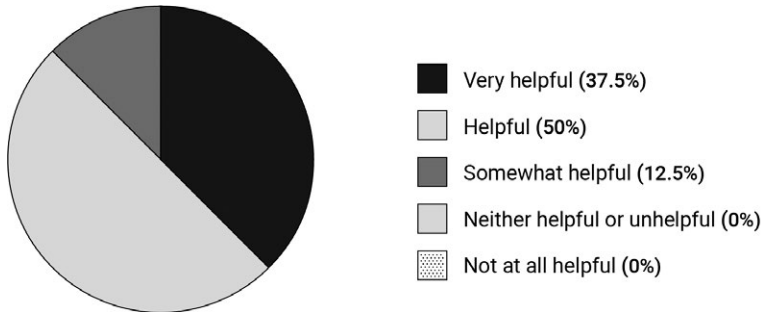
42 The following project outcomes have already been achieved and/or the groundwork has been laid for them to be achieved:

- Greater understanding and analysis of conflict, its impact, and how it operates in church and faith communities.
- Conflict, change and transition are navigated in more transformative ways with increased benefits and reduced negative impact.
- Increased understanding of the dynamics of conflict, brokenness and division leading to culture shift and recognition of the transformational potential of conflict.
- Reduction in the number of formal complaints being made through the Complaints and Discipline procedure.

43 Feedback from a recent survey undertaken in early 2023 with the current District Chairs in the pilot regions alongside feedback from previous District Chairs involved over the life of the project provided the following feedback on the project.

44 In your opinion, how helpful is it to have a reconciliation and mediation service available to your District?
Data received from eight respondents.

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- 45** Would you recommend the reconciliation and mediation service to others?
Data received from six respondents. Only six respondents answered the question as to whether they would recommend the service. Of these five would recommend it and one would not.

Follow up conversations took place to work on addressing the concerns raised about the project and how these can be minimised for future development of the work.

- 46** How has the mediation service benefited work around change and conflict in your District?

“Hard to say as this work is still in progress. Having an independent reconciliation team involved in a situation has enabled all to be held in a safe space which in itself has been healing.”

“Provided a reliable resource to offer to people and churches facing relationship difficulties.”

“In one case a good resolution by an external mediator helped one presbyter stay out of a complaint process.”

“Greater awareness of alternative approaches to handling conflict other than complaints.”

- 47** General comments

“I was hugely enthusiastic initially, but two recent experiences have led to a significant loss of trust and confidence in the project.”

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(As in section 45 of the report follow up conversations took place to address the concerns raised, which led to a strengthening of processes within the project)

“It’s still difficult getting people to engage with mediation before the conflict gets too big to deal with.” (This has been addressed by ongoing communication initiatives and collaboration with PWT)

“I hope the pilot proves successful and the scheme becomes permanent so that it is available when needed. I am confident that the need for reconciliation and mediation will only increase in future.”

“This has service has made a useful and positive contribution to dealing with conflict in the District. It has provided another avenue of intervention which has been both professional and reassuring. That it has offered independent expertise has been particularly useful.”

“The quick response and conversation was really helpful.”

- 48** Concerns raised by District Chairs throughout the pilot phase of the project have been helpful and have been dealt with promptly and a collaborative approach has been taken to seek appropriate solutions that have strengthened the project and its impact.

One area of learning from the pilot project is the importance of the engagement of District Chairs particularly through the advisory function of the steering group and this would continue and be extended if further development of the RMT is recommended.

Proposed way forward – building on a strong foundation

- 49** The Methodist Church in Britain has invested considerably in the RMT pilot as well as the ongoing PWT programme with the view of embedding a culture of peace and reconciliation and minimising the risk of bullying and harassment. Having made this investment over a number of years we see an even stronger future ahead built on this firm foundation with a vision for an integrated programme.

- 50** A vision for a fully integrated RMT and PWT:

“Do not allow yourself one thought of separating from your brothers and sisters, whether their opinions agree with yours or not.” John Wesley

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- 51** Having reviewed the ongoing work needed to further embed PWT and build on the RMT pilot project, the way in which the two areas of work interlink has become very clear. There are a number of aspects of our work where PWT and RMT continue to offer significant benefits. The following proposed way forward comes from conversations in partnership with Place for Hope based on an integration of these two areas of work.
- 52** Since 2016, Place for Hope has worked in partnership with the Methodist Church in Britain through the development of the Positive Working Together (PWT) and a team of trainers from the Learning Network, and a number of volunteers, to support individuals and congregations to grow in their understanding of conflict, live well with difference, and help them to realise their potential as peacemakers. In 2020, the PWT partnership was augmented by the Reconciliation and Mediation Team (RMT) Pilot Project in three Learning Network Regions; Eastern, London and North West and Mann, designed to trial the impact of provision of mediation, facilitated conversation and coaching support through a team of trained and accredited mediators from the Methodist Church.
- 53** It has been pleasing to witness the increasing synergy between the two workstreams of PWT and RMT funded under the current Grant Agreement over the past two years and their combined positive impact for individuals, ministries and communities. Alongside the development of the pilot RMT project, the PWT programme itself entered a new phase of embedding conflict transformation and reconciliation across the Methodist Church in Britain for 2023. The first phase of PWT focused on equipping the Learning Network to deliver specific foundational courses across the Church and has now reached the point that the training of trainers for these courses could become the responsibility of the Learning Network, freeing the focus of PWT to move to developing the next suite of specialised train the trainer programmes/workshops on specific topics addressing identified needs (eg conducting congregational discussions on potentially polarising topics, leading through change and transition, and resources that enable the embedding of skills, understanding and confidence in conflict transformation more widely in the lives and communities of all in the Methodist Church).
- 54** As detailed discussions take place about rolling out the training of RMT mediators and the availability of mediation for churches throughout the Connexion, we envision the benefits of a fully-integrated Joint programme going forward in which the two workstreams of RMT and PWT complement and build on one another under a single programme, through which all requests for support – for mediation, facilitated conversations, coaching or training – can be responded to by drawing on the full team of Place for Hope as well as the growing RMT and PWT networks in the Methodist Church.

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55 This fully integrated programme would be the natural and exciting next step in working positively towards a culture shift in our churches that sees conflict as normal part of diverse communities which can serve as a window through which we can deepen our relationships, community and faith, when a transformative approach is taken. An integrated joint programme would enable the Methodist Church and Place for Hope to increasingly release the spirit of faith-based conflict transformation and the ministry of reconciliation (FBCTR) in the culture, systems, mission, and ministry of the Methodist Church at both grassroots and systemic levels.

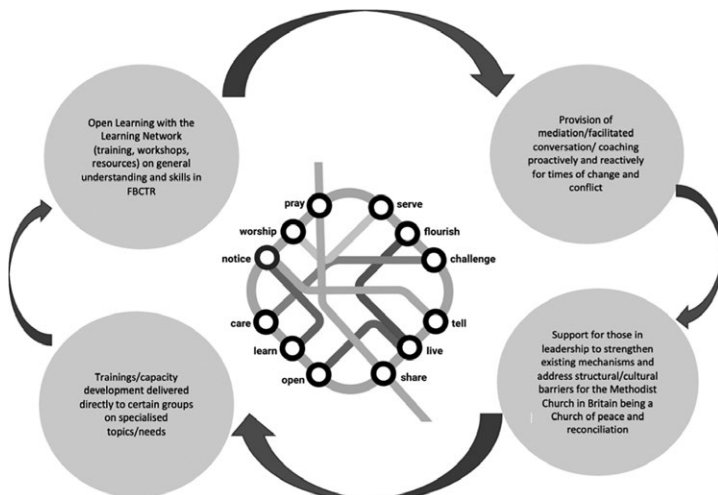
56 Embedding Peace and Reconciliation:

- In denominations and churches there is often the assumption that people have a basic understanding of peace and reconciliation through other faith (Bible reading/study, worship, service etc) and life experience, and discipleship learning and development opportunities. This is usually far from the case, and many may well struggle to understand the importance of peace and reconciliation in their Christian life and how to apply it in their own ministry, mission and personal lives (if such a distinction holds), and how it can underpin our approach to everyday issues of justice, inclusion, the environment as well as personal, community and professional relationships. The depth and extent of the knowledge required to live as people of peace and reconciliation will vary according to their discipleship journey and their ministries.
- The joint programme's integrated approach would support the Methodist Church in Britain to:
 - Strengthen their support of those serving in ministry – lay or ordained – to navigate change, difference and conflict well;
 - Help release the spirit of conflict transformation and the ministry of reconciliation for all in the relationships, culture and systems of the Methodist Church.
 - Support Districts to enable enthusiastic, worshipping, serving, witnessing, nurturing congregations to fulfil their mission and ministry for their context.
- The joint programme would enable these objectives through the offering of a package of vocational training and support aimed at the growth of skills and processes of addressing difference, change and conflict in individual and group discipleship journeys from the grassroots to more systemic levels of the Church (including providing the best combination of support for each situation):
 - a. Training and ongoing coaching, in collaboration with and mostly through the Learning Network on how an understanding of conflict

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transformation and reconciliation and associated skills can be a lens and way of strengthening all 12 aspects of the Methodist Way of Life. Further training would be tailored for the needs of a specific church, Circuit and District with a journey approach of starting where people are at and accompanying them on that journey of understanding, skills and confidence in FBCTR.

- b. Specific training and support may also be provided directly under the Joint programme for specific ministries, groups and events such as Superintendents, District Reconciliation Groups, JDS, 3Generate and others on specific topics of change and conflict that strengthen their ministry and purpose.
- c. Responding to requests for support through facilitation and mediation in situations of conflict and change which involve or affect the Methodist Church in Britain and all who make up the Church. This may include facilitation and provision for individuals, churches, Circuits, Districts Council and Conference.
- d. Such other training and support in the area of faith-based conflict transformation, reconciliation and peace-making as may from time to time be agreed between the parties, particularly those aimed at strengthening the existing mechanisms and addressing the barriers to the Methodist Church in Britain growing as a church of peace and reconciliation.



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Key principles of an integrated approach in the joint programme

57 Growing Internal Capacity for Faith-based Conflict Transformation and Reconciliation (FBCTR)

The joint programme would continue to strengthen the internal capacity for FBCTR by working closely with the Learning Network to deliver an extended range of trainings, particularly focused on grassroots embedding of FBCTR and developing specific training modules that speak to specific specialised needs of certain groups within the Methodist Church, such as Circuit Superintendents, DRGs etc. Through the training and support of a team of Mediation Practitioners, the programme also grows an internal group of specialists for conflict that has elevated beyond the local capacity to address.

58 Emphasis on case studies and practical examples

Moving people from being aware of their calling to be a peacemaker and to the ministry of reconciliation to actively applying it relies on their having a clear picture of what FBCTR looks like when applied in their ministry and mission. There is a need to systematically collect and utilise relevant case studies from the Methodist Church and other Christian denominations on an ongoing basis. These will form a key part of training programmes and ongoing communications within and external to the Church.

59 Emphasis on a journey approach and reflective learning

The design of training, both existing and new will take into account the current knowledge base of participants and the contexts in which they live and minister. This means that training and resources are targeted based on the roles, and current levels of awareness in a specific Church, Circuit and District and ability to apply FBCTR and are practical for the challenges they encounter. A reflective learning approach will be employed throughout to review and build on participants' understanding and practice of FBCTR. In essence: What have they learned/done? What would they do differently? What do they need to know/access to improve their practice as they journey as a disciple of Jesus?

60 A 'twin track' approach

Broadly, this refers to the design and implementation of:

- i) Faith-based conflict transformation and reconciliation specific training and communications where appropriate; and

- ii) Including faith-based conflict transformation elements in other learning and development programmes run in the Church, particularly those that support the 12 aspects of the Methodist Way of Life and cross-cutting initiatives such as the Discrimination and Abuse Response Service (DARS).

61 Ensuring supporting resources and systems are in place

One-off training alone rarely leads to long term changes in the behaviours and practices of participants. It is critical that other factors within the Church are in place to support ongoing learning and applications. This includes ensuring appropriate resources, policies and practice, and conflict coaching support are readily available. It also emphasises the need for visible cultural support for faith-based conflict transformation. Access to Place for Hope for timely technical assistance in the form of mediation/facilitated conversation/coaching is also crucial in situations when conflict has escalated to require an external party to resolve an issue and reconcile parties.

Conclusion

- 62** In enabling the integrated PWT and RMT work to progress it is recommended that a 5-year funding programme is agreed.
- 63** The time frame of 5 years allows the approach to start to embed peace and reconciliation throughout the Church, through both the ongoing systematic building of capacity, the full roll-out of the RMT across all the regions and retaining the ability to respond flexibly to ad-hoc opportunities and needs that arise.
- 64** The 5-year time frame see the capacity development approach gradually build up the understanding and skills for peace, conflict transformation and reconciliation (across key ministry groups as well as more generally across the church). The grant amount and plan each year will retain flexibility to adapt and respond to changing and arising needs, which will be monitored discussed and agreed by the Steering Committee in their quarterly meetings.

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65 Costs for a 5-year programme:

| | 2023-2024 | 2024-2025 | 2025-2026 | 2026-2027 | 2027-2028 | Total Funding |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Ongoing funding for PWT | £30,000 | £30,000 | £30,000 | £30,000 | £30,000 | £150,000 |
| Funding for extending the RMT connexion-wide | £120,000 | £120,000 | £120,000 | £120,000 | £120,000 | £600,000 |
| Integrated funding for PWT/RMT | £150,000 | £150,000 | £150,000 | £150,000 | £150,000 | £750,000 |

This integrated figure is based on a staggered roll out of the RMT so as to enable the RMT to be successfully established across the Connexion. As shown above, this integrated cost includes the ongoing costs of the development of PWT.

Additional considerations

- 66** If the decision is to end the pilot with no further extension of the RMT then the following areas will need to be considered:
- i. How we most appropriately support the ongoing need and provision of mediation, facilitated conversation and coaching in times of conflict and change.
 - ii. Resourcing costs for providing external mediation as part of the Complaints and Discipline processes and in support of the Discrimination and Abuse Response Service (DARS).
 - iii. The ongoing specialised support required for those already trained and accredited as mediators to retain their accreditation.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 3/11. **The Conference receives the Report.**
- 3/12. **The Conference adopts the recommendation for the 5-year programme, in partnership with Place for Hope, to offer the integrated approach in support of Positive Working Together and extending the Reconciliation and Mediation Team as a Connexion-wide programme.**
- 3/13. **The Conference directs the Methodist Council to recommend and approve a revised steering group for the work going forward with appropriate representation from:**
 - I. **Place for Hope**
 - II. **Chairs of District**
 - III. **The Connexional Team**

SECTION H

REVIEW OF PART 11 OF STANDING ORDERS

1. In 2019, the Conference committed to undertaking a review of Part 11 of Standing Orders, having adopted Notice of Motion 2019/202 which stated:

Reviewing Part 11 of Standing Orders: In the light of the significant changes, both in UK society and for the Methodist Church of Great Britain since our Standing Orders regarding complaints and discipline were drawn up, the Conference directs the Methodist Council to set the terms of reference for, and facilitate the work of a thorough review of Part 11 of our Standing Orders. This review should include and address how processes of Safeguarding, Complaints and Discipline, and Connexional Team Grievances, can best relate to each other.

The Conference seeks a set of processes that are able to be enacted in timescales that are fair for all concerned and that are appropriate to the capacity, resources and size of the Methodist Church of Great Britain as it is today.

2. The Council agreed the terms of reference for the Review in October 2019. However, staff changes and the disruption caused by COVID-19 from March 2020 onwards delayed the start of intense work on the Review.

3. Methodist Council, part 1

3. The Church's subsequent participation in the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) in 2020 also highlighted a need to re-examine the working of our complaints and discipline processes, which was partly criticised in evidence given to the Inquiry and reproduced in IICSA's interim report on religious organisations and settings in September 2021.
4. The former Interim General Counsel in the Connexional Team took responsibility for the work in 2020. After initial consultation in December 2020 to obtain input from a wide cross-section of people across the Church, a stakeholder event was held in January 2021, which helped to clarify and provide focus on the specific issues that needed to be addressed. Once these had been identified, the project progressed through work-streams, each of which had the task of looking at a particular aspect of the Review.
5. A report was prepared in October 2021 detailing the work undertaken by the workstreams, and offering suggestions for improvements to the Part 11 process. The report highlighted some notable positives.
6. The report noted firstly that progress in improving the process has already been made. The *Place for Hope* mediation pilot has aided early resolution of complaints at local level before they escalate disproportionately and there has been improved communication and co-ordination between those handling safeguarding matters and those handling complaints and discipline matters.
7. The report also argued that the process largely works well, but needs refinement. Opinions are divided between those who consider that Part 11 should simply be replaced, and those who think that Part 11 actually works quite well in practice but needs some refinement. The report concluded that the current Part 11 process should be retained, but made to work better.
8. The report outlined a number of areas to which attention needed to be given if the processes were to work better including:
 - 8.1 The need for a clear distinction between what is a "complaint" and what might be classed as a "grievance", and for clarification of the different processes for dealing with them.
 - 8.2 The need for the early (or earlier) resolution of complaints and for an initial 'triage system' to assess each complaint and how best it can be resolved (eg be referring to mediation or local reconciliation rather than initiating the formal complaints process), with the aim of avoiding unnecessary escalation.

3. Methodist Council, part 1

- 8.3 The need to review roles (eg, the appropriateness of the Local Complaints Officer (LCO) role being held by Circuit Superintendents and District Chairs)
 - 8.4 The possibility of ways to streamline the current process to reduce delays and perceived complexity (eg by reducing the number of levels within the disciplinary process and/or fast tracking some cases straight to the disciplinary stage).
 - 8.5 The need to take into account IICSA's recommendations, particularly the desire for transparency in the investigation of complaints.
 - 8.6 The possibility of entering into agreements with other denominations to determine each other's complaints, or establishing an "Ecumenical Ombudsman" to maintain impartiality and objectivity when assessing complaints.
 - 8.7 The need to review the types of sanction that can be imposed and how they can be enforced.
 - 8.8 The need to review the terminology used in the process (which is perceived to be legalistic and not user-friendly).
 - 8.9 The need for detailed work to align the Part 11 process with the Church's Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) strategy as it was adopted at the 2021 Conference.
 - 8.10 The importance of ensuring care for survivors of abuse.
 - 8.11 The need for regular, obligatory training for all involved in managing the process.
 - 8.12 Noting that the current process relies heavily on volunteers (and recognising delays caused by volunteers' lack of availability), the need to review the resources available to manage the process.
 - 8.13 The need to consider enabling complaints panels to meet online rather than in person by default (as meetings can be convened more quickly if held online), and consider other ways in which technology can be used to support the overall process, integrating practices that were adopted out of necessity during lockdown.
9. The report was considered by the Complaints and Discipline Sub-committee of the Law and Polity Committee in November 2021, which concluded that more work was required and referred the report to a small group for further consideration. The small group met once and concluded there was too much outstanding to enable a full report to be produced for the 2022 Conference and that it would be confusing to share the report more widely as it was. The Council was therefore informed that more work was needed and reported to the 2022 Conference that the Review would benefit from a further year's work, not least because:
- 9.1 Not all the workstreams had reported and it was hoped there might be further material to be incorporated into the final document.

3. Methodist Council, part 1

- 9.2 IICSA's final report was expected to be published in Autumn 2022 and, bearing in mind the criticism in IICSA's interim report, it was appropriate to wait to see whether IICSA made further recommendations about how the complaints of victims/survivors are addressed in Church processes.
- 9.3 The 2021 Conference adopted the Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) and more work was needed to integrate the recommendations in that strategy into a proposed revision of Part 11.
- 10. The Council also indicated its intention to bring a full report on the Review to the 2023 Conference, with recommendations on improvements and changes to the process.
- 11. There has also been a number of Memorials which the Conference has referred to those responsible for this review, namely:
 - 11.1 M28, M29 (2019) – Streamlining Discipline Processes with regard to Safeguarding Panel Outcomes following Risk Assessments
 - 11.2 M21 (2021) – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
 - 11.3 M15 (2022) – “Positive Working Together”
 - 11.4 M20 (2022) – Safeguarding
- 12. A number of other factors have demanded consideration in relation to this area of work, namely:
 - 12.1 IICSA's final report was published in October 2022, containing 20 recommendations. HM Government is yet to respond to these and any implications (eg around mandatory reporting) would need to be taken into account in the review.
 - 12.2 A number of difficult cases has served to highlight issues around the effect and operation of SO 013 (Suspension) in both the Safeguarding and the Part 11 processes.
 - 12.3 The 2022 Conference adopted the Commitments and Expectations under the Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers. The language of “expectation” carries with it the possibility of implications for the Church's disciplinary processes, if and when it is alleged that those expectations have not been met and raises the question of how, therefore, should the Commitments and Expectations be treated under Part 11.
- 13. The Secretary of the Conference sought the guidance of the Law and Polity Committee in October 2022 regarding how to progress the work that was still required. The Committee identified the need to appoint an external consultant to advise on the process, following which a detailed scoping paper was prepared and a specially-convened scoping group met on 24 January 2023 to agree the

way forward.

14. The scoping group agreed that approximately another 12 months' work was required, and endorsed the Law and Polity Committee's proposal that an external consultant be appointed. The Complaints and Discipline Sub-committee met on 30 January 2023 and also endorsed this approach.
15. Work is now in progress to advertise for an external consultant, ideally someone with a legal, rather than management consultancy, background.
16. The Council therefore makes this interim report to the Conference, detailing the work that has been done and the areas that still (or newly) need consideration and proposes to report finally, with draft Standing Orders, to the 2024 Conference.

*****RESOLUTION**

- 3/14. The Conference receives the Report.**

4. Report of the Presbyteral Session Business Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Michaela A Youngson Assistant Secretary of the Conference asc@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

1. The Presbyteral Session Business Committee for 2023 comprises the ex-President (the Revd Sonia M Hicks), the Revds Jacqueline Bellfield, Catherine Dixon, Philip J Jackson, Stephen J Lindridge, Loraine N Mellor, Stephanie Njeru.
2. The Presbyteral Session proceeds for much of its business by way of conversation. Under Clause 23(m) of the Deed of Union, the Presbyteral Session may discuss any subject in the Agenda of the Representative Session or any subject within the jurisdiction of the Conference and communicate its views thereon to the Representative Session by resolution or otherwise.
3. Members of the Presbyteral Session of the Conference may submit Notices of Motion for the Conference to consider (see below for the procedures). They may also ask that the Session be able to confer from a presbyteral perspective about particular items in the published Agenda of the Conference. All such requests will be considered by the Business Committee and time found for them where possible.
4. So far the following have been identified by the Committee:
 - Walking with Micah;
 - Oversight and Trusteeship as it relates to the Presbyteral Session;
 - Triennial Membership Returns;
 - Authorisations to preside.

In addition, the Presbyteral Session will be invited to consider leadership issues.

5. The Presbyteral Session of the Conference will meet in closed session at 17.15 on Friday 23 June, and this is expected to last for up to an hour.
6. The Presbyteral Session defines by resolution who may normally be present at closed sessions. Attendance when it sits as a court of appeal is governed by Standing Order 1145(7).

The Conference is reminded of a distinction made in Section G of the Law and Polity Committee report to the 2008 Conference entitled *Attendance at the Closed Session of the Ministerial Session of the Conference*. There is a difference between the Conference's conferring on general questions of policy and principle, on the one hand, and its decision-making on particular cases to do with identifiable

4. Report of the Presbyteral Session Business Committee

individuals, on the other. Because of the need for confidentiality and for other legal reasons, the latter needs to be dealt with in closed session and only those who will bear the responsibility for the decisions that are made should hear or otherwise receive the information about the cases concerned. This means that those presbyters who are not members of the Representative Session of the Conference, but are attending the Presbyteral Session of the Conference with the permission of a Presbyteral Session of a Synod and at their own expense are not able to be present in the closed sessions of the Presbyteral Session of the Conference: in other words, they do not participate in the decision-making in those closed sessions, nor do they hear the information that is shared within them.

At an appropriate point Resolution 5/3 will therefore be moved.

7. Details about candidates, probationers, those proposed for transfer and other permissions and authorisations will be made available to voting members of the Conference. Information regarding candidates is confidential to those who are present in the closed session and the booklet of details will be collected in at the end of that closed session. If there are any questions regarding particular cases, please contact the Revd Dr Claire Potter (potterc@methodistchurch.org.uk) as soon as possible in order that any necessary information can be collated in time for this item of business.

8. **The Record**

For the sake of accuracy it is desirable that the Presbyteral Session delegates to the Representative Session the responsibility for adopting the Record of its Session, thus allowing time for members to check its details.

At an appropriate point Resolution 5/4 will therefore be moved.

9. **Notices of Motion**

The procedure for the submission of Notices of Motion is set out in SO 132, which can be found in the Rules of Procedure, printed at the beginning of Agenda Volume One. The deadline for submission of Notices of Motion is 17.15 on Thursday 22 June; however it would assist in the planning of the Session if Notices of Motion could be submitted to the Assistant Secretary by 16.00 on Wednesday 21 June.

***RESOLUTION

- 4/1. **The Conference adopts the Report.**

5. Conference Arrangements

A. Future Conferences

The Methodist Council is required to recommend to the Conference the date for the commencement of the next Conference and, provisionally, that for the Conference after next and, when known, to print annually the plan for the location and venue of future meetings of the Conference. The responsibility for determining the venue rests with the Conference Planning Executive (SO 140(3)(i)).

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|------|------------------------|------------------|
| 2024 | <i>to be confirmed</i> | 27 June – 3 July |
| 2025 | <i>to be confirmed</i> | 26 June – 2 July |
| 2026 | <i>to be confirmed</i> | 25 June – 1 July |

***RESOLUTION

5/1. The Conference adopts the Report.

B Associate Members

***RESOLUTION

5/2. The Conference invites the following Conferences, Churches and Christian bodies to appoint associate members of the Conference in 2024:

If there are to be six¹:

The Church of England
The Church in Wales
The Scottish Episcopal Church
The United Reformed Church
The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
Malankara Orthodox Church

If there are to be four:

The Church of England
The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

¹ The number of associate members for the Conference of 2024 is dependent on the Conference's decisions in respect of the Composition of the Conference (that report to be found elsewhere in the Agenda).

5. Conference Arrangements

The United Reformed Church
The Scottish Episcopal Church

If there are to be twenty:

Africa

Presbyterian Church Cameroon
Methodist Church Gambia
Methodist Church Nigeria
Methodist Church Sierra Leone
Methodist Church of Southern Africa

Asia

Uniting Church of Australia
Church of Bangladesh
Methodist Church Fiji
United Church in Papua New Guinea
Church of South India

Europe

OPCEMI Italy
Igreja Evangelica Metodista Portuguesa
Iglesia Evangelica Española
UMC Northern Europe and Ukraine
UMC Southern and Central Europe

The Americas

Iglesia Metodista Bolivia
Iglesia Metodista El Salvador
Methodist Church of the Caribbean and the Americas
Iglesia Metodista México
Iglesia Metodista Perú

If there are to be fourteen:

Africa

Methodist Church Gambia
Methodist Church Nigeria
Methodist Church of Southern Africa

5. Conference Arrangements

Asia

Uniting Church of Australia
Church of Bangladesh
Methodist Church Fiji
United Church in Papua New Guinea

Europe

OPCEMI Italy
Iglesia Evangelica Española
UMC Northern Europe and Ukraine

The Americas

Iglesia Metodista Bolivia
Iglesia Metodista El Salvador
Methodist Church of the Caribbean and the Americas
Iglesia Metodista Peru

C. Presbyteral Session

1. The Presbyteral Session defines by resolution who may normally be present at closed sessions. Attendance when it sits as a court of appeal is governed by Standing Order 1145(7).
2. For the sake of accuracy, it is desirable that the Presbyteral Session delegates to the Representative Session the responsibility for adopting the Record of its Sessions, thus allowing time for members to check its details.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 5/3. (Presbyteral Session) **The Presbyteral Session of the Conference resolves that whenever it goes into closed session its membership, except when Standing Order 1145(7) applies, or the Conference otherwise resolves, shall be confined to presbyters who are entitled to vote on the business under consideration, with the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice in attendance as appropriate.**
- 5/4. (Presbyteral Session) **The Presbyteral Session of the Conference delegates to the Representative Session the adoption of the printed and written portions of the Daily Record for both days of its meeting.**

5. Conference Arrangements

- 5/5.** (Presbyteral Session) **The Conference directs that the total time available for the Presbyteral Session of the Conference of 2024 shall not be less than eight hours.**
- 5/6.** (Presbyteral Session) **The Conference invites the Vice-President of the Conference of 2023/2024 to attend the Presbyteral Session of the 2024 Conference, apart from any closed sessions, with the right to speak but without a vote.**
- 5/7.** **In accordance with Standing Order 105(1A) the Conference directs that the following Districts shall each elect at least one deacon to be a member of the Conference of 2024:**

Birmingham, Bristol, East Anglia, Manchester and Stockport, Newcastle upon Tyne, Nottingham and Derby, Southampton, Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury, Bedfordshire Essex and Hertfordshire, London, South East

6. Special Resolutions

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | Joanne Anderton, Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

Introduction

- 1 Under Standing Order 126, special resolutions of the Conference are required to be confirmed the following year after appropriate consultation before they can become effective. For the purpose of consultation, they are either referred to the Methodist Council (unless moved on the Council's behalf, in which case they are referred to the Law and Polity Committee) or dealt with as provisional legislation under Standing Order 122 and submitted to the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee. The bodies consulted may approve or disapprove the special resolution but may not amend it.
- 2 The Conference of 2022 referred one such resolution to the Methodist Council and one to the Law and Polity Committee. The background information and proposed amendments to the Model Trusts and Deed of Union are shown below.

Background information

- 3 The Law and Polity Committee has identified various corrections and modifications to the Model Trusts and Standing Orders consequent upon decisions already taken by the Conference.
- 4 Amendments to the Model Trusts of this nature require a special resolution, which means a resolution passed by a special majority (three quarters of the members of the Conference present and voting) in year one and then, after appropriate consultation, confirmed by the following year's Conference (again by a special majority).
- 5 Consultation on these amendments has been undertaken with the Methodist Council, and they were also submitted to the Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Scotland and Shetland Synods.

Special Resolution

- 6 On the advice of the Law and Polity Committee, the Conference, by special resolution, agreed to amend the Model Trusts as set out below and directed that

6. Special Resolutions

consultation on the proposed amendments be with the Methodist Council under Standing Order 126(1)(c).

- 6.1 Paragraph 2 of the Model Trusts: The content of what was paragraph 2 of the Model Trusts is now in sub-paragraph 2(1). Consequential amendments to other paragraphs of the Model Trusts to correct cross-references are proposed as follows:

Special Resolution: In paragraphs 3(2)(a), last line, and 4(1), line 4, of the Model Trusts replace 'paragraph 2' by 'sub-paragraph 2(1)'.

- 6.2 Paragraph 16 of the Model Trusts: The content of what was paragraph 16 of the Model Trusts is now in sub-paragraph 16(1). A consequential amendment to another paragraph of the Model Trusts to correct cross-references is proposed as follows:

Special Resolution: In paragraph 19(1)(b), last line, of the Model Trusts replace 'paragraph 16' by 'sub-paragraph 16(1)'.

- 6.3 Circuit Advance Funds: There is a reference in paragraph 18(2)(b) of the Model Trusts to 'all existing Circuit Advance Funds'. Such funds no longer exist, so it is proposed the reference be deleted.

Special Resolution: The Conference amends paragraph 18(2) of the Model Trusts as follows:

18(2) This paragraph shall apply to —~~(a)~~ all moneys which shall be paid or payable to the trustees (whether by one or more or successive or recurrent payments) on or pursuant to any sale, letting or other disposition of the property or any part thereof or of any interest therein made by the managing trustees in exercise of any power in that behalf conferred on them under any provision of paragraphs 15 or 16 of this Schedule; ~~and~~ ~~(b)~~ all existing Circuit Advance Funds.

- 7 The Council approved the Resolution.

***RESOLUTION

- 6/1. The Conference confirms the amendments to the Model Trusts as set out above.

6. Special Resolutions

Background information

- 8 In light of the merger of Synod Cymru and the Wales Synod to form Wales Synod Cymru with effect from 1 September 2022, the Conference approved a suite of amendments to Standing Orders, including the deletion of SO 491 relating to the constitution and work of Y Cyngor.

Special Resolution

- 9 As a result of this, a consequential amendment to clause 1(iv) of the Deed of Union is required as follows:

1. Particular Expressions

(iv) 'Church Courts' means the Conference, ~~Y Cyngor~~, the Synods, the Circuit Meetings, the Local Preachers' Meetings, the Church Councils and the boards and committees appointed by or reporting to those bodies;

- 10 By Special Resolution 41/4, the Conference resolved to amend Clause 1(iv) of the Deed of Union as set out above, and directed that the required consultation under Standing Order 126(1) shall be with the Law and Polity Committee.
- 11 The Law and Polity Committee approved the Resolution.

***RESOLUTION

- 6/2. **The Conference confirms the amendments to the Deed of Union as set out above.**

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| Contact name and details | Anna McCrum, Interim Faith Partnerships Lead Anna.Mccrum@actionforchildren.org.uk |
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Our mission to secure safe and happy childhoods for the most vulnerable children is as important now as it was in 1869 when the Revd Dr Thomas Bowman Stephenson created the first national children's home. Demand for our services continues to rise as the devastating impact of the cost of living crisis hits children and families across the country. We are hugely grateful to all our Methodist supporters for their continued commitment to our work. In such challenging times for so many, your support is even more valued and vital.

Leadership

- 1.2 The Revd Dr Mike Long continues to be our Methodist appointed trustee, playing an active role in the charity including as Chair of our England Committee. Mike is a much-valued member of the Board and we are thankful for the time, wisdom and expertise he offers to the charity.
- 1.3 In March 2023 we said a fond farewell to Melanie Armstrong as CEO. Having been in post since 2020, Melanie steered us through the pandemic, stabilising our finances and introducing our new strategy. Her replacement is Paul Carberry, who has worked for Action for Children for over 30 years, most recently as National Director for Scotland and interim National Director for England. Paul brings a wealth of experience of children's services to his role at a critical time for the operation of our services.

2. Delivering our services

- 2.1 Action for Children delivers 447 services across the UK. We help make sure children get the best start in life and have a loving place to call home. We can provide food and warmth in a crisis. And we can offer the right mental health support, so children thrive. The impact of the cost of living crisis continues to affect millions of children and young people in the UK including those whom we serve.

7. Action for Children

- 2.2 Against this background, we continue to implement our ambitious strategy which sets out our roadmap to 2025, balancing growth in a number of areas alongside long-term financial sustainability. The strategy concentrates on four core pillars – family support, children in care, disabled children, and mental health and wellbeing - with seven goals to help deliver them. The aim is clear – to help more vulnerable children at a time when many more children and their families are under increasing pressure.

Growing our numbers of homes

- 2.3 Action for Children is committed to growing our numbers of homes for children in care with substantial investment being made to purchase and renovate properties. Two recently acquired homes are undergoing renovation and will be registered and operational in 2023: one in the north east of England and one in north Wales. Plans for several other homes are also underway. All these homes will look after up to 4 children who will be in the care of the local authority and who may be experiencing problems associated to early childhood trauma including behavioural, mental health and attachment related problems. Our dedicated teams will be trained in trauma informed models of care enabling them to best support these children.

Mental health support

- 2.4 Our national online service, Parent Talk, provides accessible and trustworthy advice, support, and reassurance for thousands of parents and carers. In the year to April 2022 nearly 470,000 people accessed our online service with 9,000 people receiving online 1:1 support. Recent research from Parent Talk has highlighted some of the concerns and challenges facing parents and families. We found that there has been a huge increase in parents seeking support for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities; child mental health was the top issue about which parents sought advice with via Parent Talk's 1:1 coaching service; and there has been a steady increase in parents seeking help for a child who feels too anxious to attend school. Parent Talk continues to offer support to families with advice on common concerns affecting millions including parent burnout.
- 2.5 Our Blues programme gives young people the tools to look after their emotional wellbeing. Over six weeks it teaches emotional resilience and reduces low mood and anxious thoughts. Blues involves a one-hour group session at school each week plus home tasks. Students learn how to challenge negative thoughts and talk about different coping strategies. Regular group work builds rapport and

confidence. The home tasks are a chance to practise the new skills. So far, we've delivered The Blues Programme in over 200 schools, to more than 7,700 young people with 79% of students saying it has improved their mental health and 97% saying they would recommend it to a friend.

A focus on care leavers

- 2.6 Support for care leavers is an area of work that we have given particular focus in the last year. Supporting young people moving from the care system into independent living is at the heart of our ongoing collaboration with the John Lewis Partnership, who have an ambition to become an employer of choice for young people leaving the care system.
- 2.7 Applying principles set out by The Care Leavers Covenant, we are proud to have recently gained 'Care Leaver Friendly Employer - Gold Partner' status. This demonstrates our ongoing commitment to supporting care experienced people to get a job in our organisation and to thrive while they are with us.
- 2.8 Action for Children Scotland is working with the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board to investigate access, uptake and completion rates among care experienced young people in apprenticeships.
- 2.9 Care experienced young people in north east Wales have received energy efficiency and wellbeing packs this winter. This has been funded by Action for Children staff from our service, Skills Plus and a young person who is supported by it, who raised money by running half marathons in Wrexham and the London marathon.

Nothing about me, without me

- 2.10 In September 2022, we launched our first Children and Young People's Participation and Engagement Strategy, "Nothing About Me, Without Me". The strategy is a central part of our on-going commitment to the participation of children and young people in the decisions that affect their lives.
- 2.11 The strategy and the plan we have built to deliver it set out what we aim to achieve by 2025. It reaches right across the organisation and lays out our ambition as to how we will amplify the voices of the children and young people we support and, in turn, increase the level of influence they have over our work. Our recently appointed Young Ambassadors Board is an example of this work. We were delighted to receive 60 applications from young people for 15 places on the Board.

7. Action for Children

Commitment to staff

- 2.12 In recognition of its commitment to developing young people across the organisation, Action for Children in Scotland has been awarded the Investing in Young People (IYIP) Platinum Award, the highest accreditation level available to an organisation in Scotland. Action for Children is one of only 10 organisations to achieve the award which recognises a strong commitment to harnessing the talent of young people and providing a pathway for them to progress in the charity.
- 2.13 In addition, Action for Children has moved up to silver level accreditation following our latest Investors in People (IIP) assessment. IIP found Action for Children had improved across the whole IIP assessment framework since we were last assessed in 2019. Key improvements include leadership development, diversity and inclusion, and wellbeing.

3 Influencing policy and campaigning for change

- 3.1 Amidst the worst cost of living crisis in decades, we have worked hard to campaign for targeted support to the most vulnerable and shine a light on the significant barriers that millions of families have to work. In February 2023, we published a major report, *All Worked Out*, on the structural barriers that families face in accessing work and adequate support from the social security system when work is not a realistic option. We have developed a powerful [digital tool](#) giving a snapshot of levels of child poverty and financial hardship in each constituency. We encourage our Methodist supporters to use this tool to raise awareness with their MP of levels of child poverty in the local area.
- 3.2 In the autumn of 2022, in response to Government proposals to remove the link between benefit uplift and inflation, we launched a successful online action. Thank you to all our Methodist supporters who joined us to raise this critical issue with Government and help to overturn the proposals, and ensure that benefits are pegged to inflation. There is much more to do in this area and we encourage supporters to read our proposals in the *All Worked Out* report on reframing the benefits system to create a more effective way of reviewing benefit increases.

Influencing the shape of children's social care

- 3.3 Following a review of children's social care in England, the government proposed a new strategy, *Stable Homes, Built on Love*. The government says it wants

to 'rebalance children's social care away from costly crisis intervention to more meaningful and effective help for families.' This is the argument Action for Children has been putting to politicians for some time – with lots of input and evidence from frontline teams to back us up. At the time of writing the consultation period is open and Action for Children is working on its response.

Early years policy and campaigns

- 3.4 Imran Hussain, our Director of Policy and Campaigns, has been chosen as an expert adviser to the Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood set up by our charity's Patron, The Princess of Wales. In February 2023 Imran joined other experts for a meeting with the Princess of Wales at Windsor Castle.
- 3.5 The Policy and Campaigns team have been working with colleagues at Spring Nurseries by Action for Children to provide evidence to the Education Select Committee's inquiry into childcare and early years. Emma Gardner, Director of Quality and Spring Nurseries, was called as a witness to the inquiry in February 2023.

4 Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II

- 4.1 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was Action for Children's patron for nearly 50 years from 1967 to 2016. Following the announcement of her death, Sarika Patel, Chair of Trustees, Action for Children said: "We are proud and privileged to have had The Queen as our Patron for almost 50 years from 1967 to 2016. She had long been a supporter of our charity and our children's welfare before she took on the patronage of what was then known as the National Children's Home. We are so grateful to Her Majesty for her enduring and dedicated support of our work with children, young people and families."

5 The Methodist relationship

- 5.1 From prayers and good wishes to campaigning to improve support for young people to fundraising, we are immensely grateful to the Methodist Church for its continued support for our work. We are inspired by fundraising stories from across the Church including sponsored head shaves, walks, pop up shops and concerts. In the year 2021-2022 Methodists raised an amazing amount for us – £644,000.
- 5.2 In addition, we are pleased to have been able to work with the Methodist Church and the wider faith sector by supporting campaigns on the cost of living crisis.

7. Action for Children

This valuable engagement continues as the crisis for millions of children and their families grows.

- 5.3 Service visits for Methodist leaders have begun again after a hiatus due to the pandemic. Recent visits organised have included one for the President of the Conference at our children and family service in Norwich.
- 5.4 Resources for Lent, Christmas and Action for Children Sunday (9 July this year) have been shared across the Church and we welcome feedback and news from special services and events that churches and individuals have organised using these.
- 5.5 Karis Kolawole, our Faith Partnerships Lead, is on maternity leave and her replacement as interim Faith Partnerships Lead is Anna McCrum.

6 Fundraising

- 6.1 We had our most successful Secret Santa fundraising campaign ever last year, helped by our first TV advert which ran in the weeks leading to Christmas. As always, Methodists brought creative ways to support Secret Santa including carol singing at local train stations, hosting carol concerts and services at church, as well as special collections during Advent.
- 6.2 We are thrilled to be working with the John Lewis Partnership on their long-term commitment to young people across the UK who are in care and have care experience. Through their Building Happier Futures fund, they are helping us to support more care-experienced young people, with particular focus on transitioning to adulthood and employment. The John Lewis Christmas advert shone a light on the care system by featuring the story of a man learning to skateboard in preparation for fostering Ellie, a young teenager, and also highlighting that an estimated 100,000 children and young people would spend last Christmas in care, in the UK. Thank you to all who donated in John Lewis and Waitrose stores and online during the run up to Christmas.

***RESOLUTIONS

7/1. The Conference receives the Report.

7/2. The Conference notes that the trustees of Action for Children for the current year are:

Mrs Sarika Patel (Chair of Trustees), Mr Markus Ruetimann, Ms Dawn Warwick (Vice Chair of Trustees), the Revd Dr Michael J A Long, Mr Enda Johnson, Mr Steve Bell, Mr Gary Edwards, Mr Peter Curran, Mrs Lynne Atkin, Ms Leslie Evans

8. The Trustees for the Bailiwick of Guernsey Methodist Church Purposes

The following appointed Trustees, together with the Chair of the Channel Islands District (The Revd Dawn Saunders) served during the year:

Trustees: The Revd Howard Stringer, Superintendent Minister
Mr C Falla, Mr J Sharratt, Mr N Lewis
Mrs E Male, Mrs C Teed, and Mrs W Le Tissier

Secretary: Mrs M Lewis

- 1 We thank retiring Trustees Clive Falla and Jeremy Sharratt and welcome in their place Bryon Rees and Mark Dorey.
- 2 No property transactions were entered into this year.
- 3 The Trustees continue to exercise their responsibilities according to The Methodist Church (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law, 1987.

*****RESOLUTION**

- 8/1. The Conference receives the Report.**

9. The Trustees for Jersey Methodist Church Purposes

The appointed Trustees, together with the Chair of the Channel Islands District and the Superintendent of the Jersey Circuit (the Revd Dawn Saunders) are:

Mr R J L Le Maistre, Mr D Speight, Mrs L Wheeler and Miss M A Lee (Secretary).

1. There were no property transactions in 2022
2. The Trustees extend their thanks to Mrs Sally Edwards for her service as one of the Trustees for Jersey Methodist Church Purposes since her appointment in 2013.
3. The Trustees were pleased to note the care and maintenance of Methodist Church property in the Island and expressed their appreciation to those concerned.
4. The Trustees are discharging their duties under The Methodist (Jersey) Church Law, 1986.

***RESOLUTION

- 9/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**

10. Methodist Homes (MHA)

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr Chris Swift Director of Chaplaincy and Spirituality chris.swift@mha.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|--|

1. General report

- 1.1 During the past year many aspects of MHA's operations gradually returned to greater normality. The guidance on wearing masks changed, though with care homes in England being the last locations where the restriction was lifted. It came as a relief to staff and visitors when mandatory face coverings were no longer required (except in special circumstances), not least to many residents who rely on facial expressions and lip reading in order to communicate.
- 1.2 In 2023 MHA marks its 80th anniversary. Set up before the advent of the National Health Service, today the charity is the largest charitable care provider across England, Scotland, and Wales. It cares for and supports more than 18,000 older people through its 88 care homes, 69 retirement living communities and 50 community-based schemes, which help alleviate loneliness and isolation among older people living independently in the community.
- 1.3 We continue to invest in and embrace technology for the benefit of the older people whom we care for and support – this has included the development of an MHA Active App, digital care plans being piloted, and our later life hub on the MHA website.
- 1.4 During the year we developed a Blueprint for retirement living, focusing more on housing with care. As part of this revised strategy, we withdrew from the management of services at Adlington House in Otley, Brooklands House in Stafford, and Adlington House in Urmston.
- 1.5 In the course of 2023 blueprints for care homes and community support will be completed as we work to ensure that MHA services evolve to meet the needs, challenges and opportunities for future generations and which continue to embody its enduring values, informed by MHA's Methodist heritage and the Revd Walter Hall's founding vision.
- 1.6 We also closed MHA Richmond care home on the south coast due to over provision in the area, with the majority of residents and most of the staff transferring to MHA Lauriston care home just a few miles down the road.

10. Methodist Homes (MHA)

- 1.7 Growing out of MHA's overall strategic plan there are now five specialist strategies – dementia, music therapy, end of life, green care, and spirituality. Alongside this we have launched a nursing strategy, bringing additional focus to this important area of our work.
- 1.8 Volunteering continues to be a vital part of MHA's work, bringing benefits to residents, members, colleagues and the volunteers themselves. The role of people willing to give their time to be part of MHA is an invaluable addition to the care and support we provide, and a new 'volunteering strategy' is in development.
- 1.9 Our music therapy team were featured as part of the [Light up my Life](#) report with Casio and Music For Dementia. This gave us lots of great media coverage. The benefit of music for everyone, and especially for people living with dementia, continues to be reported across the media and in new research papers.
- 1.10 During the year MHA Communities provided support to more than 15,000 older people across the 192 local sites. Our membership base sat at nearly 11,500 older people on 31 January 2023. Our 151 employed colleagues and 2,130 volunteers delivered a monthly average of 1,133 face-to-face groups, clubs, classes and activities in various community settings, including in a number of Methodist churches across England and Wales.
- 1.11 MHA employs 140 chaplains, working across our residential services. This is the second year in which we have conducted a survey to record the activities of chaplains during one week in February. In 2022, given further lockdown restrictions which prevented gatherings in Retirement Living, the support offered by chaplains was weighted more than usual towards one-to-one pastoral care. Care for staff colleagues also featured prominently in the findings of the annual survey.
- 1.12 We continue to campaign for greater fairness in adult social care. Everyone appears to see the need for reform, but there is a lack of political will to bring it about. MHA's #FixCareForAll campaign has brought focus to our calls for change and drawn considerable support from across society. MHA made a significant contribution in support of the Archbishops' Commission on Reimagining Care. This included access to one of our services and a meeting with the Board's 'Future of Care' working group.
- 1.13 Since the start of the pandemic, it seems that MHA has hardly been out of the media. At the end of 2022 this included the Archbishop of Canterbury recording his BBC New Year message at MHA Bradbury Grange in Whitstable, and footage of MHA Hall Grange used in the filming of the King's Christmas message.

10. Methodist Homes (MHA)

- 1.14 While we lobby for changes that will aid the recruitment and retention of staff (not least in fees and pay) MHA makes every effort to recognise the excellent work of colleagues across the charity. We have continued to hold our annual 'OSCARS' event which recognises the outstanding work of individuals and teams across the whole of MHA.

2. Challenging Operating Environment

- 2.1 We continue to face an increasing recruitment and retention challenge, along with the whole of the social care sector. In rising to this challenge MHA continues to be a Real Living Wage employer, and from April 2023 exceeds this rate for waged care workers. In October 2022 MHA gave this group a supplementary pay award. At the time of preparing this report there are 165,000 vacancies in social care. The consequence is a much higher number of agency care and support staff which erodes continuity of care and increases costs.
- 2.2 In the wake of national lockdowns MHA has faced a confluence of adverse financial impacts. With reduced workforce numbers across the sector, MHA has seen the cost of agency workers triple to £11 million along with steep hikes in energy, rising from £6 million to £18 million in 18 months. Understandably, care homes and community spaces for older people cannot be cold and this element of our costs is consequently disproportionately high. MHA is only eligible for less than £1 million of government support with increased energy costs. In addition, MHA going forward must tackle a backlog of building maintenance and refurbishments. As a result MHA's operating margins are very tight, and a care home fee rise of over 11% in 2023 is unavoidable. This further widens the gap between the actual cost of care and the fees local authorities pay as they contend with their longstanding funding shortfalls, leaving families to top up and self-funders paying more.
- 2.3 In the cost-of-living crisis our work in communities has been especially important. We convened an inter-departmental group to focus on the challenges that were emerging, providing advice and guidance as well as making practical changes to reduce energy costs. MHA Communities research (www.mha.org.uk/news-and-blogs/news/mha-warns-older-people-will-become-increasingly-isolated-rising-costs-start-bite/) has highlighted the reality that there are increasing numbers of older people who cannot afford transport costs to get to vital activities aimed at combating loneliness and isolation.
- 2.4 Derby City Council is in discussions with MHA regarding the purchase of Epworth House as part of its flood alleviation project for the city centre. This is likely to take place in the 2023/24 financial year and it is intended that MHA's head offices will continue to be in Derby.

10. Methodist Homes (MHA)

3. Accounts and Governance

- 3.1 The latest audited accounts are available on request from our website or from Epworth House. Our Annual Impact Statement, which tells the story of MHA's activities, is also available on the website or from Epworth House.
- 3.2 During the year Cath Biddle stepped down from the Trustees; Hilary Cocker retired, and we welcomed Anne Anketell and Dr Richard Vautrey (a former Vice-President of the Conference) as new members of the Board.
- 3.3 The Trustees who oversee the work of the Charity continue to offer excellent advice and guidance, sharing between them considerable expertise across the range of MHA's activities. The focus of MHA's holistic approach to care is at the root of their willingness to serve as Board members, and they bring a range of spiritual and belief commitments to the role.

4. Other Notable Events in the Year

- 4.1 As with countless people around the world, the MHA family celebrated HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee with events across all our services. Within a short space of time we experienced sadness at the news of the death of HM The Queen. Across MHA, people met to mark the occasion of the State Funeral on 19 September. Being contemporaries of the late Queen, many of our residents shared memories of her astonishing reign and spirit of public service.
- 4.2 In February 2023 we were delighted to receive a visit to Epworth House, Derby, by the President of the Conference, the Revd Graham Thompson. During the visit the President met the longest serving member of staff at Epworth House, Fiona Dennis, who was present at the dedication of the building by the then President of the Conference in 1991.
- 4.3 We provided a wealth of materials for churches to mark MHA Sunday, with a theme of 'Growing Together' exploring the value of our outside spaces for older people, relatives, volunteers and colleagues. MHA Sunday in 2023 will have a focus of intergenerational collaboration and is due to take place on Sunday 11 June.
- 4.4 All within MHA are very grateful and value greatly the continuing prayers, volunteering, engagement and financial support received from Methodists locally and nationally.

***RESOLUTION

- 10/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**

11. Connexional Allowances Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | Ruby Beech, Chair of the Connexional Allowances Committee beechr@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Action required | Decision |
| Resolutions | <p>11/1. The Conference receives the Report.</p> <p>11/2. The Conference adopts the Report and the recommendations in sections 1, 2 and 3.</p> <p>11/3. The Conference adopts paragraph 3.6 of this Report as its further reply to Memorials M10 and M11 (2019).</p> |

Summary of content

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Subject of aims | The report covers the Committee's established portfolio of matters related to stipends, allowances and other financial provisions, grants made, and its other activities. |
| Main points | <p>Section 1 covers stipends, allowances above stipend and other allowances, fees, rates and expenses for 2023/2024.</p> <p>Section 2 reports on the funds and trusts managed by the Committee.</p> <p>Section 3 summarises other work and activities in which the Committee has been and will be involved</p> |

Summary of impact

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Financial | <p>Paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4, on stipends and allowances above stipend, impact Circuits and other employing bodies, though the figures have been published in advance for budget purposes.</p> <p>Paragraphs 1.17 and 1.18 on sabbaticals and computers in ministry impact Circuits and other employing bodies and again the figures have already been published.</p> <p>Paragraph 1.26 on the living wage impacts any body within the Church which employs lay people.</p> |
|------------------|--|

11. Connexional Allowances Committee

CONNEXIONAL ALLOWANCES COMMITTEE

The Connexional Allowances Committee's report to the 2023 Conference covers the customary update on stipends and allowances, includes progress reports on other work and activities in which the Committee has engaged, and is presented with the approval of the Methodist Council.

The report is divided into three sections, as follows.

1. Recommendations for stipends and allowances 2023/2024.
2. Report on Funds and Trusts within the Committee's remit.
3. Other matters of report from the Committee.

The Committee's new recommendations this year are **highlighted** in the text.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STIPENDS AND ALLOWANCES 2023/2024

- 1.1 The Committee makes the following recommendations, taking into account past resolutions of the Conference on Stipends and Allowances and data available from HM Government.

Standard stipend

- 1.2 The resolutions of the 2012 Conference fixed the stipend increase formula for the period until 31 August 2015, this being renewed for periods of three further years by the Conferences of 2015, 2018 and 2021. The formula will next be reviewed during 2023/2024.
- 1.3 Using the index numbers published in October 2022, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) movement for the period September 2021 to September 2022 was +10.1% and the Average Weekly Earnings Index movement for the period September 2021 to September 2022 was +5.56%: the average of these is 7.83%. **In accordance with the decision on the stipend review formula by the 2021 Conference and recommended in paragraph 1.2, the annual standard stipend for the year beginning 1 September 2023 is therefore increased by 7.83% to £29,040 (rounding up to the next highest figure divisible by 12), to give a monthly stipend of exactly £2,420.**

11. Connexional Allowances Committee

Additional allowances

- 1.4 The following allowances are applied for ministers for 2023/2024, in the light of the decisions taken by the 2018 Conference. Whilst it is anticipated that the percentages will apply for the foreseeable future, these amounts are for 2023/2024, based on the standard stipend in paragraph 1.3.** The implementation timescale was set in 2018 as follows: where the new scale of allowances gave a postholder an increase it was applied from 1 September 2019; existing postholders whose allowances decreased retained the previous percentage until the term of their appointment ends; those newly appointed from 1 September 2019 onwards receive the new allowances percentage.

| Role, post or office held | % | £ |
|---|-------------|-----------------|
| The President of the Conference | 30 | 8712 |
| The Secretary of the Conference | 30 | 8712 |
| Connexional Secretary (see paragraph 1.5) | 25 | 7260 |
| Separated District Chair | 25 | 7260 |
| Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order | 25 | 7260 |
| Superintendent | 10 | 2904 |
| Synod Secretary (see paragraph 1.6) | 5 | 1452 |
| Principal of Training Institution | 25 | 7260 |
| All other ministers in appointments as defined in paragraph 1.7 | 0, 10 or 20 | 0, 2904 or 5808 |

- 1.5 This category includes the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and, when the posts are held by ministers, the Connexional Secretary and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice.
- 1.6 The 2016 Conference agreed that the Synod Secretary's allowance be gradually withdrawn. It is retained by existing incumbents until their appointment ceases but does not apply to new appointments.
- 1.7 This category includes ministers serving in the Connexional Team or stationed to appointments within the control of the Methodist Council, staff members of Training Institutions, and the Deputy Warden of the MDO. As per the decision of

11. Connexional Allowances Committee

the 2018 Conference, these allowances will be allocated by the Remunerations Committee, having regard to the lay salary structure for such (or comparable) posts.

- 1.8 In addition to the above allowances related to roles, the Committee affirms that the allowances and other financial provisions agreed by the 2016 Conference based on location continue to apply. These include an additional allowance of 16% of stipend for all ministers stationed in the Shetland Islands, the Scilly Isles, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.
- 1.9 The Committee advises that the Malta and Rome appointments continue to receive an uplift to reflect the devaluation of the pound sterling against the euro that occurred following the Brexit referendum. These situations will continue to be kept under review.
- 1.10 The Committee reminds Circuits that, in line with Standing Order 801(1)(a), no discretionary local allowance can be paid without the prior authorisation of the Committee.

Relocation allowance

- 1.11 The Committee recommends that the maximum allowance payable by the receiving Circuit (or other responsible body) to ministers upon moving manse remains at £600. In the case of two ministers sharing the same manse, it is one payment of £800. It is clarified that this payment is in addition to the full cost of travel and removals, as defined in SO 528. Receipts must be provided – otherwise this is a taxable benefit.
- 1.12 The Committee affirms the decision of the 2015 Conference, through Notice of Motion 103, to the effect that this relocation allowance shall also apply to ministers (in appointments in the control of the Church) upon becoming supernumeraries. The costs shall be met from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons (FSPD), as are their removal costs. It is affirmed that this provision may be invoked once only, in situations (increasingly) where supernumerary ministers move and continue in active work before final retirement.
- 1.13 The Committee affirms that this provision applies to the widows or widowers of ministers who die in service upon their removal to their new home, in addition to the payment of their removal costs.

Travel allowances

- 1.14 The Committee continues to recommend that the maximum rates as prescribed by HMRC's 'approved mileage allowance payment scheme' (AMAP) be observed.

11. Connexional Allowances Committee

If alternative mileage rates exceeding those allowed by the appropriate tax authority are paid locally then it is necessary for this income to be declared to the tax authority and it will give rise to a tax liability on the individual concerned. It is emphasised that this should be regarded as a personal liability – involving the individual and HMRC – and not require handling by the Church's officers, centrally or locally. Any changes to HMRC approved rates will be considered by the Committee and presented to the Conference for approval before implementation, so as to avoid unexpected cost increases mid-year.

1.15 The Committee continues to remind the Methodist Church of our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint, and wishes to encourage people to use public transport and share cars wherever possible and use online meetings where appropriate.

1.16 The following travel expense rates will apply to ministers, supernumeraries, lay employees in churches, Circuits and Districts and lay volunteers:

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Car: up to 10,000 miles | 45p per mile |
| over 10,000 miles | 25p per mile |
| Motorcycle | 24p per mile |
| Bicycle | 20p per mile |
| Additional passenger rate | 5p per mile |

1.17 **The Committee recommends that the travel grant (taxable) which can be claimed by ministers during a time of sickness increases to £350 for each complete period of three months.** It is further clarified that this grant applies during periods of recuperation from ill health for up to one year.

Sabbatical expenses and levy

1.18 The Committee affirms that the sabbaticals annual levy is maintained at £100 and the maximum expense level retained at £1,000, following the decisions of the Conference of 2022. These levels will next be reviewed in 2023/2024.

Computers in Ministry scheme

1.19 Following the adoption by the 2017 Conference of a revised Computers in Ministry scheme offering financial support to ministers, **the Committee recommends that the allowance be increased to £194 for the year 2023/2024, ie by the same CPI % used in the stipend adjustment.**

11. Connexional Allowances Committee

- 1.20 Student ministers beginning training, or, if they choose to wait, probationer ministers at the start of their first appointment receive an additional allowance of four times the annual amount. The first annual payment (as per paragraph 1.19) is made in the month of October at the start of ministry.

Initial grants and loans to ministers

- 1.21 In accordance with SO 804(2) in respect of loans and grants to ministers appointed “for the first time to a station in the home work” the Committee continues to offer loans up to a maximum value of £10,000, interest-free, repayable over a maximum of 5 years (ie £167 per month).
- 1.22 The 2015 Conference agreed to the Committee’s recommendation that, as from September 2016, a maximum flat-rate means-tested initial grant be set at the level of £3,000, and this now applies irrespective of the age of the minister. This is instead of, and not additional to, the relocation allowance which applies to subsequent moves (as per paragraph 1.10). Therefore, receiving Circuits do not pay the relocation allowance to ministers in their initial appointment (though they do pay the travel and removal costs as per SO 528(2)).
- 1.23 During their active ministry, loans may be made to ministers but only in the most extreme and exceptional personal and financial circumstances.

Preaching fees and expenses for supernumerary ministers

- 1.24 Circuits are reminded that it is their responsibility to pay preaching fees and expenses, even if and when churches assist with the preaching plan preparation: the church is only responsible for payment when the supernumerary minister preaches at the church by specific invitation, typically for a special occasion.
- 1.25 Having reviewed the fee **the Committee recommends that it be increased to £30 from September 2023**. It will next be reviewed in 2028.

Lay employees recommended hourly rates

- 1.26 The Committee advises that the latest Living Wage rates, published in September 2022 by the Living Wage Foundation (LWF), are **£11.95 per hour for London and £10.90 for all other regions**. The LWF figures, applicable to employees aged 18 years and over, will always be adopted as the Methodist Church’s recommendations. Methodist employing bodies are reminded of the

11. Connexional Allowances Committee

resolutions of the 2010 Conference regarding the mandatory implementation of these rates.

- 1.27 The Committee reminds the whole Church of the resolution of the 2015 Conference that the implementation of the Living Wage is now mandatory in all but the most extreme and exceptional circumstances, and that all outstanding exceptions must continue to be reviewed by the appropriate District Policy Committee.
- 1.28 Methodist employing bodies are reminded that the LWF rates published in the autumn are to be implemented by the following April. However, in light of the cost of living crisis all treasurers and ministers were contacted as the Methodist Council urged all Methodist employing bodies to implement the most recent LWF rates no later than 1 December 2022. Further updated figures, expected to be announced by LWF in the autumn of 2023, will be published on the Methodist Church website, and can also be accessed on the LWF website which gives further relevant details.

Loss of Earnings

- 1.29 The Committee reviewed the maximum loss of earnings rate that is applied under Standing Order 202 for members of the Conference, Methodist Council and other relevant connexional committees as agreed by the Council. Using the London Living Wage of £11.95 per hour, a seven hour day equates to £83.65. **Therefore, it is proposed that that the maximum amount of loss of earnings is increased from £80 to £85 per day from 1 September 2023.**

2. REPORT ON FUNDS AND TRUSTS WITHIN THE COMMITTEE'S REMIT

- 2.1 The Committee acts as the Trustees for six funds or trusts which are available to ministers and which may, in some cases, be used to give financial assistance to dependent close family members as well as themselves. The funds and trusts are:
- The Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons (FSPD), previously known as the Auxiliary Fund (of the Ministers' Retirement Fund)
 - The Methodist Ministers' Children's Fund (MMCF, otherwise known as the Trinity Hall Trust – THT)
 - The Methodist Medical Benevolent Fund (MMBF)
 - The Methodist Ministers' Children's Relief Association (MMCRA)
 - The Aspinall Robinson Trust (ART)
 - The Auxiliary (Special Purposes) Fund (ASPF)

11. Connexional Allowances Committee

Analysis of grants from funds and trusts

- 2.2 The Committee gives summary information on the pattern of grant-making in its report to the Conference each year. Any differences between the grant expenditure totals given in this report and the audited accounts of the funds arise from the exceptional cases when grants are refunded or reallocated to different funds.

Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons

- 2.3 The Church continues to be immensely grateful for the generosity of donations to the FSPD. Whilst the funds remain at a healthy level, donations remain vital in allowing the CAC to respond positively to the increasing demands being placed on the funds.
- 2.4 The FSPD is by far the largest of the funds and receives substantial income from donations and legacies as well as investments. It is used in a wide variety of ways in pursuit of its objects and in 2021/2022 made grants amounting to £1,129,615. In summary, these were distributed as follows:

| Nature of grants | Total amount (£) |
|---|------------------|
| Grants to enable ministers to continue in ministry and manse adaptations | 96,674 |
| Grants to ministers for acute financial emergencies | 99,384 |
| Grants for retired ministers' health needs, nursing and residential care | 140,080 |
| Removal costs and relocation grants on retirement | 193,734 |
| Christmas gifts to widows and widowers and other miscellaneous grants | 34,050 |
| Gardening grants | 22,750 |
| Grants to MMHS ¹ for property acquisitions and special adaptations | 17,523 |
| Recuperative Years | 278,476 |
| Grants to ministers on first stationing and students | 103,950 |
| Reimbursement to circuits for ministerial sickness | 142,994 |
| Total | 1,129,615 |

1 This amount includes expenditure on properties owned by the FSPD and occupied by retired ministers and their dependants which the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society manages on the Committee's behalf. It was paid in 2022/23 but related to 2021/22.

11. Connexional Allowances Committee

Methodist Ministers' Children's Fund (Trinity Hall Trust)

- 2.5 In 2021/2022, £26,223 was paid in grants to ministers to help fund costs of educational activities for their children, including the provision of equipment for online educational activities.

Methodist Medical Benevolent Fund (MMBF)

- 2.6 In 2021/2022, the MMBF made grants of varying amounts totalling £73,711. This fund provides support from within its income, derived mainly from investment, and it is used wherever the need is related to physical and mental health conditions. The Committee continues to highlight to the Conference the sustained level of expenditure on counselling and related support for ministers, including while they are students and probationers.

Methodist Ministers' Children's Relief Association (MMCRA)

- 2.8 In 2021/2022 the MMCRA made grants amounting to £13,100 to 16 ministers and dependants to give financial help mainly to support the care of adult dependent children. This fund provided limited support from its income which relies on the collections made at District Synods. The Committee is grateful to the 10 District and Circuits who contributed £1,469 in 2021/2022. The fund has now spent all its reserves. As the MMBF and the FSPD have purposes that are sufficient to cover the grants formerly paid from the MMCRA it has been decided to close the MMCRA.

Aspinall Robinson Trust

- 2.9 In 2021/2022 six grants were made to deacons amounting to £7,969. These covered health related needs, initial grants, gardening and retirement grants.

Auxiliary (Special Purposes) Fund

- 2.10 In 2021/2022 there were eight grants made from this fund. This fund typically provides for up to 50% of annual stipend to be paid to the spouse when a minister's marriage breaks down or for specific expenditure to be reimbursed if the part-stipend is not requested. The Fund is well endowed to cater for all probable needs.

11. Connexional Allowances Committee

3. OTHER MATTERS OF REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE

- 3.1 The Committee continues to engage in reviews of several topics for which it has responsibility and is grateful for the support of the Connexional Team staff, especially in the Finance, Human Resources, Mission, Ministries and Conference offices, in all that they do.
- 3.2 The Committee keeps a record, for its own guidance and purposes, setting out the policies and precedents for dealing with the wide variety of these special requests for financial assistance. This enables the Committee always to be consistent and fair in the application of criteria for assessing need. The Committee is also called upon from time to time to advise on the interpretation of Standing Orders related to Circuits' financial obligations and provisions for ministers in a rich variety of circumstances. Having undertaken a full review of the policies and precedents during 2019/2020, the Committee made minimal changes in 2021/2022.
- 3.3 During the year the Committee engaged with the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee concerning how the work of the CAC will be taken forward in light of the proposals on Oversight and Trusteeship. Committee members were able to share the areas where it was felt the CAC added particular value to the life of the church through the careful stewardship of resources.
- 3.4 The Committee held an additional meeting in October 2022 to discuss the implications of the cost-of-living crisis on ministers. As a consequence, all ministers in the active work in stations under the control of the Conference were paid a taxable grant of £1,000 costing £1.435m in total. In addition, all pensioners in the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme were paid £250 costing £0.519m in total. The Committee continues to keep ministerial stipend levels under review noting the lag between the impact of inflation on ministers and the timing of the annual stipend uplift.
- 3.5 Given the emergence of different Deputy/Assistant District Chair posts, the Committee reviewed the need for a consistent approach to allowances for such roles. However, given that no two situations are the same, the CAC agreed that requests for allowances will be considered on a case by case basis. Districts will be asked to present a proposal to the CAC about what they wish to do and what allowance they propose to pay.
- 3.6 The Committee considered the position of the funding for the non-separated Chairs of District. A recommendation was made that the stipend should be

11. Connexional Allowances Committee

funded 50% by the District and 50% from the Methodist Church Fund (MCF), with the island allowance and 10% Chair's allowance also funded from the MCF. The Committee therefore offers this paragraph to the Conference as its further reply to Memorials 10 and 11 of 2019. (See Appendix 1 for the text of the Memorials.)

- 3.7 Having started funding medical reviews for ministers in senior appointments (eg District Chairs, Warden of the Diaconal Order), the Committee received a report on the initial implementation. This review was broadly positive but a number of issues need addressing as the approach is rolled out more widely. The Committee will continue to work with the Wellbeing Team and other relevant bodies (eg the Connexional Leaders' Forum) as this approach develops.
- 3.8 The Committee also undertook a review of the interim funding decisions that had been taken in 2020. The following outcomes were agreed:
- The funding from the FSPD for an additional post focusing on ministerial wellbeing will continue for a further three years from September 2023.
 - The funding from the FSPD of recuperative years for ministers would continue for a further three years from September 2023.
 - The funding from the FSPD of ministers' stipends who have been off sick for more than six months will continue.
 - The funding from the FSPD of the ministers' retirement course will continue.
- 3.9 The Chair of the Committee wishes to record their immense gratitude to its members, past and present, who have given unfailing support and attention to the Committee's work at all times. They bring a rich variety of experience and expertise as well as representing different constituencies within the Church.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 11/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**
- 11/2. **The Conference adopts the Report and the recommendations in sections 1, 2 and 3.**
- 11/3. **The Conference adopts paragraph 3.6 of this Report as its further reply to Memorials M10 and M11 (2019).**

11. Connexional Allowances Committee

APPENDIX 1

M10 Funding a non-separated Chair

The Isle of Man District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 47; Voting: 46 for, 0 against) draws the Conference's attention to the matter of the cost of funding a non-separated Chair.

The situation with regard to non-separated Chairs has remained the same for some decades now. But it has become clear that the demands, especially those regionally and connexionally, have markedly increased their workload. We celebrate our partnership with the Districts in our region, and with the Learning Network. We recognise, however, that these, and other connexional commitments, take the Chair out of the District far more often than was the case a decade ago.

At present the second superintendents allowance paid to non-separated Chairs is paid from connexional funds, but the entirety of the rest of the stipend is paid by the District/Circuit in which the minister is stationed. Expenses are paid in the same way as any other District.

The Synod asks the Conference to consider contributing to the stipend from connexional funds on a 50/50, half connexional and half district/circuit basis. We believe that this would further re-enforce the Chair's role as a connexional person and release other district/circuit resources to make up the shortfall in ministerial provision.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Isle of Man District Synod for the memorial.

The Synod is correct that the position regarding the funding of the stipend of a non-separated Chair has remained the same for some time. The Connexional Allowances Committee last year considered the situation as a part of its extensive review of allowances above the basic stipend and recommended that there be no change. Given, as the Synod notes, the non-separated Chair's allowance has been set at the same rate as a Superintendent's allowance (under SO 428(2)), it therefore rises to 10% in 2019.

The Synod argues that the allowance was set in a time when the expectations of a Chair was less than it now is. Non-separated Chairs participate in meetings of Chairs and the Connexional Leaders' Forum, share in all stationing matching, and contribute with their peers to the life of the Connexion in various ways. There are some responsibilities (eg, to serve on the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee or to represent returning Mission Partners in stationing) that have by custom fallen to the Island Chairs. The

11. Connexional Allowances Committee

Conference is minded to agree that 10% of basic stipend seems a disproportionately small contribution in recognition of this.

The Conference therefore accepts the principle of the Memorial and mandates the Secretary of the Conference to instigate a review of the funding of the stipend arrangements for non-separated Chairs.

M11 Funding a non-separated Chair

The Channel Islands Synod, Representative Session (Present: 37; Voting: unanimous) draws the Conference's attention to the matter of the cost of funding a non-separated Chair when they live on one Island (and therefore in one Circuit) but serve both the District and the Connexion and asks the Conference to take the following action:

The situation with regard to non-separated Chairs has remained the same for some decades now. But it has become clear the demands, especially those connexionally and regionally, have markedly increased their workload. We celebrate our increasing partnership with neighbouring Districts, including in matters of safeguarding, complaints and discipline, candidates and probationers and regionally with the Learning Network. We recognise that these, and other connexional commitments, take them out of the District far more often than a decade ago. At present, the second superintendents allowance paid to non-separated Chairs is paid by central funds, but the entirety of the rest of the stipend is paid by the Circuit the minister is resident in. Expenses are paid in the same way as any other District.

The Synod therefore asks the Conference to consider contributing to the stipend from central funds. This could be funded 50/50, half connexional funds and half from the Circuit. We believe that this would further re-enforce the Chair being a connexional person whilst also recognising locally that this is a shared appointment.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as to M10.

12. A justice-seeking Church: the report of the Walking with Micah project

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | Rachel Lampard – Walking with Micah project lampardr@methodistchurch.org.uk 020 7467 5248 The Revd Dr Joanne Cox-Darling – Chair, Mission Committee joanne.coxdarling@gmail.com Jude Levermore – Head of Mission levermorej@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Action required | For approval |
| Resolutions | <p>12/1. The Conference adopts the Report, and commends it to the Methodist Church for prayerful study and action throughout the Connexion.</p> <p>12/2. The Conference directs the Methodist Council to agree a plan to enable and embed the proposals and suggestions set out between paragraphs 210 and 215 of the report in collaboration with key stakeholders, and oversee its implementation.</p> <p>12/3. The Conference directs the Methodist Council to review at least every five years through a transparent and participative process the Principles, Priorities and Practices adopted in this report to ensure that they still meet the needs of the Methodist Church and the world.</p> <p>12/4. The Conference thanks all those who participated in and contributed to the Walking with Micah project.</p> |

Summary of content and impact

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Subject and aims | This report proposes a framework to support the Methodist Church's action for justice over the next five years. |
| Main points | <p>Walking with Micah was a two-year project helping the Methodist Church to explore what it means to be a justice-seeking Church. This report is a response to our calling to act justly, love kindness and walk humbly with God, integral to a Methodist Way of Life.</p> <p>It draws on Methodist history, theology, current concerns and practice, and recommends a framework of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles for justice which underpin our understanding of God's justice and what it means to seek justice |

12. A justice-seeking Church: the report of the Walking with Micah project

| | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities for justice to focus Methodist efforts and resources on key issues, and • Practices for justice which help us to be more effective and rooted in God in our justice-seeking <p>The report recognises how much is being done in churches to tackle injustice, and recommends a two year programme to embed these principles, priorities and practices for justice further to support and encourage this work.</p> |
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | <p>www.methodist.org.uk/walking-with-micah/</p> <p>Updates to Methodist Council: MC/21/69 Report from the Connexional Team (para 20) MC/22/6 Report from the Connexional Team (para 18)</p> |
| Consultations | <p>The Justice Conversations (January – June 2023) included responses from a range of individuals, churches, schools and communities</p> <p>Conversations with a wide range of Methodist organisations and networks</p> <p>Presentations to and conversations with a number of Synods</p> <p>Consultations with Connexional Leaders’ Forum, Chairs’ Meeting, Methodist Council, Mission Committee</p> <p>“Accompaniers” from the Faith and Order Committee</p> <p>Workshops at 3Generate 2021 and Methodist Conference 2022</p> |
| Impact | <p>The report recommends that the Methodist Council be directed to agree a plan to enable and embed the proposals contained in the report. The financial costs of initial embedding is contained within the central services budget paper found elsewhere in the Agenda.</p> <p>As churches, Circuits and Districts align their work to the principles, priorities and practices it is likely that some local change management will be required. This is intended as a ‘doing differently’, not necessarily a ‘doing more’. Advice and support will be made available from connexional personnel.</p> |

12. A justice-seeking Church: the report of the Walking with Micah project

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12. A justice-seeking Church: the report of the Walking with Micah project

The report in three minutes

A justice-seeking Church: the report of the Walking with Micah project

God, whose nature is just, yearns for justice in the world. As Christians we are called actively to do justice, show loving kindness and walk humbly with God. This invitation is at the heart of a Methodist Way of Life.

Methodists, now and in the past, have challenged injustice, worked for change and supported people experiencing injustices. As a Church, we have challenges of declining membership and limited energy, but we also have a commitment to being an inclusive, growing, evangelistic and justice-seeking Church. As we face economic, ecological, political and social changes in Britain and the world, the time is right for a renewed focus on justice and fresh approach for our Church.

This report proposes a framework to support the Methodist Church's action for justice over the next five years.

It offers six **Principles for justice**, which underpin our understanding of God's justice and what it means to seek justice:

- **God made humans in the image of God, each worthy of equal value and dignity.** The search for justice entails treating others with respect, and may involve reclaiming lost worth.
- **God desires the flourishing of creation and human community within it.** The search for justice does not diminish or limit the flourishing of others but seeks to enable it.
- **God consistently shows a bias to people experiencing poverty and those who are excluded.** The search for justice must attend to those who live in poverty, and those who are marginalised in other ways, as a priority.
- **God entrusts those in power with a special responsibility for upholding justice.** Those seeking justice will encourage and challenge those with power to fulfil their vocation.
- **God calls all people and nations actively to work for peace and justice, liberation and transformation.** It is never just someone else's responsibility. We all have a part to play.
- **God calls us to live in hope and in ways that reflect God's character and the pattern of God's kingdom.** Thus, seeking justice involves honesty and truth, and may demand protest and resistance, restitution, forgiveness, reconciliation and ultimately transformation.

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These Principles will help us to talk about our understanding of God's justice and will be a tool to help us in our conferring, discernment and action.

The report offers five key **Priorities for justice**, which emerged from a process of listening and reflection. Methodists, in Local Churches and working with others, have the opportunity to make a difference. This may be through campaigning, being with those experiencing injustice and offering support, building relationships, or striving to tell a different story of a just world.

1. **Tackling inequality and poverty:** seeking life in all its fullness
2. **Enabling a flourishing environment:** right relationship between people, planet and God
3. **Seeking justice for refugees:** one people, one world
4. **Opposing discrimination:** all are made in the image of God
5. **Pursuing peace:** seeking justice and reconciliation

The Priorities for justice will focus our efforts and our resources to support Local Churches in their worship and action. Collaborating groups will come together to share and co-create campaigns, events and resources. Churches will be able to engage with Priorities that are most relevant in their context, through existing involvement or through actions that reflects their gifts.

Finally the report offers **Practices for justice**. These challenge people to consider both our ways of doing justice and our ways of being just, and how they can be consistent with each other.

Our **ways of doing** justice involve bringing about change in the systems that hold problems in place. Beyond short term practical help, this can include action to change structures, to build relationships, and to transform understanding. Our **ways of being just** enable us to be 'at our best' when seeking justice. They enable sustainable, transformative and rooted action for justice to develop in churches and communities, and keep our actions grounded in and guided by our faith.

Using these different Practices for justice will help us to examine our current and planned justice activities, ensuring both that they contribute to change and are consistent with our beliefs about God's justice.

A two-year process is proposed to embed this new framework for justice in the Methodist Church, and enable local churches to engage with and act on the Principles, Priorities and Practices for justice.

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Section 1: Introduction

What is justice like?

Where there is God's justice . . .

- ... it is so much bigger than simply fairness
- ... we may be surprised and find our ideas of justice are challenged
- ... people feel heard and their dignity is affirmed
- ... the bonds between people, communities, nations, generations, and all living things grow in beauty and significance
- ... power is shared and used to uphold truth and justice
- ... there is enough for all, no-one lives in poverty, in hunger, or is without
- ... there is liberation from all forms of slavery
- ... all creation flourishes, all is well
- ... there is real peace
- ... we get a sense of God's kingdom and God's purpose
- ... there is joy and hope for the future

When there is a lack of justice . . .

- ... we feel unseen and unheard
- ... we do not feel we can make a difference
- ... we are prevented from fully flourishing
- ... our relationships with one another become damaged
- ... trauma and disadvantage are transmitted through generations
- ... the most vulnerable bear the heaviest burden
- ... people with limited economic resources are overwhelmed by a rising tide of poverty
- ... creation is treated as a commodity to be abused, not treasured
- ... truth is distorted
- ... the future we can imagine is constrained

Seeking justice . . .

- ... looks like praying, listening, speaking, acting, giving, relating, co-operating, resisting . . . and so much more
- ... involves deep attentiveness to people who have experienced injustice
- ... means not only allying with people like us, but being with everyone who seeks the good of all
- ... may begin gradually with the human heart but seeps through to relationships, communities, institutions
- ... should inspire righteous anger, compassion, humility and hope
- ... means we become more aware of the forces that promote and sustain injustice, prejudice, neglect

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- ... requires of us to think in terms of long-term transformation as well as short-term solutions
- ... means making restitution where injustices have benefited us or others
- ... is about doing what we can in our own context and not being overwhelmed
- ... is a vocation for everyone
- ... requires a deep rootedness in God to sustain us
- ... helps us to know God better as we are part of building God's kingdom

1. There are many debates, philosophical and political, about the meaning of justice. Our own experiences may mean that we interpret the word in particular ways, perhaps in terms of punishment or fairness.
2. This report begins, however, by rooting itself in God's justice. This justice is at the very heart of God, we see its richness and complexity in the Bible, and we catch glimpses of it even in the midst of deep injustice. The words often translated as 'justice' in our Bibles speak of biblical obligations on society – and particularly on those, such as kings, with wealth and power. *Tzedakah* (righteousness) is often thought of as 'charity', but is less about generosity and more about obligation, what it means to be part of a community of God's people. *Mishpat* (justice) relates to justice delivered as a judgement, and to the consequent just society that is created from that judgement. God's judgement is called down with great joy because God is on the side of those who are labouring under injustice (Psalm 96). God's justice is seen in laws protecting strangers, in the prophets calling out injustice, in complex stories of liberation, healing and reconciliation. Jesus's death and resurrection showed that the alienation and injustices of the world do not have the last word, rather everyone is invited to participate in God's new kingdom of liberation, justice and joy.
3. God's perfect justice will always be beyond human endeavour. Whilst we seek to align ourselves to God's will as a Church committed to being justice-seeking, we recognise our ideas of justice will only ever be proximate to divine justice, and our human actions for justice will still be imperfect and insufficient.
4. At a time of crisis, when Israel was under attack from the Assyrian empire, the prophet Micah reminded God's people that they are bound together in a covenant relationship,

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8, NRSVA)*

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5. These are not three distinct instructions. The call to act justly is not a separate vocation. Rather it is inextricably bound up with our calling to embody God's love in all that we do, and grow still closer to the perfect love and character of God by walking the way of God. The verb translated 'to do' can also mean 'to make'. It is a call not just to a passive avoidance of unjust action, but to an active commitment to bring about, or 'make', justice. This invitation is at the heart of a Methodist Way of Life.

Methodism and justice

6. The Methodist Church's commitment to justice-seeking is rooted in the development of our movement. From early Methodists who sought out the poorest in society and called out exploiters of the rich, through to involvement in justice for agricultural workers and an end to the slave trade, to more recent support for fair trade and campaigns for climate justice and an end to international debt, Methodists have often (though not unfailingly) sought to challenge injustice and bring about fairer and more just situations and structures. This desire for justice is rooted in our understanding and experience of a God who is just, and this shapes how we relate to each other and the wider world.
7. The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. A Methodist Way of Life is a rhythm of discipleship helping us put our response to this calling into practice, as individuals and communities. Amongst the commitments to worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism, we are encouraged to:
 - help people in our communities and beyond
 - care for creation and all God's gifts
 - challenge injustice
8. A Methodist Way of Life embodies our desire to be a growing, inclusive, justice-seeking and evangelistic Church. The Evangelism and Growth Strategy, *God for All*, makes clear that evangelism and justice are intertwined – a God whose character is just will shape the nature of the good news that we proclaim. As the Methodist Conference statement, *Called to Love and Praise*, says: "*The Gospel has to be both spoken and lived. The gospels show that 'good news and good works are inseparable', and that to preach the kingdom of God involves a commitment to justice and peace. So although Christians may differ in their respective*

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commitments to evangelism and social justice, the two tasks belong together.”¹

Research shows that children, young people and young adults in particular are hungry to be part of churches that are justice-seeking.² Many Local Churches already offer a just presence in local communities, building compassionate relationships, engaging in partnerships to meet short and longer term needs, and advocating for a world in which everyone can flourish. Through *God for All*, justice is being embedded in new Christian communities.

9. At the same time we also recognise that we fall short of what God desires for us. Many of us do not have direct contact with people living in poverty and experiencing injustice and we acknowledge that, as Methodist people, we have not always challenged injustice and that we continue to participate in oppressive structures. Not all people have experienced just practices within our own churches. Experiences of discrimination, as well as failures in safeguarding, have meant that for some people the Methodist Church has not been a place of justice. The *Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy* was agreed by the Conference in 2021 with the intention of achieving “a profound change in the culture, practices and attitudes of the Methodist Church”. An act of repentance was held by the Methodist Conference a year later, and training and measures to increase inclusion and diversity are being taken up across the Connexion along with a deep commitment to safeguarding practices. The Methodist Church’s commitment to be *justice-seeking* holds in tension the eternal call to be just with our daily need for repentance for our own injustice. Yet as Martin Johnstone, who led the Church of Scotland’s anti-poverty work, said: *“Every failure is not a sign that we will always fail. The road to justice is a long one, but it is one that we walk alongside others who walked it for centuries before us. For we believe that the kingdom will come on earth as it is already come in heaven.”*

Our changing world

10. A longing for justice is at the heart of our Methodist being, identity and strategy, and recent events have meant that the time is right for a renewed focus and fresh approach.

1 *Called to Love and Praise: The Nature of the Christian Church in Methodist Experience and Practice*, 1999 para 3.2.4

2 *The Open Generation 03: Open to Impact*, barna.com/the-open-generation/open-to-justice, accessed 6 March 2023

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11. The last decade has seen enormous change in our society and around the world. In the wake of the financial crisis of 2008 a programme of austerity was introduced in the UK to eliminate public budget deficits. Although education, health and international development were protected in theory, there were significant reductions in welfare spending and local government funding, as well as key public services. These cuts hit the poorest hardest, leading to an increase in child poverty and a fall in life expectancy amongst the worst off in certain parts of the country. The current cost of living crisis is not new for many people, but has tipped them over into even deeper catastrophe.
12. Two key political referendums were held in the UK in recent years. The Scottish Independence Referendum in 2014 resulted in a vote for Scotland to remain part of the UK. The Brexit Referendum of 2016 resulted in the UK formally ceasing to be a member state of the EU on 31 January 2020. Despite being supposedly decisive votes, both issues remain intensely contested and demonstrate deep fractures and polarisation. The constitutional scaffolding of the UK is under greater pressure. Many people from minority ethnic groups reported an increase in abuse and hate speech after the Brexit vote. Brexit continues to have a particular impact on Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and negotiations to untangle UK and EU relationships are still continuing.
13. The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in over 200,000 deaths in the UK by the end of 2022. It shone a light on pre-existing health inequalities. Mortality was 2.6 times higher in the most deprived than the least deprived areas, and highest amongst Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black Caribbean groups, and among people with a self-reported disability or a learning disability.³ Emergency measures to support incomes and businesses resulted in additional government spending of between £300-400 billion.⁴ And while inspiring forms of community solidarity were evident through the pandemic, isolation, addiction, domestic violence and mental ill health were also seen to increase.
14. The pandemic, together with Russia's war on Ukraine, added to inflationary pressures and a rise in international energy prices. Significant rises in fuel and food prices have contributed to a widespread cost of living crisis. People are increasingly turning to foodbanks, and churches and community groups have been running Warm Welcome spaces for people unable to afford to eat and heat their homes.

3 kingsfund.org.uk/publications/deaths-covid-19, accessed 6 March 2023

4 researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9309/CBP-9309.pdf, accessed 6 March 2023

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15. The last decade has seen sea levels rise and an increase in flooding, heatwaves, droughts and other extreme weather events. The least well off are carrying the biggest impact of the climate crisis. Despite the international agreements made through the COP summits, the world is set to emit enough carbon to exceed the 1.5°C global warming target within the next 10 years, with the planet's average temperature on a trajectory to reach 2.5°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century.⁵ There is an existential need for more urgent and radical action to tackle the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and environmental destruction.
16. In East Africa, the worst drought in 40 years has been exacerbated by rocketing global food prices, placing 22 million people at risk of starvation. At the end of 2021, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that 89.3 million people were forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order. The war in Ukraine has led to the largest movement of refugees in Europe since the Second World War. This has added pressure to an already struggling international refugee protection system, but also raised questions about how different groups of refugees are treated.
17. The #MeToo movement showed the ongoing injustices of misogyny and violence against women and girls. LGBTQI+ people still experience discrimination and victimisation. Despite the embedding of equalities legislation in UK law, racism and race-related discrimination and inequalities still impact people's daily lives. The disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities, racist violence in this country and the US, as well as evidence of ongoing systemic problems in policing, education and maternity care has shone a light on the need to resist racism in society. Alongside this, there has been an increasing but not universal recognition of the need to act on the legacies of slavery and colonialism.
18. Such a description of our times can be overwhelming, as we feel buffeted on every side, witnessing or experiencing great need, injustice and oppression. Yet we are reminded by Paul, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21, *NRSVA*). At a time of such change and great pressures, it is important to take stock, to stand back and discern what God is calling us to do.

5 unfccc.int/documents/619180, accessed 6 March 2023

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What does this report aim to do?

19. This report offers a framework for the Methodist Church to understand and articulate its call to be justice-seeking, and to prioritise and collaborate in its responses. It does not offer a definitive position on the social and political issues of the time, nor does it make a claim for a complete Methodist social theology. What it aims to do instead is to deepen our confidence in understanding how the gospel speaks to the society in which we now live and offer focus on how we might respond.
20. This report is for disciples seeking to live a Methodist Way of Life as well as those who lead within our Church. It seeks to encourage and resource churches in local communities that are longing for justice. It is written with the hope that it will assist our whole Connexion as we seek to prioritise the use of resources.
21. This report identifies the Local Church very much as the locus of justice activity and transformation. Whilst individuals, groups in Circuits or Districts, networks regionally or nationally are also engaged in justice-seeking work and are important in bringing about change, they are not the key focus of this report and its recommendations. In order for the work to flourish and the Methodist Church and its people to remain true to Our Calling, justice work must remain central to the life of Local Churches. Individuals will live out their vocation to justice through other places or partnerships, and their involvement in coalitions and collectives enliven the Methodist Church's awareness of justice, but Local Churches are a microcosm of God's kingdom – a place where dreams of justice can be glimpsed, here and now. The kingdom is always bigger than the Church, and the Church does not need to do everything. But as with vocations to youth work, evangelism and worship leading, our vocations to justice need to be held within the community of the church to benefit from others' insights, offer holistic discipleship, meet with God in prayer, and enrich our common life.
22. Other reports⁶ have noted the challenging circumstances the Methodist Church currently finds itself in, with declining membership, leadership and resources; a heavy burden of responsibilities; uncertainty over the way forward and doubt in our own abilities. This report does not intend to further encumber, but to free – to give confidence in Methodist gifts and graces; to allow the laying down of some work; to release resources, people and leaders; and to offer a way ahead, following the God of justice.

6 For example, methodist.org.uk/media/27756/conf-22-pc-44-oversight-and-trusteeship.pdf, accessed 6 March 2023

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23. The process behind this report has been rooted in conversations and listening. Section 2 of this report gives an overview of what we have to learn from our theology, our hymns, our past, our current practices and what matters to Methodist communities now.
24. Section 3 identifies the key **Principles** that underpin our understanding of God's justice and what it means to seek justice. These are not exclusively Methodist, but have emerged from conversations across the Connexion. We hope these Principles will do three things: provide an anchor for us in God's justice in turbulent times; help us to articulate our call to justice, inside and beyond the Church; and give us tools for discernment and action, individually and collectively, as we continually face new challenges of injustice.
25. Section 4 offers five **Priorities** for justice. These have emerged from reflection on conversations with Methodists, including global partners, people experiencing injustice and Methodist and other organisations, as well as learning from Scripture, hymnody and our past. Having Priorities does not mean that Methodists or Methodist churches should not campaign or work on other issues that are urgent, important locally or close to people's hearts. Instead it is an attempt to focus our collective voice and resources on a limited number of areas to increase our collective impact, whilst recognising that we will always seek to work ecumenically, and across faiths and wider civil society where we can.
26. Section 5 examines how we participate in transformation in the world, and sets out some key **Practices** or approaches that will increase our effectiveness in being justice-seekers. These involve being with others, being humble in community, using power, seeking transformation, and prayer. These ways of being keep our actions for justice grounded in our faith, staying close both to God and to those who experience injustice. Local Churches are often the locus for people's action, and this section of the report suggests ways in which the report can be embedded to help individuals and churches act justly and create synergy with connexionally-resourced justice work, as well as other networks, groups and coalitions.
27. It is recommended that the Priorities, and if necessary the Principles and Practices, be reviewed every five years to ensure that they still meet the needs of the Methodist Church and the world, through a transparent participative process.
28. The final section makes recommendations for embedding these proposals in the life of the Methodist Church.

12. A justice-seeking Church: the report of the Walking with Micah project

Section 2: Listening and learning

29. The Walking with Micah project has been a journey of learning that has drawn on many sources. Attention to the biblical witness, in its various contexts, and a variety of theological perspectives from across the world have provided key elements and these have been set alongside contemporary writings about justice, our Church's history with issues of justice, personal experience – especially attending to voices not normally heard – and examining justice-seeking practices adopted within and beyond the Church.
30. The following section includes learning from our own history and hymnody, a theology of Methodism and justice, learning from recent justice conversations in churches and current Methodist justice work.

Learning from our history

Justice threads through British Methodist history

31. Learning from our past is not a straightforward business. We need to examine who is telling the story, when, and in what context. History may be written by the 'victors' in a struggle and so may carry attitudes dismissive of others and hide genuine injustices. We like to feel good about ourselves (whoever the 'us' is) and our stories are often told with our own interpretation. British Methodists have, like all, a mixed history of engagement and non-engagement with issues of justice. There are high points of altruism, humility and action for change. There are also low points of misjudgement, apathy, compromise, colonialism and deliberate fault. So rather than attempt a complete narrative of Methodist engagement in justice, this report draws attention to some recurring threads, patterns that help to inform, inspire and warn us.
32. There are 'golden threads' that run through British Methodist history – burnished, tarnished or broken though they may be at times – which might help us understand what is important today, and help us to tell the story of God's love for all people. The following are offered as possible threads:
33. **Commitment to the poorest** – Early Methodism as a mass movement was socially diverse, but had a majority of working people. Wesley famously visited people struggling against poverty and encouraged his societies not only to give to those in need, but also to befriend those experiencing poverty, to understand their story and to challenge both attitudes and economic structures that keep people in poverty. In their best endeavours, this commitment was manifest

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among the Primitive Methodists and in the Forward movement in its work in city and town centres. The Wesley Deaconess Order, founded in 1890, combined social action and evangelism, particularly amongst those at the economic margins. There are accounts of Deaconesses leading work in slums and prisons, and opening homes for women vulnerable to exploitation. Action for Children, All We Can and Methodist Homes were all established as Methodist responses to poverty in different contexts. The Mission Alongside the Poor Affirmation in 1983 stated: *“The Methodist Church, faithful to its missionary calling to evangelism, social caring and political justice, will strive to use its resources for all in society, recognising that this will mean especially taking sides with the poor and disadvantaged.”*⁷

34. **Relationships** – Wesley’s famous comment, *“One great reason why the rich in general have so little sympathy for the poor is because they so seldom visit them”*⁸, illustrates the importance put on building relationships directly with those with lived experience of injustice as a driver of justice. For Wesley, the commitment to help those experiencing economic injustice was grounded in genuine encounter with other human beings, and it is from his own experience of ‘being with’ that his exhortations to others to do likewise are based. He told rich followers that they couldn’t be faithful to Christ unless they spent time with the poorest and learned from God amongst them.⁹ Modelling this way of being in radical relationship, enabled his societies, at their best, to be communities committed to sharing their lives together and supporting one another. The suggestion of Captain Foy, an early Methodist in Bristol, that the debt of building the New Room should be met by class members paying a penny a week, rather than relying on donations from those who were wealthy, offered a sense of agency and collaboration. This was combined with Foy’s compassionate commitment to put the penny in himself, if a member had difficulty paying. More recently the work of Sybil Phoenix (a member in the Southwark and Deptford Circuit) exemplifies community-led justice work. She fostered children, and set up the Moonshot youth club for Black young people with classes, a library, dances and a football team, as well as support for young mothers. When the club was burnt down by the National Front, she rebuilt it and later began the first anti-racist training, through MELRAW (Methodist and Ecumenical Leadership Racism Awareness Workshops), for Methodist church leaders. More recently All We Can have modelled partnership working through relief and development work.

7 Methodist Conference Agenda 1987, p. 572

8 ‘On Visiting the Sick, sermon 98’, *The Works of John Wesley*, (Bicentennial ed. vol 3.3), p. 387

9 See ‘John Wesley’s letter to Miss March, 7 February 1776’

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35. **Leadership from the margins** – Wesley’s emphasis on everyone being a child of God and loved by God gave individuals a true sense of their worth – in the words of Charles Wesley’s hymn, God’s “*ceaseless, unexhausted love, unmerited and free*” is “*enough for all, enough for each, enough for evermore*”.¹⁰ This does not stop us recognising our failings and inherent sinfulness, but it does help us understand that we are not worthless – even if society judges us to be so. This is transformational. Intentionally and unintentionally, Methodism equipped many people to resist injustices by providing education and nurturing self-worth, strong belief and sometimes righteous anger. Nineteenth century agricultural labourers, for example, learned to speak out and lead in church, and were able to assert their need for a living wage, leading to the founding of the trade union movement. Tommy Hepburn, leader of the first miners’ strike in Durham, and Ellen Wilkinson, one of the first women MPs for the Labour Party and one of the leaders of the Jarrow March, were both nurtured as Methodists. Such leadership was often personally costly, particularly for people from the working classes.
36. **Liberation** – Charles Wesley’s words, “*My chains fell off, my heart was free*”, described his conversion experience in the language of liberation. For many early Methodists, this promised liberation was from the oppression of the spirit, the body and the mind, and had a collective perspective. The Revd Hugh Price Hughes of the West London Mission in the 19th century was at the forefront of both the temperance movement, seeking to liberate people from addiction and poverty, and calls to repeal the Contagious Diseases Act, which sought the liberation of women from abuse and oppression. John Wesley recognised that injustice in 18th-century Britain required both personal and collective action to liberate people. He famously condemned the horrors of slavery, but also said that if the capitalist economy relied on slavery, it was better to abolish the system and the Empire’s wealth than to keep slavery: “*it were more desirable that they [the Caribbean islands] were altogether sunk in the depth of the sea, than that they should be cultivated at so high a price as the violation of justice, mercy and truth.*”¹¹ In 1788, Wesley held a prayer vigil for slaves to escape and break their chains. Methodists, both ordained and lay, and of both African and European heritage, took part in resistance to slavery in the Caribbean and the Americas. This strand of liberation for our global neighbours is echoed in the solidarity which has, at times only partially, been expressed with those experiencing injustice around the world. Methodists in other countries were influential in political liberation movements (eg South Africa and Zambia) and the development of liberation theology (eg Jose Bonino).

10 *Singing the Faith* 438

11 John Wesley, *Thoughts upon Slavery*, (1774)

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37. **Prophetic witness** – Methodism has nurtured prophetic groups and individuals who have sometimes challenged the Church and society in highlighting injustices. It has acted in solidarity with others for justice, for example in campaigning against the vested interests of slavery, boycotting South African goods, beginning Racial Justice Sunday after the murder of Stephen Lawrence, campaigning to 'Make Poverty History' and promoting fair trade. As a Church, we have sometimes campaigned and occupied risky spaces, until others could join or take things further, for example in exposing the scandalous impact of Benefit Sanctions particularly on disabled people.¹² This tradition of prophetic witness continues through groups such as the Network of Methodist Activists and remains with us through the stories we tell ourselves today, for example, of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Treasuring stories of costly resistance can still inspire us today.
38. **Recognising and owning our church's part in injustices** – In recent years we have begun to acknowledge our failings as a Church, where, looking back, we have got it very wrong. For example, some of our churches were unreceptive and even hostile to the Windrush generation, many of whom came to worship only to be turned away. Likewise, the Methodist Church undertook the Past Cases Review and confessed our part in the failure of the Church to keep people safe from abuse and lasting damage. Furthermore, we have not always been a prophetic counter-cultural voice: the ten years following the 2011 Conference statement, *Hope in God's Future*, saw too little progress on urgent climate action. The Methodist Church has been humbled by the generosity of many of those directly affected but also needs to hear their anger and frustration when recognising and owning our Church's part in injustices. Through the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity work, our Church is beginning to recognise the damage done and to create a truly inclusive culture. Steps are being taken to face the legacies of slavery in our institution and decolonise our work with global partners, for example through the decision to reconstitute the World Mission Fund Grants Committee to enable decisions around priorities and funding to be made by global partner churches rather than British members alone. At our best, we can face the truths of failures because we believe in a God of truth and grace, as well as a God of justice.
39. There will be other threads of justice within Methodist history in Britain. And there will be many examples where our Church failed to be 'at its best'. Yet the resonance of a commitment to the poorest, the importance of relationship, nurturing leadership from the margins, an holistic understanding of liberation, and the role of prophetic witness, as well as a, too often belated, recognition of our

12 jpit.uk/wp-content/uploads/Time-to-Rethink-Sanctions-Report.pdf, accessed 6 March 2023

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Church's participation in injustice, help to remind us of what we bring from our heritage – and will help in discerning what is ours to do in the future.

Justice and Methodist hymns

40. As a people 'born in song', we are both formed by the hymns we sing, but also see changes in our understanding reflected in the collections of hymns we authorise for use in Methodist churches.¹³ The notion of justice in our hymnody reaches back to the seminal 1780 hymnbook, *Hymns for the use of the People called Methodist*. Picking up Micah 6:8, Charles Wesley writes:

*Whoe'er to thee themselves approve,
Must take the path thy word hath show'd;
Justice pursue, and mercy love,
And humbly walk by faith with God. (Hymn 127)*

41. The first Methodists would have sung this as they sang their faith. However, the 1780 collection, the defining hymnbook of the early Methodist movement, is structured around the idea of personal salvation and offers hymns for the stages on the journey of faith – what one person called "the Pilgrim's Progress of the 18th century". Although the word justice appears in a number of hymns, it usually refers to God's divine law or final judgement. The word righteousness – a recurring theme in Charles' hymns – which incorporates the notion of justice, tends to mean God's gracious putting right of our individual wrongdoings, another term for personal salvation. Likewise, images of bondage are often metaphors for individual sin rather than systemic injustice. Social justice, though sought by the Wesleys in their ministry, is not a salient feature of these hymns. On the other hand, there are some long-standing hymns that although not mentioning the word 'justice' nonetheless articulate the reign of God's kingdom with material and more equitable improvements to communal life.
42. Over the 20th and especially into the 21st century, the notion of social justice has become more prominent in our hymn books, drawing on a wide range of hymns and songs from communities such as Iona, as well as from Methodist writers. *Singing the Faith* placed 30 hymns and songs on themes of justice and peace in a section entitled 'Of God's Enduring Purposes'. Here, God is described

13 Whilst churches use many other justice hymns and songs, for example those from the Iona Community, this section focuses on those within hymn books that have been authorised for the Methodist Church in Britain.

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as standing beside those experiencing injustice. Graham Kendrick's song 'Beauty for brokenness' (StF 693) portrays God alongside the poor and calls on God to: "give us compassion we pray, melt our cold hearts". The justice spoken of in this hymn is linked to the fulfilment of God's salvation, but the implication is that God's kingdom stands in sharp contrast to the fragility of life for many people, experienced through unemployment, dispossession and conflict. Some hymns, however, assume that the singers themselves have not experienced injustice (eg StF 702 'I will speak out for those who have no voices'). This can lead to divisive 'us' and 'them' language and sentiments, excluding some from being able to sing particular hymns, particularly about poverty, with sincerity.

43. The addition to *Hymns and Psalms* and *Singing the Faith* of material from the global Church has brought emphases of confidence ('Oh Freedom', StF 697), hope ('The right hand of God', StF 715), determination ('Sent by the Lord am I', StF 239) and joy ('We are marching in the light of God', StF 483, and 'We will walk with God', StF 484) to hymns of justice.
44. Overall, there is a growing theme of Christian disciples called into partnership with God in seeking justice. This is expressed in the way of life to which we are called as individuals and together.

*Show me how to stand for justice:
How to work for what is right,
How to challenge false assumptions,
How to walk within the light.
May I learn to share more freely
in a world so full of greed,
showing your immense compassion
by the life I choose to lead. (StF 713)*

Justice-seeking through the Methodist Conference

45. The Methodist Conference, as the governing body of the Methodist Church, has adopted statements, received reports, passed resolutions and initiated action on hundreds of justice issues. This section of the report explores how the Conference has acted for justice, and how this has changed over recent years.
46. Some of these have been **formal statements** of the Methodist Conference on specific issues of 'social responsibility'. For example, the Conference produced statements on marriage and divorce in 1946, peace and war in 1957, abortion

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in 1976, and political responsibility in 1995.¹⁴ Whilst many of these formal statements are still a helpful resource, some of them have not stood the test of time. Many need to be read in conjunction with later pieces of work – such as subsequent Conference reports on marriage and relationships, peace and early human life.

47. In 1987, the Conference changed the process for determining what is understood as '**a statement of the Conference**'. The current Standing Order 129 which deals with this is substantially unchanged from the one adopted in that year. The document produced is to be "*a considered Statement of the judgment of the Conference on some major issue or issues of faith and practice, and framed with a view to standing as such for some years.*" In order to ensure that it expresses not just the consensus of the Conference but also of the whole Methodist Church, once the Conference has agreed a draft of the statement it is sent to the Connexion for study, discussion and response. If the response is positive, the Statement may be presented to the Conference for adoption in its original or in some revised form that reflects the comments received.
48. In recent years, only one formal statement has been made on social or political issues – *Hope in God's Future: Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change* – which was adopted in 2011. This may be because in a rapidly changing world the necessary process of adopting such statements is too lengthy. Similarly, rapidly changing situations mean that it is hard to produce something that will stand "for some years".
49. There have been **reports** to the Conference, notably: *Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation* in 2005; *Created in God's Image: An Ecumenical Report on Contemporary Challenges and Principles relating to Early Human Life* in 2008; *Of Equal Value: Poverty and Inequality in the UK* in 2010; and *Drones: Ethical Dilemmas in the Application of Military Force* in 2012. All of these reports were produced ecumenically, usually with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the United Reformed Church. Whilst not formal statements of the Methodist Church, they have enabled the Conference to confer on issues of current concern, offering prophetic insight and guidance for engaging with the challenges faced.
50. In addition to statements and formal reports, every year the Methodist Conference receives **Memorials** from Synods and Circuits. These highlight current concerns of Methodist people and some of them raise concerns about

14 The Christian Citizenship Department, the Division of Social Responsibility and later Church and Society often supported the preparation of these statements.

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international or domestic justice issues. The replies from the Conference often affirm previous positions of the Conference, detail action taken on behalf of the Church, and sometimes commit officers of the Conference to certain actions – for example to write to Government ministers. **Notices of Motion** are another route for members of the Conference to raise issues of concern. Notices of Motion reflect a combination of the issues in the news at that time and the passions of some people elected to the Conference. There is often insufficient time or resource to consider these in depth at the Conference and some are therefore referred to the Methodist Council. Often these motions are uncontroversial in that they are in harmony with previous positions taken by the Conference. Occasionally further work is requested by Notices of Motion or memorials. Usually this is limited to writing letters on behalf of the Conference or bringing existing work to the attention of the Church. But there have occasionally been resolutions which have requested the production of resources or reviews or revisions of previous positions, or fuller reports – such as those on drones, early human life, or housing and homelessness.

51. The Methodist Conference has used its voice on issues of justice to support justice activity in the wider Church. Conference resolutions have required representatives of the Church, for example Presidents and Vice-Presidents, to represent the views of the Church to the UK Government or other bodies. They have provided the basis of other pieces of work – for example ethical investment decisions by the Central Finance Board or campaigns on welfare policy led by the Joint Public Issues Team – which are judged to be *“in harmony with the existing statements and resolutions of the Conference”*. Methodists and Local Churches engage with the challenges in various ways. Interest groups have been set up to take forward specific issues, such as the Methodist group on Housing and Homelessness. Individuals have been empowered to represent the position of the Conference in communication with their own elected political representatives, for example in 2016 the Notice of Motion 201(P), *After the Referendum: National Life*, was sent to all MPs and many Methodists followed it up with them in conversation.
52. The Conference’s resolutions on justice issues have been accompanied by an increasing focus on connexionally-enabled campaigning activism. The Conference moved from the clear statements of the decades before the 1990s, to a position where principles are agreed, with a recognition that changing circumstances and a deepening understanding will shape responses. This has developed in tandem with the way in which the Connexional Team has been structured to support the Conference in its justice work. The Methodist Church has moved from having Connexional Secretaries with responsibility for areas of work within a Department of Christian Citizenship, or the Division of Social

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Responsibility or Church and Society, to being part of the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) which, for Methodism, sits within the Mission Team.

53. JPIT carries forward the wishes of the Methodist Conference together with the governance bodies of the other member denominations. As well as enabling Churches to speak to national institutions, it has developed thematic popular campaigns using theological resources and previous statements or resolutions of the Conference. Significant campaigns include Truth and Lies about Poverty, Benefit Sanctions, Reset the Debt, the Nuclear Weapons Ban and campaigns around the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.
54. Methodists have long been involved in campaigning – many remember the campaigns of MAYC as shaping their faith and awareness of justice. Campaigns carried out in the name of the Methodist Church can be deeply formative for us as a Church. Based on deeply held beliefs, they surface those beliefs in practical ways and help shape our sense of what our beliefs mean for our way of life. The *Truth and Lies* campaign is a good example of this. Receiving a lot of publicity, it enabled the Church to challenge a vindictive narrative about people living in poverty, and also enabled Methodists to engage with people in different ways. Whilst we often seek out collaborative partners, Methodist Church's campaigns for justice can sometimes be at their best when they respond to a call to the margins, holding a risky prophetic space, occupying it until it becomes the norm, before handing it onto others. *Reset the Debt* kept the impact of household debt in front of decision-makers for 18 months, and others in the field have now launched their own campaigns. Yet whilst campaigning and advocacy is important, resolutions of the Conference can also be acted upon through other forms of community-based activism.¹⁵
55. There are, however, limitations connected with the ways of working described.
56. Firstly, the Methodist Conference only has a limited time for business. This means that the time given to consideration of justice issues, particularly when it is in the form of Memorials or Notices of Motion, is also limited. Significant issues can be delegated to the Methodist Council or passed with little discussion. Yet the Conference can and often does engage in deep conferring – self-conscious talking and listening in the presence of the Holy Spirit – drawing on wisdom and resources from around the Connexion. In recent years the use of workshops has helped to develop work on major issues. Similarly, there has been

15 Recent examples would include engaging with the Churches of Sanctuary Movement and the Homes for Ukraine programme, both supported at the Methodist Conference in 2022.

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benefit in having two debates on separate days when dealing with an important report: the first to discuss the overall content and principles, and the second to deal with the detailed resolutions connected to it. Given the right process and purpose, deliberate conferring enables the Church's engagement with justice issues to be deepened.

57. Secondly, whilst the Methodist Conference speaks for the Methodist Church, it does not represent the views of all people who are part of Methodist communities on all issues. Members of the Connexional Team, speaking on behalf of the Methodist Church, are careful to refer to statements made in the name of the Presidency, resolutions passed by the Conference, or the views of "many Methodists". Very rarely has the Conference indicated that views are unarguable. SO 336(1), which states that "racism is a denial of the gospel" is one, and perhaps *Hope in God's Future's* assertion that "it is now morally irresponsible to fail to act on . . . our current situation" gives a clear position on inaction on the climate crisis. Whilst Methodists will sometimes hold opposing positions on how issues of injustice should be understood or resolved, this doesn't mean that every position is acceptable or should go unchallenged, nor does complexity require us to be neutral. The Principles proposed in Section 3 of the report offer a way of anchoring us all in a vision of God's justice, from which we can seek our own vocation for justice, and ensure that the Methodist Church has an articulated basis for public engagement.

Learning from the Bible and our theology

Theological definitions of justice

58. We begin this theology of justice by reflecting on the nature of God. One of the most fundamental ways in which we understand that nature is as love. Justice is the outworking of love in the public domain and as such is an expression of God's nature; justice characterises God's interaction with God's world and God's people. Such justice may not always be comfortable, or easily intelligible, and humans may not always have fully recognised, followed or understood it, but this does not negate the value of the exploration.
59. There are many strands in the Christian tradition that can contribute to a theology of justice. These include the following approaches:
- a. **Creation-based:** Justice is where all is held in a godly balance, in a world that is good; this means that a creation-based vision of justice extends beyond the human, calling us to a responsible and caring relationship of interdependence

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with the whole created order. Justice is done when we love, appreciate and care for creation as God's precious gift, which we hold in trust. This understanding would take, as its starting point for human relations, the *imago Dei*; a just society is one in which the image of God is recognised in all people, and all are treated as such. Equally, it is one where all live as those proud to bear the image of God.

- b. **Incarnation-based:** God was fully present in the person of Jesus Christ, and chooses to be present through the followers of Christ in the messiness of everyday life. Justice may be a form of *kenosis*, or self-emptying. Too often, this is unequally expected of certain (often already marginalised) groups, but when we all give of ourselves freely for others, surrendering the privilege that we hold, the imbalance of power which leads to injustice gives way to a commitment to the good of the other. Paradoxically, this self-emptying leads to a society in which all can be fulfilled. Irenaeus of Lyons reminds us that Christ "became what we are so that we may become what he is,"¹⁶ and Mary sings that God "has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly." (Luke 1:52, NRSVA)
- c. **Salvation-based:** Justice is shaped by the cross, showing that evil will not be victorious and offering new life for all things in Jesus. Like the passion narrative itself, a salvation-based understanding of justice draws on the imagery and theology of the Exodus. Justice is liberation, which comes not without pain and not without risk. It seeks to overcome exploitation and inequality, but also the subtler forms of oppression that limit people's ability to shape and live their lives freely. It emerges into the light, reborn and renewed, but, like the risen Christ, those who have fought for justice will bear the scars. Yet there is some moral complexity in the Exodus narrative, with the liberation of the people of Israel being accompanied by the deaths of the Egyptian army in the waters. Perhaps, though, it does at least show that in various ways injustice costs the oppressors as well as the oppressed.
- d. **Kingdom-based:** In the life of Israel, in the ministry of Jesus, and in the life of the early Church, the Bible bears witness to another way of being, where God's kingdom comes and God's will is done. It also, of course, bears witness to the damage done where this is not the case. The lived experience of God's people, in both Testaments and throughout history, leads to an understanding of what justice – and injustice – feels like. Justice is inherently relational and community-based and reflects *koinonia*, the deep and loving fellowship that is made possible through the Holy Spirit.

60. In our theological reflections, we will often and rightly draw on more than one of these approaches.

16 Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, book 5, Preface

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Justice as Our Calling

61. If justice finds its source in our understanding of God, particularly as seen in the ministry of Jesus Christ, then it must surely be a part of our calling as God's people. If discipleship is about learning to be more Christ-like, we cannot avoid the task of seeking to be more just. To believe in a just God is to believe in justice as godliness, and to believe is to act. The Epistle of James declares that "faith without works is dead" (2:26, *NRSVA*) – this is not a neat soundbite, but a summary of a much longer call to let justice and love characterise our community of faith.
62. Justice describes the way in which God relates to us, so it must also be central to how we relate to God (Worship) and to one another (Learning and Caring), to how we are Christ-like in the world (Service), and indeed to the very nature of the good news that we proclaim (Evangelism). Justice is not an optional add-on, or a piece of work that we can delegate to a committee, but is central to what it means to be a disciple.

A Methodist theology of justice-seeking

63. There is nothing in the above that is uniquely Methodist: if justice is an outworking of love, and love is the nature of God, then to be Christian must be to seek justice. But perhaps there is a distinctively – although still not uniquely – Methodist theological approach to seeking justice.
64. Methodism places considerable value on the ideas of sanctification and holiness. For John Wesley holiness is about a fullness (even perfection) of love for God and for neighbour. Living out love in the real world, however, can be messy and complicated; it can involve difficult ethical decisions and engagement with those who may not share our values. But it has the potential to transform both us and the world around us. The Bible shows us a God who is intimately connected with, and concerned for, God's creation – a God who takes an interest in the orphan and the widow, who is concerned for the stranger, and who actually chose to live as part of creation, in Jesus, who was not afraid to get his holy hands dirty, before nails were driven through them. And we are called to be holy, just as God is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16, recalling Leviticus 11:45). For Methodists, holiness is intertwined with an understanding of justice.
65. Methodists have historically placed a considerable emphasis on **experience** in theology. So it might be appropriate to draw on our understanding from our individual and community experience of justice.

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66. In practice, this may often begin with what *injustice* feels like. We may be more aware of our perception of when God's rule is *not* experienced, when situations are unfair or oppressive. This could be seen as a theology that begins with the Fall, but is perhaps more concerned with redemption. We might begin with eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, but perhaps we need to have our eyes opened to injustice to which we might otherwise remain oblivious. Walter Brueggemann, in *The Prophetic Imagination*, argues that, confronted with oppressive systems, before we can seek change, we must first learn to lament the way things are. This means allowing ourselves to be awakened to situations of injustice until, understanding fully, we can do no other but lament. Then we will be ready to join the struggle for justice, not because we think we should, or because it will count to our credit, but because we cannot bear the injustice.
67. It is easy to see why the Hebrew slaves in Egypt might lament, but we may not be those Hebrews; we may even be the ordinary Egyptians, who are not driving the slaves but who benefit from their labour. How, then, are we to reach the point of lament and the urge for justice? The answer must involve a great deal of careful listening and empathy. The starting point for our Methodist theology of justice may not be our own experience, but that of others. This can be difficult and uncomfortable, but may drive us to repentance, to lament and thus to action, and so our discipleship may be enriched.
68. If our theological explorations often begin with experience, we soon find ourselves turning to **Scripture** in order to make sense of what we have experienced, to allow Scripture to read our experience and challenge it. The scriptural potential for a reflection on justice is vast and complex, and cannot be adequately dealt with here, but it is worth noting that it is not a discrete category. Firstly, it is itself in part about experience; the narratives contained within the Bible describe the experience of God's people in seeking – and often failing – to live according to God's justice. Secondly, the theological themes already outlined are themselves profoundly biblical, and the biblical witness shapes our theology and our interpretation of our experience.
69. It is also important to note that the Bible does not present one uniform picture of justice, and that there are some very problematic examples of how justice can appear very different from different perspectives. We tend to turn to the prophets (Micah among them) for a call to justice, but what are we to do with the cry of desperation at the end of Psalm 137, where the heartbroken, exiled Hebrews can find no other way to express their experience of injustice than by longing for the destruction of even the babies of their oppressors?
70. In exploring our experiences and those that we read about in Scripture, we naturally find ourselves applying **reason** to determine the underlying principles of

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justice and how they appear, or are missing, in our lives and communities today. We do this as individuals and in conference with one another, by reflecting on our individual and collective experience, and the experiences of others. We do this in order to include the widest possible range of voices, thus ensuring that the conferring itself is done justly. We recognise that sometimes these voices will disagree. As with the biblical narrative, justice looks different from different perspectives.

71. The act of conferring also allows us to discern together, not just where injustice is to be found, but also how and where to prioritise our focus as a justice-seeking church. It allows us to respond to injustice at a very local level, within each community and context, and to work with our partner churches around the world to challenge oppression and injustice internationally and globally. This does not, however, release us from the obligation to identify and challenge injustice as individuals, nor to examine our own lives for those attitudes and actions that deny the image of God in our neighbours.
72. As we reflect together on our experience and interpret the Bible with each other, we build on that collective experience that we call **tradition**. Our traditions, which are often so central to our lives and worship that we may not even notice them, arise from our experience and our sense of self-identity. We stand in a tradition of seeking justice and equality; this is seen in our history and dissenting traditions, our hymnody, our preaching, our Wesleyan heritage and doctrines. There is much here of which we can be rightly proud.
73. Again, however, we need to be attentive to the widest possible range of voices. We are part of a global Wesleyan family, and part of the Church catholic; we are also citizens of a world with a vast range of religious, cultural and linguistic traditions and a huge diversity of experience. The traditions and history of other parts of the global Methodist and other Christian communities, as well as non-Christian communities, have also shaped our own traditions. The development of Liberation Theology, Black Theology, women's and LGBTQ theologies, Urban Theology, and other liberationist approaches have enabled a deeper understanding, bringing the perspectives of marginalised communities to theological interpretation. Attention to these perspectives helps us to recognise the less constructive aspects of the history of our Church and communities, and to understand where we have colluded – and often may still collude – with inequality, injustice and oppression.
74. All of this requires a collective process of listening. We need to hear those whose experience of injustice is not ours; the reasoning of those whose understanding of justice is not ours; interpretations of Scripture that challenge our own reading; and the perspectives of those shaped in different traditions from ours. The search

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for justice is not tidy, and a theology of justice is therefore hard to systematise. Rather, we weave together the various theological strands in ever new ways, for new situations, as we listen to and confer with one another.

Learning from conversations

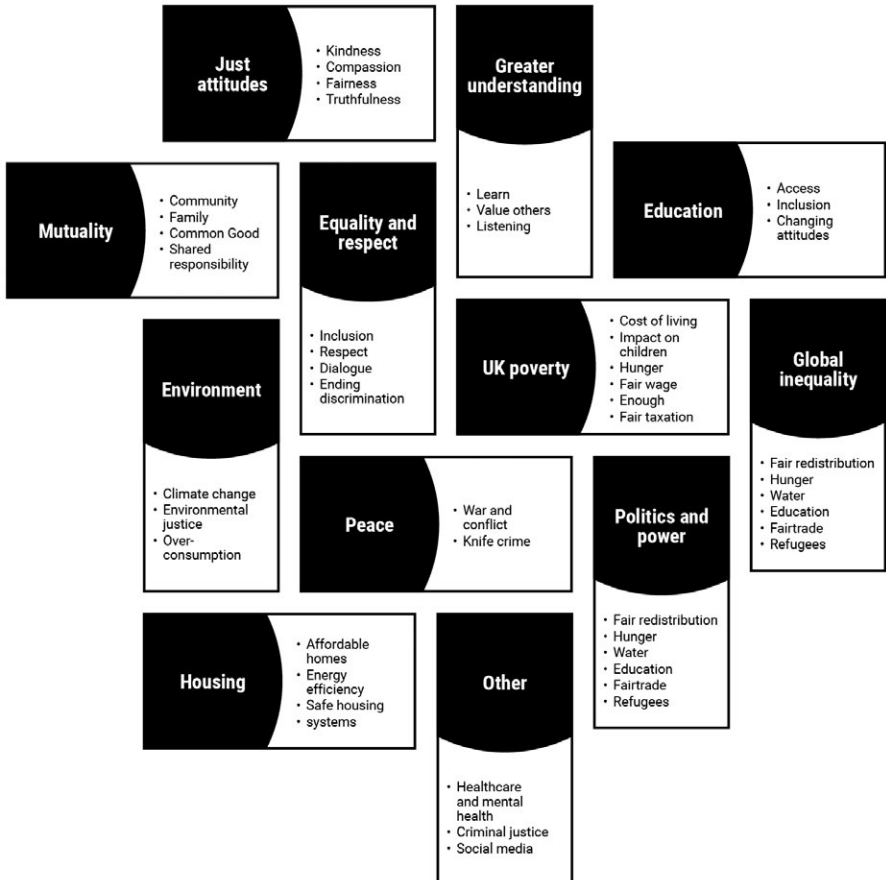
75. A major contribution to the project has been the **Justice Conversations**. This was a participatory method through which people were invited to learn through dialogue with others, and then share the fruits of what they had observed or discovered. These were conversations not consultations. The feedback indicates the breadth of concerns amongst Methodist groups and communities, and is used alongside the other sources of information indicated in this section of the report.
76. Across the Connexion, people were invited to consider together three questions as part of Justice Conversations:
 - Imagine a fair, more equal and life-bringing society and world . . . what does that look like?
 - What's the biggest obstacle to such a just world?
 - What is the most important step in making this a reality?
77. Groups were offered resources to look at these questions through the lens of Bible studies, worship, discussion groups, craftivism or intergenerational conversation. They fed back their responses through a web portal or on postcards. Some Synods and Methodist schools also took part, as did children and young people at 3Generate and deacons at Convocation.
78. Many of these responses came from groups who were aware of what was happening in their local communities and were committed to working for change. Groups that fed back through the web portal gave some information about themselves, for example:
 - *We are a community hub and the only such facility in the locality.*
 - *[We] collect a weekly delivery of vegetables from farmer for homeless ministry.*
 - *We are a church with no building. We have a piece of land leased . . . where we grow produce to share within the community through the town's community fridge which is part of the community climate emergency group.*
 - *We have recently started a Peace and Justice group called 'A Piece of Justice' which uses the Craftivist approach to activism.*
 - *Average congregation 15+; a registered fair-trade church, bronze eco church, two weekly coffee mornings – one primarily for elderly/isolated/mental health, one a free café with benefit/welfare advisor, a monthly free Sunday lunch for the community.*

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79. Whilst there was recognition that Covid-19 had changed or paused activities undertaken by churches, two thirds of churches that responded were involved in foodbanks, and a third were involved in supporting refugees, fair trade or community campaigns.
80. Groups with personal experiences of injustice were also invited to hold panels or discussions, and fed back their perspective, for example on poverty, youth, racial injustice, disability and gender. Whilst the intent was to respond to the commitment that this project should reflect the maxim of many rights groups, 'Nothing about us, without us, is for us', we recognise the inherent limitations of this process. Not all perspectives were represented. We heard that sometimes people are too tired or busy to repeatedly share their stories. Sometimes people's experiences of injustice within the Church meant that their lens focused on the Church and the changes needed within it, which demonstrated the importance of the link between this project and the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy.
81. A workshop was held with partner churches and partnership coordinators at the Pre-Conference Consultation, and there was feedback from the Global Relations conversation process with partner churches facilitated by Regional Ecumenical Advisory and Service Centre in Latin America (CREAS), as well as a conversation facilitated by All We Can.
82. Finally conversations were held with a range of Methodist organisations and networks about their Priorities for justice. These included MHA, the Methodist City Centre Network the Central Finance Board, All We Can, the Fund for Human Need and the Network of Methodist Activists. Some of these organisations have clear priorities for changes to public policy, others are responding to need or enabling engagement with justice. All of them carry some Methodist history and identity in terms of our response to injustice.
83. These various conversations did not provide an overriding issue or single call for change. Instead themes have emerged, from groups' images of a just world and their priorities for action, together with advice from JPIT and others on issues that are below the horizon. These themes were tested in workshops at the Conference of 2022. Responses from members of the Conference were fed back into the discernment process and brought into conversation with the other sources.
84. The aim throughout has been to listen across a wide range of voices and to discern what could help us be a better justice-seeking church. These conversations have shaped the Principles and Priorities proposed in later sections, and also given an insight into how our church practises justice-seeking.

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85. The graphic below is just an illustration of some of the lenses for justice that emerged in the Justice Conversations. Whilst presented in themes, the issues they represent are of course woven together in far greater complexity. Migration cannot be separated from the climate crisis, and housing is embedded in poverty in the UK. Similarly, because of the ways in which the conversations were structured, this graphic captures a representation of people's concerns about injustices to be tackled, visions of justice and means of achieving that justice. No weighting is attempted; rather this graphic gives a flavour of the themes emerging from the conversations held.



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Learning from current Methodist practice

86. The Methodist Church in Britain (MCB) currently speaks, funds, works, learns and prays on and about many justice issues, via Local Churches and Circuits, informal networks, senior leaders, grassroots activists and in partnership with others. In particular, MCB often works in partnership with other Methodist-founded organisations, including Action for Children, All We Can, the Fund for Human Need, MHA and more. There is also a large number of other organisations with which the Methodist Church and people have a long history of collaborating, including Christian Aid, the Fairtrade Foundation, A Rocha and more. Alongside these established groups are grassroots networks of individuals involved in justice work, including the Methodist Peace Fellowship, Methodist Women in Britain, Methodists for World Mission, the Methodist Zero Carbon Group and the Network of Methodist Activists. Many Methodists offer prayer, money and time to these organisations and groups.
87. Methodists often seek to undertake justice holistically – praying, learning, speaking, funding and working simultaneously – so these practices overlap and support one another. However, for simplicity, our current justice work is outlined below under three broad headings – speaking, funding and working.
88. **Speaking for justice** is undertaken most prominently by the representatives from Methodism's large annual gatherings – the Conference and 3Generate (the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly). Each year, the Conference elects a President and Vice-President, who often choose a theme for the year to speak out on. Many recent themes have reflected issues of justice, including, 'The Greatest Commandment' (love your neighbour) and 'A Place for All' (equality and inclusion). In addition to their theme, the President and Vice-President often speak on behalf of the Methodist Church and alongside others on current affairs and urgent issues of justice, often supported by the Joint Public Issues Team. 3Generate has regularly exercised its prophetic voice in highlighting justice issues, usually via the elected Youth President or Youth Representatives. In recent years, this has included environmental issues, homelessness, Black Lives Matter, and poverty in the UK. Social media has enabled Methodists at all levels to speak for justice on a broad and public platform.
89. Preachers engage with justice in the Bible and in the world on a weekly basis as they prepare to lead worship. Ministerial formation at Queen's includes a centring of liberation approaches, a mandatory module on Black and Asian theologies, and compulsory training in community-based engagement and mission.

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90. **Funding for justice** happens globally, connexionally and locally.

- **Globally:** The World Mission Fund (WMF) finances projects and work overseas in co-operation with the Methodist Church in Britain's global partner churches and organisations; this including projects focused on evangelism, mission work, schools, hospitals, environmental action, emergency situations, administration, training and much more. Recent examples of justice work include supporting the work of the Methodist Church in Tanzania in challenging attitudes toward those living with disabilities, and the work of Mediterranean Hope, through a mission partner working in advocacy for migrants and the creation of humanitarian corridors for those seeking refuge. In addition, MCB regularly fundraises for areas of high need in response to events around the world, such as the 2022 Sri Lanka appeal, and the appeals for Ukraine in 2022 and Haiti in 2021 – both of which were held jointly with All We Can.
- **Connexionally:** The Mission in Britain (MiB) Fund finances projects and work in the UK. Every Circuit and every District in the Connexion has been allocated MiB funds for one or more New Places for New People (NPNP) projects. Across the Connexion, at least 60 per cent of NPNP funding will be used for Church at the Margins projects. The vision for Church at the Margins is to nurture new Christian communities and leadership amongst economically marginalised people in new places.
- **Locally:** £250,000 of Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice (MAPJ) funding, which comes from the MiB Fund, is distributed to the Districts each year, for use according to local Priorities, within the purposes defined in Standing Order 1004 (focusing closely on advocating for and supporting those experiencing poverty), along with money from District Advance Funds.

91. **Working for justice** is led at a connexional level by the Joint Public Issues Team, where the Methodist Church works in close partnership with the Baptist Union and United Reformed Church, with the Church of Scotland as an associate partner. This work has in recent years been shaped by 'Six Hopes for Society': a just economy that enables the flourishing of all life; a society where the poorest and most marginalised are at the centre; a world that actively works for peace; a planet where our environment is renewed; a society that welcomes the stranger; and a politics characterised by listening, kindness and truthfulness. The work is focused on research, engagement, advocacy and campaigning, and the creation of resources for reflection, discussion and worship around these six hopes. Within the Children Youth and Families Team, the Agents of Change programme

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has supported, and continues to encourage activism, volunteering, campaigning, peace-making and project-starting amongst children and young people.

92. In addition to this ongoing work, short-term projects are undertaken in response to need, including recruiting COP26 Campaign Workers to mobilise the Methodist Church globally in calling for action on the climate crisis during the COP26, launching the Warm Spaces project in response to steep increases in energy bills and the cost of living crisis, and partnering with Citizens UK to support the Communities for Ukraine programme. Justice is also woven into work across the Methodist Church, including the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Strategy, the God for All Strategy, Rural Mission and Ministry, the aims and purpose of 3Generate, the work of Safeguarding, the Action for Hope Strategy and in many other ways.
93. **Working for justice** is led at a local level by churches, Circuits and Districts, which undertake justice work tailored to their own contexts and funded locally.
94. Local Churches bring many gifts. Churches desire to reflect the character of God, not to develop the power of an organisation, and are sustained by prayer and spirituality. Churches are often an enduring presence within communities, with a shared memory of change and the long-term impact of injustices, as well as relationships sometimes over generations, with members of communities. Churches' experience of pastoral care and listening means that they are not naive about the 'messiness of life' and therefore know that seeking transformation and justice can be complex, and requires persistence and often small steps. Collectively, if not always locally, churches are intergenerational and diverse, contextual and part of a global community. They are able to explore issues of justice and transformation across a wide range of experiences and perspectives. Churches can nurture leadership from the margins of societies, and children and young people inspire and initiate justice in their communities and the wider church. Christian discipleship includes the call to be a prophetic community; a people who recognise the reality of the world as it is, and who yet look towards, and invite others to look towards, the world as it should be.
95. Yet churches also face challenges in being justice-seeking presences in communities. Many of these challenges – a shortage of funding or volunteers, an increase in demand and a lack of certainty – face other charities or other voluntary organisations. The increasingly middle class demographic of many churches means that they are often disconnected from those with lived experience of injustice. There is a sense that there are fewer people within our churches able to engage with certain forms of justice-seeking and action. For

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those who are engaging, there is a risk of being overwhelmed by the breadth and depth of injustices. In the wake of the pandemic, many congregations experience a continuing sense of being in liminal, or 'in between' times, trying to discern how to hold on to the treasures of the past, to set aside the things which no longer work, and to be open to new ways of seeking justice and peace.

96. No large-scale surveying or research has been done into local church justice work, and so the scale and types of work undertaken across the Connexion remains relatively unknown. But it is clear that the areas of work that many churches are involved in include (but are not limited to): hosting foodbanks or pantries and debt advice centres; supporting people facing homelessness, drug addiction, poverty or discrimination; becoming EcoChurches or Churches of Sanctuary; hosting election hustings meetings; or being involved in campaigning or community organising groups. In addition, some diaconal and presbyteral appointments and lay worker roles have a particular emphasis on justice issues and civic or political engagement. Finally, it is important to remember that Methodist people are often involved in justice work beyond their church community, including in paid employment or voluntary work. The role of churches in inspiring such work through preaching or upholding it in prayer is crucial.
97. Across the Methodist engagement in justice outlined above, the themes that emerge most commonly in the current practice are poverty, equality, environment, global issues and asylum/migration. Less common themes which are also present include peace, a just economy and political engagement.

Key approaches to justice-seeking

98. Through conversations, and reflections on our theology, tradition and practice, it has become apparent that there are some ways of being that enable us to be 'at our best' when we are seeking justice:
- **Being with** – justice is about 'being with' people rather than 'working for' people.
 - **Humility in community** – recognising when we get things wrong, that we can grow and learn, that churches are not the most significant players, and that we must collaborate.
 - **Power** – we need to recognise where power lies and who is denied power, and how to use our own power

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- **Transformation** – justice is not only about responding to someone’s immediate needs, but also transforming the deep or structural injustices that cause those needs.
- **Prayer** – activism for justice needs to be rooted in and sustained by our relationship with the God of justice

99. These are key assumptions about ‘ways of being’ that we believe underpin a Methodist approach to justice, and are developed further in Section 5.

Section 3: Principles for justice

Introducing the Principles for justice

100. The **Principles** for justice are anchored in what we know of our just God, and suggest what this means for us to be justice-seeking.
101. Many Christian Churches have a tradition of social principles or a body of theological teaching on justice.¹⁷
102. The Catholic Church, for example, has a body of Catholic Social Teaching that originated in modern times in 1891 with the encyclical letter, *Rerum Novarum*. Since then, new encyclicals, such as Pope Francis’s *Laudato Si’* on the environment and *Fratelli Tutti* on solidarity, have refined the Church’s teaching and shaped its response to the modern world. The Catholic aid agency CAFOD summarises the core principles of Catholic Social Teaching as: dignity; solidarity; the common good; the option for the poor; peace; care for creation; and the dignity of work and participation.¹⁸
103. The worldwide Anglican Communion produces material to support ‘Five Marks of Mission’, the third, fourth and fifth of which are “To respond to human need by loving service”, “To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation” and “To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth”.¹⁹ The World Communion of Reformed Churches engages in extensive teaching

17 See Malcolm Brown (ed), *Anglican Social Theology: Renewing the Vision today* (Church House Publishing, 2014) for discussion of different traditions

18 cafod.org.uk/Pray/Catholic-social-teaching, accessed 6 March 2023

19 anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.asp, accessed 6 March 2023

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and campaigning on justice, including the 2004 Accra Confession on economic and environmental justice.²⁰ The Baptist World Alliance has a Commission on Racial, Gender and Economic Justice and several other Commissions as part of a Religious Freedom, Human Rights, and Justice Network.²¹ *Quaker Faith and Practice* is a collection of witness and wisdom, consisting of extracts and quotes, reflecting the breadth of Quaker theology. As well as describing Quaker governance, it offers testimonies on social responsibility and peace.

104. The World Methodist Council has a social justice committee with a current focus on economic justice or injustice, and has approved a 'World Methodist Social Affirmation'.²² The United Methodist Church (UMC)²³ has a series of Social Principles, beginning with an affirmation of faith from which detailed position statements follow, speaking *"to the human issues in the contemporary world from a sound biblical and theological foundation . . . They are a call to faithfulness and are intended to be instructive and persuasive in the best of the prophetic spirit."* The General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church has been through a process, over a number of years, and involving hundreds of people from around the Church globally, to develop proposed new Social Principles that will come to the next UMC General Conference.
105. Other partner churches have similarly developed theological approaches to current human or global challenges, for example the Pacific Churches on 'Re-weaving the ecological mat' or the theological statements of the Methodist Church in Cuba on children and the family.
106. As shown in section 2 the British Methodist Conference has made theological statements related to specific social or justice issues, and from these have been developed positions or activities.
107. What is offered to the Conference through these Principles for justice is different. We recommend the adoption of six simple Principles, developed through listening, conversations and with accompaniers from the Faith and Order Committee. These Principles offer a description of what underpins our beliefs, for us as Methodists, about a God of justice. Each is followed by what this principle means for us if we are to be justice-seeking. Whilst these Principles will be recognised by many Christians, they are proposed humbly as emerging from our own reception of scripture, experience, tradition and reason.

20 wrc.ch/resources/justice, accessed 6 March 2023

21 baptistworld.org/commissions, accessed 6 March 2023

22 worldmethodistcouncil.org/social-international-affairs, accessed 6 March 2023

23 The United Methodist Church is a global Methodist Church based in the United States of America.

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108. We recommend the adoption of these Principles for justice:

- God made humans in the image of God, each worthy of equal value and dignity. *The search for justice entails treating others with respect, and may involve reclaiming lost worth.*
- God desires the flourishing of creation and human community within it. *The search for justice does not diminish or limit the flourishing of others but seeks to enable it.*
- God consistently shows a bias to people experiencing poverty and those who are excluded. *The search for justice must attend to those who live in poverty, and those who are marginalised in other ways, as a priority.*
- God entrusts those in power with a special responsibility for upholding justice. *Those seeking justice will encourage and challenge those with power to fulfil their vocation.*
- God calls all people and nations actively to work for peace and justice, liberation and transformation. *It is never just someone else's responsibility. We all have a part to play.*
- God calls us to live in hope and in ways that reflect God's character and the pattern of God's kingdom. *Thus, seeking justice involves honesty and truth, and may demand protest and resistance, restitution, forgiveness, reconciliation and ultimately transformation.*

What are the Principles for?

109. The hope behind these Principles is three-fold. Firstly, in turbulent times, these Principles are anchored in what we understand of God's just character. They are not a panacea, telling us everything we need to think or know in every situation. They do not mean that we no longer need to think, pray, or confer with each other. Instead the Principles are a powerful expression of what keeps us rooted as we wrestle with situations of injustice.
110. Secondly, the hope is that that these Principles will help us to articulate our call to justice, both inside and beyond the Methodist Church, in ways that are clear and compelling.
111. Thirdly, the hope is that the Principles will be tools to support discernment, individually and collectively, as we continually face new challenges of injustice. Supported by the deeper reflections below, they will be a resource for us – as members, as Church leaders, as groups such as JPIT or the Central Finance Board – when we are called to respond in word or action to specific issues. If these are agreed by the Conference, the intention is to provide materials, such as

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Bible study or small group resources and toolkits, to enable Methodists to engage with them.

112. There may be times when one of the Principles might speak more to us than others. However, they should not be cherry-picked. Instead they should work in dialogue one with another, and that interaction should help us to go deeper.
113. Above all the Principles are not to be received passively. They are for us to work out in community with each other, together, through our discipleship and discernment, as part of our vocation for justice in this time and place. Our engagement with the Principles comprises part of our accountability to each other as well as to God.
114. At the core of these Principles is God's love. John Wesley recognised that love was the most important gift and motivator. In his sermon on The Catholic Spirit he wrote, "*Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may.*"²⁴ Adopting these Principles does not mean that Methodists will all have to agree on each issue or vote the same way in every election. We have different lenses and experiences of justice and injustice, as well as different political ideologies. Methodists have represented most mainstream parties in elected assemblies. But we can be united in the acceptance of the Principles, even if we do not yet fully agree over their application.
115. There are however some positions that cross "*the limits of acceptable political ideology, beyond which Christian sympathy must be withdrawn because our understanding of God is contradicted (eg apartheid, or the National Front).*"²⁵ The Principles do not themselves draw such lines, but will help in the identification of ideologies, policies or behaviours that are unacceptable.
116. In the end we must recall, as the Methodist Statement on Political Responsibility (1995) reminds us, that however earnest, our efforts for justice will only ever be human and a proximate picture of God's justice:

"the Christian community must face honestly its historical record. It is clear that the power of sin remains ever present in the church as in creation

24 'Catholic Spirit, sermon 39', *The Works of John Wesley*, (Bicentennial ed. vol 2.4) p. 82

25 The Methodist Statement on Political Responsibility 1995. This is reflected in SO 013B, and the requirement of SO 050 that preparation for candidates for membership shall 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".

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as a whole. It infects all relationships and social structures, distorting perception and breeding corruption, oppression, arrogance and unbridled selfishness. No political programme, therefore, can be equated with the coming kingdom of God."

Going deeper with the Principles

God made humans in the image of God, each worthy of equal value and dignity. *The search for justice entails treating others with respect, and may involve reclaiming lost worth.*

117. From the very beginning, the 'image of God' is embedded into the biblical story as a key way of describing human identity. Genesis 1:26-27 tells us three times that humanity is formed in God's image; then God blesses this new, human creation and declares it to be good.
118. It is also significant that diversity is an inherent part of this identity; God creates humankind "in the image of God" (v.27). It is not a particular people, gender, ability, ethnicity or social status that is created to bear the divine image, but all humankind.
119. To recognise this image in all humans is inherently to treat all people with equal (and utmost) dignity and of equal (the highest) value. Anything else is a distortion of our relationship with God, or what we call 'sin'. To elevate some is to find ourselves recasting our understanding of God in the image of some people. To reduce others to a lesser status is to treat God's image as unworthy of respect. The first outcome is idolatry, the second is a failure to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and strength.
120. If, then, our identity as the image of God is part of God's good creation, our failure to recognise that image in others – or to treat people as being of unequal worth – is a consequence of the Fall. That is, it is an example of our human tendency to idolise our own ideas about God, and to limit the scope of God's grace. The consequences of this are not limited to individual relationships; to fail to see the image of God in others results in the image of God being less clear in us. It is to act as though not only the 'other', but also we ourselves, are not bearers of God's image.
121. In Jesus, we see the truest image of God, remaining faithful to that image and recognising it in others. We see him restore worth to those considered worthless and take time to engage with humanity that bears the imprint of Godself. And we

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see Jesus treated as of no worth, executed in pain and humiliation on the cross, God's ultimate defeat of that which is evil and the promise of new life and new creation. And so the cross – a symbol of the human capacity for inhumanity – becomes instead a symbol of a new way of being, in which, through loving our neighbour as ourselves, the image of God can be seen more clearly in us, and our worth can be restored.

God desires the flourishing of creation and human community within it. The search for justice does not diminish or limit the flourishing of others but seeks to enable it.

122. Creation is intrinsically good and God delights in it. Human beings are the focal point of the biblical account of creation in the book of Genesis (chapters 1, 2) but all creation is interdependent. People are 'made for each other' (Genesis 2:18) yet this cannot occur without the wider flourishing of the created order that includes all living things and the global ecosystem.
123. Flourishing means the maximal development of one's potential and capabilities, the greatest use of the gifts we are all given. It is about having enough in order to thrive; the ability to live a good life, one that is meaningful and satisfying. It is not the same as the freedom to do whatever one likes, but flourishing is about that environment which enables our greatest potential to be reached, individually and collectively. It does not suggest that we all have the same potential, but that we are of equal worth in the sight of God. Each one of us is uniquely gifted and has our own distinctive contribution to make. Theologically, the concept of the good life includes work and rest, as well as pursuits that are creative and allow free self-expression. Flourishing is about exploring and co-creating God's world, and discovering these to be satisfying and enriching experiences. However the waste or exploitation of God's gifts is not only sin against God but represents an injustice against others.
124. The flourishing of creation needs to be understood carefully. Humanity is an integral part of God's created order. Creation's beauty, diversity, complexity and variety of species are consequences of its flourishing, not the goal of it. All living things are one whole, and the destruction of one part (a habitat or a species) will often have serious implications for many others, in ways often unforeseeable.
125. The flourishing of creation describes a situation in which the present and future of human beings and all living things are secured, in ways that respect the delicate balance between creature and environment.
126. In principle, no one aspect of justice is more important than any other, and ideally the pursuit of one form of justice should not impair the advancement of any

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other nor lead to the diminishing of anyone. Justice, flourishing and diversity are all linked. In practice, however, we will always wrestle with competing priorities due to finitude and scarcity, but in the search for justice we should always guard against the creation of injustices elsewhere. Yet not all loss is injustice. The achievement of justice can be costly for those who seek it, and it can involve loss of privilege or reparations to those who have suffered. But only in the narrowest of interpretations can this be considered loss, for the gains far outweigh these, and open up possibilities of greater reconciliation, healing, peace and security for all, rather than for some.

127. Justice will always enhance flourishing. It may place constraints on certain activities – but only on those that create unjust outcomes, and thus would restrict the flourishing of others: neighbours and strangers in the future as well as the present.

God consistently shows a bias to people experiencing poverty and those who are excluded. *The search for justice must attend to those who live in poverty, and those who are marginalised in other ways, as a priority.*

128. The Bible reveals the infinite quality of divine love, so it becomes meaningless to compare God's love between peoples. And yet the focus on God's bias to people experiencing poverty points to the Bible's revelation of God's chosen paradigm for living together in God-centred, justice-focused community. God requires us to share God's greater attention to those in poverty, because they suffer due to the structural injustices in the shape and values of society as a whole, and which is skewed toward those with wealth. Moreover, their voices often go unheard.
129. God engages with Abraham so that he may channel blessing 'to all the families of the earth' (Genesis 12:3). Torah consistently highlights the need for Israel to remember its universal calling. The instruction to care for widows, aliens and orphans (Deuteronomy 24:19-21, cf Ruth 2:2) sits alongside teaching about debt relief (Leviticus 25) and tithing to relieve poverty (Deuteronomy 14:28). The prophets condemn behaviours which abuse power (Amos 5:11, Isaiah 1:17) and encourage their communities to develop their own strategies to resist oppression (Micah 4:3-4).
130. The New Testament picks up the same themes. John the Baptist advocates radical sharing with "the poor" (Luke 3:11). Paul encourages his congregations to give generously to his collection for those in need (Romans 15:26). James heavily criticises those who treat rich visitors differently from poor ones (James 1:1-7). The Gospels remind us that Jesus was not born with wealth or status. His teaching balances realism – "you always have the poor with you" (Matthew 26:11)

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– with radical, visionary hope. He insists that people use their resources to benefit others in need (Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 12:41-44; Luke 16:19-30, 19:1-10), and envisions banquets where the guests are the most marginalised (Luke 14:15-24).

131. Other strands in the Bible's testimony sit less easily with this model. Prosperity is a contested word. Sometimes it is achieved through wickedness (Psalm 73:3) but elsewhere it flows from righteousness (Proverbs 13:21) and sometimes, poverty is a mark of sin (Proverbs 10:4). Over against this, the story of Job directly confronts the claim of a causal link between poverty or suffering and sin. The direct link between behaviour and blessing fits poorly with an understanding of God's free grace, and the so-called 'prosperity Gospel' is damaging precisely because it denies God's essential freedom to bless creation independently of anything we do. However, contemporary interpreters should not discount the devastating impact of absolute poverty on human flourishing and how first-hand experience can shape theology in ways that may be unpredictable.
132. At the centre of the Christian quest for justice is the *missio Dei*: being challenged and amazed by what God is already doing in the world that God has made, and joining in. This leads to new ways of expressing God's bias to people experiencing poverty through prayerful collaboration with God's design for building just communities.
133. Contemporary readings of the Bible are shaped by recognition of the intrinsic, God-given value of individuals irrespective of their socio-economic status. Some responses to poverty downplay this, potentially patronising people by doing good 'to' them. Pastoral engagement focuses on working 'with' people, recognising their agency and autonomy in achieving just outcomes. This is embedded in the biblical witness to an incarnate God-with-us.
134. A far greater range of voices now engage in the interpretative conversation about biblical models of justice, with greater awareness of their own social location. The debate is enriched by contributions from people who have experienced injustice in their own lives. Alongside this, there is a fresh recognition of diversity in the voices of the Bible itself. For example, Tswana theologian Musa Dube edited *Other ways of reading: African women and the Bible*. Her contribution retells the story of the woman with the flow of blood as Mama Africa, racked by HIV, calling out to Jesus for healing, while Native American theologian Laura Donaldson writes on Ruth's sister-in-law Orpah as a role-model for her community, choosing to remain with her own traditions rather than assimilating to an alternative culture.
135. The Bible challenges structural injustice, reflected in its critique of kings and their leadership (1 Samuel 8:9) and in ambivalence around empire. This takes

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contemporary readers far beyond a concern for individual acts of charity, as Christians seek directly to act against systemic injustice. We encounter the biblical imperative to steward creation and respond by addressing the structural injustice that has brought about the climate crisis. We push back against dehumanising treatment of refugees or trafficked individuals because of Scripture's teaching that all people are made in God's image. Core biblical emphases insist that we challenge injustice in our society as well as in our individual relationships.

God entrusts those with power with a special responsibility for upholding justice. Those seeking justice will encourage and challenge those with power to fulfil their vocation.

136. Intrinsically power is neutral; what matters is how power is used and its effects. Power is often best shared, but not always: it depends what kind of power we are talking about and the purpose for which it is being used. (It is significant that in the Genesis account of creation God gives power to human beings over the other animals (Genesis 1:26).) The powerful, whether individuals or groups, have a greater capacity and responsibility to make a difference to people's lives and the systems we live under. But all share the responsibility in establishing justice.
137. The biblical account shows clearly the expectation of the good ruler, the one who has legitimate power over others. There are prophetic warnings against corrupt rulers who fail to be good shepherds to the people, and the proper use of power is exemplified in the figure of the shepherd-king, most notably in the prophecies of Jeremiah (23:1-4) and Ezekiel (34). David stands out as a fine example of this, yet his actions involving Bathsheba also display its corrupting aspect. Most contexts today do not have easy parallels with such a role, although the misuse of power throughout history has caused incalculable suffering, and sadly continues to do so today. Power is often embodied in systems, structures and cultures and this brings particular responsibilities and challenges. Sometimes the pursuit of justice involves forms of collective action that are different from individual responses.
138. Jesus shows a radically different approach to the use of power through trust in God that shows, through love, how power can be liberating. He resists temptations to dominate and enables freedom through his healings, attention to the marginalised and, most of all, through his death and resurrection.
139. The powerful have a greater influence than they often understand or perceive. They are sometimes unaware of their powers or the impact of their actions upon others, and so need to be alerted to their particular responsibilities and led into a greater recognition of how their actions are experienced. A key aspect is helping people to see how power distorts perspectives. The powerful therefore require a humility of heart as well as mind to be challenged by those with less power,

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so that the justice becomes the product of co-creation rather than paternalism. In the pursuit of justice, power works best when shared but because it is often contested, there needs to be a preferential option for those with less power.

140. Power must not be abdicated through a reluctance to accept responsibility. The avoidance of power – through timidity or sloth – is just as much sin as is its improper use. The antidote to the misuse of individual power is found through proper humility and an increased critical understanding of a situation. The just use of power is a remedy against unjust systems through bringing about structural, political and economic change.
141. Those seeking justice for themselves are rarely the powerful but those denied the ability to effect change. Yet the pursuit of justice, like love, is the task of everyone irrespective of status.
142. Martin Luther King put it this way:

“Power . . . is the ability to achieve purpose . . . In this sense power is not only desirable but necessary to implement the demands of love and justice . . . Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice.”²⁶

God calls all people and nations actively to work for peace and justice. It is never just someone else's responsibility. We all have a part to play.

143. The biblical account of human identity tells us that all people are made in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:26). If one of God's defining characteristics is justice, then this is a quality every person shares, and can develop as they are transformed into the likeness of God.
144. Jesus came to bring freedom and abundance of life for all (John 10:10) through the life-giving Spirit (John 6:63). In him, Christians are adopted into God's family (Galatians 4:7). Christian identity thus has a multiple strand of active commitment to justice woven through it.
145. However, age, culture, gender, ethnicity and ability, among other factors, make people different. Even where people intentionally push back against the artificial barriers this diversity can create, different perceptions of what justice looks like can hinder solidarity. Those who campaign for justice must collaborate with the parallel work of others who come from different places but seek complementary

26 Martin Luther King, *Chaos or Community?* (London: Pelican, 1969)

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outcomes in building just societies. This is likely to entail giving preference to voices speaking from experiences of acute injustice. There is no room to privilege the stance or choices of people with better access to resources. Nor is it acceptable to work for the 'easy peace' (StF 719) which colludes with injustice.

146. Common interest brings people together into groups at many levels – local, national or international. The solidarity of such groups can be hugely beneficial especially where people are able to support one another and offer collective resistance to oppression, often with faith as a key driver. However, when groups are shaped by strong boundaries and clear demarcations between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', their negative potential is sharply focused. Strong internal cohesion can sit alongside hostility to those outside, with a narrowly defined understanding of justice in relation only to the concerns of the in-group. This militates against justice for all and potentially creates intense injustice.
147. Baptism brings a transformative self-understanding: there is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28). The boundaries of self-selecting human groupings, with their ambivalent potential for justice-seeking, are transcended by shared allegiance to Christ and the shared goal of participating in God's justice. It therefore strengthens the missional push towards justice and freedom when the worldwide Church's work for justice models collaboration and transcends internal, local, national or international boundaries. It is potentially catastrophic for the Church's witness when national or denominational difference leads to competition or disagreement.
148. The vision of collective responsibility for justice is both enriched and complicated by differing ideas within Christian tradition of what justice looks like for individuals, communities and nations. Despite possible tensions, there is capacity for renewal, transformation and liberation when Christians work together, and seek to work with those of other faiths, to resolve conflict through collaborative approaches, respecting the views of others and giving particular attention to voices from the margins.

God calls us to live in hope and in ways that reflect God's character and the pattern of God's kingdom.²⁷ Thus, seeking justice involves honesty and truth, and may demand protest and resistance, restitution, forgiveness, reconciliation and ultimately transformation.

27 'Kingdom' is not an uncontested word, with its associations with a particular form of power, and so some prefer to speak of God's kin-dom, commonwealth or realm. It has been retained here, not uncritically, but both because it is a more familiar theological term, and because the kingdom promised by God and modelled by Jesus turns human ideas of kingdoms upside down.

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149. The pursuit of justice begins with God; justice is both God's work and God's very nature, and we are invited to participate in it. This means that seeking justice is both an imperative and a privilege for those who would seek to live according to God's ways. It is a call not only to intellectual ideas about justice, or hopes about a just future, but to words and actions in this world, at this time.
150. God's Word became flesh in Jesus, who turned the world's upside down values the right way up again, proclaiming a kingdom where the powerful are to act as servants to the powerless, those who are usually ignored are listened to and given agency, and relationships are healed. We are invited to speak God's word, but more than that, to be 'doers of the word, and not merely hearers' (James 1:22). We are called not just to words, but to deeds; if our focus is solely on words, we risk becoming hypocrites.
151. But further, we are called not just to deeds, but to a way of life – we must not simply refrain from unjust acts but be proactive in our justice-seeking. If God is so proactive in promoting the good of humanity, then followers of Christ are surely called to a way of life that imitates this proactivity? We are not just to refrain from injustice, but actively to seek peace and pursue it, in all our encounters, in our attitudes, and in our participation in the proclamation and enactment of the kingdom. We, too, are called to live in ways that upend the accepted values of the world. If we – as individuals or as members of institutions – have power, we are called to use it to serve; if we hold power unjustly, we are called to repent; if we benefit where historic injustice lingers in modern inequality, we are called to make restitution; and if our actions have caused or perpetuated injustice, we are called to listen carefully to uncomfortable truths, and to respond with humility.
152. In moving beyond deeds to a way of life that is oriented towards the hope of a new heaven and earth, we recognise that seeking justice is not about one-off acts of goodness, but about our whole attitude, as we seek to become more Christ-like, letting "the same mind be in [us] that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness." (Philippians 2:5-7, *NRSVA*). And, because we will inevitably get it wrong at times, it is about constantly learning, trying again and, in seeking justice, seeking also our own transformation (Romans 12:2).
153. There are many ways in which these Principles can be further explored, and brought into dialogue with current injustices. The next section offers some Priorities for action and begins to make links with the Principles for justice identified in this section.

Section 4: Priorities for justice

Introducing the Priorities for justice

154. The **Priorities** for justice are intended to offer a focus for the Methodist Church in our commitment to seeking the transformation of the world.
155. These have emerged from reflection on conversations with Methodists (including global partners), people experiencing injustice, and Methodist and other organisations, as well as reflecting on the Bible, our hymns and our past. This is also a consideration of the gifts, strengths and opportunities we have now, as well as our limitations, which lead us to focus on 'what is ours to do'. Sometimes what is 'ours to do' may be 'our' as a Local Church; at other times it may be 'ours' as a District or as the Connexional Team. But, being connexional, we do it in each case on behalf of the whole Church.
156. Having such Priorities does not mean that Methodists or Methodist churches should not campaign or work on other issues that are urgent, important locally, or close to people's hearts. Instead, they are an attempt to focus our different voices, experiences and resources on a limited number of areas in order to increase our collective impact for change, whilst recognising that we will always seek to work ecumenically, across faiths and with wider civil society where we can.
157. It should also be noted that the gifts, skills, experience and potential of each individual, church and Methodist body will be different. The five Priorities themselves will resonate more in some contexts than in others. The expectation is not that each person, church or group tries to do everything, or even that they try to do something different each year, but rather that they discern, within the Priorities, that to which they can respond (or continue to respond), according to what is appropriate to their context or local situation. This may involve reflecting on what might challenge them, and will require prayerful consideration of what work they may be called to lay down.
158. The Methodist Conference and Methodists have spoken and acted on many issues of injustice over the years. It is often hard to put issues down, or to reassess, as new concerns arise. This leads to an ever growing snowball of responsibilities. This report is an opportunity to consider, amidst the growing demands and shrinking resources, what is ours to do.
159. Having Priorities will hopefully enable a more joined up approach to particular key issues. Having a limited focus will allow more strategic work bringing together

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different elements of our Church. For example, this might include: bringing together affected groups to shape the work; the growth of a community of practice for Local Churches, individuals and groups engaged in responding to an issue; the co-ordination of a public ecumenical campaign by JPIT; a commitment from others to offer preaching or study resources for local churches; or training in communication for leaders for justice by the connexional Communications Team. There might be other opportunities to engage with the Priorities for justice through other connexionally-resourced work or with partner organisations or wider networks.

160. Every member of the Methodist Church in Britain is able to join in with campaigns focused on political change, regardless of their jurisdiction. Sometimes this will be at the level of local councillor, or MS, MSP or MP, or elected Mayor. The Priorities will offer greater variety for participation, with churches from right across the Methodist Church in Britain able contribute to and participate in the Priorities in ways that are contextually and politically relevant to them. In addition, as happens at the moment, Districts and churches in different jurisdictions will continue to communicate with their governments.
161. Having Priorities does not mean that local communities should not identify other local concerns or that the Methodist Church cannot respond to emerging or urgent issues. Indeed both of these will need to sit alongside longer term work on Priorities if the Church is faithfully to seek justice.
162. Key to having Priorities is to offer the Methodist Conference itself another way of engaging with justice.

We recommend that the Conference sets aside time each year for members to confer deeply on one of the five Priorities, in a way which offers resource or direction for the future, a practice that could also be reflected in districts and circuits. There would also need to be space for the Conference to consider urgent issues through the normal channels, but the main focus would be on discerning where God is acting for justice within the priority areas and conferring on how the Methodist Church can best join in. The Mission Committee/Methodist Council will report annually to the Conference on progress on the other priorities.

163. The intention is that the priorities will stand for five years before being refreshed by the Conference, according to a process of evaluation and discernment to be agreed by the Methodist Council. In the Covenant service we are reminded that there are seasons and times when God will call us to particular services and ask us to lay aside others, and that we accept God's purposes for us. The Priorities are intended to echo this rhythm of reflection, commitment and action.

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164. We recommend the following Priorities for justice be adopted:

- 1. Tackling inequality and poverty: seeking life in all its fullness**
- 2. Enabling a flourishing environment: right relationship between people, planet and God**
- 3. Seeking justice for refugees: one people, one world**
- 4. Opposing discrimination: all are made in the image of God**
- 5. Pursuing peace: seeking justice and reconciliation**

165. Each of these priorities is proposed because it is rooted in the Principles for justice, because there is a real need in our world today, because we heard people talk about them, and because we believe that we have something to offer as a Church – from our history, our relationships, our communities, our strengths – in order to make a difference. The tables below set out why this is the case for each of these priorities and what our contribution as a Church or Local Churches could be.

166. The examples given are not exhaustive. It is hoped there will be many more partners and connections. Similarly the suggestions of ‘what is ours to do’ and ‘starting points’ indicate the direction of travel, but will be developed more fully by those contributing to taking the priorities forward.

| Priority 1 | Tackling inequality and poverty: seeking life in all its fullness |
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| How does this link to the Principles? | God consistently shows a bias to those experiencing poverty and those who are excluded. This radically challenges the way we organise our society. Our value is not based on our (economic or other) contribution but because we are made in the image of God. God wants us not just to survive but to thrive and flourish. |
| What is the vision? | We hope for a world where every person and all God’s creation can thrive and flourish, living life in all its fullness. We believe that God has a particular orientation to those who are economically poor and marginalised. We long for a new economic narrative that is based on God’s justice which centres on people and the planet. |

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| Priority 1 | Tackling inequality and poverty: seeking life in all its fullness | |
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| <p>What is the problem?</p> | <p>The current cost of living crisis and its long term impacts are dragging people deeper into poverty. Inequality and poverty scars the lives of individuals (particularly children) and communities in the UK.</p> <p>Whilst there is much work taking place developing the policy tools to end poverty, there is a lack of will from those in power to prioritise poverty and inequality in their decision making.</p> | |
| <p>What do we bring from our past?</p> | <p>From early Methodism there has been a concern for the poorest in society. Wesley was radical in his inclusion of the poorest, and a duty to care for the poor was included in the <i>Liverpool Minutes</i>. Central Halls prioritised work amongst the urban poor. Today a significant number of churches are active in supporting the poorest in local communities, through foodbanks, pantries, warm spaces, debt advice centres and more.</p> <p>In addition, JPIT has a reputation for detailed research and leading prophetic campaigning, and Methodists have engaged with their local and national leaders on poverty.</p> | <p><i>"One great reason why the rich in general have so little sympathy for the poor is because they so seldom visit them. Hence it is that one part of the world does not know what the other suffers. Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know: they keep out of the way of knowing it – and then plead their voluntary ignorance as an excuse for their hardness of heart."</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">John Wesley</p> |
| <p>What did we hear from groups with first-hand experience?</p> | <p>Church Action on Poverty's Poverty Panel spoke in the context of the daily damaging impact of poverty. They said what is needed is a redistribution of wealth and power. People need enough to live on and to flourish. We need to be better connected and people need to be valued for being human. We need a new narrative about the economy which centres people and planet.</p> | <p><i>"If the debt was taken away, it would make a huge difference. I wouldn't get depressed. I would stop feeling mentally unsettled."</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Leonie, JPIT's Reset the Debt campaign</p> |
| | <p>The connexional Safeguarding Team said that ending poverty would have the biggest impact on the safeguarding of children.</p> | |

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| Priority 1 | Tackling inequality and poverty: seeking life in all its fullness | |
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| What did Methodist communities say? | <p>In the Justice Conversations, economic inequality and poverty were mentioned by a significant number of respondents. The cost of living crisis was mentioned a lot, as was the scandal of hunger in the UK. Many talked about the importance of fair wages, a review of benefits and equal opportunities around employment and education. Groups talked about a just world being a place where people can flourish, thrive and be happy, and where everyone has enough. Groups also talked about the need to listen to people who experience poverty.</p> | <p><i>"With rising living costs and the unavailability of housing, many people are struggling with the basics of food, water, shelter and heating".</i></p> <p><i>"A just world is . . . where the voices of the poor, the dispossessed, the under-represented voices are heard and listened to."</i></p> |
| What connections do we have? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church at the Margins is nurturing and building new Christian communities amongst economically marginalised people, and offering best practice – at least 60 per cent of New Places for New People funding is committed to areas of financial hardship. • £250,000 per annum from the Mission in Britain Fund is allocated to the districts for the purpose of advocacy of the Methodist Church's commitment to those experiencing poverty and inequality of resources and/or assistance by way of grants for personnel or property schemes, primarily to Local Churches and Circuits, to assist them in supporting those experiencing poverty and inequality of resources. | |

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| Priority 1 | Tackling inequality and poverty: seeking life in all its fullness |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-established Methodist presence in some communities experiencing poverty. • Action for Children has a priority of offering children the best start in life which includes tackling poverty through family support and advocacy • Many Methodist Schools are situated in areas of deprivation with strong links to the communities they serve. The Methodist Church strategy for its schools, <i>Transforming Lives</i> (2021), is committed to establishing more schools in areas of need. • The Methodist Fund for Human Need made emergency payments to 4,000 people facing hardship or destitution over the past five years. • JPIT has broad ecumenical connections and wider links with the anti-poverty sector including being seen as a coordinating voice for faith expressions around poverty and advocacy, particularly in building the moral case around ending poverty. Partnership with Church Action on Poverty, and work co-ordinating the Hirsch Cost of Living Report (2022) with Gordon Brown and 56 organisations has led to opportunities for leadership in building an anti-poverty movement ahead of the next general election (working between 2023-2025). • More than 12 per cent of all Methodist Churches hosted a Warm Welcome Space in winter 2022/23, actively demonstrating their commitment to those impacted by the cost of living crisis. • Since 2015, All We Can has been recognised as a leader in the sector in putting voices of the global south at the heart of strategy development. |
| <p>What do we bring?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A widely shared understanding that Methodists prioritise tackling poverty. The experience and commitment of local churches which are rooted in communities. • The Church at the Margins programme. • The expertise and reputation of JPIT as an ecumenical campaign and advocacy group. • Connections across grassroots community initiatives challenging poverty throughout the UK, as well as with national voices including political leaders, faith leaders and national charities. |

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| Priority 1 | Tackling inequality and poverty: seeking life in all its fullness |
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| What is ours to do? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect – nurture relationships with people experiencing poverty to build new Christian communities and build transformational relationships between people engaged in the struggle with poverty and people with power to achieve lasting social change • Campaign – immediately against the impact of the cost of living crisis on those in poverty; as well as connecting local with national to build a longer term national anti-poverty movement aimed at putting the moral case to end UK poverty at the heart of the public and political debate in the run up to the next general election • Support – engage with communities to support people dragged into poverty through this crisis |
| A starting point might be . . . | <p>To reflect together on how well we know our local community, and indeed, people within our own congregation. This might involve intentional listening to one another and to neighbours. Walking prayerfully around the local area can be a powerful way of beginning to make connections, to notice things previously unseen, and to identify possible connections.</p> |

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| Priority 2 | Enabling a flourishing environment: right relationship between people, planet and God | |
| How does this link to the Principles? | <p>God desires the flourishing of creation and human community within it. Romans 28:22-23 speaks of creation and humans within it longing for redemption. The flourishing of creation describes a situation in which the present and future of human beings and all living things are somehow secured, in ways that respect the delicate balance between creatures and the environment.</p> <p>A recognition that living justly is about a way of life, and also that where historic injustice lingers in modern inequality, we may be called to make restitution and reparation.</p> | |
| What is the vision? | <p>Our vision is of a world where a right relationship with God, creator of all, draws us into a right relationship with all creation, human and non-human, to enable the flourishing of all.</p> | |
| What is the problem? | <p>Humanity is living beyond the fragile limits of our planet – of which the climate crisis is just one indicator. Environmental injustice impacts first and hardest on the poorest. Lifestyles of overconsumption and economic models that pursue growth regardless of ecological impacts and place people already experiencing poverty in an increasingly worse situation.</p> | |
| What do we bring from our past? | <p>Wesley believed that creation is grounded in a God, and as part of God's creation we have responsibility to care. A person's lifestyle should show justice and integrity, requiring people, for example, to pray about the money they spend.</p> <p><i>Hope in God's Future</i> is a Methodist Conference statement on Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change</p> | <p><i>"The theological task is to reflect on modern scientific accounts of current and threatened future harms from climate change in the context of affirming the triune God as creator and redeemer of the universe. The scientific analyses of climate change and the role of human greenhouse gas emissions are well-grounded. It is now morally irresponsible to fail to acknowledge and address the urgent need for radical cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in order to prevent intolerable damage to human populations and mass extinctions of many plant and animal species."</i></p> <p><i>Hope in God's Future, 2011</i></p> |

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| Priority 2 | Enabling a flourishing environment: right relationship between people, planet and God | |
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| <p>What did we hear from groups with first-hand experience?</p> | <p>In the run up to the COP26 meeting, a global group of young people collected stories from countries such as Fiji, Zambia, Uruguay, Italy, India and Britain.</p> <p>They told stories of communities displaced by rising sea levels, crops that were failing because of drought, the impact on fishing of the warming of oceans, as well as the work that is happening to try and mitigate the impact of the climate crisis.</p> | <p><i>"The cry of the exiled Israelites, 'How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' is a cry that resonates deeply with Pacific people for whom, land, sea, spirituality and identity are profoundly interrelated. We cannot sing about our islands, our ocean without singing of our creator God. We are part of the land, we bleed and sweat the salt water of our ocean, we are part of creation. What is the song we then sing in the midst of the suffocation of our mother ocean? Our song is both praise and protest!"</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">The Revd James Bhagwan, Pastor in the Methodist Church of Fiji/General Secretary Pacific Conference of Churches</p> |

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| Priority 2 | Enabling a flourishing environment: right relationship between people, planet and God | |
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| <p>What did Methodist communities say?</p> | <p>In the Justice Conversations, a significant number of groups highlighted the importance of a healthy and flourishing environment – and how much humanity benefits from connection with creation. Most framed this in the terms of the impact of the climate crisis, and within this a number referred to the need to stop the burning of fossil fuels, to improve energy efficiency in homes, to make active travel easier, and to deal with landfill and recycling. Others talked about the need to live more simply, reducing consumerism and excessive consumption. A few raised the question of whether we can continue to focus on economic growth and still limit the damage to the planet.</p> | <p><i>A world where we have addressed the impact of climate change, so that all can have access to food, water, energy, housing in a safe way.</i></p> <p><i>People that have need to re-evaluate and adjust their lifestyles to address inequality and climate change.</i></p> <p><i>“All have a right to a clean and healthy environment and access to countryside and the coast.”</i></p> <p><i>“Where we have abandoned the obsession with consumption and instead focus on giving and creating.”</i></p> |
| <p>What connections do we have?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All We Can is working alongside communities who are experiencing the impact of the climate crisis. • Thirteen percent of churches are registered with EcoChurch/ EcoCongregation. There is a strong relationship with A Rocha, which runs EcoChurch and has received connexional funding. • The Methodist Conference has committed to becoming a Net Zero carbon emission Church by 2030. Action for Hope is the programme to encourage churches to focus on use of assets, wisdom and lifestyle. • The Methodist Church is a partner with Faith Invest which is co-ordinating global interfaith work. • The UMC General Board of Church and Society works at the UN COPs and the UN and has collaborated with the Methodist Church in Britain. The European Methodist Council has appointed a Youth Climate Ambassador. | |

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| Priority 2 | Enabling a flourishing environment: right relationship between people, planet and God |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JPIT has run campaigns around Loss and Damage and local authority work to reach net zero. • Methodist Zero Carbon Group is a network of people committed to climate action. • The Central Finance Board has an ambition to invest in positive climate solutions. • Relationship with Faith for the Climate (multi-faith climate advocacy). |
| What do we bring? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear theological statement on climate change • A Conference commitment to net zero and a plan for churches to engage with it • Connections with partner churches and communities around the globe • Campaigns with global and local focuses |
| What is ours to do? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign – campaigning for awareness of the impact of climate crisis and the need to make restitution through the Loss and Damage scheme • Action for Hope – moving our churches towards net zero • Challenge - economic models which harm people and planet |
| A starting point might be . . . | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take next steps with Action for Hope towards Net Zero |

| Priority 3 | Seeking justice for refugees: one people, one world |
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| How does this link to the Principles? | All humans are made in the image of God and are worthy of equal value and dignity. The denial, hindering or waste of God's gifts is not only sin against God but represents an injustice against others. The Bible presents challenges to structural injustice. |
| What is the vision? | Our vision is of a world where conflict, poverty, oppression do not force people to leave their homes We long for a society where people who are forced to seek sanctuary are treated with dignity and respect |

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| Priority 3 | Seeking justice for refugees: one people, one world | |
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| <p>What is the problem?</p> | <p>The UNHCR estimates the number of people forcibly displaced is now 89.3 million, with over 27.1 million refugees. Conflicts, poverty, and the climate crisis as well as the narrower definitions described in the refugee convention are behind this movement. In the UK, there is an anti-refugee narrative, with legislation increasingly limiting people's chances of exercising their right to claim asylum.</p> | |
| <p>What do we bring from our past?</p> | <p>Early Methodists established Stranger's Friend societies to target support towards migrants from rural areas who could not access locally based welfare systems.</p> <p>All We Can traces its roots back to the 1930s with the Methodist Refugee Fund, responding to the crisis facing refugees in Europe. Over the past 90 years Methodist people have supported All We Can in working alongside communities around the world, experiencing war, disaster and poverty.</p> <p>Local Churches and communities in Britain have offered a welcome and support to people arriving as refugees and asylum seekers.</p> <p>The Methodist Church has taken part in campaigns in support of people seeking sanctuary, including the successful campaign with Citizens UK to end the detention of child asylum seekers, and more recently the campaigns to Lift the Ban on asylum seekers working and against a two-tier asylum system.</p> | <p><i>"Will Methodists whose hearts are moved by thanksgiving for peace send gifts to help some of those whose sorrowful plight is involved in the terms of peace? This is an emergency call."</i></p> <p>Letter from the Revd Henry Carter to the Methodist Recorder, October 1938, appealing for support to set up the Methodist Refugee Fund</p> |

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| Priority 3 | Seeking justice for refugees: one people, one world | |
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| What did we hear from groups with first-hand experience? | <p>Asylum seekers spoke about the stress and uncertainty they faced, being unable to work, struggling to contact the Home Office, having little money and having difficulty accessing healthcare. Some praised the welcome and support they had received from a local Methodist Church of which they were now part.</p> | <p><i>"It is so stressful. We are not allowed to work, we have no money, there is no fresh food to eat. I worry for my family."</i></p> <p><i>"When I am walking in the street and I am feeling sad and lonely, I remember that I have a family at the church."</i></p> |
| What did Methodist communities say? | <p>A third of churches that responded to the Justice Conversations offer some kind of support to refugees or asylum seekers. A number of groups highlighted the needs of refugees, with some making links with conflict especially in Ukraine, historic global inequality and the climate crisis. Many called for a more generous response to people seeking sanctuary in Britain.</p> <p>Many also highlighted some of the drivers behind people seeking refuge, including global inequality, the climate crisis and conflict, and talked of the need to tackle these inequalities, rebalance resources, and ensure fair taxation and fair trade.</p> | <p><i>"That war means people don't have homes and become refugees."</i></p> <p><i>"The willingness of other countries, (especially those bordering Ukraine) to offer support to refugees puts the UK response to shame. Also hypocrisy when compared to attitude to Afghan refugees."</i></p> |
| What connections do we have? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global partner churches with experience of sending and receiving refugees and migrants, and Districts which have links with them. • Experience within some fellowship groups and the London District <i>Moving Stories</i> project. • JPIT leading multiple campaigns, including co-ordinating local groups alongside asylum seekers. • Methodist Homes for Ukraine working with Citizens UK. | |

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| Priority 3 | Seeking justice for refugees: one people, one world |
|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Churches with experience of being alongside asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, for example in the Trinity Centre in Cardiff, the Methodist Asylum Project in Middlesbrough and Café Lingo on the Isle of Man. • OPCEMI [the Italian Methodist Church] and Mediterranean Hope – practical help and support for humanitarian visas. • Work alongside groups such as City and Church of Sanctuary, Citizens and Migrants Organise, Churches Commission on Migrants in Europe, Together with Refugees, Safe Passage, World Methodist Council. |
| <p>What do we bring?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links with partner churches in countries that send and receive refugees and migrants • Part of a broad coalition supporting refugees in Britain • Moral voice rooted in long-standing commitment and a willingness to challenge populist anti-immigration narratives |
| <p>What is ours to do?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign – against moves to further restrict rights to claim asylum in Britain and to support alternatives such as humanitarian visas • Support – offer practical support for people seeking refuge, from participating in Government schemes to hosting destitute asylum seekers or becoming a Church of Sanctuary • Stories – Seek to shift the narrative about refugees and asylum seekers, for example through supporting people seeking refuge in telling their stories and helping communities share stories about countries that send and receive refugees around the world |
| <p>A starting point might be . . .</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with your local authority, Refugees Welcome group or local refugee organised group to find out how refugees and asylum seekers are housed in your area. Explore what they need and how you might help to affirm their well-being, agency and dignity. • Consider what it means to become a Church of Sanctuary. |

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| Priority 4 | Opposing discrimination: all are made in the image of God |
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| How does this link to the Principles? | <p>God calls all people and nations actively to work for peace and justice, liberation and transformation. The Bible presents challenges to structural injustice.</p> <p>All humans are made in the image of God and are worthy of equal value and dignity. We are not just to refrain from injustice, but actively to seek peace and pursue it, in all our encounters, in our attitudes, and in our participation in the proclamation and enactment of the kingdom. We, too, are called to live in ways that upend the accepted values of the world. Power must not be abdicated through a reluctance to accept responsibility. The avoidance of power – through timidity or sloth – is just as much sin as is its improper use.</p> |
| What is the vision? | <p>A society where there is justice and dignity for all, especially those who have previously been excluded, and where the Church stands in active solidarity with them.²⁸</p> |
| What is the problem? | <p>As some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant income inequality between ethnic groups, due largely to lower wages, higher housing costs and the impact of the benefit cap. • Disabled people are more likely to be living in poverty, unemployed and without further qualifications. • Evidence suggests that people from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic communities are at higher risk of developing a mental health problem in adulthood, but are less likely to receive support for their mental health. • Black Caribbean children are around 1.7 times more likely to be permanently excluded from schools compared to White British children. • Disproportionate impact of the pandemic on people who share certain protected characteristics.²⁹ • People who experience more than one form of disadvantage or discrimination (intersectionality) are hit even harder. |

28 Adapted from JDS strategy

29 commonslibrary.parliament.uk/income-inequality-by-ethnic-group, accessed 7 March 2023; jrf.org.uk/blog/disability-destitution, accessed 7 March 2023; Mental Health Statistics (England), House of Commons Library 2021; School Exclusions, House of Commons Library 2020; nhsconfed.org/publications/unequal-impact-covid-19-protected-characteristics, accessed 7 March 2023

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| Priority 4 | Opposing discrimination: all are made in the image of God | |
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| <p>What do we bring from our past?</p> | <p>Wesley recognised that the structures of society affected upon the individual – for example the influence of rising grain prices on people experiencing poverty or the violent impact of colonialism - and took a personal stand. He spoke out strongly against the slave trade and was deeply affected by writing of Olaudah Equiano, a former slave.</p> <p>Methodism sought to tackle racism within and beyond the Church, for example, in <i>A Tree God Planted</i> (1985) and the work of MELRAW.</p> <p>A slow but growing recognition of the need to change our Church's structures and culture which have excluded people, embodied in a commitment to the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Strategy.</p> <p>Many examples of Methodists and groups speaking and acting against discrimination and for transformation of oppressive structures, nationally and globally.</p> | <p><i>"Where is the justice . . . of depriving them of liberty itself, to which an Angolan has the same natural right as an Englishman, and on which he sets as high a value?"</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">John Wesley, <i>Thoughts on Slavery</i></p> |
| <p>What did we hear from groups with first-hand experience</p> | <p>Most groups with first-hand experience who offered responses focused on their experiences of discrimination within church contexts. From JDS and EDI officer we heard about the impact of intersectionality, and the piling up of multiple disadvantage on groups. Young people at 3Generate spoke about experiences of racism, fears of violence, and discrimination</p> | <p><i>"I was 14 and coming home from school. I was stopped by the police. They asked for my name, and searched my bag. I was the only one stopped in my group of friends. I was the only Black person. I was 14 and I just wanted to go home."</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Young Methodist from East London</p> |

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| Priority 4 | Opposing discrimination: all are made in the image of God | |
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| What did Methodist communities say? | <p>Equality and inclusion were significant themes within the Justice Conversation responses. Some talked about tolerance, others framed respect more positively in terms of the dignity of the other; others talked about the importance of mutual respect in enabling dialogue, communication and the appreciation of difference.</p> <p>Many also referred to need to end discrimination and prejudice. Racism, gender inequality and the barriers faced by disabled people were mentioned most frequently, with people also making links between discrimination and worse access to housing, employment or other services.</p> <p>At 3Generate tackling racism was in amongst the top issues identified by young people.</p> | <p><i>“That all are treated equally as being made in the image of God regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age or sexuality.”</i></p> <p><i>“Barriers to people accessing education such as poverty, lack of necessary facilities and racial, social or gender discrimination.”</i></p> |
| What connections do we have? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JDS strategy focusing on embedding EDI within the Church • Creation of Solidarity Circles of people with lived experiences • Place for Hope mediation and reconciliation work • JPIT work on poverty which has potential for drawing out intersectionality • Ecumenical work on reparations/ policing/racial justice • Fellowship groups • Relations with global partners • All We Can staff chairs an international NGO group on decolonising aid • A younger generation in the Church who strongly oppose discrimination • Local congregations bringing experience from their communities | |

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| Priority 4 | Opposing discrimination: all are made in the image of God |
|---------------------------------|---|
| What do we bring? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodist theology underpinning the work • An active JDS strategy with a strand focused on transformation • Existing commitments to campaigning on injustices which can be linked together • A growing willingness to face up to our past |
| What is ours to do? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersectionality – as a key way of understanding injustice. Ensuring work on all priorities seeks out ways of engaging with multiple disadvantage • Solidarity – Complementing JDS strategy in seeking opportunities for churches to stand alongside communities opposing discrimination • Prioritising – support for young people experiencing discrimination in society |
| A starting point might be . . . | Screen the film <i>After the Flood: The Church, Slavery and Reconciliation</i> at your church and host a conversation about the implications of it. |

| Priority 5 | Pursuing peace: seeking justice and reconciliation |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| How does this link to the Principles? | Peace and justice are tightly woven together. Peace cannot exist without justice. Creation and human community can't truly flourish unless the world is at peace. Peace requires a cultural shift away from violence. In order to create peace in the world we need to know peace within our own relationships and communities too. |
| What is the vision? | For God's vision of peace to reign. Where people reject violence as the answer and weapons are turned into tools to feed the community. |

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| Priority 5 | Pursuing peace: seeking justice and reconciliation | |
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| What is the problem? | <p>Global conflicts kill, injure and displace millions every year. The majority of conflicts are between non-state actors, such as political militias or terrorist groups, rather than between states. Over 60 per cent of conflicts in the early 2000s relapsed or reoccurred within five years, showing the root causes have not been tackled and a false peace created. Violence and conflict are interwoven with poverty, homelessness, environmental degradation and historic injustices. Nations and industry promote a narrative that security can only be achieved through increased military expenditure, which restricts resources put into reconciliation and peace-building. The possession of nuclear weapons implies the possibility of their use and yet any use of nuclear weapons would be immoral.</p> | |
| What do we bring from our past? | <p>Methodist Central Hall Westminster hosted the inaugural meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in 1946.</p> <p>Significant strand of Conscientious Objection particularly amongst some in the Primitive Methodist Church. The Methodist Peace Fellowship was founded in 1933 to inform and unite Methodists who covenanted together “to renounce war and all its works and ways.”</p> <p>Widespread support for 0.7 per cent GDP aid spending campaign, which has involved spending on peace and reconciliation.</p> <p>Methodist Conference support for the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.</p> <p>A diversity of views around war, peace and faith shown by a strong pacifist strand of theology co-existing alongside connexional support for forces chaplaincy, with the current Army Chaplain General and Deputy Chaplain General both being Methodist ministers.</p> | <p><i>“So long as this monster [war] stalks uncontrolled, where is reason, virtue, humanity? They are utterly excluded. They have no place. They are a name and nothing more.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">John Wesley said of war in <i>The Doctrine of Original Sin</i></p> <p><i>“You never cast out evil by evil. You can’t conquer violence by more violence, or fear by terror.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Donald Soper</p> |

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| Priority 5 | Pursuing peace: seeking justice and reconciliation | |
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| <p>What did we hear from groups with first-hand experience?</p> | <p>People spoke of the need for those who have not experienced conflict to be aware of the complexity of conflict. The roots are deeply intertwined with a place's history, culture and sense of identity. There is no easy answer, and those on the 'outside' need to resist the temptation to see themselves as rescuers/heroes.</p> <p>Even when things look peaceful, tension and the potential for violence can often lurk beneath the surface. Unless the injustices which nurture conflict are addressed (economic and social marginalisation and discrimination, misuse of power, corruption) the legacy of conflicts long past, and the psychological impact of living through or escaping conflict, can continue to choke the potential for individuals and communities to flourish.</p> <p>People shared that it is often the most vulnerable people in our community who are drawn in to conflict and then are unable to escape.</p> | <p><i>"We've had so many people come in wanting to 'fix' the conflicts in our community, and usually, they don't stay long. Once the money has run out, or things get tough, they leave again. And then the next person comes along, with their ideas."</i></p> <p><i>"Cessation of military hostilities without the acknowledgement of past atrocities have not achieved lasting 'peace.' The acknowledgement of past atrocities without meaningful attention paid to the upholding of human rights has left our community in permanent unsettledness."</i></p> |

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| Priority 5 | Pursuing peace: seeking justice and reconciliation | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>What did Methodist communities say?</p> | <p>The need for peace was mentioned by a large number of respondents. Many of these referred to it in the abstract, or as an end to conflict in the world, but some referred to specific conflicts, especially in Ukraine, and also in places such as Yemen, Afghanistan, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Whilst most groups framed the call for peace in Ukraine as an end to the conflict, with a very small number saying that those fighting should be supported, a few specifically called for violence not to be used in bringing about peace. Questions were also raised about the need for justice for crimes committed during times of conflict.</p> <p>There were a number of references to the domestic need for peace with the issue of knife crime, an issue which also received significant support at 3Generate. A number of responses also talked about a vision of a safe world, an end to gender-based violence, and a desire for personal safety, conditions which are needed lay the foundations for peace in people's environments.</p> | <p><i>"My heart breaks for those in Yemen, Afghanistan and Ukraine particularly where conflict robs so many of the right to healthy lives."</i></p> <p><i>"Peace – conflict has driven the number of refugees up to record levels."</i></p> |

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| Priority 5 | Pursuing peace: seeking justice and reconciliation |
|---|--|
| <p>What connections do we have?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the MCB and Global Church partners with experience of conflict and post-conflict • Methodist Churches and Individuals who have supported refugee resettlement schemes, often from places of immediate conflict like Syria and Ukraine. • Methodist Peace Fellowship/Fellowship of Reconciliation • All We Can and Christian Aid with experience of working in areas of long term impact of conflict • Groups such as the United Methodist Church have representation at the United Nations • Methodist forces chaplains • Place for Hope reconciliation and mediation pilot • Mission partners in conflict and post-conflict areas, eg Sri Lanka, Israel/Palestine, Haiti • The Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches |
| <p>What do we bring?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scriptures which are replete with a vision of God’s kingdom where justice and peace “kiss each other” (Psalm 85:10) • Congregations and partner churches with first-hand experience of conflict and violence • Campaigning experience around peace and weapons |
| <p>What is ours to do?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipping – speaking more confidently about peace and non-violence – theologically and politically – whilst recognising our disagreements • Stories – Sharing stories of experiences of violence and conflict • Campaigning – for a just peace, for example through campaigns to fund post-conflict reconciliation and alternatives to conflict |
| <p>A starting point might be ...</p> | <p>Find out whether your bank or pension scheme is investing in nuclear weapons through #InvestingInChange supported by the Methodist Church, and write to ask them about their policies - investinginchange.uk</p> <p>Use resources reflecting on peace on Peace Sunday or Remembrance Sunday</p> |

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Taking forward the Priorities for justice

167. **If these Priorities are accepted by the Conference, then we recommend that collaborating groups for each one be formed, made up of individuals from Methodist entities, groups, networks and parts of the Connexional Team with an interest in the Priorities. These collaborative and light-touch groups would focus on what is identified as 'ours to do' and bring their own contributions. Together they would agree how to resource Methodist engagement with the Priorities for justice, co-creating current and future activity.**
168. The section on 'embedding' the report in Section 6 outlines some of the ways this approach might make a difference.

Section 5: Practices for Justice

What does it look like to practice justice? The Quaker Meeting House in Chelmsford is near the Crown Court. In 2018, 15 young people were charged with aviation security offences after breaching Stansted Airport's fence and locking themselves together around the front nose-wheel of a plane which was being prepared to deport 60 people to Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. The protesters claimed that they were acting to prevent human rights abuses taking place. Hundreds of people gathered outside the Crown Court.

Members of several Quaker Meetings nearby supported the protesters' non-violent stance in opposition to mass deportations, and collectively agreed to give their support. Some Quakers provided accommodation in their homes to defendants and family members for the duration of the trial. Chelmsford Meeting collectively decided to provide their Quaker Meeting House for use as a sanctuary and base for the defendants and their supporters, with Quakers providing food for larger gatherings. Local Quakers, the defendants, and some supporters held a Quaker Meeting for Worship on the evening before the trial started. One Quaker regularly stood on the steps outside the courthouse with sandwich-boards expressing support for the Stansted 15. Many local Quakers attended the several large vigils held outside the courthouse at key points in the trial, and brought food for the participants. Some Quakers offered spiritual and pastoral support to defendants and supporters as needed. And on many days of the trial, Quakers sat conspicuously in the courtroom to show their solidarity with the defendants.

All of these people were involved in Quaker witness against deportation. They responded in a range of ways – standing in solidarity, praying, making food –

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according to their own personal gifts or preferences, whilst being upheld by their cohesion as a worshipping community.

As Quakers, each person's contribution became an act of activism because of the collective witness of the Meeting.

The Stansted 15 were acquitted on appeal, after the Court ruled that there was no case to answer.

169. A justice-seeking Church and people need practices which will enable sustainable, flourishing, transformative, action for justice, rooted in God.
170. Christian discipleship includes the call to be and to act as a prophetic community; people who are both willing to recognise and engage with the reality of the 'world as it is', and who yet look with hope and anticipation to the 'world as it should be', and in all their actions seek to bring that transformation.
171. As Methodists, our justice-seeking takes place in the local, connexional and global spheres; we seek justice both as part of our individual discipleship and also as part of a body committed to the connexional principle of belonging, mutuality and interdependence.³⁰ Our participation in God's work of justice-seeking, liberation, transformation and flourishing can take many different forms.
172. This section considers two approaches to practising justice – ways of *being* and ways of *doing*. It sets out some of the practices which enable sustainable, flourishing, transformative, rooted, action for justice.

Approaches to practicing justice: ways of *being*

173. In Section 2, five ways of being or approaches were identified which enable us to be 'at our best' when seeking justice. These approaches to practicing justice – being with, humility in community, the use of power, transformation and prayer – enable sustainable, transformative and rooted action for justice to develop in churches and communities, as well as keeping our actions grounded in and guided by our faith. Because justice is a complex and often contested notion, these practices help us to stay close to God and to those who experience injustice. They assist us in discerning how and where to act, as well as humbly

30 *Called to Love and Praise* (1999), Section 4.6, methodist.org.uk/media/1993/fo-statement-called-to-love-and-praise-1999.pdf

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acknowledging our failures and limitations. They spring from and can be woven into a Methodist Way of Life, and build on the expectation that Methodists are engaging in various forms of justice activity.

174. This section explores these 'ways of being' in more detail, in the hope that they will help when examining our own practices or making decisions about how we can be 'at our best' when seeking justice.

Being with not for³¹

175. Justice is about 'being with' people rather than 'working for' people. 'Being with' means our relationships are characterised by friendship, respect and a willingness to give time to listening. We practise justice in ways that involve communities in making decisions together, people experiencing injustice having agency and dignity, and people standing and working in solidarity together.
176. In doing this, it is vital to listen to and learn from those rooted in situations of injustice and those with significant knowledge of the issue. If we do not have personal experience ourselves, we practice 'being with' by seeking the knowledge and wisdom of those with first-hand experience. Relying solely what we think we know, or a "theology of good intentions"³², whilst intending our actions for good, can instead cause further harm. Learning from people with experience of injustice may sometimes lead to unlearning what we have previously thought to be true.
177. Yet the burden for action must not be placed on those who have experienced in justice. If we ourselves have experience of injustice, we may choose to share our experience openly. Yet trauma, tiredness or rage, amongst other reasons, may mean we do not wish to speak and that is sufficient. There are many ways in which people who wish to be attentive to injustice can listen.
178. Practising justice through 'being with' means co-creating the space for careful listening before acting, because 'Nothing about us, without us, is for us.'

31 Sam Wells in *The Nazareth Manifesto* has helped to popularise the approach of 'being with' rather than 'working for' when churches are engaging with justice. The principle of 'subsidiarity' outlined in Catholic social teaching is similar – instructing that decisions about how we seek justice and transformation should be made as close as possible to the people affected by them. It can also be found in Methodism – from John Wesley's emphasis on visitation, to the approach of the *God for All Church at the Margins* programme.

32 Anthony Reddie, *Nobodies to Somebodies: A Practical Theology for Education and Liberation* (Epworth press, 2003), p.134-140

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Humility in community

179. Justice is about being alongside our neighbours, including those with lived experience of injustice, in communities both local and global. As Methodists, we are part of a Connexion. We do not work alone but within an ongoing mutual conversation between Local Churches, different parts of the Connexion, the world community, and those of other faiths and none seeking to act justly. We are called to walk humbly with God, and with one another.
180. As part of a Methodist Way of Life, we are called to “notice God in Scripture, and the world.” As we try to notice and understand God’s justice, our vision and understanding will only ever be proximate. When we are seeking justice this means recognising that we as individuals or a gathered community may not understand that ‘full picture’. We may well get things wrong, and there is always more to learn. Practising humility in our communities involves being honest and realistic about what churches represent and can offer. We are rarely the size or strength we once were, nor do we have all the resources, on our own, that are needed to enact change. But we are not tasked to be hero or rescuer, and instead called to respond as collaborators with God! This should prompt us to ask how we can join in with our communities rather than lead them.
181. This way of being involves partnering with others locally and globally, building community with those different from ourselves, and, as we are not the most significant players, collaborating where we can.

Self-awareness and the use of power

182. Justice is about recognising power imbalances within the world and our communities, and being wise in our use of power. None of us stands outside the systems that constitute our communities and societies, or systems of sin that disconnect us from God, from each other, from the created world. We may benefit, knowingly or unknowingly, from the power imbalances that maintain injustices in our world. For example, we may buy goods at low prices from supply chains that use cheap or exploited labour in other parts of the world, leaving such workers unable to build better lives. If we are male, white and European, we may have advantages which consciously or unconsciously oppress others. We therefore need to recognise that sometimes our sense of injustice is a reaction to a loss of advantage.
183. Being attentive to power involves self-awareness and careful discernment, about what we, as individuals and church, are called to do and how we are called to

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respond. We are sometimes called to give our power away to others, to share it, or to claim it and use it well. Jesus knew well how to use or sacrifice power; following his example in this is profoundly counter-cultural and is part of our calling to “live in a way that draws others to Jesus”.³³

184. Power is intrinsically neutral. As explored in the section on the Principles, it can be used for good or ill effect, but it cannot be ignored. Failing to recognise power can lead us to (mis)use it in ways that are not constructive, or that diminish the power and agency of others.
185. If we do not rightly recognise our power, as individuals or collectively, we risk being ineffective, or making the action about ‘us’ and not the issue being addressed. For example, in speaking out for justice, if we are not speaking from our own lived experience, we need to use the stories of others with integrity, so that the focus remains on the injustice and not on ourselves. If those with lived experience are invited to speak and share, the support they might need should be considered in order that they and their stories are not exploited or sensationalised.
186. This way of being involves recognising and regularly reflecting on our place and our interests within the system, so we may make a better society.

Visibility and transformation

187. Following a Methodist Way of Life includes “challenging injustice”, and this involves bringing to light injustices that are ignored or unrecognised, as well as those which are very stark. It is about transforming the deep or systemic issues that cause those injustices and not only responding to the immediate problems they cause.
188. Desmond Tutu is credited with saying, “*There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.*” We acknowledge that some injustices are hidden away, ignored or silenced by those in power, and the causes of injustice are often complex and hidden. We commit to drawing attention to situations and the causes of injustice, raising awareness and not allowing them to be hidden. Like the prophets, we will not sit quiet while the vulnerable are forgotten, even if speaking out makes us unpopular.

33 A Methodist Way of Life, methodist.org.uk/media/19302/mwol-a6-booklet-1020.pdf, accessed 16 March 2023

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189. Our justice-seeking should focus both on present injustices and on future transformation. Seeking justice not only involves responding to immediate needs, but also transforming the deep or systemic injustices that causes those needs. This means being willing to engage with the reality of the world as it is and the challenges faced by many, but also holding on to the hope that transformation, healing, and right relationship can and will be restored, leading to the flourishing of all God's creation. This way of being involves reviewing what we are doing, celebrating where change has taken place, being open to discerning a different way of engaging, and journeying with God to new things.

Prayer

190. Justice is about connecting with God, holding both our action and limitations before God, and seeking in prayer the well-being and flourishing of others. We are called to 'pray daily' and 'worship with others regularly.' In prayer, we may express our anger, our powerlessness and our passion for change in the face of many tragedies and injustices, confess our failings, and offer our thanks for small or large positive change. This way of being involves connecting to the character and work of the God of justice, so that we draw on limitless divine grace, and live hopefully.

Approaches to practising justice: ways of *doing*

191. So what should we do to make justice? How do we respond to injustice or put justice-seeking into practice, in our personal and community lives?
192. Firstly, we should ensure that we participate in a process of discernment about how to respond to injustice. Catholic theologians and liberation base communities developed the model of See-Judge-Act (or See-Discern-Act) to help people to reflect critically and theologically on the realities we face – and, crucially, to resist the temptation of leaping in straight to action. Through this method a community will review or 'see' a situation of injustice in the light of understanding the reality in its social, political, economic and cultural dimensions. Then through a process of social analysis and scriptural and theological reflection they can discern or 'judge' the deeper truths. In the light of this, proposals for action to change the situation and address its root causes will emerge, empowering those who are disadvantaged in this situation. Of course

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this is a cycle or a spiral that should be constantly repeated and evaluated, alongside those most closely affected by the situation where possible.³⁴

193. Secondly, we need to reflect on how those actions contribute to the change we want to see. How do they bridge the gap between what is and what we believe should be?
194. Sometimes, only certain actions are available to us. Some actions may sit more naturally with our temperament. Some are more open to those with certain privileges. When there is a choice, we are also challenged to choose the action that is most likely to have an impact and contribute to bring about change.
195. Complex problems, such as environmental degradation or health inequalities remain intractable because they are held in place by various constraints, eg government policies, societal norms, market forces, power imbalances, or accepted narratives about society. To tackle them systemic change, not piecemeal change, is needed. System change happens at three levels – structural, relational and transformative.³⁵ For example, campaigning for changes in legislation tries to achieve structural changes, community organising can bring about relational change, and communicating a different story can help to change the narratives needed for transformative change.
196. Crucially, shifts in system change are most likely to be sustained when working at all three different levels of change. For example, in 2016 a large number of refugees were given refuge in mainland Europe. The practices, policies and resources were put in place to enable their resettlement. But without promoting an accompanying

34 **See** – what is happening, who is involved, who gains, who loses, why is it happening, why does it continue?

Judge – how do you feel about this situation? What do you think should be happening? Are there Bible stories which have a resonance here? What does your faith say to you about this situation

Act – What can we do to bridge the gap between what is happening (the reality) and what should be happening (the ideal/what our faith says)? What action are we going to take? Who can we involve in our action?

For more on using this methodology, see grassroots.caritas.eu/see-judge-act

35 The first level of changes, **structural**, are the most visible, and include policies which guide governments, organisations or others' actions, practices or the habits of groups, and how money, people, knowledge, information and other assets are distributed. The second level of changes – **relational** – are less apparent. These include relationships and the quality of connections between those involved in the system, and power dynamics or the distribution of formal or informal decision-making powers or influences amongst individuals or groups. Finally are the third level of changes – **transformative** – which are implicit. These concern the powerful but unarticulated beliefs, assumptions or narratives that influence what we think or do. See efc.issuelab.org/resources/30855/30855.pdf, accessed 6 March 2023

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narrative to change existing residents' narratives about asylum seekers, a dominant message of fear of 'the other' undermined successful resettlement in some places. In contrast, Poverty Truth Commissions are about building relationships between people who have power and those who are made vulnerable by particular circumstances. The quality of those relationships enables those with experience of poverty to share the reality of particular systems or policies and influence those who have more power to change them for everyone – structural, relational and transformative level change happening together. As a Church and a body of individuals, being in relationship, working locally, nationally and with global partners, we should consider what is ours to do in the changes needed at structural, relational and transformative levels to unlock complex problems.

197. Churches, individuals and groups are engaged in a range of actions for justice. The following non-exhaustive list describes some of the key ways in which Methodists are found acting for justice, and some of the challenges that are involved.
198. **Responding to need:** Following a Methodist Way of Life involves “helping people in our communities and beyond.” The many and varied social action projects of Local Churches usually begin in response to an identified need or injustice within their community. The multiple resources available to a local church – a building, volunteers, specific funding sources, and experience around safeguarding and other policies – can allow a church to be agile in response. Volunteering with a social action project, or advocating for a person in need, can be a source of transformation and change for the volunteers themselves, and, for many community members, church, at its best, can feel like a warm and welcoming place of hospitality and generosity.
Examples include Warm Welcome spaces, debt advice centres, refugee support centres
199. Responses to need must also have a justice dimension and work with others to create agency and long-term change. Otherwise there is a danger that justice work becomes only about social provision, lacking an analysis of the injustice involved or the transformation needed. Or there is a risk that social action becomes disconnected from our social engagement. We need to be wary of providing a service that we just assume is needed, rather than building relationships with those in our community in order to achieve change that lasts. This is part of our commitment to learning and telling of the love of God.
Examples include community pantries, campaigns shaped by people with first-hand experience
200. **Relationship building** takes time and a commitment to seeking renewal in our relationship with God, ourselves and with others. “Caring for ourselves and

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those around us” is key to Methodist discipleship and must be lived out in our justice-seeking. Anchoring our social engagement in listening and relationship building enables a deeper understanding of the issues, renews our commitment, and offers the possibility of providing advocacy, developing local leadership and working in solidarity and collaboration for wider structural change.

Examples include asset-based community development, community organising, Church at the Margins

201. **Changing rules or practices** can take place at local, national and global level. We have a role in engaging in the systems, processes and cultures of our political life as much as practical action. When looked at as a whole, any social justice issue can feel overwhelming, and we may feel lost as to where to begin to seek change. Change often happens through small steps. If our justice-seeking is rooted in relationship, both with those who have first-hand experience and those who have decision-making power and the ability to make change happen, then we are better able to focus our actions on making a difference. As we seek to influence structural change, our key questions might be: Have we identified where the decision-making power is in relation to this issue? Who has the power and ability to make change? Who are our potential partners or collaborators in this work? What is in our power to do?
Examples include campaigning, lobbying, awareness raising
202. **Personal:** there will be certain issues which matter particularly to us as individuals – either because we have some connection to these through lived experience, encounter with others, or a sense that this is something God has called us to engage with as part of our own calling. Our decisions about what we do with our finances, how we treat others, what we do with our time, all have a potential impact, for good or for ill.
Examples include ethical choices in our lifestyle, using our financial power, commitment to a particular cause
203. **Creative and symbolic** acts of prophetic witness can raise awareness of injustice, but also engage people more deeply through opportunities to lament, to pray, to seek confession and restitution, or to offer hope in times of overwhelm. In these types of action there is often opportunity for sharing faith and the good news of the gospel. Craft, music, art and drama can be powerful allies in prophetic witness.
Examples include Craftivism, public liturgy, symbolic protests
204. **Visible activism**, joining in solidarity with others to agitate for change around a shared cause can be a powerful and highly visible way of acting for justice. Yet we increasingly recognise that it is an action which is not accessible to all; not

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everyone can go on a march and some people put themselves at greater personal risk than others when protesting. A question which still arises is that regarding whether Methodists ought to join in acts of civil disobedience or resistance. The 1986 Conference report, *Accept and Resist*, offers the possibility of these as Christian responses, saying that actions should be focused on policy, not individual persons, and should only be engaged in after careful self-reflection, prayerful discernment, and a commitment to accepting the consequences of engaging in such acts.

Examples include participation in demonstrations, civil disobedience or resistance

205. All of these actions have a place in a justice-seeking Church. Some may be more needed at particular times and places. We may as individuals have different strengths and preferences. We are each called to join in with God's kingdom plan and together our acts become powerful. The example given at the start of this section of the Quakers in Chelmsford reminds us that *"each person's contribution became an act of activism because of the collective witness of the Meeting."*
206. However we choose to respond to injustice, we should reflect on what we do and how we do it, asking is there integrity between our ways of doing and ways of being? Do our acts of justice demonstrate and embody being with, humility in community, self-awareness and the use of power, visibility and transformation, and are they rooted in prayer? Using these different approaches to justice can help us to examine our current and planned justice activities, ensuring that they contribute to change - and are consistent with our beliefs about God's justice.
207. **We recommend that the material on *Approaches to justice: ways of doing and Approaches to justice: ways of being* in Part 5 of the report be used in all parts of the life of the Methodist Church, locally and connexionally, as criteria when we reflect on our life, work, decisions and actions.**
208. In the final section we look at how the Principles, Priorities and Practices for justice could be embedded within the Methodist Church to make a difference in the Church and the world.

Section 6: What might it look like to be a justice-seeking Church?

Embedding being a justice-seeking Church

209. The sections on Principles, Priorities and Practices for justice reflect what has been heard about how the Methodist Church envisages God's justice being seen at this time and place. How then might this be achieved through our practices or actions?

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- 210. In order to give life to the Principles, Priorities and Practices identified in the Walking with Micah report, we recommend that a two-year plan be developed to enable and embed the following throughout the life of the Methodist Church, including:**
- a. Integration of the 'Principles for justice' into our learning and decision-making**
 - b. Engagement with the 'Practices: approaches to justice' at all levels of church life**
 - c. Collaboration on the 'Priorities for justice' between partners,³⁶ developing clear and integrated plans and opportunities for local church engagement**
 - d. Support for Local Churches to engage with local communities within a justice framework**
211. Success will depend on collaboration and participation of teams within the Connexional Team, wider Methodist organisations, as well as circuit and district leadership deciding how to embed the Principles, Priorities and Practices in participatory ways within their own mission. The following are examples of actions which could help to embed the outcomes of this report within the Methodist Church:
- 212. Integration of the 'Principles for justice' into our learning and decision-making**
- Identification of opportunities to engage with the Principles through, for example, ministerial formation, preacher development, 3Generate, Cliff College, Learning Network
 - Development of resources for small groups and Bible studies around the Principles for justice, including resources for intergeneration conversations and youth group settings
 - Use of Principles by JPIT when exploring current challenges
 - Intentional use of Principles, in appropriate language, when articulating Methodist responses to injustices
 - Reflection of the language of the Principles in prayer and liturgy

³⁶ Partners are envisaged as being those with an interest in the Priorities, including Methodist entities and relevant parts of the Connexional Team, as well as Local Churches, groups and networks

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213. Engagement with the 'Practices: approaches to justice' at all levels of church life

- Development of a tool for churches and others within the Connexion to explore their own justice activities in the light of the approaches to justice, and those of organisations with which they wish to engage in partnership
- Intentional use of the language of the approaches to practising justice in Methodist communication

214. Collaboration on the 'Priorities for justice' by partners, developing clear and integrated plans and opportunities for local church engagement

- Annual conferring at the Conference on a theme arising from the Priorities for justice, which is used to shape future work, as well as a report on the other priorities
- Working ecumenically where possible, committed collaboration around the Priorities for justice from Methodist and non-Methodist entities – potentially in the form of a strategic collaboration group for each of the priorities, continuing to model participation
- A flexing of connexionally-resourced support for effective work around the Priorities for justice – for example, this might involve: JPIT reflecting the priorities in its workplan; Children Youth and Family considering how children and young people can be supported in their discipleship through working for justice and influencing change through their churches, 3Generate or the Agents of Change Discipleship and Vocation resource; global Church partners shaping MCB work on refugees; other Methodist organisations such as All We Can exploring where their advocacy work overlaps with the priorities
- Communities of practice for individuals and churches deeply engaged with each of the Priorities in order to support one another and shape the work on the Priorities
- Development of shared plans for delivering campaigns, resources, communications on the five priorities, with clear messaging and opportunities for churches to join in or to flex to reflect local circumstances
- Explore models to develop and resource a consistent representative communicator on each Priority for justice

215. Support for Local Churches and others making a shift towards justice

- Collaboration across mission planning, Church at the Margins, a Methodist Way of Life, Learning Network, ministries, communications, JPIT, Children Youth and Family, ministerial training etc

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- Resources for churches, including intergenerational resources, as they reimagine worship, along with resources and training for preachers and worship leaders
- Collective support in prayer for those engaged in justice-seeking, eg the online Micah community being piloted by the Manchester and Stockport District
- Communications training and briefings for leaders of all ages, from children up, within churches, circuits and districts who identify as being leaders for justice
- Rolling out of Methodist Faith-Based organising pilot and support for Methodists engaging in community organising
- JPIT's Constituency Action Network project to provide training and focus for engagement
- Regular opportunities for churches to engage with one of the priorities, according to the plans developed for each of them by the collaboration groups

A separate resolution at the end of this report sets out how a plan to enable and embed these examples and others in collaboration with key stakeholders may be developed and implemented.

Imagine . . .

216. Imagine for a moment that you, like John of the Book of Revelation, are granted a vision of the future of the Methodist Church.
217. What do you see? A shrinking institution with a limited future . . . or a small, sometimes marginalised, but richly diverse community with a big vision and a deep passion for justice and peace, living out a Methodist Way of Life. A Church where:
- Friendships span the divides of society;
 - Listening to the lived, painful experience of those unjustly treated is normal, informing prayer and action;
 - There is repentance for failures in perpetuating or benefiting from injustice;
 - Children and adults are safe from abuse and exploitation;
 - All are valued and treated with respect;
 - Discrimination in all its forms is challenged;
 - Christians act together with partners to seek justice and peace;
 - Compassion for those in need inspires care and empowers action for structural change;

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- There is a desire to be and go beyond being a net zero Church to create grace spaces for flourishing;
- Refugees and those seeking asylum are welcomed, supported and offered solidarity;
- Members regularly meet with their MP to share stories and seek change;
- Children and young people are recognised, encouraged and supported as justice leaders and empowered to lead worship and action with all generations joining them in their work;
- A community pantry, offering affordable food, is hosted at the church, but owned by the local community;
- A truly affordable housing project is led by the community, providing safe and warm homes;
- Opportunities are sought to speak into the public square and engage in acts of prophetic witness;
- Worship allows for painful lament and deeply felt intercession, as well as thanksgiving and praise;
- The Connexion uses its combined strength to engage with its justice priorities;
- The bonds between people, communities, nations, generations, and all living things are enhanced;
- Our hope in God is continually renewed and our passion for the carrying the good news is bold, sharing the story, and holding social action and social justice, equally in our hands.

The angel of Methodism says to its churches: 'this may be so, if my people are faithful to their calling.'

Section 7: Resolutions

***RESOLUTIONS

- 12/1. **The Conference adopts the Report, and commends it to the Methodist Church for prayerful study and action throughout the Connexion.**
- 12/2. **The Conference directs the Methodist Council to agree a plan to enable and embed the proposals and suggestions set out between paragraphs 210 and 215 of the report in collaboration with key stakeholders, and oversee its implementation.**

12. A justice-seeking Church: the report of the Walking with Micah project

- 12/3. The Conference directs the Methodist Council to review at least every five years through a transparent and participative process the Principles, Priorities and Practices adopted in this report to ensure that they still meet the needs of the Methodist Church and the world.**
- 12/4. The Conference thanks all those who participated in and contributed to the Walking with Micah project.**

Appendix 1

Members of Walking with Micah Reference Group

The Revd Dr Roger Walton (chair)
The Revd Mandy Briggs
The Revd Ken Howcroft
The Revd Helen Kirk
Dr Daleep Mukarji
Deacon Kerry Scarlett
Ms Ella Sibley-Ryan
The Revd Arlington Trotman

Accompaniers appointed by the Faith and Order Committee

The Revd Dr Catrin Harland-Davies
The Revd Dr Mike Long
The Revd Dr Caroline Wickens

13. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr Stephen D Wigley Chair of the Committee jaceichair@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

Chair's Foreword

- 1 I am pleased to introduce the 2023 report of the work of the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI). I am very conscious that the challenging events of this last year, with the continuing impact of the war in Ukraine, the rise in fuel prices, high levels of inflation and for many people a 'cost of living' crisis, have presented both a challenge to investors and also highlighted the need for the kind of ethical scrutiny which JACEI provides.
- 2 Last year's report noted the rapid pace of change and adaptation by the Central Finance Board (CFB) to the Conference's decision to exit the oil and gas sector. It was particularly encouraging to join 71 other faith institutions in a joint disinvestment announcement from fossil fuels. I continue to be proud of the input of all the members of JACEI and the staff at the CFB that made this historic moment possible.
- 3 Last year JACEI also introduced a new policy format that sought to more clearly outline the expectations the Church has for investee company behaviour. The new policy format has already been applied to the mining sector, as detailed in the 2021 report. I am pleased to say that, as you will see in this year's report, the updated policy is helping the CFB to effectively address issues of workplace equality and climate action within the mining industry.
- 4 This year, JACEI is pleased to publish a policy on the banking sector in this new format. Banks provide essential financial services to global society and the Church relies on banks to facilitate many of its operations. At the same time JACEI is also acutely aware of the concerns which many rightly have about banks, particularly the sector approach to fossil fuel lending and participation in areas of conflict.
- 5 The role of JACEI is to assist the CFB in holding these ethical issues in tension when making investment decisions: on the one hand, that banks are essential; on the other that banks are potentially doing harm. With careful consideration given to the operational needs of the church and wider society, and with deep concern for people and planet, JACEI has formulated a policy on banking that will allow the CFB to act constructively and consistently in its engagement with the sector.

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- 6 I am pleased to report that this policy is already in action, as I witnessed at first-hand when participating in a high-level dialogue with Cardinal Vincent Nichols and two senior advisors for HSBC's Group Chair. Equipped by the updated policy, we were able to discuss the bank's position on infringements to democratic rights in Hong Kong, its response to banking in Russia following the illegal invasion of Ukraine, and its commitment to no longer provide project finance for the development of new oil and gas fields.
- 7 Another key area of work over the last year has been the introduction by the CFB and its wholly-owned subsidiary Epworth Investment Management Ltd (Epworth) of a comprehensive theological framework which they call *Pillars*.
- 8 JACEI has always been concerned with the theological grounding of CFB policies. Historically, JACEI would seek to develop a theological basis for each policy individually. More recently, and with the guidance of JACEI, the CFB/Epworth has published seven theological statements, each linked to a broad ethical category that allows the CFB/Epworth to effectively embed theology into engagement action.
- 9 For JACEI, these *Pillars* provide a comprehensive theological underpinning for all CFB policies and remind us of our call to care for God's creation. (More details of the *Pillars* can be found on the Epworth website: <https://www.epworthinvestment.co.uk/downloads/epworth-investment-pillars.pdf>)
- 10 Finally, this Foreword is an opportunity to register my thanks and appreciation to my colleagues on JACEI and at the CFB for their hard work and commitment in recent years. This is my sixth and last year as Chair of JACEI and I become ever more conscious of the importance of its work in seeking to ensure that the Church works with ecumenical and charity partners to use its money wisely and well in the service of the Kingdom.
- 11 I wish my successor every blessing in this important task and commend this report to the Conference.

The Revd Dr Stephen Wigley
Chair, JACEI

13. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

Executive Summary

12 Ethical Pillars

The CFB/Epworth has strengthened its theological grounding through the development of ethical pillars. The ethical pillars are guided by God's call to care for people and planet, are informed by the Wesleyan tradition of equality, fairness, individual responsibility, and societal care, and have been developed in conversation with the Methodist Church's work on *A Justice-Seeking Church*. Details of these Pillars can be found on the Epworth website.

<https://www.epworthinvestment.co.uk/downloads/epworth-investment-pillars.pdf>

13 Climate emergency

JACEI remained steadfast in its focus on the climate emergency throughout the year under review.

As co-leads for Climate Action (CA) 100+ engagement with the mining company Anglo American, JACEI noted the CFB's unique position to help influence better climate performance at the mines. The CFB have reported to JACEI that Anglo has been open and constructive in the discussions they have had.

Actions the company has taken in line with requests in CA 100+ engagements include: a goal to reduce net emissions to zero in the long-term, publication of a detailed pathway of actions, publication of a Scope 3 inventory, scenario analysis and improved governance and transparency on indirect lobbying. Most recently, again in line with CA100+ requests, the company included in its latest climate report of October 2021 a 1.5-degree scenario analysis, actions to support a just transition and a quantitative Scope 3 ambition.

14 Banks

Working alongside the CFB, JACEI has published a sector specific policy on banks that seeks to better appraise their performance, hold them to account where necessary and improve their practices through company engagement.

In the wake of HSBC's announcement to cease new fossil fuel project funding, the CFB/Epworth co-signed letters, organised by ShareAction, to Barclays and BNP Paribas, encouraging these banks to do the same and cease direct project financing of new oil and gas fields.

15 HSBC

JACEI was heartened to learn that after a series of engagements, the CFB was invited for high level discussion with the head of the Catholic Church in the England and Wales, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, and two of HSBC's senior advisors on human rights and policy.

13. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

At the meeting with HSBC, the Chair of JACEI was able to discuss issues surrounding Hong Kong, Palestine and Russia. Further discussion was had on the bank's approach to human rights and lending practices to the arms trade. JACEI will continue to monitor the progress of CFB's engagement with the bank

16 **Russia**

The CFB/Epworth do not hold any Russian securities directly, and both organisations have eliminated small indirect exposure to Russian companies through holdings of emerging market-focused vehicles.

JACEI noted the CFB's steadfast resolve in supporting the Ukrainians through company engagement.

17 **Equality**

JACEI was pleased to hear that following the CFB's successful engagement with Rio Tinto on workplace violence and culture, the CFB sought a collaborative partner to examine other mining companies.

JACEI is delighted to learn that the CFB has begun to work with International Women in Mining and the Development Partner Institute to form a coalition of investors seeking to improve safety and wellbeing standards for women in the mining sector.

18 **Waste**

Noting the CFB/Epworth's engagement with Ten Entertainment on waste targets, JACEI was pleased to learn that the engagement had expedited the company's focus on setting such targets. All packaging is recyclable and Ten Entertainment is trialling customer segmentation of waste.

19 **Labour**

JACEI continues to be concerned for the rights of workers. The tech industry in particular presents unique challenges upholding labour rights and good working standards. JACEI is pleased to report the CFB has been able to comment on Tesla's corporate attitude toward labour in an effort to draw attention to the substandard approach within the sector.

20 **Voting and executive remuneration**

The CFB is part of the Church Investors Group proxy voting coalition, which has a progressive voting policy integrating diversity and the climate emergency among other issues into its voting decisions. The CFB's quarterly voting summaries are reviewed at JACEI meetings. The summary reports are available on the CFB website, with the full voting report available on request.

13. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

21 **Health, wellbeing and farm animal welfare**

JACEI noted that the CFB participated in an event where the Access to Medicine Foundation presented the latest iteration of its Index. This event gave opportunity for the CFB to meet with and query the approach of GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and AstraZeneca (AZN). GSK has long been the highest scorer in the index; however, AZN has moved up from seventh place two years ago to sit third within the index. Both GSK and AZN are targeting positive impact on the lives of those in low- and middle-income countries.

22 **Nestlé**

The CFB/Epworth and representatives of Joint Public issues team met with representatives from Nestlé to discuss a range of ethical issues. This built on the engagement started years ago regarding Breast Milk Substitutes and has now broadened out to include nutrition and health, as well as other topics such as the climate emergency and modern slavery.

23 **The UK Stewardship Code**

After a successful submission in 2021, the CFB/Epworth team submitted the 2022 renewal ahead of the early submission deadline. The latest Stewardship Code report reflects the suggestions made by the Financial Reporting Council on our previous submission, as well as integrating case studies into every reported principle. JACEI was delighted the CFB/Epworth received approval of their latest report.

24 **The Church Investors Group (CIG)**

The CFB is part of the ecumenical Church Investors Group, which works to encourage responsible business practice through engagement with company managements and promote ethical investment based upon Christian ethical principles.

25 **Communication**

All the CFB publications including quarterly responsible investment reviews, voting summaries, position papers and policy statements are available on the CFB and Epworth websites (<https://www.epworthinvestment.co.uk/> and <https://www.cfbmethodistchurch.org.uk/>) in keeping with a strong tradition of full transparency.

26 **The CFB ethical review**

JACEI's responsibility to the Conference includes a resolution that the CFB Funds are managed in support of an ethical stance *which is in accordance with the aims of the Methodist Church*. It regularly reviews the CFB performance in this regard across a range of reports and reviews.

13. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

Governance

27 **Role, function and membership of the Committee**

The Committee has continued with the process agreed for appointing new members. The current membership and the Standing Order are set out in the Governance section.

Conclusion

28 Based on the information available, the Committee judges that the CFB has managed the funds under its control in support of an ethical stance which is in accordance with the aims of the Methodist Church. This includes the holdings in its wholly owned subsidiary, Epworth Investment Management Ltd.

29 In arriving at this conclusion, the Committee scrutinised compliance with the CFB ethical policies through the:

- voting record of the CFB;
- ethically excluded lists of UK and global companies;
- ethics meeting minutes of the CFB;
- company engagement record of the CFB;
- independently verified review of the CFB UK portfolio carbon footprint;
- CFB participation in **the Church Investors Group (CIG)**;
- CFB participation in the **Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change (IIGCC)**; **CDP** (formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project); **TPI** (Transition Pathway Initiative); **Climate Action 100+**; the **Principles of Responsible Investment (PRI)**; **Access to Medicines Index (ATMI)**; **Access to Nutrition Index (ATNI)**; **Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare (BBFAW)**; **Farm Animal Investment Risk & Return (FAIRR)**; the **Powering Past Coal Alliance**; the **Plastic Solutions Investor Alliance**.

***RESOLUTION

13/1. **The Conference receives the Report of the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment for the year to 31 March 2023.**

For more detail on the issues contained within this Summary Report, and other matters considered by JACEI, we recommend referring to the full 2023 Report which can be found on the CFB website along with all position papers and CFB policy statements.
www.cfbmethodistchurch.org.uk

13. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

Governance: Role, Function and Membership of the Committee

The Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) was established in 1983 by a Resolution of the Methodist Conference to provide a mechanism for the Methodist Church to tackle ethical dilemmas associated with investment and to report annually to the Conference.

Terms of reference

The Joint Advisory Committee of the Ethics of Investment shall have a Chair appointed by the Methodist Council who should be able to represent Methodism at a senior ecumenical level. This position has to date always been filled by a District Chair.

The Committee shall have five members appointed by the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church (CFB) and five members appointed by the Methodist Council. The function of the Committee shall be:

- *To advise the CFB of ethical considerations relating to investment, it being accepted that the CFB legally has responsibility for making the final decision on the purchase or disposal of any investment;*
- *To act as an advocate, where appropriate, in respect of any ethical policy of the CFB, any investment decision taken on ethical grounds, and any other advice the Committee may provide on ethical matters relating to investment;*
- *To report to the Methodist Conference on the workings of the Committee and in particular to comment on the performance of the CFB in managing the funds under its control according to an ethical stance which is in accordance with the aims of the Methodist Church;*
- *JACEI may comprise both executive and non-executive members, with the expectation that the CFB and Methodist Council may each nominate one executive officer to be a Member of JACEI;*
- *Each non-executive member appointed by either the CFB or by Methodist Council shall be eligible to stand for membership for up to two successive terms of three years, up to a maximum of six years in total;*
- *Members, on the completion of each three year term, may stand down, be asked to stand down, or be asked to give their assent to continue to serve up to the normal maximum of six years. Their re-appointment shall be recorded in the Minutes; executive members of JACEI representing the CFB and Methodist Council shall have no upper limit to their terms;*
- *The Committee, may agree to a non-executive member, including the Chair, serving for an additional period of up to three years at the completion of any six year term, to facilitate continuity of the Committee's business;*

13. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

- *A Minute shall be taken of any meeting of the Committee, approved by JACEI members, and signed as a true and fair record of proceedings by the Chair;*
- *The Committee shall appoint a Secretary to act on its behalf.*

Standing order

The following Standing Order relating to JACEI was approved by Methodist Conference (2019).

- (1) *There shall be a Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment, appointed annually in accordance with clause (2) below.*
- (2) *The Committee shall consist of eleven persons and shall comprise:-*
 - (i) *a Chair appointed by the Methodist Council;*
 - (ii) *five other persons appointed by the Methodist Council;*
 - (iii) *five persons appointed by the Central Finance Board;*
- (3) *The Committee shall meet as frequently as need be, but in any event at least once a year.*
- (4) *The Committee shall be responsible for advising the Central Finance Board on ethical aspects of investments, and proposed investments, and shall report annually to Conference.*

Responsible investment reporting requirements

The Task Force on Climate related Financial Disclosures was established by the Financial Stability Board to develop recommendations for more effective climate-related disclosures that could enable stakeholders to understand better the concentrations of carbon-related assets in the financial sector and the financials systems exposures to climate-related risks. In November 2020, the UK government announced that it will be mandatory to report in line with TCDF recommendations across the UK economy by 2025, with some sectors required to report as soon as 2021.

The CFB is an investment manager, through its subsidiary Epworth Investment Management Ltd., to large pension funds that use the JACEI Conference Report as part of their assessment of compliance with their ethical and responsible investment policies. The report should therefore enable trustee bodies to assess clearly whether the CFB, and its subsidiary, Epworth Investment Management Limited, have operated in a way consistent with the aims of the Methodist Church.

13. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

JACEI procedures

The Committee has agreed it should:

- Hold at least four meetings a year;
- Have its own identity with a postal and electronic address located within the Connexional Team at Methodist Church House;
- Advise the CFB and its subsidiary Epworth Investment Management Ltd. in relation to Methodist Church policy in respect of ethical and responsible investment;
- Examine all aspects of a company's operations rather than focus on one particular issue;
- To act as an advocate, where appropriate, in respect of any ethical policy of the CFB, any investment decision taken on ethical grounds, and any other advice the Committee may provide on ethical matters relating to investment;
- Seek ways to make the advice provided by the Committee available to the wider Methodist Church.

Observers

Observers, particularly those representing other church denominations and/or organisations may attend meetings of JACEI at the invitation and agreement of the Chair and Committee.

The Methodist Church in Ireland has permanent observer status to attend meetings of JACEI.

Observers may be invited to speak and participate in discussion but may not vote.

Quorum

For the purpose of conducting meetings of JACEI, a quorum shall be deemed as being four members including the Chair. At least three members of any quorum including the Chair should be non-executive representatives.

Conduct of business

JACEI business may be conducted electronically before, between and following meetings. Any decisions arising from remote and electronic communication shall be noted by the Secretary and made available to all members.

13. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

JACEI agendas

JACEI receives at each meeting:

- the work-plan
- one or two major items for debate, usually Position Papers and Policy Statements either previously agreed by the Committee or requested by the CFB;
- other significant matters for discussion (including the climate emergency and extractives industries as standing items);
- CFB engagement, including company notes and briefings;
- a CFB ethical performance review including voting summary reports, ethical exclusions and a note of any disinvestment on ethical grounds;
- a note of any significant collaborative engagement work.

The Committee confirms it:

- ✓ held four meetings; in 2021/22 four meetings took place in June 2022, September 2022, December 2022, and March 2023;
- ✓ has its own identity with an address located at Methodist Church House;
- ✓ advised the CFB in relation to current Methodist Church policy;
- ✓ examined all aspects of a company's operations rather than simply focus on one particular issue;
- ✓ took responsibility, where appropriate, for making public any ethical policy of the CFB and in particular any investment decision taken on ethical grounds, and;
- ✓ sought ways to make the advice provided by the Committee available to the wider Methodist Church.

The Committee receives and reviews the CFB workplan at every meeting, which sets medium-term policy priorities.

Committee membership

The Revd Dr Stephen Wigley is Chair of the Committee. He assumed the role of Chair on 1 July 2016.

The JACEI Chair is independent, usually nominated from among the membership of the District Chairs and appointed by Methodist Council.

Members appointed by the Methodist Council are:

- The Revd Dr Sheryl Anderson
- The Revd Dr Vincent Jambawo

13. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

- Ms Rachel Lampard
- Mr Jonathan Cape
- The Revd Dr Michael Long

Members appointed by the Central Finance Board (CFB) are:

- Ms Morwenna Williams
- Mr Bala Gnanapragasam
- The Revd Anne Ellis
- The Revd Julian Blakemore
- The Revd Dr Andrew Harper

Mr David Hopley attends as a representative of the Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland, which has Permanent Observer status on JACEI.

Mr Richard Nunn, board member and past Chair of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd attends JACEI as an observer.

In attendance from time to time to facilitate the workings of the Committee were: Mr David Palmer, Mr Miles Askew, Mr Steve Hucklesby and Ms Roz Amos.

Mrs Sophie Forrest is JACEI Secretary.

The Committee has a reciprocal arrangement with the Church of England Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) whereby representatives of JACEI and the EIAG attend as observers of each other's meetings and exchange Minutes.

Enquiries about the Committee's work are encouraged, with letters to be addressed to the Committee's Chair c/o 25 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9SF, or by email to: jaceichair@methodistchurch.org.uk.

The CFB may be contacted through the Revd Dr Andrew Harper at 9 Bonhill Street, London EC2A 4PE. Telephone: 020 7496 3630 or email andrew.harper@epworthinvestment.co.uk

14. Services of Marriage

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Mark Rowland Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee rowlandm@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Action required | Approval |
| Resolutions | <p>14/1. The Conference receives the Report.</p> <p>14/2. The Conference authorises the service for <i>The Marriage of any Two Persons</i> for use in the Methodist Church.</p> <p>14/3. The Conference authorises the service for <i>The Blessing of a Marriage of any Two Persons previously solemnized</i> for use in the Methodist Church.</p> <p>14/4. The Conference authorises the selection of <i>Additional Scripture Readings for the Marriage of any Two Persons</i> for use in the Methodist Church.</p> |

Summary of Content

| | |
|--|--|
| Subject and aims | To authorise the services for <i>The Marriage of any Two Persons</i> , <i>The Blessing of a Marriage of any Two Persons previously solemnized</i> and the selection of <i>Additional Scripture Readings for the Marriage of any Two Persons</i> for use in the Methodist Church. |
| Main points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These services were commended for experimental use by the Conference of 2021. • Feedback has been received and final versions are now presented for authorisation. |
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | <i>God in Love Unites Us</i> The response of the Faith and Order Committee to the <i>God in Love Unites Us</i> Report |

14. Services of Marriage

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Following its decisions regarding marriage, the Conference of 2021 adopted the recommendation that there should be two services of marriage in the *Methodist Worship Book* (MWB), reflecting the two ways in which marriage is understood in the Methodist Church. It therefore renamed the existing services in MWB as 'The Marriage of a Man and a Woman' and 'The Blessing of a Marriage of a Man and a Woman previously solemnized.' It also commended for experimental use services for *The Marriage of any Two Persons* and *The Blessing of a Marriage of any Two Persons previously solemnized*, directing that feedback be sent to the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee to enable the 2023 Conference to make a decision about their formal authorisation.
- 1.2 The Conference amended the introduction to the relevant section of MWB which now reads as follows:

A marriage ceremony is a formal occasion when a solemn, legal contract is made between two persons. Since the decisions of the Conference of 2021, within the Methodist Church this is understood in two ways, namely that marriage can only be between a man and a woman and that marriage can be between any two persons. Accordingly, liturgies for marriage and the blessing of a marriage according to both understandings are provided. Whatever our understanding, in a Christian context, the service is always an act of worship in which marriage is celebrated as a gift of God and the joy of the couple is shared and their commitment to each other is witnessed by family and friends. *The Marriage Service's* themes of love, hope, faithfulness, sacrifice and trust are at the heart of the Christian gospel.

2 Feedback and amendments

- 2.1 Very limited feedback has been received on the services commended for experimental use. The substantive issues that have been raised relate to the need for two services, the passage regarding the nurturing of children in the declaration of purpose, the omission of Mark 10:6-9 from the suggested passages of scripture and the phrase 'binding themselves to each other' in the declaration of the marriage.
- 2.2 It is important to recognise that the decision to have two services (ie 'for a Man and a Woman' and 'for any Two Persons') has already been made and it is not suggested that be reviewed at this stage. The Faith and Order Committee

14. Services of Marriage

continues to believe that it is appropriate that liturgical resources are provided in accordance with both understandings of marriage affirmed by the Methodist Church. Couples marrying and those leading marriage services will use the resources appropriate to their situation and convictions.

- 2.3 A suggested amendment proposed rewording the fourth paragraph of the declaration of purpose (no. 4 in the marriage service; no. 3 in the blessing service) to remove the references to children and family life. The Faith and Order Committee aimed in the drafting of these services that there be should be in each case one service in two forms, rather than two entirely different services. The elements of this section are reordered to change the emphasis compared to the services for One Man and One Woman in the light of the greater diversity of couples who may use it, but the Faith and Order Committee recognises that there are, for example, same-sex couples for whom nurturing children is an important part of their relationship and, equally, mixed-sex couples who do not have children. It believes it is important to retain a commonality between the two services on this point and therefore has not accepted the proposed amendment.
- 2.4 As reported to the 2021 Conference, the principle in drafting the services 'for any Two Persons' was that every option in these services should be potentially suitable for any couple who might use it. Mark 10:6-9 was not included as it is a gendered text and therefore does not meet that criterion. It continues to be part of the service for One Man and One Woman and in any service a couple can use whichever biblical texts they feel, in consultation with the person leading the service, are appropriate.
- 2.5 A further suggestion proposed restoring the phrase 'binding themselves to each other' in the declaration of the marriage (no. 15). The Faith and Order Committee was happy to accept this suggestion.
- 2.6 By inadvertent error, the headings on the additional scripture readings referred to 'any Two People' and in some places pronouns were not given correctly and these have now been corrected. The Faith and Order Committee also identified that note 3 on the Blessing Service had been retained as it exists in the service for The Blessing of a Marriage of One Man and One Woman suggesting that the service should be conducted by the minister with pastoral charge. There is no parallel note for the marriage service itself and it may be that the minister with pastoral charge is not able in conscience to conduct this service. This part of the note has therefore been omitted. There are other minor amendments to correct typographical matters and to clarify rubrics.

14. Services of Marriage

3 Authorisation

- 3.1 In accordance with the direction of the 2021 Conference, the Faith and Order Committee therefore presents these services with amendments as discussed above for authorisation by the Conference. As with any Methodist liturgy, they can and should be personalised according to the situation and context. However, in the context of a marriage, careful attention must be given to ensure that the legal requirements are satisfied.

4 The Liturgies:

THE MARRIAGE OF ANY TWO PERSONS

NOTES

1. At the time of publication, it is required by law in England and Wales that the words of declaration at no. 5 and the words of contract at no. 13 (or the permitted alternative forms, set out in the Appendix) should be said in the presence of the Authorized Person (or the Registrar) and two witnesses. The full names of the parties should be used.
2. When this service is used in Scotland, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, or any other jurisdiction whose marriage legislation is different from that of England and Wales, the minister or other person conducting the service should ensure that the service complies with the legal requirements of that jurisdiction. Appropriate substitutions should be made at nos. 5 and 13 if necessary.
3. In the case of same-sex marriages, there may be legal requirements additional to those for mixed-sex marriages. In England and Wales these include that the registration of the building and the appointment of the Authorized Person need to be extended to cover same-sex marriages. The minister, Authorized Person, or (in some jurisdictions) other person conducting the service, should ensure compliance with all relevant requirements.
4. This service includes the suggestions of pronouns her/him/them for those being married. Some being married may prefer the use of other pronouns and the preference of the person should always be followed. However, at the time of writing, in England and Wales the use of the word husband or wife (according to the legally recognized gender of the person) is required by law at no. 13.

THE PREPARATION

- 1 The people may stand as the marriage party enters the church. The persons to be married stand together before the minister.

The minister may welcome the congregation.

The minister says:

We meet together in the presence of God
to witness the marriage of A and C,
to ask God's blessing upon them,
to support them with our prayers
and to share their joy.

- 2 Hymn

- 3 The people remain standing. The minister says:

Let us pray.

Gracious God, your generous love surrounds us,
and everything we enjoy comes from you.
We confess our ingratitude for your goodness
and our selfishness in using your gifts.
Forgive and renew us,
and fill us with your Spirit
that in true thankfulness
we may bear witness to your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

- 4 The minister says:

A and C, with your families and friends,
we thank God on this day
for the gift of marriage.

It is the will of God that, in marriage,
a couple should experience
a life-long unity of heart, body and mind;
comfort and companionship;
enrichment and encouragement;
tenderness and trust.

14. Services of Marriage

It is the will of God that marriage
should be honoured as a way of life,
in which we may know the security of love and care,
and grow towards maturity.
Through such marriage,
human society may be enriched,
family life strengthened,
and children nurtured.

No one should enter into this lightly or selfishly,
for marriage involves the giving
of two persons
wholeheartedly to each other.
Christ in his self-giving comes to our help,
for he loves us and gave himself for us.

A and C, you are now to share this way of life
which God has created
and, in Christ, has blessed.
Today we pray that the Holy Spirit
will guide and strengthen you
that you may fulfil God's purposes
for the rest of your lives.

5 The Legal Declarations

The minister says to the people:

A and C are now to make the declarations which the law requires.

The minister says to AB:

Are you, AB, free lawfully to marry CD?

AB answers: I am.

The minister says to CD:

Are you, CD, free lawfully to marry AB?

CD answers: I am.

14. Services of Marriage

6 The minister says to the couple:

You have made the declarations required by law. I ask you now to affirm, in the presence of us all, your intention to marry each other.

The minister says to AB:

A, are you willing to give yourself in marriage to C?

AB answers: I am.

The minister says to AB:

Will you love *her/him/them*, comfort and honour *her/him/them*, be *her/his/their* companion through all the joys and sorrows of life, and be faithful to *her/him/them* as long as you both shall live?

AB answers: With God's help, I will.

The minister says to CD:

C, are you willing to give yourself in marriage to A?

CD answers: I am.

The minister says to CD:

Will you love *her/him/them*, comfort and honour *her/him/them*, be *her/his/their* companion through all the joys and sorrows of life, and be faithful to *her/him/them* as long as you both shall live?

CD answers: With God's help, I will.

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

The whole of the Ministry of the Word may occur here or at no. 18, or the scripture readings may be read here and the sermon may be preached at no. 18.

7 All sit. At least one passage of scripture is read. If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, a passage from the Gospels always concludes the readings.

14. Services of Marriage

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of one's house, it would be utterly scorned.

Song of Solomon 8:7

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, 13

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:14-19

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:12-17

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They

14. Services of Marriage

have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

John 2:1-11

Jesus said: 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.'

John 15:9-12

Additional scripture readings are listed below.

- 8 Sermon
- 9 Hymn

THE MARRIAGE

- 10 All stand. The minister may say to the people:

I ask you, the families and friends of A and C:

Will you do all in your power to support and encourage them in their marriage?

The people answer:

With God's help, we will.

14. Services of Marriage

- 11 If *AB* has a relative or friend presenting *her/him/them* for marriage, the minister says:

Who presents *A* to be married to *C*?

AB's relative or friend answers: I do.

If *CD* has a relative or friend presenting *her/him/them* for marriage, the minister says:

Who presents *C* to be married to *A*?

CD's relative or friend answers: I do.

- 12 The minister says:

Gracious God,
as you have brought *A* and *C* together in love and trust,
enable them through the power of your Holy Spirit
to make and keep their vows;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

- 13 The Vows

AB takes *CD*'s right hand and says:

I, *AB*, take you, *CD*, to be my wedded wife/husband,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
from this day forward,
until we are parted by death;
and this is my solemn vow.

They loose hands.

CD takes *AB*'s right hand and says:

I, *CD*, take you, *AB*, to be my wedded wife/husband,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
from this day forward,
until we are parted by death;
and this is my solemn vow.

They loose hands.

14 The Giving of the Rings

The minister receives the rings on the book, and says:

Eternal God,
bless these rings
that they may be
symbols of the love and trust
between A and C. **Amen.**

EITHER

AB places a ring on *CD*'s ring finger, and says:

I give you this ring
as a sign of our marriage.
With my body I honour you,
all that I am I give to you,
and all that I have I share with you,
within the love of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

CD places a ring on *AB*'s ring finger, and says:

I give you this ring
as a sign of our marriage.
With my body I honour you,
all that I am I give to you,
and all that I have I share with you,
within the love of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

OR

After the rings have been given and received, the couple say together:

With these rings
we pledge ourselves
to each other,
in the Name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

14. Services of Marriage

- 15 The minister joins the right hands of the couple. The minister may wrap *her/his/their* stole around, and/or place *her/his/their hand* on the couple's joined hands.

The minister says to the couple:

A and C, God so join you together
that none shall ever part you.

The minister says to the people:

Before God and in the presence of us all,
A and C have exchanged vows,
joined their hands,
and given and received rings,
binding themselves to each other.
I therefore proclaim that they are now
united in the covenant of marriage.

- 16 A hymn may be sung here or after no. 17.
- 17 The people remain standing. The couple may kneel and the minister may lay hands upon their heads.

The minister says:

A and C,
the blessing of God the Father,
God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always.
May God be your protection and your wisdom,
your guide and your peace,
your joy, your comfort, and your eternal rest. **Amen.**

- 18 The whole of the Ministry of the Word follows, if it has not occurred earlier. If the sermon has been deferred, it is preached here.

THE PRAYERS

19 These or some other prayers of intercession:

Let us pray.

God of grace, source of all love,
we pray for A and C
that they may live together in love and faithfulness
to the end of their lives.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Enrich their friendship,
that each may be for the other
a companion in joy and a comforter in sorrow.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Help A and C to be patient, gentle and forgiving,
that their marriage may reflect Christ's love for all people.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Enable them to make their home
a place of welcome and friendship,
that their life together
may be a source of strength to others.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Other intercessions may be included.

May we, who have witnessed these vows today,
be signs of your love in the world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

14. Services of Marriage

20 The Lord's Prayer

EITHER

We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who
sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

OR

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

21 If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, the service continues from no. 25.

If Holy Communion is not celebrated, the service continues as follows:

22 All stand.

The minister says this prayer, or gives thanks in *her/his/their* own words:

Praise God,
who is the source of joy and celebration,
pleasure and delight, love and friendship.

Praise God,
who, in the life and victory of Jesus Christ,
reveals to us the glory of self-giving love.

Praise God,
who sends the Holy Spirit to be our helper
and to guide us into the way of perfect love.

Praise God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

14. Services of Marriage

23 Hymn

24 The minister says to all present:

God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Spirit,
make *you/us* strong in faith
and guide *you/us* in truth and love.

EITHER

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine on you and be
gracious to you;
the Lord look on you with kindness
and give you peace. **Amen.**

OR

May God be gracious to us
and bless us,
and make his face to shine
upon us. **Amen.**

HOLY COMMUNION

25 The Peace

All stand.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

The people may greet one another in the name of Christ.

THE PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS

26 Bread and wine are brought to the table by the couple or other members of the congregation (or if already on the table are uncovered). The presiding minister takes the bread and wine and prepares them for use.

THE THANKSGIVING

27 All stand.

The presiding minister leads the great prayer of thanksgiving:

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

14. Services of Marriage

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We praise you, gracious God,
creator and sustainer of all things.

From the beginning
you made us for yourself and for each other,
and you call us to reflect your faithfulness
in lives of love and service.

You gave yourself to us in your Son, Jesus Christ,
the Lord of heaven and earth,
and entrusted him to the care of a human family.
In his life, death and resurrection,
you revealed the power of self-giving love,
rescued us from sin and selfishness,
and made us a new family through your grace.

You give yourself to us today,
and by your Holy Spirit
you promise to be with us always
as our companion and our guide.

And so, with all your people on earth and in heaven,
we give you thanks and praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessèd is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy God, we praise you
that on the night in which he was betrayed
our Saviour Christ took bread
and gave you thanks.
He broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,

'Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup of wine,
gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying,
'Drink this, all of you.
This is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for all people for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

And so, gracious God, we remember and celebrate
all that Christ has done for us.
We offer ourselves to you in humble thanksgiving.

Send your Holy Spirit
that these gifts of bread and wine
may be for us the body and blood of Christ.
Together with all your people,
may we have life in all its fullness,
live in the power of love,
and fill creation with a song of endless praise.

**Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory is yours, God most holy,
now and for ever. Amen.**

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

28 The presiding minister breaks the bread in the sight of the people in silence, or saying:

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.

The presiding minister may lift the cup in silence, or saying:

The cup we bless is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

29 Silence, all seated or kneeling

14. Services of Marriage

THE SHARING OF THE BREAD AND WINE

30 The presiding minister receives, then, beginning with the couple and their families, the people, according to local custom.

31 Words such as the following are said during the distribution:

The body of Christ. **Amen.**

The blood of Christ. **Amen.**

32 During the distribution there may be appropriate music.

33 The elements that remain are covered with a white cloth.

PRAYERS AND DISMISSAL

34 Let us pray.

**We thank you, Lord,
that you have fed us in this sacrament,
united us with Christ,
and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet
prepared for all people. Amen.**

35 Hymn

36 The presiding minister says to all present:

God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Spirit,
make *you/us* strong in faith
and guide *you/us* in truth and love.

EITHER

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine on you and
be gracious to you;
the Lord look on you with kindness
and give you peace. **Amen.**

OR

May God be gracious to us
and bless us,
and make his face to shine
upon us. **Amen.**

APPENDIX

- 1 As an alternative to the questions and answers in no. 5, the persons contracting the marriage may make the declaration required by law by saying:

EITHER

**A I do solemnly declare
that I know not
of any lawful impediment
why I, AB/CD,*
may not be joined in matrimony
to CD/AB.***

OR

**B I declare that I know of no legal reason why I,
AB/CD,* may not be joined in marriage to CD/AB.***

- 2 As an alternative to the words of contract set out in no. 13,

EITHER

A the persons to be married may say:

**I call upon these persons here present
to witness that I, AB/CD,*
do take thee, CD/AB,*
to be my lawful wedded wife/husband,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
from this day forward,
until we are parted by death;
and this is my solemn vow.**

OR

B the persons to be married may say to each other:

**I, AB/CD,* take thee, CD/AB,*
to be my wedded wife/husband,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,**

14. Services of Marriage

in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
from this day forward,
until we are parted by death;
and this is my solemn vow.

(* The full names of the parties must be used.)

THE BLESSING OF A MARRIAGE OF ANY TWO PERSONS PREVIOUSLY SOLEMNIZED

NOTES

- 1 This form of service must not be used for the solemnization of a marriage.
- 2 This form of service is not suitable for those who wish to reaffirm or renew marriage vows.
- 3 This service can be used either as a private ceremony or with a congregation of family and friends.
- 4 This service includes the suggestions of pronouns her/him/them for those whose marriage is being blessed. Some may prefer the use of other pronouns and the preference of the person should always be followed.

THE PREPARATION

- 1 The persons whose marriage is to be blessed stand together before the minister. The minister may welcome the congregation.

The minister says:

We meet together in the presence of God
to join with A and C,
in asking God's blessing upon their marriage.

- 2 Hymn

3 The minister says:

A and C, with your families and friends,
we thank God on this day
for the gift of marriage.

It is the will of God that, in marriage,
a couple should experience
a life-long unity of heart, body and mind;
comfort and companionship;
enrichment and encouragement;
tenderness and trust.

It is the will of God that marriage
should be honoured as a way of life,
in which we may know the security of love and care,
and grow towards maturity.
Through such marriage,
human society may be enriched,
family life strengthened,
and children nurtured.

No one should enter into this lightly or selfishly,
for marriage involves the giving
of two persons
wholeheartedly to each other.
Christ in his self-giving comes to our help,
for he loves us and gave himself for us.

A and C,
you have already entered this way of life
which God has created
and, in Christ, has blessed.
Today we pray that the Holy Spirit
will guide and strengthen you
that you may fulfil God's purposes
for the rest of your lives.

14. Services of Marriage

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

The whole of the Ministry of the Word may occur here or at no. 13, or the scripture readings may be read here and the sermon may be preached at no. 13.

- 4 All sit. At least one passage of scripture is read. If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, a passage from the Gospels always concludes the readings.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of one's house, it would be utterly scorned.
Song of Solomon 8:7

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, 13

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:14-19

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ

14. Services of Marriage

dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:12-17

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

John 2:1-11

Jesus said: 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.'

John 15:9-12

Additional scripture readings are listed below.

- 5 Sermon
- 6 Hymn

14. Services of Marriage

THE BLESSING OF THE MARRIAGE

7 All stand. The minister says:

Gracious God,
you have brought A and C together in love and trust.

By the power of your Holy Spirit,
may they receive your blessing upon their marriage;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

8 The minister says to AB:

A, you have come here as C's *husband/wife/spouse*
seeking God's blessing upon your marriage,
and desiring to live according to God's will.

I ask you, therefore:
will you love *her/him/them*, comfort and honour *her/him/them*,
be *her/his/their* companion
through all the joys and sorrows of life,
and be faithful to *her/him/them*
as long as you both shall live?

AB answers:

With God's help, I will.

The minister says to CD:

C, you have come here as A's *husband/wife/spouse*
seeking God's blessing upon your marriage,
and desiring to live according to God's will.

I ask you, therefore:
will you love *her/him/them*, comfort and honour *her/him/them*,
be *her/his/their* companion
through all the joys and sorrows of life,
and be faithful to *her/him/them*
as long as you both shall live?

14. Services of Marriage

CD answers:

With God's help, I will.

- 9 The couple join their ring hands. The minister places a hand on their joined hands, and says:

Eternal God,
bless *these rings/this ring,*
symbols/a symbol of the love and trust
between A and C. **Amen.**

- 10 The minister may wrap *her/his/their* stole around the couple's joined hands. The couple say together:

Within the love of God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
I am bound to you in marriage
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
until we are parted by death.

- 11 The people remain standing. The couple may kneel, and the minister may lay hands upon their heads.

The minister says:

A and C,
the blessing of God the Father,
God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always.
May God be your protection and your wisdom,
your guide and your peace,
your joy, your comfort, and your eternal rest. **Amen.**

- 12 Hymn

- 13 The whole of the Ministry of the Word follows, if it has not occurred earlier. If the sermon has been deferred, it is preached here.

14. Services of Marriage

THE PRAYERS

14 All sit.

These or some other prayers of intercession:

Let us pray.

God of grace, source of all love,
we pray for A and C
that they may live together in love and faithfulness
to the end of their lives.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Enrich their friendship,
that each may be for the other
a companion in joy and a comforter in sorrow.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Help A and C to be patient, gentle, and forgiving,
that their marriage may reflect Christ's love for all people.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Enable them to make their home
a place of welcome and friendship,
that their life together
may be a source of strength to others.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Other intercessions may be included.

May we, who have witnessed their promises today,
be signs of your love in the world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

14. Services of Marriage

15 The Lord's Prayer

EITHER

We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who
sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

OR

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

16 If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, the service continues from no. 20.

If Holy Communion is not celebrated, the service continues as follows:

17 All stand.

The minister says this prayer, or gives thanks in *her/his/their* own words:

Praise God,
who is the source of joy and celebration,
pleasure and delight, love and friendship.

Praise God,
who, in the life and victory of Jesus Christ,
reveals to us the glory of self-giving love.

Praise God,
who sends the Holy Spirit to be our helper
and to guide us into the way of perfect love.

Praise God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

14. Services of Marriage

18 Hymn

19 The minister says to all present:

God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Spirit,
make *you/us* strong in faith
and guide *you/us* in truth and love.

EITHER

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine on you and
be gracious to you;
the Lord look on you with kindness
and give you peace. **Amen.**

OR

May God be gracious to us
and bless us,
and make his face to shine
upon us. **Amen.**

HOLY COMMUNION

20 The Peace

All stand.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

The people may greet one another in the name of Christ.

THE PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS

21 Bread and wine are brought to the table by the couple or other members of the congregation (or if already on the table are uncovered). The presiding minister takes the bread and wine and prepares them for use.

THE THANKSGIVING

22 All stand.

The presiding minister leads the great prayer of thanksgiving:

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We praise you, gracious God,
creator and sustainer of all things.

From the beginning
you made us for yourself and for each other,
and you call us to reflect your faithfulness
in lives of love and service.

You gave yourself to us in your Son, Jesus Christ,
the Lord of heaven and earth,
and entrusted him to the care of a human family.
In his life, death and resurrection,
you revealed the power of self-giving love,
rescued us from sin and selfishness
and made us a new family through your grace.

You give yourself to us today,
and by your Holy Spirit
you promise to be with us always
as our companion and our guide.

And so with all your people on earth and in heaven
we give you thanks and praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessèd is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy God, we praise you
that on the night in which he was betrayed
our Saviour Christ took bread
and gave you thanks.
He broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,

14. Services of Marriage

'Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup of wine,
gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying,
'Drink this, all of you.
This is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for all people for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

And so, gracious God, we remember and celebrate
all that Christ has done for us.
We offer ourselves to you in humble thanksgiving.

Send your Holy Spirit
that these gifts of bread and wine
may be for us the body and blood of Christ.
Together with all your people,
may we have life in all its fullness,
live in the power of love,
and fill creation with a song of endless praise.

**Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory is yours, God most holy,
now and for ever. Amen.**

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

- 23 The presiding minister breaks the bread in the sight of the people in silence, or saying:

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.

The presiding minister may lift the cup in silence, or saying:

The cup we bless is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

- 24 Silence, all seated or kneeling

THE SHARING OF THE BREAD AND WINE

- 25 The presiding minister receives, then, beginning with the couple and their families, the people, according to local custom.
- 26 Words such as the following are said during the distribution:
- The body of Christ. **Amen.**
The blood of Christ. **Amen.**
- 27 During the distribution there may be appropriate music.
- 28 The elements that remain are covered with a white cloth.

PRAYERS AND DISMISSAL

- 29 Let us pray.
- We thank you, Lord,
that you have fed us in this sacrament,
united us with Christ,
and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet
prepared for all people. Amen.**

- 30 Hymn

- 31 The presiding minister says to all present:

God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Spirit,
make *you/us* strong in faith
and guide *you/us* in truth and love.

EITHER

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine on you and
be gracious to you;
the Lord look on you with kindness
and give you peace. **Amen.**

OR

May God be gracious to us
and bless us,
and make his face to shine
upon us. **Amen.**

14. Services of Marriage

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE MARRIAGE OF ANY TWO PERSONS

Old Testament

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Ruth 1:16-17 | Do not press me to leave you |
| Ecclesiastes 4:7-12 | Two support each other |
| Song of Songs 2:10-15 | A love song |

Psalms

| | |
|------------|------------------------------------|
| Psalms 23 | The Lord our shepherd |
| Psalms 121 | The Lord's blessing and protection |
| Psalms 138 | Thanks and praise to the Lord |

Epistle

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Romans 12:1-2, 9-13 | Love in practice |
| Galatians 3:25-29 | Heirs of the promise |
| Philippians 1:9-11 | Growing into a rich love |
| Philippians 2:1-11 | The example of Jesus |
| 1 John 3:18-24 | Love in practice |
| 1 John 4:7-12, 15-17 | Love one another |

Gospel

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Matthew 5:1-10 | The Beatitudes |
| Matthew 7:21, 24-27 | Hearing and doing |
| Matthew 22:35-40 | The greatest commandment |

***RESOLUTIONS

- 14/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**
- 14/2. **The Conference authorises the service for *The Marriage of any Two Persons* for use in the Methodist Church.**
- 14/3. **The Conference authorises the service for *The Blessing of a Marriage of any Two Persons previously solemnized* for use in the Methodist Church.**
- 14/4. **The Conference authorises the selection of *Additional Scripture Readings for the Marriage of any Two Persons* for use in the Methodist Church.**

15. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity (1)

| | |
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| Contact name and details | Mrs Joanne Anderton Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice and Secretary to the Committee Email: lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|--|

SECTION A GENERAL REPORT

1. The Committee is charged under Standing Order 338 with the scrutiny of all new legislation which is proposed to the Conference in order to ensure its coherence with existing usage and Methodist polity. Various members of the Committee undertake this task and have commented upon all the proposals submitted to the Committee by the Methodist Council and other bodies. The Committee also seeks to ensure that Standing Orders comply with any changes in legislation or case law.
2. The Committee was deeply saddened by the loss in November 2022 of the Revd Dr Brian Beck, former Secretary of the Conference (1984-1998), aged 89. As Secretary of the Conference, Brian gave many years of service to the Committee and was a great supporter of the Committee's work. His name lives on in the 1988 Preface to *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*.
3. Mr Lynn John and Mr Andrew Maxfield have both resigned from the Committee during this connexional year. The Committee wishes to express its gratitude for their respective contributions to the Committee, and particularly to Lynn John for advising the Church in his professional capacity for over 30 years.
4. The Committee was pleased to welcome two new members in October 2022 - the Revds Andrew Charlesworth and Kenneth Howcroft - and has undertaken a membership recruitment process during the year. Interviews for the shortlisted candidates are due to take place in May 2023.
5. The Committee has also established a Committee Executive this year, to support and assist the Secretary and Chair of the Committee in prioritising the Committee's work and to be available for consultation as issues arise, particularly between meetings.
6. The Committee appointed Miss Elizabeth Ovey as its representative to the 2023 Conference under Standing Order 102(1)(iii).

15. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity (1)

7. The Committee appointed its 2023 Conference Sub-committee under Standing Order 338(6) as follows: the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice (Secretary and convenor), the Secretary of the Conference, the Revd Jennifer M Dyer, Mr David Gibson, the Revd Kenneth Howcroft, Miss Elizabeth Ovey, and the Revds Canon Julian Pursehouse, Ian Rutherford and Dr James N Tebbutt (Chair). Mrs Susan Howdle has been invited to act as a consultant and adviser to the Sub-committee if required.
8. The Committee appointed its Complaints and Discipline Sub-committee for the year in accordance with the Sub-committee's terms of reference. The Sub-committee met in January 2023 to discuss matters pertaining to the Church's complaints and discipline process. A report on progress with the review of Part 11 of Standing Orders appears elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.
9. The Secretary of the Committee meets regularly with the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee to collaborate on matters in which both Committees have an interest. The Committee has nominated the Revd Kenneth Howcroft to attend the Faith and Order Committee's meetings as an observer on the Committee's behalf.
10. The Committee has had another very busy year, meeting four times in total: in person in October 2022, and electronically in December, March and April 2023. The Committee has provided support and guidance to the Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Team on numerous matters and continues to assist with significant pieces of work being undertaken by the Church. Examples include:
 - a) Producing connexional guidance on church mergers and amalgamations under Standing Orders 605A and 942;
 - b) Reviewing and advising on connexional guidance on chapel closures under Standing Order 943;
 - c) Assisting the Ministries: Vocation and Worship Team in the annual review of the Church Stewards, Circuit Stewards and Superintendents' Handbooks, and reviewing and commenting on the proposed Handbook for Methodist Ministers;
 - d) Advising the Secretary of the Conference on matters relating to the review of Part 11 of Standing Orders;
 - e) Assisting the Faith and Order Committee in reviewing the current 'experimental' versions of the Church's marriage liturgies from a legal perspective.
11. Individual Committee members have also joined various working groups to assist in reviewing particular processes or guidance, notably: the Revd Dr James Tebbutt and Mrs Susan Howdle are the Committee's representatives on the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group.

15. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity (1)

12. The Chair and Secretary of the Committee are grateful to all the Committee members for their continued support and willingness to assist with the Committee's work. Further items will be reported in Part 2 of the Committee's report to the Conference.

***RESOLUTION

- 15/1. **The Conference receives the General Report.**

SECTION B AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

As usual, the Committee submits a list of corrections to Standing Orders, consequent upon decisions already taken by the Conference, or to remedy minor errors or omissions. A further set of corrections and modifications will be presented in Part 2 of the Committee's report to the Conference.

1. **Standing Order 016A Single Transferable Vote**
The amendments to Standing Orders 016A (1A) and (3A) approved by the 2022 Conference used 'will' instead of 'shall' to denote an obligation, which does not accord with CPD drafting protocol and was overlooked during the scrutiny process.

The Conference is asked to amend Standing Orders 016A(1A) and (3A) as follows:

- (1A) Voting ~~will~~ **shall** be by paper ballot or an agreed electronic voting system. Reference to ballot paper throughout this Standing Order ~~will~~ **shall** refer to the paper ballot or the equivalent electronic system.
 - (3A) The counting of the votes ~~will~~ **shall** be undertaken by a recognised single transferable voting method, as determined by the Methodist Council prior to the Conference.
2. **Standing Order 232(3A)(a) Safeguarding Committee**
There is a numbering error in Standing Order 232(3A)(a), concerning the appointment of three-person panels to deal with certain safeguarding matters. This appears to be due to an addition made to, and consequent renumbering of, the subclauses of Standing Order 232(1), but without consequential amendment of the corresponding references in clause (3A).

15. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity (1)

The Conference is asked to amend Standing Order 232(3A)(a) as follows:

(a) When discharging the functions specified under clause (2)(i) and (ii) to (iv) above, the panel nominated shall contain ~~two persons~~ **one person** referred to in clause ~~(1)(i)(1)(ii)(a)~~ and ~~one person~~ **two persons** referred to in clause (1)(ii)(b).

3. **Standing Order 321(1)(xi) Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC)**

An amended form of wording for Standing Order 321(1)(xi) was proposed by Notice of Motion 104/2022 and approved by the 2022 Conference without being scrutinised by the Law and Polity Conference Sub-committee. The amendment introduces the concept of 'Justice, Dignity and Solidarity' as a defined term, without it being specifically defined but instead illustrated by a list of examples of what it might include. An editorial footnote to Standing Order 321(1) refers readers to Standing Order 336, which explains what the Church means by 'justice, dignity and solidarity', although the phrase itself is not defined within CPD.

Also, the reference to the full title of MCPOC in the amended Standing Order 321(1)(xi) may simply be shortened to 'the committee', since that is how MCPOC is referred to in the rest of the Standing Order.

The Conference is asked to amend Standing Order 321(1)(xi) as follows:

(xi) up to five further members, selected in collaboration with the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee, to ensure that leadership is offered regarding the concerns of ~~Justice, Dignity and Solidarity in areas including disability, race, gender, LGBTQ+ and mental health~~ **justice, dignity and solidarity**, having regard to the leadership also offered by other members of the ~~Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee~~ **committee**;

4. **Standing Order 410(1)(xiv) Constitution [of the Representative Session of the District Synod]**

Following the 2022 Conference's approval of the introduction of local lay-pastors in Section 56A, Standing Order 410(1)(xiv) was partially amended but omitted to include the relevant Standing Order reference relating to local lay-pastors:

15. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity (1)

The Conference is asked to amend Standing Order 410(1)(xiv) as follows:

(xiv) such numbers of eligible local lay-pastors and lay employees appointed in the District under Standing Order **56A1** or 570 as may be determined by the Synod;

5. **Standing Order 734 Presbyteral and Diaconal Probationers of other Conferences and Churches**

The title of Standing Order 734 was amended by the 2022 Conference in error and should revert to its previous form, since 'Ministerial' is a more accurate description for probationers of other Conferences and Churches.

The Conference is asked to amend the title of Standing Order 734 as follows:

734 Presbyteral-*Ministerial* and Diaconal Probationers of other Conferences and Churches.

6. **Standing Order 755 Methodist Diaconal Order Leadership Group**

The Methodist Diaconal Order Leadership Group referred to in Standing Order 755 actually functions under the title of 'Methodist Diaconal Order Support and Advisory Group'.

The Conference is asked to amend Standing Order 755 as follows:

755 Methodist Diaconal Order Leadership *Support and Advisory* Group

(1) The Conference shall each year appoint the Methodist Diaconal Order Leadership ***Support and Advisory*** Group upon nominations from the Methodist Council.

(2)-(4) [*unchanged*].

***RESOLUTION

- 15/2. **The Conference, by way of minor and consequential corrections, amends the Standing Orders as set out above.**

15. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity (1)

SECTION C SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS

1. **Special Resolution 41/4 (2022)**

The 2022 Conference passed Special Resolution 41/4 to delete the reference to 'Y Cyngor' in the Deed of Union, as follows:

The Conference resolves to amend Clause 1(iv) of the Deed of Union, and directs that the required consultation under Standing Order 126(1) shall be with the Law and Polity Committee.

The Committee considered and unanimously approved the Special Resolution at its meeting in October 2022. The formal proposal to confirm the Special Resolution is presented elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.

2. **Special Resolution 43/4 (2022)**

On the Committee's advice, the 2022 Conference passed Special Resolution 43/4 proposing minor and consequential amendments to the Model Trusts. Standing Order 126(1)(a) requires Special Resolutions amending the Model Trusts to be submitted to the Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Scotland and Shetland Synods for consultation. This consultation has commenced and the outcome will be reported elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.

3. **Special Resolution 44/7 (2022)**

The 2022 Conference passed Special Resolution 44/7 amending the Deed of Union in connection with the proposals to create a new Connexional Council and directed that the consultation under Standing Order 126(1) should be with the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee.

The Committee considered and unanimously approved the Special Resolution at its meeting in October 2022. The formal proposal to confirm the Special Resolution is presented in the Oversight and Trusteeship Report elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.

***RESOLUTION

15/3. **The Conference receives the Report.**

16. Methodist Forces Board

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | Mr Doug Swanney – Chair of the Methodist Forces Board swanneyd@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|--|

1. Methodist Forces Chaplains continue to minister to the women and men of His Majesty's forces throughout the UK and around the world. This is a significant and enduring ministry for which the Methodist Church is held in high regard due to the calibre of its chaplains. Further evidence of this good standing came in the King's New Year's Honours List when the Revd Ian Brown received an OBE for his work in chaplaincy, and the Revd Mike Hall received a Commanding Officers' commendation for his work with the RAF community.

Activity

2. The death of HM The Queen was keenly felt across the UK, around the Commonwealth and across the wider world. HM Forces were particularly affected by the Queen's passing, and were expected to undertake a significant part in the state funeral. A number of our senior chaplains were present at the state funeral in their respective roles, alongside the President of the Conference and the President of the Free Churches Group of Churches Together in England.
3. At the start of October 2022, the President of the Conference enjoyed a visit to the RAF. This visit gave the President a good insight into the workings of several RAF stations, and the opportunity to see chaplains in their own context. Each year this visit is timed to give the President a better understanding of the challenges and work of the Armed Forces prior to representing the Methodist Church at the National Act of Remembrance.
4. In time for Remembrance 2022, the Methodist Forces Board (MFB) published a revised set of resources to support church leaders with Remembrance Sunday services. A number of chaplains contributed to videos, sharing their perspectives on Remembrance; these have been extremely well received by churches.
5. In line with the God for All strategy, the MFB has supported local Methodists to engage in their own learning and discernment about how to engage with the Armed Forces community. As a way to support and encourage Districts/Circuits who may wish to pursue this, the Projects Officer organised visits for Methodists to Tidworth Garrison and Catterick Garrison. Colleagues had the opportunity to learn more for themselves about the way in which the Army operates and how chaplaincy supports Serving Personnel and the wider community. These visits demonstrate the willingness of the Methodist Church to engage in learning about new contexts.

16. Methodist Forces Board

They also enable informed intercession for those who lead a challenging lifestyle in order to protect us. The Projects Officer is working with chaplains to organise further visits around the Connexion, and would welcome an approach from any Circuit or District who wished to pursue these opportunities. The possibility of a New Places for New People-type of community within the Armed Forces is an exciting prospect that the MFB is keen to explore with a willing District(s).

6. To further encourage Districts and Circuits to become more engaged with the Armed Forces community, the MFB published a new missional toolkit in the autumn. This is available on the Forces Chaplaincy webpages of the Methodist Church website. This resource shares a wide range of proven approaches to engaging with Armed Forces personnel and their families.
7. During the Tri-Service Chaplains' Conference at the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre in February 2023 we said a fond farewell to the Revd Alastair Bissell and the Revd Paul Mellor. Both have given long and distinguished service to the RAF. We were also able to welcome new chaplains the Revd Mark Street (Royal Navy) and the Revd Nimilote Rokotoro (Army). In March 2023 we welcomed back the Revd Phil Corrigan as a Reservist Chaplain to the RAF in Northern Ireland, where he is now a superintendent, having previously been a regular RAF Chaplain for many years.
8. The Armed Forces route to achieve Worship: Leading and Preaching (W:LP) status has had good engagement from the Fijian Methodist community in the UK, who see this as a helpful way to complete the course whilst serving in HM Forces. Three Fijian Methodists have engaged with this route, with one due to complete this year (used W:LP in a year) who is now seeking to candidate for ordained ministry and another now on trial with his circuit (using W:LP in a year), having completed his Army career. The Board is grateful to Cdr Mark Barton for continuing to oversee this work.
9. Through dialogue with the MFB, the Aldershot Methodist Military Trust (AMMT) has reaffirmed its commitment to work with the MFB to ensure that its resources are used in the most advantageous way to support the work of the Methodist Church within the military community. The AMMT also continues to support the Hants-Surrey Border Circuit with its work in Aldershot Garrison.

Challenges

10. Since January 2022 we have sadly been without the Secretary of the Forces Board (SFB) due to ill health. Proposed changes to the Board's way of working had been agreed by the Council in January 2022. However, due to the SFB's extended

absence significant new insights about the MFB's way of working arose. Therefore revised proposals were accepted by the Council in January 2023 which maintain much of the expertise and knowledge which has been built up over many years. This was deemed critical in supporting chaplains through the absence of the SFB. The Chair of the MFB wishes to thank those around the Connexion who have supported the chaplains and the MFB's work in the SFB's absence. Much of what we have been able to undertake in this last connexional year has been due to the stalwart efforts of our Projects Officer, and also the Assistant Secretary of the Conference, the Chair of the Southampton District, our senior chaplains and many others. The work of the MFB has continued to be delivered with high levels of productivity and effectiveness due to this support from across the Connexion.

11. Following feedback from the chaplains, the MFB approached and was delighted to receive a positive response from the Revd Graham Thompson, to act as a pastoral connection between the Methodist Church and the chaplains during the SFB's absence. This has been welcomed and is highly valued by the chaplains.
12. The work of the Board has led us to consider issues connected to the future profile of Methodism in Armed Forces chaplaincy. As the profile of those in ordained ministry changes, so do the issues with helping Methodist ministers to discern whether they are called to this ministry. The MFB has begun to engage constructively with the Stationing Advisory Committee to highlight areas where a different approach may support the Methodist Church to maintain its valued and valuable presence in Forces Chaplaincy, for instance by working to outline the opportunities within Armed Forces Chaplaincy to those colleagues who are without appointment and perhaps cannot see a future in circuit ministry, yet may be energised by the prospect of Forces Chaplaincy.

Cadet Force chaplaincy

13. Regular and constructive engagement with Cadet Force chaplains has supported the MFB to better understand the issues that they face as they volunteer their time to engage with the largest uniformed youth organisation in the UK. The profile of Cadet Force Chaplaincy has been helpfully raised with the presence of a Cadet Force chaplain on the MFB for the first time in recent years. Deacon Sue Culver has generously brought her experience of the Royal Air Force Air Cadets to the Board, and will be succeeded next connexional year by a chaplain from either the Sea Cadets or Army Cadet Force.
14. Whilst chaplains' engagement with the adult volunteers, Cadets (aged 11-18) and the Cadets' families is hugely rewarding, they have asked the MFB for support in

16. Methodist Forces Board

raising the significance of this ministry with colleagues in Districts and Circuits who they sometimes feel do not perceive this work to be a critical part of circuit ministry.

Note of thanks

15. As ever, the work of the MFB is capably assisted and financially supported by the Aldershot Methodist Military Trust. The Board's thanks go to the Trust for their enduring support to maintain a strong Methodist presence in the military which ministers to Serving Personnel and their families, civil servants and contractors, to the glory of God.

*****RESOLUTION**

- 16/1. The Conference receives the Report.**

17. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP)

| | |
|--|---|
| Contact names and details | Mr Ian White, Chair of the Board ian.alsager@gmail.com Anne Goodman, Chief Executive anne.goodman@tmcp.org.uk |
| Subject and aims | This report provides a brief overview of the service and work undertaken by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) in its role as Custodian Trustee and in support of Managing Trustees across the Connexion. |
| Background context and relevant documents | To be read in conjunction with this Report please see TMCP's website: www.tmcp.org.uk/about/publications for a full copy of the Trustees Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2022. |

SECTION A: GENERAL REPORT

1. Mission Statement, Governance and Key Roles

Mission Statement and Governance

The purpose of the Board (TMCP) is to serve the Methodist Church in the advancement of the Christian faith in accordance with its doctrinal standards and discipline, and any charitable purpose of the Methodist Church or Church organisation.

Our mission is to serve the Methodist Church

Our mission is to support and strengthen the Methodist Church, both by providing practical support to Managing Trustees and by working closely and effectively with our colleagues in the Connexional Team.

We aim at all times to:

- work within an ethical and Christian framework;
- perform our role to the highest standard;
- act with integrity and patience;
- listen carefully and communicate effectively;
- value and nurture the talents of those within the organisation;
- work efficiently and effectively within the confines of available resources.

17. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP)

Our Vision and Goals:

Our Vision is:

- to continue to fulfil our principal duty to act as custodian trustee of all properties held on model trusts of the Methodist Church Act 1976, to better help the Church to achieve its mission;
- to provide a comprehensive role as the corporate body of the Church;
- to continue with our specific areas of specialism such as sharing agreements, trusts and data protection (GDPR);
- to ensure that the TMCP team is utilised in the most effective and efficient way, while still maintaining clarity about its particular role within the Connexion.

Our Goals are:

- to streamline all processes through collaboration with our colleagues across the Connexion and their advisers;
- to fulfil our responsibility to Managing Trustees through guidance and training;
- to provide appropriate and adequate assistance to the Methodist Connexion;
- to ensure that resources match the need now and on an ongoing basis;
- to support our staff in their ongoing training and development.

In partnership we hope to help and support Managing Trustees across the Connexion to build a sustainable mission-led future.

Structure

The Board is a corporate body and was incorporated by the Methodist Church Act 1939. Our governing documents are the 1939 Act, our Trust Deed of 1939 and the Methodist Church Act 1976. The Board is served by four sub-committees: the Executive, Audit and Risk Committee, Grants Committee and Investment Committee.

Board members

Our Board members are members of the Methodist Church and they are appointed by the Conference on the nomination of the Board. As far as possible the Board comprises equal lay and ministerial members. Nominations are assessed in terms of experience, skills and expertise. A skills audit is performed annually by the Chair in consultation with all Board members. Board members represent a cross-section of Church Officers and members. A list of current Board members is available from TMCP's website: <https://www.tmcp.org.uk/meet-the-team>.

17. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP)

Working together with Managing Trustees

TMCP are the custodian trustees for all property held on the Model Trusts of the Methodist Church Act 1976 (except for that in the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man which are held by their own boards of trustees) and this includes nearly all of the property held by over 3,800 Local Churches, 339 Circuits and 29 Districts.

The Board is also custodian of the funds held in 5,553 trusts, a small number of which are under the direct management of the Board and discretionary grants are given from these in accordance with the terms of the trusts.

It is important to distinguish our role as custodian trustees from that of Managing Trustees:

| TMCP as Custodian Trustee: | Role of Managing Trustees: |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We hold legal title.• We have a duty to ensure Managing Trustees do not act in breach of trust.• We do not get involved in the day-to-day management.• We can only act under the lawful direction of Managing Trustees | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• They are responsible for the day to day management of the property• They exercise power or discretion in respect of the property |

The activities of the Board include, but are not limited to:

- Effecting all sales, purchases and leases of property by Church bodies and checking legal documents before signature by Managing Trustees.
- Investing funds received from sales or bequests and transmitting funds for purchases or to meet the cost of projects as instructed by Managing Trustees
- Fulfilling any other duties or responsibilities required of, or appropriate for, the corporate body acting on behalf of the Methodist Church.

Partnership working remains at the heart of what TMCP does.

Working together with the Methodist Council

Under SO 931(3) the Methodist Council has delegated to TMCP the role of inspecting and approving contracts. In addition, they may instruct TMCP to undertake additional work.

17. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP)

The Board is extremely pleased that the Service Level Partnership Agreement, originally finalised and signed by the Methodist Council and the TMCP Board in July 2020, continues to underpin and maintain transparency and accountability in respect of the services TMCP provides across the Connexion.

The Agreement guides the relationship between the Board and the Methodist Council, outlining the protocols and parameters within which both will work. The intention is to promote collaboration and maintain efficient and effective working relationships. The Agreement helps optimise the support offered to Managing Trustees, ensuring a high quality of service which is outcome-focused.

The Secretary of the Conference and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice (COLCP) together with the Chair and Chief Executive of TMCP continue to hold half-yearly meetings, primarily to complete the necessary periodic review and monitoring.

TMCP as a Corporate Body

TMCP has corporate status and it has been found to be useful as a vehicle beyond trusteeship as such, where certain legal functions need to be vested in a corporate person, rather than a group of individuals. Examples of where TMCP's corporate role has been of benefit to the Methodist Church include holding shares in Methodist controlled trading subsidiaries and entering into the framework agreement and management of the Panel of Solicitors on behalf of the Methodist Church.

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

TMCP continues to act as the Data Controller for all Local Churches, Circuits and Districts (who are deemed to be the "Data Processors" ie the people who deal with data/information on behalf of the Methodist Church).

Under a separate registration the Connexional Team is responsible for all data protection matters concerning safeguarding, complaints and discipline issues for the whole Methodist Church.

TMCP and the Connexional Team continue to work together to provide data protection resources to the wider Connexion, including precedent documents, policies, practical guidance and frequently asked questions. TMCP continue to hold regular online forums with District Data Champions to bring them up to speed on current developments in Data Protection and to provide support and guidance as needed.

17. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP)

As Data Controller, TMCP requires assurance from the Local Churches, Circuits and Districts that all necessary GDPR processes are being adhered to. In order to obtain such assurances, and on the recommendation of its Internal Auditors, TMCP introduced an Annual Checklist. This is completed by local Managing Trustees, with a deadline for submission being 31 May. The Annual Checklist is reported back via the Circuit and District who collate the returns to confirm that the Managing Trustees are fulfilling their responsibilities with regard to Data Protection legislation.

Working Together with the Methodist Church and Partners

TMCP puts Managing Trustees at the centre of all it does and it has close working relationships with many parts of the Methodist Church and its partners.

Key stakeholders include:

- Managing Trustees including the Methodist Council;
- District Chairs;
- District Property Secretaries;
- Circuit Superintendents;
- District, Circuit and Church Treasurers;
- Connexional Conference Office, Property Team and the Property Development Committee;
- Panel Solicitors;
- external Solicitors and Surveyors;
- Central Finance Board (CFB);
- other Methodist Church related organisations such as MIC Ltd.

News Hub Articles

Articles are regularly published on the TMCP website 'News Hub', providing information to Managing Trustees and their professional advisers on updates to the website, guidance on changes in legislation, training events, availability of trust statements and other relevant information. During the year there have been ten articles published, providing guidance on topics such as housing Ukrainian refugees, landlord and tenant matters, streamlining of property transactions and data protection updates. Managing Trustees are encouraged to sign up for the News Hub emails to be kept informed of current developments. The number of subscribers is currently in excess of 1,000.

17. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP)

Grants

TMCP continues to encourage grant applications to be made in respect of the discretionary funds for which the Board has responsibility. The protocols and details of how to apply are on the website.

The Board is pleased that, due to increased publicity across the Connexion and through the Property Development Committee, it paid grants totalling £194,153 for property and other projects from these trusts during the last financial year.

Monitoring of Panel of Solicitors

TMCP and the Connexional Team have carefully selected firms of solicitors to be on the Panel for the Methodist Church who can provide advice across the Methodist Connexion in England and Wales. All the firms appointed to the Panel have the proven skill, expertise and technical knowledge to provide excellent legal advice to Managing Trustee bodies.

The Framework Agreement between TMCP and the Panel firms sets out the overarching principles for the performance and management of the Panel. In its capacity as the Church's corporate body TMCP is party to the Framework Agreement meaning it has responsibility for ensuring the terms of the Framework Agreement are complied with.

Feedback questionnaires are sent at the end of every legal transaction to all Managing Trustees who use the Panel. Feedback is an important part of the monitoring process and ensures that Managing Trustees are receiving a high level of service and advice. TMCP are summarising statistics relating to use of the Panel for monitoring, reporting, management and addressing feedback and complaints.

TMCP hold quarterly face to face monitoring meetings with each firm on the Panel and training events regularly take place.

Streamlining for sales has been in operation for over 12 months. This enables agreed processes to be followed with the adoption of precedent documents. It has meant TMCP needs to spend less time involved in a transaction especially when a buyer has been found (the time critical stage) and on the whole transactions are proceeding with greater speed.

The legal team are working with the Panel on the introduction of streamlined process for both purchases and leases. This will work in a similar way to those involving sales with the increased use of template documents and quick, straightforward steps to the completion of transactions.

17. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP)

The current framework agreement is due to come to an end in May 2023. TMCP is working closely with the Connexional Procurement Officer on the retender process and has extended the current framework agreement for the three firms on the existing Panel to the end of August with a view that the retender will be complete and training completed for any new firms for a start on 1 September 2023.

2. Outcomes and Achievements

The Finance Team

The Team supports the Board's role as custodian trustee by planning and performing all financial operations relating to the receipts and payments of Model Trust monies as well as the investment of funds on behalf of Managing Trustees.

The Trust Information System provides online access to trust statements, balances and other information. There were 2,800 users at the end of 2021/22.

Key achievements 2021/22 include:

- the month end completion process has continued at an average of five working days which has resulted in information being available earlier for Managing Trustees;
- TMCP is working with third parties to ensure they provide information to TMCP as quickly as possible with a view to further reducing the month-end completion process;
- average number of payments requested per month is 94 including consents payments;
- average total value of payments has increased to £6.3m per month;
- payments are actioned within three working days of receiving the application (provided the application has been completed correctly);
- average instructions outstanding at the end of each working month equate to 11% of all instructions received - these are primarily instructions received in the final two days of the month or items that are ongoing due to scheduled requested future payments

The Legal Team

The Team continues to help Managing Trustees across the Connexion to secure income from their property to fund mission including granting non-residential leases, residential tenancies and entering into licences and one-off booking forms. During the connexional year 2021/22 Managing Trustees were assisted with guidance on new

17. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP)

major redevelopment projects, property sales and purchases of new property as well as trust matters, bequests, ecumenical issues and other queries.

Key achievements 2021/22 include:

- streamlining has allowed the legal team to ‘virtually’ meet with Managing Trustees thereby increasing accessibility, approachability, and closer working relationships;
- the team has hit all performance targets as outlined in the SLPA as well as our own internal targets;
- introduction of guidance on the TMCP website for Managing Trustees involved in disputes;
- support to Managing Trustees in Wales for the Rent Smart Wales scheme for ensuring they received top up training for the Landlord’s Licence;
- working with the Scottish District for the creation of a panel of solicitors in Scotland;
- continuous training for data champions on the revised annual return form;
- updated guidance on the website on Model Trust 14(2A) following the changes to the Model Trusts and implementation of the accompanying Methodist Council policy;
- more assistance on specific streams of work for the Connexional Team.

3. Key Strategies

A number of key strategies are being rolled out in respect of the work performed by TMCP. These primarily commenced in 2020/21 and are all now well underway. Delivery of these strategies will result in the streamlining of all internal processes and continue to lead to efficiencies which will positively impact performance. The Board and team are investing resources to achieve these outcomes. The current status of these strategies is outlined below:

IT Strategy (Delivered)

- upgrade of office computers to laptops running Windows 10 for remote working;
- migration of email to Microsoft 365 on ‘tmcp.org.uk’ domain;
- digital ways of working implemented;
- procurement of a Matter Management System;
- initial user training on Microsoft 365, Teams and SharePoint;
- start of file migration to Microsoft 365;
- implementation of new telephone systems using Microsoft 365 Platform;
- procurement of a new Managed Service Provider for on-going IT Support.

17. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP)

IT Strategy (in progress)

- configuration and implementation of the Matter Management System:
 - TMCP is making excellent progress with this project;
 - improvements are being made along the way to enhance the benefits to Managing Trustees and there is a clear path through to delivery;
 - the TMCP Board is very keen that there is not a compromise on quality;
 - the Board extends its renewed gratitude to the Team, recognising what has been achieved;
 - current timescales aim for rollout of the new platform at the beginning of 2023/24.
- migration of files to new digital platform and integrating agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs);
- review alternative Finance Systems, and plan for replacement software.

Legal Strategy

- refinement of existing KPIs and the introduction of focussed KPIs as necessary;
- streamlining – 2023 will see this extended across more types of legal work;
- improved ways of communication – increased use of Zoom and Teams to virtually 'meet with Managing Trustees (MTs);
- panel of solicitors for Scotland;
- more guidance and training for MTs – for example ecumenical website pages, more precedent documents and updates to guidance in property and trusts following the incremental changes brought in the Charities Act 2022;
- implementing further integrated ways of working with connexional colleagues and Districts, including District Property Secretaries.

Finance Strategy

- ground-up review of processes:
 - the month-end processes were successfully streamlined; however, they continue to be monitored and reviewed to see if further improvements can be made;
 - a successful External Audit was undertaken with new auditors;
 - as part of a rolling Internal Audit programme, a review will be undertaken to ensure that the Budgeting Process is robust and realistic.
- improved engagement with external parties:
 - the team continues to communicate well with Managing Trustees creating stronger relationships;
 - the relationship between TMCP Finance, Central Finance Board and the Connexional Team continues to flourish and we work collaboratively where appropriate to improve the overall service delivered to the wider Methodist Church.

17. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP)

- grants, with ever diminishing funds the grant process has been under review to ensure that as many applicants as possible are considered at each sitting. During the connexional year to August 2022 £194,153 grants were paid. Monies are continually sought to improve the grants facility.

Workforce Strategy

- the Board successfully implemented the Salary and Performance Review policy;
- this ensures levels of pay are reviewed against benchmarks;
- any salary increases are directly correlated to sector benchmarks as well as performance in each role.

4. Collaborative Working and Challenges

Development of a sustainable model providing support to the Connexion in future years

Having completed phase 2 of the Digital Transformation Project and with phase 3 underway the TMCP Board believes that this investment will provide a solid working platform for the organisation going forward. The continued investment in resources in terms of the staff team and IT systems, together with the implementation of change management and streamlining of systems, is having a positive effect on the services TMCP provides to the Connexion.

Part of TMCP's road map is to consider, with some urgency, the fact that its current funding model is not sustainable and presents key risks. By way of example, the model is not dynamic and cannot respond to changes in demand for legal services.

In a more regulated world, where the pre-requisite is openness and transparency, TMCP now have the opportunity to re-establish how it links its key role as Custodian Trustee with its charging structure. Also, as a separately registered charity, TMCP must, through appropriate funding, be able to meet its ongoing responsibilities and be able to operate as a going concern.

Within the Service Level Partnership Agreement, it is recognised that the parties should mutually ensure that appropriate levels of funding are available to maintain service levels and in 2020/21 it was agreed collaboratively that we would work towards this. As a consequence, the TMCP Board has considered a variety of funding models and have decided on a preferred option. TMCP is now in conversation with the Connexional Team to 'sound out' the proposals.

17. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP)

The focus on whether or not TMCP has adequate resources has sharpened during 2022/23 as the flow of work continues to increase and additional pressures are being felt across the team. It is envisaged that, following more detailed discussions with the Connexional Team and other parties, there will be a funding proposal put to the 2024 Conference.

In the meantime, TMCP and the Connexional Team continue to collaborate successfully and are carefully ensuring that any systems and IT developments across both teams can dovetail together as much as possible.

The Board recognises and values greatly the work performed by the TMCP team, especially in respect of the additional work performed relating to the implementation of new IT systems and processes. The Board is proud of the achievements of the team to date and are looking forward to the ongoing advancement and streamlining of our systems.

Communication Strategy

As TMCP streamlines processes and implements a new integrated IT system, the Board, CEO and Team are keen to ensure they communicate efficiently and engage effectively with Managing Trustees and all key stakeholders. There is a need to ensure the roles of Managing Trustee and Custodian Trustee are clearly communicated and understood. TMCP wants to support all those using its services and also manage expectations. The team wishes to engage early on at the start of transactions, wherever possible, in partnership with the Panel of Solicitors.

A plan for achieving these objectives will be implemented alongside the rollout of new systems and processes. TMCP will ensure objectives are measurable within this strategy and a selection of key stakeholders will be consulted during the process.

In the meantime, the Board takes this opportunity to thank Managing Trustees and all its other partners across the Church for their continued support and collaboration.

SECTION B

Membership of the Board

The Board is required to report to the Conference if any members have resigned, died, become bankrupt or made an assignment with their creditors, resided outside the United Kingdom for more than twelve months, refused or become unfit to act or ceased to be members of the Methodist Church so that new appointments can be made by the Conference on the nomination of the remaining members of the Board.

17. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP)

Changes in Office

1. Resignations

The Revd Simon Leigh resigned from the Board with effect from 10 November 2022. The Board recognises and appreciates his contribution to the Board.

2. Board Membership as at 28th February 2023

The Revd Rosemarie E G Clarke

The Revd Paul Davis

The Revd Rodney Hill

The Revd Gill Newton

The Revd Philip Wagstaff

Mr Gerry Davis OBE

Mr David James

Mr John Jefferson

Ms Alethea Siow (Vice-Chair)

Mr Ian White (Chair)

SECTION C

Declarations under the Methodist Church Trust Deed 1939

There are no matters to report under the Trust Deed of 1939.

***RESOLUTION

17/1. The Conference receives the Report.

18. Methodist Schools Appointments

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|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | Douglas Jones, Group Accountant and Company Secretary, Methodist Independent Schools Trust djones@methodistschools.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|--|

Summary of content

| | |
|--|--|
| Subject and aims | Appointment of Methodist Independent Schools Trustees and governors to three Methodist Independent Associated Schools. Appointment of Methodist Academies and Schools Trustees. Appointment of Epworth Education Trust Trustees |
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | The Conference is responsible for the appointment of Methodist Independent Schools Trustees and governors to the schools named in the resolutions. The Conference is responsible for the appointment of Methodist Academies and Schools Trustees. The Conference is responsible for the appointment of Epworth Education Trust Trustees. |

Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST)

Appointment of Trustees to MIST and Governors to Associated Schools

Trustees of Methodist Independent Schools Trust are appointed by the Conference, normally for a three-year term. Nominations are made by the Trust, Chairs of Governors and the Methodist Council.

Under the Schemes relating to the administration of Ashville College, Kingswood School and Rydal Penrhos School, the Conference is responsible for the appointment of governors to their governing bodies.

Governors are nominated by the governing bodies and/or the Methodist Independent Schools Trust and are initially appointed for a period of three years. They may be re-appointed for a further period.

18. Methodist Schools Appointments

***RESOLUTIONS

- 18/1. The Conference adopts the re-nomination by the Methodist Council of the Revd Stephen Burgess as a Trustee of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2026.
- 18/2. The Conference adopts the re-nomination by Methodist Council of the Revd Dr Calvin Samuel as a Trustee of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2026.
- 18/3. The Conference adopts the nomination by the Trustees of Mr Timothy Emmett as a Trustee of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2026.

Ashville College

- 18/4. The Conference adopts the re-nominations by the Governors of Mr Jamie Search, Mr Jonathan Oxley and Mr Simon Donkin as Governors of Ashville College for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2026.

Rydal Penrhos School

- 18/5. The Conference adopts the nomination by the Governors of Mr Nicholas Jewsbury as a Governor of Rydal Penrhos School for a period of five years concluding 31 August 2028.

Kingswood School

- 18/6. The Conference adopts the nominations by the Governors of Mr Robert Hill (concluding 9 May 2026), Mr Guy Hinchley (concluding 27 June 2026), Mr Nick Kirkham (concluding 9 March 2027), Professor David Lane (concluding 26 June 2026), Dr Clare Millington (concluding 22 May 2026), Mrs Dorothy Nancekievill (concluding 7 June 2026), and Mrs Morag Smith (concluding 26 May 2026) as Governors of Kingswood School.

Reasoned Statements - MIST

Mr Timothy Emmett

Tim is an education industry specialist having worked across the sector developing major education programmes in the UK and internationally. He is currently employed as a Business Development Director at a major university in the UK.

18. Methodist Schools Appointments

Reasoned Statement – Rydal Penrhos School

Mr Nicholas Jewsbury

Nicholas has extensive expertise in performance cultures and personnel matters, derived from a long and successful military career. He is keen to apply this knowledge to the task of school improvement.

Reasoned Statements – Kingswood School

Mr Robert Hill

Rob is a current parent at Kingswood and has a background in engineering, project management and property. His areas of expertise include standards, governance and quality.

Mr Guy Hinchley

Guy is a former pupil and is a retired solicitor and managing partner of a large law firm. His skills include financial and business planning and fostering teamwork on boards.

Mr Nick Kirkham

Nick has experience in founding and developing creative workspaces for start-up companies. He has 30 years' experience of property management and development skills. Four generations of his family have attended Kingswood.

Professor David Lane

David is an experienced scientist with particular interests in Robotics and Artificial Intelligence in education, as well as supporting start-up companies. He is an ex-Kingswood pupil.

Dr Clare Millington

Clare is a former GP who currently works as a counsellor. In particular, she offers support to the Kingswood safeguarding teams. She is an ex-Kingswood parent.

Mrs Dorothy Nancekievill

Dorothy is a former Head of Farringtons School, a Methodist Day and Boarding School in Kent, and was Director of Music at Wells Cathedral School for 16 years. She conducts the International Staff Songsters for the Salvation Army.

Mrs Morag Smith

Morag currently works for the NHS as the Chief Programme Officer for the New Hospital Programme. She has considerable commercial and infrastructure experience and her interest is in building a diverse and inclusive workplace. She has two boys in the prep school.

18. Methodist Schools Appointments

Methodist Academies and Schools Trust (MAST)

Appointment of Trustees to MAST

***RESOLUTIONS

- 18/7. The Conference adopts the nomination by Methodist Council of Mrs Janet Carolyn Glass as a Trustee of the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2026.
- 18/8. The Conference adopts the re-nominations by Methodist Council of Mr Steven College and Mrs Annette Foster as Trustees of the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2026.

Reasoned Statement – Methodist Academies Schools Trust

Mrs Janet Carolyn Glass

Janet is a Methodist and has served as a Trustee at church, circuit and district level. Janet has recently retired from teaching at a Methodist school where she held additional responsibilities such as Safeguarding and International Studies.

Epworth Education Trust (EET)

Appointment of Trustees to EET

***RESOLUTIONS

- 18/9. The Conference adopts the nomination by Methodist Council of the Revd Stuart Ellis, Mr Steve Myers and Mr Gareth Roberts as Trustee of the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2026.

Reasoned Statement – Epworth Education Trust (EET)

The Revd Stuart Ellis

Stuart is a Methodist minister, stationed as superintendent of the Sherwood Forest Circuit. Stuart also serves as a Chair of Governors at a special school in Ipswich. Stuart has previous experience as a Headteacher in Essex in a junior school in an area of

18. Methodist Schools Appointments

deprivation, and as an executive head in a school with oversight of a school in special measures. Stuart has experience in turning round inadequate schools and remains involved in a schools' Trust in Bromley.

Mr Steve Myers

Steve has extensive experience as a former school Governor and Chair of Governors at a founding Methodist school within the Epworth Education Trust. Steve is a Trustee of Methodist Academies and Schools Trust. Steve presently works in Local Government and has experience in financial services management. Steve is a committed Christian and serves as Vice-Chair of this Parochial Church Council.

Mr Gareth Roberts

Gareth is a practising solicitor specialising in employment law. Gareth provides advice to senior executives and companies on employment law / HR issues.

19. All We Can

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| Contact name and details | Graeme Hodge, Chief Executive, All We Can Tel: 020 3758 7700 Email: info@allwecan.org.uk Web: www.allwecan.org.uk |
| Subject and aims | This report summarises the activities and achievements of All We Can in the time since September 2021 to present |
| Resolution | 19/1. The Conference receives the Report. |
| Main points | Since September 2021, the work of the All We Can movement has had a transformational and measurable impact on the lives of more than 1,658,736 people. All We Can partnered with 24 local organisations in eight countries, including two new focus countries, namely Sierra Leone and Liberia, to facilitate a variety of long-term development programmes. |
| Background context and relevant documents | Full version of All We Can Trustees' Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2022 and 2021/22 Annual Review – available from the All We Can website. |

- 1 All We Can is a movement of people choosing to seek and bring hope, through committed and sustained support, action and genuinely equal partnership. Being led by communities and partners in low- and middle-income countries means that the work we do together is driven by the hopes of those who seek it, to help drive them to overcome poverty and injustice and develop flourishing and resilient communities. This is what we do with our neighbours around the globe: we stand with them in hope of a better and more just future for them, for our whole world, for us all.
- 2 This report is evidence of that living hope. It provides the narrative and measure of how and where transformative change is happening as a result of this movement's efforts and why doing development differently means sustainable change for the good of all those who bring it.

Working together to transform lives

- 3 On 1 September 2021, All We Can took control of Y Care International, the relief and development agency of the YMCAs in England and Wales, Scotland and

Ireland. Together, All We Can and Y Care International will combine efforts to tackle poverty, inequality and injustice in some of the world's most vulnerable communities.

- 4 United by our commitment to working with talented change-makers rooted in local communities, our shared Christian faith, and our drive to fearlessly challenge poverty and injustice, the union of All We Can and Y Care International will enable millions of people of all faiths and none across the globe to see their potential fulfilled. Our shared values, and relational, collaborative way of working with international partners will ensure this new arrangement enables both charities to continue transforming lives.
- 5 Y Care International remains a separate charitable body, but all its services are fulfilled by All We Can and costs are incurred for this service. Its staff joined All We Can's small and friendly team, and together, they work towards the missions and operations of both charities. Driven by the principles of All We Can's partnership approach, which are shared by Y Care International, and recognising the unique strengths of each organisation, All We Can and Y Care International both maintain their individual identities– but one joint staff team deliver the work.
- 6 Through this new way of working, both charities are able to increase impact and magnify efforts to challenge poverty and injustice around the world, by working in partnership and championing locally-led solutions.

Achievements and performance

All We Can's work had a transformative impact on the lives of 1,658,736 people last year.

'All We Can has a unique partnership model that needs to be shared and replicated by other donors. Listening to the partners' vision and helping partners to achieve their full potential is known best by All We Can.' Anonymous partner, 2022

- 7 Through its relational approach to partnership, All We Can believes local partner organisations rooted in their local communities are best placed to achieve meaningful and long-lasting change. By helping these organisations respond to the changing needs of their communities and supporting them with organisational capacity development, training and resourcing, All We Can aims to

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leave a legacy of thriving, resilient partners who can continue to deliver impactful programmes long after our partnership ends.

- 8 All We Can has provided long-term development support to 24 local partners in eight countries over the last year, including two new focus countries, namely Sierra Leone and Liberia, where we have carried out extensive partner scoping and validation processes. As a result, we have established formal partnerships with four new Sierra Leonean partners and identified four Liberian organisations whose partnerships will commence in the 2022/23 financial year.
- 9 All We Can, together with the support of the Methodist Church, launched our most successful emergency appeal in recent years, raising more than £1 million for the Ukraine Emergency Appeal. In total to date, we have provided £333,549 in funding. The complexity and constantly changing needs and transitional nature of responses, due to conflict mean that we anticipate further partner funding needs in the coming months. The pace of response also accounts for the inevitable protracted nature of this emergency and provisions of neighbouring states to refugees fleeing conflict zones. We have also ring-fenced £350k for the longer-term recovery interventions.

Working relationally with our partners

'All We Can has a unique partnership model that needs to be shared and replicated by other donors. Listening to the partners' vision and helping partners to achieve their full potential is known best by All We Can.' Anonymous partner, 2022

- 10 Working relationally with partners and embodying our values of love, collaboration and integrity in all that we do remain a core priority for All We Can. With COVID restrictions lessening over the course of the year, the flexible nature of All We Can's funding has meant that partners were able to incorporate the adjustments needed into their annual operational planning to support communities grappling with the aftermath of national lockdowns.
- 11 Through our approach to partnership, local partner organisations rooted in their local communities are best placed to achieve meaningful and long-lasting change. By helping these organisations respond to the changing needs of their communities and supporting them with organisational capacity development, training, and resourcing, All We Can aims to leave a legacy of thriving, resilient partners who can continue to deliver impactful programmes long after our partnership ends.

'The partnership among us and All We Can is a healthy professional relationship and the best handholding support towards growth and development of our organisation, as well as community simultaneously. All We Can is one of the best agencies who respect and accepts the needs and requirements of community in terms of addressing the issues to bring into a greater CHANGE towards sustainable development, self-independent and innovative learning.' Anonymous partner survey respondent

12 In 2021-22, All We Can has supported our partners in the following ways:

- Working closely with our Indian partner READ to prepare for their exit from formal support well in advance by developing financial sustainability plans and investing in social enterprises
- Assisting our partners in Jordan and Bangladesh to shift from immediate humanitarian aid support to longer-term development support for the Syrian and Rohingya refugee crises. Work with refugees, remains a core part of the work of All We Can.
- Supporting local partners to maximise their impact through monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL). Over the past year, sixty-three percent of our partners have opted to use our flexible funding to appoint dedicated MEL staff – an increase from 50% last year.
- This is just scratching the surface. We continue to help strengthen, equip, and support partners to develop their work in a multitude of different ways so that they can continue serving their local communities in the best possible manner.

Agile, efficient and relational funding and grant making

'The Partnership with All We Can has made us a better organization that drives its agenda with sustainability in mind.' – FABIO, Uganda (2022 Partner Feedback Survey)

13 From the results of our annual Anonymous Partner Survey, 100% of participating partners reported satisfaction with the flexibility of the funding they receive; this flexibility enables partners to adapt their grants during the year in response to shifting needs and situations that might arise in-country. These adjustments are always communicated and explored together with Partnership Managers, as we walk alongside partners operating in shifting contexts. Partners also continue to have ownership, deciding with the communities they support what activities to spend funding on and what they will report to All We Can on. Partners reported they were either 'very satisfied' (50%) or 'satisfied' (43.75%) that they had received funding on time.

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Supporting Local Churches to improve their effectiveness as agents of change in their contexts

- 14 All We Can, in partnership with the Global Relationships team of the Methodist Church in Britain, is supporting various Methodist churches across different regions through the Church CAN initiative. These churches include the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas (MCCA – covering multiple national churches across the region), the Church of North India (CNI), the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone (MCSL), and the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA- covering multiple national churches within the region). The support involves implementing strategic plans, establishing policies and guidelines, training pastors and staff, and investing in digital resources. The impact of the support includes improved governance structures, strengthened departments, and enhanced outreach to communities. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, All We Can continues to work with these churches to achieve their goals, liaising constantly with the Global Relationships team, who continue to hold relationships with these church partners.
- 15 The All We Can team is working with members of the Connexional Team at a number of events, including Cliff College Festival and Solas Festival, and supported the Children and Youth Team with the planning and delivery of 3 Generate. Joint events have been planned with JPIT, focusing on equipping local preachers and worship leaders to talk about justice. Several members of the Connexional Team contributed to All We Can's Lent materials that has been widely praised as a resource that helps churches wrestle with local issues of mission, as well as global justice.

Informing, inspiring and engaging supporters

- 16 During the year, All We Can's Public Engagement Team focused on our partnership approach through The Next Steps campaign, which showcased the story of Shupikai from Zimbabwe. The campaign has been successful in fundraising and capturing the hearts of supporters. All We Can also integrated advocacy into our activities, with a team at the COP26 climate meetings and the development of a new partner-linked advocacy strategy.
- 17 The organisation has continued to grow its relationships with the press and media, with spokespeople featuring on Trans World Radio, Premier Christian Radio regularly, and at BOND (sector coalition for International development

agencies) and other sector events, with frequent appearances in print and online publications. Additionally, All We Can's locally led approach was captured on film in Malawi as part of a strategy to inspire supporters to help enable development to be done in a different way.

- 18** One hundred and twenty-three All We Can partner churches have journeyed with communities in love, solidarity, and support. We are exceptionally grateful for the support of the Methodist individuals, churches, Circuits and Districts for the giving and engagement that enables the support of so much great work around the world.

Income and expenditure

- 19** 80p in every pound is spent on our charitable objectives. 11p in every pound spent on fundraising activities. 9p in every pound is spent on support and governance costs.

Total income increased by £700k (19%) to £4,349k (2021: £3,650k)

Total expenditure increased by £1,246k to £3,988k (2021: £2,742k).

- 20** **Expenditure on charitable activities increased by 56% to £3,449k** (2021: £2,207k). This represents 86.5% of total expenditure (2021: 80.5%), which compares very favourably with similar organisations of size and focus across the sector.

Reserves policy

- 21** At 31 August 2022, the charity held total funds of £3,191k with balances of £686k of restricted funds and £1,392k of designated funds, leaving a general reserve fund balance of £1,113k, a surplus of £562k against the minimum level. This surplus has arisen primarily from legacy income being significantly higher than expected and has been allocated in the 2022–23 budget to provide additional grants and organisational development to the charity's existing partners.

Plans for the future

- 22** All We Can is approaching the midpoint of our 5-year strategy, spanning 2020–2025 and a mid-term review is scheduled for summer 2023. This is to help us

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understand progress made to date against the Strategic Plan, learn lessons and make recommendations to help deliver our targets over the remaining strategic period.

- 23 We will continue to play a leading role in the international development sector, leading on decolonising aid, locally led development and continuing to champion and refine our partnership approach in co-creation with partners around the world to grow our impact.
- 24 We also plan to introduce new innovation, particularly in the area of digital efficiency in relation to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, and create opportunities for continued learning and improvement of our own practices together with those of our partners.
- 25 We are deeply grateful for the ongoing support of the Methodist people and our wider Methodist family and endeavour to continue to serve as the Methodist Relief and Development Agency in all the ways we can.

*****RESOLUTION**

- 19/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**

20. 3Generate 2022 – Methodist Children and Youth Assembly

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | Mr James Carver, Methodist Youth President 2022/2023 youthpresident@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Action Required | For Decision |
| Resolutions | <p>20/1. The Conference receives the Report.</p> <p>20/2. The Conference calls on all Methodists actively to engage in conversation with children and young people about faith and life.</p> <p>20/3. The Conference encourages all Methodist people, as they seek to live a Methodist Way of Life, to build their confidence in speaking with children and young people about faith and life and recommends to them the first module of the Youth Ministry Essentials training course as a way to develop their skills in this area.</p> <p>20/4. The Conference encourages churches, Circuits, and Districts to raise awareness of and actively find ways to resource and support children and young people in attending Christian youth events in addition to 3Generate.</p> <p>20/5. The Conference further encourages every Circuit to engage in ongoing conversation with their District Ambassador in respect of the support given to children and young people in attending Christian youth events in addition to 3Generate.</p> |

Summary of Content and Impact

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Subject and Aims | <p>This report provides a detailed overview of the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly, 3Generate 2022. Its aims are to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the Conference to 3Generate 2022 • Make the Conference aware of election results • Bring to the Conference's attention the topics that are important to the children and young people of the Methodist Church • Present to the Conference resolutions that aim to break barriers which impact children and young people within the Church |
|-------------------------|--|

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| | |
|--|---|
| Main Points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people want an active relationship with adults within the church that enables them to have open conversations their faith and life. • Children and young people want more opportunities to meet with each other. • Children and young people want recognition as active disciples in the life of the Church with opportunities to explore their faith on a deeper level. |
| Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function) | Report 10 to the 2022 Conference: <i>3Generate 2021 – Methodist Children and Youth Assembly</i> |
| Consultations | Children and young people who attended 3Generate 2022 Elected Youth Representatives |
| Impact | <p>It is foreseen that the resolutions contained within this report shall have the following impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial and resource cost on Churches, Circuits, and Districts linked to Resolution 4. • Increased workload for District Ambassadors linked to Resolution 5. • A time commitment from Methodist members linked to Resolutions 2, 4, and 5. |

'I am young in years and you are aged; therefore I was timid and afraid to declare my opinion to you. I said, "Let days speak, and many years teach wisdom." But truly it is the spirit in a mortal, the breath of the Almighty, that makes for understanding. It is not the old that are wise, nor the aged that understand what is right

Job 32:6b-9 (NRSVA)

Introduction

3Generate 2022 was bigger, better, and louder than ever before with 1200 children and young people, 456 group leaders, and 252 volunteers joining together at the NEC in Birmingham to share in view, in creativity, and in communion with God. This is the report of that weekend and over the next few pages, we will introduce you to the event itself,

report the results of elections held, bring to your attention the topics that are important to children and young people, and present resolutions that aim to break barriers which impact children and young people within the Church.

Tune In

This year, 3Generate aimed to encourage children and young people to 'Tune in to God, the World and Each Other' as a way of guiding them towards being able to discern God's plans.

This was assisted by actions which were designed to prompt those attending to a) tune into God, the world, and each other, b) listen to what God is saying to them, and c) discern what actions need to be taken for themselves, their local church, or the Connexion.



This process was also woven throughout the event with the help of venues that were each designed to help children and young people engage in a way that best suited them. This process was woven throughout the event and in every venue. The venues in the 3Generate Town included:

The Arena

Hosting a range of amazing contributors such as DJ Genesis, A-Star, the National Methodist Youth Brass Band, and Pan Nation, the Arena was one of 3Generate's main worship spaces.

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The Arts Centre

Understanding that there are multiple ways to identify God's work within the world, the Arts Centre was a place where the children and young people had an opportunity create beautiful pieces of art that depicted what God means to them.

Also included in the Arts Centre were paintings from the Methodist Modern Art Collection; specifically: Feeding of Five Thousand by Eularia Clark, Christ's Entry Into Jerusalem by Norman Adams, Nativity Polyptych by Francis Hoyland, Pentecost by John Brokenshire, The Washing of the Feet by Ghislaine Howard, and Dalit Madonna by Jyoti Sahi. The aim of the Methodist Modern Art Collection is to encourage people to enter into conversations about God in Christ in the contemporary world, and at 3Generate it enabled the children and young people to connect to God on an emotional and thought-provoking level.

The Chapel

The Chapel was the spiritual epicentre of 3Generate with various conversations taking place that covered areas of faith, LGBT+ inclusion in the church, politics, neurodiverse conditions, and science. The venue also hosted numerous prayer and worship sessions such as Unplanned and Unplugged; spirit-led worship sessions which were conducted without a structure.

One of the conversations, hosted by A-Star, helped the Assembly to understand the effects of sickle cell disease; an inherited medical condition that affects the blood and can often cause infections and anaemia.¹

The Great Outdoors

The Great Outdoors was God's wonderful outside world, inside. Made up of trees, leaves, rocks, and wood, the venue helped the children and young people to explore the beauty that God created. The area also had a climbing wall, an inflatable 'leap of faith' slide, woodcraft activities, and a planetarium to inspire and help the children and young people to recognise God's presence wherever they may be.

The Health and Wellbeing Centre

A common discussion in the Church is how we see God, the Health and Wellbeing Centre inverted this and helped the children and young people to understand how God sees

¹ <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sickle-cell-disease/>

them. Though guided meditation, sessions with therapy dogs, and reflective prayers, the children and young people discovered how much God loves and cares for them, helping them to understand God's plan for them.

The Park

The Methodist Church believes that a way in which we can discern God's plan is through conversations with others. The Park was a place for the children and young people to do this. The venue, which was run in partnership with Cliff College and its students, also acted a place of worship with a late night communion taking place and multiple sessions for worship music and group prayer. For the adventurous participants there was also early morning sports, which included running several laps around the site.

On Saturday, the Park hosted the best contributors of the whole weekend at '3Gen's Got Talent'; a youth-led talent show filled with songs, magic tricks, jokes, and many more acts which depicted the diversity of the Church and showcased the different skills God enables everyone to have.

The Hope and Anchor

The Hope and Anchor was the Ice Cream and Milkshake café of 3Generate. Hosted by the Evangelism and Growth team, children and young people could go into this venue to discuss deep theological questions they had about God, take a break over some board games, or take part in a quiz. At the end of the day, this venue also acted as a base for our 18-25 volunteer stream to get together and chat about topics close to them.

The Rec

A sports focused venue, the Rec was a space where children and young people could discover spirituality and faith through sports, using these activities to engage with God and enable faith conversations.

The Sensory Space

At 3Generate, we are aware that some of our venues are busy. To help participants who became overstimulated, or just want to escape the crowds for a bit, the Sensory Space was an area away from other venues that allowed people to have time out when they needed it. The venue was created with help from Growing Hope² and had a range of

² <https://growinghope.org.uk/>

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provisions including sensory toys, trampolines, Lego, and ear defenders. Full information on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion at 3Generate is featured later in this report.

On the Sunday, the Sensory Space played host to an in-person meeting of Let's Talk About Disability, a Methodist initiative created and run by young people living with disability. As part of the session, the group hosted a discussion around what it is like to be a young person living with disabilities in the church, with the aim of enabling future discussions and collaborative work to make the Church an inclusive space for all. Members of the Conference can read more about Let's Talk About Disability on the Methodist Church website.³

The Tech Hub

If you entered the Tech Hub, you would have seen children and young people playing video games, wearing VR headsets and using Instagram; you would probably ask yourself what this has to do with faith. With the amazing help of Missional Generation,⁴ the Tech Hub utilised this equipment and helped children and young people to engage with the Bible and learn about what mission looks like in a digital age. The venue was a shining example of how the Church, and expressions of faith, can exist in a technology-dominated world.

The Theatre Royal

Utilising forms of poetry, dance, songs and other mediums, the Theatre Royal helped children and young people to understand that God is always around and can be seen through the performing arts as well as our Bibles.

The Town Hall

For years, the children and young people of the Methodist Church have actively called out many social justice issues within and outside of the Church. The Town Hall gave participants a chance to expand their knowledge of politics and social action by teaching them how to make change happen in a variety of ways. The venue also hosted talks on how to set up charities, sessions on how to write to Members of Parliament, and discussions on how to tackle the climate crisis.

3 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/children-youth-family-ministry/agents-of-change/lets-talk-about-disability/>

4 <https://www.missionalgen.co.uk/>

On The Margins

On The Margins is a venue where we attempt, with the help of professionals, to highlight, understand and combat the different forms of oppression at work in the world. This year the venue focused on the topic of peace through the medium of artwork and conversations with Army Chaplains, Place for Hope, survivors of conflict, and protest groups. The venue engaged in active and informative dialogue with children and young people, enabling them to build their knowledge of ongoing situations between Ukraine and Russia, the ecological impact of war around the world, including the Rwandan conflict, and conversations on the difference between freedom of speech and hate speech.

We are thankful for all those who spoke to the children and young people, especially to our guests from Rwanda who shared their tough testimonies with us.

The Well

Running alongside activities for children and young people, the Well was an area open to leaders who attended and who had a passion for learning more about getting children and young people involved in faith conversations and the life of the Church. This year, the Well hosted a variety of sessions on multiple topics which included youth empowerment, creating accessible material for children and young people, and what mission looks like in a digital age. Also, understanding the pressures that youth workers experience, The Well hosted break sessions where leaders could have refreshments and share tips between themselves.

4-7 Venue

At 3Generate 2021, we trialled a brand new venue for 4-7 year olds to attend 3Generate and feed into the conversations. This year, the venue was back! On the Saturday, our youngest participants joined us again at 3Generate in their own unique venue where they could join in with up to two significant adults; such as parents, carers, grandparents, or others who were known well to them. Together, the group explored the different ways to tune in to God, discussed faith, and thought about the questions they had. The venue was a space for them to understand that they can meet with God through play, through craft, or during times of exploration. During their day together, they visited The Rec venue, posed questions to the President and Vice President of the Conference, and took part in a wealth of activities. It was a fun, active and enjoyable day with Godly Play stories, worship, prayer, and lots of conversations!

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The Town Square

3Generate expanded this year, by creating a new 'Town Square'. This large space was available for anyone to come and socialise, talk as a group, and discover information about the multiple areas of work within the Methodist Church. In addition, on the Saturday, the 3Generate Youth Reps took over the space and ran a wide-array of unique activities aimed at being in dialogue with children and young people at the event. Over the day, participants could engage with The Continuum, which enabled them to share their views on different topics; the Social Justice Paperchains, where children and young people added their concern for the world to other people's concerns; a conversational ball pit where groups climbed in and discussed answers to questions; and complete online quizzes. They could also sit at the Bus Stop and discuss with volunteers their answers to the following questions:

"What commitment to God are you making?"

"What do you want to do about that?"

"What support would you need to achieve this?"

These sessions complemented the work of other venues, which also created unique spaces for dialogue with children and young people.

The Conference should be aware that these short descriptions do not do the venues as much justice as they deserve, and any member is invited to apply to attend 3Generate 2023 as a Group Leader or volunteer to experience 3Generate first hand.

Young Adults

This year 3Generate offered individuals aged 18-25 the option to join a young adults' volunteer stream. This was an alternative option in conjunction to attending as participants if they so wished. At 3Generate 2022, an amazing team of 39 young adults gave up their time and helped out around site by managing venues, equipping sessions, and ensuring the event was safe for all who attended.

Also this year, a small group of young adults aged between 18-25 years old took part in an informal consultation on Young Adult Ministry. As part of the session, the attendees were asked for their ideas as to what they would like Young Adult ministry to look like, this will be fed into the ongoing development of Young Adult ministry. Some key themes that ran throughout the feedback were:

- Young adults want to have a connection with their home churches when living at university, and when they return home for the holidays.
- Young adults want to be encouraged to find a place in the church according to their needs, instead of the needs of the church, and without feeling tokenised.

Sustainability

In line with the aim of the Methodist Church to become net zero by 2030, 3Generate 2022 worked hard to protect the environment with many initiatives which included using recycled festival tents for participants to stay in, sustainably sourced hoodies for all volunteers, and ensuring that none of our waste went to landfill sites.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

3Generate always seeks to embed diversity and inclusivity throughout and beyond the weekend. We are committed to equity, equality, respect and inclusion for all children, young people and adults.

As part of our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, we worked directly with group leaders in the run up to the event to ensure that the accommodation (tents, beds, showers etc) was exactly what each delegate needed in order for the event to be truly accessible. Furthermore, as part of their statutory training, all volunteers received instruction on safeguarding, tackling unconscious bias, and accessibility.

This year, we also had guests from our international partners including some from the Methodist Church in Ireland who kindly helped to lead worship and prayer sessions, and young people from the Evangelical Church of Spain (Iglesia Evangelica Espanola) who fed back that they enjoyed the music at the worship sessions and loved the way in which 3Generate hears the voices of children and young people.

Additional needs

3Generate takes its responsibility to those with additional needs very seriously. For those who needed a little extra help fully to participate in 3Generate, a range of support was available including: the Sensory Space where calmer, more relaxed sessions took place, resources such as ear defenders and fidget toys being available in each of the venues around town, and BSL interpreters during worship. There were also new sessions this year for siblings of those with additional needs to discuss the pressures of being a young carer. Additionally, the provision of a dedicated quiet space for mealtimes was introduced. Each year, 3Generate looks at how everyone can enjoy the event, have their voice heard, and tune in to God as best possible; information on our review process is available in the next section.

Our process for growing and developing

As part of our ongoing development process, we are constantly seeking to refine and grow 3Generate as an event as there is always more to learn. So that the event is

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consistently evolving, we have a comprehensive, year-round process of engagement and participation, which starts with the weekend itself, where we listen to onsite feedback from children, young people, leaders, and volunteers. Also, after the weekend we send out feedback forms to both group leaders and members of the delivery team. Some feedback from this year included:

“It was very impactful for me to be in a church environment as a queer person and not have it be an issue. Also enjoyed meeting other trans young people on the delivery team.”

“I chatted to a couple of teenage lads who told me the best thing about 3Generate wasn't the amazing activities; it was the conversations about faith they were able to have. 3Gen is a safe space to have those conversations”

“As an older volunteer I'm usually around people of my own age, but it was wonderful to be surrounded by so many delightful young people. I wore my hoodie to a church council meeting to demonstrate to the members, and I also took some of the programmes.”

“[3Generate] Inspired leaders to think about use of different activities, interesting to hear that some of them missed traditional worship music! Encouraged us to network and share resources as a circuit to build on work started at [3Generate]!”

“The young people felt challenged with the various of activities available. Overcoming fears of heights with the climbing wall. Participating in the escape van activity.”

“Seeing so many children and young people safely enjoying themselves and learning is inspiring. One young person was really taken by the Youth President speaking on stage because he has a stammer too. 3 Gen inspired myself and my group through the comradeship shown at the event. Giving time to volunteer and also meeting so many positive and friendly people. Realizing how exciting it can be to be a part of The Methodist Church. Realizing that with God all things are possible. Involving several new adults as group volunteers and seeing them being inspired and encouraged.”

“As mentioned, the young people brought their concerns back to the church in worship. It's possible that this has already affected the church's willingness to move in some directions. Slowly! 3Generate also helps to bond and enthuse our group which has an impact on the wider church.”

“3Gen always [energises] the church to support our young people in their faith and their way of worshipping and learning.”

As mentioned, as part of our ongoing development process, we review all feedback, safeguarding debriefs, operational reviews, and the open dialogue from children and

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young people. This is then fed back into the development and planning process for the next year. This process is long but in summary, it consists of the following:

| Rough Date | Name | Description |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Immediately after 3Generate | Feedback Gathered | Feedback is gathered from Youth Groups and Volunteers who attended 3Generate |
| November – January | Programme Sprint 1 | A time for the Programme team to review the feedback and make suggestions on how to evolve the event for the proceeding year. |
| January – February | Influencers Day | This is a day where groups of children and young people gather, are presented with the ideas from the Programme Sprint, and they inform us which ideas they think are wanted and which would not appeal. |
| February – March | Programme Sprint 2 | A place where the Programme Team gathers again, reviews the feedback from the Influencer Day, and formulates plans around the pieces of feedback. Venue Leads then go to the satellite groups who work on how to implement this in each venue. |
| May – July | Programme Sprint 3 | A place where the Programme Team gathers for a final time and the Venue Leads present their plans; these are then typed up and become the programme. |

Elections

In accordance with Standing Orders 250(10), 250(11), and 250(12) 3Generate is required each year to elect representatives to act as the Methodist Youth President, Representatives to the Methodist Conference, and Representatives to the Methodist Council. However, in recent years, the representative group has expanded to include Global Church Representatives, individuals elected to interact and share testimony with our global partners, Agents of Change Representatives, individuals elected to represent the youth voice on social justice issues, and a Digital Representative, an individual elected to assist with boosting the digital profile and presence of the representative team and share news of what the various representatives are doing. At 3Generate 2022, the following individuals were elected:

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| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Youth President 2023/2024 | Thomas Hart |
| Methodist Conference Representative | Iraj Irfan Erin Campbell Owen Wilkins |
| Methodist Council Representative | Matt Hayes |
| Agents of Change Representative | Daniel Onyett Afon Harland Alex Day Ailish Dooley |
| Global Church Representative | Luca Barwick Plant |
| Digital Representative | Joseph Zaccaria |

These individuals will join Verity Wild (Methodist Council Representative), Eleanor Dixon (Methodist Council Representative), and Eli Atif (Global Church Representative) as part of the Youth Representatives Team of the Methodist Church in Britain and the Youth President Advisory Group.

We share our thanks to the 3Generate Youth Representatives who served from January 2022 to January 2023; Martha Rand (Methodist Conference Representative), Charlotte Hambly (Methodist Council Representative), Isabel Barlow (Ecumenical Representative), James Jenkins (Ecumenical Representative), Hope Wild (Agents of Change Representative), Liddy Buswell (Global Church Representative), and Daud Shaukat (Digital Representative).

What are children and young people talking about?

Children and young people want more opportunities to meet with each other.

The Methodist Church has a history of connexionalism that children and young people want to be a part of; this was a clear statement from the Youth Assembly. However, despite youth gatherings, home groups, synods, and more being available, it was identified that these may not always be available to children and young people due to factors including timings, locations, awareness, and cost. This is important to acknowledge because being able to attend these events in addition to 3Generate allows for children and young people to: a) meet with each other, b) share wisdom across the generations, c) share developmental information with their Local Churches, and d) enable them to have a wider understanding of the Methodist Church in Great Britain. This can also be crucial for the young person's interpersonal development and identity within

20. 3Generate 2022 – Methodist Children and Youth Assembly

the church, especially in a denomination where churches are dispersed and local youth congregations are on the decline.

The elected representatives of 3Generate are aware of, and commend, the multiple youth gatherings taking place across Britain which, in addition to 3Generate, include Flourish (organised by Yorkshire North and East District), Amplify (organised by Birmingham District), Momentwm (organised by Wales Synod Cymru), and 8:23 (organised by the Nottingham and Derby District). There are also multiple opportunities for children and young people to share their wisdom in places such as the Methodist Conference⁵ or their local Church Council. However, as identified earlier there are barriers to children and young people being able to attend these meetings and events that need to be addressed on a local level.

We understand that with the ongoing cost of living crisis, it can be difficult for churches, circuits, or districts to financially support everyone, but we implore you to invest in the present and future of the church by supporting the development of children and young people in whatever way is available. We therefore ask churches, circuits, and districts to assist their children and young people by a) identifying ways in which they are able to attend events in addition to 3Generate, and b) making provisions available to enable children and young people to engage with such opportunities.

Children and young people want an active relationship with adults within the church that enables them to have open conversations their faith and life.

A massive message from 3Generate was the children and young people calling out for help. Not help from the Youth Assembly, but help from their home churches. The Methodist Church has the belief that we encounter and learn more about the magnificent nature of God through conversation with others, a belief that was reinforced in *Our Calling* (2000) which states “The Church exists to help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care”. However, conversations at 3Generate 2022 indicated that children and young people often feel excluded or ill equipped to participate in these conversations due to older members of the church not engaging in conversation about faith and life with them. This is concerning because evidence suggests that retention of young people within the church is increased when they have a deeper understanding of faith and God (Barna Group, 2023⁶).

5 Being eligible to vote on internal matters relating to the Methodist Church but ineligible to vote on trustee matters below the age of 18.

6 Barna Group, (2023). Over Half of Gen Z Teens Feel Motivated To Learn More About Jesus. *Millennials and Generations* [online], 01 February. Available at: <https://www.barna.com/research/teens-and-jesus/>

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At 3Generate and other youth gatherings across the Connexion, children and young people are opened up to many theological discussions, across multiple topics such as understanding war as Christians, how science and religion can co-exist, and what our identities tell us about faith. However, based on our conversations, this support is not extended within home churches; a place where the learning needs to be encouraged.

We acknowledge that this may not be the case for all churches, however, in a world where everything is high speed, cancel culture is rife, and communication styles are constantly changing, it can be unnerving for adults to enter into dialogue with children and young people out of fear that one wrong word could land them in trouble. Therefore, we would like to commend to you session one of the Youth Ministry Essentials course, a free resource which equips people with the skills and confidence needed to effectively enter into a two-way dialogue with children and young people. The course is planned to launch in June, so should be available via The Well learning hub on the Methodist website at the time of the Conference.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

The children and youth assembly of the Methodist Church present the following resolutions on behalf of the children and young people of the Methodist Church:

- 20/1. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 20/2. The Conference calls on all Methodists actively to engage in conversation with children and young people about faith and life.**
- 20/3. The Conference encourages all Methodist people, as they seek to live a Methodist Way of Life, to build their confidence in speaking with children and young people about faith and life and recommends to them the first module of the Youth Ministry Essentials training course as a way to develop their skills in this area.**
- 20/4. The Conference encourages churches, Circuits, and Districts to raise awareness of and actively find ways to resource and support children and young people in attending Christian youth events in addition to 3Generate.**
- 20/5. The Conference further encourages every Circuit to engage in ongoing conversation with their District Ambassador in respect of the support given to children and young people in attending Christian youth events in addition to 3Generate.**

21. Faith and Order Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact Name and Details | The Revd Mark Rowland Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee rowlandm@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Action Required | Approval |
| Resolutions | 21/1. The Conference receives the Report. 21/2. The Conference amends Standing Orders as set out in paragraphs 5.15 and 5.16 above. 21/3. The Conference adopts section 5 of this report as its further reply to Memorial M22 (2022). 21/4. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to bring the work required by resolution 45/2 of the Conference of 2022 to the Conference of 2024. |

Summary of Content

| | |
|--|---|
| Subject and Aims | A general update on the work of the Faith and Order Committee. A further response to Memorial M22 (2022). |
| Main Points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Ways of Working • Liturgy and Worship Subcommittee • A fundamental revision of the Methodist Worship Book? • Use of alcohol in Holy Communion • Other items of work |
| Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function) | <i>Methodist Worship Book</i> Memorial M22 (2022) Oversight, Trusteeship and Leadership (Conference 2022) |

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Faith and Order Committee is appointed by, and accountable to, the Methodist Conference. On behalf of the Conference it helps to ensure that what the Methodist Church in Britain says and does is true to its self-understanding, mission and purpose. It therefore seeks to encourage a deepening of theological

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understanding, engagement with the Methodist tradition, and shared critical reflection in order to help discern Methodist perspectives and responses in all aspects of the Church's life.

- 1.2 Under SO 330(10) the Faith and Order Committee has a specific role in scrutinising all matters directly concerning the faith and order of the Church presented to the Conference by other bodies. Such scrutiny requires consultation with the full committee, and often some collaborative working, and the Committee is therefore grateful for early conversations, particularly with working parties appointed by other bodies, to establish effective and constructive ways of working and reflecting as the work develops. Conversations as the group is set up and the process for developing the work is established are particularly appreciated. All reports, questions and communication to the Committee should be sent in the first instance to the Secretary of the Committee.

2 Ways of Working

- 2.1 Each year the Committee reflects on its ways of working. In the current year, the appointment of a new Secretary of the Committee is inevitably leading to some adjustments and changes, which are still in their early days. The Committee has also given attention to its pattern of meeting and the ways in which new members are recruited. Last year, recruitment to both the Committee itself and to the Liturgy and Worship Subcommittee were by open advertisement and interview and a similar process is underway for this year's recruitment. Due to the success of last year's recruitment process for the Liturgy and Worship Subcommittee we have only recruited to the main committee this year. Reflecting on the process from last year, we note that alongside the openness of an advert and application process, we need to work harder at offering encouragement and help to enable those who are underrepresented on the Committee to apply.
- 2.2 The Committee is aware that there are various expectations of what the Committee does, what it is responsible for, and the kind of decisions it can make. The role and remit of the Faith and Order Committee is set out in Standing Order 330.
- 2.3 A common misassumption is about the role that the Committee plays in the theological life of the Church. Although it does have a responsibility to "stimulate theological reflection and study throughout the Church" (SO 330(3)), it is important to note that the Faith and Order Committee is just one part of the process of theological reflection. It does have a particular role to play in helping the Conference make decisions which have implications for the faith and order of the Church. This often involves both a broad theological understanding and

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particular (and often detailed) knowledge of Methodist theology, polity and the relevant theological subject areas, which is more than just academic expertise. In addition, much of the work of the Committee requires the ability to read and process significant paperwork, too often at short notice, and with a careful attention to detail. Whilst not every member of the Committee needs to be proficient in every area, these are the gifts and knowledge needed to be able to carry out the Committee's work.

- 2.4 Given that the Committee is not, and should not be, the only place where theological thinking happens, then it does have a concern for the theological life of the Church and how theological thinking is facilitated in Local Churches, Circuits, Districts, the Connexional Team, and connexional working parties, committees and other bodies. Its own desire to play a part in stimulating theological thinking has often been thwarted by a heavy workload and immediate demands. This is likely to be mirrored in many other contexts, and continues to be an issue of concern.
- 2.5 When the Conference directs the Committee to undertake a piece of work on a specific topic then the Committee would usually work with other people; either through establishing a working group that draws on a variety of people with different experience and perspectives relevant to the subject, or through reflection days, conversations or different forms of consultation. For many of the reports it brings to the Conference, therefore, it has worked with people outside of the Committee and from many parts of the Church's life.
- 2.6 In order for the Committee to be able to fulfil its responsibilities it requires not only the skills and knowledge indicated above, but also a commitment of time and attention. As in many areas of the Methodist Church's life, Committee members are volunteers. In a context when many people are already overloaded, finding people who have the time and availability is a challenge.
- 2.7 The Committee also notes that, like many others, it undertakes much of its work under pressure in order to meet Conference, Council and other deadlines. This affects the extent and nature of any consultation (which, if done well, always takes time, attention and resourcing), the opportunity to engage in more proactive and creative thinking, and the time and ability to develop skills for faith and order work. The Committee has given thought to how it might help to develop the particular skills and expertise needed for its work and has explored and is exploring various possibilities including mentoring, creating further opportunities for involvement in its work, training or study days or sessions in particular areas and paying attention to different ways of identifying people for particular pieces of work. It has been encouraged at the response to the recent advertisements,

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and is keen to identify people with potential for faith and order work even if they do not have all the skills needed at present.

3 The Liturgy and Worship Subcommittee

- 3.1 The Liturgy and Worship Subcommittee now consists of 11 people, convened by the Revd Neil Stubbens and continuing to be chaired by the Revd Leo Osborn. It engages in a wide range of liturgical work on behalf of the Committee and the Committee is extremely grateful for its attention and dedication to its task. In addition to the specific items of work directed to it, it provides representation for the Methodist Church to the Joint Liturgical Group, the Funerals Group and the Liturgical Commission of the Church of England.
- 3.2 The Conference of 2021 directed the production of guidance for marking the ending of appointments in services of worship (resolution 26/3). This guidance has now been produced and is available on the Faith and Order pages of the Methodist Church website. In addition, guidance on Welcome Services and a paper on the Theology and Practice of the Peace have also been produced and are available in the same place.
- 3.3 The Standing Orders adopted by the Conference of 2022 regarding Local Lay-Pastors require that a service of commissioning normally be held at the start of an appointment (SO 56A1(7)) and a liturgy for such a service has now been produced and approved by the Faith and Order Committee and is available on the additional liturgies' page.⁷
- 3.4 The new set of additional orders for services of Holy Communion mentioned in our report to the Conference of 2022 have now been completed and are now available on the Methodist Church website. These are intended to complement the current provision in the *Methodist Worship Book* and include explanatory notes that may be helpful for study, perhaps as part of preparation for membership or in house groups.

4 A fundamental revision of the Methodist Worship Book?

- 4.1 The Secretary of the Conference asked the Faith and Order Committee to consider whether it is time for a fundamental revision of the *Methodist Worship*

7 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/leading-worship/additional-methodist-liturgies/>

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Book (MWB). Under the terms of Standing Order 330(9), the Committee has the authority to make proposals for revising forms of service authorised by the Conference. Authorisation by the Conference is our highest level of liturgical approval.

4.2 MWB was published in 1999 so is now a little over 20 years old, although the work on producing it began in 1990. There has never been any requirement for Methodists to use authorised texts, but they provide ‘norms for guidance.’ It is a much more substantial book than its predecessor (the *Methodist Service Book* 1975) which was a deliberate decision in response to feedback at the time. With the developments of technology since then, it is easier for additional resources to be made available online via the Methodist Church website. These usually carry ‘approved’ or ‘recommended’ status and may be for particular needs or occasions. While in many ways, MWB continues to wear well and to be a widely used resource in our worship, there is also a number of factors that point towards the need for change:

- The corrections to the text made since the original publication;
- Subsequent decisions of the Conference which have changed the text of the MWB eg those following the report on the Theology and Ecclesiology Underpinning the Diaconate which amended the ordination service;
- The liturgies authorised by the Conference subsequent to the MWB eg the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Promises, and whether these should now be included;
- The new marriage services which will come to the 2023 Conference;
- Concerns about the Good Friday reproaches and liturgical resources for Holy Week and therefore whether these should be revised or whether the current guidance⁸ becomes part of the text;
- Questions about inclusive and expansive language.

4.3 Following initial consideration by the Liturgy and Worship Subcommittee, the Committee considered this at its November meeting and took the view that it is time for a fundamental revision of the MWB. The Committee recognised many factors that tend to support this view and felt that, while some things could be retained, the extent of revision required probably suggests a fairly full and comprehensive piece of work. It noted questions around format and use and the significance of authorised resources, while also recognising their value and importance beyond their use (or otherwise) in public worship.

8 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/life-and-faith/faith-and-order/guidance-for-methodist-people-concerning-anti-semitism-and-the-service-for-good-friday/>

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- 4.4 As the conversation continues, no doubt further factors will be identified. There is also a practical motive in that the stock of MWB available for purchase has now been exhausted. As an interim measure, Englesea Brook is collecting, refurbishing and making available copies of MWB which are no longer required (eg from churches which have closed).
- 4.5 Following conversations within the Connexional Team and consideration at the Methodist Council, it is agreed that the first step in any revision would be to conduct a consultation process among both leaders of worship and worshippers to assist in discerning what form a successor to MWB might take. This could include such matters as what use is currently made of MWB, what resources would be desirable in a new collection, what format(s) it should be available in (noting that our current practice is 'digital first') and so on. The Council has agreed that the Faith and Order Committee will take forward this consultation process, with a view to developing proposals to bring to the 2024 Conference.

5 Use of alcohol in Holy Communion

- 5.1 Memorial M22 from the Cumbria District Synod to the Conference of 2022 requested consideration of our discipline regarding the use of alcohol in Holy Communion by Methodist presbyters when presiding in the context of another denomination for whom that is customary. The Synod was concerned that our current position is inconsistent in expecting those who take services in Methodist contexts to conform to our discipline, while expecting Methodists presiding in other denominational contexts to conform to our rules not those of the context – 'having our cake and eating it' in effect. The key request of the memorial was:

The Synod asked the Conference to direct the Faith and Order Committee, in consultation with the Connexional Ecumenical Officer, to consider whether the understanding around a Methodist presbyter accepting an invitation to preside at Holy Communion in another denomination's context might be developed, specifically to permit a Methodist presbyter to respect the practices of another denomination concerning the use of alcoholic wine when on their premises.

- 5.2 The Conference in its response directed the Faith and Order Committee as requested. Following consideration of matters raised, it is proposed that amendments to the Standing Order be made to provide for exceptions in appropriate contexts.

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Current position

- 5.3 As the memorial points out, we currently hold the position that the denominational identity of a given service is determined by the presiding minister. Any service of Holy Communion at which a Methodist presides is therefore subject to Methodist discipline, no matter what form the service takes, where it takes place or of whom the congregation is made up.
- 5.4 The current discipline of the Methodist Church on this matter so far as Methodist services on Methodist premises is concerned is set out in Standing Order 922, in particular 922(2):

In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper the wine used shall be non-alcoholic.

Standing Order 922(4) provides an exception for the celebration of the Lord's Supper by a non-Methodist congregation worshipping on Methodist premises, subject to certain conditions.

- 5.5 There are however no exceptions provided for situations where a Methodist presides, wherever the service takes place. In general, Methodists should not do in another church what they are not allowed to do in their own. Moreover, Standing Order 014(3) says that the stipulations in Standing Order 922 concerning the use of alcohol on Methodist premises should also apply in other places where there is a publicly advertised event using the name of the Methodist Church, except in certain stated situations. Those exceptions no longer seem sufficient to deal with the ecumenical situations in which Methodists are engaged.

Situations where the issue arises

- 5.6 There are several situations across the Connexion where, were the discipline strictly enforced, Methodists presiding would be in breach. These all relate to ecumenical partnership and cooperation. The memorial gives the example where a Methodist presbyter is invited to preside in a church of another denomination. As noted above, the discipline that applies to a particular celebration of the Lord's Supper is determined by the denomination of the presiding minister. So even though in all other respects a service may follow the custom and practice of another denomination, if a Methodist presides it is regarded as subject to Methodist discipline. Following our current discipline, a Methodist so invited should insist on the use of non-alcoholic wine. As the memorial notes, this may not be a constructive or helpful position to take for ecumenical relations.

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- 5.7 In addition to the situation raised by the memorial, there are other contexts where Methodists cooperate ecumenically and similar issues arise. For example, in chaplaincies, ministerial training contexts and Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) it is common practice that in the celebration of the Lord's Supper both alcoholic and non-alcoholic wine are available and members of the congregation are able to choose, according to their own needs and conscience, which to receive. Strictly, a Methodist presiding at such a service is in breach of our current discipline.
- 5.8 A further scenario can be imagined if the kind of ecumenical service envisaged in the previous paragraph took place on Methodist premises. The exception of Standing Order 922(4) does not straight-forwardly apply to such a service and so questions arise both because of who is presiding and because of where the service is taking place.
- 5.9 While M22 (2022) is limited to the first example, it would be remiss to consider it without also giving attention to these other similar situations that occur in the life of the connexion.

Proposal

- 5.10 The Methodist Church has never disputed that the Lord's Supper can be celebrated with alcoholic wine and recognises this practice in a number of ecumenical partners (and indeed other Methodists in some parts of the world). Our own discipline on this point has been part of our witness to the dangers of the misuse of alcohol and our commitment to creating safe spaces for those affected by addiction. While affirming as a general principle our current discipline that the wine used in the Lord's Supper should be non-alcoholic, it is recognised that in the interests of relating well ecumenically, it would be appropriate to allow exceptions for some of the situations highlighted here. Methodists should be able to offer assistance to churches of other denominations where appropriate and to share in ecumenical services where multiple churches' traditions are honoured.
- 5.11 What is proposed therefore is to amend the Standing Order to create a new exception to provide for the situations identified above. This would allow Methodists presiding to use alcoholic wine when presiding for another denomination for whom that is customary or as part of an ecumenical service (eg in a chaplaincy), including on Methodist premises when that is part of long-term and regular ecumenical relationship. It should be noted that there is already provision for non-Methodist congregations using Methodist premises to use alcoholic wine in Holy Communion subject to certain conditions.

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- 5.12 Those authorised to preside by the Conference under Standing Order 011 are included in this proposed exception. There may well be ecumenical contexts where it would not be appropriate for them, considering all the circumstances, to preside. However, if there were otherwise no objection, there seems no merit in creating an obstacle by this exception not being available in the same way as it would be to presbyters.
- 5.13 In all cases, the consent of the Methodist who is presiding is required for the use of alcoholic wine to be permissible and where the congregation includes Methodists or if the Methodist presiding wishes it then non-alcoholic wine should also be made available. Thus Methodist principles are upheld alongside appropriate ecumenical cooperation.

Standing Order Amendments

- 5.14 As the proposals outlined above relate to the celebration of the Lord's Supper by Methodists in general, it has been agreed with the Law and Polity Committee that Part 9 of Standing Orders (which concerns Methodist premises) is no longer the appropriate place for the relevant Standing Order. It is therefore proposed to create a new Standing Order 010B and to make consequential amendments to Standing Order 922 as a result.
- 5.15 The new Standing Order 010B would read as follows:

010B Wine at the Lord's Supper

(1) In accordance with Standing Order 922(1) and subject to clauses (2) and (3) below, on Methodist premises and in services held elsewhere in the name of the Methodist Church in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper the wine used shall be non-alcoholic.

(2) Standing Order 922(1) and clause (1) above shall not preclude the use of alcoholic wine at the Lord's Supper by a non-Methodist congregation worshipping according to its own traditions on Methodist premises or in regular acts of ecumenical worship on those premises, provided that:

- (i) such use is not contrary to any sharing agreement that may apply;***
- (ii) such use is authorised by the trustees and permitted by the rules that apply to that congregation; and***
- (iii) when a Methodist presbyter or other person authorised by the Conference under Standing Order 011 presides that presbyter or other authorised person consents.***

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(3) Clause (1) above shall not preclude the use of alcoholic wine at the Lord's Supper when a Methodist presbyter or other person authorised by the Conference under Standing Order 011 presides, and where:

(i) such use is for a congregation of another denomination or in an ecumenical act of worship;

(ii) such use does not take place on Methodist premises; and

(iii) the presbyter or other authorised person consents.

(4) In all cases where a Methodist congregation regularly shares in the Lord's Supper in an ecumenical act of worship or a Methodist presbyter or other person authorised by the Conference under Standing Order 011 is regularly invited to preside at such a service, non-alcoholic wine shall also be available.

5.16 It is then proposed that Standing Order 922 be amended as follows:

922 Intoxicants. (1) Subject to clauses (3), **(3A)**, **(3B)** and **(3C)** ~~(4)~~ below and to Standing Orders 926 **and 010B**, the supply, sale or use of intoxicants on Methodist premises is not permitted in any circumstances, nor may Methodist premises be used in such a way as to advertise or promote, whether directly or by means of sponsored events, the sale or use of intoxicants.

~~(2) In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper the wine used shall be non-alcoholic.~~

(3) Clause (1) shall not preclude the use of alcoholic drinks on domestic occasions in private homes, nor the lawful supply, sale or use of such drinks in other residential premises with the consent of the trustees and subject to such conditions as they may prescribe.

(3A) Clause (1) above shall not preclude the lawful supply, sale or use of alcoholic drinks on Methodist premises (other than any part of the relevant premises in which worship has been identified by the trustees as the primary use) if:

(i) a significant part of the mission and activity of the Methodist Church carried out on the relevant premises involves use of the premises as a conference centre;

(ii) such supply, sale or use is solely in connection with an event taking place on those premises as part of such use; and

(iii) such supply, sale or use is with the consent of the trustees given for the specific event and subject to such conditions as they may prescribe.

(3B) Where the relevant premises are local, circuit or district property, the trustees may treat the condition specified in clause **(3A)**(i) above as satisfied

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only if the appropriate district authority so determines. In all other cases, the trustees may treat that condition as satisfied only if the appropriate connexional authority so determines.

(3C) The trustees may delegate their power to grant consent under clause (3A)(iii) above to such person or body as they think fit upon terms that any exercise of the delegated power shall be in accordance with a policy agreed by the trustees.

~~(4) Clauses (1) and (2) above shall not preclude the use of alcoholic wine at communion by a non-Methodist congregation worshipping on Methodist premises, provided that such use is not contrary to any sharing agreement that may apply, is authorised by the trustees and permitted by the rules that apply to that congregation.~~

- 5.17 The Faith and Order Committee also proposes that this section of its report be adopted as a further reply to Memorial M22 (2022).

6 Other specific items of work

- 6.1 The Committee reported to the Conference last year regarding the *Changing Scenes* resource. Further work on this resource has indicated that it will not be possible to complete it in the manner originally envisaged. Instead, it is intended that the prayers and liturgies it would have contained be made available online and in a form that can continue to be developed.
- 6.2 The Committee is also bringing to this Conference as separate reports work on Online Church (in collaboration with the Law and Polity Committee), Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper and on the authorisation of liturgies for the marriage of any two persons and the blessing of a marriage of any two persons previously solemnized.
- 6.3 The Faith and Order Committee has continued to be involved in the ongoing work regarding Oversight and Trusteeship and continues to hold before the Methodist Church the emphases of 'relatedness', 'participation' and 'conferring' as we continue to explore the meaning and practice of 'oversight', 'trusteeship' and 'leadership'. It reminds the Conference of the reflection on these matters in its report *Oversight, Trusteeship and Leadership* to the 2022 Conference. In the light of the decisions of that Conference not to receive the proposals regarding reconfiguration of districts, the Committee asks the Conference for permission to bring the work it directed on the role of a District Chair (resolution 45/2) to the Conference of 2024 and to refocus of it in the light of the new situation.

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- 6.4 The Committee is planning to report to the Conference of 2024 on the following matters:

The role of a District Chair
Healing Ministry and Neurodiversity
Singleness
Holy Communion and Online Worship (conclusion of the period of discernment)
Membership
Proposals for a revision of the *Methodist Worship Book*

- 6.5 The Committee is planning to report to the Conference of 2025 on the following matters:

Marriage and Relationships (further work)

***RESOLUTIONS

- 21/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**
- 21/2. **The Conference amends Standing Orders as set out in paragraphs 5.15 and 5.16 above.**
- 21/3. **The Conference adopts section 5 of this report as its further reply to Memorial M22 (2022).**
- 21/4. **The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to bring the work required by resolution 45/2 of the Conference of 2022 to the Conference of 2024.**

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SECTION I GENERAL REPORT (2)

1.1 Governance responsibilities

In accordance with its governance responsibilities, the Council:

- made appointments and nominations to various bodies and committees;
- on behalf of the Conference, appointed the Connexional Reconciliation Group;
- received a report concerning the governance of Cliff College, and appointed an interim Cliff College Committee under the terms of SO 341;
- received a report from the Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission concerning the Anglican-Methodist Covenant and directed the Faith and Order Committee to explore with the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England the most suitable next steps in considering *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* and to work with that Commission to draft such liturgical, legislative and other texts as may be needed;
- directed that a management fee of £0.5m is paid to the Central Finance Board in lieu of an increase in management fees to all Methodist clients and that this fee is funded from the Pension Reserve Fund.

1.2 Other business

The Council, in the context of Sunday worship, heard reflections from the President and Vice-President on their year of office.

Should members of the Conference wish to view them, Council papers and minutes are available on the website at www.methodist.org.uk/council

***RESOLUTION

22/1. The Conference receives the General Report of the Council.

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SECTION J REVIEW OF THE CITY CENTRE LIST

1. The Council received a report concerning the City Centre List (CCL), and noted that there are 33 active members of the City Centre List (CCL).
2. The 2021 Conference agreed to end the exemption CCL properties had hitherto enjoyed from the levy for the Connexional Priority Fund that is charged on all capital money arising from the sale, letting or other disposition of land. Since this change, questions have arisen about the purpose of the List.

Rights and duties

3. The main rights and duties of List members briefly are:
 - a. the opportunity to propose a management committee be formed which is then responsible for the stationing/ re-invitation of ministers;
 - b. to submit to reviews of the mission and ministry of their church, circuit or project, undertaken by the District Synod, in collaboration with the responsible Church Council, Circuit Meeting or management committee every five years.
4. In addition, any funds proceeding from the sale of any CCL property must be used "in continuing the work of God in the relevant city centre", ie the funds cannot be used in another location.
5. This is a summary of Standing Orders 440, 512A and 944.

Feedback from list members

6. In order better to understand the perceived benefits of membership of the List, a questionnaire was distributed to all active members of the List. 29 responses were received, representing 24 of the 33 List members (72%). The majority of respondents (83%) were ordained ministers.
7. Respondents were asked, "What do you think are the advantages and/or disadvantages about being a member of the City Centre List?"
 - The most popular response was a reference to sharing learning and support with others in city centre ministry; 9 out of 29 respondents mentioned this (31%).

- The second-most popular response was a reference to the sense of identity, recognition and/or raised profile of the project, consequent to being on the List; 8 out of 29 respondents mentioned this (28%).
 - The joint-third-most popular responses were the advantage of proceeds of capital sales staying in the city centre and the disadvantage of no longer being exempt from the levy; 4 out of 29 respondents mentioned these (14%).
 - Other responses included reference to reviews (in both positive and negative lights), keeping the emphasis of work on mission, receiving support/ oversight from the district/Connexion, the disadvantages of proceeds of capital sales staying in the city centre, and how different stationing processes can help ensure appropriate/ experienced ministry. 3 respondents or fewer mentioned each of these (3%).
8. Respondents were asked, “How have you found the CCL review process? Did you get enough guidance and support? Is there anything you’d change about the review process?”
- The most popular response was that the respondent wasn’t sure or didn’t have an opinion; 13 out of 29 respondents mentioned this (45%). Many of these said they had not yet been involved in a review since they had been stationed to the circuit relatively recently.
 - The joint-second-most popular responses were a reference to good support from the Connexional Team or District, and the usefulness of the review for reflection and discerning future direction; 5 out of 29 respondents mentioned these (17%).
 - Other responses included both positive and negative references to the review process and level of external support, alongside questions about the purpose, feedback and reporting of reviews. Three respondents or fewer mentioned each of these (3%).

The burden of reviews

9. The obligation to submit to a review is a burdensome process. Reviews are undertaken by Synods in collaboration with church councils/ circuits meetings/ management committees and are also often supported by members of the Connexional Team or District Team (eg a Learning Network Officer or District Missioner). The results must then be reported to the Connexional Team member responsible for maintaining the List, collated, and reported to the Council.
10. In the past three years, 17 CCL members have submitted late reviews, ranging from a couple of months to three years late. This was in part fuelled by the Covid-19 pandemic, but has also been due to the difficulty in engaging

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congregations, navigating Synod/ Council reporting deadlines, and finding time and energy for this work amongst other competing priorities.

Reducing the burden, maintaining the value of the CCL

11. A key part of *God for All: the Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth* is encouraging every church and Circuit to engage in mission planning, a very similar process to the CCL reviews. Instead of being mandated to undergo a review every five years, it is proposed that CCL members be encouraged to engage in mission planning on a regular basis, alongside all other churches in the Connexion. In turn, Synods will take into account the outcome of those reviews in determining whether to retain or remove a CCL member and/or whether to seek a revocation of a Conference direction that a management committee may be established.
12. This preserves the value CCL members see in reviews – discernment, reflection and listening – while allowing Synods discretion in how these should be undertaken in specific cases. It should also free up capacity to focus on the wider benefits of CCL membership: the sense of identity, recognition and/or raised profile of the project, consequent to being on the List, and the advantage of proceeds of capital sales staying in the city centre.

Methodist City Centre Network

13. For completeness, the Methodist City Centre Network (MCCN) is entirely separate to the City Centre List, though with much overlap in membership. It is an informal grassroots group who describe themselves as

“a supportive group of ministers and lay people. We meet for regular online times of prayer and fellowship to share in the strains and delights that are particular to city centre work. We also have a biennial two-day gathering and day visits to see one another’s churches and projects a couple of times a year.”
14. The Connexional Team will continue to signpost and support the work of the MCCN, to enable opportunities for learning, networking, support and fellowship.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 22/2. **The Conference receives the report.**

22/3. The Conference revokes clause (5) of Standing Order 440 and amends Standing Order 512A(5) as follows:

(5) The Conference may at any time revoke such a direction and make transitional and consequential provisions, ~~and each review under Standing Order 440(5) of a Circuit to which this Standing Order applies shall consider whether the direction should be revoked.~~

**SECTION K
MINUTES OF THE CONFERENCE AND DIRECTORY**

1. The Council heard that in the light of GDPR legislation and in response to legal advice, the *Minutes and Directory* has been available to a restricted circulation since 2019. Some of the address lists, particularly those relating to lay officers, previously contained therein were removed due to difficulties of obtaining consent and uncertainty about whether they were, strictly, required. Other lists are available on the Methodist Church website, which enables them to be kept up to date during the year, and are accessible to a wider group of people.
2. The effect of this is that those sections of the *Minutes* which report on the proceedings of the Conference are no longer available to those who are not ministers or holders of particular offices.
3. The Council now proposes that the *Minutes and Directory* be split into two publications, one of which would contain those items which constitute the *Minutes* while the other would be the *Directory*, containing the address lists. The *Minutes* would then be on general sale again, while the *Directory* would be restricted to ministers. The Council recommends that the *Minutes* comprises sections Parts I-III of the present *Minutes and Directory*, along with other Conference material such as the Pastoral Address and the Presidential and Vice-Presidential addresses.
4. As planning is already underway for the 2023 editions, the Conference is asked to direct that the changes to the Standing Order take effect from 1 September 2023, with the first editions to be printed under this new arrangement being those which record the decisions of the 2024 Conference. The proposed changes to SO 124 are as follows:

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124 Publication of Proceedings. (1) Subject to clause (9) below the general resolutions and other proceedings of the Conference required by clause 37 of the Deed of Union to be printed and published shall be issued as a book under the title of *The Minutes of the Annual Conference and Directory of the Methodist Church* and the year of the Conference concerned.

(1A) There shall also be published at the same time as the Minutes of Conference a Directory of the Methodist Church containing the contact details of presbyters, presbyteral probationers, deacons and diaconal probationers, and such other lists as are required by Standing Orders or deemed necessary by the Secretary of the Conference.

(2) ~~†~~ **The Minutes of Conference and the Directory of the Methodist Church shall both** be prepared for publication by the Secretary of the Conference.

(3) *[deleted]*

(4) Persons whose names and addresses are listed in the **Minutes of Conference Directory of the Methodist Church** shall be entitled to have printed any degrees, distinctions or professional qualifications, held by them, of which they have given particulars to the Secretary of the Conference. In the case of degrees, the name of the awarding body shall be stated and the prefix 'Hon' shall be added to all honorary degrees.

(5) Every minister in the active work and every probationer shall possess a copy **of both publications**, the cost of which shall be an expense recoverable, in the case of persons in appointments within the control of the Church, from the Circuits or other bodies responsible for provision of their stipends.

(6) A copy **of both publications** shall be presented to every supernumerary, the cost being defrayed by the Methodist Church Fund.

(7) A copy of the memorial service which incorporates that section of the Minutes of Conference containing the obituary notices of those ministers and probationers who have died shall be presented to the nearest relative of every such person whose obituary is printed in the issue of that year, the cost being defrayed by the Methodist Church Fund.

(8) A copy **of both publications** shall be presented **on application** to the spouse or civil partner of any deceased ministers ~~who makes application~~, the cost being defrayed by the Methodist Church Fund.

(9) Those general resolutions of the Conference embodied in Standing Orders shall be published with the Deed of Union, the Model Trusts and other appropriate texts under the title *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*. Amendments or an amended edition shall be published annually and prepared for publication by the officer for legal and constitutional practice. Every minister in the active work and every probationer shall possess a copy and receive annually the amendments or amended edition, the cost of which shall be an expense recoverable, in the case of persons in appointments within the control

of the Church, from the Circuits or other bodies responsible for provision of their stipends.

(10) Ministers without appointment shall each be entitled, if they obtain the publications specified in clauses (1), **(1A)** and (9) above, to recover the cost of one copy of each per annum from the respective Circuits in which they reside.

(11) A brief summary of the transactions of the Conference shall be published annually for wide circulation in the Church. This summary shall highlight possible action points for individuals and Local Churches or questions that could be addressed at local level. The cost of publication shall be a charge on the Methodist Church Fund and arrangements for it shall be made by the Methodist Council. Responsibility for the content of the summary shall lie with the person or persons appointed to edit it, who shall be responsible for taking the following action:

- (i) consulting the Secretary of the Conference on the factual content; and
- (ii) ensuring that the master copy reaches Methodist Publishing so that it can be distributed by the end of August.

(12) Any member of the Conference reporting the public proceedings of the Conference for the news media shall be personally responsible for the information given.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

22/4. The Conference receives the Report.

22/5. The Conference amends SO 124 as shown in the Report with effect from 1 September 2023.

SECTION L

CONFERENCE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

1. In adopting Notice of Motion 2021/112 at the 2021 Conference, the Conference directed the Council to establish a framework to analyse the cumulative impact of all resolutions brought to the Conference with regard to resources, time and potential benefits. The Conference also appealed to the Council to recognise the reduced capacity in all parts of the life of the Connexion and therefore to apply the existing mandate the Council has to evaluate the number and cumulative time impact of resolutions presented to all future Conferences.

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2. During the connexional year 2021/2022, the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) and the Council considered how best to address the question of impact and the Council brought a report to the 2022 Conference which proposed the establishment of a Conference Scrutiny Sub-Committee in place of the Conference Financial Committee. It is envisaged that this new Sub-Committee will have a broader remit than the present Financial Committee which, under SO 136A(2), has responsibility to 'identify all resolutions in the Agenda or otherwise circulated to the Conference which would have financial implications, other than those for which provision has already been made in the budget, and [to] notify the Conference accordingly.'
3. The 2022 Conference directed the Methodist Council to carry out further work to determine the details of the Conference Scrutiny Sub-committee (including its membership and its relationship with the Business Committee) and, following collaboration and consultation with the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee and the Law and Polity Committee, to bring Standing Orders for the establishment of the Conference Scrutiny Sub-committee to the Conference of 2023. The Conference further directed that, pending the establishment of the Conference Scrutiny Sub-committee, the Financial Committee, in addition to its responsibilities under Standing Order 136A, shall scrutinise the material coming before it to determine as far as may be its impact on the whole Connexion in terms of resources of finance, personnel and workload and shall advise the Conference of its conclusions. Such advice shall wherever possible be given in writing.
4. The reflections so far have led to the conclusion that the notice of motion form should be adapted to include questions relating to the potential wider impact of the work that is requested within the notice of motion. The proposed questions are:
 - Who will need to undertake this work in whichever context the work is to take place?
 - How is it proposed that the work will be done (including time commitment) and what might be laid aside to create the capacity for the work?
 - How does the work enable to Church to fulfil Our Calling whilst also making the Church more safe, efficient and effective?

These will need to sit alongside the questions about financial implications.

5. It is suggested that the new Committee will comprise members of the Conference who represent among them the key roles who are likely to be most impacted by notices of motion (for example, Synod Secretary, superintendent, District Treasurer, church steward) alongside a member

of the Resourcing Committee or Connexional Council to ensure that there is a strong link to the budgeting process.

6. Work will need to be done to ensure that there is good communication with the Conference Business Committee, to ensure that business is scheduled appropriately and that, where there are major impact considerations, to take those into account, so that the business is undertaken in a way that is most helpful to the Conference.
7. In its discussions the SRC also recognised that a similar approach for evaluating the impact of all areas of work will need to be an ongoing process for the Connexional Council once it is established. The Conference Scrutiny Sub Committee will have sight of all Notices of Motion before the Conference as they are submitted, but both the Memorials Committee and the Connexional Council will need to have a similar (if not identical) process for considering impact in work they intend to take to the Conference.
8. It is recognised that this will be an evolving process, and that the 2023 Conference will be a transitional year and an opportunity to test out the various questions that need asking. This will then be followed up by a fuller report to the Council in October 2023 with recommendations for the Terms of Reference of the new Conference Scrutiny Sub Committee.

***RESOLUTION

22/6. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION M MISSION COMMITTEE

1. The Mission Committee is appointed by the Methodist Conference and is accountable to the Conference through the Methodist Council.
2. This report aims to enable the Church to develop and maintain a strategic vision for mission, in accordance with Standing Order 1000A1, by outlining the work of the Committee in the connexional year 2022/2023.
3. The Mission Committee has oversight of the missional work of the Church, including the work of the Heritage Committee, the Fellowships Sub-Committee, the Global Relationships Committee, the Methodist Modern Art Collection Management

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Committee and the New Places for New People Guiding Team. In its first year, the Mission Committee has received reports from all these groups, as well as others including the Joint Public Issues Team, and lead staff of the Mission Team.

Children, Youth and Families (CYF) Strategy

4. The Committee presented the 2022-2027 Children, Youth and Family (CYF) Strategy to the Council. This strategy is informed by multiple consultations over two years with children, young people, young adults, youth workers and others connected with CYF ministry in the Methodist Church.
5. The Committee agreed three resolutions relating to this strategy:
 - The Committee received the Children, Youth and Families strategy 2022-2027, acknowledging the focus and orientations as set out in the strategy.
 - The Committee recommended that the work of full participation of children and young people remains the work of every part of church life.
 - The Committee agreed that the Youth Presidents and their Advisory Groups be the primary way in which the collective voices of children and young people are both heard and fed into the governance life of the Church at a macro level.
6. The Council approved the following as the purposes for 3Generate (the Methodist Youth Assembly (SO 250)). 3Generate should be:
 - A place of celebration, inspiration and empowerment for all children and young people associated with the life of the Methodist Church in Britain.
 - A place where dialogue happens across generations.
 - A place for the Christian discipleship of children and young people in the Methodist tradition.
 - A place for the upskilling and inspiring of those with a ministry among children, young people and their households.
 - A place where vocational experiences and opportunities are presented for all attendees

Global Relationships Committee

7. The Committee received a report from the Global Relationships Committee (GRC) on the breadth of ongoing Global Relationships work and discussed the links

between this work and other areas of mission. For more information on Global Relationships, please visit www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-worldwide/global-relationships/

8. The Council agreed the following changes to the mission partner programme:
- The Mission Partner programme should continue for ordained persons of the MCB and MCI.
 - The Mission Partner programme should phase out the employment of lay Mission Partners and explore the potential of other pathways for lay people to serve overseas in the future (see below). All lay MCB and MCI Mission Partners solely employed by MCB should be put at risk of redundancy before August 2024. This should be done in consultation with receiving churches and Mission Partners to provide prayerful and appropriate care.
 - Where we jointly send lay Mission Partners with other Churches or organisations, conversations will be initiated or continued regarding the viability MCB's future support of the role.
 - The GRC will explore pathways for lay people with a vocation as Mission Partners and continue to work with partners to share opportunities that provide pathways for lay people to serve overseas.
 - Mission Partners, as far as is possible, should receive an equal stipend to their colleagues in their placement when in placement. Partner Churches and Organisations should be asked to confirm that someone from outside the country would have the means to live on such an income (without land/family support in the country of placement), and, upon advice from the Partner Church or Organisation, a supplement could be paid. When in Britain or Ireland on furlough, in training, or on authorised leave, Mission Partners should continue to receive the basic MCB ministerial stipend.
 - Partner Churches and Organisations who receive ordained Mission Partners should, where appropriate, be asked if they are prepared to pay for, or contribute towards, the Mission Partner's stipend and other costs when in placement.
 - Mission Partners will continue to receive the benefits that are currently accorded to them, including but not limited to medical costs, authorised flights, and furlough accommodation support.

Other work of the Mission Committee in connexional year 2022/2023

9. The Committee received district and circuit New Places for New People (NPNP) funding submissions. All NPNP funding submissions were approved

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by the Committee; these comprised three district submissions and one circuit submission. For more information on NPNP, please visit <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/new-places-for-new-people/>

10. The Committee received a report on the next iteration of the connexional strategy for evangelism and growth and was pleased to note the thorough integration of justice-seeking and evangelism in this vision for the future. The Committee further affirmed the general direction of travel, and in particular the centrality of a Methodist Way of Life. The Council presents the text below, in order to clarify the relationship between Our Calling and a Methodist Way of Life:

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. The Church does this through: Worship, Learning and Caring, Service, and Evangelism.

A Methodist Way of Life provides a further level of detail to the four aspects of *Our Calling* [Worship, Learning and Caring, Service, Evangelism] by elaborating three particular aspects of each. Within the overall primary framework of *Our Calling*, and the Conference statement on the nature of the Church, *Called to Love and Praise*, *A Methodist Way of Life* aims to provide a clear, detailed, and practical common framework for what Methodist discipleship could look like in the 21st century.

As such, the Mission Committee asks the Church to continue to engage with and promote *A Methodist Way of Life*, and asks the Council and Conference to approve it as:

- (1) within the primary framework of *Our Calling* and *Called to Love and Praise*, an expression of our mission together as a Church: to be a movement of disciples who praise the triune God and respond to the Gospel through living out a common way of life in the world;
- (2) a foundation for discipleship journeys and a creative pattern open to all people – Methodist members and spiritual explorers alike – to recognise and express the grace of God at work in their lives, and to hear God's challenge to them and to the entire world to be transformed by God's grace; and
- (3) an effective framework through which to connect the diverse work of the Church in the world and to communicate it clearly to the world.

11. The Committee received a report from the Fellowships Sub-Committee and discussed the potential for mission and evangelism offered by the Fellowship Groups. The Committee noted that Connexional Team staff are working to develop governance options, and that Committee members were invited to engage with this work.
12. The Committee received a report from the Methodist Heritage Committee outlining their work, in particular the work achieved since October 2021 towards delivering the strategic priorities agreed by the Council in April 2019, and work planned for 2022/2023.
13. The Committee received reports from the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) on its work. The Committee commended the work of JPIT on the Cost of Living Crisis and reflected on the breadth of anti-poverty work ongoing within the Church (including Church at the Margins, as a key orientation within the CYF strategy, and within the WWM project). Reflections included:
 - A desire for the narrative to be changed in the UK – the public needed to be informed that people unable properly to feed their children are not irresponsible, but that poverty is the consequence of decisions made in wider society including by the Government.
 - A belief that the time had come for the Methodist Church to stand up together with our ecumenical partners to state that poverty is a moral issue that must be addressed.
 - A belief that taking a stance on anti-poverty was vital to the Church going forward.
14. As a result of these reflections, the Strategy and Resources Committee has agreed that £140,000 from the Mission in Britain Fund be allocated to the JPIT budget in connexional year 2023/2024 to enable an expansion of their work in tackling poverty.
15. Further to the JPIT report, the Committee also reflected on one of JPIT's 'six hopes for society', namely, 'A world which actively works for peace'. This included discussions on the war in Ukraine, disarmament, non-proliferation and the morality of spending on arms during a Cost of Living crisis. The Committee noted that global military spending is now over US\$2 trillion and continues to rise alarmingly, depriving governments of revenue to tackle poverty or invest adequately in addressing the climate crisis. The Committee further noted that partnership working, including with global partners, is key on this issue.

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16. The Committee noted that the context of the war in Ukraine has left many governments less willing to engage in discussions about disarmament, yet believes this is a mistake. Without the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty¹, Russia would have had thousands of more devastating missiles it could have used against Ukraine². Arms control has a rich history of success and protecting civilians – the current situation in Ukraine only illustrates the absolute necessity of going further with disarmament.
17. The Committee encouraged JPIT to continue to work with existing and new partners to call on the UK Government to support the call for a fourth UN Special Session on Disarmament. The Council agreed to put a resolution before the Conference in support of this work.
18. The Committee received a report from the Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee (MMACMC) and approved proposed priorities for 2022/2023. They commended the work of the MMACMC, in particular the successful exhibition in Coventry as part of the city's celebration as designated UK City of Culture.
19. The Committee noted that the MMACMC is seeking a new home for the Collection and approved the MMACMC's statement and criteria for a new home. The Mission Committee will receive detailed options for potential new homes for the Collection from the MMACMC in connexional year 2023/2024. The Mission Committee will consider a wide range of new home options and will balance the cost of re-homing the Collection alongside other missional priorities and make recommendation to the Council via the Strategy and Resources Committee.
20. The Committee welcomed the Principal of Cliff College to its January meeting for a presentation on the work of the College. The Committee noted the many areas in which the Committee and College could collaborate and the importance of close working in future. The Committee is taking seriously its need to be as diverse and inclusive as possible, and is continuing to include key partners in meetings and consultations.

1 Although unfortunately this treaty no longer operates following recent US withdrawal

2 Plesch, D 'Zero Missiles: Building On The Precedent That Helps Ukraine Today', www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/zero-missiles-building-on-the-precedent-that-helps-ukrainetoday/

***RESOLUTIONS

- 22/7. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 22/8. The Conference approves *A Methodist Way of Life* as being within the framework of *Our Calling and Called to Love and Praise* as set out in paragraph 10 above.**
- 22/9. The Conference supports the call for a fourth UN Special Session on Disarmament at a future UN General Assembly.**

SECTION N MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

1. The Ministries Committee reports to the Methodist Council to enable the Church to develop and maintain a strategic vision for the use of ordained, accredited, commissioned and informal ministries and offices throughout the Connexion. Many of the pieces of work currently being undertaken are interdependent with each other and with previous decisions of the Church, for example the 2020 Conference Report *Changing Patterns of Ministry* continues to shape the work being undertaken on future candidating processes and on the review of how we go about stationing ministers. The Ministries Committee pays particular attention to the contexts in which ministry takes place, and has spent time and care considering how global factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted upon ministers in terms of their well-being and the nature of their work.
2. The Ministries Committee is accountable through the Methodist Council to the Conference for:
 - (i) developing and supporting the processes relating to the oversight, accountability and professional development of those engaged in the ministries and offices of the Church;
 - (ii) developing and supporting programmes for nourishing, equipping and resourcing those engaged in the ministries and offices of the Church;
 - (iii) developing and supporting the Church's structures and resources for learning, training, scholarship, research and development;
 - (iv) in collaboration with other bodies, supporting the development of structures that enable the use of various forms of ministry as resources for mission within Circuits and Districts;

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- (v) overseeing connexional policy regarding its ordained ministries, including that relating to the processes for offering as a candidate, the oversight of students and probationers, and stationing, but without adjudicating on individual cases, which shall remain the task of the bodies appointed to fulfil that responsibility. (SO 32A1(2))

To that end the Ministries Committee has met three times since the 2022 Conference on 13 September 2022, 4-5 February 2023, and 11 May 2023.

3. The Committee reports on its work in the following sections:
 - The Learning Institutions and Continuing Development in Ministry (CDIM).
 - Lay Ministries
 - Matters relating to Ordained Ministries
 - Student Matters

THE LEARNING INSTITUTIONS AND CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT IN MINISTRY (CDIM)

4. The Committee received annual reports from the Queen's Foundation and Cliff College. Both institutions are working intentionally to incorporate the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) strategy.

The Queen's Foundation

5. The Queen's Foundation has continued, on behalf of the Methodist Church, to receive all candidates accepted by the Methodist Conference for initial ministerial training. The intake for 2022-23 comprised 15 student ministers, eight allocated to the full-time pathway and seven to part-time, with two provisionally allocated to the Circuit-based Learning Pathway (CBLP) for later in their training. Of the new cohort, three are student deacons and twelve student presbyters; nine are women and six men; four are of Global Majority or UK Minority Ethnic Heritage.
6. Most student ministers are studying on accredited programmes from Durham University's Common Awards suite, as part of their overall formational programme. At the beginning of the academic year 2021-22, 44 were working at CertHE or DipHE level in Theology, Ministry and Mission; one was working towards the BA; one was on a Graduate Certificate programme; 13 were studying for Masters degrees; four were working at doctoral level and two were on bespoke non-accredited programmes. During 2021-22, 11 students were being

supported with particular learning needs, or physical health needs, many of them through public DSA (Disabled Students' Allowance) provision. The DSA support for students is one of the main benefits of the Foundation's status as Office for Students Approved Provider.

7. With regard to the Circuit-based Learning Pathway, a review of the pathway conducted during 2021-22 by the Director of Learning for Ministry was extremely positive and resulted in the Ministries Committee affirming that the pathway should continue as a clear third training pathway, beyond its initial five-year pilot phase.
8. In 2021-22, Queen's worked with 40 probationers on the programme of probation studies designed to build on their pre-ordination training. In September 2021, an additional 14 former probationers were working on their studies post-ordination.
9. Methodist staff appointed to Queen's continue to make contributions to the life of the Connexion beyond initial ministerial training and probation studies. During the year three Methodist tutors have also been members of the Faith and Order Committee (including working parties on particular topics), one is on the New Places for New People Guiding Team, and another on the *Holiness* editorial board. Methodist tutors also contribute to societies and conferences and to scholarly research in a range of disciplines. Queen's staff, including Methodists, have contributed significantly to work on diversity and racial justice for the Church of England, for Common Awards (Durham University) and for the Society for the Study of Theology; as well as being part of the Theological Educators' Conference and conferences in specific theological disciplines.
10. The Centre for Black Theology (CBT) continues to go from strength to strength in terms of offering new pathways and attracting student numbers. It respects the need to work alongside Black Majority (usually Pentecostal) churches in both official and unofficial ways, whilst acknowledging that Black experiences of Christianity are broader than this; exploring the extent to which to foster 'Black only' groups within the learning experience and when to encourage or require a diversity on the pathways of study students choose.
11. Queen's is grateful for the generosity of the Methodist Church in enabling it to carry through the ambitious Partnership in Theological Education Project with two partner institutions in Rwanda and Sri Lanka so that students who are working towards their planned doctoral studies on the programme have visited for residential periods.
12. The work which has been undertaken on the Vision Statement and Aims – which has included consultations with students, staff and governors past and

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present – has proved instructive in clarifying what it means to be such a diverse body. The Foundation believes God is wanting it to celebrate and work with diversity without any single group/tradition dominating. In this way it models as a community what it means to be a diverse Church, in an even more diverse society. The new Vision Statement is as follows:

Queen's strives to be a diverse, challenging, Gospel-focused community, shaping people for God's mission in the world.

As a community, gathered and dispersed, Queen's strives to:

- practise deep attentiveness to Jesus Christ
- live by the Holy Spirit's leading
- stimulate joyful, challenging exploration of the riches of the Bible and Christian traditions
- create a lively, extended prophetic community of worship, prayer and action
- provide searching, supportive pathways of formation and training for discipleship and ministry
- listen to voices which are often not heard, to enable the less confident to find their voice and flourish.

Cliff College: A Global Centre for Evangelism and Missiology

13. Cliff College is a Methodist evangelical learning community which is rooted in God's Word and Spirit for the purpose of equipping God's people for practical ministry and cutting-edge missional engagement. The education offered at Cliff is theology for the real world – rooted in practice, forged in community, grounded in the authority of Scripture and consistently prompting us to face outwards.
14. During 2021-2022, the Cliff College Committee, on the request of the College Principal, commissioned the Methodist Church's Head of Mission and the Director of Learning for Ministry to undertake a far-reaching review of its strategy, structure and delivery to effectively serve as a Learning Institution of the Methodist Church. The recommendations include:
 - The College's staffing structure will be amended to ensure a closer working relationship with the Methodist Connexional Team.
 - An annual grant will be paid to Cliff College, from the Methodist Church, that will be linked to the delivery of the Shared Mission Plan. This plan will be reviewed, updated and agreed each year.
 - The development of the new 'Formation in Mission and Ministry' validated diploma will provide a tool for training within the Methodist Church, and the

ongoing work on the new degree will also be a great benefit. The Methodist Church will make available HE awards to doctoral scholarships in the areas of work of the three research centres.

- The current short course programme will be reimagined and will be more fully integrated into the work of the Methodist Learning Network and others within the Connexional Team.
- Cliff College partnerships will be driven by the objectives of the Methodist Council and will be reviewed to bring them in line with those of the Methodist Church. In particular, the College will foster a deeper relationship with The Queen's Foundation and will develop integrated strategies, with the Methodist Church, in its global work, alongside All We Can, and its work with young adults.
- A long-term strategy will be developed for Cliff Festival that creates links with other Methodist events and gatherings. The theme for Festival 2023 will be 'Eden Restored' – this theme will give us opportunities to work closely with our partners to explore issues around creation, redemption and what it means to 'Build the Kingdom here'.

- 15.** Cliff College continues to value its collaborative agreement with the University of Manchester for the validation of programmes. During the year 2021-2022, validated programmes were delivered by Cliff College as follows: BA in Theology and Ministry (28), BA in Ministry and Mission (38), MA in Mission (59), Postgraduate Research: PhD and PhD Missiology (16). 19 students completed their undergraduate awards during the academic year and graduated in autumn 2022. In this year's National Student Survey, which gathered opinions from final year undergraduates on the quality of their courses, Cliff College received 100% overall student satisfaction.
- 16.** During the year, two new programmes have been developed by Cliff College and subsequently validated by the University of Manchester:
- The Foundations for Mission and Ministry programme, with a related suite of standalone CPD (continuing professional development) units will provide credit-bearing training that has been carefully calibrated to serve the realities of practical mission and ministry as well as the priorities of the Methodist Church. The programme has been identified as the training pathway for Local Lay-Pastor.
 - Cliff College's new undergraduate degree, which will replace the current two undergraduate degrees in September 2023. The new degree, titled BA (Hons) Theology and Mission will be dual delivery, making it an innovative programme that will enable students to study for a HE Certificate, HE Diploma

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or Degree in Theology and Mission both in person at Cliff College and online, using the College's bespoke theological education platform, CliffX.

17. Short Courses continue, including Certificates in Women in Leadership, Men's Ministry, Pastoral Care, Social Activism, Family Ministry, Mentoring, Ministry among Older People, Faith in Change and Conflict, Bereavement Ministry, Parenting for Faith, Bible Engagement, Christian Administrative Ministry, Christian Coaching and Pioneer Ministry. In addition, a number of other Short Courses and retreats have been offered, including Godly Play training.
18. Online learning is a crucial part of Cliff's overall strategy and continues to grow as a valuable part of Cliff's portfolio of training opportunities, enabling people from around the world to study with us, opening up theological education and vocational training beyond traditional routes. 106 students have completed the College's own online courses over the past year, which include Parenting for Faith, Introduction to Christian Holiness, Creative Bible Reading and Introduction to Evangelism.
19. The Samuel Chadwick Centre at Cliff College is an academic research centre that gathers and disseminates the fruits of research in pneumatology, with particular reference to the Wesleyan, Pentecostal and charismatic traditions. The fourth annual Samuel Chadwick Lecture was held on Friday 15 October 2021. Keith Warrington, Reader in Pentecostal Studies at Regents Theological College delivered the lecture on 'The Holy Spirit and the New Testament.' A formal response was given by Dr Andy Boakye, from the University of Manchester.
20. The Bible, Gender and Church (BGC) Research Centre is a collaboration between Cliff College and the University of Manchester, focusing on biblical and practical gender studies, and how these intersect and inform the lives of women and men in the contemporary Church. The Centre hosted an online seminar in November 2021, entitled 'Preaching Problematic Passages: How to Teach Difficult Texts with Sensitivity.' The BGC Research Centre was awarded a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to fund a project entitled 'Abusing God: reading the Bible in the #MeToo Age.' This is an important piece of work, and the award from AHRC is significant for Cliff College's research profile.
21. Cliff College's Centre for the Study of Youth, Children and Families Mission and Ministry, *Generation*, has continued to host online and hybrid forums, with three events exploring the topics of children's spirituality, evangelism to youth and sexual ethics. The forums aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice in children's, youth and families' ministry, and each one brought together practitioners and academics to explore the topics raised.

22. TheologyX, the College's online learning platform, has welcomed a number of other TheologyX partners, including the Methodist Church in Ireland, who worked with the Innovation Team to deliver a course entitled 'Joining with God's Mission.' There are currently 46 active courses on TheologyX, and nearly 5,000 registered users on the platform. In the past year, the Creating Safer Spaces Advanced Module has been completed by 3,516 individuals, representing nearly 14,000 learning hours for this course alone, and highlighting the value and place of online learning within the Methodist Church's work.
23. Cliff College has provided training for nine Mission Partners and Accompanying Volunteers. It continues to support a significant number of partner churches and is developing work in Sierra Leone, Argentina and Cuba.
24. The College is again grateful for the annual grant it receives from the Methodist Church, which not only supports the ongoing work of the College, but also enables us to support the work of the Connexional team in many ways. We will continue to work alongside, and strengthen our relationships with, our partners in the Connexional team and Learning Network to develop a range of opportunities that support the learning needs of the Church in this rapidly changing landscape.

HE Awards

25. The Committee oversees the HE Awards which are given to Methodists, lay and ordained, seeking to pursue higher degrees in a theological or missiological subject. The disbursement of this annual fund is overseen by a HE Awards Panel, working with the Directors of Learning for Ministry, and Research and Scholarship. The Committee was encouraged and excited by the range of subjects being studied, the passion for thinking and learning theologically and how it might impact the life of the Methodist Church. A total of 38 people are being funded by the Church to pursue higher degrees: 26 at Doctoral level and 12 at Masters. For 2nd year funding, 13 students are at doctoral level and 8 at Masters. The range and depth of the scholarship work is impressive and has included enquiry into matters at the heart of current Connexional priorities, such as work on JDS issues, circuit structures, Methodist discipline, and Wesleyan theology and mission. In June 2023 two research conferences will be held in person at Cliff College with a day for MA students and a day for PhD students (not just those receiving HE Awards), resourced by exponents of academic writing. Efforts are also being made to feed the fruits of scholarship back into the Church, with follow up discussions with all those who complete, about how the work can be shared, trying to develop communities of scholarship and help the life of the Church in different ways.

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Methodist-related Education Institutions

26. The Director of Learning for Ministry has continued to work intentionally with Methodist-related institutions to ensure that the Connexional Team is nurturing and promoting their research programmes and encouraging HE Awards applicants wherever possible at least to consider pursuing their study through one of them. The Committee agreed to the establishment of doctoral scholarships at the three Methodist institutions, working with the two Network Centres and the University of Roehampton. At Cliff, this could be for a piece of research connected to one of its three research centres; at the University of Roehampton it will be attached to a place in the DTh programme. The scholarships will be in addition to the current HE Awards programme and will cover tuition fees for the full course of the degree, subject to satisfactory progress, up to a maximum of six years part-time study. It may be possible to consider a full-time programme, with matching funding from the institution, or elsewhere. Applicants will need to demonstrate congruence with the mission and priorities of the Methodist Church in their proposal. Also, in common with recipients of the regular awards, the recipients will be expected to engage with the wider Methodist research community (eg through the annual Research Conference) and participate in an annual review with the Directors of Learning for Ministry, and Research and Scholarship, as well as to offer annual progress reports from their supervisors. It is hoped that this scheme will be a helpful way to strengthen the connections between the Church and its theological institutions, as well as to demonstrate and deepen the Church's commitment to higher learning and research, *both* as a missional presence within the academic sphere and also as a stimulus which informs and inspires its witness, mission and common life.

LAY MINISTRY

Local Preachers and Worship Leaders

27. The Ministries Committee encourages and supports local preachers and worship leaders, who have a vital role to play in the regeneration of the life and mission of the Church. The statistics below show a continuing decline in the number of active preachers, broadly in line with previous trends and demographic reality. There is however no sign of any reduction in the number of active or trainee Worship Leaders, perhaps reflecting increasing opportunities for participation in worship, and the prevalence of Local Arrangements. New guidance on the possibilities presented by Local Arrangements is proposed to encourage churches to see these as opportunities for developing the whole Church as a worshipping community.

- 28.** It is ten years since development of the Worship: Leading and Preaching (WLP) course commenced. The online resources have been updated and simplified and all students are now using version 3 (WLP3). This marks a significant milestone in a continuing process of simplifying access to training and removing obstacles to learning for local preachers and worship leaders. 50 portfolios have now been completed in WLP3 and feedback continues to be positive from both students and tutors. Work is now focused on refreshing the content of the course.
- 29.** In collaboration with the Learning Network, the portfolio of online training opportunities for local preachers and worship leaders has been expanded, and now consists of:
- Online Inductions for all newly enrolled students, tutors and mentors. These seek to orientate people to the course and address anxieties about online study.
 - Explore Online, which now provides quarterly online group learning opportunities especially for those with no local tutor group. Worship Leaders can complete their four modules in a year, Local Preachers can complete their eight modules in two years.
 - WLP for Tutors, Mentors and Local Preachers' Secretaries, enabling a rapid introduction for those taking on these roles or considering doing so.
 - Study Skills for Students. A series of six online webinars. This programme emerged from work conducted by the Board of Studies and the JDS Strategy team.
 - Further Skills for Tutors - an online series tackling specific topics such as theological reflection, culture and language in educational practice. This was produced in response to requests from Tutors and Mentors in consultation with the JDS Strategy team.
- 30.** Other programmes seeking to improve access to training for local preachers and worship leaders include:
- Summer School at Cliff College, which allows students to participate in group work for two modules in an intensive week at Cliff College.
 - The WLP in a Year programme, which provides a blend of residential weekends and online learning with the needs of potential ordination candidates in mind. A cohort of 12 students are enrolled for 2022-23. Demand will be monitored closely as the new process for candidating becomes established.
 - With the support of the Forces Board, a training pathway for those in the Armed Forces. The East Solent and Downs Circuit acts as the host circuit and their Tutor provides remote support to students, with Army chaplains acting as Mentors.

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31. A silent retreat for local preachers was held at Launde Abbey, Leicestershire in May 2022, which was fully subscribed. A second event is being held at Whalley Abbey, Lancashire in March 2023. The intention is for this to be held annually for the spiritual refreshment of local preachers and worship leaders. Work continues to encourage Local Preachers' Meetings to make maximum use of these vital gatherings as places of encouragement and growth. A major focus for 2023, in collaboration with the Evangelism and Growth Team will be on developing the depth and quality of public worship in changing times. The library of session plans for the Continuing Local Preacher Development (CLPD) use in Local Preachers' Meetings continues to expand and further resources are planned.
32. As of January 2023, there were 5,477 active local preachers recorded on the connexional database, a decline of 4% from 5,698 the previous year. Of those in training, 375 had a Note to Preach (2021: 376), and there were 483 persons On Trial (2021: 492) as local preachers.
- 140 portfolios were successfully completed on the Worship: Leading and Preaching course in 2022, compared with 156 the previous year. Of these, 16 were from worship leaders (2021: 10), who have successfully completed modules 1-4. 63 were Portfolio LPA, (2021: 75), and 61 were Portfolio LPB, (2021: 71) indicating completion of LP training. A total of 42 portfolios were completed on the new WLP3 version of the course, the remaining 98 being on the WLP2 version, which has now closed.
 - During the year, 54 new students enrolled for WLP as worship leaders and 152 as local preachers.
 - The number of new local preachers admitted during 2022 was 83. This compares with 219 in 2021 but is comparable with typical numbers from previous years. The high number in 2021 was skewed by factors such as opportunities to complete studies during lockdowns, the end of the Faith and Worship course and a backlog of Recognition Services due to COVID.
 - The number of local preachers who died and were included in the Remembrance Book in 2021 was 281. The list for 2022 is in preparation and will be presented at the 2023 Conference.
33. The Ministries Committee approved a Guidance Note for Welcoming Lay Preachers from Other Traditions. Standing Order 566A makes provision for Lay Preachers or Readers from "Other Churches" who have become members, to be recognised as local preachers. The responsibility for discerning the call of a local preacher lies with the Local Preachers' Meeting, on behalf of the Circuit Meeting. The new guidance should make a significant difference in enabling circuits to make fair and equitable decisions.

34. The Ministries Committee approved an outline proposal for the provision of local preacher and worship leader training materials in Chinese languages (Mandarin and Cantonese) suitable for use in the current context.
35. The provision of materials in Welsh remains a Conference commitment and the Ministries Committee endorsed a proposal for continuing provision of local preacher and worship leader training in Welsh language, based on a phased approach taking account of available resources and likely demand.

Local Lay-Pastors

36. Competencies for the role of local lay-pastor were adopted by the Conference. The Ministries team with colleagues in the wider team have worked hard to provide guidance to circuits on the Methodist Church Website.

VOCATIONS

Developing Vocations

37. In 2019-20 developing vocations was identified as an urgent and important piece of work for the Church by the Ministries Committee and the Methodist Council. Since then, there has been a number of strategic steps to prioritise vocations within the workplan of the Connexional Team, and to build confidence in the Church to encourage vocational exploration, and to keep this as a priority for both the Ministries Committee and the Methodist Council. These have included:
 - Appointing a member of the Connexional Team to coordinate the work across the Connexional Team, keep the brief high on the Church's agenda, and ensure there is space for creative response to the Church's needs.
 - Research about barriers which prevent people from candidating; and a subsequent review of candidating.
 - Using the concern about candidate numbers to pay attention to underlying issues within church life, especially ministerial wellbeing.
 - Love This Calling campaign;
 - Creation of resources to equip church leaders, individuals and groups to create a culture of celebrating vocations, identifying church vocations and teaching methods of discernment.
38. Over the past 3 years the approach to Developing Vocations has changed and developed. Our key strategy now is to embed a cohesive approach to developing vocations within the breadth of the Connexional Team. There is now

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a Connexional Team Developing Vocations Community of Practice. This is a meeting where colleagues, with a significant part of their workplan which focuses on vocations, meet together. They inform strategy and share updates so that no one works in silos. Developing vocations is also in workplans for the Learning Network and Children Youth and Families (CYF). Less formally it weaves through the work of Evangelism and Growth, Global Relationships and JDS teams.

- 39.** Key actions which are operating across the Connexional Team include:
- A piece of work exploring the Church's response to the very low numbers of British people of global majority heritage offering for ordained and lay ministries.
 - The new candidating process element, Explore, which is about vocational exploration and will be open to anyone wishing to reflect on their calling. The work will include producing the vocational exploration resources, recruitment and training of accompanists, setting up the new systems for candidates, and communicating the new processes to the Church.
 - The Leadership year led by Children Youth and Families is now open to all young people, and not just Youth Reps.
 - The Evangelism and Growth team is working with those exploring a vocation as evangelist, young evangelist, pioneer and New Places for New People leadership. The Ministries team will work with them to see if any of these people who have a call to ordained ministry are able to candidate now that some restrictions have been removed.
- 40.** This work is evolving in many different ways and the Ministries Committee recently received a paper giving a snapshot of some activities which are developing the confidence of our disciples, both lay and ordained, in scattered settings as well as gathered churches.

Discernment Process for Senior Posts

- 41.** The 2022 Conference directed the Ministries Committee to continue its work on discernment for senior roles and to report to the 2023 Conference, to consider how vocations for leadership in the Church can be appropriately, identified, fostered and coordinated with processes of appointment. In September 2022 the Ministries Committee appointed a sub-group to take this work forward. The Group looked at two areas for consideration by the Committee, one is a broad overview of the background and issues in leadership development for senior posts facing the Church in these times, the other are specific proposals for the discernment and support of those who feel called to this work.

42. It was felt important that some description of “senior posts” was attempted and they are identified as leadership roles in *Districts* (Chairs, Deputy / Assistant Chairs, Synod secretaries / senior lay roles in District leadership teams) and *Connexion* (Chairs / Deputy Chairs of Committees, Secretariat of the Conference, senior leadership roles in the Connexional Team). Discussion took place as to whether Superintendents and Circuit Stewards should be included. This would widen the scope of the work considerably, and resources for these groups are available via superintendents’ conferences and circuit stewards’ development
43. The discernment required in our current context of uncertainty and complexity (what some writers call “liminality”: the times between something ended and something not yet ready to begin) is no longer best served by being based simply on competencies but rather attention needs to be given to individuals’ strengths. The group defined strengths as a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of thinking, feeling or behaving that is authentic and energising. Such key strengths might include:
- mental, people and change agility
 - thriving in situations of complexity, uncertainty and expanding horizons of knowledge and wisdom
 - those who relish working with others, and have a proven record as team builders
 - those who are effective at learning from experience

Some in the Group talked about these as “lead” indicators of suitability for senior posts (pointing to what the person might become) rather than “lag indicators” (drawing predominantly on what the person has already done in other roles).

44. It is critical that the diversity and experience of persons identified in ordained and lay roles should be given greater attention. Success in any process supporting discernment will lead to a Church with a diverse senior leadership.
45. The group felt strongly that the discernment and support of those called to these roles, as indeed to any leadership within the Church, is a long-term commitment. It is a process that stretches for the ordained from initial formation in ministry, through training, probation and continued development and, for lay persons, an ongoing review of those identified say as circuit stewards and synod officers. The question was asked as to whether the Explore programme being developed for the new candidating process might be a good model but acknowledge that there is little capacity to develop this currently.

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46. The group felt it important to offer some resources for those who are identified as called to roles or who have been appointed. The group recommends two leadership-learning resources:
- a development of an existing pilot programme, the Leadership Learning Space (LLS). This programme, developed by Loraine Mellor and Nigel Pimlott has worked with two cohorts of people from a wide range of roles, lay and ordained. The group first meet in person onsite and then commit to meeting online once a month – there is input via reading sources and presentations by those in leadership inside and outside the Church. The group also pray together and share their leadership journeys. There is a high premium placed on applying learning to the working context of participants and on learning from shared experience. The programme is currently on its second cohort, so there is learning to be gathered from its work. This could become a ‘rolling programme’ rather than separate cohorts so that people might dip into it at various points in ministry, allowing them to respond to leadership opportunities as they arise.
 - an Open Access resource which could be provided at modest cost by The Queen’s Foundation and Cliff College. This would enable further learning, and accountability for the learning process by participants within a flexible and adaptable format. Areas covered might include competency and confidence in technical and adaptive leadership, building and leading teams, leading in times of crisis, building teams, handling risk and failure, feminist and black theology approaches to leadership.
47. There should be an expectation that those appointed to senior roles would engage with these resources and that feedback be offered on their learning (much as is currently offered to those in supervision training). Mandatory leadership training will enable the senior leadership in the Church to be formed and fitted in a consistent way for the emerging challenges and opportunities of our current and future context.
48. At this stage the group is uncertain about the value of identifying a senior leadership cohort in advance (eg a list of approved candidates for nomination). It felt that identifying such a cohort might be resource intensive and impractical, and wondered if it would not be more effective to see this work as an “offer” to those considering senior leadership and an expectation on those appointed. It is possible to identify those with the needed gifts and graces from those in formation, those who engage with leadership learning (and events such as the May Conference at Cliff), those who apply for posts and those identified by district leadership teams.

Implementing the new Candidating Scheme

49. A new candidating process is being implemented following the decision of the 2022 Conference. This has started with applicants applying between January and April 2023 for 'Discerning Ordained Vocation 1' (DOV1). The 'Explore' programme will be launched in September 2023. There is now an implementation plan, with the work scoped out. Candidating is no longer envisaged as a three-stage process as Explore is to be a stand-alone discernment process for people seeking to explore vocation in as wide a way as possible, not just in the context of candidating for ordained ministry. Explore is being tied in with the Vocations strategy. Ongoing work includes the recruitment and training of accompanists, including a number from existing District Candidates Committee membership. All who wish to explore ordained ministry will carry out DOV1 and then DOV2 (which is the candidating element). The Ministries Committee noted that this is a significant piece of work for the Connexional Team within a tight timeframe. The Chair additionally notes that there are significant capacity issues, especially given that there are a number of other significant pieces of work to be done by the same Officers within the Team. This piece of work needs to be done with attention and care so that candidates are served well by the Church. The review of candidating had been a root and branch process and it was recognised that the 2022 Conference resolutions would have a far-reaching impact on other parts of the processes of the Church. There would be a particular impact on the role of local preacher which can now be fully valued as a lay office within the Church rather than being regarded by some as a stepping stone to ordained ministry.

Implications of the New Candidating Process on Student Training and Probation

50. Following consultations with MCPOC, the Ministries Committee and the Stationing Committee, the Ministries Committee directed the Connexional Team to do further work on adapting profiles for probationer presbyter appointments and diaconal appointments in order to take note of the fact that not all probationers will have previous experience of preaching, proclaiming and worship leading. The Ministries Committee directed that connexional training be developed for worship development groups, and that this is taken forward by the Ministerial Coordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministry, in conjunction with the Ministries Team. The Ministries Committee referred the issue around authorisations to preside for probationers to the Faith and Order Committee as part of its wider work in reviewing authorisations.

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Candidating Numbers

51. The Ministries Team is keeping these numbers under regular review.

Criteria and Competencies for Ministry

52. The Ministries Committee examined the revised criteria and competencies for Ministry which reflect the impact of various Conference decisions and the priorities of the Church in recent years, notably the Justice Dignity and Solidarity strategy, Changing Patterns of Ministry and the Review of Candidating, and recommended changes to the Council. The Ministries Team also checked that safeguarding was appropriately included. Further consultations have also been held with the Queen's Foundation.
53. The Council appointed the Revd Dr Joanne Cox-Darling and Dr Hellen Okello with the Warden of the MDO to work with the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee, the Chair or Deputy Chair of the Ministries Committee or their representative, and the appropriate member(s) of the Connexional Team to revise the wording of the Criteria for Selection for presentation to the Conference for adoption and publication.

MATTERS RELATING TO ORDAINED MINISTRY

Stationing Review Group

54. The remit of the Stationing Review Group is to carry out a root and branch review of all processes related to the stationing of ministers (presbyters and deacons) in the Methodist Church in Britain. The Group will present a final report to the 2024 Conference with recommendations for changes to those processes. The first meeting of the group was held in January 2023 and the group plans to meet approximately every two months. The Group will consult widely with both lay and ordained Methodists alongside input from ecumenical partners.

Initial Stationing Appointments and Local Specific Contexts (Limited Deployability)

55. The Ministries Committee addressed some complex questions raised about initial stationing in local or specific contexts. The Committee appointed a task group comprising members of MCPOC, the Queen's Foundation, and the Ministries Committee to review the emerging wider issues around the offer of candidates for local or specific contexts, consulting with others as necessary, and reporting back to the Ministries Committee in September 2023.

Candidates and Occupational Health Assessment Reports

56. All recommended candidates from 2024 onwards will have an Occupational Health assessment. Where any adjustments are needed for that candidate to be able to study and to minister, these will be outlined in the assessment. External legal advice has been received, and a policy is being prepared by the Legal Counsel to establish clearly what adjustments are reasonable and what are not, to include cost implications. The Ministries Committee requested that members of the Well-being team, the Law and Polity Committee and MCPOC agree the policy that clearly identifies which adjustments are reasonable for a candidate for ordained ministry to be able to study and to minister. The Ministries Committee directed MCPOC to set up a standing sub-committee to apply the policy commencing 2023-2024. The Ministries Committee directed that guidance on this process be added to the candidates' guidance documents for 2023-2024.

Flourishing / Well-being in Ordained Ministry

57. The Ministries Committee received a further report and noted the implications of this work for the ongoing work of the Committee and the Ministries Team. The Committee was pleased to see how much had been implemented by the team on behalf of the Church, whilst recognising this is always a work in progress.

Voices of Identity

58. There is ongoing work around the "voices of identity" project which has gathered the voices of ministers in specific contexts and situations and learning for the Church continues. There are some ministers noting isolation in their work and the project has been started to draw those groups together. The project was established so that participants might continue to run the groups if they think it might be helpful. The Committee noted the fruits borne to date, the main themes emerging, and the places of cross over and intersection with other aspects of its work, in particular that of ministerial wellbeing and the stationing process.

Handbook for Methodist Ministers in Circuit Appointments

59. The Ministries Committee scrutinised and gave its approval in principle to the issuing of a Ministers' Handbook, pending review by various stakeholders. This completely redrafted handbook was overseen by the Director of the Ministries Team, who is charged with the responsibility for editing and keeping the handbook up to date. The Committee directed that the Ministers' handbook

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should be updated on an annual basis and published in an electronic format. The content of the updated handbook would be presented to the committee for review every five years.

Guidance for Superintendents

60. The Ministries Committee adopted a guidance note to Superintendents and District Chairs about appropriate ways to encourage ministers in addition to the circuit staff to offer their gifts within Circuits, and for Circuits to receive those gifts and to be enriched by them. This guidance is self-explanatory and is a revision of a guidance note issued in 2016. It relates to ordained ministers who, although often stationed to a Circuit, are not members of the staff appointed to exercise pastoral responsibility in that Circuit. The Committee directed that the guidance be circulated to Superintendents and District Chairs.
61. The Ministries Committee also adopted a guidance note on the preaching ministry of ministers who have resigned from Full Connexion and directed that it be circulated to Superintendents and District Chairs.

Appeals Review Group

62. The Appeals Review Group of the Ministries Committee has been looking to make the Appeal processes relating to decisions about what might be termed initial ministry (ie the acceptance or not of candidates; the continuance or discontinuance of students; the continuance or discontinuance of probationers; and decisions about the transfer or granting of "recognised and regarded" status to ministers of other churches) as coherent and consistent as possible.
63. Amongst those cases, decisions about the discontinuance of students or probationers are very similar to decisions to remove people from Full Connexion after they have been ordained. The latter is one of the possible outcomes of discipline cases and is analogous in many cases to what in employment terms would be described as deprivation of livelihood.
64. There are therefore grounds for arguing that there should be coherence and consistency between the appeals which the Conference is charged to consider and those in discipline cases which lead to removal from Full Connexion. This is particularly the case with regard to the grounds for any appeal, and the status of any report to the Conference (eg is the Conference able to rehear an individual case?). Coherence and consistency do not require absolute similarity between all appeals, but any divergences should be rationally defensible as due to the requirements of particular contexts.

65. However there is a review of the discipline processes underway at the behest of the Conference, and it is making very slow progress. That means that the progress of the Review Group has been stalled, and the group was too short of time to bring fully worked out proposals to the 2024 Conference. The Ministries Committee agreed that the Review Group should delay its report to the Conference for a year and wait to obtain information from the Discipline Review.
66. The Ministries Committee also recommended that the final sentence of Standing Order 715(1) which reads "For (iii) above" be removed reflecting the changes made by the 2022 Conference.

Future of Processes for Ministers of Other Conferences and Churches (MOCCs)

67. The pause on the MOCC processes has been in place since January 2022 pending a review of the application, discernment, stationing and induction processes for MOCCs. It is expected that MOCC applicants will be able to apply again from January 2024, which, if they are recommended, could lead to them being stationed in appointments starting September 2025.
68. There are 15 ministers living in Britain with British passports or a current visa who potentially wish to apply to transfer as R&R or into Full Connexion. It has been suggested that this might be the time to consider whether we could process these MOCC applicants who are already in Britain because the process will be more straightforward and economical than for other MOCC applicants. If we permitted these 15 ministers to apply, we would need to extend the application period to the end of March (instead of the end of February) and continue the process as it is designed currently. That could lead to them being matched to appointments in February 2024 and starting their stations in September 2024.
69. There is a considerable challenge for subsequent years with a further 57 ministers who are interested in applying plus any others who might make contact during the forthcoming year. The proposal is that they will all be contacted once the decision has been made to reopen the process in January 2024. They will be told that there are limited appointments available, so they are advised only to apply if they feel strongly called to serve in Britain. Home churches from where there are a number of applicants would also be asked if they could work with the ministers so that they are absolutely sure this is the right step to take.
70. The Ministries Committee directed that MOCC applicants currently resident in Britain, who do not need a visa sponsored by the Methodist Church in Britain, be permitted to apply in February - March 2023, with a view to those recommended starting appointments in September 2024.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

71. The Ministries Committee recommended that the other potential MOCC applicants who have enquired since the start of the pause on MOCC processes will be contacted in Autumn 2023 as outlined above.
72. The Ministries Committee affirmed that the work of the Section 73 review group is to cease and be subsumed into the Stationing Review.

Ministers of Other Conferences and Churches (MOCCs) – General

73. Due to the various complexities arising with MOCCs applications, the Ministries Committee directed that, for MOCC ministers applying to extend their R&R status, that R&R status is granted for five years subject to the minister being in an appointment, and that this does not have to be extended whenever a minister changes appointments within that five-year period. This is being reported to the Law and Polity Committee.

Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC)

74. There has been a high number of issues for MCPOC to address concerning candidates, students and probationers. Issues have included: changes in personal circumstances, changes in training pathway or probation studies, changes to supervision arrangements, concerns around the impact of itinerancy, length of probation for those in part time appointments, inhabiting the particular order of ministry, challenges in appointments, changes within probation appointments, eligibility issues for candidates, applications for local context appointments for candidates.
75. The Council recommends to the Conference that from 2023 onwards the length of probation for all probationers in part time appointments shall normally be three years and proposes changes to Standing Order 721(2).

Supervision Research

76. In 2021 the Methodist Conference adopted the Reflective Supervision Policy and agreed it would be next reviewed in 2026. To inform any changes to that policy it has been agreed that a new piece of research will be commissioned. This research will seek to give a clear picture of where the Methodist Church now stands in terms of offering reflective supervision to those involved in ordained and lay ministry and offer both quantitative and qualitative evidence around that. It is anticipated that it will also lead recommendations for next steps in

the development of the policy. The Ministries Committee approved an outline proposal for this research and directed the Ministries Team to proceed with this work under the oversight of the Supervision Reference Group. The Committee directed that the outcomes of discussions are embedded within the research scoping process and considered alongside others as they become clear.

***RESOLUTIONS

22/10. The Conference receives the Report.

22/11. The Conference amends SO 715(1) as follows.

715 Appeals. (1) The candidate or a Connexional Secretary, or with the candidate's consent the candidate's Superintendent or Chair, may, by notice given in writing to the secretary of the Ministerial Candidates Selection Committee within fourteen days of notification to the candidate in writing of the decision of the committee and specifying the ground(s) of appeal, apply for a review of the recommendation of the committee, on one or more of the following grounds:

- (i) that the procedural provisions of this Section have not been correctly followed;
- (ii) that there are facts which were not available to the committee and which are such as to make its recommendation inappropriate;
- (iii) that the judgment of the committee, as conveyed to the candidate in the official letter informing the candidate that his or her offer has been declined, is questioned in writing by both the Superintendent and the Chair of the candidate.

A reasoned statement to support the appeal shall be supplied by the appellant(s). ~~For (iii) above to be a ground of appeal, the district Candidates Committee must have recorded a majority in favour of the candidate of 75% of those present and entitled to vote.~~

22/12. The Conference amends SO 721(2) as follows:

(2) ... Such period shall **normally** include ~~at least~~ two years on probation **on a full-time basis** after the completion of pre-ordination training, **three years on probation on a part-time basis**, or, where such training has been undertaken concurrently with probation, ~~at least one further year after its completion~~ **of such training**.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

SECTION O STANDING ORDER 793

The Council received a report concerning SO 793 which lays out the process by which supernumerary ministers are able to return to the active work. The process as laid out in the Standing Order is for any applications to be made to the Stationing Advisory Committee, which in turn makes a recommendation to the Conference.

However, there are situations that arise unexpectedly and can cause urgent needs within Circuits. In some cases supernumerary ministers are able to support the additional needs of a Circuit. In such cases, for a supernumerary to have pastoral charge of a church, then they need to return to the active work. As stated, SO 793 reserves this decision for the Conference. However, SO 774(8) sets out how ministers without appointment may apply for permission to return to the active work, and includes provision for the President or the Vice-President on the President's behalf to grant permission between meetings of the Conference in exceptional circumstances. While Standing Order 793 sets out analogous procedures for those returning to the active work from being a supernumerary, it does not include a similar provision for doing so between meetings of the Conference. The proposed amendment is designed to rectify that.

The President (or, on their behalf, the Vice-President) has the authority in certain circumstances to grant ill health retirement on the recommendation of the medical committee (SO 790(2)(f)). It would be beneficial to circuits with urgent stationing needs were the President (or, on their behalf, the Vice-President) also able to grant permission for a supernumerary to return to the active work between meetings of the Conference.

The Council therefore recommends that SO 793 should be amended to include provision for the President to grant permission for a supernumerary to return to the active work in case of emergencies.

In the light of this, the proposed amendments set out below to SO 700(3) and 701(4) make explicit the principle that this is not linked to whether they are receiving a pension from the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme. The rules of the scheme set their own criteria, which can allow a pension to be received whilst a stipend is being paid.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

22/13. The Conference receives the Report.

22/14. The Conference amends Standing Orders as follows:

700 Presbyteral Ministry

(3) Presbyters in the active work exercise their ministry, including pastoral responsibility, primarily in the setting in which they are stationed, whether ***the appointment is*** full-time or part-time, and whether or not the appointment is directly within the control of the Church ***or some other body, and whether or not they are in receipt of a stipend or pension.***

701 Diaconal Ministry

(4) Deacons in the active work exercise their diaconal ministry primarily in the setting to which they are appointed, whether ***the appointment is*** full-time or part-time, and whether or not the appointment is directly within the control of the Church ***or some other body, and whether or not they are in receipt of a stipend or pension.***

793 Return to the Active Work. (1) Subject to clause (2) below any application by a supernumerary presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion for permission to return to the active work shall be made to the Stationing Advisory Committee. The application shall be referred to the chair of the medical committee of the Methodist Council who shall arrange for a medical report and make a recommendation to the Advisory Committee and, where application has been made to become a member of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme, to the Trustee of the scheme. The Advisory Committee shall consult the Chair and Superintendent of the supernumerary concerned, and, where the supernumerary is a deacon, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, and make a recommendation to the Stationing Committee, which shall in turn make a recommendation to the Conference. ***In the case of urgent stationing needs or other emergency the President or the Vice-President on the President's behalf may consider the recommendation from the Advisory Committee, grant immediate permission and report to the Conference.***

SECTION P JUSTICE, DIGNITY AND SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

Quotes from people who are seeing change as a result of implementing the JDS Strategy

"My church are amazing. I love them to pieces, and I think every church could be like this if there was a sense of openness and a willingness to hear stories."

"I must admit I was dreading the training as I thought it was going to have only one agenda, to change my mind. Actually I found it helpful and I learned a lot."

22. Methodist Council, part 2

"The thing I love about the Methodist church is that it is willing to listen, and I think you know that's not shouted about enough. The Methodist Church is one of the only churches I know that is willing to do that, to make good."

"The Justice, Dignity, and Solidarity strategy is about a church that's working towards a change of culture. So kind of recognizing that the rudder has been turned..."

Quotes from people who still see that there is much work to be done

"You see, in the church, as long as you dot the i's and cross the t's and follow the procedures...what you do to the human being and the emotions...that's irrelevant, in my opinion. It's completely irrelevant. It's not about human beings...it's about 'Oh, follow the procedure! Make sure that it's done by this date and that date, you've got to fill in this form and that form, and you know...and the human being in the process does not actually count for very much"

"I don't think the church is raw enough. I think it's too idealistic sometimes..."

"When people are confronted with pain and suffering, they react in 2 ways: either they take the knee, or they walk away, slamming a door. And it's really interesting if you are prepared for those extremes – both need to be met with grace, and comfort, and compassion."

How has the Strategy been taken forward?

The Committee believes there has been a significant change in the level of awareness and understanding of the importance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work across many parts of the Connexion. While there is still much to be done, and there are some parts of the Connexion where awareness of Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity is still low or non-existent, there has nevertheless been a positive start to the implementation of the Strategy.

While particular actions can make clear difference to the lives of particular people and their participation within the life of the Church, this strategy aims for systemic, cultural and attitudinal change. These deeper changes will depend on continuing conversations, opening up to one another, willingness to listen and to learn from one another, and to finding fully collaborative ways of shaping our communal life as Methodists, open to the Spirit of God as we meet, fully ourselves, together. We have seen that God is at work where this happens and we testify that God is good.

At the same time we are acutely aware that there is still much change that God needs to work in us and the resolutions which the Council brings to the Conference are intended to continue this work into its next phase of development.

Milestones in brief

- **Resources for the work:** a 'User Guide' to the strategy, an Inclusive Language Guide and an Equality Impact Assessment tool have been published and are now reviewed regularly
- **Training:** streamlining of the Unconscious Bias training, EDI module on MCBX and a Personal Responsibility Commitment form. Revisions have been made following much constructive feedback. Circuits are now being asked to record the mandatory undertaking of this training. A FAQs sheet is available on the link EDI mandatory training. At the time of writing, 848 people have engaged with the online training and many of them have begun to share the training with others, via in person methods, using the online training materials in groups.
- **The Discrimination and Abuse Response Service** is now moving into phase 2 and will be reviewed in March-April 2023
- Commissioned work from University of Winchester which sets out the framework for a response to the request for a "**Truth and Reconciliation**" process
- Establishment of **the first Solidarity Circles...** for Disability, LGBT+, Racial Justice and Women. Four Co-ordinators have been appointed during February 2023 and members for the circles are being recruited during March 2023 ready to begin meeting in May 2023.
- The first phase of a **longitudinal study**, by the Susanna Wesley Foundation, into the effect of this strategy across the Connexion, has begun. Two researchers (one internal and one external) will explore the progress made in the implementation of the Methodist Church's strategy for a fully inclusive church by conducting interviews with randomly selected EDI Officers and District Chairs. The aim is to understand in more detail what drives and hinders the implementation of the JDS strategy.
- **Transformational change** - there is a deep and clearer understanding that transformational change is acutely necessary and that it needs to begin within ourselves as God changes us, as individuals and in our relationship with each other. This is the only way that we can enter a well-balanced and informed change for the emerging future of the collective church. There is ongoing commitment to implementing this but it is beginning to be evident that where conversation is iterative, transformation occurs. This reflects the story of the Road to Emmaus.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

Many parts of the Connexional Team have been taking this work into their own areas of work and the examples below are just a few of the pieces of work to have come from this:

- the Local Preachers and Worship Leaders team (including some Learning Network colleagues) have revised much of their work in the light of the Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity including guidance around SO 566A Welcoming Preachers from Other Traditions, which can be found on the website;
- competencies about intercultural skills have been added into the Framework of Competencies for Ministry;
- a new 'Accessibility Pathway' will be launched by the Property Team, in collaboration with the Solidarity Circle for Disability, with a target date of May 2023.

The Connexional Guidance about the appointment of EDI Officers is now online under this link: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/27851/connexional-guidance-on-edi-officers-oct-2022.pdf>

Further to the decisions of the 2021 Conference in relation to the use of preferred pronouns, the Council agreed that pronouns be asked for, and included where people choose this, in all Methodist work (eg on social media, electronic signatures, all connexional meetings, reports and Conference business). The Council also directed that as far as possible, and with consideration of the addressee's preference, gendered titles which disclose the marital status of a woman should be avoided in all connexional meetings and correspondence.

Substantive items

a. EDI training

The Council has agreed to add Worship Leaders be added to the list of mandatory roles. Worship Leaders' responsibility for leading worship needs this training as much as Local Preachers, and it seems that the omission was an error.

The 2022 Conference agreed that further annual learning (beyond the initial EDI module) should be undertaken in a form, and with the content, to be determined by the person finishing the initial module. The Personal Responsibility Commitment is to support with this further learning with the intention that it be reviewed at each MDR conversation (for ministers), in annual appraisal (for employees) and annually for all preachers and worship leaders on the Local Preachers and Worship Leaders meeting agenda.

b. Solidarity Circle for Disability

The Solidarity Circle for Disability (pilot) members have worked with the Implementation Officer to agree some guidance for supporting those living with disability within the

Church. The Council agreed that the “Accessibility Support Needs: Guidance” document should be made available to all appointing and employing bodies to accompany the Volunteer Agreement process, in supporting disabled people called to serve in the Church’s life.

c. Solidarity Circles

Solidarity Circles have been established for Disability, LGBT+, Racial Justice and Women. These will only work as the Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity agreed if those representing the Church are prepared to listen and respond to what comes from these Solidarity Circles. Anonymised notes will be prepared by the Co-ordinators and communicated through the JDS Committee in order to support the transformation needed in the Church.

d. A Proposal for the next phase of the Truth and Reconciliation Process (TRP)

The first (pilot) phase of the Truth and Reconciliation process, commissioned by the JDS Committee, and conducted by Katie Deadman-Vernall at the University of Winchester, was completed in December 2022. The Council agreed the principles for the next phase of the Truth & Reconciliation Process, which is set out below, and asked the JDS Committee to initiate a task-group which will bring to the Council a budgeted plan for this work. This plan will form part of the budgeting process for the next connexional year.

An outline of the process follows:

Beyond Phase 1...

i) Acknowledge, Apologise and Initiate

Acknowledge people who have been discriminated against by the Church through an institutional apology. It should be made by a person or body that can clearly represent the MCB and be offered in way that can be heard by and beyond the whole Church. It should clearly represent the weight and depth of people’s hurts now and those received in the past, and be set against a systemic, global backdrop. The apology should not encourage acceptance but should invite response and should be about accountability, not blame. Its content and form should be clearly and widely discerned, born from an inclusive theology and directly linked to people’s lived experiences of discrimination. Critically, it should reflect clear commitments to action.

One of the actions from the apology should be the ‘formal’ initiation of the TRP. There should be an invitation to form a group in local contexts; with the ongoing guarantee of collaborative support from the system of the MCB. Within this could be a [re] commitment to ‘listening’ as a Church, in order to re-construct the story of the MCB, to reflect an openness for a new story, that everyone features in.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

Such acknowledgement, apology and initiation should also be reflected and reiterated at the District, Circuit and local level, by the relevant, representative leaders, to ensure that it is widely heard and engaged with.

The TRP could be also be initiated through encouraging a Church-wide period of mourning and deep reflection, of processing the past, which might also invite psychological preparation for people to consider what their own stories of discrimination are; the (beyond binary) roles they and others have had.

ii) **Public and Private Storytelling**

The invitation to people to share their story, their truth of lived experience of discrimination, should be made loudly, continually and shared widely so that people outside of the MCB can hear it. Public and private spaces should be made available at the local level for people to tell their stories. These spaces could be developed locally and should be relevant and accessible to all, reflective of an inclusive invitation. They should offer options for people to tell their story in their own way, whether that be through non-verbal creative means, or verbalised. Online spaces could also be utilised.

Resources will be needed to help people to tell their stories, and to help people deeply listen to them.

If the spaces are designed to host conversations, whether public or private, experienced facilitators might be useful to support the process.

iii) **Memorialise**

Create opportunities for people's stories to hold long-term resonance, so they can be remembered and honoured. These opportunities should have the capacity to reflect the individual stories as connected together, as part of a bigger MCB story. They should be hosted at the local and structural level. This might be the creation of a physical space in a local church, it might be online on a church's website, it might be a memorial service or an object like a stained glass window, or many such options simultaneously. The memorialisation should be collaboratively designed by those whose stories it will represent; this might involve a variety of congregations and local communities.

Centralised opportunities for memorialisation will also be needed, in order to draw together the individual narratives from around the Connexion, to encourage engagement with the wider story of the Church, and to continue to reflect the process as being structurally and locally held. Methodist Church House might be an example of a central space; the Inclusive Church area on the Methodist Church's central website might be another.

iv) Respond to the Future that Emerges

The process should foster an openness and willingness to change, and the acceptance that attitudinal, cultural and structural change will be needed. The wisdom, and crucially, the needs within people's stories, should be responded to with action-for-change. There should not be a particular point in the process for this, it should be continual. In listening deeply to each other and developing forms of relational, co-inquiry, the action that is needed will be heard and understood; transparency and collaboration will bring an appropriate response; not negotiated, but new and relative to the means and resources available. Build into the process an encouragement to recognise and celebrate these changes, that will likely be seen in 'shifts' rather than seismic events: name them and give thanks for them.

f) Reparations Group Report

Throughout the connexional year 2021/22 the Reparations group continued to meet to consider the full scope of work required to address Memorial M22 brought to the 2021 Conference:

- 1) To report on the direct/indirect involvement of the Methodist Church in the transatlantic slave trade.
- 2) To recommend the full breadth of reparations required for the injustices suffered by enslaved people, the scope of any public statements including and associated apology.
- 3) To explore the need for further education and training on the relationship between contemporary racism, identity, colonialism and the slave trade.

A significant part of this work has focused on identifying potential financial links between the Methodist Church and profits from the enslaved people and the Transatlantic slave trade. Dr Clive Norris was commissioned under the auspices of the Heritage team to research the evidence of financial links between the Methodist movement, focusing on the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. His report concludes that although the Methodist Church at that time was rarely directly linked to the trade of enslaved people, it did probably benefit indirectly, as did British society at the time.

The Reparations group recognises that further research is required to ascertain a more comprehensive understanding of benefits to the Church from the Transatlantic slave trade. As a result the group will explore opportunities to identify potential links in the earlier period of Wesley's Ministry.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

As part of this work the Revd Arlington Trotman has been in conversation with the University of the West Indies and the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas, who the group believe have an important role to play in this area of exploration. As a result, it would be beneficial for the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas in association with the University of the West Indies to be included in conversation at the next stage of this work. The Revd Arlington Trotman has agreed to coordinate this aspect.

Through 2023/24 the group will explore ways in which local circuits and districts can self-audit, identify and document artefacts, paintings and other iconography obtained or created during Britain's colonial past which may prove offensive and which may need a new narrative to explain context and history of the item. Through the audit and under the guidance of the connexional Heritage Committee it is hoped to identify artefacts that had been obtained from other countries during the transatlantic slave trade or British colonial period which may have to be returned to their original place of origin.

In taking this work forward the group adopted 'A five Cs framework' suggested by the Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal. The framework provides a structure for taking the work of the group forward. It encapsulates some of the challenges and opportunities that considered.

Five Cs framework:

- Contested histories – different memories and challenges in considering reparations.
- Case studies for consideration, from different parts of the world in considering reparation and not to be restricted to a Eurocentric perspective.
- Confession /acknowledgement of histories of hurt and trauma arising from the explorations above.
- Conversations and consultations, including the Caribbean region which, would further illuminate matters for research and consideration.
- Conciliation as an ongoing process (of conciliatory conversation), the end goal is not reconciliation (reconciliation is the framework and the pathway)

As part of an ongoing conciliatory conversation, the group will seek to explore the feasibility of holding a major conference in 2025, on the issues of reparations and associated links to the Methodist Church in Britain in terms of the Transatlantic Slave trade. The conference would help to address ignorance and find pathways and languages and prophetic theologies to envision new futures.

*****RESOLUTION**

22/15. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION Q FORCES BOARD

The Council heard that the last twelve months have been a period of uncertainty for the Methodist Forces Board (MFB). The absence of the Secretary of the Forces Board (SFB) has highlighted the need for the proposed changes to ensure a robustness that could cope with key personnel missing.

The Council agreed the following recommendations:

| Original recommendation | Comment | Revised recommendation |
|--|---|--|
| The ex-President chairs the MFB for the year following their presidency. | No longer to be taken forward. It is recommended that a named Officer of Conference or a senior manager in the Connexional Team chairs the MFB, as appropriate. This is intended to provide greater continuity to the Board. To have an ever-changing Chair would not have provided the ability for anyone to step into the work with any level of knowledge or experience. | Named Officer of Conference or a senior manager in the Connexional Team chairs the MFB, as appropriate. This remains the Connexional Secretary for the remainder of this connexional year. |
| The work of the SFB transfers to the oversight of the Conference Office under the Assistant Secretary of the Conference (ASC). | Discussions with ASC have highlighted capacity issues. It is now proposed that the work of the MFB moves to the oversight of the Head of Ministries, where chaplaincy sits. Links to the wider chaplaincy work are critical. The Ministries Team has now moved to sitting under the Connexional Secretary. | The work of the SFB transfers to the oversight of the Head of Ministries, to more closely align it with work with other forms of chaplaincy. |

22. Methodist Council, part 2

| Original recommendation | Comment | Revised recommendation |
|---|---|--|
| <p>The Chair designated to represent returning mission partners in stationing also represents Forces Chaplains returning to circuit ministry.</p> | <p>Further clarified to: a District Chair designated for a number of years to sit on the MFB to represent the Forces Chaplains in the stationing process. Suggested this Chair be drawn from the South West, given their proximity to both Navy Command and Army Headquarters. This is essentially maintaining the status quo, which was found to be critical to the MFB in the absence of a Secretary.</p> | <p>A District Chair designated for a number of years to sits on the MFB to represent the Forces Chaplains in the stationing process. This remains the Chair of the Southampton District for the time being.</p> |
| <p>That the MFB comprises the Chair, Secretary, the Secretary of the Conference or her/ his nominee, the three Principal Chaplains, a Forces Chaplain (for a two-year period, rotating through the three Services), a Cadet Force Chaplain (for a one-year period, rotating through the cadet forces), at least two lay Methodist members (one of whom will have responsibility for W:L&P within the Services).</p> | <p>As previously, plus a District Chair from the South West region</p> | <p>That the MFB comprises the Chair, Secretary, the Secretary of the Conference or her/ his nominee, the three Principal Chaplains, a Forces Chaplain (for a two-year period, rotating through the three Services), a Cadet Force Chaplain (for a one-year period, rotating through the cadet forces), a District Chair from the South West region, at least two lay Methodist members (one of whom will have responsibility for W:L&P within the Services).</p> |
| <p>Twice yearly meetings will be held with Cadet Force Chaplains.</p> | <p>No change</p> | <p>Twice yearly meetings will be held with Cadet Force Chaplains.</p> |

| Original recommendation | Comment | Revised recommendation |
|---|------------------|---|
| <p>Chaplains are encouraged to attend the District synod where they are posted, and the District Chair is encouraged to invite these chaplains (where advised) to attend their local synod. (Where chaplains are serving overseas they are encouraged, where possible, to attend the synod of the District where they last resided.) It is hoped that this will enable the sharing of knowledge, understanding, and mutual support within the life of the Church.</p> | <p>No change</p> | <p>Chaplains are encouraged to attend the District synod where they are posted, and the District Chair is encouraged to invite these chaplains (where advised) to attend their local synod. (Where chaplains are serving overseas they are encouraged, where possible, to attend the synod of the District where they last resided.) It is hoped that this will enable the sharing of knowledge, understanding, and mutual support within the life of the Church.</p> |

The Council also reports to the Conference that the work directed by resolution 11/2 of the 2021 Conference has not proved possible for a number of reasons. The Council therefore approved that it be removed from the workplan.

11/2. The Conference directs the Methodist Forces Board and Aldershot Methodist Military Trust to continue their conversations and bring a proposal for a unified body for Methodist engagement with the Armed Forces to the 2022 Conference.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

22/16. The Conference receives the Report.

22/17. The Conference amends Standing Orders as follows:

22. Methodist Council, part 2

322 Stationing. (1) There shall be a connexional Stationing Committee appointed annually by the Conference, on the nomination of the Methodist Council, which shall consist of:

- (i) a lay chair, being the person for the time being appointed to that office in accordance with clause (1A) below;
- (ii) the Secretary of the Conference who shall act as convener, and the assistant secretary of the Conference;
- (iii) seven district Chairs, ***one of whom shall be the district Chair appointed under Standing Order 1007 to be a member of the Forces Board***, and seven district Lay Stationing Representatives appointed with a view to the representation of suitable regional groupings of Districts;
- (iv) no more than two Team members with responsibility for presbyteral and diaconal selection and training and for the stationing of probationers;
- (v) *[deleted]*
- (vi) *[deleted]*
- (vii) the chair of the Stationing Advisory Committee;
- (viii) the Warden or deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- (ix) the chair and a lay member of the Diaconal Stationing Subcommittee;
- (x) the chair of the group responsible on behalf of the Stationing Committee for overseeing the matching of particular presbyters to appointments;
- (xi) the convener of the Stationing Action Group appointed in accordance with clause (8) below.
- (xii) *[deleted]*

1007 The Forces. (1) The Methodist Council shall annually appoint a Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force Board, ('the Forces Board') through which it shall exercise general oversight of:

- (i) the work of all ministers who are set apart to serve under the direction of the council as chaplains to the forces;
- (ii) the work of all deacons serving in support of chaplains;
- (iii) all lay workers employed by the council to serve in support of chaplains;
- (iv) declared Methodists in the forces.

(1A) The Forces Board shall also exercise a general oversight of the work of ministers appointed to serve as Reserve Chaplains, Officiating Chaplains and Cadet Force Chaplains.

- (1B) The Forces Board shall consist of a chair and:**
- (i) the secretary of the Forces Board, who shall be appointed in accordance with Standing Order 313 or 314, and be a member of the connexional Team;**
 - (ii) the Secretary of the Conference or a senior member of the connexional Team to represent them;**
 - (iii) the principal chaplains appointed and serving under clause (3);**
 - (iv) two chaplains, other than a principal chaplain, appointed and serving under clause (3), one of whom shall be serving as a chaplain to the cadet force;**
 - (v) a District Chair, who shall have responsibility for chaplains in stationing;**
 - (vi) two or more lay persons, one of whom shall oversee the provision in the forces of the training programmes prescribed by the Methodist Council under Standing Orders 565 and 680(1)(ii).**

SECTION R LEARNING NETWORK AND SO 340

The Council received a report from the Strategy and Resources Committee concerning the future of the Learning Network (LN). Having heard reflections on the experience of those delivering programmes for the LN, and particularly in the light of the move to online during the pandemic, the Committee agreed to the proposal that the Learning Network moves from being organised in individual regions to being structured as a single team working across the Connexion. The effect of this is that there will no longer be regional learning and development fora, freeing districts or groups of districts to engage in ways appropriate to their missional context with members of the Connexional Team; instead there will be a Connexional Learning and Development Forum. Each District will continue to have an aligned officer. The Council therefore recommends that SO 340 is revoked, which will enable flexibility as the work moves forward.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

22/18. The Conference receives the Report.

22/19. The Conference revokes SO 340.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

SECTION S

MEMORIAL M15 (2022)

1. **Memorial M15 – Positive Working Together:**

The Birmingham (5/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 60; Voting: unanimous), draws the Conference's attention to both Positive Working Together and the 2015 Methodist Conference Report to Conference 40. Positive Working Together and asks the Conference to take the following action:

- a. To signpost people to the anti-bullying policy in the current Safeguarding policy.
- b. To ensure there is work done to include anti-harassment in Policy (as indicated in Positive Working Together and in the Conference 2015 Report).
- c. To revisit the layout of Positive Working Together and make clearer the Shared Commitment to ensure it is distinct and easy to access and use (it is currently among other text on pages 11-12 of the Positive Working Together booklet).
- d. To change the status of The Shared Commitment from being 'guidance' to being the expected behaviour of every person in Methodist Church life.
- e. To make accessible resources more easily available and for it to be clear that every person in church life can be enabled to use Positive Working Together to help create a safe and more inclusive church community.
- f. For the Shared Commitment to be recognised by every Church Council, to be part of Role Descriptions, and used alongside/integrated with Safeguarding training and documentation.
- g. To integrate the Shared Commitment from Positive Working Together into other Conflict Resolution courses being used in the Methodist Church.
- h. To include Positive Working Together in the Standing Orders of the Methodist Church.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Birmingham Circuit Meeting for drawing attention to the work on Positive Working Together and the 2015 Methodist Conference Report Positive Working Together (Agenda Item 40).

The memorial highlights the need for ongoing work as the church continues to encourage and develop engagement with Positive Working Together so as to enable all those who are part of the church community to live well with difference.

The Birmingham Circuit is thanked for its support and its local implementation of Positive Working Together and in particular commends its work around The Shared Commitment.

The Conference is aware that work is already underway within the Learning Network to offer a regular pattern of Positive Working Together training opportunities, across the Connexion, through Growing through Change and Conflict, Responding to Bullying and Harassment and Spirituality, Scripture and Conflict alongside Faith in Change and Conflict, which is run in partnership with Place for Hope and Cliff College and offered as a Cliff Certificate course. It is believed that this approach will offer greater accessibility to resources. The Shared Commitment will be produced as a standalone document, from the full report, made available on the Methodist Church website and directly referred to within these training resources.

The Conference believes that the work of the group reviewing Section 11 Complaints and Discipline of CPD will be able to incorporate the inclusion of Positive Working Together within Standing Orders as part of its ongoing work. The Conference believes that the incorporation of Positive Working Together in Standing Orders together with the Commitments and Expectations proposed in Agenda Item 19 of the 2022 Conference, The Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers: Commitments and Expectations, will change the status of The Shared Commitment from 'guidance' to being the expected behaviour of every person in Methodist Church life.

The Conference strongly encourages Churches and Circuits to adopt The Shared Commitment and to consider inclusion within Role Descriptions and its use alongside Safeguarding training and documentation.

The Conference recognises the existing work undertaken by the Safeguarding team to incorporate the anti-bullying policy within the overall Safeguarding Policy. The Safeguarding team is due to review the policy later this year and at that point will seek to include anti-harassment within the overall Policy.

The Conference recognises that further work is required to enable a greater engagement with Positive Working Together and therefore accepts the overall direction of the memorial and directs the Methodist Council to arrange how best to take this work forward.

2. The Council has agreed the following way forward for this work:
 - The Learning Network is continuing to develop the work of Positive Working Together. It therefore is recommended that the Learning Network takes forward the following aspects for the memorial: M15 a, c, e, f (working with the Safeguarding team) and g. The Learning Network will update the Positive Working Together pages of the Methodist Church website to reflect the work undertaken.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

- The response to the memorial indicates that the Safeguarding team will be able to undertake the work involved to include 'anti-harassment policy' (M15 b) as part of the overall review of the Safeguarding Policy during 2022-23. The revised policy will be presented to the Safeguarding Committee, Methodist Council and Methodist Conference for approval.
- M15 d and h will be taken forward by the Conference Office as part of the ongoing Part 11 review enabling the relevant aspects of Positive Working Together Guidelines to be incorporated into Standing Orders.

***RESOLUTIONS

22/20. The Conference receives the Report.

22/21. The Conference adopts the Report as its further reply to M15 (2022).

SECTION T

NOTICE OF MOTION 2022/205: SUPPORT FOR DISPOSAL OF PROPERTY

The 2022 Conference adopted the following notice of motion:

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic along with other factors, the volume of properties for Circuits to dispose of is increasing. This is already creating a significant burden on ministers and lay officers. Relieving the circuits of the need to action this would enable missional activity to continue uninterrupted and would significantly improve well-being for many. Not taking significant action quickly will lead to further stress on ministers and lay officers and at some point may make circuit activity and development unviable.

Consequently the Conference asks the Methodist Council to explore the feasibility of establishing a small team of suitably qualified and experienced people to take on the role of disposing of closed churches, manses and other church property, the costs of the team being recouped from the proceeds of sale. Circuits would not be required to use this service, but demand for such a service would be expected to be significant.

The Strategy and Resources Committee and the Council considered the feasibility of this proposal as directed. Although the Council could see some benefits to this proposal, it was unsure how to measure the demand for it and how to manage it. The Council

therefore wishes instead to emphasise the Strategic Guidance for Property which helps Circuits to consider the different options that might be available to them. Overall, the Council did not feel that there would be sufficient appetite for this to be established and then managed.

***RESOLUTION

22/22. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION U HOPE IN GOD'S FUTURE

As part of the Council's report to the 2022 Conference, the Conference received a report from Action for Hope. One of the aims of that project indicated a need for revisions to be considered to *Hope in God's Future*, which was adopted as a Statement of the Judgment of the Conference in 2011.

Hope in God's Future is a helpful, urgent and wide-ranging document, and one that it is hoped will continue to receive attention and promote action. It is recommended that any revisions to the Conference Statement should include ongoing reflection with global, ecumenical and interfaith partner, perhaps especially among the Abrahamic faiths, from whom we have much to learn and whose wisdom should be brought to bear on our conversations.

As this is a Statement of the Judgment of the Conference, the Conference is asked to direct that this work be done. It is proposed that the names for a new Resource Group to review and update *Hope in God's Future* should be offered to the Council in October 2023 and the Resource Group will then report to the Conference no later than 2025.

***RESOLUTION

22/23. The Conference receives the Report.

22/24. The Conference directs the Council to appoint a Resource Group to undertake a review of the Conference Statement, *Hope in God's Future*, and to report to the Conference no later than 2025.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

SECTION V CHAIR OF THE CONFERENCE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Under SO 136, the Business Committee is chaired by a past President or Vice-President appointed by the Conference on the nomination of the Council for a term of three years. The Revd Loraine Mellor is due to complete her period as Chair after the 2023 Conference, and the Council therefore brings a nomination to the Conference for the succeeding three years. Past Presidents and Vice-Presidents were contacted and invited to consider whether they wished to express interest in the role.

Following a discernment process, the Council nominates Mr Dudley Coates to serve as Chair of the Conference Business Committee for the Conferences of 2024, 2025 and 2026. Dudley Coates was Vice-President of the Conference for 2006/07 and has experience of participating in debates and addressing the Conference. Dudley has considerable experience in chairing a variety of meetings and committees and as a former Vice-President has chaired and contributed to a number of connexional panels and working parties. Dudley is also a member of the Business Committee and has an understanding of the importance of the Business Committee's work and responsibilities.

*****RESOLUTION**

22/25. The Conference appoints Mr Dudley Coates as Chair of the Conference Business Committee for the Conferences of 2024, 2025 and 2026.

23. Safeguarding Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | Judith Davey-Cole Chair of the Committee chairsafeguarding@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

1. Overview

1.1 The Church's work in safeguarding has continued to develop in a number of areas as the understanding of what it means to be a safer organisation grows and we respond to increased public expectations and professional practice. This can be reflected in public debates and government inquiries where children have been seriously mistreated or killed and where vulnerable adults have been neglected and abused. The work of safeguarding strives to assist the Church in being a model of a safe place for all.

1.2 The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), set up in 2014 following a series of high profile sexual abuse cases, issued its final report in October 2022. The report to the 2022 Conference described some of the work that had been undertaken in respect of a specific inquiry into religious organisations in which the Methodist Church was included. The final IICSA report was drawn from seven years of investigations, 15 separate Hearings, and the Truth Project which was set up to listen to victims and survivors. The final report set out the extent to which statutory and non-statutory institutions failed in their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation and marked 20 recommendations for reform. These included:

- The creation of a Child Protection Authority (CPA) in England and Wales;
- a Cabinet level Minister for Children;
- greater use of the DBS Barred List;
- the establishment of a national redress scheme for England and Wales;
- The introduction of a statutory requirement of mandatory reporting;
- a public awareness campaign.

At the time of writing this report we have not received the government's formal response to these recommendations.

1.3 Overall, the work that has been undertaken in order to respond to the Inquiry has enabled the committee to review all our policy and training programmes. The new system of district audits that have been introduced this year (see below) will be a key part of how we learn from our practice and further develop best practice across the church.

23. Safeguarding Committee

1.4 Once again, the Safeguarding Committee wishes to thank all those volunteers, officers and paid staff who work so hard to improve the awareness of, implementation and development of safeguarding in the church and its activities in order to ensure safe spaces for all. This is not always easy and sometimes involves personal cost but we are beginning to see clear evidence of where the culture of the church is developing into one which is incorporating a broader and more proactive approach to building and maintaining a safe space for everyone.

2. Oversight

2.1 The Committee said goodbye to a number of long standing members and gives thanks for all that they have contributed over many years. New members have taken up the seats following an open recruitment process. We gave particular thanks to the committee chair, the Revd Henry Lewis, and the deputy committee chair, the Revd Anne Brown, who completed their term of service at the end of 2022. The Conference had given its thanks last year in advance of them both stepping down. Again, following a recruitment process the committee has been pleased to welcome Judith Davey-Cole as the new committee chair and has appointed the Revd John Hellyer as the new deputy.

2.2 The annual training event focused on the newly created training course concerning spiritual abuse and we plan to launch this later in 2023.

2.3 In order to assist with its work overseeing the review and development of safeguarding policy, the Council directed the Committee to nominate for appointment by the Council a small group with responsibility on the Council's behalf to review and amend the Safeguarding Policy and to report through the Safeguarding Committee to the Council.

2.4 As reported to the 2022 Conference, work has been undertaken on developing study materials to encourage churches and local preachers to engage with the themes of the Theology of Safeguarding report (which the Conference adopted in 2021); these will be launched shortly.

2.5 The Methodist Council has approved a programme for safeguarding audits in Districts by members of the Safeguarding Committee to be undertaken over a four-year period. These will enable greater insights to be gained into how well an understanding of safeguarding is being implemented in everyday church work and assist in identifying how effective policy and training programmes have been in affecting our safeguarding culture

23. Safeguarding Committee

3. Safeguarding Casework and Development work

- 3.1 Case statistics and safeguarding panels completed for 2021/22 and first six months of 2022/23
(compared with previous three years):

| Period | 1/9/19-31/8/20 | 1/9/20-31/8/21 | 1/9/21-31/8/22 | 1/9/22-28/2/23 |
|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| DBS cases open | 89 | 28 | 79 | 39 |
| DBS cases closed | 186 | 50 | 56 | 26 |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----|----|----|----|
| Non DBS cases open | 57 | 27 | 17 | 20 |
| Non DBS cases closed | 13 | 17 | 2 | 3 |

Safeguarding Panels

| | 1/9/19-31/8/20 | 1/9/19-31/8/20 | 1/9/20-31/8/21 | 1/9/20-31/8/21 | 1/9/21-31/8/22 | 1/9/21-31/8/22 | 1/9/22-28/2/23 | 1/9/22-28/2/23 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Outcome | Number | Appeals | Number | Appeals | Number | Appeals | Number | Appeals |
| Not cleared | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Restrictions on role and Safeguarding Contract | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Cleared with conditions | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cleared with no conditions | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| No changes to current Safeguarding Contract | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

23. Safeguarding Committee

| | 1/9/19-31/8/20 | 1/9/19-31/8/20 | 1/9/20-31/8/21 | 1/9/20-31/8/21 | 1/9/21-31/8/22 | 1/9/21-31/8/22 | 1/9/22-28/2/23 | 1/9/22-28/2/23 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Outcome | Number | Appeals | Number | Appeals | Number | Appeals | Number | Appeals |
| Safeguarding Contract ended | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Safeguarding Contract ended with conditions | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Resigned from Role | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 19 | 0 | 10 | 1 | 16 | 1 | 3 | 0 |

- 3.2** A new case work management system is being introduced to improve recording of all safeguarding cases. Part of this amalgamation of records will enable a more efficient and wider collection of data and information from which trends can be identified and more informed forecasts made.
- 3.3** As reported to the 2022 Conference, the review of all the main safeguarding policies has now been undertaken and approved by the committee. This has included a full revision of the safe recruitment policy. This has resulted in a shorter more concise set of procedures. Work is now underway to review risk assessment processes and the Standing Orders related to safeguarding, following an external case review.
- 3.4** The Safeguarding Team has supported the creation of the Discrimination and Abuse Response service (DARS) in order to offer a first point of contact to anyone who may require guidance and advice where discrimination of abuse may be experienced. This has enabled a closer sharing between safeguarding officers and those leading on work contained within the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) strategy.
- 3.5** The Safeguarding Team has continued to work with colleagues in the Global Relationships team in writing policy and developing practice in order to support grant giving and responding to specific safeguarding matters in different parts of the world where mission partners are based. A visit was made to the Methodist Church in South Africa to lead some training by two members of the team and there has been close cooperation with the appointment of a new mission partner based in Togo who has responsibility for developing safeguarding work internationally.

23. Safeguarding Committee

3.6 The Safeguarding Team has supported two key new developments in the church this year with guidance documentation and advice given for the Homes for Ukraine scheme and the Warm Spaces initiatives.

4. Safeguarding training

4.1 The Safeguarding Training Group has completed the writing and publication of the new Advanced Module 2023 training and will now turn its attention to the next edition of the Foundation Module. This has been a big undertaking as the group has sought to incorporate feedback from those who have done the course previously along with the new learning and legislative changes that have occurred since the 2019 version was written. Our core safeguarding training will be enhanced with the new Theology of Safeguarding study materials and links to the Reflect and Respond guide on responding to survivors, and by our developing programme of webinars which have been well received by a wide audience across the church.

4.2 Domestic Abuse training

The Safeguarding Team has continued to work on new training materials in relation to domestic abuse, broadcast further webinars and produce posters and stickers for all churches to draw attention to support that can be accessed for anyone who wishes to seek advice about domestic abuse situations.

4.3 Spiritual Abuse

The course developed in conjunction with Dr. Lisa Oakley from Chester University and Thirtyone:eight has now been drafted and trialled with the Safeguarding Committee. We intend to make this available during this year.

4.4 Young People

Work has begun to look at young people's safeguarding training materials in conjunction with the Children, Youth and Family Team.

4.5 As reported in last year's report, there has been collaboration with ecumenical partners, in consultation with the NSPCC, to produce and distribute a series of short films and accompanying learning resources aimed at children and young people between the ages of 11-16 to help them explore the impact of their faith and values on their online activities. This work has now been commissioned.

23. Safeguarding Committee

4.6 Financial Abuse

A very well attended webinar took place focusing on various types of financial abuse that vulnerable adults can be subject to and practical ways in which churches can respond.

4.7 Global partners

Members of the Safeguarding Team have continued to engage with Methodist churches across the world in online training and conferences. As reported above, we now have a dedicated mission partner who will take a lead in this area with direct support from the connexional safeguarding team (CST).

5. District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs)

5.1 Across the Connexion, the CST has identified an increase in work for District Safeguarding Officers and a number of districts are reviewing the number of hours that the work now requires. Along with professional supervision the CST has assisted in the induction of new DSOs and responded to specific requests to review district safeguarding arrangements. Regular connexional meetings have been held on zoom and face to face as well as some dedicated training sessions via webinars. The annual conference brought DSOs together with other safeguarding officers and colleagues from the Learning Network as we journey together in developing our safeguarding and training practice.

5.2 Following on from the memorial to the 2022 Conference, work has begun to explore and consult on the consideration of connexional employment of DSOs. A report will come to the Conference in 2024.

6. Developing Survivors' work

6.1 Increasingly central to all safeguarding work is considering the input and perspective of victims and survivors as we review and develop policy, training and practice. The committee is very grateful to members of both the Methodist Survivor Advisory Group (MSAG) and Methodist Survivor Policy Group (MSPG) for all that they contribute in these areas. This year the CST has also added a Survivors' Forum to which new people can be welcomed and introduced to the work that is underway, giving them the opportunity to identify ways in which they might wish to become more involved with safeguarding developments. This continues to be an evolving area of our work and we have been reviewing the operation of safeguarding panels in order better to address the needs of those who have been abused when it comes to our formal processes.

23. Safeguarding Committee

7. **Ecumenical working**

- 7.1 The Anglican Methodist Safeguarding Group has refreshed its membership with a new Director for the Church of England and lead Bishop. We also wish to thank the Revd Helen Cameron for all her commitment in this area as she steps down and her role as joint chair is taken on by the Assistant Secretary of the Conference.
- 7.2 The chair of the Safeguarding Committee continues to attend the Church of England's National Safeguarding Panel.
- 7.3 The Director of Safeguarding attends the Christian Forum for Safeguarding and sits on the URC Safeguarding Advisory Group and the Scripture Union Safeguarding Group.
- 7.4 Work has continued to refresh Local Ecumenical Partnership safeguarding guidance as well as an Information Sharing Protocol; these should both be completed this year.

*****RESOLUTION**

- 23/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**

24. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Timothy A Swindell Connexional Treasurer Tim.Swindell@methodist.org.uk |
| Resolution | 24/1. The Conference receives the Report as the Unified Statement of Connexional Finances required by SO 360. |

Summary of Content

| | |
|--|---|
| Subject and aims | Summary extracts of the full consolidated accounts of the Methodist Church for 2021/2022 which were adopted by the Methodist Council and are presented to the Conference as the unified statement of connexional finances required by Standing Order 360. |
| Main points | These accounts consolidate figures for a wide variety of Methodist activities and entities. |
| Background context and relevant documents | <p>When the Methodist Church was registered with the Charity Commission it was agreed that the accounts of the registered charity would be those of the Methodist Council. The full consolidated accounts were presented to the Council and adopted by the Council under SO 212(1). They are available for scrutiny on the Methodist Church website and in printed form from the Finance and Resources Team.</p> <p>Under SO 360 the Council is required to present to the Conference a “unified statement of connexional finances ... so as to give an overall view of those moneys and other assets for which the council is responsible”.</p> <p>This Report consists of extracts from the full consolidated accounts which provide a summary of them to meet that requirement. It is submitted to the Conference as the trustee body of the registered charity.</p> |

1. **Link to the Financial Statements**

The accounts can be viewed online at: [Financial Accounts & Trustees Report](#)

24. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

2. **Strategic objectives, aims and purposes of the Methodist Church**

The activities covered in these financial statements fall within the work of The Methodist Church in Great Britain ('The Methodist Church' or 'The Church'). The aim of The Methodist Church in Great Britain is to fulfil its calling, which is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

3. **Public benefit requirement**

The trustees of The Methodist Church have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission in compliance with its duties under section 17 of the Charities Act 2011. This guidance sets out two key principles:

- The organisation must have an identifiable benefit.
- The benefit must be to the public or a section of the public.

The Church exists, *inter alia*, to:

- increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love;
- help people learn and grow as Christians, through mutual support and care; and
- be a good neighbour to people in need and challenge injustice.

The trustees consider that for these reasons the charity meets these public benefit requirements.

4. **Organisation of the Work**

The Methodist Church in Great Britain, in response to its calling and in pursuit of the strategic objectives shown at the start of this report, organises its work in the following eight key areas:

1. Building Communities
2. Children, Youth and Families
3. Evangelism and Growth
4. Global Relations
5. Learning Network
6. The Methodist Council and Governance
7. Ministries
8. Property

5. **Financial Review**

The activities covered in these consolidated financial statements are those under the oversight of the Methodist Council. The Methodist Church in Great Britain is the registered charity, and the Charity Commission has agreed that these financial statements can properly serve as the financial statements of the charity.

24. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

The net income for the year was a deficit of £2.6m (2021: £23.6m surplus), including net investment losses of £12.0m (2021: £22.7m gain).

Other recognised losses for the year were £8.4m (2021: £13.2m gain). A £1.9m loss (2021: £12.3m gain) arose from the actuarial revaluation of the Pension and Assurance Scheme for Lay Employees of The Methodist Church. A £6.6m loss resulted from the revaluation of the Church's charitable property. This was primarily due to a change in the valuation assumptions for the North Bank Estate.

Income

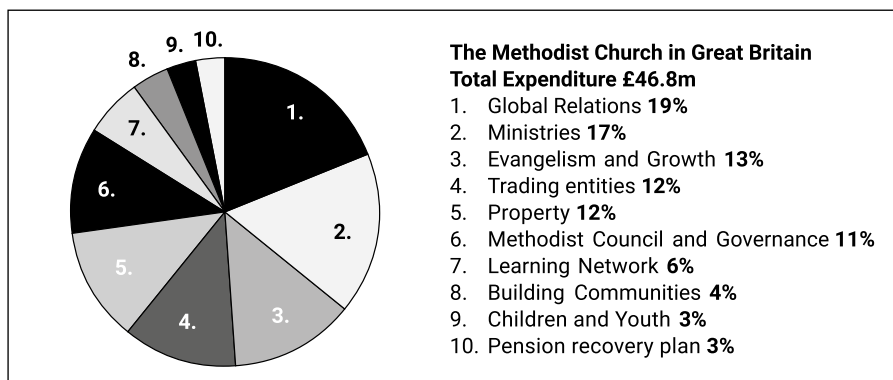
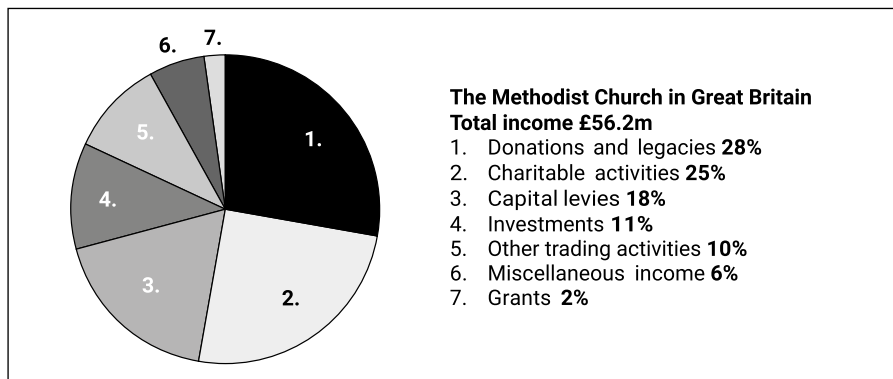
The total income for the year was £56.2m (2021: £40.3m) an increase of 40% compared to the previous year. This was mainly due to the following:

1. A £0.5m increase in legacy income.
2. Donations to the Pension Reserve Fund of £7.2m in response to an appeal made by the Methodist Conference.
3. Increases in investment income despite the difficult market conditions.
4. An increase in trading income as the activities at MICL (increasing hotel occupancy) and Cliff College (courses and events) recover following the pandemic restrictions in the previous year.
5. A £2m gain from the sale of Methodist Church House.
6. Additional income as a result of consolidating Y Care international into the accounts.

Expenditure

Total expenditure increased to £46.8m (2021: £39.4m). Of this, £41.2m was spent on direct charitable activities (2021: £35.4m). The increase in expenditure was largely due to payments to the pension schemes agreed as part of the 2020 Valuation. The other notable expenditure increase was the consolidation of Y Care International into the accounts and additional grants being made by All We Can.

24. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances



6. Investments

As at 31 August 2022, the Church held fixed asset investments with a fair value of £182 million (2021: £194 million). The Finance Sub-Committee regularly review the investment portfolio and performs an annual review of the investment policy. The Church's investment objective is to seek an optimal return from income and capital combined. The Finance Sub-Committee is satisfied with the overall performance of the investment portfolio against agreed benchmarks.

7. Consolidated statement of financial activities – see over

8. Consolidated balance sheet – see over

24. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

The Methodist Church in Great Britain Consolidated statement of financial activities For the year ended 31 August 2022

| Notes | Unrestricted £000 | Restricted £000 | Endowment £000 | 2022 Total £000 | Unrestricted £000 | Restricted £000 | Endowment £000 | 2021 Total £000 |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Income and endowments from: | | | | | | | | |
| 3a | 8,173 | 7,502 | - | 15,675 | 1,079 | 5,620 | - | 6,699 |
| 3b | 13,532 | 335 | - | 13,867 | 13,680 | 306 | - | 13,986 |
| 4a | 2,032 | 4,109 | - | 6,141 | 1,312 | 3,539 | - | 4,851 |
| 5a | 4,566 | 1,384 | - | 5,950 | 851 | 1,235 | - | 2,086 |
| 6a | 10,061 | - | - | 10,061 | 10,272 | - | - | 10,272 |
| 6b | 15 | 1,282 | - | 1,297 | 416 | 954 | - | 1,370 |
| 3c | 826 | 384 | - | 1,210 | 426 | 590 | - | 1,016 |
| 19a, 20a | (57) | 2,083 | - | 2,026 | - | - | - | - |
| Total income | 39,148 | 17,079 | - | 56,227 | 28,036 | 12,244 | - | 40,280 |
| Expenditure on: | | | | | | | | |
| Raising funds | 4,682 | 964 | 19 | 5,665 | 2,988 | 966 | 17 | 3,971 |
| Charitable activities | | | | | | | | |
| 7a | 1,229 | 759 | - | 1,988 | 1,023 | 817 | - | 1,840 |
| 7b | 1,520 | 33 | - | 1,553 | 1,266 | 7 | - | 1,273 |
| 7c | 5,510 | 512 | - | 6,022 | 5,561 | 394 | 10 | 5,965 |
| 7d | 977 | 7,961 | - | 8,938 | 972 | 7,188 | - | 8,160 |
| 7e | 2,719 | 59 | - | 2,778 | 2,654 | 13 | - | 2,667 |
| 7f | 4,777 | 85 | - | 4,862 | 4,221 | 18 | - | 4,239 |
| 7g | 3,556 | 4,674 | - | 8,080 | 5,152 | 4,260 | - | 9,412 |
| 7h | 655 | 4,850 | - | 5,505 | 801 | 140 | - | 941 |
| 7i | 1,496 | - | - | 1,496 | 799 | - | - | 799 |
| 7j | - | - | - | - | 148 | (59) | - | 89 |
| 19a, 20a, 21a | 26,921 | 19,897 | 19 | 46,837 | 25,585 | 13,744 | 27 | 39,356 |
| 14a | (7,304) | (1,046) | (3,603) | (11,953) | 9,924 | 9,646 | 3,125 | 22,685 |
| Net income | 4,923 | (3,864) | (3,622) | (2,563) | 12,375 | 8,146 | 3,098 | 23,619 |
| 22 | 934 | (1,305) | 371 | - | 946 | (1,203) | 257 | - |
| Net income after transfers | 5,857 | (3,169) | (3,251) | (2,563) | 13,321 | 6,943 | 3,355 | 23,619 |
| Other recognised gains and losses: | | | | | | | | |
| 28 | (2,201) | 311 | - | (1,890) | 12,213 | 80 | - | 12,293 |
| | - | (6,564) | - | (6,564) | 946 | 946 | - | 946 |
| Net movement in funds | 3,656 | (11,422) | (3,251) | (11,017) | 25,534 | 7,969 | 3,355 | 36,858 |
| Total funds at 1 September | 117,976 | 149,331 | 22,835 | 290,142 | 92,442 | 152,119 | 19,480 | 264,041 |
| Elimination of Westminster College from consolidation | - | - | - | - | (10,756) | - | - | (10,756) |
| Total funds at 31 August | 121,632 | 137,909 | 19,584 | 279,125 | 117,976 | 149,331 | 22,835 | 290,142 |

24. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

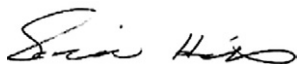
The Methodist Church in Great Britain Balance Sheets as at 31 August 2022

| | Notes | The Methodist Church in Great Britain | | The Connexional Funds | |
|---|-------|---------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | | 2022 | 2021 | 2022 | 2021 |
| | | £000 | £000 | £000 | £000 |
| Fixed assets | | | | | |
| Intangible assets | 13c | 62 | 76 | 43 | 63 |
| Tangible fixed assets | 13a&b | 80,051 | 95,947 | 69,228 | 87,366 |
| Investments | 14a&b | 182,267 | 193,575 | 167,766 | 181,991 |
| | | 262,380 | 289,598 | 237,037 | 269,420 |
| Current assets | | | | | |
| Stocks | 17 | 44 | 54 | 29 | 36 |
| Debtors | 15 | 5,664 | 3,611 | 4,393 | 3,342 |
| Short-term deposits | | 25,513 | 13,326 | 23,605 | 11,539 |
| Cash at bank and in hand | | 5,022 | 4,970 | 3,012 | 4,179 |
| Total current assets | | 36,243 | 21,961 | 31,039 | 19,096 |
| Creditors | | | | | |
| Amounts falling due within one year | 16a | (15,774) | (14,372) | (13,975) | (13,425) |
| Net current assets | | 20,469 | 7,589 | 17,064 | 5,671 |
| Total assets less current liabilities | | 282,849 | 297,187 | 254,101 | 275,091 |
| Creditors | | | | | |
| Amounts falling due after more than one year | 16b | (2,356) | (3,969) | (1,792) | (3,301) |
| Net assets excluding pension liability | | 280,493 | 293,218 | 252,309 | 271,790 |
| Defined benefit pension scheme liability | 28 | (1,368) | (3,076) | (1,368) | (3,076) |
| Net assets including pension liability | 23 | 279,125 | 290,142 | 250,941 | 268,714 |
| The funds of the charity | | | | | |
| Unrestricted funds | | | | | |
| General funds | | 52,706 | 53,214 | 50,531 | 52,514 |
| Designated funds | | 68,926 | 66,092 | 67,763 | 64,984 |
| Defined benefit pension scheme liability | 28 | - | (1,330) | - | (1,677) |
| Total unrestricted funds | 19 | 121,632 | 117,976 | 118,294 | 115,821 |
| Restricted funds | 20 | 137,909 | 149,331 | 113,062 | 130,058 |
| Endowment funds | 21 | 19,584 | 22,835 | 19,584 | 22,835 |
| Total funds | | 279,125 | 290,142 | 250,940 | 268,714 |

Total unrestricted funds include revaluation reserve of £7.2m (2021: £7.2m) for both The Methodist Church in Great Britain and the Connexional Funds. Total restricted funds include revaluation reserve of £46.2m (2021: £54.1m) for The Methodist Church in Great Britain and £43.3m (2021: £52.2m) for The Connexional Funds. (Note 24 Page 90)

24. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

Approved and authorised for issue by the Methodist Council on 26 January 2023 and signed on its behalf by:



The Revd Sonia Hicks
Chair of the Council



The Revd Timothy Swindell
Connexional Treasurer

24. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

9. **Statement of trustees' responsibilities**

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and the group and of the income and expenditure of the charity and group for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- a) select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- b) observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- c) make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- d) state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- e) prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the trust deed. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and the group and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Auditor

A resolution proposing a procurement process for the appointment of the external auditor to the charity was approved by the Methodist Council.

*****RESOLUTION**

24/1. The Conference receives the report as the Unified Statement of Connexional Finances required by SO 360.

24. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

Independent Auditor's Report to the trustees of THE METHODIST CHURCH IN GREAT BRITAIN

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of The Methodist Church in Great Britain (the 'parent charity') and its subsidiaries (the 'group') for the year ended 31 August 2022 which comprise the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities, the Connexional Statement of Financial Activities, the Consolidated and Connexional Balance Sheets, the Consolidated and Connexional Cash Flow Statements and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and charity's affairs as at 31 August 2022 and of their incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We have been appointed as auditors under section 151 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with regulations made under section 154 of that Act.

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group and parent charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

24. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the group's or parent charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the Trustees' Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Charities Act 2011 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the Trustees' Report; or
- sufficient accounting records have not been kept by the parent charity; or
- the parent charity financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' responsibilities the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that

24. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the group's and parent charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the group or parent charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. The objectives of our audit are to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding compliance with laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, to perform audit procedures to help identify instances of non-compliance with other laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements, and to respond appropriately to identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations identified during the audit.

In relation to fraud, the objectives of our audit are to identify and assess the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud, to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud through designing and implementing appropriate responses and to respond appropriately to fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit.

However, it is the primary responsibility of management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, to ensure that the entity's operations are conducted in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations and for the prevention and detection of fraud.

24. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud, the group audit engagement team:

- obtained an understanding of the nature of the sector, including the legal and regulatory framework, that the group and parent charity operates in and how the group and parent charity is complying with the legal and regulatory framework;
- inquired of management, and those charged with governance, about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, including any known actual, suspected or alleged instances of fraud;
- discussed matters about non-compliance with laws and regulations and how fraud might occur including assessment of how and where the financial statements may be susceptible to fraud.

As a result of these procedures we consider the most significant laws and regulations that have a direct impact on the financial statements are FRS 102, Charities SORP (FRS 102), Charities Act 2011 and the parent charity's governing document. We performed audit procedures to detect non-compliances which may have a material impact on the financial statements which included reviewing the financial statements including the Trustees' Report and remaining alert to new or unusual transactions which may not be in accordance with the governing documents.

The most significant laws and regulations that have an indirect impact on the financial statements are those in relation to General Data Protection regulations in the UK and safeguarding. We performed audit procedures to inquire of management and those charged with governance whether the group is in compliance with these law and regulations and inspected correspondence with regulatory authorities.

The group audit engagement team identified the risk of management override of controls as the area where the financial statements were most susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. Audit procedures performed included but were not limited to testing manual journal entries and other adjustments, evaluating the business rationale in relation to significant, unusual transactions and transactions entered into outside the normal course of business and challenging judgments and estimates.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees as a body, in accordance with the Charities Act 2011. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or

24. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

RSM UK Audit LLP

RSM UK Audit LLP
Statutory Auditor
Chartered Accountants
103 Colmore Row
Birmingham
West Midlands, B3 3AG

Date: 2 February 2023

RSM UK Audit LLP is eligible to act as an auditor in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2023/24

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | Matt Tattersall – Director of Finance & Resources tattersallm@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Action required | Decision |
| Resolutions | <p>25/1. The Conference receives the report.</p> <p>25/2. The Conference approves the revised Reserves Policy.</p> <p>25/3. The Conference approves the budget for 2023/24.</p> <p>25/4. The Conference approves the district allocations of the assessment to the Methodist Church Fund set out in the paper.</p> |

Summary of content

| | |
|--|---|
| Subject of aims | The paper provides the Conference with the opportunity to review and discuss the draft budget proposal. |
| Main points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitional funding is required whilst the Connexional Team is transformed to match the requirements of the Church within the resources available. • There is no flexibility available in the budget to cover any new priorities that the Conference might wish to support. • A new reserve level is proposed. |
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | MC/23/11 Financial Planning |
| Consultations | <p>The allocation of the MCF District Assessment was agreed at a meeting of the District Treasurers in December 2022.</p> <p>The draft budget was agreed by the Methodist Council in March 2023, on the recommendation of the Strategy and Resources Committee.</p> |

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2023/24

Summary of impact

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Financial | All parts of the Connexion are affected by the use of Connexional Funds. |
| Wider connexional | Ongoing reduction in the District Assessment means there is less funding for the Connexional Team and therefore a reduction in the work that the team can undertake. |
| Risk | Budget assumptions contain inherent risk which is mitigated by taking a balanced approach to setting of both income and expenditure budgets. The overall level of reserve in the key funds protects the Church against unexpected financial shocks. |

Connexional Central Services Budget 2023/24

Background

- 1 This budget proposal not only covers 2023/24, but projects forward over the subsequent four years. The context for the plan is the need to respond to the growing affordability challenge with the District Assessment and the need to 'right size' the Connexional Team in the light of the available resources. Another key component is the expected release of resources from the Connexional Priority Fund following the reduction in risks associated with the pension schemes.

Scenario Planning

- 2 Over the last two years, the Senior Management Group has developed a number of scenarios for the future of the Church and Connexional Team over the medium term. The 'most likely' scenario shows how the Church has entered a phase of profound transition but that the core purpose of the Connexional Team to support the Church will remain. Further work is being conducted to imagine the Church in ten years' time that will add to this planning.
- 3 In line with previous budgets, the longer-term objective is to ensure that the core work of the Connexional Team can be appropriately funded through the District Assessment. Additional strategies and initiatives would need to be funded from other sources such as the Mission in Britain Fund and the Connexional Priority

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2023/24

Fund (CPF). However, it is noted that these funds are currently fully committed to existing strategies eg God For All, and there is no flexibility in this budget to meet further initiatives the Conference may seek to approve.

- 4 It is envisaged that many of the Church's properties will become surplus to requirements over the next decade. This will require investment in property, legal and financial expertise to ensure the Church acts as a good steward of these resources. Even if many of these properties are sold at below market value to further the purposes of the Church, it is likely the receipt of capital levies into the CPF will increase.
- 5 However, for the purposes of budget setting, the level of capital levies has been fixed at the current level. This means that any additional levies above the current level would be available to support further expenditure from the CPF.

Reserves Policy

- 6 Having experienced the impact of the recent economic and pandemic shocks to the finances of the church, it is appropriate to review the reserves policy. It is notable that at no point did the Methodist Church Fund actually fall below its reserve level of £7.5million.
- 7 Charity Commission guidance for large charities advocates an integrated approach to assessing reserves alongside strategic planning, budgeting and risk management.
- 8 A financial risk analysis has been undertaken against all the known risks as identified in the risk register and through an analysis of the MCF income and expenditure. This approach advocates the setting of a reserve level in the range of £5million to £6million. On the advice of the Finance Sub-committee and Strategy and Resources Committee the Methodist Council has reviewed this analysis and recommends this revised reserve level to the Conference.

District Assessment

- 9 It had previously been agreed by the Conference to reduce the District Assessment (DA) by 1% in 2021/22, 2% in 2022/23 and 3% in 2023/24. This was based on inflation running at 2% and therefore the overall real terms cost to the Connexional Budget over the three years being c12% or c£1.7m. These reductions were in response to the ongoing reduction in church membership and the perceived ability to pay.

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2023/24

- 10** The 3% reduction in 2023/24 was to be funded from the changes to Oversight and Trusteeship and particularly the reduction in the number of Districts. As the Conference of 2022 did not support the proposals to reconfigure the district boundaries, these savings are no longer available.
- 11** In addition, the significant increase in inflation over the last twelve months makes it even harder to absorb the full value of the 2023/24 absolute cut in the DA. Nevertheless, the affordability of the DA for a Church whose membership is in numerical decline continues to present challenges right across the Connexion. Therefore, the proposed budget includes an assumption that inflation has to be passed through to the DA, but then in each year for the next 5 years, the DA will fall in real terms by three percentage points. The cumulative effect of this will be a cut in DA of 15% in real terms by the end of 2027/28.
- 12** With inflation of 9% in 2023/24 the proposed increase in the DA is set at 6%. Anticipated inflation in future years is around 3% and therefore the overall change to the DA from 2024/25 onwards is approximately 0%.
- 13** The District Assessment is apportioned among the Districts using stationing and staffing numbers (with presbyters/deacons as equivalent to 1.5 of a lay worker), with the annual change per District being restricted to a maximum increase of 3%

Table 1: 2023/24 MCF Assessment by District

| | District | £ | | District | £ |
|----|----------------------------------|---------|----|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 2 | Wales Synod Cymru | 530,326 | 21 | Lancashire | 446,091 |
| 5 | Birmingham | 554,750 | 22 | Nottingham and Derby | 660,596 |
| 6 | Bolton & Rochdale | 302,337 | 23 | Northampton | 768,016 |
| 7 | Bristol | 597,091 | 24 | Plymouth and Exeter | 510,192 |
| 9 | Cumbria | 215,578 | 25 | Sheffield | 475,025 |
| 10 | Channel Islands | 113,700 | 26 | Southampton | 634,665 |
| 11 | Chester and Stoke | 501,549 | 27 | Yorkshire West | 766,475 |
| 12 | Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly | 375,467 | 28 | Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury | 562,924 |
| 13 | Darlington | 342,419 | 29 | Yorkshire North & East | 608,741 |
| 14 | East Anglia | 554,973 | 31 | Scotland | 157,325 |
| 15 | Isle of Man | 66,547 | 32 | Shetland | 19,029 |
| 17 | Lincolnshire | 289,779 | 34 | Beds, Essex & Herts | 525,819 |
| 18 | Liverpool | 353,681 | 35 | London | 1,429,226 |
| 19 | Manchester & Stockport | 515,660 | 36 | South East | 744,269 |
| 20 | Newcastle | 563,358 | | TOTAL | 14,185,605 |

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2023/24

above or 4% below the average uplift. The provisional figures based on an overall increase of 6% were agreed by the District Treasurers in December 2022.

Pension Reserve Fund (PRF)

- 14** It is assumed that payments to the PRF will be suspended from 2023/24. This is in line with recommendations the Council is making to the Conference in relation to the pension schemes.

Financial Balance

- 15** It is necessary for the Methodist Church Fund (MCF) budget to achieve financial balance in the medium term. The use of reserves will support the budget position over the next 3 years, with recurrent financial balance achieved around 2026/27. Should the profitability of Methodist International Centre return to pre-pandemic business plan levels, financial balance may be restored more quickly.

Inflation

- 16** The 2022/23 budget includes an allowance for 2% pay inflation (4.4% stipend inflation) and no inflation on anything else. However, with actual inflation (CPI) at over 11% the pay scales will need to be addressed from September 2023. Ahead of further consideration of the pay issues by the pay and grading committee, it is assumed that pay budgets will need to increase by 8% to correct the shortfall in 2022/23 pay, and a further 4% to cover 2023/24 inflation.
- 17** It is assumed that the remainder of the budget will need to increase by 5% in 2023/24 (partly to correct the shortfall in budget in 2022/23) and 2% from 2024/25.

Other budget issues

- 18** In response to a Memorial the Conference requested a review of the funding for non-separated Chairs. Reflecting the increased connexional workload for non-separated Chairs, the Connexional Allowances Committee is recommending that the costs of the basic stipend are split 50%:50% between the Methodist Church Fund and the District. In addition, the MCF will continue to fund the 16% island allowance and the 10% Chair's uplift.

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2023/24

Connexional Priority Fund

- 19** Due to the increase in property levies above plan, the CPF has an available balance of £1.5m unallocated (all other monies in the CPF being allocated to God For All, or other existing commitments). In addition, as highlighted above, it is likely that the current level of payments from the CPF to the PRF will cease from September 2023, freeing up a further £4.5m per annum minimum for perhaps the next decade.
- 20** In these circumstances it would be possible to reduce the property levy accordingly. However, as the wider Connexion already has c£300m in unspent funds, simply adding to this by reducing the property levy would not be effective stewardship nor a very strategic response.
- 21** Therefore, it is proposed that the additional funds in the CPF are used to fund the transition from the Church of today to whatever the transformed Church of 2032 looks like. The key priorities will be to:
- support the Church's ambition to achieve net zero carbon by 2030;
 - support the ongoing real terms reduction in the District Assessment;
 - offset the savings lost because of the decision on district reorganisation;
 - fund the additional resources needed for the Church to divest itself effectively of surplus buildings;
 - fund the costs associated with developing a transformation plan eg, project management; and,
 - fund the consequences of any such plan (eg, redundancies).
- 22** The consequence of this will be to adjust the use of the property levy as follows:

| | Current | Proposed |
|--|---------|----------|
| Pension Reserve Fund | 45% | - |
| District Advance Funds | 27.5% | 30% |
| Connexional Priority Fund including Transformation and Action for Hope | 21.5% | 70% |
| Methodist Church Fund | 6% | - |

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2023/24

Mission in Britain (MIB) Fund

- 23 It is assumed that the MIB Fund will continue to fund God For All (GFA); Methodist Action on Poverty & Justice; Heritage; Justice Dignity and Solidarity, and contribute to the Church's commitment to zero carbon by 2030. In addition, an allocation has been made to the Mission budget of £100k to £150k to support the instigation of an anti-poverty movement, aiming to put the moral case to end UK poverty at the heart of the public debate.

World Mission Fund

- 24 It is assumed that the Global Relationships Committee will continue to spend down to reserve levels and that ongoing expenditure will be restricted to the level of ongoing income.

Epworth Fund

- 25 The Epworth Fund is used to meet the cost of One Programme Participants (OPPs). The number of OPPs is due to increase in line with the funding agreed for the GFA strategy.
- 26 It is also proposed to continue to use the fund to meet the costs of the connexional IT strategy including implementation costs plus ongoing revenue costs of £165k per annum.
- 27 The Conference has previously resolved to use any free reserve balance of the Fund for the benefit of the GFA strategy.

Summary of Parameters

- 28 The overall planning assumptions can be summarised as follows:

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2023/24

| | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 | 2027/28 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Pay inflation | 12% | 4% | 4% | 4% | 4% |
| Other inflation | 5% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| Increase/(Decrease) in MCF District Assessment | 6% | 0% | (0.1%) | (0.2%) | (0.3%) |
| Budget for transformation | £0.5m | £0.5m | £0.5m | - | - |
| Contribution from CPF | £2.5m | £2.5m | £2.5m | £2.5m | £2.5m |
| MCF Income | £19.4m | £18.9m | £18.9m | £18.9m | £18.9m |
| MCF Expenditure | £19.3m | £19.6m | £20.1m | £20.3m | £20.8m |
| MCF Deficit | (£0.1m) | £0.7m | £1.2m | £1.4m | £1.9m |

NB The inflation figures for 2024/25 onwards are indicative and will be updated each year. This will then alter the District Assessment figure each year, though the overall impact will always be to achieve a three percentage point real terms reduction.

- 29 The rationale for producing a five-year plan is to give certainty as to how the forthcoming transition is to be funded. Many of the numbers in the plan could be changed, not least if property sales increase, and the transition period could be extended. However, at some point, the work of the Connexional Team must be radically reformed to serve the Church of tomorrow, rather than the Church of today. Therefore, one of the primary objectives of the transformation programme will be to determine what cuts to the Team will be implemented, and when, to address the c£4.3m deficit (23% of the current budget) that will emerge using the assumptions set out in this paper. However, in line with the usual approach, budgets by Activity have only been produced for the forthcoming three years.

Budget Proposal

- 30 The total budget can be seen in the table below:

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2023/24

Table 2 Connexional Central Services Budget: overall income and expenditure

| Activity | 2022-23 £'000 | 2023-24 £'000 | 2024-25 £'000 | 2025-26 £'000 |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Income | | | | |
| Central Income | 22,034 | 25,016 | 25,103 | 25,096 |
| Income Generating Centre | 614 | 2,253 | 2,575 | 2,575 |
| Global relations | 2,710 | 2,020 | 1,741 | 1,687 |
| Evangelism & Growth | 1,475 | 1,085 | 1,099 | 1,089 |
| Ministries | 846 | 986 | 967 | 962 |
| Central Functions | 1,275 | 947 | 541 | 509 |
| Property | 560 | 513 | 510 | 528 |
| Others - Pensions | 872 | 261 | 248 | 248 |
| Children & Youth | 120 | 150 | 160 | 175 |
| Methodist Council & Governance | 142 | 143 | 144 | 144 |
| Learning Network | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Total | 30,653 | 33,377 | 33,091 | 33,016 |
| Expenditure | | | | |
| Evangelism & Growth | 7,832 | 12,397 | 12,627 | 12,592 |
| Central Functions | 6,736 | 7,608 | 7,060 | 6,920 |
| Global relations | 8,306 | 6,420 | 1,627 | 1,617 |
| Ministries | 5,126 | 5,648 | 5,812 | 5,990 |
| Methodist Council & Governance | 3,992 | 4,280 | 4,431 | 4,672 |
| Others - Pensions | 5,675 | 2,555 | 2,555 | 175 |
| Learning Network | 2,410 | 2,499 | 2,593 | 2,688 |
| Children & Youth | 1,717 | 1,521 | 1,733 | 1,778 |
| Building communities | 1,123 | 1,229 | 1,241 | 1,285 |
| Property | 743 | 850 | 871 | 903 |
| Total | 43,660 | 45,007 | 40,550 | 38,620 |
| Net Deficit | (13,007) | (11,630) | (7,459) | (5,604) |
| | | | | |

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2023/24

- 31** The increase in income in 2023/24 reflects the inflationary uplift to the Assessment, additional capital levies and improvement in the performance of the trading entities.
- 32** The increases in expenditure in 2023/24 is largely attributable to the impact of inflation, additional allocations funded by capital levies, partly offset by a slowing in World Mission spend as it nears its reserve level.
- 33** The deficit in each year largely reflects the decision of previous Conferences to reduce the reserve levels of the main Connexional Funds and also the expenditure from the Pension Reserve Fund into the pension schemes.
- 34** The Methodist Church Fund (MCF) budget can be seen in the table below:

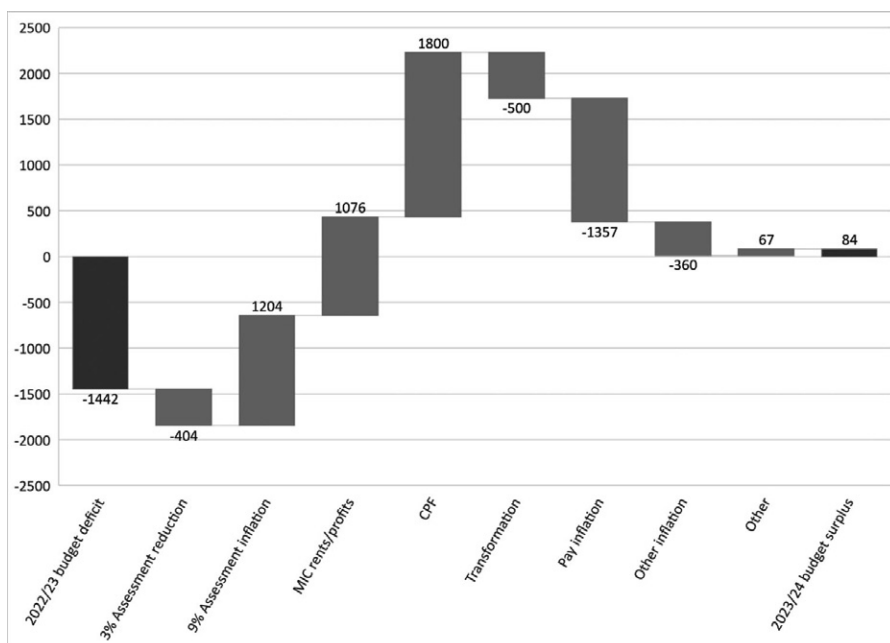
Table 3 Methodist Church Fund Budget: income and expenditure

| Activity | 2022-23 £'000 | 2023-24 £'000 | 2024-25 £'000 | 2025-26 £'000 |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Income | | | | |
| Central Income | 15,361 | 18,269 | 18,138 | 18,091 |
| Central Functions | 1,275 | 947 | 541 | 509 |
| Property | 165 | 168 | 167 | 184 |
| Methodist Council & Governance | 142 | 143 | 144 | 144 |
| Children & Youth | 120 | 150 | 160 | 175 |
| Global relations | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Evangelism & Growth | 1 | 1 | 11 | 1 |
| Ministries | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 17,071 | 19,680 | 19,163 | 19,106 |
| Expenditure | | | | |
| Central Functions | 5,814 | 6,408 | 6,191 | 6,220 |
| Methodist Council & Governance | 3,792 | 4,075 | 4,221 | 4,457 |
| Learning Network | 2,411 | 2,499 | 2,593 | 2,688 |
| Ministries | 2,221 | 1,810 | 1,884 | 1,992 |
| Children & Youth | 1,317 | 1,472 | 1,511 | 1,545 |
| Evangelism & Growth | 1,226 | 1,367 | 1,400 | 1,361 |
| Building communities | 866 | 961 | 963 | 1,000 |
| Property | 527 | 644 | 675 | 707 |
| Global relations | 339 | 360 | 376 | 392 |
| Total | 18,513 | 19,596 | 19,814 | 20,362 |
| Net Deficit | (1,442) | 84 | (651) | (1,256) |

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2023/24

- 35** The small surplus in 2023/24 is largely consequent on the transitional support provided from the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF). As the District Assessment continues to fall in subsequent years, the deficit starts to increase. NB in 2028/29 when the transitional support has ended, the total annual deficit will exceed £4m indicating the need to implement a transformation plan over the next 5 years.
- 36** The main movements in the budgeted MCF from 2022/23 to 2023/24 can be seen in the waterfall chart below:

Chart 1: Change in the MCF Budgeted Deficit from 2022/23 to 2023/24



Funds

- 37** The budgeted fund balances can be found at appendix 2. It remains the aim to reduce balances in restricted funds where possible before allocating budgets against unrestricted funds.

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2023/24

***RESOLUTIONS

- 25/1. The Conference receives the Report.
- 25/2. The Conference approves the revised Reserves Policy.
- 25/3. The Conference approves the budget for 2023/24.
- 25/4. The Conference approves the district allocations of the assessment to the Methodist Church Fund set out in the paper.

Appendix 1: Resource Activities

| Activity | Areas covered |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Building communities | Ecumenical, Interfaith, Joint Public Issues Team, Forces Board, Communications |
| Children, youth and families | Children, youth, families, education, 3Generate |
| Evangelism and Growth | Evangelism and Growth, Heritage, Action for Hope |
| Global relations | World Church, World Meth Council; Mission Partners |
| Learning Network | The work of the Learning Network regions across the Connexion |
| The Conference, Council & Governance | The Conference, Presidency, Secretary of Conference, Council, Faith & Order, District Chairs, Law & Polity, Legal, Safeguarding, Justice, Dignity and Solidarity |
| Ministries | Initial ministerial training, ministerial development, ministerial oversight, ministerial grants, Diaconal order |
| Central Functions | Finance; IT; Procurement; Human Resources; Facilities/ Front of House; Corporate; Connexional Secretary |
| Property | Property team, connexional manses, property projects, property grants |

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2023/24

Appendix 2: Fund Balances

| Fund | Opening | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | Closing |
|--|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | Balance | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | Balance |
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| MCF General | 28,717 | (1,442) | 84 | (651) | (1,255) | 25,453 |
| Auxiliary Special Purposes | 590 | (39) | (43) | (44) | (44) | 421 |
| Trinity Hall Trust | 1,043 | (2) | (13) | (14) | (14) | 1,000 |
| Lefroy Yorke Trust - Endowment Fund | 940 | (0) | 45 | 67 | 67 | 1,119 |
| Barratt Memorial | 1,273 | (1) | (1) | (1) | (1) | 1,267 |
| Rank - Endowment Fund | 7,314 | (1) | 321 | 482 | 482 | 8,599 |
| Marshall Scholarship - Endowment Fund | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Necessitous Local Preachers - Endowment Fund | 212 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 212 |
| Strawson Gift - Endowment Fund | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| William Leech Charities - Endowment Fund | 9,809 | 207 | 207 | 207 | 207 | 10,637 |
| Aspinall Robinson Trust (MDO Holiday Fund) | 728 | 2 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 756 |
| MDO Surplus Funds | 581 | (6) | (9) | (8) | (8) | 550 |
| Archives Revenue Fund | 18 | 0 | (10) | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| WG Barratt - Income | 0 | 29 | (29) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Connexional Priority Fund | 10,558 | (1,099) | (2,251) | (2,494) | (2,519) | 2,195 |
| Epworth Fund | 7,128 | (1,669) | (1,187) | (1,062) | (947) | 2,263 |
| Pension Reserves Fund | 50,076 | (1,294) | (2,382) | (2,393) | (13) | 43,995 |
| Beckley Trust | 3 | (0) | (0) | (0) | (0) | 3 |
| Necessitous Local Preachers - Income | 9 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 23 |
| Borries Bequest - Endowment | 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 29 |
| Modern Christian Art- Development | 28 | (3) | (3) | (3) | (3) | 16 |
| Forces Chaplaincy Revenue | 544 | (54) | (125) | (56) | (58) | 250 |
| Methodist Heritage | 8 | 0 | (5) | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Mission in Britain Fund | 6,386 | (1,235) | (1,177) | (1,152) | (1,104) | 1,719 |
| Mission in Business Industries and Commerce | 446 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 466 |
| Lay Mission Superannuation | 411 | 14 | 21 | 20 | 20 | 486 |
| Connexional Travel Fund | 0 | (4) | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sabbatical Fund | 51 | 21 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 105 |
| Fund for the Support of Presbyters & Deacons | 9,294 | (609) | (700) | (631) | (654) | 6,699 |
| Medical Benevolent Fund | 2,385 | (24) | (4) | 18 | 18 | 2,394 |
| Ministers Children's Relief Association | 2 | (9) | 7 | 0 | 0 | (0) |
| Listed Buildings | 22 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 22 |
| Fund for Property | 1,247 | 142 | 114 | 124 | 126 | 1,753 |
| Special Extension Fund | 2,292 | 31 | 65 | 88 | 88 | 2,563 |
| Fund for Training | 2,373 | 129 | 120 | 116 | 115 | 2,853 |
| Long Term Renewal Fund | 427 | 6 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 459 |
| Overseas Student Work | 330 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 346 |
| Centenary Hall Trust | 27,719 | (22) | 109 | 137 | 137 | 28,081 |
| World Mission Fund | 15,452 | (6,097) | (4,833) | (253) | (285) | 3,985 |
| Benevolent Fund | 393 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 411 |
| MIC Trust | 21,592 | 0 | (0) | 0 | 0 | 21,592 |
| Oxford Institute | 109 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 109 |
| Designated Training Fund | 2 | (2) | (0) | (0) | (0) | 0 |
| Langley House Trust | 88 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 88 |
| Total | 210,651 | (13,007) | (11,629) | (7,458) | (5,604) | 172,952 |

26. Pension Schemes

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | Matt Tattersall - Director of Finance and Resources tattersallm@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Resolutions | <p>26/1. The Conference receives the Report.</p> <p>26/2. The Conference approves that the previously agreed increase in pension contribution rates from Circuits in September 2023 is cancelled.</p> <p>26/3. The Conference approves that should circumstances allow, contributions from the property levy to the Pension Reserve Fund be suspended.</p> <p>26/4. The Conference approves that should circumstances allow over the coming years, the voluntary contributions to the Pension Reserve Fund be returned to the donors with interest paid at the CFB Deposit Rate.</p> <p>26/5. The Conference accepts the recommendation of the MMPS review task group to make no changes to the MMPS at the current time but to pass the review of MMPS to the Finance Sub-committee for ongoing consideration.</p> <p>26/6. The Conference approves the appointment of Mr Luke Wilcox and Mr Pete Harris as directors of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Trust Limited for a period of three years commencing 1 September 2023.</p> |

Summary of content

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Subject of aims | To update the Conference on pension issues including the estimated funding position and a report from the task group established by the Council to look at the future of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme (MMPS). |
| Main points | The risks concerning the pension schemes have materially reduced so some significant decisions need to be taken. |

26. Pension Schemes

| | |
|--|---|
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | Conference reports explain where we were: Conference 2022 Agenda Volume 2 (methodist.org.uk) Conference 2021 Agenda Volume 2 (methodist.org.uk) MC/22/13 sets out the terms of reference for the MMPS review task group MC/23/18 provides more detailed information on the pension issues |
| Consultations | A presentation by the Chair of the pension trustees was given at the November 2022 Finance Sub-committee. The resolutions in this paper are recommended by the Council. |

Summary of impact

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Standing Orders | The note to SO974 (1) will need amending to reflect the reduction in contributions to the Pension Reserve Fund to 0%. |
| Financial | Whilst decisions over the c£0.5bn pension funds are a matter for the pension trustees, the decisions they take have a material impact on finances across the connexion. |
| Wider connexional | The voluntary appeal for funds towards the pension reserve fund gained significant attention across the Connexion. The change in context and need for those funds is similarly a matter of wider connexional concern. |
| Risk | There is an opportunity materially to reduce the financial risk to the Church from the pension schemes. |

Introduction

- 1 This paper deals with pension issues that relate to the Methodist Conference as the “employing body” of the Methodist Ministers’ Pension Scheme (MMPS). It also covers issues that are the responsibility of the Methodist Council (the Council) as:
 - an employer in the Pension and Assurance Scheme for Lay Employees of the Methodist Church (PASLEMC), and
 - the lead employer for other Methodist bodies in PASLEMC.

26. Pension Schemes

- 2 At its meeting in January 2023 the Council received a paper updating it on significant developments affecting both pension schemes. Members of the Conference who are interested in understanding more of the detail are encouraged to read that Council paper which can be found at https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/28976/counc_mc23-18-pension-update.pdf.
- 3 This paper provides a simplified summary of the issues considered by the Council and makes important recommendations concerning the future of both schemes.
- 4 Whilst this paper deals with issues that relate to the effective investment of Methodist monies, it should be noted that the Investment Strategy of the pension schemes is the responsibility of the respective Pension Trustee. The Council and the Conference cannot direct that strategy, though they are able to offer comment on it.

Recap of the position prior to 2022

- 5 As at the date of the 2020 valuations both schemes were in deficit. Recovery plans were agreed for both schemes with funding provided by the Pension Reserve Fund (PRF).
- 6 The cost of future accrual in the MMPS had increased and was being temporarily subsidised from the PRF. The Conference agreed that circuit contributions rates should be increased from 1 September 2023 to meet the increased cost on an ongoing basis.
- 7 An agreement was reached with the Trustees of both schemes concerning long term funding. This agreement outlined an aspiration to reduce risk in the investment strategies of both schemes. It was envisaged that risk would be progressively reduced as circumstances allowed until a low risk investment portfolio by 2030 (PASLEMC) and 2035 (MMPS) was reached. To mitigate the risk in the meantime the Council agreed that various connexional properties would be offered as security. In addition, a voluntary appeal was launched to add funds to the PRF.
- 8 The Conference affirmed the work of an MMPS task group and requested that proposals for the future of the MMPS were brought to the Conference of 2023 ensuring that any such proposals fully considered the ethical stance of the Methodist Church.

Recent developments

- 9 Major economic turbulence in 2022 led to a dramatic, unprecedented and unexpected increase in long term interest rates. This was driven mainly by the

invasion of Ukraine, but also the government's "mini-budget" in September. The consequence of this was a large reduction in the value of the future liabilities of the pension schemes. Whilst the value of the pension investments also fell during this time, it was by a lesser amount. Therefore, the overall funding position of the schemes materially improved.

- 10 This change in the funding position was so dramatic that the de-risking strategy that had been agreed to occur over 10 years (PASLEMC) and 15 years (MMPS) was largely delivered over 10 months. A consequence of the accelerated approach to de-risking is that the Trustees have significantly reduced the amount of money they invest with the Central Finance Board (CFB). Whilst this reduction was always anticipated, the pace was not, and the CFB have had to put in place measures to address their loss of income. In addition, the Methodist Council agreed to fund from the PRF a temporary increase in charges from the CFB to avoid these being passed on to individual churches and Circuits.
- 11 The schemes only undergo a full valuation every three years. However, in the intervening period, the actuaries use a range of estimated data to produce interim valuations. The interim funding positions as at 31 August 2022 were MMPS £48.0m surplus and PASLEMC £2.3m deficit. The cost of future accrual in MMPS also reduced dramatically.
- 12 In summary:
 - There has been an unprecedented and unforeseeable improvement in the valuation of the pension schemes.
 - De-risking has achieved target funding positions 8 years (PASLEMC) and 13 years (MMPS) ahead of plan.
 - Having been de-risked, the schemes are less at risk from future changes in market conditions, ie the reduction in the deficit experienced in recent months would not be fully reversed even if interest rates returned to previous levels.
 - Disinvestment of funds from the CFB has been at a pace that left the CFB with an unexpected deficit.

Insurance buy-out/buy-in

- 13 When the decision was taken to close PASLEMC to future accrual in 2019, it was always the case that the scheme would need a longer-term solution. As the scheme is closed and the number of pensioners declines over the coming decades, it will not be viable to retain in-house management of the scheme in the long run. A common solution in this situation is an insurance buy out. This

26. Pension Schemes

is where the scheme is closed and an insurer takes over all the investments and pays the pensions using a form of insurance called an 'annuity'. There would be no actual change to the amount of pension a pensioner received, just who they received it from.

- 14 The pension investments would sit with the annuity provider and would not be directly subject to the ethics of the Methodist Church. However, this is no different to the current position where the investment strategy of the Pension Trustees cannot be directed by the Conference. Also, in choosing such an insurance provider, the Church could ensure ethical considerations were factored into the selection process.
- 15 As the MMPS remains open to future accrual, a buy-out is not an option. However, the Trustee could undertake an insurance buy-in. This is similar to a buy-out, except the scheme would not be wound up but would purchase and hold annuities from an insurer to cover the current liabilities. The Trustee would then use the cash flow from these annuities to pay out pensions due. Like a buy-in, the investments would be with an insurer. This approach does not require Council or Conference approval as the scheme would not be wound up. However, the Trustees are engaging with the Council as this opportunity is explored.
- 16 Insurance buy-ins/outs take a long time (estimated at two years) to negotiate and implement. The Director of Finance and Resources and Connexional Treasurer are leading the discussions with the pension trustees, reporting back to each Finance Sub-committee meeting with escalation through the SRC to Council and Conference as required.

Pension Reserve Fund (PRF)

- 17 When the Conference launched the appeal for additional voluntary contributions to the PRF it was on the basis that a well-funded PRF provided extra security to the pension trustees. In turn, this supported the setting of a long-term target for each scheme and an agreed de-risking path to achieve that target. This helped prevent the setting of a more aggressive target, a spiralling of the pension deficit, and an unaffordable increase in the ongoing cost of the pension scheme. All this remains true.
- 18 It was implicit from the actuarial assumptions that the funds in the PRF would be required for most of the period up to the target dates of 2030 (PASLEMC) and 2035 (MMPS). The unprecedented economic events of the last year mean that the investments have been de-risked over the course of months, not years. In this context, it is much less likely that the £7.6m of voluntary contributions to the PRF will be required.

- 19** Whilst it may not be clear for the next 18-24 months that those voluntary contributions are surplus to requirements, it is more likely than not. It is for the Conference to agree how any unspent funds are used, but given the circumstances, it is proposed that should the funds not be required that they are returned to the respective donors. As the funds have accrued interest whilst in the PRF it is appropriate this is also passed to the donors. It is proposed to pay interest at the CFB deposit fund rate.
- 20** By the end of August 2023 it is likely that the total funds in the PRF will exceed £50m. Allowing for the deficit payments to the PASLEMC (£12m) and the potential future return of the voluntary contributions with interest, significant funds will still remain. Should the process towards insurance buy-in/out continue successfully it is possible there will be no ongoing requirement for a PRF. It is therefore proposed that subject to satisfactory negotiations with the pension trustees, contributions from the property levy to the PRF are suspended from September 2023.

MMPS review task group

- 21** The task group has been reviewing the future of the MMPS using four main parameters:
- the affordability of the scheme and the value for money provided;
 - where risk over future costs and benefits should lie between circuits and ministers;
 - the appropriateness of governance arrangements in the context of the Church, and
 - the Covenant relationship between the Church and those called to serve as ministers.
- 22** The task group has received a verbal update on the steps being taken by the Church of England to develop a new type of pension scheme – a collective defined contribution (CDC) scheme. Whilst it shares some features of a defined contribution (DC) scheme, a CDC scheme aims to achieve higher levels of investment return (and therefore higher pensions) by sharing the risk between member employees over time. This option will be further explored with Church of England representatives during 2023.
- 23** The task group commissioned work from a firm of pension specialists that addressed some key questions:
- Will future accrual costs increase as the schemes de-risk?

26. Pension Schemes

They confirmed that based on the figures as at the time of the 2020 Valuation, the costs of the pension scheme would increase from the current 38.8% to c47.2%. However, given the material increase in the discount rate since 2020, the de-risked level of contributions would now be closer to 22.3%.

- Would a defined contribution pension scheme offer better benefits to members than the MMPS?
For the current level of contributions MMPS provides a higher level of pension than an equivalent DC pension. However, a DC pension would offer more flexibility. If a minister wanted to forgo the provision of a 50% pension to a surviving dependant, they would be able to increase their own pension. Also, a DC scheme would offer more flexibility to draw down benefits sooner.
- Are the pension levels paid from MMPS reasonable?
Research suggests that £20k represents a modest, but acceptable level of income in retirement. However, it would assume that housing costs are limited, whereas ministers may face above average housing costs. For a minister starting at age 35 with no other pension provision, and serving the Church until state pension age, their MMPS pension plus their state pension would total c£20k.

24 In the light of the very different circumstances now faced and the input from the pension specialists, the group concluded as follows:

- For the level of benefits provided, the MMPS is not an expensive scheme. Reducing the cost of the scheme would reduce the benefits to members. As the benefits provided are not excessive and only provide for a modest level of income in retirement, reducing the pension further is not recommended.
- Based on the current position, it is likely that the cost of future accrual in the scheme will fall dramatically at the next valuation in September 2023. Whilst circumstances could change, particularly in the medium term, the immediate pressure from increasing costs has gone away.
- MMPS is less flexible than alternative pension arrangements but does provide a basic pension to all with the risk sitting with the Church. A DC scheme would offer more flexibility for ministers but would also increase the risk they carry. Whether the Church should offer more flexibility and allow ministers to take more decisions for themselves about their pensions is a question about the relationship between Church and minister. The Secretary of the Conference will take this question forward.

- CDC may offer an interesting alternative pension arrangement, but it is some years away from being a viable replacement for MMPS.
- The group is stood down for the foreseeable future; no changes to MMPS are recommended, and conversations over the future of MMPS should continue at a slower pace, overseen for now by the Finance Sub-committee. This approach will allow the focus to be on developing the insurance buy-in/out options whilst not closing the door on new arrangements for MMPS.

Employer Nominated Directors

- 25** The Methodist Ministers' Pension Trust Limited (MMPTL) is the Trustee of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme (MMPS). Under its Articles, six directors of MMPTL must be nominated by the Council and appointed by the Conference. One-third of the Church-appointed Directors retire by rotation each year and are eligible for reappointment.
- 26** In order to regularise appointments, Mr Luke Wilcox was appointed by the Conference of 2022 for a term of just one year from September 2022, with a view to renewing his appointment for a further three years from September 2023. Mr Wilcox is willing to serve a further three-year term and his nomination is recommended by the Council.
- 27** Mr John Wyatt is due to retire by rotation on 31 August 2023.
- 28** Mr Pete Harris was appointed by the Council to the Trustee of the Pension and Assurance Scheme for Lay Employees of the Methodist Church (PASLEMC) from September 2022. Mr Harris has indicated his willingness to also serve as a director of MMPTL and his nomination is recommended by the Council.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 26/1. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 26/2. The Conference approves that the previously agreed increase in pension contribution rates from circuits in September 2023 is cancelled.**
- 26/3. The Conference approves that should circumstances allow, contributions from the property levy to the Pension Reserve Fund be suspended.**
- 26/4. The Conference approves that should circumstances allow over the coming years, the voluntary contributions to the Pension Reserve Fund be returned to the donors with interest paid at the CFB Deposit Rate.**

26. Pension Schemes

- 26/5. The Conference accepts the recommendation of the MMPS review task group to make no changes to the MMPS at the current time but to pass the review of MMPS to the Finance Sub-committee for ongoing consideration.**
- 26/6. The Conference approves the appointment of Mr Luke Wilcox and Mr Pete Harris as directors of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Trust Limited for a period of three years commencing 1 September 2023.**

27. Online Church

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Mark Rowland Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee rowlandm@methodistchurch.org.uk Mrs Joanne Anderton Secretary of the Law and Polity Committee lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Resolutions | 27/1. The Conference receives the Report. 27/2. The Conference recognises the close relation of the questions of online celebrations of Holy Communion and predominantly online churches and, subject to the outcome of the connexional period of discernment, affirms in principle the possibility of predominantly online churches. 27/3. The Conference requests all connexional and district committees and other relevant entities to consider the implications for them if provisions for predominantly online churches were to be made by the Conference, and to submit their observations and comments to the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee by 31 January 2024. 27/4. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee, in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee. to consider what work would be needed in order to enable predominantly online churches to be lawfully recognised within the <i>Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church</i> and to propose appropriate resolutions to the Conference of 2024. |

27. Online Church

Summary of Content and Impact

| | |
|--|--|
| Subject and aims | The issues involved in establishing and operating online churches |
| Main points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominantly online churches, which conduct the majority of their activities online, could be recognised theologically. • Predominantly online churches appear to be legally possible. • The outcome of the (ongoing) connexional period of discernment on Holy Communion and Online Worship is critical to this. • Some activities would always need an onsite element. • The implications of enabling predominantly online churches could be wide ranging and connexional, district and other appropriate bodies are requested to consider the effect on them and to send comments. |
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | Holy Communion and Online Worship (2021) Oversight and Trusteeship (2022) |
| Consultations | Broad consultation with connexional, district and other bodies proposed. |
| Impact | Multiple bodies need to respond to consultation. Longer term impact to be determined by consultation. |

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Conference of 2022 'directed the Faith and Order and Law and Polity Committees to consider the issues involved in establishing and operating an online church, and to report to the Conference of 2023, together with any recommendations for any necessary amendments to the Deed of Union and Standing Orders.' A working party of the Faith and Order Committee has considered the theological questions, while the Law and Polity Committee has considered legal questions that arise. There are many expressions of Christian discipleship, worship and mission taking place online in the name of the Methodist Church or in which Methodists share. This piece of work is directed to the more specific question of whether it is possible to have a 'local church' or 'society' which operates predominantly online and to explore the implications of that. Not all online mission and ministry will need to be an online church but in

some cases that may be appropriate and we here seek to understand how that would operate within our theology and polity.

- 1.2 We have reflected on how to understand 'online church'. By it we imagine a community which conducts the majority of its activity online, including regular worship, meetings to transact the church's business and gatherings for fellowship and study. Just as onsite churches can conduct some activities online, we recognise that online churches can also conduct some activities onsite, as appropriate. In particular, we have identified certain activities that will always need some kind of onsite aspect, even if the majority join online. To make this clear, we have used the language of 'predominantly online' throughout this report.

2. Current situation

- 2.1 Methodists have been engaging in online expressions of Christian faith and discipleship for many years, including meeting for worship and fellowship, engaging through social media and producing content to share Christian faith through videos, blogs and other means. During the Covid lockdown this was greatly accelerated as onsite gathering was forbidden. Questions as to how the church relates to the online space which were already at large have been brought into very great prominence as a result.
- 2.2 At present, Methodist churches can gather online for worship and fellowship and can engage in evangelism and mission online. There are also online expressions of the ministry of pastoral care. The 2021 Conference adopted a period of discernment to last until 31 August 2024 in which services of Holy Communion may take place online. Temporary provisions have been in place since 2020 to enable governance meetings and meetings to transact church business to take place online and more permanent provisions are being worked on. There are therefore very many aspects of the church's life that already can, and do, take place online. However, the presenting issue for this report is that the definition of 'Local Church' in the Deed of Union would seem to exclude the possibility of predominantly online churches:

1 (xv) 'Local Church' and 'Society' are equivalent expressions and mean (subject to any exceptions provided for by Standing Orders) the whole body of members of the Methodist Church connected with and attending one particular place of worship.

Predominantly online churches would have no necessary connection to 'one particular place of worship' and aspects of their life that did occur onsite might be in varying locations, arranged according to need. While there could be reflection

27. Online Church

on the meaning of 'place' and the extent to which online contexts can be regarded as 'places', we have instead chosen to consider the question more broadly and to build on the reflection that informed the report on *Holy Communion and Online Worship*¹ (hereinafter HCOW).

3. Considering context

- 3.1 The question here does not arise simply in the abstract, but is a product of particular missional work in different parts of the Connexion. Pressure of time has meant that an extensive consultation process has not been possible, but we have sought to gather relevant examples through conversation with those ministering in these contexts.
- 3.2 The experience of lockdown and the possibilities of online worship, fellowship and meeting that emerged in that time have inspired many across the connexion with new possibilities that had previously been unimagined or only suitable in very particular situations. One of the insights of lockdown was the way in which online church could include people for whom onsite gathering had been difficult or impossible. Alongside sometimes challenging situations relating to property, online communities can be an attractive option. Many of the usual requirements of a local Methodist church can be provided online including regular worship, a Church Council, stewards' meetings and so on.
- 3.4 Following the Conference's decision on online celebrations of Holy Communion, services of Holy Communion can be celebrated online and often participants can create a sense of sacred space in their own homes for these services. Baptisms must take place with the person administering baptism and the person being baptised in the same place but there are possibilities including a small gathering onsite with others joining online as well as celebrating baptism during a particular and special gathering, for example a retreat.
- 3.5 There are different models for pastoral care online. One example is triplets where groups of three can meet via Zoom for support and accountability. Messaging applications such as WhatsApp can provide for groups to keep in close contact and share news and concern.
- 3.6 A frequent question was about the way in which safeguarding policies apply in a predominantly online context and how applicable current forms of training are. If the Methodist Church were to authorise predominantly online churches, it is

1 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/21765/conf-2021-39-holy-communion-and-online-worship.pdf>

recognised that further work would be needed with regard to safeguarding in such communities.

- 3.7 Further, in order to be a Methodist church, a community must belong to a Circuit and be within a District, which in most cases are currently geographically based. Initially it seems likely predominantly online churches will have a geographical centre of gravity, but as the work grows they are likely to draw people from a much wider area. Key questions include: when the minister moves appointment, what happens? Can a community move with the minister? How is moving on and good transition enabled?

4. Anthropology

- 4.1 The Christian understanding of what it means to be a human being is deeply rooted in our understanding of salvation and resists the individualism which is so much a part of modern life. We become our truest selves when united to Christ and to be united to Christ is to be part of the church which is his body. Our sense of who we are is shaped by the contexts in which we live and move and we are increasingly finding that online life has become one of the environments through which many people both understand and express themselves².
- 4.2 Christians celebrate the Incarnation as central to our faith remembering that, in Jesus, God lived a human and bodily life. We therefore celebrate the physical aspects of our experience. When gathering online, it is important that we remember that we still gather as 'enfleshed' human beings. It is the meeting which is virtual, not the people who share in it, and we therefore understand that an online gathering is an appropriate way to celebrate and nurture our incarnational faith.
- 4.3 Although all churches would wish to be welcoming to all, expressions of church vary and individuals may feel more at home in one church context than another. Ways of worship and the culture of an individual church can unintentionally exclude those who are 'not like us'. In discussing the possibility of an online church, it is worth bearing in mind what Palfrey and Gasser referred to as the difference between "digital immigrants" and "digital natives." In 2008, their book *Born Digital*³ studied the first generation of digital natives. It is already (in 2023) out of date because digital technologies and associated behaviours develop at such a rate - the opening observation of the number of people carrying iPods on a

² HCOW §5.1-5.2

³ Palfrey, John, and Urs. Gasser. *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives*. New York: Basic Books, 2008, 1.

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subway train and later discussion of “MySpace” is proof enough. However, many of their observations around digital natives (those born after 1980) remain true despite the particular platforms changing.

- 4.4 They draw a distinction between digital immigrants, who had to learn how to use email and computers but remember how to use a Walkman, and digital natives, who grew up with digital connected technology developing alongside them. In their view, ‘unlike Digital Immigrants, Digital Natives live much of their lives online, without distinguishing the online and the offline... Instead of thinking of their digital identity and their physical-space identity as separate things, they just have an identity...they are joined by a set of common practices... [and are] constantly connected.’⁴ It is important, therefore, to remember in all discussions that while the concept of Digital Church might be alien for some, for others it will be their natural place of connection. Pete Phillips draws on Hine as he writes that ‘the internet is now embedded, embodied and everyday’⁵ – that is true but, of course, while for many people digital experience is now very much “everyday”, for others it continues to feel unfamiliar or uncomfortable. However, for digital natives, digital *is* life. For some, the digital connectivity that the church and wider society embraced through the Covid-19 pandemic came naturally and brought a desperately needed place of connection, worship and spiritual growth. Others of course, longed to return to physical places of connection and experiences having found digital connection strained or false.
- 4.5 When considering the issue of online celebrations of Holy Communion, the 2021 Conference report noted:

those who have prepared this report realised that a key question was whether there was a danger of objections to Holy Communion online which are based purely on assumptions or which represent a barrier which is not imposed when the service is held with the congregation in one physical location. There is a parallel here to the early discussions on children receiving Holy Communion, when there was a lot of concern about whether or not children understood what was happening despite the fact that adults are not expected to prove a level of comprehension before being invited to share in the sacrament. One challenge in all discussions was the need to be alert to what is a genuine theological

4 Palfrey and Gasser, *Born Digital*, 4-5.

5 Phillips, Peter M, *The Bible, Social Media, and Digital Culture*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2020, 20.

argument and what is an assumption based on prior experience, recognising that many opinions will naturally be a mixture of the two.⁶

- 4.6 We might add a further question when it comes to the possibility of predominantly online church. We might instinctively bring assumptions and experiences that lead us to start by asking ‘is predominantly online church possible?’ One way to bring our own assumptions to light, particularly if we are not digital natives, is to turn the question around: ‘What theological objections exist which would prevent a church from usually gathering online?’
- 4.7 As the report noted,

Digital theological anthropology therefore asks not simply ‘who are we when we are online’ but also ‘who are we because it is possible to go online’. Increasingly, as technologies advance, we will be pointed forward to an even more integrated world. As our everyday life is impacted more and more by digital possibilities and the digital world becomes further integrated into our life, our relationships with others and our assumptions about living, Christian theology will need to address this new context and ask ‘how are we to be renewed in the image of God?’⁷

At root, if the church is to be where people are, then the changing patterns of our lives and the prevalence and extent of our digital interaction and living will need to be taken into account in our understanding of what it is to be the church.

5. Ecclesiology

- 5.1 HCOW summarised its section on ecclesiology as follows:

In summary, therefore, a Methodist understanding of the Church, particularly in relationship to our understanding of the Lord’s Supper, encourages us to think of the Church as a community which bears witness to the whole history of salvation (and does so in celebrations of the Eucharist, although not exclusively so), is gathered and interdependent, and is open and inclusive. Online Holy Communion invites us to consider once more how this understanding of the Church may be reflected in all of our worship.⁸

6 HCOW §1.3

7 HCOW §5.7

8 HCOW §3.11

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- 5.2 The Committee also considered the description of church in the Joint Anglican-Methodist report on the ecclesiology of emerging expressions of church⁹ which was received by the Conference of 2012:
1. A community of people who are called by God to be committed disciples of Jesus Christ and to live out their discipleship in the world;
 2. A community that regularly assembles for Christian worship and is then sent out into the world to engage in mission and service;
 3. A community in which the Gospel is proclaimed in ways that are appropriate to the life of its members;
 4. A community in which the Scriptures are regularly preached and taught;
 5. A community in which baptism is conferred in appropriate circumstances as a rite of initiation into the Church;
 6. A community that celebrates the Lord's Supper;
 7. A community where pastoral responsibility and presidency at the Lord's Supper is exercised by the appropriate authorized ministry;
 8. A community that is united to others through: mutual commitment; spiritual communion; structures of governance, oversight and communion; and an authorized ministry in common.
- 5.3 While that report went on to note that 'a Christian community that lacks some or all of these essential ecclesial elements is not a church', it also noted that Methodists are generally reluctant to 'unchurch' particular communities. However, in the context of discerning what communities are capable of being 'Methodist churches' it recognised that all these elements would certainly be essential. Each of these might look different in a predominantly online context, and would be more possible in some online contexts than others (eg in what way are worshippers watching a service on Youtube 'assembled'?). It is certainly possible to imagine predominantly online communities that would embody, in ways appropriate to their context, each of these elements.
- 5.4 The second point of this list highlights a rhythm of the church's life that is significant to our understanding of the church's worship and mission. We gather as God's people in worship and are sent out in mission: this cycle of gathering and dispersing can be seen as the 'breathing' of the church, necessary to maintain its healthy life. While it may look different, we suggest that predominantly online churches would have a similar kind of rhythm of gathering and dispersing. Gathered in worship or fellowship in an online context such as

9 *Fresh Expressions in the Mission of the Church: Report of an Anglican-Methodist working party*, Church House Publishing, 2012, 181.

Zoom, church members are then 'sent out' to be Christians in their own place and local communities and to engage in mission and service where they are.

- 5.4 At root, the Reformers' marks of the church (where the word is faithfully preached and the sacraments duly administered) are the key questions and if those are present, then in principle, a community should be recognisable as a church. At one level, if we can recognise that Holy Communion can be celebrated online then the possibility of a church community existing online may follow. HCOW also recognised this point:

The question of the nature of [the] Lord's Supper and the question of what it means to be a church are closely related, firstly because the Methodist Church understands that Holy Communion is the worship of the gathered Church, not simply an individual act of devotion. In addition, some have argued that it is not possible to be a church unless the sacraments are celebrated, which raises an important question for any Local Church which intends to gather for worship mainly online. Can such a gathering be a church, as Methodism understands being a church, without some form of online Holy Communion? A Methodist understanding of online Holy Communion is, therefore, related to a Methodist understanding of the Church itself.¹⁰

We note in this regard that the Connexion is currently in a period of discernment on that question and therefore any action in response to the direction of the Conference for this piece of work will need to be aligned with the conclusions of that discernment.

- 5.5 A Methodist church must be able to baptise people, confirm them and receive them into membership or it cannot be a Methodist church. Both baptism and confirmation have a necessary physical element: in baptism the one administering the sacrament must pour water over the person or dip them in water. In confirmation, laying on of hands by a presbyter is needed. Provided that an appropriate person is able to visit the person being baptised or confirmed so that baptism and/or confirmation can be administered, while others join the service online, then both these rites are possible. Reception into membership (for those who are already baptised and confirmed) involves offering the 'hand of fellowship'¹¹ which is representative of relationship and belonging and we suggest that suitable online versions of this gesture could be developed.

¹⁰ HCOW §3.1

¹¹ See, for example, *Methodist Worship Book*, p. 83

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6. Mission

- 6.1 The connexional *God For All* (GFA) strategy has as its aim 'to present a contextual, coherent, and coordinated Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth'¹² and it names one of its five core areas of focus for change as 'Digital Presence: Mission for the Digital Age.'¹³ As a Church we have begun to understand the role that digital increasingly plays in the larger mission of God through the Church. One outworking of GFA is the increased investment in 'digital' as a place of mission for the church. The 2022 Christmas and Advent campaign through social media reached around 1.4 million people with the video content being viewed more than 250,400 times. However, beyond a passive engagement the videos drove 5,660 clicks through to the Methodist Church website where in the digital space we were able to introduce this particular subset to the Christian faith through a message of inclusion and welcome.
- 6.2 The Methodist Church aspires to be 'justice-seeking' and the strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity is part of enabling us to be 'a Church in which God's unconditional love is expressed in word and actions, where all are fully able to play their part in the Church's life'¹⁴. For some, online provision is a key part of enabling them to play their part in the Church's life. During the lockdown, many observed, for example, that housebound members were able to be more actively involved in worship and church activities because of online gathering. At the same time, for others, online provision raises challenges around availability and ability to use the relevant equipment and software. Looking more generally, in a context in which church buildings are being closed in many areas, it may be that online provision might assist in responding to that. However, the equality impacts of this should also be considered, particularly if onsite provision became primarily associated with areas that are more affluent. The concerns of Justice, Dignity and Solidarity should be kept at the forefront as practice develops.
- 6.3 We might reread Martyn Atkins' reflections of 2008 in light of the digital age. Atkins described the collective essence of the church as derived from the missionary God, and 'created to share in the *missio dei*.'¹⁵ At the time rather than "digital" (not surprising since Facebook was still in its infancy), he was reflecting on how Fresh Expressions were challenging the nature of the church; we have since then, seen within our own denomination and beyond the fruit that has

12 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/19181/conf-2020-4-evangelism-and-growth.pdf>

13 GFA §32

14 *Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity*, Methodist Conference 2021, Agenda p. 756

15 Atkins, Martyn, "What is the essence of the Church?", in Croft, Stephen (ed.), *Mission Shaped Questions*, London: Church House Publishing, 2008, 17, 19.

been possible by including Fresh Expressions within the broader description of 'church'. Of course, all Fresh Expressions (Café Churches, Surfer Churches, Biker Churches or even Sticky Churches) have never intended to serve all people, but they have witnessed to and made space for individual subgroups of society that might find the inherited ways of being church alien. Whilst in the 1990s and 2000s we were able to expand an understanding of church to include Fresh Expressions, now in 2023, it is crucial we widen that understanding again to include digital as an expression of church.

7. Legal Considerations

7.1 The Law and Polity Committee has considered the legal requirements of operating an online church and offers its thoughts below.

7.2 In so far as the law of England and Wales is concerned:

1. There is no statutory requirement for a place of worship to be certified or registered as such;
2. If the worshipping congregation wishes to solemnise marriages in their place of worship, that place of worship must be both certified under section 2 of the Places of Worship Registration Act 1855 and registered under section 41 of the Marriage Act 1949;
3. There may be some limited advantage in being certified as a place of worship to allow business rates exemption for the physical 'office' of a church to be claimed;
4. Although there may be a practical necessity for a church to have a correspondence address (and/or addresses for the relevant trustees) there does not appear to be any legislative or regulatory requirement that an unincorporated body such as a Local Church must have a physical presence to be recognised as existing. Neither the Charity Commission (registration as a charity) nor HMRC (registration for Gift Aid purposes) appear to require the charity itself to have a physical presence, other than a correspondence address for the purposes of registration if required;
5. At the present time, until tested by a court case, physical and online places/spaces remain distinct in the eyes of the legislature and the courts.

7.3 The main advantages of maintaining a certified physical place of worship, as opposed to operating a wholly (or predominantly) online church, appear to be:

1. the ability for a congregation to register its certified place of worship for solemnisation of marriages;

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2. the potential ability to claim exemption from the payment of business rates for an 'office' which is associated with a certified place of worship (although as the exemption appears to flow from the fact that the place of worship itself is certified as such, if there is no place of worship to be certified because the church meets online, it seems unlikely that the 'office' exemption could be, or would even need to be, claimed); and
3. (for practical reasons) having a distinct correspondence address for the purposes of registration as a charity with the Charity Commission (if required) or to claim Gift Aid by reason of registration with HMRC.

7.4 However, provided that:

1. the online church has a correspondence address (which could be that of the minister's manse or circuit office); and
2. the online church is able to open a bank account with just a correspondence address; and
3. the online church has some managing trustees who have physical addresses which can be provided to the Charity Commission and other official bodies if required; and
4. the governance structure of the Methodist Church permits a Local Church to exist without a physical presence;

there does not appear to be any reason why a Methodist congregation which meets entirely or predominantly online cannot be operated or registered as a charity and enjoy the benefits (eg Gift Aid) which a congregation meeting onsite can do.

7.5 It should also be noted that a CCLI licence is required for a congregation to play music and/or use other media in any act of worship, which includes online worship. However, provided the online church has a correspondence address, obtaining a CCLI licence for an online congregation ought not to be an issue.

7.6 In so far as the law of the other jurisdictions is different, further consideration will need to be given as to the impact of such differences on the requirements for certification and/or registration as a place of worship, and on the advantages and disadvantages which may flow from certification and/or registration. It is not anticipated, however, that any such differences will alter the basis and nature of any possible amendments to the Deed of Union and/or Standing Orders referred to in paragraph 8.2 below.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 We recommend that, as a matter of theological principle, that if it is discerned that Holy Communion can be celebrated in online context, then churches which meet predominantly online can be recognised. By these we mean churches which carry out the vast majority of their activity online and will have no established onsite presence. Some activities, such as baptism and confirmation will continue to require some onsite aspects, as discussed in paragraph 5.5, and (under current law) solemnisation of marriages in England and Wales must take place in a validly registered building (see paragraph 7.2 above), but venues for these may vary and may be arranged on an as needed basis. In saying this, we note that the period of discernment regarding Holy Communion and Online Worship does not conclude until 2024. Any implementation of online church provisions would need to depend on and be consistent with the outcome of that discernment. The key question at this stage is whether the Conference agrees with this recommendation. If it does, then further work is needed on the practical consequences of that, which could be wide-ranging and have implications for many areas of the Methodist Church's work.
- 8.2 The first of these consequences would be that the definition of 'local church' in the Deed of Union, mentioned above would need attention. That definition allows for exceptions to be made in Standing Orders and we would recommend that an appropriate Standing Order to provide for predominantly online churches be drafted.
- 8.3 In conversations about this work, we noted that particular issues arise for predominantly online churches around a variety of areas including safeguarding, where there will need to be further work about how policies, procedures and training apply for this kind of online situation. Some guidance will be needed around financial management. It will be important in making any provision for predominantly online churches that proper arrangements are made for all the requirements that will need to be complied with.
- 8.4 In the longer term, consideration would need to be given to how a predominantly online church would relate to wider connexional structures: does it belong to a geographical circuit or district? Or do we need to consider online circuits and/or districts? How would stationing work? What does it mean for a minister to 'move on' from a predominantly online church? There are probably many other consequential effects. But at root these are practical considerations which follow from the theological discernment and not matters by which the point of principle should be decided. However, they will need careful consideration.

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8.5 We therefore recommend that further work is needed and propose that, during the period leading to the conclusion of the period of discernment on Holy Communion and online worship, all connexional and district committees, groups and teams give consideration to the questions that might arise for their work from provisions for predominantly online churches. Each such body should consider:

- How might this affect our work?
- What questions need considering?
- What existing policies, Standing Orders, procedures etc. may need changing?
- What new provision might need to be made?

Comments should be sent to faithandorder@methodistchurch.org.uk by 31 January 2024. This will enable the Faith and Order Committee, in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee, to consider what work would be needed in order to enable predominantly online churches to be lawfully recognised within the Methodist Church's constitution and to propose appropriate resolutions to the Conference of 2024.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 27/1. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 27/2. The Conference recognises the close relation of the questions of online celebrations of Holy Communion and predominantly online churches and, subject to the outcome of the connexional period of discernment, affirms in principle the possibility of predominantly online churches.**
- 27/3. The Conference requests all connexional and district committees and other relevant entities to consider the implications for them if provisions for predominantly online churches were to be made by the Conference, and to submit their observations and comments to the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee by 31 January 2024.**
- 27/4. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee, in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee, to consider what work would be needed in order to enable predominantly online churches to be lawfully recognised within the *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church* and to propose appropriate resolutions to the Conference of 2024.**

28. Stationing Committee

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| Contact name and details | Pamela Lavender, Chair of the Stationing Committee chairstationing@methodistchurch.org.uk |
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Stationing Committee wishes to express its grateful thanks to all those many people who, in ever-changing and sometimes challenging circumstances, have given many hours of work to the important task of helping to match our ministers to Circuits in need of their gifts and graces.
- 1.2. The Stationing Committee is grateful to the Revd Jenny Impey, who has guided the Stationing Matching Group, to the Revd Dr Stephen Lindridge, who chairs the work of the Stationing Action Group, to Deacon Karen McBride and the Revd Dr David Hinchliffe, who guide the work of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee, and to the Revd Dr Claire Potter, Ministerial Coordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries, for all the prayerful work they undertake throughout the year.
- 1.3. The circuit appointments submitted for Stationing Matching were, once again, scrutinised carefully in order to understand the needs of the Connexion. Those appointments agreed to be of very great need are prioritised in the Stationing Matching meetings and every effort is made to match such places with a minister. This scrutiny is now indicating that there is a growing number of places across the Connexion where ordained ministry is very thinly spread, which is a matter of increasing concern.
- 1.4. The Stationing Committee is aware that much reconfiguration of Circuits and development of teams of lay workers, deacons and presbyters is being undertaken in order to facilitate effective mission and ministry, and is very grateful for these initiatives.
- 1.5. The Stationing Committee is very grateful to the presbyters and deacons who offer to develop their gifts and skills to be used in Circuits to enable them to develop their mission and ministry. It is also appreciative of those ministers willing to serve in the places that need them most.
- 1.6. The Stationing Committee has continued to work with Bevan Powell, the Connexional Adviser for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, to continue to challenge any discriminatory behaviour of which it is aware and to embed the recommendations of the JDS strategy within its work.

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2. Stationing Matching Group

- 2.1. Stationing matching is a process by which we attempt to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Circuits and presbyters. The work of the Stationing Matching Group was, as always, conducted carefully and prayerfully with time being taken to consider each presbyter and Circuit as the group sought to make matches which would enable presbyters and Circuits to flourish in mission and ministry, and to ensure that ministry was spread across the Connexion in response to the greatest need.
- 2.2. By the beginning of the matching process, 108 circuit profiles and 72 presbyteral profiles had been submitted. As the process continued, a further two circuit profiles and five presbyteral profiles were submitted. Twenty of the appointments were designated as Critical after scrutiny, compared to 44 last year. This meant the group was able to focus more carefully on the Circuits in greatest need of ministry and ensure a better spread of matches across the Connexion. Inevitably, it was not possible to make matches for every appointment and throughout the process discernment continued with permission being given for profiles to be reshaped in order that matches might be made with deacons, probationer presbyters and those who have been recommended for transfer from other churches and conferences.
- 2.3. During the first meeting of the Stationing Matching Group (SMG1), at the beginning of November, there were 107 Circuits seeking presbyters and 68 presbyters available for matching. Sixty-seven matches were made, including matches for 19 out of the 20 critical appointments. Fifty-nine out of 67 visits resulted in invitations being issued and accepted. Of the eight that were declined, six were declined by the presbyter and two by the Circuit. Overall, 88% of the visits resulted in invitations being issued and accepted.
- 2.4. The second meeting of the Stationing Matching Group (SMG2) met in early December. An additional circuit profile had been designated as critical. There were 48 circuit profiles to be considered, of which four were critical and only 11 presbyters available for matching. Nine matches were made, including matches for three of the critical appointments. Eight out of nine visits resulted in invitations being issued and accepted. Overall, 89% of the visits resulted in accepted invitations.
- 2.5. The third meeting of the Stationing Matching Group (SMG3) was held online in January. At that stage there were 41 Circuits seeking presbyters, among them two appointments designated as critical, and only six presbyters were available.

Matches were found for five of the presbyters and four of the visits resulted in invitations being issued and accepted (80%).

- 2.6. Since SMG3, the Stationing Action Group (SAG) has met monthly to seek to match the remaining presbyters together with others who become available during the connexional year. At the time of writing, seven Circuits (including four superintendencies) are seeking presbyters and there is one presbyter available who is seeking a part-time appointment.
- 2.7. The Stationing Matching Group is grateful for the engagement of presbyters and Circuits in exploring the matches, all those who prepared profiles, drew up lists to indicate the kinds of presbyters and Circuits they could see themselves working with and flourishing in, prepared for visits and travelled out of their comfort zones to engage prayerfully in discernment conversations. The final recommendations to the Conference come not from the SMG but from the presbyters and Circuits who say yes to one another and begin the journey of discovering gifts and opportunities for mission and who will commit themselves to welcome services to “join together in the work to which God has called us.” (*Methodist Worship Book* page 361).
- 2.8. The SMG invited Bevan Powell, the Connexional Equalities and Diversity Adviser, to observe each phase of SMG and the Stationing Committee is considering his recommendations as we continue to build on our commitment to justice, dignity and solidarity.

3. Report of the Initial Stationing Sub-Committee (ISSC)

- 3.1. The ISSC1 met on 4-5 January 2023.
- 3.2. **Probationer Appointments:** Twenty-four presbyteral probationer profiles had been approved by the Initial Stationing Scrutiny group. The scrutiny group worked with several Circuits to help them to restructure and rethink profiles so that they were suitable for probationer presbyters. One of these 24 profiles was submitted for a probationer presbyter or a Minister of another Conference or Church (MOCC).
- 3.3. **Probationers:** Twenty presbyteral probationers were matched with appointments. One probationer returning to probation after several years of ill health was not matched at ISSC1 because a part-time appointment was needed and none had been submitted. However, a match was subsequently made through the Stationing Action Group.

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- 3.4. ISSC1 noted that four diaconal probationers were being considered by the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee between 6-8 January 2023. All four were subsequently matched with appointments.
- 3.5. The ISSC2 met on 8 February 2023.
- 3.6. **Ministers of Other Churches and Conferences (MOCCs):** Five Ministers of other Churches and Conferences (MOCCs) were matched with appointments. Three of these are recommended to become 'Recognised and Regarded' ministers. Two are recommended to be received into Full Connexion.

The MOCC processes have been paused for this year. Two of those who have been stationed were already in appointments as 'Authorised to Serve'. It was agreed that because they were already here, they would be permitted to apply to transfer: one as Recognised and Regarded and the other to Full Connexion. They attended the full transfer panel process and were recommended in November 2022. The remaining three ministers were in stationing in 2022, when there were not sufficient appointments and, therefore, their profiles had been held over for a year.

The Stationing Committee confirmed that MOCC appointments should be capped at 10-12 each year (but it should be noted that those chosen to be in appointments that are outside the control of the church or not in circuits, are not counted within the cap).

4. Report of the Stationing Action Group

- 4.1. The Stationing Action Group commenced its work on 6 February 2023 and will continue through to the Conference. At the beginning of the process, there were 37 available appointments (of which one had been identified as 'critical'). Seven presbyters (not all of whom have been available to be matched for a variety of reasons) had still to agree an appointment.
- 4.2. Since then, 14 presbyters and four new appointments have been considered by SAG. One presbyter has withdrawn to take up another appointment outside the control of the church.
- 4.3. In February, four matches were made which led to invitations to serve being accepted by four presbyters, one of which was for the critical appointment. In March, five matches were made which led to invitations to serve being accepted by four presbyters. Five matches were made in April.

- 4.4. Twenty appointments were withdrawn at the end of March, following submission of reasoned statements
- 4.5. The actions reported mean that, at the time of writing, there remain seven available appointments, four of which are superintendentcies. There is also still one presbyter who is looking for a less than half time appointment.

5. **Report on Diaconal Stationing**

- 5.1. Diaconal stationing matching began with 12 ordained deacons and four people to be stationed as diaconal probationers and 19 circuit profiles. As the matching process began, one other ordained deacon entered the stationing process.
- 5.2. Two of the ordained deacons' partners were also in the stationing matching process as presbyters and in each case the diaconal appointment was identified as the priority.
- 5.3. All appointments were carefully scrutinised. Visits continue to be an essential part of the diaconal direct stationing process and for the first time in recent years all appointments were able to have an 'in-person' visit with the Warden/Deputy Warden, often following an initial zoom conversation.
- 5.4. In November, the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee (DSSC) met with the ordained deacons and those to be stationed as probationers and their households, for stationing conversations. Following these conversations one ordained deacon was identified for matching early at SMG2.
- 5.5. In January, the DSSC matched the remaining 12 ordained deacons and four diaconal probationers to 16 of the remaining 18 Circuit profiles. The matches were called at SMG3.
- 5.6. At the end of January, all but one of these matches were confirmed. Unfortunately, due to personal pastoral circumstances, one ordained deacon needed to withdraw from the matching process and from the Circuit with which they had been matched.
- 5.7. During the following months, the DSSC continued to work in collaboration with the Stationing Action Group, with the three unmatched Circuits and with members of the Order. At the time of writing, one Circuit has withdrawn its profile, one Circuit has received a match and one Circuit is not matched.

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5.8. The DSSC recognises and appreciates that its work has been enabled by the willingness of Circuits to discern diaconal appointments and, in one case, to enable a deacon to be matched with a new appointment earlier than expected. In addition, the DSSC is thankful for the faithfulness of deacons in living out of the diaconal principles of itinerancy and direct stationing and their generosity in embracing the invitations and opportunities these bring, to join in with the work of God in the world.

6. Stationing Code of Practice

6.1. Amendments have been made to the Stationing Code of Practice which reflect changes in Standing Orders, the removal of gender based personal pronouns and other matters which the Stationing Committee wish to emphasise in the light of experience from year to year. This year, due to requests for greater clarity from the Circuits, a particular focus on guidance for Letters of Understanding has been included.

7. Projections

7.1 Number of Methodist presbyters and probationers in the active work

| Connexional Year | Actual 2019/2020 | Actual 2020/2021 | Actual 2021/2022 | Estimate 2022/2023 | Estimate 2023/2024 |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Start of Year | 1340 | 1308 | 1228 | 1167 | 1125 |
| Normal Retirements | 49 | 80 | 74 | 60 | 60 |
| Early Retirements | 4 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 5 |
| Resignations | 6 | 13 | 7 | 6 | 5 |
| Other Losses | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL LOSSES | 59 | 98 | 90 | 72 | 71 |
| New Probationers | 17 | 13 | 23 | 21 | 16 |
| Other Gains | 10 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 5 |
| TOTAL GAINS | 27 | 18 | 29 | 30 | 21 |
| END OF YEAR | 1308 | 1228 | 1167 | 1125 | 1075 |

7.2 Number of Methodist Deacons and Probationers in the Active Work

| Connexional Year | Actual 2019/2020 | Actual 2020/2021 | Actual 2021/2022 | Estimate 2022/2023 | Estimate 2023/2024 |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Start of Year | 134 | 135 | 134 | 139 | 134 |
| Retirements | 3 | 5 | 3 | 10 | 5 |
| Resignations | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other Losses | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL LOSSES | 3 | 6 | 3 | 10 | 5 |
| New Probationers | 4 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| Other Gains | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| TOTAL GAINS | 4 | 5 | 8 | 5 | 3 |
| END OF YEAR | 135 | 134 | 139 | 134 | 132 |

8. Moving Forward

- 8.1.** The Stationing Committee remains committed to a thorough review of all our stationing processes this year in order to ensure that we develop robust and coherent policies designed to ensure well supported mission and ministry across the Connexion. It is vitally important to ensure the continuing well-being of our deacons and presbyters in addition to providing ministers to those places where they are most needed.
- 8.2.** The context in which the Stationing Committee does its work is ever more challenging but the developments that the Committee has overseen this year and the ongoing stationing review which is planning for the future cause it to remain hopeful that we will sustain appropriate ways to station our ministers in the service of Our Calling.

9. Stationing Review Group

It was reported to the 2022 Conference that the Council had agreed that a thorough review of stationing processes be undertaken due to a number of concerns raised by the Ministries Committee, Stationing Committee, Stationing Matching Group, Chairs' Meeting, Connexional Leaders' Forum and gatherings of

28. Stationing Committee

superintendent ministers in Districts and connexionally. The Council agreed the terms of reference for this work, and reported those to the 2022 Conference.

The Stationing Review Group (SRG) has set out to undertake a root and branch review of processes related to the stationing of ministers in the Methodist Church in Britain and to report to the Conference with recommendations for changes to those processes and the necessary changes to Standing Orders. The SRG met for the first time in January 2023.

The review will consist of input from a wide range of individuals and groups including consultation with the Stationing Committee, Stationing Matching Group, Circuit Stewards, Chairs of District, the Warden of the Diaconal Order, Lay Stationing Representatives, ministers with recent experience of being stationed, representatives of the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee, the Ministries Committee and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; as well as the Methodist Church in Ireland and ecumenical partners.

In May this year, the SRG distributed a survey to Circuit Stewards, District Chairs and Lay Stationing Representatives, presbyters and deacons (in various roles both inside and outside the control of the Church) and their spouses/partners. The data from that survey is currently being analysed and will inform the recommendations of the SRG.

The Stationing Review Group will present its final report to the Conference of 2024.

***RESOLUTION

28/1. The Conference receives the Report.

29. Review of Criteria for Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Mark Rowland Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee rowlandm@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Resolutions | <p>29/1. The Conference receives the Report.</p> <p>29/2. The Conference amends Standing Order 011 as set out in paragraph 4.1.</p> <p>29/3. The Conference adopts the proposed criteria for granting Authorisations to preside at the Lord's Supper set out in paragraph 4.2 and directs that they be printed in Book VI Part 3 of the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church, in place of the existing criteria.</p> <p>29/4. The Conference directs that, in any individual case, any period of authorisation prior to 1 September 2023 shall be disregarded for the purposes of determining the six-year period in Standing Order 011(5).</p> <p>29/5. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee in consultation with the Authorisations Committee to keep the new criteria under review and to bring any further recommendations necessary to a future Conference.</p> <p>29/6. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to explore whether the practice of Extended Communion in the Methodist Church might be widened and to report to the Conference with appropriate recommendations.</p> |

Summary of content and impact

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Subject and aims | To review the criteria for the granting of authorisations to preside at the Lord's Supper to persons other than presbyters |
| Main points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are several issues with the current criteria. • New criteria are proposed which seek to address these issues and be more suitable for our current context. |

29. Review of Criteria for Authorisations to Preside at the Lord’s Supper

| | |
|--|---|
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | The existing criteria are in CPD, Book VI, Part 3. |
| Consultations | Authorisations Committee. Evangelism and Growth Team. |
| Impact | Authorisations Committee, District Policy Committees and Circuits applying will need to learn a new process and criteria. |

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Conference of 2020 directed the Faith and Order Committee, in consultation with the Authorisations Committee, to review the criteria for authorisations to preside at the Lord’s Supper (hereinafter ‘authorisations’) and to bring recommendations for revised criteria to the 2021 Conference. The challenges of the ongoing Covid pandemic and the pressure of other work has meant that unfortunately it has not been possible to bring this work until now.

2. Principles

- 2.1 The Methodist Church affirms that Holy Communion is the central act of Christian worship,¹ an essential element in the life of any Methodist church. In the Methodist Church presidency at Holy Communion is normally exercised by presbyters, and any lay presidency requires specific authorisation by the Conference; this position is rooted in the Deed of Union which says: ‘For the sake of church order and not because of any priestly virtue inherent in the office the presbyters of the Methodist Church are set apart by ordination to the ministry of the word and sacraments.’² The provision of an authorisation to preside is to support and enable the mission and worship of local Methodist churches and Circuits.
- 2.2 There are several issues with the current situation:
- The existing criteria have two categories of deprivation – the original 1997 criteria (hereinafter ‘ordinary’) and the missional criteria. In the ordinary criteria, pastoral relationship with a congregation or congregation(s) in question is not considered in any way to strengthen the application and if the

1 Methodist Worship Book (p. 114).

2 CPD 2022 p. 213

29. Review of Criteria for Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper

Committee considers that an authorisation may blur distinctions between ministries, it may decline the application. In the missional criteria, the person 'should be able to identify with the situation, preferably as a pioneer minister or some other community leader.'³

- The ordinary criteria are based on a mathematical formula which embodies assumptions that are no longer valid. These include that presbyters take no Sundays off in the quarter and that churches have two services a Sunday. It also assumes that it is the celebration of Holy Communion on a Sunday where deprivation is likely to occur. This may still be the case, but it can be questioned as to whether this assumption should be so strongly built into the criteria.
- The use of a mathematical formula means Circuits may engage simply with the numbers rather than considering the theological issues at play.
- The current criteria give little guidance as to the discernment of who the appropriate person(s) to whom an authorisation should be granted might be. There is more provision about those to whom authorisations should not be granted (deacons, lay employees, local lay pastors etc).

2.3 The Committee believes that the language of deprivation is not the only possible language for this situation and not always the most appropriate. It provides a negative approach to the question and in reality few of our members are actually *deprived* of Holy Communion: rather the question is how readily it should be available and what provision best serves our mission. However, in terms of ecumenical relations, there are benefits to using the language of deprivation in signalling why the Methodist Church makes exceptions to the traditional practice that presidency at Holy Communion is exercised by presbyters. *Called to Love and Praise* notes that such exceptions are through 'pastoral deprivation or missionary emergency'⁴. While retaining an underlying principle that the granting of an authorisation arises out of deprivation, the Committee proposes that the authorisation process should explore more qualitatively how granting an authorisation to preside at Holy Communion is related to the needs of the context in mission, worship and discipleship.

2.4 As a starting point in terms of the celebration of Holy Communion, the Faith and Order Committee takes the view that any *local church* should be resourced to celebrate Holy Communion at least once a month at its *principal* act of worship. In applying for an authorisation, the circuit should explain how the need for the celebration of Holy Communion in a Circuit cannot be resourced

3 CPD 2022 p. 794

4 *Called to Love and Praise*, Methodist Conference 1999, §4.5.8

29. Review of Criteria for Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper

from the presbyters available. For example, this may be due to lack of numbers, or that the particular needs of a specialised missional context (eg *New Places for New People* or those using languages other than English) cannot be met by the existing circuit staff. The Circuit should also explain its mission strategy taking into account *Our Calling* and how the need for an authorisation arises missionally, pastorally, or in terms of deepening discipleship. Alongside this, it is important both within the Methodist Church and in the context of our ecumenical relationships to emphasise that this is a practice we adopt in response to deprivation that occurs in particular situations and in furtherance of our work and mission as a church.

3. Whom to authorise?

- 3.1 Circuits need to exercise discernment about whom to authorise to preside. This is a significant and spiritual task and those authorised should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the significance of Holy Communion in the life of the Church and in the communities where they will preside. The Committee suggests that in many cases suitable candidates will be drawn from the Circuit's local preachers. This is appropriate in that the celebration of Holy Communion should always include the ministry of the word. In some contexts, worship leaders will be appropriate candidates. If the potential recipient of an authorisation is not a local preacher, they would need an accredited preacher working with them.
- 3.2 As observed, one of the challenges of the current situation is the tension between the missional and the ordinary criteria with regard to pastoral identification with the relevant contexts. Clearly it is desirable that persons authorised have the relevant gifts to minister in the context required. However, it should also be remembered that the celebration of Holy Communion is always an act of the whole Church and not simply a local concern. We therefore recommend that any local role a person may hold should not be considered a relevant factor in discerning whether they are the most suitable person to receive an authorisation. What will be relevant is the gifts they show for the contexts in which the ministry is needed. Furthermore, it will continue to be necessary to take care that granting of authorisations does not create confusion as to the Methodist Church's understanding of ministry and particular ministerial roles. In such cases, the Authorisations Committee may decline to recommend an authorisation be granted even if the other criteria are satisfied.
- 3.3 A question has been raised as to whether probationer presbyters should be eligible for authorisations to preside in the new pattern of probation being developed following the changes to the candidating process made by the Conference of 2022. This was referred to the Faith and Order Committee by the

29. Review of Criteria for Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper

Ministries Committee, while work on this report was in progress. The Committee recognises that some probationers in the new pattern will be stationed with extensive experience of leading worship and preaching, while for others probation will be a critical period of formation in these skills. It therefore takes the view that it would not be appropriate to impose a blanket ruling on whether presbyteral probationers can be granted authorisation to preside. Instead, it encourages those responsible for each probationer's formation (in circuit and connexionally) to consider what is most appropriate in their situation and to recognise that in some situations it would be appropriate not to apply for authorisation.

- 3.4 There are some other persons for whom it is not appropriate to apply for an authorisation. An authorisation will not normally be granted to those whose offer as candidates for presbyteral ministry has been declined. There may, however, be circumstances when this is appropriate, but such an application would not be granted within five years of the declined offer. In such cases the vocational issues should first be thoroughly explored by the superintendent with the person concerned before the application goes to a circuit meeting.
- 3.5 The office of local lay-pastor does not bring with it authorisation to preside at Holy Communion (SO 56A0(3)). *Changing Patterns of Ministry* affirms that 'it might be that there are occasions when a local lay-pastor is discerned to be the most appropriate person in the Circuit to have an authorisation to preside at the Lord's Supper, but this will be because of their standing in the Circuit and not as part of their role as a local lay-pastor.'⁵ The Committee takes the view that such occasions will be extremely rare due to the potential for confusion of roles granting an authorisation to a local lay-pastor will create. Circuits making such applications will need to be very clear as to why someone who is also a local lay-pastor is nevertheless discerned to be the most appropriate person to be authorised.
- 3.6 The Conference of 2019 affirmed by resolution 25/9 that it is not appropriate for deacons to receive authorisations. Standing Order amendments to give effect to this affirmation are included below, following consultation with the Law and Polity Committee.
- 3.7 Careful consideration should be given to ecumenical sensitivities when Circuits are considering applying for authorisations. With some ecumenical partners, Methodists presiding by virtue of an authorisation may not pose a challenge, while for others this may raise questions. In the case of probationers for

5 Changing Patterns of Ministry, Methodist Conference 2021, §4.4.9

29. Review of Criteria for Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper

presbyteral ministry who will have pastoral responsibility for Local Ecumenical Partnerships this issue should be considered particularly carefully.

- 3.8 As at present, we propose that the maximum length an authorisation may be applied for is three years. However, we suggest any given person should have an authorisation no more than six years at a time and therefore we propose that only one further period of three years should be permitted. This does not prevent the Circuit making an application for another person to be authorised but seeks to preserve clarity as to our understanding of different roles and ministries. Where someone feels called to a longer term ministry of this kind, attention is drawn to the relevant discernment pathways, including those for local or specific contexts. The Committee is aware further work is being done on pathways related to ordained ministry in pioneer contexts. By way of transitional arrangements, the Committee proposes that any periods of authorisation before 1 September 2023 should not count towards the six-year maximum. In this way, no one will hit the limit before 2029 giving suitable opportunity to consider appropriate ways forward.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 The considerations outlined above will require amendments to Standing Order 011 and the following revised form is proposed. The opportunity has also been taken to clarify the title of this Standing Order.

011 Conduct of Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper. (1) A Circuit which considers that ~~it is any of its churches or a significant number of church members or other Christians in the local community is deprived of reasonably frequent and regular celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper~~ **because it cannot meet a sustained need for the celebration of that sacrament** through lack of ~~with the~~ **presbyters available** may apply for the authorisation of persons other than presbyters to preside at that sacrament when appointed to do so on the circuit plan, or on other occasions when authorised by the Superintendent.

(2) (a) Subject to clauses (4) and (5)(a) below all such applications, with reasons for making them and the consent of the nominee, shall be submitted by the Circuit Meeting for consideration by the district Policy Committee. The Superintendent of any Circuit making an application may attend the committee while that application is under consideration.

(b) Persons nominated for authorisation to preside at the Lord's Supper shall be members in the Circuit, ~~or deacons~~ or **presbyteral** probationers appointed or expected to be appointed to it. The district Policy Committee shall be provided

29. Review of Criteria for Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper

with information as to the suitability of all persons so nominated, and shall make its recommendations to the Synod. Such information shall be provided by the Circuit Meeting in the case of members in the Circuit; **and** by the appropriate Oversight Committee in the case of presbyteral probationers; ~~and by the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order in the case of deacons and diaconal probationers.~~

(3) All such applications shall be sent, with the recommendations of the district Policy Committee and the comments of the Synod thereon, to the convener of an Authorisations Committee appointed for the purpose by the Methodist Council, and the Authorisations Committee shall report with its recommendations directly to the Conference, which shall grant such authorisations as it thinks fit, to take effect from the beginning of the next connexional year. Appeals against the committee's recommendations shall be heard by a further committee appointed for the purpose from among the members of the next Conference by the Methodist Council. The report of the appeals committee shall be presented together with the general report of the Authorisations Committee.

(4) If an additional appointment of a ~~deacon or~~ **presbyteral** probationer to a Circuit is proposed, or if circumstances arise which require a member in a Circuit to be nominated, at a date when it is no longer practicable to complete the procedure prescribed by clause (2) above an application may be made by the Circuit Meeting (or if it cannot be called in time by the Superintendent and circuit stewards) directly to the Authorisations Committee. The criterion in clause (1) above and the requirements of clause (2)(a) above as to the provision of reasons and consent shall apply and information as to the nominee shall be provided to the committee by the appropriate person under clause (2)(b) above.

(5) (a) The authorisation shall be renewable annually. If the district Policy Committee is satisfied that the person authorised remains suitable and the circumstances of the Circuit have not changed, it may on the application of the Circuit Meeting recommend a renewal of the authorisation for a second or third year, and the Authorisations Committee shall support any such recommendation without further investigation. If renewal is sought beyond the initial ~~or any subsequent~~ period of three years the procedures set out in clauses (2) and (3) above shall be followed in full. **No person may hold an authorisation for a continuous period in excess of six years.**

(b) Once granted, an authorisation shall cease to be exercisable by the person authorised on cessation of membership or of the status of ~~deacon or~~ **presbyteral** probationer, as the case may be, or on removal from the Circuit.

29. Review of Criteria for Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper

(6) Persons so authorised shall, unless already instructed in presidency at the Lord's Supper, be so instructed by the Chair or by a presbyter appointed by him or her, the forms of service authorised by the Conference being used as a basis of instruction.

(7) In emergencies arising after the meeting of the Conference by the death of a presbyter or otherwise, the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf may grant an authorisation having immediate effect and continuing until the 31st August following the next meeting of the Conference.

4.2 *The Criteria*

The Faith and Order Committee proposes that the key criteria for applying for an authorisation to preside at Holy Communion should be:

1. The sustained need for the celebration of Holy Communion which cannot be resourced from the presbyters available in a Circuit.
2. A mission strategy that supports the need for an authorisation.
3. A suitable person nominated by the Circuit who can be trusted to hold an appreciation of the significance of Holy Communion in the life of the church

All three criteria must be met. The criteria in CPD (pp794-5) would be replaced as follows:

1. Sustained need for the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper which cannot be met from the presbyters available, leading to deprivation from that sacrament, is the ground on which a person other than a presbyter may be authorised to preside at that sacrament. The regulations governing the applications for and the granting of such authorisations are contained in Standing Order 011, and these criteria should be read in conjunction with and subject to the provisions of that Standing Order.

2. To be granted an authorisation a Circuit must demonstrate on application to the Authorisations Committee:

1. The sustained need for the celebration of Holy Communion which cannot be resourced from the presbyters available in a circuit.
2. A mission strategy that supports the need for an authorisation.
3. A suitable person nominated by the Circuit who can be trusted to hold an appreciation of the significance of Holy Communion in the life of the church

29. Review of Criteria for Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper

There may be different reasons why the sustained need cannot be met from the presbyters available which may include, for example, lack of numbers or the particular needs of specialised mission contexts.

3. Authorisations are granted for someone to assist across a Circuit and should be exercised at the direction of the Superintendent. Appropriate consideration should be given to ensure that the exercise of the authorisation responds to the particular needs for which it was sought and helps to meet them. Authorisations are not related to any particular local role (eg lay employee or local lay-pastor) a person may have and the holding of any such role is not a relevant factor in determining suitability to be granted an authorisation. In circumstances where the committee judges that such an arrangement might lead to a blurring of the distinctions between particular callings and ministries, the Authorisations Committee may decline to recommend an authorisation for a given named individual even when the other criteria are met. An authorisation will not normally be granted to those whose offer as candidates for presbyteral ministry has been declined. Where this is nevertheless deemed appropriate, such an application would not be granted within five years of the declined offer. In such cases, the vocational issues should first be thoroughly explored by the superintendent with the person concerned before the application goes to a circuit meeting.

4. To assess the suitability of the person proposed, evidence shall be presented to the district Policy Committee of his or her

- (a) general competence, gifts and graces in leading worship with respect to the contexts in question, and
- (b) understanding of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The written consent of the person proposed is also required.

5. Authorisations may be granted to presbyteral probationers and other lay persons. Persons authorised must be members in the relevant Circuit or presbyteral probationers appointed to it.

4.3 *Further Work*

Methodist discipline currently provides for extended communion in homes, hospitals and hospices, where elements set aside at a previous celebration of Holy Communion can be shared with those unable to attend. We suggest that a further piece of work is done to explore whether extended communion could be

29. Review of Criteria for Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper

more widely used as a suitable way of enabling sacramental coverage without the need for as many authorisations. This would involve exploring whether bread and wine set aside at a celebration of Holy Communion in one church could then be used in a service for another congregation led by a suitably designated and authorised person. Currently this practice is not permitted.

4.4 *Implementation*

The Committee has considered whether it would be appropriate to pilot the new criteria or to adopt them temporarily, recognising that they involve substantial changes to the practice up to now and there will be significant implications both for circuits applying and for the Authorisations Committee. However, it felt that having different systems operating in parallel would generate more work rather than less as well as raising questions of parity between circuits within and without any pilot area. It also considered an initial temporary period of adoption with the possibility of review later. However, in the event, it considers that the best way forward is to propose these new criteria for adoption by the Conference and to keep progress under review as the new process is embedded. If need be, the Committee will ask the Conference to make amendments to address any issues that are identified.

5. **Appendix: Proposed new application format**

Preliminary considerations

Circuit name and number

District name and number

1. Please describe the context of the Circuit.
2. Please describe the current practice of the Circuit in celebrating Holy Communion
 - a. The number of Holy Communion services taking place currently (each quarter) at the main act of worship at each relevant location.
 - b. Other celebrations of Holy Communion taking place regularly in the life of the circuit.
3. Please describe:
 - a. the aspirations of the Circuit in terms of celebrating Holy Communion
 - i. The number of Holy Communion Services the circuit discerns to be necessary so that every congregation has at least a monthly celebration of Holy Communion at its main service. (quarterly)

29. Review of Criteria for Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper

- ii. The number of further celebrations of Holy Communion the Circuit discerns to be necessary.
 - iii. An account of the practicalities that impact provision for example time and distance
- b. The reasons it is not possible to accommodate these needs with the circuit's current availability of presbyteral ministry.

The application

- 1 Meets the criteria.
- 2 Does not yet meet the criteria (*the application shows potential – further conversation with DPC/Authorisations Committee may be helpful*)
- 3 Does not meet the criteria.

1. Please describe the need for the celebration of Holy Communion that cannot be provided by the presbyters of the Circuit

*How does Holy Communion fit into the life of the Circuit?
How will this authorisation reflect Our Calling and Priorities?*

2. How will this authorisation relate to the Circuit's mission plan?
- a. *Missionally*
 - b. *Pastorally*
 - c. *Deepening discipleship*

In what ways is the application aided or enlightened by Methodist strategies – God for All, Methodist Way of Life, JDS etc – and how an authorisation may further these?

3. Have other ways of meeting the need for the celebration of Holy Communion been considered?

What other opportunities for celebrating Holy Communion across congregations or ecumenically have been explored which would mitigate the need for lay authorisations?

- a. *Ecumenically*
- b. *Mid-week etc*

29. Review of Criteria for Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper

4. Are there any ecumenical considerations in connection with this application? What steps have been or will be taken to ensure that the position(s) of ecumenical partners are respected?

Which ecumenical partners might be involved? What approach do they take to presidency at the Lord's Supper? Has any appropriate consultation been undertaken as part of preparing this application?

5. For whom is the authorisation sought?

Has the Circuit considered safer recruiting, and JDS issues in making a nomination? What are the circuit plans for induction, accountability and review including supervision and training?

Has the person previously candidated for presbyteral ministry?

Please provide a reasoned statement for the named person

6. Any other relevant information that will help the Authorisations Committee.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 29/1. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 29/2. The Conference amends Standing Order 011 as set out in paragraph 4.1 above.**
- 29/3. The Conference adopts the proposed criteria for granting Authorisations to preside at the Lord's Supper set out in paragraph 4.2 above and directs that they be printed in Book VI Part 3 of the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church, in place of the existing criteria.**
- 29/4. The Conference directs that, in any individual case, any period of authorisation prior to 1 September 2023 shall be disregarded for the purposes of determining the six-year period in Standing Order 011(5).**
- 29/5. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee in consultation with the Authorisations Committee to keep the new criteria under review and to bring any further recommendations necessary to a future Conference.**
- 29/6. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to explore whether the practice of Extended Communion in the Methodist Church might be widened and to report to the Conference with appropriate recommendations.**

30. Referred Memorials and Notices of Motion

Below appears a list of Memorials and Notices of Motion from previous Conferences that have not yet received a final reply or are not reported on elsewhere in the Agenda. In October 2022 the Methodist Council received an update on work arising from the 2022 Conference.

In the final column of the list below, under the heading 'current situation', a report is given on how the items of business have been dealt with at this Conference, or what recommendations are being made about how they are dealt with in the future.

Memorials from the 2017 Conference

| MEMORIALS | Work to be undertaken by (eg committee or team) | Deadline for report to the Conference | Current situation |
|---|---|--|---|
| M4 and M5: Candidating for ministers seeking to move from presbyter to deacon or vice-versa | Ministerial Candidates and Probationers' Oversight Committee in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee | 2019 | Ongoing work. Consultation has taken place with the Faith and Order Committee, and the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers' Oversight Committee (MCPOC) is working on this in the light of the new candidating processes. |

Memorials from the 2018 Conference

| MEMORIALS | Work to be undertaken by (eg committee or team) | Deadline for report to the Conference | Current situation |
|--|--|--|--|
| M10: Membership of Church Councils by presbyters | Methodist Council | N/A | Ongoing work. Forming part of the work on ministerial wellbeing. |

30. Referred Memorials and Notices of Motion

Memorials from the 2019 Conference

| MEMORIALS | Work to be undertaken by (eg committee or team) | Deadline for report to the Conference | Current situation |
|---|--|--|--|
| M1, 2: Reimbursement for stipends of ministers on long term sick leave | The Council | 2021 | This is on the agenda of the Connexional Allowances Committee. |

Memorials from the 2022 Conference

| MEMORIALS | Work to be undertaken by (eg committee or team) | Deadline for report to the Conference | Current situation |
|---|--|--|--|
| M12: Energy Efficiency Rating of Methodist Buildings and SO 973 | The Council | | This is being considered as part of the Action for Hope project. |
| M13: Climate Change and Energy Efficiency of Manses | Ministries Committee | | |
| M15: Positive Working Together | The Council | | This is forming part of the review of Part 11. |
| M17: Ecumenical appointments of ministers | Ministries and Stationing Committees | | This has been referred to the Stationing Review Group. |
| M20: Safeguarding | The Council | | This was referred to the review of Part 11. |
| M21: District Safeguarding Officers | The Council | | Work has begun to consult on this and is ongoing. |

30. Referred Memorials and Notices of Motion

Notices of Motion from previous Conferences referred for report to the Conference

| NOTICES OF MOTION | Work to be undertaken by (eg committee or team) | Deadline for report to the Conference | Current situation |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| NoM 2018/205 Stationing Matching | Stationing Committee, Methodist Council | 2019 | The Council conducted some preliminary work on this and, noting the complex challenges, referred its report to the Stationing Committee for further consideration. It has now been referred to the Stationing Review Group. |
| NoM 2019/202: Reviewing Part 11 of Standing Orders | Methodist Council | None | See the report from the Methodist Council. |

***RESOLUTION

30/1. The Conference adopts the Report.

31. Rydal Penrhos College – Amendment of Governance Structure and revision of Articles of Association

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | Douglas Jones, Group Accountant and Company Secretary, Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) djones@methodistschools.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

A brief background

Rydal Penrhos School was created by a Scheme ('the Scheme') authorised by the Conference with effect from 20 October 1995 when Rydal School and Penrhos College merged. The Scheme incorporates the Methodist Secondary Education Trust Deed 1903 (subject to some school-specific amendments) and sets out a number of school governance provisions including provisions for the governing body and day-to-day management of the School.

Under clause 10(4)(a) of the Scheme, no amendments may be made to the Scheme without the approval of the Conference.

The Governors of Rydal Penrhos are the Directors of Rydal Penrhos Limited, which conducts the day-to-day management and administration of the School. The Articles of Association for Rydal Penrhos Limited contain many of the same governing body and school management provisions contained within the Scheme.

This has resulted in the need for Governors to consult both documents each time a governance question arises. This is unduly burdensome and creates ambiguities for the Governors in the day-to-day management of the School.

The Governors wish to simplify and streamline their governance structure, modernising both documents and transferring many of the management and governing body provisions from the Scheme into the Articles of Association. This will provide clarity to the Governors of the School and enable them to monitor their governance on a more routine basis, as well as bringing the structure in line with other MIST associated schools.

The Governors have approved the revised Scheme and draft Articles, subject to the Conference's final approval.

Following the approval of the Conference, the members of Rydal Penrhos Limited intend to pass a special resolution adopting the revised Scheme and Articles and to notify Companies House and the Charity Commission of this.

31. Rydal Penrhos College – Amendment of Governance Structure and revision of Articles of Association

The Conference is therefore asked to approve the revised Scheme and draft Articles, noting particularly the two key provisions that are being retained, namely;

1. that the existing provision that “Religious Education at the School shall be given in a manner that is not contrary to the doctrinal standards of the Methodist Church as interpreted by the Conference” is to be retained and that no amendment can be made to it.
2. The Conference retains the control to approve amendments to the Articles and to the Scheme.

The key changes to the Scheme and the Articles are summarised below. Copies of the previous versions of the Scheme and Articles are available on request.

Rydal Penrhos is an associated school in the Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) group. MIST is happy to endorse the request for the Conference’s approval.

A summary of key changes in respect of the Scheme are:

1. Clause 1 - amended to include reference to Rydal Penrhos Limited and remove any references to divisions within the school which no longer exist;
2. Clause 2 - amended to reflect changes to the 1903 Deed since 1995;
3. Clause 3 – similarly amends the 1903 Deed, reflecting recent amendments to the Deed, granting Rydal Penrhos Limited powers to carry out day to day management of the school in accordance with the requirements of the Methodist Schools Property Company;
4. Clause 3(1) – the dissolution provision which stipulated that 31% of the assets of the School be applied in furtherance of girl’s education is removed. The dissolution provision contained within the 1903 Deed is applied. Now that the School operates as a mixed school the Governors no longer consider this to be appropriate;
5. Clauses 4 -9 – the clauses which refer to the governing body and management of the School have been removed and included within the Articles of Association of Rydal Penrhos Limited;
6. Clauses 10 (1)-(3) – removed and incorporated within the Articles of Association.

A summary of key changes in respect of the Articles of Association are:

1. The Articles have been modernised to incorporate current best practice, including granting the Governors the ability to meet via electronic means;

31. Rydal Penrhos College – Amendment of Governance Structure and revision of Articles of Association

2. The number of Governors of the School is limited to 12 with 2 ex-officio Governors, namely the Chief Executive Officer of MIST and a Chair of Wales Synod Cymru of the Methodist Church. [Article 14.2; 14.4 & 14.5]
3. The requirement for a majority of Methodist Governors has been removed and replaced with the requirement for two ex-officio Methodist members and at least two further Methodist Governors. [Article 14.6]
4. The quorum for meetings has been lowered to six or 50% of the Governors, reflecting the change in Governor numbers. [Article 11.1 & 22.1]
5. Term limits for Governors have been removed to ensure that good governors are able to continue contributing to the running of the School. [Article 17.1]
6. The Chair and Vice-Chairs are limited to three three-year terms in office. [Article 23.3]
7. School management provisions from the Scheme have been incorporated into the Articles from the Scheme [Articles 35-36]

The above revisions are to modernise the working practices and increase the agility of the Governing Body, in line with good practice and were unanimously agreed by the Board of Governors at Rydal Penrhos College on 18 April 2023.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 31/1. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 31/2. The Conference approves the revision to the Scheme and to the Articles of Association for Rydal Penrhos College as set out in the Report.**

32. Permissions to Serve

1. **PRESBYTERS OFFERING AS CANDIDATES FOR THE DIACONATE**
No case
2. **TRANSFER TO OTHER CONFERENCES AND DENOMINATIONS**
Noel G Irwin
3. **TRANSFER TO THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND**
No case
4. **PERMISSION TO SERVE ABROAD**
See the draft of the stations
5. **PERMISSION TO RESIDE ABROAD**
See the draft of the stations
6. **PERMISSION TO SERVE ANOTHER CHURCH (under Standing Order 735)**
See the draft of the stations

*****RESOLUTION** (Presbyteral Session)

- 32/1. **The Conference adopts the Report.**

33. Presbyterian Transfers and Reinstatements

1. **Recommendations of the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee acting as a Transfer Committee**
 - 1.1 The report of the Appeals Committee on applicants who have appealed against the recommendations of the committee under Standing Order 730(10) [see also SO 730(14)]
No case
 - 1.2 Report on cases where there have been medical objections
No case
 - 1.3 Applicants for transfer recommended by a 75% majority or more in the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee to be transferred to the jurisdiction of this Conference under SO 730
Dawn Francis Brown (Methodist Church of Southern Africa)
Paulo Bessa Da Silva (Methodist Church of Brazil)
Brian Hutton (Methodist Church of Southern Africa)
Clement Matarirano (Methodist Church in Zimbabwe)
Richman Ncube (Methodist Church in Zimbabwe)
Noel Nhariswa (Methodist Church in Zimbabwe)
Brenton Robert Prigge (Methodist Church of Southern Africa)
Elizabeth Christina Catharina Van Aardt-Goddess (Methodist Church of Southern Africa)
Janet Elizabeth Verrier (Methodist Church of Southern Africa)
 - 1.4 Applicants for transfer as a probationer recommended by a 75% majority or more in the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee to be transferred to the jurisdiction of this Conference under SO 730
No case
 - 1.5 Applicants for transfer recommended by a 75% majority or more in the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee to proceed to initial training and probation
No case
 - 1.6 Applicants for transfer recommended by a 75% majority or more in the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee to proceed to probation prior to Reception into Full Connexion
No case

33. Presbyteral Transfers and Reinstatements

- 1.7 Applicants for transfer recommended by a 75% majority or more in the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee to be received on transfer upon fulfilment of stated condition
Ray Hampden Goddess (Methodist Church of Southern Africa)
- 1.8 Applicants not recommended for transfer
No case
- 1.9 Former presbyters and deacons of other Churches applying to be received into Full Connexion (under Standing Order 731)
 - (a) Those recommended
Brain Magadzire
 - (b) Those recommended upon fulfilment of stated conditions
No case
 - (c) Those not recommended
No case
- 1.10 Applicants recommended to be recognised and regarded as presbyters in Full Connexion with the Conference under Standing Order 732
Shannon Casey De Laoreal (Louisiana Conference of the United Methodist Church)
Krystyna Halina Kwarciak (Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession (Lutheran))
David Alan Markay (West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church)
Kristin Chiles Markay (West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church)
Tongayi Joseph Matamba (Methodist Church in Zimbabwe)
Andrew Simon Christian Melvin (Baptist Union of Great Britain)
Aboseh Ngwana (Presbyterian Church in Cameroon)
Emmanuel Ajibola Onabanjo (Methodist Church Nigeria)
Rajbharat Patta (Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church, India)
Manoa Ratubalavu (Methodist Church Fiji)
Nimilote Rokotoro (Methodist Church Fiji)

2. **TRANSFER FROM THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND**

No case

33. Presbyteral Transfers and Reinstatements

3. **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REINSTATEMENTS TO FULL CONNEXION**
Peter Timms
4. **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REINSTATEMENTS AS LOCAL PREACHERS**
No case

***RESOLUTIONS (Presbyteral Session)

- 38/1. **The Conference adopts the Report.**
- 38/2. **The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that those persons whom the Conference has duly adjudged as fit to be received by transfer or reinstatement as the case may be as presbyters be now or at a specified date presented to the Representative Session to be received into Full Connexion with the Conference, and if not already ordained, to be ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands.**

34. Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland

1. Legal

- 1.1 The fund is governed by a Deed of Trust registered in the books of the Lords and Council and Session at Edinburgh on 4 November 1869. The Deed narrates resolutions of the Conference of 1869 as to the raising, administration and purposes of the Fund. (See Standing Order 476 for further information.)

The purposes of the said Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland are: -

- (1) The liquidation of debts yet remaining on Methodist Churches, Chapels or Manses in Scotland or debts that may yet be contracted with the sanction of the connexional property committee,
- (2) The purchase or erection of new or additional places of worship and of sites for such objects, and
- (3) The acquisition of Manses or investment of money to meet house rents thus making provision for the residences of ordained ministers where at present only Probationers are stationed and from time to time in other places as occasion may arise.

2. Administration

- 2.1 The means of Aid is by way of Grants and/or interest free loans. No funds can be allocated unless the project is listed under the Methodist Church Property Consents Procedure for authorisation by local and circuit bodies and by the District Consents Panel and, where appropriate, the Connexional Conservation Officer. Where a grant has been made it remains refundable if the property is subsequently sold.

- 2.2 The Trustees are:

OFFICIAL: The Revd S Mark Slaney – Synod Chair; the Revd Dr Helen E Jenkins – Presbyteral Synod Secretary; the Revd Allan Y Loudon – District Ministerial Property Secretary and the Revd Nicholas B Baker – District Home Mission representative.

NON-OFFICIAL: Dr Alan J Hayes; Mr David A Easson; Mr Edward A L Wallace (General Treasurer); and Miss Maureen G Anderson.

The General Committee consists of the Trustees, General Secretary and Treasurer, the District Lay Property Secretary – Mr Phillip A Haggis, the Superintendent Ministers of every Circuit and Mrs Margaret Brown, Mrs Jenny Easson and Mr Peter Mills as the present Synod-nominated lay members subsequently appointed by Conference.

34. Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland

3. Financial

- 3.1 The accounts for 2022 were presented by the fund treasurer to the Trustees and General Committee in March 2023 and these were accepted for presentation to Synod and completion of the OSCR return.
- 3.2 The incoming resources of the Fund for the year ended 31 December 2022 was £49,228 (2021 £12,046). The change over the previous year was due to increased grant repayments from the proceeds of sale of grant aided properties and was despite the suspension of Circuit Subscriptions under SO 476.
- 3.3 The net of incoming resources for the year after deducting grants paid and expenses was an increase of £28,415 (2021 £635) with CFB capitalised surplus funds of £147,981 (2021 £108,462) and investments valued at £253,163 (2021 £291,261).
- 3.4 Balances at 31st December 2022:
General Fund £5179 (2021 £2,713),
Grant Fund £94,230 (2021 £73,456), recoverable grants £344,488 (2021 £347,052)
Loan Account £53,752 (2021 £48,577), outstanding loans £12,575 (2021 £16,975)
The overall Fund value at 31st December 2022 was £406,385 (2021 £416,007).

4. Grants

Grants previously approved paid out totalling £Nil (2021 £Nil).
Grants approved and paid out this year totalled £20,000 (2021 £10,000).
During the year two new applications for aid were considered and granted by the General Committee:
Strathclyde Circuit [Netherton Church] £10,000
Ayrshire and Renfrewshire Circuit (New manse) £10,000
Also in relation to this property was the transfer of the contingent liability of £3,750 from the Langhall Manse under the replacement scheme.

5. Loans

Loan instalments are collected half-yearly in May and November. No loans were approved and paid during the year. (2021 £4500)

6. General

Due to the continuing impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the finances of churches and Circuits the trustees and general committee recommend a further extension to the current suspension of Circuit subscriptions to the fund during the Connexional year 2023/24.

34. Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland

7. Changes to the Fund

The fund report to the 2022 Methodist Conference set out certain proposed changes:-

"7.1 Recognising that the Relief and Extension Fund (R&E Fund) is an independent Charity reporting to the Conference under the noted Trust Deed and to OSCR under Scottish Charity law - notification is given that the following changes to the operation of the Fund are under discussion with the aim to make it more flexible in its operation and more effective in its support of the mission plan of the Scotland District. These discussions form part of the streamlining of operational structure in line with the current District Review being brought to Synod in May 2022.

1. *The reporting financial year to be changed - to be the connexional year rather than calendar year.*
2. *A joint application for DAF and R&E Fund be implemented for assessment and administration purposes under the scrutiny of the District Grants Committee. (The application form has been agreed by Trustees in 2021.)*
3. *Existing named Trustees to step down and the Trustees of the R&E Fund to be set to match the District Grants Committee membership – to be Chair, two ordained ministers and three lay members, with non-voting administrative support.*
4. *The role of the R&E Fund General Committee (for approval of Funds) to be undertaken by the revised DPC (subject to Synod authorisation of proposal) – operational from September 2022.*
5. *R&E Fund to be reported by annual report to the Conference via Synod.*
6. *Financial Management to be done by District Treasurer in collaboration with TMCP – to fulfil the Trust role of the General Treasurer.*
7. *Fund Operation to be done by District Grants Officer – to fulfil the Trust role of General Secretary.*
The Conference is asked to receive these proposals and facilitate their implementation through legal adjustment to the Trust Deed and administrative support as required."

In response, the 2022 Conference passed Resolution 54/3 which provides as follows:

"The Conference notes the proposals to change the Trust Deed, and directs the trustees of the Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland to consult with the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and the Law and Polity Committee on the proposed changes and to bring detailed amendments to the 2023 Conference as required."

34. Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland

The Trustees of the Fund have consulted as directed and with the legal advice of David Gibson, a member of the Law and Polity Committee and of the Scotland Synod, the following outcomes have been reported:

1. The Fund is governed by a Deed of Trust registered, as previously noted. In discussions, OSCR have confirmed that any changes to the Deed of Trust would be a variation in the constitution of the charity and would thus require to be the subject of a Charity Re-organisation Scheme, a process controlled by OSCR as the Scottish charity regulator. Under such a Scheme, it is necessary to demonstrate compliance with the conditions and outcomes set out in the Scottish charity legislation. It is felt that this would be a time consuming and potentially expensive process and that on a cost/benefit analysis it is unlikely that the amount of work required and the cost involved would be justified. However, it appears possible to achieve the majority of the desired structural changes utilising the powers reserved to the Conference in terms of the Deed of Trust. Other matters are of an operational nature and should be able to be accommodated within the existing practices of the Fund, with two exceptions in relation to paragraphs 1 and 5 of 7.1.
2. The two principal structural changes sought are in relation to the constitution of the General Committee of the Fund and the designation and number of Trustees of the Fund.
3. The General Committee is the controlling body of the Fund. Under the Deed of Trust, power is reserved to the Conference to determine the composition of the General Committee and the current composition is set out in SO 476. Accordingly, the proposed change to the General Committee set out in paragraph 4 of 7.1, whereby the General Committee is to be composed of the members of the Scotland District Policy Committee, can be accommodated by amendment to SO 476 as proposed in paragraph 8 below.
4. The Deed of Trust requires there to be four Official (ie ex-officio) Trustees and four Non-Official Trustees. Paragraph 3 of 7.1 sought to reduce the number of Official Trustees and Non-Official Trustees to three in each case and to alter the composition of the Official Trustees with the intention that the Trustees be the members of the Scotland District Grants Committee ("DGC"). This would require alteration to the Deed of Trust. However, utilising the power reserved to the Conference in the Deed of Trust to determine the office-holders who are to be the Official Trustees, it should be possible to re-organise the composition of the Official Trustees to align with the composition of the DGC. This can be accommodated by amendment to SO 476 as proposed in paragraph 8 below. The composition

34. Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland

- of the Non-Official Trustees is able to be aligned with the composition of the DGC utilising the existing provisions in the Deed of Trust.
5. The matters referred to in paragraphs 2, 6 and 7 of 7.1 are operational and administrative in nature and should be able to be accommodated within the existing practices of the management of the Fund. No changes are required to Standing Orders as regards these matters.
 6. The Deed of Trust specifies the reporting financial year as the calendar year. Accordingly, the reporting financial year cannot be changed to the connexional year, as proposed in paragraph 1 of 7.1, without changing the Deed of Trust. It has been acknowledged that the proposed change is not practical and that the reporting financial year would remain as the calendar year.
 7. The Deed of Trust requires the Fund to report annually to the Conference and so the proposed change in paragraph 5 of 7.1 cannot be effected without changing the Deed of Trust. It has been acknowledged that the proposed change is not practical and that the existing practice of reporting to the Conference should continue.
 8. Accordingly, the proposed changes to SO 476 presented to the Conference for consideration are as follows, with bold italics denoting inserted text and strikethrough denoting deleted text:

476 Scotland. *(1) The General Committee of the Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland shall consist of **the members of the District Policy Committee of the Scotland District:***

- (i) ~~the Chair and secretary of the Methodist Synod in Scotland and the presbyteral secretaries responsible for home mission and property affairs (being the ex-officio trustees of the fund);~~*
- (ii) ~~the other trustees and the secretary and treasurer of the fund and the lay secretaries responsible for home mission and property affairs;~~*
- (iii) ~~the Superintendent of each Circuit in the District;~~*
- (iv) ~~lay persons nominated by the Synod and appointed by the Conference.~~*

(1A) The Official Trustees of the fund shall be the Chair of the Scotland District, the Treasurer of the Scotland District, the secretary of the Scotland District Grants Committee and a Superintendent from the Scotland District nominated annually by the Superintendents in the Scotland District.

(2) Annual collections on behalf of the fund shall be taken in all places of worship in Scotland on a Sunday, in addition to donations and subscriptions received from trust funds and personal contributions.

(3) The arrangements for raising the fund shall not interfere with the Standing Orders relating to the Methodist Fund for Property, collections and subscriptions for which shall be gathered and forwarded as though no separate fund for Scotland existed.

34. Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland

(4) In the Synod of the Scotland District the business of the fund shall be considered in connection with that of the connexional funds.

9. With regards to the structural changes to the Fund as proposed in SO 476 as set out in paragraph 8 above, OSCR have advised that the Fund should notify OSCR once the changes to Standing Orders have been made and should provide OSCR with a copy of the updated Standing Orders. OSCR advised that there was no requirement to obtain OSCR's prior consent to the changes since no changes were being made to the purposes of the Fund.

8. Future Change

The Trustees also report that further changes to the structure of the Fund are under consideration, with a move to adoption of the Model Trusts in place of the existing Deed of Trust. This is with a view to updating governance and management procedures so as to encourage more effective use of resources.

***RESOLUTIONS

34/1. The Conference receives the Report.

34/2. The Conference amends SO 476 as set out in the Report.

35. Composition of the Conference

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Michaela Youngson, Assistant Secretary of the Conference ASC@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Resolutions | See end of the report. |

1. The 2022 Conference adopted the following resolution:
The Conference resolved that, from the Conference of 2024, the total voting membership of the Conference shall be 225. The Conference directed the Methodist Council, in collaboration with the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee, to determine the distribution of seats and directs the Law and Polity Committee to bring draft Standing Orders to the 2023 Conference. The Conference further directed that the proportion of members of the Conference elected by the Synods shall not be less than 70%.
2. The Methodist Council appointed a task group (which included a member of the JDS Committee, along with members of the Council and the Conference Secretariat) to undertake this work and to recommend to the Council the distribution of the 225 seats which will make up the full voting membership of the Conference from 2024. The task group reported to the Council in March; the Council agreed the allocation of seats as set out below and recommends this to the Conference.
3. Factors that impact on the distribution of seats include the decisions of the 2022 Conference which resolved that Synod-elected members of the Conference should be no less than 70% of the overall body whilst resolving not to receive section F of the Oversight and Trusteeship Report which recommended a reconfiguration and reduction in the number of Districts. It can be seen that these decisions together limit the possibility of particular categories of representative continuing to be accommodated within the membership of the Conference. This will in turn place greater responsibility on the Synods to ensure that the Conference membership is appropriately representative (SO 417(2)).
4. The Council recommends that the category of Conference-elected be abolished, to be replaced by members of the Connexional Council. It is important that a relationship of trust and mutual understanding be established between the Conference and the Connexional Council as the new body comes into being. Having most, if not all, of the members of the Council as members of the Conference would facilitate that relationship. It is hoped that the continuity and experience currently offered by the Conference-elected representatives would, in future, be provided by the members of the Connexional Council. This proposal

35. Composition of the Conference

would ensure that a good proportion of the Connexional Council were members of the Conference, particularly once those who are representatives in other capacities are taken into account, whilst not requiring it of each member of the Council. In the table below, the Council is represented by seven of its members plus its Chair. Those currently serving as Conference-elected representatives would fulfil their terms of office; the Conference will be asked to suspend parts of SO 103 and, no further elections would then need to take place save for one in 2023 for a presbyter to serve in the 2024 Conference. This will be necessary because of the requirements specified in the Deed of Union concerning the proportion of deacons, presbyters and lay people who are to make up the Conference-elected category. Where there are future reductions, then the total number of representatives will be achieved by an increase in the synod-elected category.

5. It is proposed to reduce the current representation from the Irish Conference from four to two members of the Conference. This has been brought following consultation with the Methodist Church in Ireland's Governance Board. The Irish Lay Leader is elected for two years, so the proposal that they or the President represent the MCI Conference alongside the Secretary gives scope for each Lay Leader to be present at least once. Subsequent work remains to be done to ensure that provision is in place symbolically to indicate the continued importance of the close relationship between the British and Irish Conference, for example, as now, through the prayer which the Irish President traditionally offers at the beginning of the Conference.
6. The proposed reduction in the representation of the Irish Conference and the proposed removal of Conference-elected representatives will both require changes to the Deed of Union. These changes could therefore not come into effect before 2025. However, the Connexional Council will not be in place by the 2024 Conference, and it is therefore assumed that the 2024 and 2025 Conferences will be transitional years, whilst still maintaining the total number directed by the Conference as well as the representation of the Synods. This is shown in the table below, although the precise numbers are indicative only as the final number of Synod representatives cannot be determined until the number of dual qualifications is known.
7. The Strategy and Resources Committee has recommended to the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group that the post of Connexional Treasurer will no longer be required when the Resourcing Committee has been established. Interim arrangements will need to be made for 2023-24 but the assumption has been made that however those duties are being covered it will not be necessary for the Connexional Treasurer to be a member of the Conference in 2024.

35. Composition of the Conference

8. The remaining non-District representative categories represent those groups within the life of the Church who by dint of the nature of their role are highly unlikely to be elected by synods (ie Forces Chaplains and Mission Partners), and those who represent a special relationship between the Church and our partners (ie UMC and Irish Methodist Conference representatives). It is hoped that as the JDS strategy is embedded in the life of the Church and Districts elect diverse groups of representatives, it will become unnecessary to have a separate category for EDI concerns and the Youth Assembly, however the Council accepted the recommendation that it remains helpful to the church at this time to retain these categories, though reduced from their current size.
9. The Conference has valued the presence of representatives of other Conferences and Churches. The 2022 Conference received a report which recommended that as the size of the Conference is reduced, the constituency should be reduced from 20 (18 of whom are associate members) to 14 (12 of whom would be associates). That recommendation is carried into this report and represented on the table below.

10.

| Role/Category | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | Deed of Union change |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Presidency | 6 | 6 | 6 | |
| Secretary | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Assistant Secretary | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| COLCP | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Record Secretary | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Journal Secretary | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Memorials Cttee Convenor | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Chair of Rep Session Business Committee | 1 | 1 | 1 | |

35. Composition of the Conference

| Role/Category | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | Deed of Union change |
|---|---|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Chairs of District | 25 [<i>this number is reduced due to dual qualifications</i>] | 26 [<i>assuming some dual qualifications</i>] | 28 <i>This number may drop by 2025 to approx 22</i> | |
| Warden of the Diaconal Order | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Irish Methodist Church Reps | 4 | 4 | 2 | Yes |
| Global Relationships | 2 | 2 | 2 | |
| UMC Reps | 2 | 2 | 2 | |
| Conference Elected | 9 | 7 | 3 | Yes |
| Connexional Council | 0 | 0 | 7 | |
| Youth Assembly | 4 | 2 | 2 | |
| Chair of the Methodist Council | 1 | 1 | 0 | |
| Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee | 1 | 1 | 0 | |
| Connexional Council Chair | 0 | 0 | 1 | |
| Forces Chaplain | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Connexional Treasurer | 1 | 0 | 0 | |

35. Composition of the Conference

| Role/Category | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | Deed of Union change |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|------|----------------------|
| Connexional Secretary | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Mission Partners | 2 | 1 | 1 | |
| EDI representatives | 6 | 3 | 3 | |
| Representative of Faith and Order | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Law and Polity | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Stationing Committee | 1 | 0 | 0 | |
| Methodist Women in Britain | 1 | 0 | 0 | |
| Synods | 229 | 158 | 158 | |
| Totals | 306 | 225 | 225 | |

Ecumenical Associate Members 4
 Global Relationship Associate Members 12

11. Standing Order 100(2) requires that the constitution of the Conference be reviewed every five years, therefore the next review shall take place no later than the connexional year 2027/2028.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 35/1. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 35/2. The Conference approves the allocation of seats at the Conference as set out in the table at paragraph 10 of the Report.**
- 35/3. The Conference directs that the membership of the Conference of 2024 be constituted as set out in the middle column of the table, and amends Standing Orders as follows:**

35. Composition of the Conference

100 Numbers. (1) The Representative Session shall number ~~306~~ **225** persons...

102 Representatives of Connexional and Other Bodies

(1) The connexional committees, funds and institutions to be represented in the Conference pursuant to clause 14(2)(x) of the Deed of Union and the representation of each shall be as follows, any representative not otherwise identified being appointed by the body in question:

(i) Methodist Council

(b) ~~The connexional Treasurer~~

....

(f) ~~Two persons, each of whom~~ **One person who** is serving overseas under the direction of the council or is a minister whose ministry is based on an overseas appointment under Standing Order 780(1)(vi)

(g) Six **Three** persons representing the concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion, ~~at least two of whom shall represent the concerns of racial justice and at least two of whom shall be under the age of 26 at the date fixed for the commencement of the Conference.~~

(iv) Stationing Committee One representative.

(vii) Methodist Women in Britain One representative.

(5) The Methodist Children and Youth Assembly shall be represented by the Youth President together with three lay persons **one lay person** elected at the preceding Methodist Children and Youth Assembly in accordance with Standing Order 250(11).

35/4. The Conference directs that, subject to the confirmation of Resolution 35/7 at the Conference of 2024, the membership of the Conference of 2025 and thereafter be constituted as set out in the right-hand column of the table, and directs the Law and Polity Committee to bring the necessary amendments of Standing Orders to the Conference of 2024.

35/5. The Conference resolves, for the purposes of achieving the reduction in the number of Conference-elected representatives whilst complying with the current requirements of the Deed of Union in that regard, to elect one such presbyteral representative at this Conference, and therefore suspends such parts of Standing Order 103 as is necessary to achieve this reduction, as follows:

Resolution for suspension to be brought on the Order Paper

35/6. The Conference adopts the allocation of seats for associate members of the Conference as set out at the foot of the table in the Report, with effect from the Conference of 2024, and amends Standing Order 107 as follows:

35. Composition of the Conference

- (1) The associate members of the Conference to be appointed under Clause 14(4) of the Deed of Union shall be as follows:
- (i) ~~six-four~~ persons appointed by other churches and Christian bodies which are members of an ecumenical body or association in Great Britain of which the Methodist Church is also a member;
 - (i) ~~twenty-fourteen~~ persons appointed by other autonomous conferences, other Methodist churches and united churches in which Methodists have joined.

Special Resolution [*resolution as to the form of appropriate consultation to be brought on the Order Paper*]

35/7. The Conference amends the Deed of Union as set out below:

14 The Representative Session

(2) **Membership.** The Conference in its Representative Session shall comprise:

- (i) the persons who when it commences its sitting hold office as the President, the Vice-President and the Secretary of the Conference;
- (ii) the persons who last held office as the President and the Vice-President of the Conference;
- (iii) the President-Designate, the Vice-President Designate and (if any) the Secretary-Designate nominated by the last preceding Conference;
- (iv) assistant secretaries and other officers of the Conference, as prescribed by Standing Orders;
- (v) the Chair or Chairs of each home District;
- (vi) the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- (vii) the President **or the Lay Leader** of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Secretary of the Irish Conference;
- (viii) the members and associate members appointed by or on behalf of other conferences, churches and Christian bodies as prescribed in sub-clauses (3) and (4) below;
- ~~(ix) the conference-elected representatives, as prescribed below;~~
- (x) **such** representatives of **the Connexional Council and of** connexional committees, funds and institutions, **and such other connexional officers, as are** prescribed by Standing Orders;
- (xA) representatives, as prescribed by Standing Orders, of a Methodist Youth Assembly to be established in accordance with Standing Orders;
- (xB) *[deleted]*
- (xi) members elected by the Representative Sessions of Synods, as prescribed below.

35. Composition of the Conference

(3) ~~The Irish Conference and the~~ **The General Conference of the United Methodist Church.** The Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the General Conference of the United Methodist Church shall each be entitled to appoint annually to the Conference two persons.

(5) ~~Conference-elected Representatives.~~ (a) The conference-elected representatives shall be elected by the Conference. One shall be a deacon and the remaining members shall consist of equal numbers of presbyters and lay persons.

(b) Subject to (a) above, the numbers, term of office and other matters concerning the election and service of conference-elected representatives shall be prescribed by Standing Orders.

(c) Any conference-elected representative who becomes incapable of acting or unfit to act or ceases to be a member of the Methodist Church or, being a presbyter or deacon when elected, ceases to be such shall be disqualified from being a conference-elected representative and his or her office shall forthwith become vacant.

(d) Casual vacancies occurring from time to time in the number of the conference-elected representatives shall be filled by the Conference.

17 Substitutes. (a) The Conference shall have power to elect a substitute for any member who is unable or unwilling to attend except the President **or the Lay Leader** of the Methodist Church in Ireland or the Secretary of the Irish Conference or a member or associate member appointed under clause 14(3) or 14(4) above, but in the case of a member elected by the Representative Session of a Synod only upon nomination in accordance with Standing Orders:

- (i) if the member is a deacon, by the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order; or
- (ii) otherwise, by an officer or officers of that Synod.

43 The Irish Conference.

...

(c) Ministers and lay members of the Methodist Church in Ireland may be appointed members of the Conference, ~~of the Missionary Committee or of any other committee of~~ the Conference of the Methodist Church.

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| Contact name and details | The Revd Michaela A Youngson Connexional Ecumenical Officer asc@methodistchurch.org.uk |
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Unity in Diversity

“The luxurious expense of well-practised Christian division is no longer affordable. My simple challenge to all of us today, is to re-find the spiritual passion of the past for ecumenism; theologically, in solidarity with the suffering, in love that covers a multitude of sins. To do that we must face our fears of each other and of the world together, we must love one another, we must give common witness, and work towards a more visible unity that we reimagine in the grace of God.”

*Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby,
speaking at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches,
meeting in Karlsruhe, Germany September 2022*

On 3 November 2003 the Anglican-Methodist Covenant was signed, representing a new relationship and new hope for transformation as the British Methodist Church and the Church of England committed themselves to work together for the sake of Christ's mission. As we approach the twentieth anniversary of that optimistic and momentous occasion, we are called to reflect on what has been achieved and what there is still to do. In his address to the World Council of Churches, Justin Welby reminded those gathered that at Pentecost, God created a single new people and that when Christ comes as judge the Church will have to answer for her divisions.

“We will have no answer to his judgement if we permit such a failure in this age of our divisions, such a failure in this age of climate change which threatens literally billions of our fellow human beings, of war and possible nuclear war.”

He went on in a spirit of humility to confess his own sense of ‘failure and shame’ regarding his efforts in terms of ecumenical effort. And concluded,

“I want to commit myself now and, with you, I pray and hope to seek afresh the future unity to which we are all called, not a unity of identity but a unity of diversity in the richness of God's creation and in that, towards that and with that, may God give us courage, joy, love and peace.”

When meeting with the President and Vice President of the Conference, both the Archbishops of Canterbury and York spoke warmly and with commitment of the need for the covenant relationship between our churches to continue and to be deepened.

36. Ecumenical Report

It is in this context that the new Life in Covenant Group has met to continue the work of advocating for and supporting the Covenant – with a realism that many in both churches do not know of its existence, or understand its meaning for local mission and ministry. The Methodist Anglican Panel for Mission and Unity (MAPUM) continues to work towards fostering excellent relationships and shared mission in local contexts and reported to the Council in March. In the spirit of ‘working towards a visible unity that is reimagined in the grace of God’, and recognising that the context for both churches has changed since it considered the work on the Mission and Ministry in Covenant proposals in October 2019,

the Council directed the Faith and Order Committee to explore with the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England the most suitable next steps in considering Mission and Ministry in Covenant and to work with that Commission to draft such liturgical, legislative and other texts as may be needed.

Reconciliation and Unity

The World Council of Churches theme for its Assembly in 2022 was, “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity”. Through many wonderful acts of worship, plenary debates, key note addresses and workshops, Christians from across the world explored the theme. Through the work of its various commissions a number of statements were issued, commented on, redrafted and finally agreed by the 800 delegates to the Assembly. These included, among others:

Statement on Confronting Racism and Xenophobia – Overcoming Discrimination, Ensuring Belonging.

Statement on the War in Ukraine, Peace and Justice in the European Region.

Statement on Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

Statement: Seeking Justice and Peace for All in the Middle East

The representatives of the British Methodist Church to the Assembly were able to engage in the drafting of the statement ‘Seeking Justice and Peace for All in the Middle East’ and were pleased that the final language was strengthened, following a sensitive and thoughtful debate in the Assembly Plenary.

All the statements and many other papers relating to the WCC Assembly can be found on the WCC website at Documents | World Council of Churches (oikoumene.org) pages 4 and 5.

God in Christ Reconciling

The Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission has reached the end of its eleventh round of dialogue and has published *God in Christ Reconciling: On the Way to Full Communion in Faith, Sacraments and Mission*. The report comments on the parable of the two sons (Luke 15:11-32), the text chosen by the Commission for its scriptural reflection. When the report was presented to Pope Francis, he noted that both Catholics and Methodists need to repent and return to the Father in order for unity to come about, because, through their divisions, both have sinned and strayed from God.

The Co-Chairs of the Commission, Bishop John Sherrington and the Revd Dr David Chapman will be discussing the report at a Fringe event at this year's Conference, and members of the British Methodist Roman Catholic Dialogue will be present to host the event. The Faith and Order Committee will bring a response to 'God in Christ Reconciling' to next year's Conference. It is encouraging to see a deepening and extending of our relationship with our Roman Catholic siblings.

A number of Methodist representatives have, in the run up to this Conference, met at Durham University as part of an ecumenical symposium responding to and engaging with the Synodal process instigated by the Pope, encouraging a new way of conferring and engaging within the Roman Catholic Church, between it and other denominations and between the Church and the world. The Secretary of the Conference will be leading a group of young adults to an international event taking place in Rome in September, celebrating in prayer and fellowship, the end of the first stage of the Synodal process. If you are aware of 18-35 year olds who might be interested please get in touch with TGRome@methodistchurch.org.uk. Bursaries are available toward the cost of the visit.

Churches Together

The various national and pan-national ecumenical bodies continue to work together, producing resources, encouraging shared mission and ministry, and learning from one another as we all work out what it means to be the Body of Christ in this challenging world.

The Methodist Church continues to be committed to working with ecumenical partners from a wide variety of Christian traditions. We continue to encourage flexible ways of working together wherever possible as we engage in God's mission. The call to unity is a gospel imperative and a mission imperative and we continue to be challenged by the

36. Ecumenical Report

“Lund Principle”¹ that we should “act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately.” The challenge is not only to seek to act together but to articulate, understand and seek ultimately to resolve or to hold together those deep differences which divide us.

The Concordat between the United Methodist Church and the British Methodist Church has been supported by a small group of officers, who at their meeting in December 2022 agreed that the focus of the relationship would continue to be mutual support, shared learning and a deepening of relationships. This would in practice be expressed through occasional, possibly annual, events online, focussing on a particular aspect of mission. The officers will meet shortly after this Conference to firm up proposals for the first of these international online events.

Engagement with our Methodist and Uniting Church partners in Europe continues through the work of the European Methodist Council (EMC) which continues to meet online and in person. The EMC heard, at its meeting in September 2022, from members based in Ukraine and Russia and continues to hold in prayer all affected by the horrendous conflict unfolding. The EMC is a critical place for us walking with UMC Conferences as they make decisions about their future and we pray for all those impacted by decisions currently being made. .

We also continue in our work with the Churches’ Commission on Migration in Europe (CCME) as well as our support of the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome (a partnership with EMC and the World Methodist Council) and Mediterranean Hope (a partnership project based in Lampedusa working with refugees).

The Connexional Ecumenical Officer and Assistant Ecumenical Officer continue to support churches as they explore new and long-established ways of working in partnership and to resource and support district and regional ecumenical officers. They can be contacted at EO@methodistchurch.org.uk

***RESOLUTION

36/1. The Conference receives the Report.

1 The Lund principle is derived from a question raised by the 1952 Faith and Order Conference of the World Council of Churches, held at Lund, Sweden. “Should not our Churches ask themselves whether they are showing sufficient eagerness to enter into conversation with other Churches, and whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?”

37. A S Peake Memorial Trust

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr Andrew J Lunn admin@mandsmethodists.org.uk |
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The Trust fund was set up in 1932 to memorialise the life and work of Arthur Samuel Peake, a Primitive Methodist layperson and Biblical scholar, tutor at Hartley College, Manchester, and in 1904 becoming the first Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis in the University of Manchester. The Trust had been run in close partnership with Hartley Victoria College, until that closed in 2015.

The 2022 Conference appointed a new body of Trustees, who have met twice since then. They are planning to run a day conference in Manchester in March 2024 as the first of a new series of events organised under the Trust's auspices.

The original Trust document leaves in the hands of the Methodist Conference any changes to the rules of the Trust. The Trustees have redrafted the rules to reflect the ways we believe the resources of the Trust could best be utilised at this point in its history, and asks the Conference to approve these amended rules.

***RESOLUTIONS

37/1. The Conference receives the Report.

37/2. The Conference approves the amended rules as set out below:

PROPOSED REGULATIONS FOR A S PEAKE MEMORIAL TRUST 2023

A S Peake Memorial Trust

Regulations

1. The name of the Trust shall be the A S Peake Memorial Trust.
2. The objects of the Trust shall be:
 - a) To memorialise the contribution of the late Dr A S Peake (1865-1929) to biblical scholarship.
 - b) To continue the tradition of biblical scholarship which he represented.
 - c) To present this tradition, together with the findings of contemporary scholars, in terms suitable for a broad audience.

37. A S Peake Memorial Trust

3. The Managing Trustees

- a) The Managing Trustees for administration of the Fund shall be seven in number including lay participation, and where possible two trustees who represent theological higher education in Greater Manchester who need not be Methodist members or ministers.
- b) The Managing Trustees shall be appointed by the Methodist Conference and vacancies shall be filled by the Methodist Conference on nomination of the Trustees. Trustees shall serve for three years, but any Trustee may be open to re-appointment.
- c) The Managing Trustees shall issue an annual report to the Methodist Council together with a statement of accounts.
- d) The Trustees for the Methodist Church Purposes shall act as custodian trustees for the invested funds, and shall forward the annual income less expenses to the fund holder appointed by the Trustees (*currently the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church*) whose receipt shall be a sufficient discharge.

4. The Study Event

A study event in furtherance of the objects of the Trust shall be delivered annually in Greater Manchester, or in a place as the Managing Trustees may determine. The person or persons leading the event shall be appointed by the Managing Trustees, and shall include a scholar of repute who shares Peake's commitment to link academic biblical scholarship to the life of the church. Resources from the event will be made more widely available through electronic publication. This event shall be publicised using A S Peake's name.

38. Methodist Ministers' Housing Society (MMHS)

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| Contact name and details | Mairi Johnstone CEO mjohnstone@mmhs.org.uk |
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1. Introduction

This report covers the period 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2022, but towards the end of our report we also comment on key developments from 1 September 2022 to date.

We are regulated by and report to Companies House, the Charity Commission, the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator and the Government of the Isle of Man.

Our mission is to meet the housing and housing-related needs of retired Methodist ministers of limited means, their spouses, widows and widowers and to offer support for their wellbeing in the key areas of mobility and independence. Our mission is directed by **our vision** for MMHS which is set out in Acts 4:34, 'There was not a single person in need among them' and all we do is underpinned by **our core values** of Christian distinctiveness, high standards of care, and professionalism as individuals and as an organisation.

2. Overview of the period

Throughout the 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2022 period, our core Staff Team and Board of Trustees remained resilient and focused on the significant challenges that followed hard on the heels of the pandemic – a cost of living crunch, the war in Ukraine, a cost and supply crisis with building materials, industrial action and the impact of a shrinking workforce, to name a few.

During this period, we were able to plan for and set out our Strategy for 2022-2027. It was excellent to work hard, creatively and with enthusiasm, on a good future for MMHS.

We consider ourselves privileged to provide housing for ministers who have dedicated their lives to improving the lives of others. The case studies in our Trustees' Report for 2021-2022 testify to useful lives well-lived. Some of our ministerial residents are well into their 90s – with a few beyond – all living independently. We recently celebrated one reaching the age of 102.

3. Housing provision during the period

As at 31 August 2022, we had 896 properties. Of that number, 710 were occupied by our ministerial residents, 166 by market tenants and 20 were empty. Empty property numbers are kept to a minimum and the time they are left empty is kept

38. Methodist Ministers' Housing Society (MMHS)

as short as possible; numbers fluctuate monthly. It is sometimes unavoidable due to transition periods when ministerial residents transfer, or during marketing periods for market tenants.

We were pleased to provide housing for 27 new ministerial residents during the period, including two retiring early for compassionate or health reasons. We also transferred six Ministerial Residents to more appropriate properties.

Our Equity Sharing Scheme enables our ministerial residents to acquire a financial interest in their property. At the end of August 2021, 401 ministerial residents had equity interests with a total fair value of £18,585,000.

During the year, we prioritised using our existing portfolio when offering accommodation to new ministerial residents.

4. **Rent and finances for the period**

Our standard basic rent is the same for all ministerial residents across the whole country; for 21/22, the monthly-rent rose from £300 to £322. A few ministerial residents pay a supplemental rent where their income in retirement is above the figure used for setting our standard basic rent.

Rental income from ministerial residents amounted to £2.552m for the year. A further £1.505m of income was generated from market tenants, £76k from interest and dividends and £2,607k from legacies, bequests and grants. Donations amounting to £61k were received from individuals, churches and Circuits within the Methodist family. The net surplus derived from the sale of surplus properties amounted to £719k. MMHS's total funds as at 31 August 2021 were £187.401m.

Overall income was £7.1m. This income exceeded expenditure by £0.45m, due largely to an unusually large bequest.

We continued to face extraordinary inflationary and cost pressures as we strived to provide our services.

We entered the second year of our 12-year Rent Plan which, as mentioned previously, saw the monthly rent increase by £22 (we chose not to add an additional inflationary amount, as we could have done under our Plan). We continued to cross-subsidise those less able to pay using our specially designated Wellbeing Fund. We are delighted that we are able to maintain a standard basic rent which is well below those set by social housing providers, and one that is substantially below market level rents.

38. Methodist Ministers' Housing Society (MMHS)

In total, we had 273 wellbeing claims to our Wellbeing Fund, with a total commitment of just under £89,000. Most were for a one-off Winter Warmer Grant which we were delighted to award to those who qualified.

5. **Refurbishments and repairs and maintenance**

Our rolling programme for maintaining our properties, including kitchen and bathroom refits, continued apace. When properties become empty, we take the opportunity to undertake major refurbishments to avoid disturbance to any incumbent residents.

Refurbishments comprise kitchen and bathroom replacements; upgrading joinery, heating, plumbing and electrical installations; building fabric repairs, redecoration and replacement of finishes. A comprehensive specification is prepared which prevents projects drifting into remodelling, extensions and structural alterations.

Over the period, we refurbished 26 homes at an average 'spend' per property of £34,825. We continue to exert tight control of refurbishment contracts by ensuring our documentation of works include all that they should at the time of tender. Almost two-thirds (75%) of our projects were delivered below budget.

Over 1,700 jobs were recorded relating to the repair and maintenance of our properties including 12 bathroom and 8 kitchen refits.

Electrical inspections and associated remedial works are administered and undertaken by HES Fire Protection Limited. Gas-Elec Limited took over our gas compliance checks and associated remedial works.

Energy efficiency and insulation considerations are constantly reviewed as a means of 'greening' our properties. Our boiler replacement programme saw 55 new combination boilers installed during the period; our window and door replacement programme provided 30 properties with new windows and external doors during the period. In addition, we are eliminating cold water storage tanks which can harbour legionella whilst fitting thermostatic radiator valves, low flow shower fittings, low-energy light fittings and loft insulation where appropriate.

6. **Board of Trustees**

The Board had eight trustees during the reporting period. The Chair, Vice-Chair and CEO worked closely together to manage the business of the Board, the effective stewardship of MMHS's assets, and the sound governance of its operations. The tailored learning and development programme for trustees continued to be refined and expanded; participation in it helps to demonstrate MMHS's serious intent to enable its trustees to meet the increasingly demanding governance requirements placed on charities.

38. Methodist Ministers' Housing Society (MMHS)

7. **Staff**

The core Staff Team was 17 strong, three being part-time, and everyone worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic period, and beyond, to deliver the services and housing mission of MMHS. Their dedication and professionalism are acknowledged and appreciated.

During the reporting period, the Senior Management Team comprised the CEO and three executive Directors (Finance, Operations and Property). The CEO is responsible for the implementation of the decisions of the Trustees and the day-to-day management of the affairs of MMHS. She is also the Company Secretary. The CEO is responsible for the development of effective management systems to ensure all staff understand their roles and objectives and have appropriate appraisals and training to enable them to fulfil their roles.

8. **Present and future developments**

This year, we are celebrating our 75th anniversary. This is a remarkable achievement of which we are proud. We will mark the year with a number of celebratory events and productions.

We are now well through the first year of our new Strategic Plan 2022-2027. We would like to set out a few of our 19 strategic objectives, as follows:

- We will continue to provide quality housing to retiring ministers who fulfil our eligibility criteria. We look regularly, usually annually, at our eligibility criteria. It is important to ensure they remain relevant, financially workable, and responsive to the changing face of ministry in the Methodist Church. Like all private landlords providing quality housing, we are facing into considerable headwinds, most notably: increasing regulation, tough market pressures, the cost impact of inflation, and expected legislative changes, for example, with EPCs and the decarbonisation agenda generally.
- We will have a particular focus on transfers. We know that moving nearer to family members and other sources of support can assist our ministerial residents to remain in general housing for longer than might otherwise be possible.
- We will establish collaborative relationships with other agencies, charities or groups so that we can signpost ministers to housing that we are unable to provide. We will build on the agreement we have reached with the Church of England for retired Methodist ministers, whether or not with MMHS, to access two of their seven supported housing schemes. MMHS's own provision will remain general housing.
- We will continue to care for and improve our housing stock to the best of our ability. We will undertake a bespoke survey of each of our properties with a focus on energy efficiency, health and safety, and asbestos.

38. Methodist Ministers' Housing Society (MMHS)

- We will continue to develop use of our Wellbeing Fund, for example, in supporting those who are in financial difficulty. We will provide further one-off grants similar to the one paid out during this year, the Winter Warmer Grant.
- We will continue to meet need through the provision of aids and adaptations and, if appropriate, by funding costs ourselves or sharing costs with the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons.
- We will seek new ways to generate income in a sustainable way. Our exceptionally low charitable rents present operating income challenges, especially in the face of current escalating costs, high inflation rates and increasing regulation. In the short-term, we will continue to subsidise the rental income generated from our Ministerial Residents with rental income from our market-rented portfolio but we will dispose of the market-rented portfolio in the medium-term and purchase investment-only properties or invest in a suitable property fund.
- We will continue to build capacity and capability by investing in and developing our Staff Team and Board of Trustees, so that all are fully equipped to deliver what is expected of them.
- We aspire to be 'agile, mobile and with access to real-time data and information'. In the short term, we are continuing to make best use of our existing software, but an IT transformation project is underway, to replace our present housing management system with a system that is better aligned to our present and future needs. We are also rebuilding our document management system.

9. Conclusion

Finally, we would like to acknowledge warmly, the amazing generosity shown to MMHS through the gifts and donations we receive from our supporters, and the legacies and bequests we receive from those who remember us in their Wills. All make the seemingly impossible possible. We are so grateful.

***RESOLUTION

38/1. The Conference receives the Report.

39. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

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| Contact name and details | John Sandford, Chair admin@cfbmethodistchurch.org.uk |
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Summary statement of changes in unit holders' net assets

As at 28 February 2023

| | Net assets at 28/02/2022 £'000s | Net creations/ cancellations £'000s | Change in Net assets £'000s | Net assets at 28/02/2023 £'000s |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| CFB UK Equity Fund | 188,173 | (113,059) | (11,724) | 63,390 |
| CFB Global Equity Fund | 139,043 | (84,937) | (4,317) | 49,789 |
| CFB Gilt Fund | 4,849 | 1,457 | (1,138) | 5,168 |
| CFB Corporate Bond Fund | 97,150 | (71,660) | (3,190) | 22,300 |
| CFB Short Fixed Interest Fund | 14,959 | (272) | (1,402) | 13,285 |
| CFB Managed Mixed Fund | 30,709 | (818) | (1,551) | 28,340 |
| CFB Methodist Council Medium Term Fund (*) | - | 418 | 10,463 | 10,881 |
| CFB Methodist Council Long Term Fund (*) | - | - | 62,279 | 62,279 |
| CFB Property Fund | 25,764 | (6,605) | (3,740) | 15,419 |
| CFB Deposit Fund | 484,414 | (131,197) | - | 353,217 |
| Less: CFB Deposit Fund balances in other CFB funds | (1,322) | (2,441) | - | (3,763) |
| | | | | |
| Total funds under management | 983,739 | (409,114) | 45,680 | 620,305 |

(*) Excluding cross investment into other CFB Funds.

39. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

Chair's Report

Another year of change

I started this report last year with the heading "A year of change". Unfortunately, 2022/23 has also been a year of change that has seen a substantial loss of assets under management by the Central Finance Board (CFB) and a mini restructuring of the organisation in response to this. I must thank the connexional leadership and Methodist Council for their outstanding support during this period that has given us the time and space to continue our plans to replace these lost assets through the external market and Epworth Investment Management (Epworth). The year has also seen many successes which we should celebrate:

- The development of our Christian ethical presence as a witness in the Investment community, in particular the development of our Pillars document that gives a theological underpinning to our investment approach.
- The platforming of the Epworth charity clients to give them better service.
- The launch of our Christian ethical retail product so that individual Christians can invest in accordance with their values. This is a first for the UK.
- The award for Epworth of the 'Best Charity Investment Fund Management Firm' in the Wealth and Finance awards.

The Chief Executive Officer expands on these in his report.

A sharp decline in assets under management

I have reported previously on the Methodist pension schemes' (Schemes) long-term strategy to "de-risk" their asset portfolios by switching their equity portfolios held with the CFB into liability matching instruments managed by third parties. A recovery plan had been agreed with the lead employers in the Schemes that would lead to full disinvestment from the CFB by the Schemes by the next decade. In anticipation of this loss of assets over the next seven years, the CFB has been developing projects for new asset growth in Epworth. Members of the Schemes will be aware that the Schemes have been reporting deficits in their recent actuarial valuations – the assets that the schemes hold have been insufficient to meet the Schemes' future liabilities (ie the pensions of ministers and lay people). This has placed pressure upon the Church to finance this funding gap, something that the Connexional Treasurer addressed at the 2022 Methodist Conference. These deficits also led the Trustees of the Schemes to keep some of their investments with the CFB due to the need for investment growth to aid in the reduction of these deficits.

This financial situation changed dramatically last summer as the turmoil within the Conservative party led to a loss of confidence in the UK's investment markets and a

39. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

sharp rise in the yield on UK Government Bonds. A key input to the actuarial valuation of the Schemes funding positions is Gilt yields as these are used to work out the present value of those future liabilities. With the surge in rates in August 2022 the net present value of these future liabilities fell sharply, meaning that the deficits in the schemes were substantially reduced. The Trustees therefore no longer needed to keep “risk on” in their asset portfolios and were able to move the substantial part of their portfolios held within CFB into liability matching assets held elsewhere. This is terrific news for the Church as a major financial concern has been addressed. Unfortunately for the CFB it meant that our assets under management fell by £382m, or 37%, during 2022.

Ethical exclusions hurt the CFB’s investment returns

The extreme hardship suffered by Ukrainians continues as Putin’s War seems to be at a stalemate in the country’s east. Many sectors of the stock market have benefitted from these events; not least the oil and gas sector as Russia’s energy supplies to the West faced severe sanctions. Defence companies and high yielding sectors such as tobacco have also had good years. However, the ethical investment policies of the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment preclude investment from most of these sectors, leading to a difficult year for our equity portfolios. The CFB has received several emails from Church members questioning the decision to disinvest from the oil and gas sector. From an investment perspective the timing of the disinvestment was poor; from an ethics point of view the recent action of the oil and gas companies in increasing their capital expenditure on exploration for new reserves supports the decision of the Methodist Conference to disinvest. There has been a three-year long debate at Conference on the ethics of the oil and gas sector that required the CFB to undertake extensive research on the alignment of companies in this sector with a “well below two degrees” scenario. At the time, our research concluded that no oil and gas company was unambiguously aligned with the requirements of the Paris Accord; the events of the last year have confirmed this assessment.

The CFB’s financial position

Last year I was reporting on a surplus in the CFB but was wary of the difficult financial markets that lay ahead after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. I also warned of the accelerated path of disinvestment from the CFB that the Methodist pensions schemes were on following the rise in interest rates. Both of these strategic risks accelerated during 2022/23.

Ironically, Epworth received an industry award for the investment of Charity assets in the same week that it received notice from the pension schemes of their switch out

39. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

of the majority of their risk assets with the CFB. The CFB Council reacted quickly and decisively to remediate this loss of income by entering into a period of consultation with staff that resulted in four redundancies. The costs of these redundancies are reflected in this year's trading position. Other cost cutting measures were implemented upon the withdrawal of assets by the Pension Schemes, but the CFB Council were determined to protect the resources committed to business development to ensure that the strategic plan to grow Epworth was given time to embed itself. A small fee increase was introduced on the Funds managed by the CFB but the Council limited these increases so that the Church does not pay fees any higher than those charged to third party clients by Epworth. In the CFB's "cost recovery" financial model, limiting the CFB fees in this way has contributed to the losses reported in 2022/23. I am therefore extremely grateful that, after the financial year end, the Methodist Council has confirmed to pay an additional management fee to the CFB of £500,000 to replace the lost revenue in 2022/23. This financial support is very welcome and greatly extends the window that Epworth has to grow its external business to replace the CFB's lost assets through the initiatives that the Chief Executive Officer describes in more detail in his report.

Since the difficult news of last autumn, the consolidated assets under management have shown good growth through better investment markets and new business in our Deposit Funds. We are fighting this trend as much as we can and I should express our gratitude to the custodian trustee, the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, in helping us maintain our position with Church clients. The CFB represents the voice of the Church in the UK's financial markets; a voice that we demonstrably use to improve the lives of individuals and the weakening of this voice is perhaps the most disappointing aspect of the last year.

Lending to the Church

Last year I reported on a loan to the Methodist Council to support the financing of the purchase of new premises for the Connexional Team at Tavistock Place, London, which will become Methodist Church House. I am pleased to report that this loan was repaid without incident and that the CFB is now planning to join members of the Connexional Team in Tavistock Place next year. We were also approached by the Scheme trustees during the year who were concerned about potential liquidity risks during the extreme volatility of their leveraged Gilt positions with other managers during the market turmoil of the Truss Government. In the end, our assistance was not required but this incident was a good illustration of one of the benefits that the CFB provides to the Church is our ability to react quickly in times of financial crises.

39. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

The Future

The restructuring forced upon the CFB by the recent loss of assets and the focus upon new business growth in Epworth is the strategy for the future. A couple of years ago, the Council asked Epworth to focus its messaging on the good that investing using a Christian ethical overlay can do for the world. In the past I felt that we talked too much about what we should not do. This change of messaging has had a real impact and we regularly see Epworth and the CFB in the media and on-line feeds leading discussions on corporate behaviours. We are influencing the world for the better. While not wanting to diminish our current financial position, we have taken action to return to surplus and have an exciting growth plan. In particular, we can now not only serve the ethical needs of Charities but also serve the needs of the individual Christian investor. I am very optimistic about the future and that we will continue to be a voice in the investment community for the Methodist Church, the poor and the marginalised.

John Sandford, Chair

Chief Executive Officer's Report

Firstly, may I express my thanks to everyone at the CFB, Council and colleagues, for their support and understanding during the difficult last year. I must also thank the broader Church which, generally, has been incredibly supportive and given us great encouragement to continue our work representing the Methodist Church in the financial markets. We are privileged to be part of this wonderful faith and I am looking forward to joining the Connexional Team in Tavistock Place next year.

Investment review of the year

The last year has been a challenging one in many ways. While COVID is now largely in the rear-view mirror, there have been other challenges throughout this period which have, collectively, given people and investment markets a difficult time. Putin had just invaded Ukraine when we wrote our last report; one year on, there remains no sign of an end to the suffering created by this. Russian assets, notably fossil fuels, have been gradually removed from global supply chains as sanctions have tightened, and while this caused an acute spike in energy prices initially it has fallen back in recent months. On the positive side, global economic growth has been more resilient than expected in this environment, leading to higher than anticipated inflation in many markets. This has left many policymakers with difficult trade-offs to balance, between controlling inflation and raising interest rates while most people are feeling a cost-of-living squeeze.

39. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

Equity markets have, against this backdrop been volatile but surprisingly resilient overall. UK equities have returned around 7% in the year to 28 Feb 2023. Our UK portfolio has struggled in this environment, particularly in the early part of the year where sectors that benefited from Putin's war effort rose and has returned 1.5% in the same period. A rotation away from growth stocks in 2022 hurt our relative performance, although this has reversed somewhat in 2023 to date. Global equities also gave a net positive return of around 2% over the twelve months. The CFB global equity fund returned -1% over the period, with similar factors impacting performance overall. Bond markets have fallen as interest rates have risen from their historic lows. This has meant we could increase the rate on the CFB Deposit Fund from its historic lows to an interest rate of over 3.60% at time of writing, but that the bond funds have achieved negative returns for the year to 28 February. Property returns started strong but became sharply negative as the year wore on and investors contemplated the impact of higher interest rates on the sector.

Ethical review

Our theological motivation and focus remains at the forefront of all we do. As such, the CFB and Epworth have strengthened our theological grounding through the development of ethical pillars. These pillars underpin policies, keep the organisation grounded in its theology, and allow the CFB/Epworth to respond better to existing and emerging issues. The ethical pillars are guided by God's call to care for people and planet, and informed by the Wesleyan tradition of equality, fairness, individual responsibility, and societal care. The pillars are also linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). CFB/Epworth supports the utilization of the SDGs, but feel that without a robust theological underpinning, they risk being misused by corporations or organizations attempting to appear ethical. By linking the theological pillars to the SDGs, the CFB/Epworth develops a common industry voice whilst better embedding theology into engagement action.

The development of these ethical pillars has enabled us to develop a more concise policy format that clearly outlines expectations we have for investee companies. This new format has already been applied and tested with the mining sector through a key collaborative activity where the CFB/Epworth serve as co-leads for Climate Action 100+'s Anglo American Engagement. Anglo American is a large, multinational diversified mining company specialising in the production of platinum, diamonds, copper, nickel and iron ore. As co-leads for Climate Action 100+ engagement with Anglo, we helped influence better climate performance at the miner. Notably, the miner has committed to reduce net emissions to zero in the long-term, publication of a detailed pathway of actions, publication of a scope 3 inventory, scenario analysis and improved governance and transparency on indirect lobbying.

39. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

We also recognise the ongoing concerns within the Church surrounding the banking sector. From local branch closures to investment in fossil fuels, to activities with nations in violation of international law, the sector is not without its problems. We also recognise, however, the absolute importance of participating in the sector as individuals, institutions and investors, and the banks' essential role in fostering global markets. Plainly, the world simply needs banks, but it also needs banks to be better. Working alongside the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment, the CFB has published a sector specific policy on banks that seeks to better hold them to account and improve their practices through company engagement.

On 14 December 2022, HSBC announced it would no longer provide direct financing to new oil and gas fields, making it the world's biggest bank to do so. The CFB/Epworth felt this sent a strong market signal that banks appetite for financing new oil and gas is diminishing, as well as setting a new minimum standard for major European banks committed to net zero. HSBC's announcement was in direct response to engagement by ShareAction and investors, including the CFB/Epworth.

In the wake of HSBC's announcement to cease new fossil fuel project funding, the CFB/Epworth co-signed letters organised by ShareAction to Barclays and BNP Paribas, encouraging these banks to do the same and cease direct financing of new oil and gas fields.

We are also resolute in our commitment to play whatever part we can in supporting Ukraine during this time of illegal invasion by the Russian state. The CFB/Epworth do not hold any Russian securities directly, and both organisations have eliminated small indirect exposure to Russian companies through holdings of emerging market-focused vehicles.

We also seek to engage with investee companies where operations in Russia may still exist. After a series of engagements, the CFB was invited for high level discussion with the President of the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, and two of HSBC's senior advisors on human rights and policy. At the meeting with HSBC, we were able to challenge the bank on issues surrounding Hong Kong, Palestine, and Russia. Further discussion was had on the bank's approach to human rights and lending practices to the arms trade.

CFB Fund performance

Where possible, the CFB funds are now all cross invested into the equivalent sub-Fund in the offering from Epworth, the Epworth Investment Fund for Charities. To show the impact of the Pension Schemes disinvestment, Fund values are shown at the end of 2021/22

39. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

and 2022/23 in Table 1. The negative performance of the Equity funds over one year in comparison with the benchmarks, broadly reflect the impact of our ethical exclusions of companies that have benefitted from Russia's invasion of the Ukraine. The equity fund benchmarks are whole of market benchmarks, unadjusted for any ethical exclusions.

The CFB's voting record

The CFB continues to be a very active investor. Our voting policy follows the agreed template of the Church Investors Group. Under the template most of the Christian investment bodies in the UK vote together on such issues as Executive pay and boardroom diversification. The CFB's voting record in 2022/23 is shown in Table 2.

Table 1 - CFB fund performance summary

To 28 February 2023

| | Fund size | Fund size | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| | 28.02.22 £m | 28.02.23 £m | 1 year % | 3 years % p.a. | 5 years % p.a. | 10 years % p.a. |
| CFB UK Equity Fund | 188.2 | 63.4 | 1.45 | 6.60 | 4.72 | 6.15 |
| Benchmark | | | 7.30 | 8.82 | 5.25 | 6.26 |
| Excess return | | | -5.85 | -2.22 | -0.53 | -0.11 |
| CFB Global Equity Fund | 139.0 | 49.8 | -1.07 | 10.22 | 8.53 | 10.73 |
| Benchmark | | | 2.28 | 11.57 | 9.38 | 11.36 |
| Excess return | | | -3.35 | -1.28 | -0.85 | -0.63 |
| CFB Gilt Fund | 4.9 | 5.2 | -21.43 | -10.26 | -3.87 | -0.15 |
| Benchmark | | | -21.24 | -9.96 | -3.47 | 0.26 |
| Excess return | | | -0.19 | -0.30 | -0.40 | -0.41 |
| CFB Corporate Bond Fund | 97.1 | 22.3 | -11.67 | -5.75 | -1.42 | 1.44 |
| Benchmark | | | -12.08 | -5.12 | -0.88 | 1.90 |
| Excess return | | | +0.41 | -0.63 | -0.54 | -0.46 |

All figures annualised and after fees

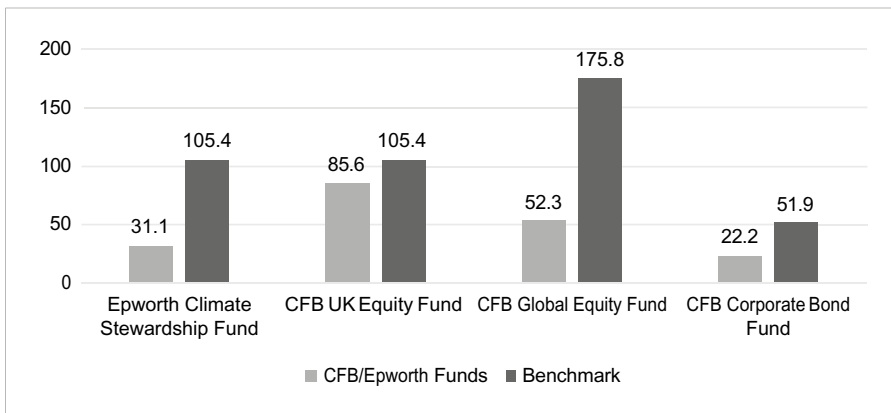
39. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

Table 2 - CFB voting record

Year to 28 February 2023

| | For | Oppose | Abstain | Against or abstain |
|--------------------------------|--------------|------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Auditors | 418 | 2 | 0 | 0% |
| Directors | 2,723 | 469 | 6 | 15% |
| Remuneration | 129 | 234 | 4 | 65% |
| Executive Pay Scheme (UK) | 29 | 20 | 0 | 41% |
| Shareholder Capital (Overseas) | 108 | 9 | 0 | 8% |
| Other | 1,772 | 129 | 31 | 8% |
| Total | 5,179 | 863 | 41 | 15% |

Figure 1 - CFB/Epworth funds' carbon footprints (tCO2e/Mil USD)



Sources for the above data chart - Sustainalytics for the equity funds, and Clarity AI for the Corporate Bond Fund.

Carbon footprint

One of the other elements of fund performance that the CFB reports on is the relative carbon footprint of each fund. Figure 1 shows the latest figures on the carbon footprints of the funds, compared to the benchmark indices that they are measured against.

39. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

CFB Deposit Fund

Last year I was reflecting on the extremely low rates being paid to our Depositors by the CFB Deposit Fund. This has rapidly changed. As I write this the CFB is paying our Depositors 3.63%. The surge in inflationary pressures has led to central banks rapidly raising interest rates and we are now probably close to the top of the interest rate cycle. However, many banks are not passing the increase in wholesale rates onto their savers and hence we are seeing the CFB Deposit Fund offering a substantial uplift on the rates available from most banks' same day access accounts. In Epworth we have jumped on this opportunity to market the Epworth Cash Plus Fund to charities and this has led to some of the recovery in our assets under management reported by the Chair previously. With supply chains still imperilled and labour market struggles, we do not expect interest rates to fall significantly any time soon.

Portfolio clients

Our portfolio offering to churches and charities has traditionally been based upon the Epworth funds, held in the client's own name. Whilst delivering our Christian approach to ethics, our toolbox for asset allocation decisions was relatively limited. Over the last six months we have been working with a third-party platform provider to migrate our portfolio clients onto an independent custodian and on-line valuation system. This platform greatly enhances our client experience, broadening our fund choice and giving clients daily access to their portfolio values. The Epworth Funds remain at the heart of our clients' equity exposure and any third party funds that we use undergo a stringent ethical screening before they are selected. I must extend my thanks to Sarah Bourgein, our Head of Client Relations, who has spent many hours with our clients reviewing their financial needs and appetite for risk and guiding them through the agreement and transfer process to move to the new platform. It has been a major commitment for the organization over the last year but it brings our portfolio offering into the modern world with a transparent fee structure, daily client access and active asset allocation.

Retail clients

This time last year I advised that we were still waiting to hear from the UK regulator as to whether Epworth would be extended permission to handle general retail clients. I am pleased to report that this did come through and that last Autumn we formally launched our managed portfolio service (MPS) at the Association of Christian Financial Advisers. We use our Christian ethical overlay to screen potential investments and then our joint venture partner, Canaccord Genuity, manages the portfolios on various third-party platforms on our behalf.

39. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

Currently our MPS is available to clients of Independent Financial Advisers (IFAs) on three platforms. This service is only available through IFAs due to the strict – and appropriate – rules concerning gathering of financial information, attitude to risk and understanding of a client's full financial affairs before making an investment into our MPS service. Epworth does not have the structure or staff to support a stand-alone retail offering at present. We expect this business to grow slowly but consistently; delivering us a broad client base that greatly reduces our reliance on a few core clients.

Taking environmental, social, and governance (ESG) thinking forward

The ethical pillars that are described previously have been developed by our Chief Responsibility Officer, the Revd Dr Andrew Harper. He joined us in 2021 with a mandate to change our approach to ethical thinking; to change from a negative mindset to a positive one – not what we won't do, but what we can do. Andrew has delivered a foundational document for the CFB and Epworth that will be at the heart of our work for many years to come. The next challenge that I have set Andrew is to consider a new paradigm for ethical investing. ESG is in danger of becoming stale; every national and international investment firm is leading with it. The Central Finance Board was at the very forefront of ethical thinking in the 1970s when we disinvested from apartheid South Africa. Epworth kept this going in 1996 with the launch of a range of funds managed using Christian values. I am very excited to see what Andrew comes up with for the next evolution in ethical investment thinking.

Award

I am delighted to announce that Epworth received the award for Best Charity Investment Fund Management Firm in the UK last year from the Wealth & Finance Awards. The judges were keen to observe that this award was made in recognition of Epworth's leading work in the field of ethical investment.

David Palmer, Chief Executive Officer

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 39/1. The Conference adopts the Report of the Central Finance Board**
- 39/2. The Conference elects the following persons to the Central Finance Board for the period of one year from 1 September 2023:**

Dr Keith Aldred, Jennie Austin, Ruby Beech, the Revd Julian Blakemore, Graham Boyd, Julian De Garis Parker, Caroline Edwards, the Revd Anne Ellis, Ashley

39. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

France, Bala Gnanapragasam, Anne Goodman, Alan Groves, Frank Guaschi, the Revd David Haslam, Sue Haworth, Peter Hobbs, the Revd Dr Peter Howson, Nick Moore, the Revd Leslie Newton, Colin Pearson, the Revd Jennifer Potter, Martin Rees, John Sandford, Andrew Slim, the Revd Eleanor Smith, the Revd Timothy Swindell, Matthew Tattersall, the Revd Graham Thompson, Morwenna Williams

40. Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact Name and Details | The Revd Dr Claire Potter Ministerial Coordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries potterc@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

1. Special Reports

- 1.1 Candidates accepted at previous Conferences and given permission to delay entry into training
 - (a) Those given permission to defer by a further year
No case
 - (b) Those given permission to enter into training
Liam James John Sheridan
- 1.2 Candidates to be accepted at this Conference and to be given permission to delay entry into training
No case
- 1.3 Candidates to be accepted at this Conference and to be given permission to transfer to another Conference
No case
- 1.4 Candidates conditionally accepted at previous Conferences
 - (a) Those judged to have fulfilled the condition and therefore to be accepted as candidates
No case
 - (b) Those judged to have failed to fulfil the condition and thereby not to be accepted as candidates
No case
 - (c) Those still to fulfil the condition
No case
- 1.5 Changes in expected date of Reception into Full Connexion
 - (a) To an earlier date
No case

40. Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee

- (b) To a later date
 - Sarah Louise Caddell from 2023 to 2024
 - Cassandra Emma Jennings from 2026 to 2027
 - Joyce Popoola from 2025 to 2026
 - Agnes Eyiaba Sam from 2024 to 2025

1.6 Deferment or suspension under SO 726

- (a) Student presbyters
 - No case*
- (b) Probationers
 - No case*

1.7 Withdrawals under SO 727

- (a) Candidates
 - No case*
- (b) Student presbyters
 - No case*
- (c) Probationers
 - No case*

1.9 Transfer to other Conferences or Churches

No case

1.10 Reinstatements under SO 761

- (a) Student presbyters
 - No case*
- (b) Probationers
 - No case*

1.11 Discipline

No case

1.12 Discontinuance under SO 031(4)

No case

40. Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee

*****RESOLUTION** (Presbyteral Session)

40/1. The Conference adopts the special reports of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

2. CANDIDATES FOR PRESBYTERAL MINISTRY

*****RESOLUTION** (Presbyteral Session)

40/2. The Conference resolves to recommend to the Representative Session for training those persons whose names have been duly presented to it.

*****RESOLUTION** (Representative Session)

40/3. The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that it accepts for training unconditionally or conditionally as the case may be the candidates for presbyteral ministry recommended by the Presbyteral Session whose names are recorded in the Daily Record for that Session.

3. PREACHERS RECOMMENDED FOR CONTINUANCE ON TRIAL

In the following lists:

** = change from the lists approved by the 2022 Conference*

+ = candidates accepted by the 2022 Conference

| Surname | First name(s) | Due to be received into Full Connexion |
|----------------|----------------------|---|
| Alex | Abi | 2026 |
| Banks | John Paul | 2025 |
| Banks | Kyung Mi | 2026 |
| +Barker | Michaela Jayne | 2026 |
| Bell | Jonathan | 2024 |

40. Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee

| Surname | First name(s) | Due to be received into Full Connexion |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Bell | Judith Helen Elizabeth | 2025 |
| *Bhajan | Evelyn Ruth | 2024 |
| Birks | Tracy Ann | 2025 |
| Brooker | Tina | 2025 |
| Bryon | Ian David | 2026 |
| *Caddell | Sarah Louise | 2024 |
| +Carney | Owen Gerallt | 2027 |
| Carrington | Anna Marie | 2026 |
| Chan | Chi Lok (Rocky) | 2026 |
| +Chikaviro | Godfrey | 2027 |
| Chun | Hannah Moon | 2025 |
| +Clark | Julie | 2026 |
| Collins | Rachel Irene | 2024 |
| +Cullingford | James Jeremy | 2026 |
| Dainty-Share | Tiras Philip | 2024 |
| Day | Anne Mary | 2024 |
| Donnison | Steven David | 2024 |
| Dowson | Ruth Elizabeth | 2025 |
| +Edbarg | Christvin Johnson Kirubakara Pandian | 2027 |
| Edmondson | Hayley Lisa | 2025 |
| +Frimpong-Manso | Collins | 2027 |
| Fugill | Rebecca Elizabeth | 2024 |

40. Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee

| Surname | First name(s) | Due to be received into Full Connexion |
|--|-------------------------------|---|
| Geeson | Nicola Jayne | 2026 |
| Gillard | Samantha Jane | 2025 |
| +Haraszti | Ildiko Maria | 2027 |
| Holmes | Christopher John | 2025 |
| Hooks | Sarah Anne | 2025 |
| Hughes | Catharine | 2024 |
| +Jacobs | Susan Nerissa | 2026 |
| +*Jennings | Cassandra Emma | 2027 |
| Kisob | Juliet Aritey | 2024 |
| Kwallah | Joseph Ndehi | 2025 |
| Laing | Alexandra Dagmar | 2024 |
| Makunde | Sincere | 2025 |
| Marshall | Rebecca Jane | 2026 |
| Martin | Laura Sarah | 2026 |
| Mayisiri | Joyce (transferred candidate) | 2024 |
| Mayo | Stephen Neil | 2026 |
| McGhee | Kirsty Seonad | 2025 |
| McMahon-Riley (formerly McMahon) | Jason Lee | 2025 |
| Moss | Rachel | 2024 |
| Mutopo | Rosemary | 2024 |

40. Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee

| Surname | First name(s) | Due to be received into Full Connexion |
|----------------|----------------------|---|
| Onyett | Michelle (Mo) | 2024 |
| Patterson | James Alan | 2024 |
| Pinkney | Rachel Elizabeth | 2025 |
| +Pipet | Dorothy Anne | 2027 |
| *Popoola | Joyce | 2026 |
| Porter | Richard John | 2025 |
| Prince | Rachael Helen | 2025 |
| Read | Rachel | 2026 |
| Robinson | Philip | 2024 |
| *Sam | Agnes Eyiaba | 2025 |
| +*Sheridan | Liam James John | 2028 |
| Simmons | Heather Elizabeth | 2025 |
| Smith | Fiona Marie | 2025 |
| Smith | Matthew Barrie | 2024 |
| Sparey | Naomi-Rachel Frances | 2026 |
| +Sutcliffe | Claire Lucy | 2027 |
| Sutton | Steven | 2024 |
| Tedd | Paulette Rosemarie | 2026 |
| Thorne | Penelope | 2025 |
| Tull | Marcia Yvonne | 2024 |

40. Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee

| Surname | First name(s) | Due to be received into Full Connexion |
|---------|---------------|--|
| Walker | Wendy | 2024 |
| Weir | Fiona | 2024 |
| White | Blayze Kyle | 2024 |

***RESOLUTION (Presbyteral Session)

40/4. The Conference adopts the report on preachers recommended for continuance on trial.

4. Preachers on trial presented to the Conference for reception into Full Connexion in 2023

^ = ordained presbyter from another conference

| Surname | First name(s) |
|-----------|---------------------|
| Brooks | Elisabeth Karen |
| Butcher | Sarah |
| Deans | Michelle |
| Gaffney | Craig |
| Garde | Jonathan |
| Harold | Paul K A |
| Hayward | John Trevor Saxelby |
| Jones | Sally Ann |
| ^Kimpinde | Jean-Claude Mwansa |
| Lamb | Sarah Elizabeth |
| Sherwood | Gareth |
| Songer | Gillian |
| Spain | Stephen John |

40. Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee

***RESOLUTION (Presbyteral Session)

- 40/5. The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that it judges that those persons whose names are printed in the Agenda have duly completed their training and probation and thereby it recommended them to the Representative Session as fit to be received into Full Connexion with the Conference as presbyters and, if not already ordained, to be ordained.**

***RESOLUTION (Representative Session)

- 40/6. The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that those persons whose names have been read to the Conference and are printed in the Agenda and Daily Record be now received into Full Connexion with the Conference as presbyters, and that those not already ordained, be ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands on the afternoon of this day, 25 June 2023, at Coventry Cathedral.**

41. Authorisations Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr Andrew J Lunn Chair of the Authorisations Committee admin@mandsmethodists.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|--|

1. The Authorisations Committee has reviewed applications from Circuits for those who are not ordained as presbyters (both lay people and probationer presbyters) to be authorised to preside at services of Holy Communion in accordance with Standing Order 011. Careful consideration was given to applications using the established criteria set out in Book VI, Part 3 of CPD.
2. The Committee considered a total of 74 applications (including renewals after three years): 23 presbyteral probationers and 51 lay people. 70 authorisations are recommended to the 2023 Conference. The Committee declined to recommend four applications which either did not meet the deprivation figure, and which could not be accepted on the grounds of geographical deprivation, or did not meet other criteria.
3. The Committee considered five applications made under the missional criterion and all are recommended (included in the above figures).
4. The Faith and Order Committee was tasked by the Conference with a review of the current criteria for Authorisations. A report is brought elsewhere in the Agenda which, if agreed, will lead to a new set of criteria.
5. Applications for authorisations for deacons are no longer being considered, following the resolution of the 2019 Conference arising from the report *The Theology and Ecclesiology Underpinning the Diaconate and the Methodist Diaconal Order*.
6. Applications are scrutinised by Circuit Meetings and District Policy Committees before submission. The committee is grateful to those Circuits and Districts which supply full and accurate details, as these help the committee to complete its part of the process with the minimum of uncertainty and delay.
7. All applications for consideration in 2024 should be submitted to the Ministries Vocations and Worship Team mvw@methodistchurch.org.uk by Friday 22 March 2024. The Committee will meet on Monday 15 April 2024 to consider the applications received.
8. Authorisations, when granted, are for one year and their scope is limited to the Circuit in which the person resides. If the District Policy Committee (DPC) is

41. Authorisations Committee

satisfied that the person authorised remains suitable and the circumstances of the Circuit have not changed, it may on the application of the Circuit Meeting recommend a renewal of the authorisation for a second or third year, and the Authorisations Committee supports any such recommendation without further investigation (see lists B and C below). However it should be noted that DPCs are required to re-examine cases at the end of year 1 and year 2 to check these are still appropriate.

9. The Authorisations Committee presents three lists to the Conference. List A records the recommendations of the Committee on the initial applications and renewals at the end of a three-year term. Lists B and C set out the recommendations of the Authorisations Committee on renewals for a second or third year.
10. The Committee welcomes informal consultations with any Circuit considering making an application for an authorisation.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 41/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**
- 41/2. **The Conference authorises the following persons to preside at the Lord's Supper for the year commencing 1 September 2023 in accordance with the provisions of SO 011:**

AUTHORISATIONS TO BE PRESENTED TO THE 2023 CONFERENCE

Key: P = Probationer presbyter
L = Lay person
M = Approved under missional criterion

LIST A – New applications for authorisations for three years

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----|
| 2/13 | Gwent Hills and Vales | Hugo Potgeiter | L |
| 2/13 | Gwent Hills and Vales | Celia Price | L |
| 2/18 | Neath Port Talbot | Clem Raymond | L |

41. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 2/18 | Neath Port Talbot | Robin Sherwood | L |
| 2/27 | Vale of Glamorgan | Phillipa Doble | L |
| | | | |
| 5/1 | Birmingham | Danielle Wilson | M |
| 5/12 | South Warwickshire | Tina Brooker | P |
| 5/12 | South Warwickshire | Sheila Brown | L |
| | | | |
| 6/1 | Bolton | Sarah Hooks | P |
| | | | |
| 9/14 | South Lakes | Hayley Edmondson | P |
| 9/16 | South West Cumbria United Area | Hayley Edmondson | P |
| 9/16 | South West Cumbria United Area | Janet Ladds | L |
| 9/16 | South West Cumbria United Area | Bob Mantle | L |
| | | | |
| 12/1 | Camborne, Redruth and Hayle | Archie Rowe | L |
| 12/7 | St Austell | Jenny Taylor | L |
| 12/8 | Bodmin Padstow & Wadebridge | Sophie Doyle | M |
| 12/9 | Liskeard and Looe | David Nicholls | L |
| 12/12 | Fore Street, St Ives | William Thomas | M |
| 12/20 | Camelford and Week St Mary | Peter Daniel | L |
| 12/20 | Camelford and Week St Mary | Julie E Swann | M |
| | | | |
| 13/7 | Cleveland and Danby | June Feather | L |
| 13/10 | Bishop Auckland and Shildon | Rachel E Pinkney | P |
| | | | |

41. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|-------------------|--|-------------------------|------------|
| 14/10 | Norfolk Broads | Judith H E Bell | P |
| | | | |
| 15/1 | Isle of Man | Rita Norrey | L |
| | | | |
| 17/6 | East Lincolnshire | Susan Alldread | L |
| 17/6 | East Lincolnshire | Tricia Johnson | L |
| 17/6 | East Lincolnshire | Richard Neale | L |
| | | | |
| 18/9 | Wirral | Ruth Dowson | P |
| | | | |
| 19/19 | Alderley Edge and Knutsford | Sincere Makunde | P |
| | | | |
| 20/6 | South East Northumberland Ecumenical Area | Richard Porter | P |
| | | | |
| 22/1 | Nottingham North East | Jason McMahon- Riley | P |
| 22/2 | Nottingham South | Paul A Johns | L |
| 22/16 | East Staffordshire and South Derbyshire | Rachel Moss | P |
| | | | |
| 23/13 | Northampton | Samantha Gillard | P |
| 23/27 | High Wycombe | Rachael Prince | P |
| | | | |
| 24/1 | Plymouth and Devonport | Janet Dobinson | M |
| 24/7 | Tavistock | Sandra Dodd | L |

41. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 24/10 | South Devon | Rachel Mitchell | L |
| 24/11 | Bude and Holsworthy | Courtney Drew | L |
| 24/11 | Bude and Holsworthy | Michael Reeves | L |
| 24/11 | Bude and Holsworthy | Mark Shepherd | L |
| 24/20 | Ilfracombe and Barnstaple | Sylvia Edwards | L |
| 24/22 | South Molton and Ringsash | Susan Procter | L |
| 24/23 | Torrige | Roy Harris | L |
| 24/23 | Torrige | Elsie Potter | L |
| 24/23 | Torrige | Frank Watson | L |
| 24/24 | West Devon | Angela Banfield | L |
| 24/28 | Teignbridge | Sharon Hurlow | L |
| | | | |
| 25/14 | Doncaster | Sean Worsley | L |
| 25/17 | Rotherham and Dearne Valley | Edward A Siddall | L |
| | | | |
| 26/4 | Basingstoke and Reading | John Banks | P |
| 26/6 | Meon Valley | Rosie Banks | L |
| 26/11 | Isle of Wight | Shirley Whittingstall | L |
| | | | |
| 27/17 | Aire and Calder | Christopher J Holmes | P |
| 27/31 | Airedale | Tracy Ann Birks | P |
| | | | |
| 28/3 | Shropshire and Marches | Ruth Downes | L |
| 28/3 | Shropshire and Marches | Mike Hallworth | L |
| 28/3 | Shropshire and Marches | Adrian Williams | L |

41. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----|
| 28/9 | Stafford | Jean Harrison | L |
| 28/9 | Stafford | Robert Johnson | L |
| 28/12 | Black Country | Juliet Kisob | P |
| 28/14 | Gornal and Sedgley | William Caldwell | L |
| | | | |
| 29/24 | Ripon and Lower Dales | Sarah L Caddell | P |
| 29/36 | Goole and Selby | Joseph Kwallah | P |
| | | | |
| 34/1 | North Bedfordshire | Paul Cooper | L |
| 34/6 | Colchester | Hannah Chun | P |
| 34/10 | Southend and Leigh | Heather Simmons | P |
| 34/11 | South Essex | Fiona Smith | P |
| | | | |
| 36/21 | North Kent | Oscar Siu | L |
| 36/25 | South Kent | Roy Hollands | L |

LIST B – Renewals after one year for applications granted in 2022

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|------------|---|-----------------|-----|
| 2/1 | Bathafarn Area of the Cymru Circuit | Elizabeth Jones | L |
| 2/1 | Glannau Maelor Area of the Cymru Circuit | Maryl Rees | L |
| 2/1 | Ceredigion a Merionnydd Area of the Cymru Circuit | Eluned Williams | L |
| | | | |
| 2/16 | Mid Glamorgan Mission | Paul Cooke | L |

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| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 2/16 | Mid Glamorgan Mission | John Cullwick | L |
| 2/16 | Mid Glamorgan Mission | Jane Williams | L |
| | | | |
| 5/9 | Tamworth and Lichfield | Wendy Walker | P |
| | | | |
| 6/5 | Wigan | James Whelan | L |
| 6/8 | Bury | Thomas King | M |
| 6/8 | Bury | Blayze K White | P |
| | | | |
| 7/22 | North Wiltshire | Rachel Collins | P |
| | | | |
| 9/4 | Western Fells | Lilian Dixon | L |
| 9/4 | Western Fells | Vivienne Kendall | L |
| 9/4 | Western Fells | Douglas McDevitte | L |
| 9/4 | Western Fells | Amanda Taylor | M |
| 9/7 | Kirkby Stephen, Appleby and Tebay | David Askew | L |
| 9/7 | Kirkby Stephen, Appleby and Tebay | Wilf Capstick | L |
| 9/13 | Kendal | Tiras Dainty-Share | P |
| | | | |
| 11/15 | Potteries Mission | Paul Owen | L |
| 11/18 | Stoke-on-Trent Mission | Alison Price | M |
| | | | |
| 12/3 | Falmouth and Gwenapp | Jenny Lockwood | L |
| 12/7 | St Austell | Bernard Goudge | L |

41. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 12/7 | St Austell | Mary Lightfoot | L |
| 12/7 | St Austell | Tony Warren | L |
| 12/8 | Bodmin, Padstow and Wadebridge | Myra Williams | L |
| 12/14 | The Lizard and Mounts Bay | Rebecca Fugill | P |
| 12/20 | Camelford and Week St Mary | Sophie Doyle | L |
| 12/20 | Camelford and Week St Mary | Loveday Paynter | L |
| 12/22 | Saltash | Marguerite Smith | L |
| 12/24 | Mid Cornwall | Christine Roberts | L |
| | | | |
| 13/11 | Durham and Deerness | Fiona Weir | M |
| | | | |
| 14/15 | Central Norfolk | Jonathan Bell | P |
| | | | |
| 17/6 | East Lincolnshire | Nick Adams | L |
| 17/6 | East Lincolnshire | Neil Baxter | L |
| 17/6 | East Lincolnshire | Roger Maidens | L |
| | | | |
| 18/19 | Lancashire West | Alexandra Laing | P |
| | | | |
| 19/1 | Manchester | Catharine Hughes | P |
| 19/8 | Altrincham | Kevin Jaquiss | L |
| | | | |
| 21/1 | Burnley and Pendle | Richard Hoyle | L |
| 21/2 | West Pennine Moors | Matt Smith | P |

41. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-----|
| | | | |
| 22/2 | National Forest East | Susanna Draper | L |
| 22/13 | Borders Mission | Jacqueline Dawson | L |
| 22/13 | Borders Mission | Michael Render | L |
| | | | |
| 23/5 | Banbury | Philip Robinson | P |
| 23/11 | Hinckley | Judith Cooke | L |
| 23/12 | Melton Mowbray | Jennifer Oliver | L |
| 23/14 | East Mercia | Patricia Basson | L |
| 23/14 | East Mercia | Kate Hitchcox | L |
| 23/28 | Amersham | James Patterson | P |
| | | | |
| 24/16 | Tiverton and Wellington | Richard Allington | L |
| 24/16 | Tiverton and Wellington | Gill Atkinson | L |
| 24/16 | Tiverton and Wellington | Ruth Hartley | L |
| 24/16 | Tiverton and Wellington | Dawn Nadim | L |
| 24/16 | Tiverton and Wellington | Hazel Parsons | L |
| 24/22 | South Molton and Ringsash | Sheila Collier | L |
| 24/23 | Torrige | David Ley | L |
| | | | |
| 25/1 | Sheffield | Nick Waterfield | M |
| 25/14 | Doncaster | Susanna Brookes | L |
| 25/14 | Doncaster | Alice Curry | L |
| 25/14 | Doncaster | Jack Key | M |

41. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 25/14 | Doncaster | Christine Ogley | L |
| 25/17 | Rotherham and Dearne Valley | David Guy | L |
| 25/17 | Rotherham and Dearne Valley | Anne Holmes | L |
| 25/17 | Rotherham and Dearne Valley | Clive Taylor | L |
| 25/19 | Trinity | Keith Abel | L |
| | | | |
| 26/2 | Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey | Peter Castle | L |
| 26/2 | Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey | John Evans | L |
| 26/8 | Dorset South and West | Chris Warren | L |
| 26/8 | Dorset South and West | Timothy Wells | L |
| 26/11 | Isle of Wight | Mike Hackleton | L |
| 26/11 | Isle of Wight | Jane Morris | L |
| 26/11 | Isle of Wight | John Wells | L |
| | | | |
| 27/1 | Leeds South and West | Michelle Onyett | P |
| 27/34 | Calderdale | Caroline Stead | L |
| | | | |
| 28/3 | Shropshire and Marches | Vivienne Thomas | L |
| 28/4 | Walsall | Peter Kelsall | L |
| | | | |
| 29/1 | Kairos | Liane Kenset | M |
| | | | |
| 34/7 | Tendring | Steve Sutton | P |
| 34/10 | Southend and Leigh | Bob Briant | L |

41. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|------------|--|-----------------|-----|
| 34/10 | Southend and Leigh | Agnes Sam | P |
| 34/12 | Herts and Essex Borders Ecumenical Area (HAEBEA) | Marcia Tull | P |
| 34/13 | St Albans and Welwyn | Rosemary Mutopo | P |
| 34/14 | West Hertfordshire and Borders | Joyce Mayisiri | P |
| | | | |
| 36/1 | Hants-Surrey Border | Anne Day | P |
| 36/8 | West Sussex (Coast and Downs | Steven Donnison | P |

LIST C – Renewals after two years for applications granted in 2021

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----|
| 2/20 | South West Wales | John Birch | L |
| 2/25 | Welshpool Bro Hafren | John Harbron | L |
| | | | |
| 5/6 | Birmingham (West) and Oldbury | Michael Hall | L |
| | | | |
| 11/18 | Stoke Mission | Glynis Cooper | L |
| 11/18 | Stoke Mission | Amy Wyatt | L |
| 11/24 | Staffordshire Moorlands | Gill Meredith | L |
| | | | |
| 12/7 | St Austell | John Keast | L |
| 12/8 | Bodmin, Padstow and Wadebridge | Caroline Bailey | L |
| 12/8 | Bodmin, Padstow and Wadebridge | Rod Harrison | L |

41. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 12/24 | Mid Cornwall | Miranda Knight | L |
| | | | |
| 13/3 | Stockton | Jan Smith | L |
| 13/3 | Stockton | Jim Wilkinson | L |
| | | | |
| 14/10 | Norfolk Broads | Shaun Cushion | L |
| | | | |
| 19/8 | Altrincham | Dorothy Bretherton | L |
| 19/15 | Bramhall and Wythenshawe | David Allaby | L |
| 19/15 | Bramhall and Wythenshawe | Nick Harding | L |
| 19/15 | Bramhall and Wythenshawe | John Ream | L |
| | | | |
| 23/12 | Melton Mowbray | Anne Yates | L |
| 23/29 | Vale of Aylesbury | Arthur Sara | L |
| | | | |
| 24/11 | Bude and Holsworthy | Muriel Hodges | L |
| 24/11 | Bude and Holsworthy | Clive Smale | L |
| 24/20 | Ilfracombe and Barnstaple | Martin Reardon | L |
| | | | |
| 26/8 | Dorset South and West | Peter Jenner | L |
| 26/9 | Poole Bay | Janet Baker | L |
| 26/9 | Poole Bay | Brian Tucknott | L |
| 26/11 | Isle of Wight | Marian Izzard | L |
| | | | |

41. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 28/2 | Brownhills and Willenhall | Mike Smith | L |
| 28/13 | Dudley and Netherton | Charlotte Harding | L |
| 28/13 | Dudley and Netherton | William Jones | L |
| 28/13 | Dudley and Netherton | Peter Roberts | L |
| | | | |
| 29/33 | York | John Bailey | L |
| | | | |
| 36/25 | South Kent | David Smith | L |

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| Contact name and details | Mrs Joanne Anderton Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice and Secretary to the Committee Email: lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk |
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SECTION D ONLINE MEETINGS

1. The onset of the coronavirus pandemic led to an enormous expansion in the use of platforms such as Zoom for the conduct of meetings considered necessary or desirable for church purposes. This was recognised by the Conference of 2020, which passed a resolution (LP/5) to ratify such action as far as possible and a further resolution (LP/12) to enable the holding of online meetings in the future while coronavirus restrictions on physical meetings remained in place. This was subject to special provisions in relation to matters of discontinuance, competence, safeguarding and discipline.
2. Similar resolutions to enable the conduct of business online, but not limited to the duration of coronavirus restrictions, were passed by the Conference of 2021 (Resolution LP/18) and the Conference of 2022 (Resolution 43/2). These resolutions were intended to have temporary effect, pending the adoption by the Conference, if thought fit, of Standing Orders relating to the holding of online meetings. Resolution 43/2 was accordingly expressed to apply to the business of the Methodist Church conducted in any jurisdiction forming part of the Methodist Church in Great Britain until the close of the Conference of 2023.
3. The Committee has now given consideration to the form of permanent legislation relating to online meetings and brings the draft Standing Orders set out below to the Conference.
4. In doing so, it has borne in mind that in the law of England and Wales there is no generally applicable legal definition of the word “meeting”. In the context of general meetings under the Companies Acts, however, it has been said that the rationale for the requirement of such a meeting is “that members shall be able to attend in person so as to debate and vote on matters affecting the company” (*Byng v. London Life Association Limited*). Nevertheless it was held in that case that advantage could be taken of technological advances so that members were not required to be present in the same room; it was sufficient if there was an audio-visual link which enabled all the members to see and hear what was going on in other rooms and to be seen and be heard. During the pandemic, and

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in connection with meetings to approve a company scheme of arrangement, it was held that a visual link was not required and a meeting could be held using telephonic communication if it provided “the mechanism by which creditors or shareholders are able to come together and consult with each other, should they choose to do so, in order to make a collective decision on the rearrangement or compromise of their rights against the company” (*Castle Trust Direct Plc*). The important point was that those attending should be able “to hear and ask questions and express opinions in circumstances in which everybody else who is present at the meeting is also able to hear, ask questions and express opinions”.

5. The Committee also notes that the delegated legislation introduced in England and Wales to enable local authorities to continue to hold meetings during the pandemic permitted meetings to be held by conference call as well as by arrangements involving a video link (the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panels Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, S.I. 2020 No. 392 and the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020, S.I. 2020 No. 442.
6. Consultation is being undertaken in the home Districts and Circuits outside England and Wales to ascertain whether there is any difference of principle as to what may constitute a “meeting” in those jurisdictions.
7. No amendments are being proposed to the text of the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts.
8. In the view of the Committee, the purpose of the various meetings which are provided for by the Standing Orders or are held in the ordinary conduct of the business of the Methodist Church is similarly to enable those entitled or invited to attend to come together, whether physically or remotely, using a mechanism which enables them all to have a proper opportunity to engage in discussion and debate and to reach conclusions on a basis informed by such discussion and debate. In many circumstances this purpose may best be achieved by a traditional physical meeting now that the obstacles posed by the coronavirus restrictions have been removed. The Committee is, however, conscious that there may be many reasons why in practice a more representative meeting and in consequence better discussion and debate and better informed decisions may be achieved through meetings held in another form.
9. The principles adopted by the Committee are that:
 - 9.1 The legislation should be as enabling as is reasonably possible, except that special provision should continue to be made for discontinuance,

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competence, safeguarding and discipline cases conducted under the relevant Standing Orders (which are separate from procedures under employment contracts);

- 9.2 Some additional requirements should apply in the cases of Circuit Meetings and Church Councils;
- 9.3 Guidance should be made available in Book VII as to the factors to be borne in mind in relation to different types of meeting when a decision is made as to the form in which a meeting should be held.

10. The Committee draws attention to the following points:

- 10.1 The Committee's view, as reported to the Conference of 2020 in the Second Report of the Business Committee, is that as the governing documentation of the Methodist Church in Britain currently stands, it requires a physical meeting of the Conference;
- 10.2 The Deed of Union and the Model Trusts may only be amended by special resolution (or by deferred special resolution in the case of the doctrinal standards) as defined in the Methodist Church Act 1976. The definition of "special resolution" in s.2 of that Act requires a "special majority" of the members of the Conference, such a majority being defined as "three quarters of the members ... present and voting". It follows that amendments to the Deed of Union and the Model Trusts may only be made at a physical meeting of the Conference;
- 10.3 The Methodist Church Funds Act 1960 contains provisions relating to meetings of the Central Finance Board. Such meetings are not governed by Standing Orders and whether or not a physical meeting is required is a matter of the construction of the Act itself.

Standing Order amendments

The Committee recommends the following Standing Order amendments to the Conference.

008 General Provisions. In these Standing Orders, unless the context otherwise requires:

... ***(ivA) references to a 'meeting' have the meaning given in Standing Order 019B;***

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- 019B Form of meetings. (1) Subject to clauses (6) and (8) below, a 'meeting' for the purposes of these Standing Orders is any coming together of a group of persons which is a physical meeting, an electronic meeting or a hybrid meeting as defined in clauses (2) to (4) below and related terms shall be construed accordingly.**
- (2) A 'physical meeting' is a meeting at which those attending come together at a specified geographical location and meet face to face.**
- (3) An 'electronic meeting' is a meeting at which those attending come together by means of any equipment or other facility which enables persons who are not in the same place to speak to and be heard by each other (whether or not the equipment or facility also enables those persons to see each other).**
- (4) A 'hybrid meeting' is a meeting at which those attending come together by a combination of physical presence in accordance with clause (2) above (whether in a single location or more than one) and other means specified in clause (3) above.**
- (5) A person is 'present' at a meeting for voting purposes if that person is present physically in the case of a physical meeting, electronically in the case of an electronic meeting or either physically or electronically in the case of a hybrid meeting at the time when the vote is taken.**
- (6) A meeting may not take the form of an electronic meeting or a hybrid meeting if such a meeting would be contrary to any provision of the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts or, where the meeting is not to be held in England and Wales, the law applying to the holding of meetings in the relevant jurisdiction.**
- (7) Clause (8) applies to a meeting of the following bodies:**
- (i) an initial or appeal committee under Section 03;**
 - (ii) a consultative or pastoral committee under Section 04;**
 - (iii) a safeguarding panel or safeguarding appeal panel under Section 23; and**
 - (iv) a discipline or appeal committee under Part 11.**
- (8) Where this clause applies, a meeting may only be held as an electronic meeting or a hybrid meeting if:**
- (i) the person who is the subject of the relevant discontinuance, competence or safeguarding proceedings or the respondent under Part 11 agrees that the meeting may take place in such a form; or**
 - (ii) the chair of the relevant committee or panel is satisfied that in all the circumstances such a meeting would be able to deal fairly with the proceedings and decides that the meeting should be held in that form.**

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502. Chairing, *Form and Notice of Meetings.*

...

- (4)
 - (a) Any body to which this Standing Order applies may fix the **date**, time, **form** and **(subject to paragraph (b) below) and place (where appropriate)** of its next meeting and if it does so no further consultation or consent **under the provisions of this Standing Order** is required for the calling of that meeting as so fixed.
 - (b) ***In the case of the Circuit Meeting or a Church Council, the relevant body must take into account when fixing the form of the next meeting the need to ensure that as many members and persons invited to attend as possible are able to attend and to participate effectively. If necessary, a decision as to the form of the next meeting must be deferred to enable the requirements of clauses (5) and (6) to be satisfied.***
 - (c) ***The chair of the Circuit Meeting or a Church Council may in case of emergency change the form of a meeting if the chair reasonably believes that the attendance at a meeting in the original form will not be sufficient to enable good decision-making, but must adjourn the meeting if the attendance at the meeting in its new form is not reasonably representative of those entitled to attend.***
- (5) Subject to clause (4) above official meetings shall be convened and held only after consultation (in the case of circuit meetings or committees) with the Superintendent or (in the case of local meetings or committees) with the presbyter who is in pastoral charge of the Local Church, with any presbyteral probationer or any person authorised to serve the Church as a presbyter under Standing Order 733 who is (in either case) exercising pastoral responsibility in it, and with any local lay-pastor appointed under the provisions of Section 56A of Standing Orders to serve in it, and (as to both circuit and local bodies) with the appropriate chair where one has been appointed under clause (2) above.
- (6) Subject to clause (4) above such a meeting shall be called only by, or with the consent of, its chair or the Superintendent or (in the case of local meetings or committees) the presbyter who is in pastoral charge of the Local Church in consultation with any local lay-pastor appointed under the provisions of Section 56A of Standing Orders to serve in that church or, if a chair has been appointed under clause (2) above, that chair, except that if they all refuse to call or consent to the calling of a meeting required by the Deed of Union or Standing Orders, or requested in writing by not less than one third of the persons entitled to attend as members of that meeting, then that meeting may be called by its secretary or convener, or by any three other members.

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- (7) In all cases care shall be taken to ensure that notice of meetings to which this Standing Order applies, **including notice of the place of the meeting or its form if not physical**, reaches all persons entitled to be present **sufficiently in advance of the meeting to make it reasonably practicable for them to attend if they wish to do so** and that decisions ...

...

613. Meetings. (1) The Church Council shall meet at least twice in each year **on the date, at the time and in the format determined in accordance with Standing Order 502 and upon the notice required by Standing Order 502(7).**

Guidance for CPD

The Committee also offers the following guidance to the Conference and recommends that it be published in Book VII of *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*.

Part 6A Guidance relating to the form in which meetings should be held

Church Council meetings

1. A Church Council has authority and oversight over the whole area of the ministry of the church, including the management of its property, and is responsible for its aims and methods, the determination and pursuit of policy and the deployment of available resources (S.O. 603). So far as possible, the Council should be constituted so as to ensure that all areas of the church's life are adequately represented and in particular that, wherever possible, young people are included (S.O. 610). It is therefore important that meetings should be held in a form which enables the maximum attendance and the most effective participation.
2. Experience since the use of Zoom and similar platforms became commonplace, including experience of remote court hearings, suggests that people find it easier to concentrate on and to understand what is being said if they are face to face, can see more of the person who is speaking and can take into account body language. Some people do not give the same weight and the same quality of attention to electronic meetings. If all other considerations are equal, a physical meeting may be more effective.

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3. This is, however, likely to vary very considerably from place to place, bearing in mind the size of the local church, the age of its members, how close they live to the church, the time of day at which meetings may be held, the time of year and many other circumstances. Matters for particular consideration are:
 - 3.1 does the current practice for holding meetings exclude the same people repeatedly?
 - 3.2 do some members have difficulties in attending physical meetings?
 - 3.3 do some members lack access to Zoom (or an equivalent) at all, or are some members for any reason inhibited or uncomfortable in using it?
 - 3.4 do some members have significant problems with bandwidth or connectivity, so that even if they are able to attend they are not able to participate effectively?
 - 3.5 if a hybrid meeting is under consideration, would that disadvantage the members attending remotely?
4. It is important to bear in mind that the form of meeting which may be most convenient for the majority may be exclusionary as respects the minority.
5. Environmental concerns (the avoidance of travel) and possibly the cost of heating a building are relevant but should not outweigh the need to ensure full participation.

Circuit Meetings

6. The Circuit Meeting is the principal meeting responsible for the affairs of the circuit and has to determine the assessment payable by each local church (S.O. 515). The considerations set out in paragraphs 1 to 5 are likely to apply equally to a Circuit Meeting, or possibly more so in the case of environmental factors. In addition:
 - 6.1 a Circuit Meeting may potentially be very large. It is harder to manage larger meetings effectively if they are in electronic or hybrid form.
 - 6.2 care will need to be taken in deciding on the form of meeting to ensure that the representatives from all the churches can participate effectively.

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Synods

7. In addition to dealing with matters of business, many Districts use the opportunity of coming together at Synod as a means of fellowship within the District and for purposes going beyond the conduct of business. That object is unlikely to be achieved if the Synod always meets online. The District should consider whether that is significant within the life of the District.
8. There are clearly significant environmental implications of a physical meeting in the case of many Districts which will need to be weighed against other concerns.

Procedure, rules of debate and voting

9. Probably relatively few Circuit Meetings, and certainly few Church Councils, will often have occasion to consider the formal rules of debate (see S.O. 517(2) and S.O. 615(2)), but the rules are framed in the expectation of a physical meeting and may not so readily apply to an electronic meeting or hybrid meeting. If either such form of meeting is adopted, it will be necessary to ensure that all participants, including the chair, are familiar with techniques for catching the chair's eye and that those techniques work satisfactorily. The rules of debate also provide for procedural motions, some of which may lead to a vote. It is important to ensure that there is a clear and well understood process for taking votes, even when no vote is expected, or at least that a clear explanation can be given at the time.
10. Where elections are to be held, consideration should again be given to voting processes if the meeting is not a physical meeting.
11. If a meeting is in electronic form, and perhaps also if it is in hybrid form, it may be desirable to agree rules about the use of the 'chat' facility (both as a means of general communication and as between individuals) and the 'reactions' facility.
12. If confidential business will be discussed, consideration should be given to how effectively confidentiality can be maintained if the meeting is not a physical meeting, having regard in particular to the possibility that when a person attends a meeting electronically others, without the agreement of the members of the meeting, may be present in or need to pass through the same room or otherwise may be able to hear what is said.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 42/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**

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- 42/2. The Conference amends Standing Orders as set out above.**
- 42/3. The Conference adopts the guidance set out above and directs that it should be published in Book VII of *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*.**

SECTION E

AMENDMENTS TO MODEL TRUST 26 (PROTECTION OF PURCHASERS)

Model Trust 26 is designed to protect a purchaser for value of a legal interest in Model Trust property – usually a sale or lease, or more rarely the grant of an easement or a mortgage – and permits a Memorandum of Consent to be signed by the connexional Property Secretary (or other person so authorised by the Methodist Council) for every transaction, thereby providing assurance to purchasers of Model Trust property that the managing trustees have the power to enter into the transaction.

However, Model Trust 26 was introduced before legislation governing disposals of charity land came into force in most, if not all, of the jurisdictions in which the Model Trusts apply. For example, purchasers of charity land in England and Wales are now protected by the Charities Act statements which managing trustees are required to certify in the transfer deed, lease, etc. and there is no need for the additional assurance of a Memorandum of Consent.

In practice, the requirement for TMCP to prepare, and the Council's authorised delegate to sign, a Memorandum of Consent for every sale, lease, etc of Model Trust property is burdensome and time-consuming, amounting to the production of several hundred documents each year.

In 2010, the Committee agreed to recommend to the Conference that the Memorandum of Consent requirements in Model Trust 26 be deleted. However, for reasons unknown, the proposal was never put to the Conference.

The Committee therefore brings the proposal to the Conference now, and asks the Conference to delete the definition of "memorandum of consent" in sub-paragraph (1) and to delete sub-paragraphs (3) and (4) of Model Trust 26.

Amendments to the Model Trusts of this nature require a special resolution, which means a resolution passed by a special majority (three quarters of the members of the Conference present and voting) in year one and then, after appropriate consultation, confirmed by the following year's Conference (again by a special majority).

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This is the first year in which these Model Trust amendments have been brought to the Conference and the Committee advises the Conference that consultation on those amendments should be with the Methodist Council under Standing Order 126(1)(c). The amendments will also be submitted to the Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Scotland, and Shetland Synods.

***RESOLUTIONS

42/4. The Conference receives the Report.

42/5. (three quarters majority) The Conference, by special resolution, amends Model Trust 26 by deleting the definition of “memorandum of consent” in sub-paragraph (1) and deleting sub-paragraphs (3) and (4), and directs that consultation on the proposed amendments be with the Methodist Council under Standing Order 126(1)(c).

SECTION F

RENEWING FULL CONNEXION – COMMITMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

The 2022 Conference adopted the Commitments and Expectations under the Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers (Conference Resolution 19/2 (2022)). The Committee was directed to consider and draft the necessary changes to Standing Orders to give effect to the Conference’s desire that there is an annual commitment to the Commitments and Expectations made at the Methodist Diaconal Order Convocation and in each of the two sessions of Conference: Presbyteral and Representative (Conference Resolutions 19/3 and 19/5).

The Conference Resolutions adopted make no mention of the Conference Diaconal Committee. However, the preamble to Section 2 of the Commitments and Expectations states that the commitment is to be made in both sessions of Conference (Presbyteral and Representative) as well as the Conference Diaconal Committee. The Committee observes that there is thus a contradiction between the Commitments and Expectations and the Resolutions adopted by Conference which specify the Methodist Diaconal Order Convocation as the location of the making of the annual commitment.

The Committee considers that to require by Standing Order that the Commitments and Expectations be made and remade each year in three separate locations by three groups of people who represent different groups within the Church may give rise to an inference that the Commitments and Expectations go beyond simply a drawing together of that which was already held within the Church’s understanding of ministry and the relationship

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of lay and ordained within the life of the Church. The Committee recommends, therefore, that the making of the annual commitment takes place solely in the Representative Session of Conference, as it is the Session of Conference in which the ordained (both presbyteral and diaconal) and lay members of the Church come together, and where each may make commitments to each on behalf of the whole Church. The Committee proposes a new Standing Order 13A to provide for the making of this commitment.

The Committee further considers that introducing 'expectations' which are stated (in the headnote to Section 3 of the Commitments and Expectations) to "...set out the standards and provide tools for discernment with regard to how ministers fulfil their office...", necessarily provides a basis upon which complaints may be made against any minister, which in turn engages the complaints process set out in Part 11 of Standing Orders. Pending the outcome of the current review of the Church's Complaints and Discipline processes, the Committee suggests that this be dealt with simply by the addition to SO 1101(1)(i) and to SO 1130(3) of editorial notes referring to the Commitments and Expectations printed in Book IV Part 6.

The Conference is asked to amend Standing Orders by introducing a new Section 13A and Standing Order 13A1 as follows:

Section 13A – Covenant Commitment

13A1 Making the Commitments and affirming the Expectations

Annually, during the Representative Session of the Conference, those members present shall, on behalf of themselves and of the whole of the membership, make the Commitments and affirm the Expectations contained in Part 6 of Book IV: 'Renewing Full Connexion: Commitments and Expectations'.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

42/6, The Conference receives the Report.

42/7. The Conference amends Standing Orders as set out above.

SECTION G AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

In addition to the amendments submitted in Part 1 of the Committee's report to the Conference, the Committee also recommends the following amendment.

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Standing Order 760 (Resignation)

Standing Order 761(6) entitles a minister who wishes to be reinstated to be accompanied by a friend to the meeting of the advisory committee. However, no such entitlement is afforded to ministers wishing to resign under Standing Order 760(1). The Committee understands that it is usual practice to allow ministers to be accompanied by a friend to a resignation meeting and recommends that Standing Order 760 be amended to reflect this practice. In recommending this amendment, the Committee also suggests taking the opportunity to incorporate gender-neutral language in the rest of the Standing Order (in keeping with the Conference's policy).

The Conference is therefore asked to amend Standing Order 760 as follows:

760 Resignation. (1) Any presbyter or deacon wishing to resign from Full Connexion shall send to the President notice of such resignation. All such notices shall be referred by the President to an advisory committee for consideration. An opportunity shall be given to the minister to be present at the committee if ~~he or she~~ **the minister** should so desire. The committee shall advise the President as to whether the resignation should be accepted and, if so, the date from which it should take effect and to what extent the status of the person concerned as a local preacher and member should be affected. The committee shall also advise the President, the Superintendent of the Circuit in which that person is stationed or if not stationed is shown as residing and the Chair of the District of which the Circuit forms part whether any public announcement should be made and if so, to whom and in what terms.

(1A) *The minister may be accompanied by a friend when attending the advisory committee.*

- (2) The advisory committee shall consist of an ex-President or ex-Vice-President appointed by the President, the Secretary of the Conference, who shall act as convener, the Chair and Superintendent concerned, in the case of a deacon the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order or ~~his or her~~ **the Warden's** deputy, and three other persons appointed by the convener.
- (3) Where a person seeking to resign or withdraw under this Standing Order is at the time of giving notice the subject of a complaint or charge under Part 11:
 - (i) that person or the President may at any time before a decision is made under this Standing Order require that the complaint or charge is first disposed of in accordance with the provisions of that Part;
 - (ii) if no person so requires, the provisions of Standing Order 1151(9) shall apply.

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- (4) Should a minister intimate to the President an intention to resign from Full Connexion at some future date the President may regard that intimation as tantamount to a present resignation and the procedure shall be as above.
- (5) In any case in which a minister gives notice of ~~his or her~~ a wish to resign or intention to resign at some future date (whether or not the resignation is accepted) the President, acting in consultation with the advisory committee, may, if ~~he or she~~ **the President** thinks fit, notify the convener of the Complaints Support Group appointed by the District in which the minister is stationed or if not stationed is shown as residing. The convener shall offer two members of the Group to the minister to act as advisers and friends and two further members of the Group to any Local Church or churches in the Circuit (if any) in which **or of which** the minister is stationed or has pastoral charge, or in which ~~he or she~~ **the minister** undertakes pastoral responsibilities. The convener shall also offer further members of the Group to individuals or groups of individuals to whom the President directs that such an offer should be made.
- (6) The President, acting in consultation with the advisory committee, has authority to accept the resignation of a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion and in every case of an accepted resignation the President shall make a declaration with regard to the status of the person concerned as a local preacher and member. Every action under this clause on the part of the President shall be deemed for all purposes to be the action of the Conference. The President shall report ~~his or her~~ **the action taken** to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference next following or the next meeting of the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may be, and to the Representative Session.

***RESOLUTIONS

42/8. The Conference receives the Report.

42/9. The Conference amends Standing Order 760 as set out above.

SECTION H RESOLUTIONS ON THE PASTORAL WORK

The Conference of 2022 (Resolution 19/4) directed the Law and Polity Committee, in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee, to bring a proposal relating to the inclusion and positioning of Book V Part 5 (Resolutions on the Pastoral Work) to the Conference of 2023.

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Both Committees have considered the matter. Whilst there appears to be no legal or theological objection to moving Book V Part 5 from its current position in Volume 2 to Volume 1 of *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church* (CPD), the Faith and Order Committee has expressed the view that the Resolutions in Part 5 can, and should, simply be deleted. The Law and Polity Committee sees no legal reason why Part 5 should not be deleted, and therefore recommends to the Conference that this be done.

***RESOLUTIONS

42/10. The Conference receives the Report.

42/11. The Conference directs that Part 5 (Resolutions on the Pastoral Work) of Book V (Historic Texts) be removed from CPD.

SECTION I THE COMMITTEE'S ONGOING WORK

The Committee wishes to highlight to the Conference the following items on the Committee's workplan:

1. Review of CPD

Triggered by the conversation on the placing of Part 5 of Book V referred to above, discussions have taken place this year about conducting a general review of the content of Volume 1 of *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*, which is no longer available in printed copy. In the wider context, the Secretary of the Conference has now asked the Committee to consider a fuller review of all aspects of CPD, for which it is proposed to establish a working party to scope the work required and devise a realistic timetable in which to conduct the review, having regard to other projects which are currently in progress, notably the Oversight and Trusteeship work and the review of the Church's complaints and discipline processes in Part 11 of Standing Orders. Any review of CPD will necessarily include consideration of the accessibility of CPD to all who need to refer to it, and also the status of the guidance which is published within it.

2. Connexional guidance and codes of practice

The Committee has noted that at times those responsible for a particular area of the Church's life or activity issue guidance which says that a particular action "shall"

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happen, whereas Standing Orders (which, until any amendment is agreed, should take precedence) might only say “may” happen.

The Committee wishes to draw the Conference’s attention to the risk of such guidance being seen as authoritative instead of the applicable Standing Order(s). The Committee is pleased to have had the opportunity to assist the Connexional Team in reviewing various handbooks and guidance during this year, to enable those producing such publications to be confident that they do not conflict with the Church’s governing documents.

The Committee recommends that all guidance and Codes of Practice should refer expressly to the relevant Standing Orders from which that guidance or Code is derived, including where appropriate citing the full text of the Standing Order(s) to aid understanding and application.

All queries on the interpretation of Standing Orders should be sent to the Committee’s Secretary, the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice:
lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk

3. Changes in composition of Districts

The Committee has noted some possible areas of confusion between Standing Order 401, which deals with the changes in compositions of Districts, and Section 48A, which concerns Districts with modified constitutions, but which also strays into the territory of changes in the compositions of Districts. The Committee proposes to consider this, potentially to clarify the provisions and to consult with relevant others (such as the Secretary of the Conference and the Methodist Council), to check whether there are other process or policy considerations arising from the present provisions that deserve attention, in order to enable any proposed amendments to be brought to the Conference of 2024.

4. Standing Order 1104 Record-keeping, confidentiality and related matters

The Committee has identified a need to align Standing Order 1104 with the Church’s data retention schedules, particularly in the light of the recommendations of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) as to the holding of records relating to safeguarding matters.

The Committee also recognises that there are several significant policy questions to be addressed regarding retention of records generally – both locally and connexionally. The Committee therefore proposes to undertake a wider piece of the work, in consultation

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with other relevant parties, to review the whole of Standing Order 1104 and the Church's general policy relating to document retention. This work will also include a review, from this perspective, of the Guidelines for Good Practice in Confidentiality and Pastoral Care in Part 14 of Book VII of CPD.

*****RESOLUTION**

42/12. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION J

CANDIDATING FOR MINISTRY - STANDING ORDER AMENDMENTS

The Conference of 2022 (Resolution 17/16) directed the Committee to present to the Conference of 2023 draft revisions of Section 71 of Standing Orders (and of any related Standing Orders) to accommodate the new candidating process.

At the time of writing this report, there are still several policy questions relating to some aspects of the new arrangements to be resolved before the Committee is able to complete the drafting of the Standing Order amendments for presentation to the Conference. The Committee therefore proposes bringing the Standing Order amendments to the Conference elsewhere in the Agenda.

*****RESOLUTION**

42/13. The Conference receives the Report.

43. There is Room: Triennial Membership Returns 2019 - 2022

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | Doug Swanney, Connexional Secretary, cs@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Resolution | 43/1. The Conference receives the Report. |

- 1 Every three years the Connexional Team (hereafter “The Team”) is required to present a report on the membership returns of the Church to both the Presbyteral and Representative Sessions of the Conference (Standing Order 305). The Standing Order further indicates that Chairs and Superintendents shall provide any statistical information that is necessary for the business of the Team.
- 2 Over the last few years there has been a constant drive for the Team only to ask for information which it absolutely requires, recognising the pressures on the whole Connexion and not wishing for any returns to be seen as a burden. Work continues to ensure that what is being asked for in the various returns is pared back as much as it can, without us ceasing to have any real sense of ourselves through the data that we request and hold.
- 3 Whilst it has been the practice to present a Statistics for Mission report to the Conference every three years, the approach to reporting has changed so that it more closely meets the Standing Order requirement to report on ‘membership returns’. It also allows space to reflect on what changes in membership might mean for the church. It is anticipated that on-going reporting on membership returns will form part of the reporting of the Mission Committee.

Returns 2019-2022

- 4 The table below shows the returns received across the period from 2019-2022.

| Membership & Attendance | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Number of Churches Submitted | 4,159 | 4,058 | 3,406 | 3,332 |
| Total Number of Churches | 4,285 | 4,182 | 3,923 | 3,745 |
| Reported Membership | 169,321 | 164,084 | 131,689 | 131,839 |
| of which are LEP members | 29,310 | 27,844 | 22,967 | 22,263 |
| Attendance | 132,980 | N/A | N/A | 87,588 |
| % Complete | 97.1% | 97.0% | 86.8% | 89.0% |
| Membership adjusted for missing data | 174,451 | 169,098 | 151,678 | 148,180 |

43. There is Room: Triennial Membership Returns 2019 - 2022

- 5 For the years 2020 and 2021 attendances were not recorded due to the lockdown with many societies meeting online for that time. The attendance figures for 2022 (as for 2019) do not include those who shared online in services.
- 6 At first reading the reported membership looks very different from the bottom line which has been adjusted to take account of the missing data in each year.
- 7 Despite the requirement for membership to be reported annually, the percentage of those not reporting has increased. This makes it difficult really to ascertain what the numbers are saying.
- 8 In order to add further meaning to them the line at the bottom of the table offers a picture of what might be the case if we were to assume that the churches for which no report has been made have membership in direct proportion to the churches for whom we do have data.
- 9 These numbers would indicate a 3,000 reduction between 2021 and 2022, which would be more typical of pre-pandemic trends. Such an extrapolation also implies a loss of 10,000 members during the pandemic (representing approx. 15% of our membership) which would match the narrative around the Connexion.

A smaller Church but God still evident

- 10 The decline in membership and attendance is not unexpected nor is it unique to Methodism within these islands, or to Christianity in the West generally.
- 11 However, despite the falling numbers, there is evidence that God is indeed still at work in and through the Methodist Church and its people. The faithfulness of God and God's people in the current reality is seen in pockets of growth in churches and Circuits, and in experimentation, with Methodist people and churches taking missional risks. That faithfulness is also evident where Trustees make hard decisions about the best use of property and resources and draw some presence to an end for this time.
- 12 Furthermore, every District has now taken up a commitment to New Places for New People, with 13 district-led new Christian communities already launched or in planning for launch, of which five are Church at the Margins projects. As more Districts and Circuits launch New Places for New People (NPNP), we anticipate seeing growth in the numbers of new people exploring Christian spirituality and community and making faith commitments.

43. There is Room: Triennial Membership Returns 2019 - 2022

- 13 The Methodist Church in Britain is a Church that desires to grow and is taking strategic steps for long-term growth. Those strategic steps are based on the belief that growth is inseparable from inclusion, justice, and evangelism. In particular, the newly established Mission Committee, formed by the 2022 Methodist Conference, has worked to join up the different areas of mission (see Section M of the Methodist Council report 22 to the 2023 Conference), in particular the intersection of evangelism and justice via the Walking with Micah project (see report 12 to the 2023 Conference). This last year has also seen fresh attempts to bring innovation to a number of areas as evidenced by the new candidating processes and the new *Foundations for Mission and Ministry* course offered by Cliff College.
- 14 A church with a smaller membership is not necessarily a church with a lesser impact. Membership is one indicator of the impact of a church, but by no means the only nor always the most informative indicator. Another indicator of impact is the measure of engagement with mission projects. This last winter, more than one in ten Methodist Churches hosted Warm Welcome Spaces in service to their local communities in a cost of living crisis, proportionally more than any other denomination. These were spread across the Connexion, with more than 60% of Circuits hosting at least one space.
- 15 Considering the stewardship of resources is another way to measure impact. The increasing numbers of churches choosing to 'merge for mission' tell brave and encouraging stories about resurrection and new life. The funding for district-led and circuit-led NPNP projects to inspire Circuits and churches is another example of missional commitment and stewardship.

Encouraging membership and discipleship exploration

- 16 It remains the case that some people will want to explore spirituality, to serve their community, to find friendship and fellowship, and to be active in and committed to the Christian community, but not to become members of the Church. The Methodist Church will respect their journeys, welcome them wherever they are on those journeys, value them as they are, and invite them to play an active part in the life of the church. *A Methodist Way of Life* provides an accessible, experiential framework for both members and non-members to deepen their exploration and discipleship.
- 17 In existing churches and *New Places for New People*, the Methodist Church should still seek to convey the value and relevance of membership for a person's

43. There is Room: Triennial Membership Returns 2019 - 2022

spiritual life and for the robustness of service and mission as a local church in a local community. The report, *Methodist Membership in the 21st Century*, reminds us that "Membership of the Methodist Church is primarily about growth in grace and holiness... It involves a choice and commitment to work at growing in grace and holiness in relation to a particular community of Methodist disciples."¹

- 18** All Christians are called to develop and deepen their faith through a rhythm of life which leads to meaningful faith commitments and an extension of the invitation to others to share in that rhythm. Enabling this to happen needs and helps to create a culture in the local church in which commitments to discipleship and membership are regularly communicated in an honest, normalised, consistent, and joyous way. This also provides clear and accessible pathways for exploring deeper discipleship commitments including membership, which are offered as a standard part of the church's life, and in turn provides opportunities for faith commitments including membership to be celebrated publicly and seriously. As these faith commitments form part of the church's liturgical and missional life, the testimony from those making commitments is centred, the rhythm of the life of faith is reinforced and faith is developed and deepened.

Opportunities to share good news stories

- 19** There is a number of ways in which we share the stories that highlight how communities are being supported by our engagement, thereby conveying our desire to be an inclusive, justice-seeking church.
- 20** Currently 75,000 people visit the Methodist website at least once a month, with 4000 visiting at least once a day. Our social media channels have more than 50,550 followers. In the last year there have been around 5.5m impressions (those who have been shown our content) on our social media channels and we have reached more than 4.63m people who have viewed our tweets and posts on these channels. This is a significant set of figures for a denomination our size.
- 21** In the past year we have seen a net increase of more than 2,500 followers on our social media channels. Our original videos have been viewed over 200,000 times with almost 150,000 engagements (people liking or commenting on material). On YouTube we have seen a net increase of almost 700 new subscribers and we have had over 162,000 video views on this channel (in addition to social media film views).

¹ Conference 2022, *Methodist Membership in the 21st Century* paragraph 2.4

43. There is Room: Triennial Membership Returns 2019 - 2022

- 22** All of these numbers represent either the faithful discipleship of the people called Methodist today or the potential of a future group of people living a Methodist way of life.
- 23** One particular way we have had a huge impact recently is through the *There is Room* campaign which ran from Advent to Christmas. Central to this campaign was the provision to local churches of high-quality and easy to use resources which would point new and existing audiences to either faith exploration or a local church. Many liked the 'real-ness' of the theme and were able to connect the difficulties faced by those featured to events in their local context. Others talked of how the diverse range of resources enabled them to engage with different audiences.
- 24** Our social content including a 'hero' film reached more than 575,500 people with all social content reaching around 1.4m people. The video content was viewed more than 250,000 times and more than 181,000 free printed resources were distributed. The main video drove 5,660 clicks through to our website. There were over 19,000 visits to the *There is Room* resources page on the website. Again, all these engagements are a snapshot of the reach and the possibilities of how our message is being shared.
- 25** A further way in which we share good news stories is through *the connexion* magazine. The goal for *the connexion* is for a high quality discipleship and evangelism tool to be read by members and for copies to be shared with those who do not regularly attend a church but may be interested in hearing good news stories and reading about how the Methodist Church is working in their communities.

Conclusion

- 26** As stated earlier, our membership figures are not a surprise, nor need they be the whole story. Behind these numbers lies a wealth of stories of growth, of celebration, of community engagement, and of faithfulness to God.
- 27** However, these numbers signal we no longer have the people to populate our structures. We know that we cannot continue to do everything we did when these triennially reported numbers were significantly larger and that therefore we need to make pragmatic choices about the things that our ours to do. We know that we must work harder with partners in order for us all to have economies of scale where we can and to focus our energies and resources clearly and effectively on our priorities under Our Calling.

43. There is Room: Triennial Membership Returns 2019 - 2022

- 28** There is room in our Church for real growth in our discipleship, in our commitment to justice, and in our desire to be inclusive. There is room in our work for people to hear the call to discipleship through us. There is room for us to continue to have a presence where God calls us to be and there is room for us to be excited by the possibilities that we are seeing behind the statistics we collect.

*****RESOLUTION**

- 43/1. The Conference receives the Report.**

44. The Necessitous Local Preachers Fund (NLPF)

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | Joanne Anderton Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

1. The Necessitous Local Preachers Fund (the **NLPF**, or **Fund**) was created by a trust deed dated 5 June 1882 *“for the benefit of necessitous local preachers in the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion”* (the **Trust Deed**). In 1940, the NLPF was amalgamated with two other funds whose purposes were also to support necessitous Methodist or Wesleyan Local Preachers.
2. The capital sum in the NLPF is invested with the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes in Trust 18271. On 28 February 2023 the total capital value of the Fund exceeded £196,000 and the income in the Fund amounted to £9,590.01.
3. The Trust Deed places no limit on the number of trustees who may be appointed, but the number must not fall below three.
4. The power to remove and appoint NLPF trustees lies with Conference.
5. Clause 2 of the Trust Deed states: *“The Trustees shall from time to time invest the said sum of Eight Thousand Pounds ... and shall pay the income thereof from time to time ... for the benefit of such necessitous Local Preachers according to such rules and in such manner as the said Conference shall from time to time direct...”*. This means that the NLPF trustees are responsible for ensuring that the Fund is invested and used in accordance with the terms of the Trust Deed and any rules dictated by the Conference.
6. The Trust Deed goes on to say: *“PROVIDED that if the said Conference shall so direct the Trustees shall pay such income ... to such Committee or Committees as the said Conference shall from time to time direct to be applied for the like benefit according to such rules and in such manner as the said Conference shall from time to time direct...”*
7. Standing Order 364(6) states:

“(6) In pursuance of its powers under the Deed Poll dated the 5th June 1882 establishing the Necessitous Local Preachers Fund the Conference directs the trustees of that fund to pay the income of the fund to the Methodist Council to be applied according to the trusts of the above Deed. The council shall have power to delegate to any two or more persons, whether or not members or a committee of the council, decisions as to the application or distribution of such income according to the said trusts.”

44. The Necessitous Local Preachers Fund (NLPF)

8. In 1969 the Methodist Conference entrusted the administration of the NLPF to the Connexional Local Preachers' Committee (**CLPC**).
9. In 2003, responsibility for administering grants from the NLPF was transferred from the CLPC to Local Preachers' Mutual Aid (LPMA), now reconstituted as the Leaders and Worship and Preachers' Trust (**LWPT**). LWPT is an ecumenical body, which is outside of the control of the Methodist Church in Great Britain.
10. The most recent guidance for the application of the Fund (dated August 2007) states that the trustees shall report to the annual meeting of CLPC.
11. There is no longer a CLPC and in recent years it has proved difficult for the LWPT to administer the Fund effectively due to lack of active trustees.
12. Consequently, in 2020 the Methodist Council directed the Ministries Committee to take over the administration of the NLPF from the LWPT. The Council reported this decision to the 2020 Conference, noting that the position was complex and that work was ongoing to enable the NLPF to be used for its intended purpose.
13. Legal advice has now been taken which indicates that, in order to bring the NLPF back onto a proper footing to enable the Fund to be administered effectively, the Conference should remove the existing NLPF trustees and appoint a new set of trustees.
14. For the avoidance of doubt, the Conference is also advised to confirm the Council's 2020 decision that responsibility for administering grants made from the NLPF now lies with the Ministries Committee rather than the LWPT.
15. Once appointed, the new trustees are advised to review the Trust Deed and, in the Law and Polity Committee, to propose amendments to modernise and clarify the terms and powers of the Trust Deed. This might include, for example, asking the Charity Commission to approve amendments to the eligibility criteria to enable grants from the Fund to be made to Worship Leaders as well as Local Preachers.
16. The Conference is also asked to direct the Ministries Committee, in consultation with the NLPF trustees and the Law and Polity Committee, to devise new rules for the administration of grants from the Fund and to bring these rules to the 2024 Conference for approval.

44. The Necessitous Local Preachers Fund (NLPF)

***RESOLUTIONS

- 44/1. The Conference receives the Report.
- 44/2. The Conference removes the existing trustees and appoints the new trustees of the Necessitous Local Preachers Fund as follows: [*names to follow*]
- 44/3. The Conference confirms that the Ministries Committee shall be responsible for administering the allocation of grants made from the Necessitous Local Preachers Fund, in place of the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust.
- 44/4. The Conference directs the new trustees of the Necessitous Local Preachers Fund, in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee, to propose amendments to modernise and clarify the terms and powers of the Trust Deed and to report to the 2024 Conference.
- 44/5. The Conference directs the Ministries Committee, in consultation with the Necessitous Local Preachers Fund trustees and the Law and Polity Committee, to devise new rules for the administration of grants from the Fund and to bring these rules to the 2024 Conference for approval.

45. Designations for Appointment of District Chairs

***RESOLUTIONS

- 45/1. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Dr Marcus Torchon as Chair for the Bristol District for a period of six years from 1 September 2024.
- 45/2. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Angela J Long as Chair for the Lincolnshire District for a period of six years from 1 September 2023.
- 45/3. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Andrew W Fyall as Chair for the Nottingham and Derby District for a period of six years from 1 September 2023.
- 45/4. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Sonia M Hicks as Chair for the Northampton District for a period of six years from 1 September 2024.

The following resolutions require a majority of 75%.

- 45/5. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Dr Jennifer Hurd as Chair for Wales Synod Cymru for a further period of two years from 1 September 2024.
- 45/6. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Richard M Andrew as Chair for the Darlington District for a further period of five years from 1 September 2024.
- 45/7. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Dr Daniel R Haylett as Chair for the Plymouth and Exeter District for a further period of five years from 1 September 2024.

The following resolutions require a simple majority.

- 45/8. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Dr Daniel R Haylett as Chair for the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly District, in addition to the Plymouth and Exeter District, for one year from 1 September 2023.
- 45/9. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Loraine N Mellor as Chair for the Plymouth and Exeter District, in addition to the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly District, for one year from 1 September 2023.

45. Designations for Appointment of District Chairs

Reasoned Statements:

The Revd Andrew Fyall

Andrew Fyall is Deputy Chair of the Nottingham and Derby District and Team Lead for New Places for New People. Andy previously served as Superintendent Minister of the Stamford Circuit (2017-2022) where he was recognised as a visionary, creative and strategic leader. In his current role and as part of the Regional Working Group, Andy has a good understanding of and commitment to the need for collaboration with neighbouring Districts.

Andy brings a considerable wealth of leadership experience, he is Spirit-led, visionary and pro-active whilst engaging in maximum consultation and collaboration before acting. His passion for making God's love known in any way and every way possible is what Andy lives for! Indeed, he sees every aspect of his ministry, whether strategic planning, administration, or the care of colleagues as an opportunity for furthering this aim.

Andy brings creativity, ability to communicate, and skills in forming and developing positive relationships within the church, with ecumenical partners and beyond to community and civic organisations. He is thoughtful and strategic and has a strong pastoral instinct. Andy is well equipped to deliver the District's Policy to Love God, Love Others and Make Disciples.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Andrew W Fyall is appointed to serve as Chair for the Nottingham and Derby District for a period of six years from 1 September 2023.

The Revd Sonia Hicks

Sonia Hicks brings a wealth of experience of pastoral ministry in the Methodist Church in Britain, in the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas, and in the Methodist Church in Ireland. Sonia has considerable recent experience in connexional leadership, being well known as the President of the Conference in 2021-22, and is currently the Chair of the Methodist Council. The gifts she brings as a risk-taker and inspirational speaker correlate well with the District's statement of needs. The District believes that at this point in the District's life her energy, effervescence and joy in the Lord Jesus will complement the gifts of others in the District Leadership Team, to enable the District to develop in line with its Mission Plan.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Sonia Hicks is appointed to serve as Chair for the Northampton District for a period of six years from 1 September 2024.

45. Designations for Appointment of District Chairs

The Revd Angela Long

Angela (Angy) Long is the Superintendent Minister of the Epworth and Scunthorpe Circuit, as well as providing cover for the Wolds and Trent Circuit due to long term sick leave of a colleague. Angy has an academic background in law and psychology, as well as theology, and has served in circuits in both Scotland and England, offering experience in rural, urban and industrial contexts. Angy brings creativity, strategic thinking and an ability to reflect theologically and to think on her feet. She is committed to the connexional nature of the Methodist Church and to making links between the decisions of the Conference and the delivery of mission on the ground. Angy is committed to ecumenical working, as well as to using our heritage and Methodist identity as resources for effective mission. She is creative in her leading of worship and in exercising her ministry.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Angela Long is appointed to serve as Chair for the Lincolnshire Methodist District for a period of six years from 1 September 2023.

The Revd Dr Marcus Torchon

Marcus Torchon brings a wealth of experience of ministry from diverse contexts in Britain and the Caribbean combined with an openness to learning and underpinned by a deep and disciplined spirituality. He is an inspiring leader who will nurture and develop the gifts of lay people and ordained colleagues. He will offer a strong and strategic understanding of the role of Chair with an imaginative and clear view of missional priorities.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Dr Marcus Torchon is appointed to serve as Chair for the Bristol District for a period of six years from 1 September 2024.

The Revd Richard Andrew

The Revd Richard Andrew has served as Chair of the Darlington District since September 2018. His leading of worship has been widely appreciated including when he has introduced members of the District to forms of worship previously unfamiliar to them. He is a careful and widely read preacher who expresses a gentle and confident faith. He has helped the District to embrace the challenges of mission in the contemporary world. His emphasis upon 'every church growing' has given a sense of direction to the District. Ecumenical colleagues and District Officers pay tribute to his leadership skills. Individuals who have approached him for pastoral conversations feel confidence in his

45. Designations for Appointment of District Chairs

ability to hold the moment with pastoral sensitivity. At the same time Circuits short in staff have been able to receive considerable support from Richard allowing them to cope better with the problem and sustain their work. It is particularly remarkable that Richard has achieved these results through the period of time he has been in the District as his first year necessitated travel from York and the next two were dominated by COVID. It is clear from the consultations within the District that continuity at the present time would be greatly valued.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Richard Andrew is appointed to serve as Chair for the Darlington District for a further period of five years from 1 September 2024.

The Revd Dr Jennifer Hurd

Jennifer Hurd has been Chair of Synod Cymru since 2013 and of Wales Synod Cymru since it was formed in 2022.

Jennie's knowledge and understanding of the Welsh language and culture is very significant, and particularly given the new ways of working adopted since the creation of Wales Synod Cymru. Her experience of working within the former Synod Cymru is important for Cylchdaith Cymru. She brings an incredibly strong contribution to the ecumenical and interdenominational work across Wales, in English and in Welsh and is a very highly respected ecumenical colleague. Her gentle collaborative leadership style is an asset to our Synod. She is a firm and competent chair of meetings. Jennie has a strong pastoral heart, taking an interest in people and their lives, particularly of ministerial colleagues. She is friendly, approachable and supportive, yet gently challenging.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Dr Jennifer Hurd is appointed to serve as Chair for Wales Synod Cymru for a further period of two years from 1 September 2024.

The Revd Dr Daniel Haylett

Daniel Haylett has been Chair of the Plymouth and Exeter District since 2022. The District appreciates Dan's gifts and skills and it is obvious that these have been witnessed first hand, despite the short time since he moved to the District. He offers excellent pastoral care, with his willingness to listen particularly appreciated. His leadership of the District is described as empowering, strong, encouraging, positive, empathetic, enabling, helpful and supportive. He is a clear communicator and someone that inspires confidence with an ability to see 'the wider picture'. His leadership of worship is well received, and

45. Designations for Appointment of District Chairs

is felt to be engaging, thought provoking and encouraging. Ongoing work in the District and region, such as the discussions with the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly District, the introduction of New Places for New People and other connexional initiatives, will need the leadership that Dan brings.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Dr Daniel R Haylett is appointed to serve as Chair for the Plymouth and Exeter District for a further period of five years from 1 September 2024.

The Revds Dr Daniel Haylett and Loraine N Mellor

Loraine and Dan are increasingly working closely together and using their distinctive gifts across both Districts would have advantages for all. This will enable the Districts to continue to imagine, plan and build what is needed to further the mission of the Church across the two Districts, in anticipation of an even closer sharing in the near future. This proposal comes at a time when the wider South West Region continues to consider how best to reshape governance structures to better suit mission and ministry needs and opportunities for today, recognising that current structures were first implemented in 1957. Loraine and Dan along with the wider small group are keen to continue to work out what new structures might be most helpful in focusing on mission, and, whilst recognising that each has a primary concern for their current District, are committed to continue to learn from closer working and greater sharing.

The Plymouth and Exeter Synod and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Synod recommend to the Conference that the Revd Loraine Mellor and the Revd Dr Dan Haylett work as joint Chairs across the Plymouth and Exeter District and the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Districts, for one year from 1 September 2023.

46. District Resolution

The Manchester and Stockport District (voting in the Synod as follows: Present: 72; For: 47; Against: 15) invites the Methodist Conference of 2023 to direct that further work be done to explore and propose radical ways in which the Methodist Church of Great Britain might re-order itself as it seeks to be effective in mission and ministry in the years ahead.

As a result of the Methodist Conference of 2022 declining to receive section F of the *Oversight and Trusteeship* report, work has continued in many districts to reflect on the boundaries and structures of districts in the particular geographical regions of which they are a part. The Manchester and Stockport Synod of September 2022 was asked to consider whether it wished to be part of a new North West District which would include, the *Liverpool* district, the *Lancashire* district, the *Bolton and Rochdale* district, the *Cumbria* district and the *Manchester and Stockport* district. The Synod received a presentation and after debate declined the proposal. There were several reasons for this which included: the geographical size of the proposed district, the challenges of connexionalism in such a district, a concern about whether the proposals would create an extra layer of structure, and a desire to see a radical reshaping of our structures rather than a more functional 'regrouping' process.

Following the Methodist Conference, online consultations with Conference representatives were held, in which it was asked if a more radical approach across the Methodist Connexion would be welcomed. We understand that there are presently no plans for further work to be undertaken connexionally on this area of our shared life. The Manchester and Stockport Synod suggests that this work at a connexional level is essential to the future of the Methodist Church. In an attempt, therefore, to define 'radical', further conversations took place in the Manchester and Stockport District. Possible areas of exploration might include the reshaping of districts in terms other than geographical, the removal of a level of governance structure, ways of working with particular areas of ministry or specialisms of practitioners which would require more flexible boundaries, or a redrawing of the map (not based on current boundaries), as well as the intentional development of a mixed economy of church governance.

The Manchester and Stockport District recognises that this is a substantial piece of work which would require time to achieve, including consultation with the Methodist Council, the Faith and Order and Law and Polity committees among others. It would also have financial and other resource implications for the Church as a whole. However, the Manchester and Stockport District feels there is value to the Methodist Church in this approach which could not be considered in the Districts alone, and so a connexional perspective is sought. Therefore, the Manchester and Stockport District asks the Methodist Conference of 2023 to consider this request carefully.

46. District Resolution

*****RESOLUTION**

- 46/1. The Conference directs that work be undertaken as a matter of urgency to explore and propose radical ways in which the Methodist Church of Great Britain might reorder itself as it seeks to be effective in mission and ministry.**

47. Second Report of the Conference Business Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Loraine N Mellor Chair of the Conference Business Committee loraine.mellor@cornwallmethodists.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

En bloc items

The Business Committee proposes the following items to be taken *en bloc*:

3. Methodist Council part one sections A, B, C, D
8. Trustees for the Bailiwick of Guernsey Methodist Church Purposes
9. Trustees for Jersey Methodist Church Purposes
10. Methodist Homes
15. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity (1)
16. Forces Board
17. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes
18. Methodist Schools appointments
19. All We Can
22. Methodist Council part two sections I, J, K, L, Q
28. Stationing Committee
30. Referred Memorials and Notices of Motion
37. Peake Trust
38. Methodist Ministers' Housing Society
39. Central Finance Board
42. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity (2) sections I and J
44. Necessitous Local Preachers' Fund
53. Managing Trustees of John Wesley's Chapel, the New Room Bristol and 4-5 Charles Street Bristol
54. Managing Trustees of Central Hall Westminster
55. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report

Under the terms of SO 134A, if Notices of Motion are received about items in the *en bloc* list those items will automatically be removed from the list. In addition, by giving notice to the Assistant Secretary of the Conference, any six members of the Conference may, without proposing an amendment, require that an item be removed from the list and debated. Such notice must be given before the close of business on Monday 26 June (SO 134A(1)(c)).

***RESOLUTION

47/1. The Conference adopts the Report of the Business Committee.

48. Presbyters and Deacons Becoming Supernumerary or Returning to the Active Work

PRESBYTERS BECOMING SUPERNUMERARY OR RETURNING TO THE ACTIVE WORK

1. Recommended to return to the active work

No case

2. Permission to become supernumerary granted during the year

* John P Mason

* Michael D C Poole

*Those marked * were granted permission on grounds of ill health under Standing Order 790(2).*

3. Presbyters requesting permission to become supernumerary

The figure in brackets indicates the number of years of status as a presbyter of the person concerned (with any former years of status as a deacon added with the prefix D).

| | | | |
|----------------------|------|--------------------------|------|
| Emmanuel Aggrey-Ogoe | (21) | Terence M Keen | (21) |
| Marie Attwood | (18) | Melvyn J Kelly | (28) |
| Randall J Barlow | (42) | Wendy Kilworth-Mason | (29) |
| Peter T Bates | (27) | David R Lawton | (10) |
| Peter J Bennett | (20) | Karen A V Le Mouton | (8) |
| Alistair D Bissell | (35) | Andrew Letby | (32) |
| Julian E Blakemore | (33) | Susan Levitt | (14) |
| William P H Booker | (34) | Philip J MacDonald | (35) |
| Keith W Borwick | (23) | Bernardino M Mandlate | (23) |
| Timothy J Bradshaw | (44) | Una McLean | (23) |
| Stan Brown | (40) | Nicola Martyn-Beck | (8) |
| Roy D Burley | (26) | Andrew J Mumford | (9) |
| Stephen Caddy | (35) | Michael A Neal | (32) |
| Alan Coates | (27) | Patricia S Olivent-Hayes | (24) |
| Anne R Coates | (11) | Richard J Parkes | (39) |
| Paul Cockburn | (40) | Mary M Patterson | (27) |
| Rosemary H Davies | (30) | David P Plumb | (23) |
| David Dickinson | (35) | Stephen J Poole | (28) |
| Paul J Donnison | (30) | Stephen J Poxon | (48) |
| Jacquie P Evans | (12) | K Stephen Pratt | (21) |
| Vida D Foday | (15) | * Ann Rigby-Jones | (19) |
| Christine A M Fox | (10) | Andrew P Sankey | (44) |
| David J Gillman | (45) | David M Shaw | (39) |
| Gareth L Hill | (24) | Mark R Sherman | (19) |
| * Angela R Hoare | (21) | Kim J Stilwell | (18) |
| Stuart A Innalls | (21) | John V Sumitra | (24) |
| Colin J Jackson | (30) | Alan W Swann | (21) |
| Oluyemisi Jaiyesimi | (20) | Edward J Sykes | (32) |

48. Presbyters and Deacons Becoming Supernumerary or Returning to the Active Work

| | | | |
|-----------------|------|-------------------|------|
| Robert E Thomas | (31) | Martin C Williams | (35) |
| Graham Thompson | (39) | Penelope J Worth | (22) |
| Alfred Waite | (25) | Stephen Wright | (41) |
| Colin W Watkins | (15) | Nigel J Young | (42) |
| Susan J Wigham | (28) | | |

*All applications are made under Standing Order 790(1), except those marked * who are applying on grounds of ill health under Standing Order 790(2)).*

***RESOLUTIONS

- 48/1.** (Presbyteral Session)
The Conference receives the Report.
- 48/2.** (Presbyteral Session)
The Conference recommends to the Representative Session that the presbyters listed above be permitted to become supernumerary on the grounds shown.
- 48/3.** (Representative Session)
The Conference permits those presbyters whose names have been recommended by the Presbyteral Session to become supernumerary.

DEACONS BECOMING SUPERNUMERARY OR RETURNING TO THE ACTIVE WORK

- 1. Recommended to return to the active work**
No case
- 2. Permission to become supernumerary granted during the year**
No case
- 3. Deacons requesting permission to become supernumerary**

| | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Meredith J Evans | Carole I Smith |
| Deborah D E Harkness | Maureen A Spinks |
| Belinda S Letby | Terry Street |
| Myrtle A Poxon | Janet Sutton |
| Annette Sharp | Anne Taylor |
| Anita K Shaw | |

*All applications are made under Standing Order 790(1), except those marked * who are applying on grounds of ill health under Standing Order 790(2).*

48. Presbyters and Deacons Becoming Supernumerary or Returning to the Active Work

***RESOLUTIONS

48/4. (Representative Session)

The Conference permits those deacons whose names have been recommended by the Conference Diaconal Committee to become supernumerary.

49. Committee Appointments

***RESOLUTIONS

49/1. The Conference appoints the Strategy and Resources Committee of the Council in accordance with Standing Order 213:

- (i) Dr Daleep S Mukarji (Chair)
- (iA) Ms Janet Arthur, Mrs Anne Bolton, Mr Nick Garrett, Professor David Matthews, Mrs Shelagh Morgan, the Revd Nicholas A Oborski, the Revd Marcus Torchon
- (ii) to be confirmed (Connexional Treasurer)
- (iii) deleted
- (iv) deleted
- (v) The Chair or Deputy Chair of the Ministries Committee: The Revd Gillian M Newton
- (vA) The Chair or Deputy Chair of the Mission Committee: The Revd Dr Calvin T Samuel
- (vi) District Chair: The Revd Kerry W Tankard
- (vii) The Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice, Connexional Secretary (non-voting): the Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler, the Revd Michaela A Youngson, Mrs Joanne Anderton, Mr Doug Swanney.

49/2. The Conference appoints the panel for the nomination of District Chairs:

The Revds Richard J Byass, David P Easton, John Hellyer, Christine Jones, Marian J Jones, Nichola G Jones, Derrick R Lander, Charity D Madenyika, Paul Nzacahayo, Keith A Reed, Daniel P Reed, D Paul C Smith, Graham Thompson, Alison F Tomlin, Martin H Turner, Dr Martin Wellings.

Deacons Melanie Beaven, Josephine F A Critchley, David C Hunt, Suzie Viana.

Ms Jane Allin, Ms Janet Arthur, Mrs Sue Chastney, Ms Evelyn de Graft, Prof Peter D Howdle, Miss Marion Mear, Miss Elizabeth Ovey, Mr Malcolm Pearson, Mr Noel Rajaratnam, Mr David Ridley, Mrs Caroline Stead, Dr Malcolm Stevenson, Mrs Rosemary Wass, Mrs Ruth Wilton, Mrs Helen Woodall, Mr Rob Wylie with the Secretary of the Conference as convener.

49/3. The Conference appoints the panel for Connexional Discipline, Pastoral and Appeal Committees and persons with associated functions:

Connexional Complaints Officer: Professor Diane Rowland, Mr Joseph Anoom (deputy), the Revd James A Booth (deputy).

49. Committee Appointments

Chairs: Mr Stephen Allinson, Mr Graham Danbury, Mr Robert Gaitskell, Ms Jane McIvor, Sir Alastair Norris, Miss Elizabeth Ovey.

Advocates: Mr Stephen Allinson, Mr Joseph Anoom, the Revd Jennifer M Dyer, Mr Adrian Turner, the Revd Stuart Wild.

Conveners: Discipline, Appeals and Pastoral: The Revd C Mary Austin, the Revd Andrew Cordy, Mr David Kendrew, Mrs Shelagh Morgan, the Revd Ian S Rutherford.

The Revds Derek A Aldridge, C Mary Austin, Peter E Barber, Inderjit S Bhogal, Neil A Bishop, Nick Blundell, Jill B Bowden, Kathleen M Bowe, Anne E Brown, Dr Stuart J Burgess, R Graham Carter, David Clowes, John A Cooke, K Hilary Cooke, Judy M Davies, Paul H Davis, Dr Valentin Dedji, Christine A Dybdahl, Jennifer M Dyer, Stuart Earl, Hazel M Forecast, Albert Gayle, Anne E Gibson, Dr Barbara C Glasson, Yvonne Haye, David A Haslam, John Hellyer, Sonia M Hicks, Brian R Hoare, Kenneth G Howcroft, Jimione Kaci, Jacob Kaiga, Prof Teddy Kalongo, Saidu Kanu, Ermal Kirby, John S Lampard, Christina Le Moignan, Julie A Lunn, Charity Madenyika, Paul Martin, Loraine N Mellor, William R Morrey, Siperire Mugadzaweta, Dr Paul Nzacahayo, Hayford Ofori-Attah, Lionel E Osborn, R Stephen Penrose, Dr David W Perry, Stephen J Poxon, Dr Kathleen M Richardson, Dr Neil G Richardson, J Roger Roberts, John D Robinson, Ian S Rutherford, Calvin T Samuel, D Paul C Smith, Ian Souter, Kenneth Stokes, Thomas J Stuckey, Richard J Teal, G Jeff Thomas, Graham Thompson, Alison Tomlin, Martin H Turner, Dr Mark H Wakelin, C Norman R Wallwork, Dr Roger L Walton, Peter Whittaker, Julia M Wiktorska, Sharon Willimott, Ian Yates.

Deacons Kate Barrett, Sue Culver, Jane Middleton, Myrtle Poxon, Rowland H Wilkinson.

Mrs Jane Allison, Mr Donald B Appleyard, Mrs E Jill Baker, Dr B Jill Barber, Mr John A Bell, Mr Simon Birks, Mrs Stella Bristow, Mrs Teresa Broadbent, Mr Dudley Coates, Mr John Connor, Mr Colin Cradock, Mr Andrew Cross, Ms Gillian M Dascombe, Mr Brian Davies, Mr Peter Dawe, Mrs Barbara Easton, Mr Balachandren M Gnanapragasam, Prof Peter Howdle, Mrs Judy Jarvis, Mr David Kendrew, Mr Michael P King, Mr Chris Kitchin, Mrs Sophie Kumi, Ms Rachel J Lampard, Mrs Carolyn J Lawrence, Mrs Helen R Letley, Prof Clive Marsh, Dr Edmund I Marshall, Dr Daleep S Mukarji, Mr Leon A Murray, Mrs Nwabueze Nwokolo, Mrs Sonia J O'Connor, Mrs Margaret Parker, Mrs Ruth Pickles, Mr Timothy Ratcliffe, Mrs Jean Schroeder, Mr Stephen Schroeder,

49. Committee Appointments

Dr Alan Thomson, Mr Brian Thornton, Mrs Rosemary Wass, Mr Ivan Weekes, Sister Eluned Williams.

49/4. The Conference appoints the panel for Connexional Complaints Teams:

The Revds Timothy J Bradshaw, Hilary Cheng, Molly Chitokwindo, Edson Dube, David R Ellis, Jacquie P Evans, L E Maree Farrimond, Andrew F Goodhead, Oluyemisi Jaiyesimi, David Jebb, Christopher Jones, Saidu Kanu, Simon H Leigh, Charity Madenyika, Farai Mapamula, R Margaret K Mwalu, Nicholas A Oborski, Stephen Penrose, David M Shaw (A), Kate Strange, Paul S Weir, Ruth E Whittard, Stuart Wild, Linda M Woollacott, Mmasape Zihle.

Deacons Myrtle Poxon, Stephen F Roe.

Miss Maureen Anderson, Ms Trudie Awuku, Miss Joan Ball, Mr Malcolm Bell, Mr Peter Binks, Ms Charlotte Boaiter, Mr David M Chandler, Mr Leo Cheng, Mr Peter Dawe, Mrs Eve DeGraft, Mr Daniel Djaba, Mr David Kendrew, Mr Chris Kitchin, Miss Kathryn Larrad, Mr David Laycock, Ms Betty Maynard, Mrs Nwabueze Nwokolo, Mrs Jean Schroeder, Mr John Scott.

49/5. The Conference appoints the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee:

The Revds Dr Iain M Ballard, Nicola Briggs, Richard J Byass, Benjamin P Clowes, Ashley Cooper, Dr Jonathan Dean [SO 320(1)(i)], Dr Graham Edwards, David R Emison, Dr Jonathan K Gichaara, Mark P Hammond, Dr David Hinchliffe, Catherine Hutton, Philip J Jackson, David Jebb, Naomi Kaiga, Saidu Kanu, Dr Elizabeth A Kent, M Susan E Lawler, Farai Mapamula, Vindra Maraj-Ogden, Paul Mellor, Andrew C Moffoot, Anthony J D Morling, Charity Nzegwu, Dr Claire R Potter [SO 320(1)(i)], James Pritchard, Stephen E Robinson, Mary Sachikonye, Cleopas Sibanda, Tina F Swire, Stuart Wild,

Deacons Melanie Beaven, Dawn N Canham, Joy Everingham, David Keegan, Belinda S Letby, Pamela Luxton, Jonathan Miller, Suzanne Peat, Kerry R Scarlett, Sian M Street, Suzie Viana, Linda Watkin, Ruth Yorke,

Ms E Jane Allin, Ms Winnie Baffoe, Ms Charlotte Ballard Scott, Mr Geoffrey Best, Ms Anne Browse, Ms Jenny Cheung, Ms Sharon Clutterbuck, Ms Deborah Harrison, Ms Jo Henderson-Merrygold, Mr Paul Kybird, Mrs Jane Lloyd, Ms Victoria Loveday, Mrs Catherine Roots, Mrs Anne Vautrety, Mr Joshua Wilson

The Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order has the right to attend but not to vote.

49. Committee Appointments

49/6. The Conference appoints oversight tutors [in accordance with Standing Order 321(5)(b)]:

Where more than one oversight tutor is appointed for the same institution one shall be identified as having oversight responsibility. In the following list, that person is identified by an asterisk.

Queen's Foundation, Birmingham: * The Revd Dr Jane Craske, Deacon Melanie Beaven, the Revd Dr Christine Dutton, the Revd Dr Barbara Glasson, the Revd Dr Catrin Harland-Davies, the Revd Dr Gary P Hall, Deacon Julie Hudson, the Revd Dr Paul Nzacahayo, the Revd Dr Judith Rossall

49/7. The Conference appoints the Faith and Order Committee:

A senior member of the Connexional Team representing the Secretary of the Conference: The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler.

The Secretary of the Committee: The Revd Mark Rowland.

The Revd Moses Agyam, Deacon Angela Allport, the Revd Dr George P Bailey, the Revd Yanyan Case, the Revd Dr David M Chapman, Mr Dudley Coates, the Revd Dr Graham M Edwards, the Revd Dr Catrin L Harland-Davies, the Revd Dr Eleanor Jackson, the Revd Lionel E Osborn, Mr Craig Price, the Revd Dr Judith A Rossall, the Revd Neil A Stubbens, the Revd Simon C Sutcliffe, the Revd Kerry W Tankard, the Revd Dr Martin Wellings (Chair), the Revd Dr Caroline Wickens, the Revd G Ian Yates.

49/8. The Conference appoints the Stationing Committee under Standing Order 322:

- (i) Lay Chair: to be confirmed
- (ii) The Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Conference: The Revds Dr Jonathan R Hustler and Michaela A Youngson
- (iii) Seven district Chairs and seven district Lay Stationing Representatives:

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| South-East | The Revd Nigel Cowgill Mr Keith Norman |
| South-West | The Revd Dr Jonathan H Pye Mrs Mary McNaughton |
| Wales/Midlands: | The Revd Rachel Parkinson Mrs Val Mayers |
| Yorkshire: | <u>The Revd Leslie Newton</u> Mrs Gill Daly |
| East Midlands | The Revd Julian Pursehouse Mrs Sue P Walters |

49. Committee Appointments

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| North West | The Revd Philip Gough Mr Malcolm Aspey |
| North/Scotland | The Revd S Mark Slaney Mr Bill Offler |
- (iv) No more than two Team members with responsibility for presbyteral and diaconal selection; and for the stationing of probationers: The Revd Dr Claire Potter
- (v) *deleted*
- (vi) *deleted*
- (vii) The chair of the Stationing Advisory Committee: The Revd Dr Jongikaya Zihle
- (viii) The Warden or deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order: Deacon Karen McBride
- (ix) The chair and a lay member of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-committee: The Revd Dr David Hinchliffe; to be confirmed
- (x) The chair of the group responsible on behalf of the Stationing Committee for overseeing the matching of particular presbyters to appointments: The Revd Jennifer A Impey
- (xi) The convener of the Stationing Action Group: The Revd Dr Stephen J Lindridge

49/9. The Conference appoints representatives to ecumenical bodies as follows:

- (a) *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI): Annual General Meeting:* Mr Bala Gnanapragasam.
- (b) *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland: Senior Representatives' Forum:* Mr Bala Gnanapragasam; the Revd Michaela A Youngson.
- (c) *Churches Together in England (CTE): Enabling Group* The Revd Dr Jonathan H Pye, the Revd Michaela A Youngson.
- (d) *Scottish Christian Forum (formerly Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS)): Members' Meeting:* The Revd S Mark Slaney; the Revd A James Patron Bell
- (e) *Cytûn (Churches Together in Wales): Enabling Group* The Revd Dr Jennifer A Hurd.
Proxies: The Revds Dr Ian D Morris, Philip A Poynor.

49/10. The Conference appoints the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee:

Mrs Sarah Atwell-King, Mr Adrian Burton, Mr Alan Kershaw (Chair), Mrs Susan M Mortimer, Mr Michael Rickard

49. Committee Appointments

49/11. The Conference appoints the Methodist Council of 2023:

The ex officio members specified in Standing Order 201, and:

- (i) The chair of the Council: The Revd Sonia M Hicks;
- (iA) The Assistant Secretary of the Conference: The Revd Michaela A Youngson;
- (iB) The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice: Mrs Joanne Anderton;
- (ii) The Connexional Treasurer: *to be confirmed*
- (iii) Four District Chairs: The Revds Richard M Andrew, Helen R Kirk, S Mark Slaney; *a vacancy*
- (iv) Twenty-nine District representatives: Mr Stephen Arnold, Mrs Marianne Barrett Rogers, the Revd Dr Moira Biggins, Mr Mark Braithwaite, the Revd Deborah L Caulk, the Revd Steven R M Cooper, the Revd Dr Joanne Cox-Darling, Mrs Gill Dascombe, the Revd Simon C Edwards, the Revd Ann Fox, the Revd Jennifer M Gill, Mr Peter Gregson, Ms Beti W T Holmes, Mrs Carolyn Hothersall, the Revd Marie-Anne Kent, Mr Joseph Lambert, Mrs Val Mayers, Dr Hellen Okello, the Revd Romeo R Pedro, Mrs Sheila Pollard, Miss Bridget Quint, the Revd Luke G S Smith, Ms Sandra A Smith, the Revd Rebekah Stennett, the Revd Howard J Stringer, Mrs Jenny Taylor, Mrs Elizabeth Ward, vacancies (Isle of Man, Manchester and Stockport).
- (v) The Connexional Secretary: Mr Doug Swanney;
- (vi) The Chair and two members of the SRC: Dr Daleep Mukarji, Professor David Matthews, the Revd Marcus Torchon;
- (viA) The Chair or Deputy Chair of the Ministries Committee: Mr Keith Norman;
- (vii) A representative of the Diaconal Order: Deacon Karen McBride;
- (viii) Two representatives of the Youth Assembly: Ms Eleanor Dixon, Mr Matt Hayes;
- (ix) Two representatives of concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion: The Revd Charity Nzegwu, a vacancy
- (x) Up to four Conference-appointed persons.

49/12. The Conference directs that in accordance with Standing Order 210(2)(a) the Districts shall be represented on the Methodist Council of 2024 as follows:

By a presbyter or deacon:

Wales Synod Cymru, Birmingham, Bristol, Cumbria, Chester and Stoke-on-Trent, Isle of Man, Lincolnshire, Liverpool, Newcastle upon-Tyne, Lancashire, Sheffield, Yorkshire West, Yorkshire North and East, Scotland, London.

49. Committee Appointments

By a lay person:

Bolton and Rochdale, Channel Islands, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, Darlington, East Anglia, Manchester and Stockport, Nottingham and Derby, Northampton, Plymouth and Exeter, Southampton, Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury, Shetland, Bedfordshire Essex Hertfordshire, South East.

49/13. The Conference appoints the following officers of the 2024 Conference:

Representative Session

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Journal Secretary: | The Revd Jennifer M Dyer |
| Record Secretary: | Mr Martin Harker |
| Convener of the Memorials Committee: | The Revd Catherine Dixon |

Presbyteral Session

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Record Secretary: | The Revd Jennifer M Dyer |
| Assistant Record Secretary: | The Revd Rosemarie E G Clarke |

49/14. The Conference appoints the following officers of the Conference Diaconal Committee:

Recording Officers: to be confirmed
Reporting Officer: to be confirmed

49/15. The Conference appoints the Ministries Committee:

Mrs Caroline E L Dobinson, Mr Iain A S Henderson, Ms Angharad Herriman, the Revd Dr Andrew J Lunn, Mr Andrew Maisey, the Revd Gillian M Newton (Chair), Deacon Lemia Nkwelah, Mr Keith Norman (Deputy Chair), Deacon Andrew C Packer, Mrs Karen Stefanyshyn, the Revd Caroline A Weaver, the Revd Michaela A Youngson (Convener).

49/16. The Conference appoints the Mission Committee:

Miss Rebecca Ainsworth, the Revd Richard M Andrew, Mr Paul Bridges, the Revd Dr Joanne Cox-Darling (Chair), Mr Matthew Forsyth, the Revd Dr Laurence Graham, the Revd Elaine M Lindridge, the Revd Ian S Rutherford, the Revd Dr Calvin T Samuel (Deputy Chair), the Revd Jennifer A Spouge, Mr Paul Spray

49/17. The Conference appoints the Trustees of Epworth Old Rectory:

Mrs Sarah Friswell (Chair), Mr John Purdy (Secretary), the Revd Stuart Gunson (Treasurer), Mr Barry Clarke, Professor William Gibson, the Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler, the Revd Angela Long, Mrs Ruth Parrott, the Revd Paul Wilson.

49. Committee Appointments

World Methodist Council Trustees:

Bishop Ivan Abrahams, the Revd Dr John Beyers, Dr Ashley Boggan Dreff, Mr Kirby Hickey, Archbishop Michael Kehinde Stephen.

49/18. The Conference appoints the Methodist Diaconal Order Leadership Group:

Ms Nancy Acquaah, Ms Rachel J Lampard (Chair), the Revd Andrew Letby, the Revd Dr Claire R Potter; Deacon Dawn Canham, Deacon Claire Gill; Mr Peter Baffoe.

49/19. The Conference appoints the Revd Sir Ralph Waller as a member and Chair of the Board of Westminster College Oxford Trust for a period of three years from 1 September 2022.

49/20. The Conference appoints Mrs Mary Lines as a director of Westminster College Oxford Trust Ltd for a further three years from 1 September 2023.

Details of New Nominations (underlined above):

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Winnie Baffoe | A member of Bermondsey Central Hall, Winnie has skills in strategic development and experience of a range of church communities in Britain and Western Africa. Her academic training gives her insights into the development of people and its impact in communities. |
| Marianne Barrett Rogers | Nominated to the Council by the Plymouth and Exeter District |
| Moira Biggins | Nominated to the Council by the Nottingham and Derby District. |
| Nicola Briggs | A presbyter ordained in 2019, currently serving in the Nottingham and Derby District, Nicola brings recent experience of her own vocational journey. She has been a member and co-secretary of the District Candidates Committee in the Nottingham and Derby District, has supported a candidate, serves as Synod Secretary and as a member of the District Chair Nomination Committee. She brings first hand experience of living with a disability which makes her aware of some of the challenges people can face in offering for ministry, and the support needed. |

49. Committee Appointments

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Yanyan Case | A recently-ordained presbyter stationed in the Nottingham North East Circuit. From mainland China, she grew up with an atheist background, alongside a strong Buddhist and Daoist presence. She is bilingual and is currently studying biblical Hebrew. She has previously studied missiology and has particular interests in 'reverse mission' and in evangelism. |
| Jenny Cheung | A member of Loughborough Chinese Methodist Church, Jenny has served on the District Candidates Committee of the Northampton District. She is a trustee of Methodist World Mission. She is a civil servant working with revenue. She feels that she brings an understanding of differences in culture to the discernment process. |
| Gill Dascombe | Nominated to the Council by the Bolton and Rochdale District |
| Barbara Easton | Vice-President of the Conference 2021/2022 |
| Ann Fox | Nominated to the Council by the Yorkshire North and East District |
| Jennifer Gill | Nominated to the Council by the Newcastle upon Tyne District |
| Deborah Harrison | A member of St Johns Church. Gloucester and a local preacher and youth worker, Deborah is trained in clinical theology and is not afraid to ask searching questions. She is involved in chaplaincy at a Bristol Cathedral Choir School and has experience in listening and counselling. |
| Matt Hayes | Nominated to the Council by 3Generate |
| Sonia Hicks | President of the Conference 2021/2022 |
| Carolyn Hothersall | Nominated to the Council by the Lancashire District |
| David Jebb | A presbyter ordained in 1990, currently serving in the Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire District, David brings a long and wide experience of ministry having served in diverse communities in Sri Lanka, America and different parts of Britain. He has supported 11 ministerial candidates during his ministry. He has served on a District Candidates' Committee and is currently a member of the World Methodist Council Christian Education Committee. |

49. Committee Appointments

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Naomi Kaiga | A presbyter ordained in 2000, currently serving in the Yorkshire West District, Naomi has served on the District Candidates' Committee and the Chairs' Nomination Committee. She has gifts of spiritual discernment, and her cultural background gives her a new perspective with regard to the diversity of the church. |
| Saidu Kanu | A presbyter ordained in 2014, currently serving in the London District, Saidu is keen to offer to others the nurture he has received in the church. He has previously served on the District Candidates' Committee in the Northampton District and has supported individual candidates. He has experience in healthcare chaplaincy and group therapies. |
| Marie-Anne Kent Chris Kitchin | Nominated to the Council by the Liverpool District Significant experience as Lead Member of Connexional Complaints Teams, disciplinary, employment, magisterial hearings and police appeals tribunals. Former Chair of the Bench and NHS Chief Executive, church and circuit steward. |
| Mary Lines | Retired teacher who trained at Westminster College in the 1970s and returned to the college to complete a part time, modular degree in the 1990s. Since retiring she has served as Foundation Governor in a village Primary School with responsibility for Safeguarding, SEND and Early Years and remains committed to providing inclusive education for all. She is the Safeguarding Lead in her local Methodist Church in Oxford. |
| Pamela Luxton | A deacon ordained in 2016, currently serving in the Lincolnshire District, Pamela brings experience of two diaconal appointments, one focussed on a council estate and her current appointment in caravan chaplaincy. She describes herself as being a mature candidate from a working class background and wishes to demonstrate that it is possible for people from any background to candidate for ordained ministry. |
| Leslie Newton | Chair of the Yorkshire North and East District |
| James Patron Bell | Ecumenical Officer for the Scotland District |
| Romeo Pedro | Nominated to the Council by the Sheffield District |

49. Committee Appointments

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Mary Sachikonye | A presbyter ordained in 2019, currently serving in the East Anglia District, Mary has assessment experience as a social worker. She is passionate about working with people in spiritual discernment. As a recently ordained minister she brings fresh memories of the processes. She brings experience of various cultural contexts and an understanding of how some cultural values and beliefs might impact expressions of calling. |
| Cleopas Sibanda | A presbyter ordained in 2003, currently serving in the Birmingham District, Cleopas brings skills gained from serving as a District Bishop and on Probationers' and Candidates' Committees in Zimbabwe. His experience of diversity and dynamism from an African context supported by 7 years of ministry in Britain brings a global perspective. |
| Luke Smith | Nominated to the Council by the Lincolnshire District |
| Simon Sutcliffe | A presbyter stationed as a Learning and Development Officer in the Connexional Team, with responsibility for designing and delivering Theological Literacy sessions for adults across the Connexion. He brings experience of working with circuits to help them think theologically about priorities, mission and ministry and is a skilled theologian, theological educator and communicator. |
| Graham Thompson | President of the Conference 2022/2023 |
| Suzie Viana | A deacon ordained in 2016, currently serving in the Southampton District, Suzie has been a member of the District Candidates Committee. She brings experience of Christian faith in Brazil, a heart for creative pastoral care and prayer, as well as courage to ask the difficult questions with much compassion. She is able to discern what God is saying and then work through how to implement God's calling. |
| Ralph Waller | A Methodist presbyter, who has previously served in a number of circuit appointments and higher education chaplaincies, including as chaplain of Westminster College, Oxford. From 1988 until 2018 he was the Principal of Harris Manchester College in the University of Oxford, and was a Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the university. |
| Elizabeth Ward | Nominated to the Council by the Southampton District |

49. Committee Appointments

- Stuart Wild A presbyter ordained in 1993, currently serving in the Lancashire District, Stuart brings experience of serving on the District Candidates' Committee in West Yorkshire and was secretary of the District Candidates' Committee in Bristol. He has an analytical approach to reading reports and is a good active listener and reflects theologically.
- Ruth Yorke A deacon ordained in 2007, currently serving in the Birmingham District, Ruth has been a member of the District Probationers' Committee and the Methodist Diaconal Order Religious Advisory Committee, as well as various other connexional roles. She brings an understanding of diaconal ministry and the religious order, an ability at being effective in a team, and abilities at discerning gifts and recognising vocations.

50. Presbyters and Deacons from other Churches

PRESBYTERS TO BE RECOGNISED AND REGARDED AS PRESBYTERS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

The names of persons to be recognised and regarded as Presbyters in Full Connexion are printed below and may be amended in the Order Paper at the Conference in order to incorporate any changes consequent upon the decisions of the Stationing Committee.

(1) Presbyters of the Irish Conference

Under Clause 43 of the Deed of Union all presbyters admitted into Full Connexion with the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland are automatically recognised and regarded as presbyters in Full Connexion with the Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain, irrespective of whether they are stationed by the latter Conference (although they only come under the rules and discipline of the Conference when stationed by it). The names of those who serve on the stations of the Methodist Church in Britain are printed in the Minutes of the Conference.

(2) Presbyters of other autonomous Methodist Conferences

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|
| Quophie Anochie Ababio | 34/14 | Methodist Church Ghana |
| Tokunbo E O Asogbon | 9/1 | Methodist Church Nigeria |
| Fiona Calverey | 20/8 | Methodist Church of Southern Africa |
| Annie Deche | 24/15 | Methodist Church Kenya |
| Shannon C DeLaureal | 27/15 | United Methodist Church |
| Jimmy Dube | 5/4 | Methodist Church Zimbabwe |
| Donna L Fowler-Marchant | 34/14 | United Methodist Church |
| Kennedy Gondongwe | 19/6 | Methodist Church Zimbabwe |
| Matthew A Laferty | ASA | United Methodist Church |
| David A Markay | 35/7 | United Methodist Church |
| Kristin C Markay | 35/6 | United Methodist Church |
| Tongayi J Matamba | 36/8 | Methodist Church in Zimbabwe |
| Gary J Molver | 5/16 | Methodist Church of Southern Africa |
| Collin L Moore | 7/16 | Methodist Church of Southern Africa |
| Allen Moyo | 11/4 | Methodist Church Zimbabwe |
| Ung Soon Nguang | 35/39 | Methodist Church Malaysia |
| Ayodeji E Okegbile | 35/4 | Methodist Church Nigeria |
| Emmanuel A Onabanjo | 34/15 | Methodist Church Nigeria |
| Manoa Ratubalavu | 22/16 | Methodist Church Fiji |
| Nimilote Rokotoro | 26/FC | Methodist Church Fiji |
| Sean C Turner | 15/1 | United Methodist Church |
| Bethany Willers | 2/19 | United Methodist Church |

50. Presbyters and Deacons from other Churches

***RESOLUTION

50/1. By a Standing Vote, the Conference welcomes those presbyters to be appointed to the stations, whose names are listed in the Agenda and as amended by the Order Paper circulated to the Conference, as ministers of other autonomous Methodist Conferences who, by virtue of clause 44 of the Deed of Union, will thereby be recognised and regarded as presbyters of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion.

(3) Presbyters of other communions to be recognised and regarded

| | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Peggy M Kabonde | 7/20 |
| Krystyna H Kwarciak | 19/15 |
| Chellaian Lawrence | 35/30 |
| Mark R Mander | 26/FC |
| Andrew S C Melvin | 36/13 |
| Aboseh Ngwana | 7/2 |
| Rajbharat Patta | 19/2 |
| Douglas S Rix | 24/8 |

***RESOLUTION

50/2. By a Standing Vote, the Conference, by virtue of clause 45 of the Deed of Union, declares that the persons whose names are printed for this purpose in the Agenda as amended by the Order Paper circulated to the Conference, shall be recognised and regarded during the period of their appointment to the stations for the next ensuing year as presbyters of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion.

DEACONS OF OTHER CHURCHES TO BE RECOGNISED AND REGARDED AS DEACONS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

No case

PRESBYTERS AND DEACONS OF OTHER COMMUNIONS APPLYING TO BE AUTHORISED PRESBYTERS OR DEACONS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

The names of presbyters and deacons to be authorised to serve are printed in the draft of the stations circulated to the Conference, which may be amended via the changes to the stations distributed to the Conference while it is in session.

50. Presbyters and Deacons from other Churches

***RESOLUTION

- 50/3. The Conference resolves that the persons whose names are printed for this purpose in the draft of the stations as amended by the changes to the stations circulated to the Conference, be authorised to serve the Methodist Church as presbyter or deacon as the case may be for the next ensuing year by virtue of Standing Order 733(1) and that each person so authorised shall reside for the purposes of the stations in the Circuit under which his or her name is listed.**

PRESBYTERS AND DEACONS OF OTHER COMMUNIONS APPLYING TO BE ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERS OR DEACONS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

The names of presbyters and deacons of other communions to be granted the status of associate presbyter or associate deacon as the case may be are printed in the draft of the stations circulated to the Conference, and may be amended in the changes to the stations distributed to the Conference whilst it is in session.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 50/4. The Conference resolves that the persons whose names are printed for this purpose in the draft of the stations as amended by the changes to the stations circulated to the Conference, be granted the status of associate presbyter for the next ensuing year by virtue of Standing Order 733A(1) in the Circuit whose number appears against his or her name so listed.**
- 50/5. The Conference resolves that the persons whose names are printed for this purpose in the draft of the stations as amended by the changes to the stations circulated to the Conference, be granted the status of associate deacon for the next ensuing year by virtue of Standing Order 733A(1) in the Circuit whose number appears against his or her name so listed.**

51. Appreciations

The Revd Tim Swindell

Tim Swindell has served as the Connexional Treasurer and as a member of the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) since 2015. As the Chair of the SRC's Finance Sub-Committee, he has overseen the detail of the budget work and the preparation of the accounts; members of both the Council and the Conference will long remember his capacity to explain complicated financial narratives through inventive analogies (such as lines of buses). As chair of the Conference Financial Committee he has helped the Conference to measure the financial impact of the proposals before it.

Mr Swindell has not only demonstrated mastery of the detail of the Church's financial affairs, he has also been instrumental in much of the work developing the financial strategy and in developing the finance function within the Connexional Team that has brought a greater level of professionalism to the handling of the Church's monies. Marrying his callings as a presbyter and as an accountant, he has helped the SRC, the Council and the Conference to think about the raising and expending of its financial resources in the light of the Church's mission and his ability to link financial strategy to the pastoral office has been apparent in his work on the Church's pension schemes in extremely challenging circumstances.

The Conference is very grateful for Mr Swindell's many gifts in the various areas of finance and his ability to remind the Church of the resources at its disposal.

*****RESOLUTION**

51/1. The Conference expresses its gratitude to the Revd Timothy A Swindell for his service as Connexional Treasurer and wishes him well in the future.

The Revd Loraine Mellor

Loraine Mellor has served as the Chair of the Conference Business Committee since 2020. Mrs Mellor took over the position unexpectedly and held the role in the difficult circumstances of the Coronavirus lockdown, chairing the committee remotely as the Conference met online. Over four Conferences, she has brought to the role her wide connexional experience as President of the Conference and District Chair, chairing the committee with efficiency and dealing with the unexpected events at the Conference with good-humoured calmness. Mrs Mellor has faced the challenges that the Business Committee has had to address sensitively and ensured that the work of the Conference has been completed with its mission at its centre. The Conference has great cause to be thankful to Mrs Mellor for her skill, grace and pastoral integrity in serving the Church.

***RESOLUTION

- 51/2. The Conference thanks the Revd Loraine Mellor for her service as Chair of the Conference Business Committee and wishes her well in her future life and ministry.**

Mrs Pamela Lavender

Pamela Lavender has served as Chair of the Stationing Committee since 2017. Bringing to the role her experience as a lay stationing representative, she has led the committee through challenging times as the number of appointments has consistently and by some distance been greater than the number of ministers available to fill them. Mrs Lavender has brought to the Committee the need to be alert to changing societies and circumstances, a deep understanding of the needs of the wider church and the communities ministers are called to serve, and a pastoral awareness of the strains of ministry and the demands that stationing makes on ministers and their households. She has endeavoured to ensure that the committee responds not only to the present moment, but also to the longer-term needs of the Methodist Church, and has contributed her wisdom from the work of the committee in the Connexional Leaders' Forum and other reflective groups.

The Conference is very thankful for the grace and pastoral integrity with which Mrs Lavender has served the Connexion as Chair of the Stationing Committee.

***RESOLUTION

- 51/3. The Conference expresses its gratitude to Mrs Pamela Lavender for her service as Chair of the Stationing Committee and wishes her well for the future.**

52. Report to the Representative Session of Business Conducted by the Conference Diaconal Committee

The Conference Diaconal Committee met on 5 May 2023. The President took the Chair.

1. Deacons who have died

The Committee approved the obituaries of Rosa Miriam Eleanor Boulton, Stella Mary Bullivant, Constance Lawson, Rita Adriana Savage.

2. Candidates

2.1 The Committee recommended, with the required majority, acceptance by the Representative Session of the following candidates to proceed immediately into pre-ordination training:

James David Blackhall
Vivian Chikaviro
Helen Laura Cook
Joanne Dolman
Katrina Mary Anderson Paterson
William David Topping

2.2 The Committee recommended, with the required majority, acceptance by the Representative Session of the following candidates to proceed to training upon the fulfilment of certain conditions:

No case

2.3 The Committee noted the following deacons recommended by the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee for training for presbyteral ministry upon transfer from diaconal ministry:

No case

2.4 The Committee noted the following accepted diaconal candidates recommended by the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee for training for presbyteral ministry:

No case

3. Transfer

The Committee adopted the recommendation by a 75% majority or more of the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee acting as Transfer Committee that the following applicants should be transferred to the jurisdiction of this Conference, as a probationer:

No case

52. Report to the Representative Session of Business Conducted by the Conference Diaconal Committee

4. Training and probation

The Committee adopted the following special reports of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers' Oversight Committee:

- 4.1 Candidates accepted at previous Conferences and given permission to delay entry into training
No case
- 4.2 Candidates accepted at this Conference and to be given permission to delay entry into training
No case
- 4.3 Candidates accepted at this Conference and to be given permission to transfer to another Conference
No case
- 4.4 Candidates conditionally accepted at previous Conferences
 - (a) Those judged to have fulfilled the condition and therefore to be accepted as candidates
No case
 - (b) Those judged to have failed to fulfil the condition and thereby not to be accepted as candidates
No case
 - (c) Those still to fulfil the condition
No case
- 4.5 Changes in expected date of Reception into Full Connexion
 - (a) To an earlier date
No case
 - (b) To a later date
Alison Hyde from 2023 to 2024
- 4.6 Deferment or suspension under SO 726
 - (a) Student deacons
No case
 - (b) Probationers
No case

52. Report to the Representative Session of Business Conducted by the Conference Diaconal Committee

- 4.7 Withdrawals under SO 727
- (a) Candidates
No case
- (b) Student deacons
No case
- (c) Probationers
No case
- 4.8 Transfer to other Conferences or Churches
No case
- 4.9 Reinstatements under SO 761
No case
- 4.10 Discipline
No case
- 4.11 Discontinuance under SO 031(4)
No case

In the following lists:

** = change from the lists approved by the 2022 Conference*

+ = candidates accepted by the 2022 Conference

| Surname | First name(s) | Due to be received into Full Connexion |
|----------------|----------------------|---|
| Amey | Janet | 2024 |
| +Brazier | Deborah Jane | 2027 |
| Chipandambira | Margaret | 2024 |
| Clark | Natalie Mary | 2025 |
| Da Silva Kaka | Adelha | 2025 |
| Gardner | Helen | 2025 |
| Grobler | Douw Gerbrand | 2024 |

52. Report to the Representative Session of Business Conducted by the Conference Diaconal Committee

| Surname | First name(s) | Due to be received into Full Connexion |
|----------------|----------------------|---|
| *Hyde | Alison (Ali) | 2024 |
| Laycock | Judith Grace | 2025 |
| +Morris | Samantha Jane | 2026 |
| Poole | Marie | 2024 |
| Purfit | Clare | 2024 |
| Sale | Suzanne Marie | 2024 |
| Uwimana | Marcianne | 2024 |
| Welsh | Vicky Ann | 2024 |
| +Williams | Dorice (Doris) | 2026 |

5. **Ordinands**

The Committee recommended to the Representative Session of the Conference that the following are fit to be received into Full Connexion with the Conference as deacons and to be received into full membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order, and, if not already ordained, to be ordained:

Tessa Joanne Bennett
Sarah Emily Hoe-Crook
Sarah Pitkeathly
Sarah Jane Rigby

6. **Permission to serve abroad**

Marlene A Skuce

7. **Permission to reside abroad**

Harriet P Bacon
Ramona Dinard
Bryanell Rop
Gordon H Wallace

52. Report to the Representative Session of Business Conducted by the Conference Diaconal Committee

8. Deacons becoming supernumerary

- (a) The Committee recommended to the Representative Session that the following deacons be permitted to become supernumerary:

Meredith Evans
Deborah Harkness
Belinda Letby
Myrtle Poxon
Annette Sharp
Anita Shaw
Carole Smith
Maureen Spinks
Terry Street
Janet Sutton
Anne Taylor

- (b) Permissions granted during the year:

During the year, the President permitted the following deacons to become supernumerary on health grounds:

No case

*All applications are made under SO 790(1), except those marked * who are applying on grounds of ill health under SO 790(2).*

See the Presbyters and Deacons Becoming Supernumerary or Returning to the Active Work section of the Agenda for the resolution to be presented to the Representative Session.

9. Resignations

No case

10. Annual Inquiry

The Warden of the Order gave to the President on behalf of the Convocation the assurances as to the character and discipline of the deacons and diaconal probationers required by SO 183.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 52/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**

52. Report to the Representative Session of Business Conducted by the Conference Diaconal Committee

- 52/2. The Conference resolves, by a Standing Vote, that it accepts for training, unconditionally or conditionally as the case may be, the candidates for ministry recommended by the Diaconal Committee whose names are recorded in the report of that Committee.**
- 52/3. The Conference adopts the report on diaconal students and probationers recommended for continuance in training or on probation as set out in section 4.**
- 52/4. The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that those persons whose names have been read to the Conference and are printed in the Agenda be now received into Full Connexion with the Conference as deacons and into full membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order, and, if not already ordained, to be ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands on the afternoon of this day, 25 June 2023, at Coventry Central Hall.**

Members of the Conference 2023

Members of the Conference 2023

| | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | The Revd Graham Thompson | Retiring President | (Deed of Union 14(2)(i)) |
| 2 | Mr Anthony Boateng | Retiring Vice-President | " |
| 3 | The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler | Secretary of the Conference | " |
| 4 | The Revd Sonia M Hicks | Ex-President | (DU 14(2)(ii)) |
| 5 | Mrs Barbara M Easton | Ex-Vice-President | |
| 6 | The Revd Gillian M Newton | President-Designate | (DU 14(2)(iii)) |
| 7 | Deacon Kerry R Scarlett | Vice-President-Designate | |

Conference Secretariat and other Officers (DU 14(2)(iv) SO 101)

| | | | |
|----|------------------------------|--|--------------|
| 8 | The Revd Michaela A Youngson | Assistant Secretary | |
| 9 | Mr Martin Harker | Record Secretary | |
| 10 | The Revd Jennifer M Dyer | Journal Secretary | |
| 11 | The Revd Catherine Dixon | Convener of the Memorials Committee | |
| 12 | The Revd Loraine N Mellor | Chair of the Business Committee | SO 136(1)(i) |
| 13 | Mrs Joanne Anderton | Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice | |

The Chair of each Home District (DU 14(2)(v))

| | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 14 | The Revd Dr Jennifer A Hurd | Wales Synod Cymru | |
| 15 | The Revd Dr Stephen D Wigley | Wales Synod Cymru | |
| 16 | The Revd Novette S Headley | Birmingham | |
| 17 | The Revd Dr Andrew J Lunn | Bolton and Rochdale | |
| 18 | The Revd Dr Jonathan H Pye | Bristol | |
| 19 | The Revd Dr James N Tebbutt | Cumbria | |
| 20 | The Revd Dawn J Saunders | Channel Islands | |
| 21 | The Revd Helen R Kirk | Chester and Stoke-on-Trent | |
| | The Revd Loraine N Mellor | Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly | <i>dual qualification</i> |
| 22 | The Revd Richard M Andrew | Darlington | |
| 23 | The Revd Julian M Pursehouse | East Anglia | |
| 24 | The Revd Dr Janet E Corlett | Isle of Man | |
| 25 | The Revd Bruce D Thompson | Lincolnshire | |
| 26 | The Revd Dr Sheryl M Anderson | Liverpool | |
| | The Revd Dr Andrew J Lunn | Manchester and Stockport | <i>dual qualification</i> |
| 27 | The Revd Stephen J Lindridge | Newcastle upon Tyne | |
| 28 | The Revd Philip J Gough | Lancashire | |
| 29 | The Revd Helen D Cameron | Nottingham and Derby | |

Members of the Conference 2023

| | | | |
|----|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | The Revd Helen D Cameron | Northampton | <i>dual qualification</i> |
| 30 | The Revd Dr Daniel R Haylett | Plymouth and Exeter | |
| | The Revd Gillian M Newton | Sheffield | <i>dual qualification</i> |
| 31 | The Revd Andrew P de Ville | Southampton | |
| 32 | The Revd Kerry W Tankard | Yorkshire West | |
| 33 | The Revd Rachel E Parkinson | Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury | |
| 34 | The Revd Leslie M Newton | Yorkshire North and East | |
| 35 | The Revd S Mark Slaney | Scotland | |
| | The Revd S Mark Slaney | Shetland | <i>dual qualification</i> |
| 36 | The Revd Dr David M Chapman | Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire | |
| 37 | The Revd Nigel Cowgill | London | |
| 38 | The Revd Dr Jongikaya Zihle | London | |
| 39 | The Revd Dr David Hinchliffe | South-East | |

Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order (DU (14)(2)(vi))

| | | |
|----|----------------------|------------|
| 40 | Deacon Karen McBride | The Warden |
|----|----------------------|------------|

Representatives from the Irish Conference

| | | |
|----|----------------------------|---|
| 41 | The Revd David L Turtle | (President, Methodist Conference in Ireland) (DU 14(2)(vii)) |
| 42 | The Revd Dr Heather Morris | (Secretary, Methodist Conference in Ireland) |
| 43 | Mrs Gillian Gilmore | (DU 14(3)) |
| 44 | Helen Sweeney | |

Representatives of United Methodist Church (DU 14(3))

| | |
|----|----------------------------|
| 45 | The Revd Dr Jean Hawxhurst |
| 46 | Dr David N Field |

Conference-elected Representatives (DU 14(2)(ix), DU 14(5), SO 103)

Retiring in 2023

| | |
|----|-----------------------------|
| 47 | The Revd Dr P Kofi Amisssah |
| 48 | Mr Matthew C Collins |
| 49 | The Revd Ian S Rutherford |

Retiring in 2024

| | |
|----|------------------------|
| 50 | Ms Ruby Beech |
| 51 | Mr James D Blackhall |
| 52 | Deacon Jonathan Miller |

Members of the Conference 2023

Retiring in 2025

- 53 The Revd Kenneth G Howcroft
- 54 The Revd Joanna R Rand
- 55 Ms Martha Rand

Representatives of Connexional and Other Bodies (SO 102)

- | | |
|---|--|
| The Revd Sonia M Hicks | The Chair of the Methodist Council (i)(a) <i>dual qualification</i> |
| 56 The Revd Timothy A Swindell | Connexional Treasurer (i)(b) |
| 57 Dr Daleep S Mukarji | Chair, Strategy and Resources Committee (i)(c) |
| 58 Mr Doug Swanney | Connexional Secretary (i)(d) |
| 59 The Revd Richard M Smith | Forces Chaplain (i)(e) |
| 60 Mrs Grace Pratt Morris-Chapman | Overseas Service (i)(f) |
| 61 Deacon Angleena J Keizer | Overseas Service |
| 62 The Revd Eduardo Conde Almeida | Appointed by Partner Churches (DU 14(4)(d)) |
| 63 Presiding Bishop the Revd George T Mawire | Appointed by Partner Churches |
| 64 The Revd Mark Rowland | Faith and Order representative (ii) |
| 65 Miss Elizabeth H Ovey | Law and Polity representative (iii) |
| 66 Mrs Pamela J Lavender | Stationing Committee representative (iv) |
| 67 The Revd Quophie Anochie Ababio | concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion (i)(g) |
| 68 The Revd Andrew J Brazier | concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion |
| 69 The Revd Delyth A Liddell | concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion |
| 70 The Revd Charity Nzegwu | concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion |
| 71 Mr Zariel Konadu | concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion |
| 72 Ms Tino Makonise | concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion |
| 73 Mrs Margaret Woods | representative Methodist Women in Britain (vii) |
| 74 Mr James T Carver | Youth President (5) |
| 75 Ms Erin Campbell | Youth Assembly |
| 76 Ms Iraj Irfan | Youth Assembly |
| 77 Mr Owen Wilkins | Youth Assembly |

Members of the Conference 2023

Wales Synod Cymru

- 78 The Revd Jacquie P Evans
- 79 The Revd Richard B Gillion
- 80 The Revd Janet E Park
- 81 Deacon Linda Brown
- 82 Ms Emily Barry
- 83 Miss Trish Earlam
- 84 Ms Beti W T Holmes
- 85 Mr Daud Irfan
- 86 Mr Jon Purcell

Birmingham

- 87 The Revd Cleopas Sibanda
- 88 The Revd Latika Singh
- 89 The Revd Richard W Wilde
- 90 Deacon Angela P Allport
- 91 Deacon Ruth B J S Yorke
- 92 Ms Charlotte Hambly
- 93 Mr Afon Harland
- 94 Ms Ermine Mitchell
- 95 Ms Sandra A Smith
- 96 Ms Helen Woodall

Bolton and Rochdale

- 97 The Revd Darren A Garfield
- 98 Mrs Anna Malnutt
- 99 Mr Lee O'Neill
- 100 Mrs Jill Orrell

Bristol

- 101 The Revd Dr Simon C Edwards
- 102 The Revd P.J. Jackson
- 103 The Revd Rachel H Leather
- 104 The Revd Leigh A Maydew
- 105 Mrs Hannah Bevan
- 106 Mr Niall M Briggs
- 107 Mr Gary Carey

- 108 Mr David Pendle
- 109 Mr Michael C Pryke

Cumbria

- 110 The Revd Philip J Jackson
- 111 The Revd Andrew J Sterling
- 112 Ms Gillian de Bourcier
- 113 Mrs Janice Rusling

Channel Isles

- 114 The Revd Howard J Stringer
- 115 Mrs Jean M Treleven

Chester and Stoke-on-Trent

- 116 The Revd Linda J Catlow
- 117 The Revd Elizabeth J Singleton
- 118 The Revd David J L Willis
- 119 Mrs Isabel Brislen
- 120 Mr Daniel Keen
- 121 Mr David Pickles
- 122 Mrs Jane Ratcliffe
- 123 Mr Ian C White

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

- 124 The Revd Iris R Bray
- 125 The Revd David C Miller
- 126 Mrs Christine Hordley
- 127 Mrs Sarah Reed
- 128 Mr Thomas Reed
- 129 Mrs Julie Swann

Darlington

- 130 The Revd Dr Vincent M Jambawo
- 131 The Revd Julia I Reid
- 132 Mrs Carolyn Godfrey
- 133 Mr Tat Cheong Luk
- 134 Mrs Susan Smith

Members of the Conference 2023

East Anglia

- 135 The Revd Paul D Critchley
- 136 The Revd Jacqueline S Goddard
- 137 The Revd Robert L Roberts
- 138 Deacon Linda R Kinchenton
- 139 Ms Rebecca Belshaw
- 140 Mrs Susan Eldridge
- 141 Mrs Maggie Finbow
- 142 Mrs Samantha Parfitt

Isle of Man

- 143 The Revd Dr Sean C Turner
- 144 Mrs Helen Norton

Lincolnshire

- 145 The Revd Angela J Long
- 146 The Revd Luke G S Smith
- 147 Mrs Susan Brumpton
- 148 Mrs Julie Close-Mitchell
- 149 Mr Michael May

Liverpool

- 150 The Revd Karen A Beecham
- 151 The Revd Jacqueline Bellfield
- 152 Mr Stephen H Cooper
- 153 Mr Graham Pegg
- 154 Miss Chloe Twist

Manchester and Stockport

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- 156 The Revd Dr Graham M Edwards
- 157 The Revd Sarah J Parkin
- 158 Deacon Lorraine Brown
- 159 Mrs Karen L Attaway
- 160 Mrs Ruth Dawson

- 161 Mr David James
- 162 Ms C Eva Manley
- 163 Mrs Jeanette Saxby

Newcastle-upon-Tyne

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- 165 The Revd Jennifer M Porterpryde
- 166 The Revd Eteleva Walker
- 167 Deacon Tracey J Hume
- 168 Mrs Christine Armstrong
- 169 Mr David Brown
- 170 Mr Cameron J Hume
- 171 Miss Audrey Ilderton
- 172 Mr Andrew Lowe

Lancashire

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- 174 The Revd Richard Ormrod
- 175 The Revd Stuart J Wild
- 176 Miss Rebecca Ainsworth
- 177 Mrs Carolyn Hothersall
- 178 Mr John D Spencer
- 179 Ms Hope Wild
- 180 Mrs Gillian M Womersley

Nottingham and Derby

- 181 The Revd Christopher P Briggs
- 182 The Revd Nicola A Briggs
- 183 The Revd Andrew W Fyall
- 184 The Revd Peter D Taylor
- 185 Deacon Julie Morton
- 186 Mr Paul Carver
- 187 Mrs Tanya Cook
- 188 Mrs Jane Goodfellow
- 189 Mr John Heard
- 190 Mr Marc Williamson

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- 191 The Revd Sara P Cliff
- 192 The Revd Langley A J Mackrell-Hey
- 193 The Revd Miriam S Moul
- 194 The Revd Kim Shorley
- 195 The Revd Rebecca H Wright
- 196 Deacon Stephen J Peck
- 197 Mr John V Bassill
- 198 Mr Matthew Forsyth
- 199 Ms Anna Herriman
- 200 Ms Olive R Ruzvidzo
- 201 Mr Paul Spray
- 202 Mr Alan J Window

Plymouth and Exeter

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- 204 The Revd D Paul C Smith
- 205 Deacon Deborah Marsh
- 206 Ms E Jane Allin
- 207 Ms Dawn Nadim
- 208 Mr David Watson
- 209 Mr Frank L Watson
- 210 Mrs Jacqui Watson

Sheffield

- 211 The Revd Julie I Coates
- 212 The Revd R Margaret K Mwilu
- 213 The Revd Benjamin Scrivens
- 214 Dr Jennifer Bywaters
- 215 Mrs Katrin Hackett
- 216 Mrs Judith Simms
- 217 Mr John Tranter

Southampton

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- 219 The Revd Rachel J Borgars
- 220 The Revd Karen E James
- 221 The Revd John D Yarrien
- 222 Deacon Suzie G B Viana

- 223 Mr Dudley Coates
- 224 Mrs Marian Izzard
- 225 Mr Mark Tizzard
- 226 Mrs Elizabeth Ward
- 227 Mr Paul Yarrien

Yorkshire West

- 228 The Revd Dr Tracey A Darling
- 229 The Revd David M Goodall
- 230 The Revd Naomi N Kaiga
- 231 The Revd Melvyn J Kelly
- 232 The Revd Rebekah J Stennett
- 233 Deacon Allyson Henry
- 234 Miss Pippa Lupton
- 235 Mr Richard Sheard
- 236 Mrs Caroline Stead
- 237 Mrs Laura Tunnacliffe
- 238 Mrs Heather Turner
- 239 Dr Richard M Vautrety
- 240 Mr Richard Walsh

Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury

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- 242 The Revd Samantha Hagerman
- 243 The Revd Julia Skitt
- 244 Deacon Helen Webster
- 245 Mr Denis Beaumont
- 246 Mrs Lesley Cook
- 247 Mr David Hemingway
- 248 Mr Keith Walton
- 249 Mrs Jackie Whitehouse

Yorkshire North and East

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- 251 The Revd Ann Fox
- 252 The Revd Denise E Williamson
- 253 Deacon Judith E Stoddart
- 254 Mrs Emma Crippen
- 255 Mrs Lydia Harrison
- 256 Mrs Sandra Hayward

Members of the Conference 2023

- 257 Mr Alister McClure
- 258 Miss Naomi Prince
- 259 Mr Bill Topping

Scotland and Shetland

- 260 The Revd Dr James S Garnett
- 261 The Revd Dr David M Lees
- 262 The Revd A James Patron Bell
- 263 Mrs Janet Bryer
- 264 Mr David L Gibson
- 265 Mrs Jane Peers

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- 267 The Revd Valerie J Reid
- 268 The Revd Zena F Smith
- 279 Deacon Ramona Dinard
- 270 Miss Katharine Crew
- 271 Mr David Germany
- 272 Miss Pauline Jackson
- 273 Mr Steve Rogers
- 274 Mr Steve Watson

London

- 275 The Revd Rachel A Bending
- 276 The Revd Steven R M Cooper
- 277 The Revd Richard A J Grocott
- 278 The Revd Rosamund V Hollingsworth

Associate Members

(a) Ecumenical

- 307 The Rt Revd Matthew Parker
- 308 The Revd Geoffrey Clarke
- 309 The Revd Jan Nowotnik

- 279 The Revd Charity D Madenyika
- 280 The Revd Stephanie Njeru
- 281 The Revd Dr Karl A Rutledge
- 282 The Revd Mmasape Zihle
- 283 Deacon Theresa E Simons-Sam
- 284 Ms Nancy Acquaah
- 285 Mr Robert Alderman
- 286 Mrs Janet Arthur
- 287 Miss Lorraine Davis
- 288 Mr Balachandren Gnanapragasam
- 289 Miss Margaret Greer
- 290 Mr John R Logan
- 291 Mrs Helen L Lunn
- 292 Ms Sarah Murray
- 293 Mrs Omobolaji Nzekwe
- 294 Ms Dallion Roye
- 295 Mr Moses Tandayi

South East

- 296 The Revd Rosemarie E G Clarke
- 297 The Revd Victoria E Davidson
- 298 The Revd Helen R Hollands
- 299 The Revd Nicholas A Oborski
- 300 The Revd John D Ritson
- 301 Miss Margaret A Bowerman
- 302 Mr Henry Chung
- 303 Ms M Anne Haggarty
- 304 Mrs Patricia K Oakley
- 305 Mrs Kathryn Ritson
- 306 Mrs Elizabeth Talbot

The Church of England
The United Reformed Church
The Roman Catholic Bishops Conference
of England and Wales

Members of the Conference 2023

| | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 310 | The Revd Dr John McPake | The Church of Scotland |
| 311 | The Revd Rebecca Sparey-Taylor | The Church of Wales |
| 312 | The Revd Dave Ellis | The Baptist Union of Great Britain |

(b) Overseas

| | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|--|
| 313 | The Revd Ingull Grefslie | United Methodist Church, Northern Conference |
| 314 | Mrs Lilla Kardosné Lakatos | United Methodist Church, Central/Southern Conference |
| 315 | The Revd Mirella Manocchio | OPCEMI |
| 316 | The Revd Marta Lopez Ballalta | Iglesia Evangelica Española |
| 317 | The Most Revd Bijaya Kumar Nayak | Church of North India |
| 318 | The Revd Christine Man-ling | Methodist Church Hong Kong |
| 319 | Bishop Kristi Wilson Sinurat | Gereja Methodist Indonesia |
| 320 | Mr Brian Bird | The United Church in the Soloman Islands |
| 321 | The Revd Peter Taylor | Methodist Church of New Zealand |
| 322 | <i>vacancy</i> | Methodist Church Kenya |
| 323 | <i>vacancy</i> | Eglise Protestante Méthodiste du Bénin |
| 324 | <i>vacancy</i> | Iglesia Metodista de Guinea Ecuatorial |
| 325 | The Most Revd Dr Paul Boafo | Methodist Church Ghana |
| 326 | The Revd Jacqueline Liddell | Methodist Church of the Caribbean and the Americas |
| 327 | Pastor Leonardo Elías Paredes Rivas | Comunidad Cristiana Metodista de Venezuela |
| 328 | The Revd Lic Medardo Vedia Gutiérrez | La Iglesia Evangelica Metodista en Bolivia |
| 329 | <i>vacancy</i> | Iglesia Evangelica Metodista de Nicaragua |
| 330 | Bishop Fr Américo Jara Reyes | Iglesia Evangelica Metodista Argentina |

Presbyters attending the Presbyteral Session of the Conference under their own arrangements

Presbyters attending the Presbyteral Session of the Conference under their own arrangements

The Revd Dr Keith R Albans
The Revd David R Alderman
The Revd Gillian R Baalham
The Revd Dr Stuart A Bell
The Revd Andrew P Biggs
The Revd Alan J Bolton
The Revd Dr Jane V Craske
The Revd Paul H Davis
The Revd Dr Valentin Dedji
The Revd J Trevor Dixon
The Revd Dr Christine M Dutton
The Revd Margaret H Eales
The Revd James I Eaton-Challinor
The Revd Andrew S Farrington
The Revd J Robin E Fox
The Revd David I H Hardman
The Revd Helen J Harrell
The Revd Conrad J Hicks
The Revd Gareth L Hill
The Revd Andrew J L Hollins
The Revd John C Howard-Norman
The Revd Marian J Jones
The Revd Graham R Kent
The Revd Derrick R Lander
The Revd Ann L Lett
The Revd J Peter F Levitt
The Revd Susan Levitt
The Revd Derek J McLean
The Revd Thomas J Osborne
The Revd Bonni-Belle F Pickard
The Revd Stephen J Radford
The Revd Sally A Ratcliffe
The Revd John L Simms
The Revd Eleanor J Smith
The Revd Peter G Sulston
The Revd Lily P Twist

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VOLUME

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The Conference 2023

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53. Managing Trustees of John Wesley's New Room and Charles Wesley's House, Bristol

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | Louise Wratten, Co-Director – Operations operations@newroombristol.org.uk Kate Rogers, Co-Director – Collections collections@newroombristol.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

John Wesley's New Room is facing significant pressures on its financial sustainability.

Increasing our levels of income generation and our targets for fundraising will be vital to secure its future as an accessible heritage site. The rise in cost of living and overall economic climate, particularly for the arts and heritage sector has seen a struggle in maintaining healthy profit margins and reaching necessary levels of visitation within the past year. We appreciate the support of the Bristol District, Methodist Heritage, and other partners in recognising the ongoing challenges we face, and we continue to address the deficit through maximising income generation opportunities drawn from our vision and mission:

Our Mission is to be a heritage site where people come in, and go out renewed.

Our Vision is to use our historic collection and other resources to bring to life the story and legacy of the Wesleys, offering space for curiosity, reflection, and enjoyment to all.

Since the appointment of Louise Wratten and Kate Rogers as Co-Directors in April 2022 necessary steps have been taken to improve organisational resilience through ensuring the new vision and mission are adopted in every aspect of the operation, as well as creating a five year forward plan and implementing a seasonal approach to programming. We are currently in the process of reviewing our governance policies. We intend to review the approach to our trustees' length of service and adopt a skills register.

Louise and Kate remain responsible for their roles as Operations Manager and Collections Manager respectively. Kate and Louise continue to engage with trusted networks, including Visit West, Broadmead BID and Heritage Services in Bath. Kate continues on the Bristol Museums group steering committee.

In August 2022 following his sabbatical, David Worthington took up the position of Director of Global Relationships in order to develop and strengthen our relationships with international audiences, particularly those across the United States. In April 2023 David undertook a series of speaking engagements in Florida to raise our profile and generate income through donations. We consider David's role in this area to have the potential to be profitable to our wider UK Methodist Heritage partners.

53. Managing Trustees of John Wesley's New Room and Charles Wesley's House, Bristol

Staff Appointments

In July 2022 we appointed Fiona Blades in the new role of Visitor Experience Officer. We recognise it is vital for any visitor attraction to provide a good welcome and experience for visitors. This position enables us to ensure the smooth running of our day-to-day activity. In November 2022 we appointed Sereena Knapp as our Marketing and Communications Officer following the resignation of Cyril Babeev. Sereena comes with a wealth of experience in marketing strategy and has a passion for engaging with the local community.

Heritage Site and Property Development

Within the last year we have seen the successful move of our admission desk to the ground floor atrium, and the adoption of a new visitor route, which has increased the value of an admission ticket through the inclusion of access to the pulpit and gallery. New signage reflecting our refreshed branding has improved wayfinding for visitors. Further changes have included: the development of a new temporary exhibition space supported by funding from South West Museum Development; developing creative volunteering opportunities for young people through a funded community project entitled 'Reaching In, Reaching Out'; and launching a seasonal programme of 'experience' events has helped us engage with a new audience. Our education programme continues to reach new schools across the Bristol District and beyond, with the offer of subsidised places available for disadvantaged students through the Tippett Fund. It is our understanding that John Wesley's New Room is now offering the largest education programme of any Methodist Heritage site in the country. We continue to provide a regular space for worship at our Friday Communion services organised by our Chaplains. In addition, we hold special events, such as carol services, and a special service for Wesley Day. After 43 years of service as our Director of Music, Philip Carter has resigned. We would like to extend our thanks for his dedication and commitment to the role.

John Wesley's New Room remains a space open to all and often engages in providing pastoral care for those seeking comfort or spiritual direction. In addition, we increasingly provide a resource for churches to hire us as a venue to inspire their congregations for worship and evangelism.

Building maintenance issues, the need for additional volunteers and the interpretation of our heritage offer are the primary challenges we currently face in sustaining a publicly accessible operation. We are working towards addressing these challenges within our forward plan through increased marketing, volunteer recruitment drives and ongoing fundraising efforts.

With the expansion of our commercial operation we see a number of challenges, including our capacity for hospitality, staff resource and the restrictive nature of the

53. Managing Trustees of John Wesley's New Room and Charles Wesley's House, Bristol

chapel pews. We are sensitively addressing the issue of pews and their potential barrier to our development with ongoing conversations with the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee (LBAC) following their concerns regarding our Conservation Management Plan.

In terms of property development we have seen the completion of our plans to redevelop and expand rental capacity at 5 Charles Street (neighbouring Charles Wesley's House), thereby increasing the valuation of the connexional property. The significant sum of £120,000 has been drawn from reserves in this financial year to fund the one-off refurbishment costs of 5 Charles Street. Our investment in the building has enabled us to offer rooms to seven tenants who moved into the refurbished building over Christmas 2022. We continually assess the implications of utility bills and impact of energy prices. Ongoing building maintenance issues remain which often incur high expenditure.

Changes to Policy

In March 2023 the trustees agreed to delegate consent for the provision of alcohol at New Room events to the Co-Directors, with an annual review. The sale of alcohol is restricted to the Visitor Centre and Courtyard. No alcohol is to be consumed in the Chapel. The current procedure for events is to apply for a Temporary Event Notice (TEN) to allow for the sale of alcohol on the premises. The Co-Directors will seek guidance from the Methodist Church before applying for a permanent alcohol licence, in accordance with CPD Standing Order 922 (3A).

Following the Methodist Conference decision to enable same-sex marriages, the trustees have approved and completed the registration of John Wesley's New Room for same-sex marriages. Our first same-sex marriage ceremony took place in the Chapel on Monday 1 May 2023.

The trustees board in 2022-23 at John Wesley's New Room consisted of the following members:

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| John Savage CBE | Chair of Trustees |
| Linda Jones | Secretary |
| Geoffrey Gollop | Treasurer |
| The Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler | Secretary of the Methodist Conference |
| The Revd Dr Jonathan Pye | Chair of the Bristol District |
| The Revd Prof Teddy Kalongo | Superintendent of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit |
| The Revd Josette Crane | Chaplain to John Wesley's New Room |
| The Revd David Weeks | Chaplain to John Wesley's New Room |
| Gary Best | Trustee and Historical Consultant |
| Wendy Allen | |

53. Managing Trustees of John Wesley's New Room and Charles Wesley's House, Bristol

Jane Allin
The Revd A Ward Jones
Niall Philips
Michael Rose
Aroona Smith

The staff team at John Wesley's New Room consists of the following members:

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Kate Rogers | Co-Director – Collections (FT) |
| Louise Wratten | Co-Directors – Operations (FT) |
| David Worthington | Director of Global Relationships (0.4 FTE) |
| Mandy Briggs | Education Officer (FT) |
| Graham Wilson | Finance Officer (0.4 FTE) |
| Julia Smith | Fundraising Officer (0.4 FTE) |
| Sereena Knapp | Marketing & Communications Officer (0.4 FTE) |
| Fiona Blades | Visitor Experience Officer (FT) |
| Ewa Littlefield | Catering Manager (FT) |
| Zdenek Bidsovsky | Assistant Café Manager (FT) |
| Gelila Ephrem | Catering Assistant (0.5 FTE) |
| Michael Borrow | Charles Wesley's House Cleaner (0.15 FTE) |

Financial Summary

The financial summary for the year to 31 August 2022 is shown below. This reflects a deficit for the year of £178,845 which is a significant sum relative to our reserves.

It reflects firstly a decision by the trustees to invest in the fabric of Charles Wesley's House and the neighbouring property to enable us to generate higher rental income in the future.

Secondly it reflects an anomaly of the financial circumstances we find ourselves in. Because all freehold property has to be owned by the Connexion, all the £90,000 plus money spent on the improvements have to be written off in the year they are spent, rather than treated in our accounts as a valuable improvement which probably increased the value of the property by more than the spend.

It is important to note that the investment was a deliberate policy by trustees, and that further similar investment in staff and property is the only way for John Wesley's New Room to become financially sustainable. Being forced to write off these improvements annually will restrict our ability to develop.

The Statement of Financial Activities is here presented to the Conference in summary.

53. Managing Trustees of John Wesley's New Room and Charles Wesley's House, Bristol

The full statement, including the notes, is available from the Conference Office if any member of the Conference wishes to see it.

| | | Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2022 | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|--|
| | | General Fund (Unrestricted) | Designated Funds (unrestricted) | Restricted Funds | Endowment Funds | Total 2021-22 | |
| Notes to the accounts | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | |
| Income | | | | | | | |
| 1 Donations, Legacies and Grants | 2 | 123,612 | - | 3,000 | - | 126,612 | |
| 2 Charitable Activities | 3 | 51,053 | - | - | - | 51,053 | |
| 3 Other Trading Activities | 4 | 132,497 | - | - | - | 132,497 | |
| 4 Interest and investment income | 5 | 5,349 | - | - | - | 5,349 | |
| 5 Other | 6 | 1,337 | - | - | - | 1,337 | |
| 6 Total income | | 313,848 | - | 3,000 | - | 316,848 | |
| Expenditure | | | | | | | |
| 7 Raising Funds | 7 | 146,271 | - | - | - | 146,271 | |
| 8 Charitable Activities | 8 | 324,033 | - | - | - | 324,033 | |
| 9 Other | | | | | | | |
| 10 Total charitable expenditure | | 470,304 | - | - | - | 470,304 | |
| 11 Gains/(losses) on monetary investments | | (1,398) | - | (5,735) | (18,256) | (25,389) | |
| 12 Net income/(expenditure) | | (157,854) | - | (2,735) | (18,256) | (178,845) | |
| 13 Transfers between funds | | 150,051 | (30,000) | (120,051) | - | - | |
| 14 Other gains/(losses) | | - | - | - | - | - | |
| 15 Net movement in funds | | (7,803) | (30,000) | (122,786) | (18,256) | (178,845) | |
| 16 Total funds brought forward | | 299,161 | 65,823 | 166,052 | 170,288 | 701,324 | |
| 17 Total funds carried forward | | 291,358 | 35,823 | 43,266 | 152,032 | 522,479 | |

53. Managing Trustees of John Wesley's New Room and Charles Wesley's House, Bristol

***RESOLUTIONS

53/1. The Conference receives the Report.

53/2. The Conference appoints the following as the Managing Trustees for the New Room for 2023/2024:

- (i) The Secretary of the Conference or a nominated substitute: the Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler
- (ii) The Chair of the Bristol District: the Revd Dr Jonathan H Pye
- (iii) The Superintendent of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit: the Revd Teddy Kalongo
- (iv) Mr John Savage CBE (Chair), Mrs Linda Jones (Secretary), Mr Geoffrey Gollop (Treasurer), the Revd Josette Crane (Chaplain), the Revd David Weeks (Chaplain), Wendy Allen, Mrs Jane Allin, the Revd A Ward Jones, Mr Niall Philips, Mr Michael Rose, Mrs Aroona Smith.
- (v) The Revd Ivan Fowler, retired United Reformed Church minister (subject to full management trustee board approval in July 2023).

Reasoned Statement

The Revd Ivan Fowler is a retired United Reformed Minister living locally who brings a wealth of skills and experience beneficial to John Wesley's New Room. As a landlord he has experience in tenanted property management. As an organist and historical organ enthusiast he has a passion for music. He also volunteers at St George's, Bristol, for musical events and is enthusiastic about the schools programme.

54. Managing Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall Westminster

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Nigel Cowgill Chair of the Trustees nigel@methodistlondon.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

Introduction

This report from the Managing Trustees gives an overview of the varied activities and events that have been part of the life of Methodist Central Hall Westminster (MCHW) during 2022-23. The worship and mission of the Church is steadily rebuilding following the challenges of the pandemic, the Congestion Charge, and a backlog of events, like marathons, taking place in Westminster. Nevertheless, we are resilient and determined, working in partnership with others where we can, including Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral, other Churches Together in Westminster, St Vincent's Family Project, Westminster Foodbank, The Passage, and Premier Media Group. We are seeing the fruit of our becoming a 'Global Christian family following Jesus at the heart of London'.

The Hall was still in debt by £3.0 million as of 31 August 2022 and although the future remains challenging, the revenue generated by our Business Centre has increased, whilst we have maintained our values and mission. The Trust has been self-financing since its establishment in 1994 and has not received any financial support from the Connexion in this time.

Ministry of the Church

In October 2022, MCHW celebrated our 110th Church Anniversary and former Superintendent, the Revd Martin Turner, was our guest preacher, and we had an Anniversary meal with 220 guests.

It was an honour for the Church to work alongside our business and events team to provide a place of welcome to global broadcast organisations as we became a media centre for Queen Elizabeth II's funeral and the Coronation of King Charles III, with broadcasts reaching billions of people worldwide. The ministerial team have also been involved in a variety of broadcasts ranging from BBC Radio 2, Premier, TBN, ABC, and online. Our YouTube channel continues to serve the Connexion and the World Church, reaching a potential audience of over 1,000,000 last year. Our popular online services alone are consistently reporting 1,000 viewers per week. Our website (mchw.live) is a thriving hub of activity, with over 2,500 people visiting weekly and we welcomed over 45,000 new visitors this year. Our Easter Day in person congregation was our strongest this year, with over 300 people in attendance. Church members are in good heart, and it is encouraging to see tourists returning and new congregants.

54. Managing Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall Westminster

The Parliamentary Covenant Service, hosted by MCHW, returned to the St Mary Undercroft Chapel at the Palace of Westminster in January. We are also hoping to revive the Methodist Parliamentary Fellowship this year. We seek to engage with social justice issues, and we are registering to become part of the EcoChurch community. Other regular groups, activities, and events have returned, including our Christmas Broadcast services on Premier Christian Radio, Daffodil Day (now on a Saturday), and our Healing Conference. We have also hosted Alpha Courses, Bible Studies and a Lent course, all via Zoom.

We have a supportive staff team covering the Church Office, Healing Ministry, Young Adults, Digital Media, Music, and Finance. Our Visitor Services department, which closed during the pandemic, is currently offering weekly tours of the building, together with a new initiative 'Archives for Mission'. Our Organ Matinee concerts (3rd Sunday of the month), continue to attract a faithful audience of up to 60 and feature a range of performers, occasionally including other instruments alongside the organ. Cultural Praise, Jazz Vespers, and Songs of Praise-style services are all strands of our worship and music outreach.

The Trust's grant to the Church has increased but remains reduced from what it was pre-Pandemic: £180K for 2022/23 (pre-Covid it was £260K). This continues to impact MCHW's resources, which we have accommodated from our contingency fund. The congregation has been encouraged to increase its giving to help meet the challenges and move forward with a Kingdom Agenda. The Church continues to rejoice at God's provision.

Our Business Centre

The year to 31 August 2022 was challenging for Central Hall Westminster Ltd (CHW). We continued to be impacted by Covid restrictions in place for much of the first half year. Although legal restrictions on our conference activities were lifted in January 2022, public and corporate confidence to book large scale events has taken some time to return. Nevertheless, we achieved revenues for the year to 31 August 2022 of £5.5m, in line with our forecasted revenue reported last year. This is an exceptional achievement considering the restrictions that we faced and the loss of 50% of our workforce in the prior year.

Our budget for the current year to 31 August 2023 is for revenue across our three sites of £9.2m, just under pre-pandemic levels. Continued reluctance of clients to book meetings and conferences in advance, reflecting concerns over public health conditions and the availability of public transport in the capital, impacted our first half year. On a positive note, our traditional corporate conference client base has largely been replaced with social events such as graduation ceremonies and concerts including the very successful

54. Managing Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall Westminster

series of Candlelight concerts. As previously mentioned, we were also chosen by many of the world's media as their base for the broadcasting of the late Queen Elizabeth II's funeral and welcomed them again for the Coronation.

Since its incorporation in 1999, CHW has generated nearly £20m for the Trustees. This is used by the Trustees to fund an annual grant to MCHW to further the mission of the Methodist Church and to ensure the upkeep of our Grade 2* listed building, beyond immediate repairs and maintenance. We anticipate reaching our revenue targets for the current year but, like many Methodist churches throughout the country, are faced with the enormous cost of heating, lighting, and maintaining our beautiful building. In the short to medium term, we face a challenge to deliver the level of profits we saw pre Covid.

We continue to manage building and commercial activity on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Methodist Church and Central Methodist Church York; collectively we market our commercial operations as 'Central Hall Venues' (CHV). Our ability to drive revenues and therefore profits in both Edinburgh and York have been similarly impacted by Covid and staffing level constraints.

Our desire to build a larger network with other Methodist churches for mutual benefit, sharing of expertise and resource, has taken a back seat during these difficult times. As part of our 2023 strategic review, we will be exploring the different options available to us to develop our CHV brand to best support the mission of the Methodist Church.

The Building

The Quinquennial Inspection in April 2022 noted that the Hall is well maintained and in good condition. We are working through the list of recommendations for immediate action. A further report in October 2022 looked at the condition of our plant and equipment; it highlighted several essential equipment upgrades/replacements that had been postponed due to the pandemic and financial restrictions. The most significant item is the Goods Lift which we aim to refurbish next January. We are continuing a programme of proactive maintenance, but keeping capital expenditure restricted. A comprehensive maintenance programme is scheduled for future years.

Central Hall Westminster remains fully compliant with all health and safety and building and environmental regulations. We recognise that our operations have a local and global environmental impact, and so we are committed to reducing this as much as possible by following sustainability best practices, and proactively encouraging sustainability wherever we have influence. We also have a robust Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy in place and hold a Platinum Venue Award from EcoSmart with Greengage Solutions.

54. Managing Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall Westminster

Financial Situation

For the year 2021/22 our revenues were 60% of pre Covid levels as our business was being rebuilt. Taking the Trust and its trading subsidiary CHW Ltd combined, there was a loss of £0.4m; this followed losses of £0.7m in 2019/20 and £2.2m in 2020/21 when we were closed under Covid restrictions. At 31 August 2022 our bank borrowings were £3.0m and our agreed bank loan and overdraft facilities were £3.9m.

During 2022/23 revenue has increased and should be approaching pre Covid levels. However, the impact of higher energy prices and interest rates means that any surplus will be smaller than the £0.5m we typically achieved pre Covid. The next two years from now will be testing and thereafter loan repayments will reduce. HSBC remains very supportive as we continue to depend on the performance of our conference and events business.

The Trustees

The role of Chair of the Trustees is held by the Revd Nigel Cowgill as one of the Chairs of the London District. The Nominations Committee continues to work to ensure that the Trustee body includes committed individuals with relevant skills and experience, particularly in the areas of finance, legal affairs, heritage architecture and Methodist mission, along with appropriate diversity in its membership. We continue to explore the possibility of looking to becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation to protect the Trustees from any personal liability.

The Future

The ongoing community engagement of the Church demonstrates a Methodist commitment to an outward oriented mission with God's love at its heart. The Trustees are seeking to work collaboratively with both Church and Company to ensure the future viability of Methodist Central Hall Westminster in providing a beacon of Methodist Christian mission and presence at the heart of London. In the past, our aim has been to remain self-sufficient financially, as we have until this time, but we are dependent on the success of our conference and events business.

***RESOLUTIONS

54/1. The Conference adopts the Report.

54/2. The Conference appoints the following Managing Trustees of the Conference Property at Central Hall Westminster:

54. Managing Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall Westminster

The Revd Nigel Cowgill (Chair of the Managing Trustees and Convenor – ex officio)
The Revd Anthony D Miles (Superintendent, London Westminster – ex officio)
Mr Nevil Tomlinson (Treasurer to the Trustees)
Mr Bala Gnanapragasam (Secretary to the Trustees)
*# Mrs Ama Ackah-Yensu
Ms Ruby Beech
Mr Alan Eccles
* Mr Wesley Gibbs
Mr Martin Lougher
* The Revd Lansford Penn-Timity
* Mrs Judith Mitchell
Dr Joanna Williamson
The Revd Andrew Harper

** Indicates the people nominated by the Westminster Circuit Meeting.*

Indicates Trustees who have served for 6 years or more

Reasoned Statements for Trustees who have exceeded six years of service

Mr Nevil Tomlinson – a trustee and Treasurer since 2017, he works closely with CHW management to guide us through the challenges caused by Covid and the ensuing indebtedness.

Mrs Ama Ackah-Yensu – a trustee since 2017, she is Treasurer of the Westminster Church and Circuit and makes the important financial connection between the Church and the Connexional Trustees.

Reasoned Statements for new Trustees as from 1 September 2023

Mrs Judith Mitchell – a previous Trustee and member of the Hall Fabric Committee.

The Revd Andrew Harper

Andrew is responsible for all matters related to the ethical thought leadership and ethical performance of Epworth and the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church. Andrew will bring to the Trustees practical experience of working within the faith communities, the charity sector, the wider investment community and a deep understanding of the theology of investment coupled with a love for the Methodist Church.

55. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report

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| Contact name and details | Deacon Karen McBride Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order mdowarden@methodistchurch.org.uk |
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Our life together as deacons and members of the Order

Membership:

The Methodist Diaconal Order has a complement of 241 members.

131 in the active work (including seven diaconal probationers, one ordained probationer and four diaconal ordinands)

100 supernumerary deacons

Seven diaconal students

Three deacons hold 'without appointment' status

In addition:

One authorised deacon and one associate deacon in the active work

One supernumerary associate deacon

Thirteen 'Associate members' and a number of 'Friends' who commit to support the Order through prayer and advocacy.

Since the MDO report to the Conference 2022:

- four full members and three MDO Associate members have died;
- three diaconal probationers have been received into Full Connexion and full membership of the Order, and ordained to the diaconate within the universal Church;
- three people were accepted as candidates for training in 2022 and six further candidates will be recommended to the Conference 2023;
- 11 members are seeking the permission of the Conference to 'sit down'.

The reviewing of the MDO Mission statement:

In common with the disciples of Christ everywhere, travelling the recovery-road post Covid 19 pandemic, we continue to seek to support and serve God's world, and to pray for the agility and strength to be open to new opportunities to reveal God's love for all the world.

We were grateful to the 2022 Conference for its positive response to the review of the MDO Rule of Life and its acknowledgement of the work and commitment members had put into this review to ensure all voices could participate well. With this foundational work accepted and affirmed by the Conference, the MDO has been able to give attention

55. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report

to its Mission statement, which the Conference had also invited us to review. This work was ably directed by a small working group of the Order and undertaken by all using the MDO Area Group system. This work was recently completed at the Convocation and is presented below to the Conference for its affirmation.

MDO Mission Statement:

Methodist Diaconal Order is a Christ-centred, prayerful, pioneering Religious Order committed to modelling God's love in action.

- **Christ-centred:** The MDO is inspired by and seeks to live out Jesus' ministry of love and service.
- **Prayerful:** The MDO is committed to living prayerfully, and to pray for the Church, local community, and wider world.
- **Pioneering:** The MDO seeks to enable the Church to find new ways and contexts in which to share the gospel.
- **Religious Order:** The MDO is a dispersed community that lives by a Rule of Life to enable mutual prayerful support through Area Groups and Convocation.
- **Committed to modelling God's love in action:** The MDO seeks to model God's love through spoken word, practical action, nurturing people and local communities, and challenging injustice.

Convocation:

The overarching theme of the 2023 Convocation was 'God for All', recalling for us the connexional strategy for Evangelism and Growth, as we expand our commitment to be a growing, evangelistic, justice-seeking Church of Gospel people, and also reminding members of the commitment we make through the MDO Rule: *"We recognise God's image in all that God has made; we welcome and celebrate the gifts and talents of all. Through our diversity we gain a greater insight into the kingdom of God."*

We were delighted that the President of the Conference, the Youth President, the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and two District Chairs accepted our invitation to attend and participate in the Convocation. We were enabled in our exploration of the theme by members of the Evangelism and Growth team and those enabling us as a Church to embed more deeply the gospel imperative of justice, solidarity, and dignity for all. In addition, we were thankful to have deacons from other global and ecumenical contexts, to challenge and enlarge our own insights and perspectives.

We gave thanks and remembered those sisters who had died in the past year and celebrated the three members who were received into Full Connexion with the Conference, became full members of the Order and were ordained at the 2022 Conference.

55. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report

We recognised the ministry of those seeking permission of the Conference to become supernumerary this year and heard their testimonies. Among those was Deacon Myrtle Poxon, whose active ministry of 45 years spans both that of the Wesley Deaconess Order and the Methodist Diaconal Order. Myrtle's testimony and ongoing loyal service remind us of the rich heritage of prayer, witness and service which undergirds the Order. As an Order we pay tribute to Myrtle and all our Sisters of the Wesley Deaconess Order whose obedience, costly service and lifelong commitment continue to influence and enable the life of the Methodist Diaconal Order today.

The Conference Diaconal Committee met during the Convocation, accepted the obituaries of those who had died and recommended to the Conference candidates for acceptance into initial formation and training; students and probationers to continue on trial; probationers to be recommended for reception into Full Connexion, full membership of the order and ordination as deacons; and those who are seeking permission to 'sit down'. The Committee's report is presented elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.

The 2023 Conference is the twenty fifth anniversary of the Methodist Church recognising two orders of ordained ministry – presbyteral and diaconal. In 1998 the Conference saw many members of the MDO travel to Scarborough and stand in the gallery as deacons were received for the first time into 'Full Connexion' with the Conference. We recognise that even 25 years on there is ongoing work to do, yet there is much to give thanks for, not least the most recent work in 2019 which re-affirmed and celebrated the Methodist Diaconal Order as both a religious order and an order of ministry.

It was fitting in the light of this anniversary for the Convocation to celebrate Deacon Kerry Scarlett as Vice-President designate of the Conference, to pray with her and offer our support and commitment to her in the year ahead.

In the closing service each member, whether full member, probationer or student was required to re-affirm their commitment and willingness to take up the opportunities, obligations, and privileges of diaconal ministry in God's Church and our shared life within the community of the Methodist Diaconal Order. We did so, trusting in God's help and grace to enable us as individuals and as a religious order to live the life of those called into a life of prayer and a ministry of witness and service.

Our relationship with other diaconal orders and deacons

After the years of Covid 19 we give thanks for being able to meet 'in person' with other diaconal orders and associations. Convocation included guests from the diaconal order of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church, the ecumenical Community of Deaconesses in Rwanda and ecumenical deacons and guests from the Scottish Episcopal Church, United Reformed Church. and the Church of England.

55. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report

In August, the Order's summer retreat will be led by colleagues from the Scottish Episcopal Church.

In September two members of the MDO will travel to Neuendettelsau, Germany to participate in the Diakonia Region Africa-Europe conference: Hope in a fragile world.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 55/1. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 55/2. The Conference resolves that the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall meet at Yarnfield Park, Staffordshire from Tuesday 7 May until Friday 10 May 2024.**

56. Candidating for Ministry – Standing Order amendments

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| Contact name and details | Mrs Joanne Anderton Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice and Secretary to the Law and Polity Committee Email: lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk |
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The Conference of 2022 (Resolution 17/16) directed the Law and Polity Committee to present to the Conference of 2023 draft revisions of Section 71 of Standing Orders (and of any related Standing Orders) to accommodate the new candidating process. The Committee recommends that the existing text of Section 71 of Standing Orders be deleted and replaced with an entirely new Section 71. The Committee also recommends a number of consequential amendments be made to other Standing Orders as a result. The proposed amendments are set out below.

STANDING ORDER AMENDMENTS

The existing text of Section 71 is to be deleted and replaced with the following text:

Section 71 Presbyteral and Diaconal Candidates

710 General. (1) Candidating for the diaconate or the presbyterate in the Methodist Church is a process of discernment by the candidate and the Church of the call of God upon a person's life and of how the Church may respond to it.

(2) It shall be the responsibility of the relevant member of the Connexional Team to make available a variety of resources to enable and encourage the exploration of vocation.

(3) Following any such exploration every candidate for the diaconate or the presbyterate in the Methodist Church shall engage in a process of discernment of vocation comprising two stages. Stage One is a formal process of accompanied reflection leading up to a decision by the person concerned whether or not to offer as a candidate for ordained ministry. Stage Two is the process of consideration of such an offer once it has been made.

(4) It shall be the responsibility of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee annually to produce Information for Candidates setting out the process, requirements, dates and deadlines for both stages of Discernment of Ordained Vocation.

(5) The Conference shall adopt and publish, and may from time to time amend, discernment criteria to be applied in considering offers by candidates for training as presbyters or deacons.

56. Candidating for Ministry – Standing Order amendments

711 Appointments. *(1) The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall annually appoint:*

- (i) a pool of people to serve on an Advisory Group as directed by the relevant member of the Connexional Team;*
- (ii) a pool of appropriately gifted people from whom the relevant member of the Connexional Team shall appoint an accompanist for each candidate; and*
- (iii) such other appropriately gifted and experienced people as it thinks necessary for the purpose specified in clause (4) below.*

(2) An Advisory Group Panel of three people selected from the Advisory Group by the relevant member of the Connexional Team and normally comprising a presbyter, a deacon and lay member, will meet with each candidate.

(3) The role of the accompanist is to support the candidate through their journey of vocational discernment, to meet and reflect with the candidate and to produce the agreed record referred to in Standing Order 712(2) below.

(4) The purpose for which additional persons are to be appointed under head (iii) of clause (1) above is the purpose of delivering both stages of the process of discernment of ordained vocation effectively each year and in particular supporting each candidate pastorally throughout the process and, where necessary beyond it, whatever its outcome.

712 Discernment of Ordained Vocation: Stage One. *(1) Any person exploring whether to offer as a candidate for the diaconate or the presbyterate in the Methodist Church in accordance with the Stage One process may engage with any or all of the resources offered to encourage and enable the discernment of vocation but in order to proceed to Stage Two shall at the very least have fulfilled all of the requirements of Stage One as detailed in the Information for Candidates produced annually by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee as required by Standing Order 710(4) above.*

(2) Every person entering Stage One shall be assigned an accompanist from the pool appointed in accordance with Standing Order 711(1)(ii) above by the relevant member of the Connexional Team. The person and the accompanist shall normally meet on at least three occasions either in person or online to review how the person's discernment is progressing and produce an agreed record of it which will form part of a candidate's portfolio.

(3) Unless the person concerned has voluntarily withdrawn every potential candidate shall meet with an Advisory Group Panel drawn from the Advisory Group appointed as detailed in Standing Order 711(1)(i) above to reflect on the potential candidate's progress. The Advisory Group Panel may suggest:

56. Candidating for Ministry – Standing Order amendments

- (i) continuing to Stage Two to offer as a candidate; or*
- (ii) continuing to Stage Two to offer as a candidate after having undertaken further identified elements of preparation; or*
- (iii) undertaking further exploration of vocation before returning to candidate in a subsequent year; or*
- (iv) the exploration of a different vocation.*

If the suggestion made by the Advisory Group Panel falls within the categories (ii), (iii) or (iv) above, it shall nonetheless be for the potential candidate alone to decide whether or not to continue to offer for ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in the current year, with or without having undertaken any further identified elements of preparation.

713 Discernment of Ordained Vocation: Stage Two. *(1) A candidate for the diaconate or the presbyterate in the Methodist Church shall have been baptized and shall have been a member of the Methodist Church in good standing for at least one year as at 1 September in the connexional year in which the candidate's offer is made.*

(2) A candidate for the diaconate or the presbyterate in the Methodist Church shall submit such forms and supply such references and other documentation as shall from time to time be required by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

(3) Every candidate for the diaconate or the presbyterate in the Methodist Church must have and demonstrate the legal right to work in the United Kingdom.

(4) Every candidate for the diaconate or the presbyterate in the Methodist Church shall meet with the connexional psychologist who shall produce a resilience assessment report which the candidate will be invited to sign before it is submitted.

(5) A candidate for the diaconate or the presbyterate in the Methodist Church shall submit a portfolio in the form and covering the areas of experience from time to time required by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

(6) (a) A candidate for the diaconate or the presbyterate shall satisfy the Superintendent that the candidate assents to the doctrinal standards set out in clause 4 of the Deed of Union and indicate willingness, on reception into Full Connexion, to uphold the discipline of the Church and to accept in particular the obligations to be at the disposal of the Conference for stationing which apply to the diaconate or to the presbyterate. In addition, a candidate for the diaconate shall indicate willingness to accept the commitments entailed in becoming a full member of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

56. Candidating for Ministry – Standing Order amendments

(b) The Superintendent shall also make a preliminary assessment on a connexional proforma of what might reasonably be expected of the candidate's future availability for stationing in circuit or other appointments and the terms and conditions of service under which the candidate might serve.

(7) Every candidate must be prepared to accept the form and length of training prescribed by the Conference.

(8) Unless an exemption is granted in accordance with clause (9) below an offer shall only be accepted if the candidate indicates a willingness to meet such conditions of availability for stationing as are set by the Conference at the time of acceptance and provides in writing an affirmation of willingness to be stationed in the active work for a minimum period of ten years.

(9) The connexional Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall make recommendations as to exemptions from the requirements of clause (8) above to the connexional Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation, who shall have the power to grant or withhold such exemptions.

(10) A person who was formerly a candidate for the presbyterate or the diaconate may not re-offer for either the presbyterate or the diaconate in the year following that in which the previous offer was declined unless advised to do so in writing by the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation when communicating the Conference's decision.

714 The Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation. (1) The Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation shall examine all continuing candidates for the presbyterate and the diaconate and shall report directly to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference in the case of presbyteral candidates and the Conference Diaconal Committee in the case of diaconal candidates.

(2) The committee shall meet on or before the date or dates determined by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee and shall take the form and be conducted in the manner detailed in the Information for Candidates referred to in Standing Order 710(4) above.

(3) In order to facilitate the process of discernment of vocation the committee shall have access to all portfolios, documents, references and reports submitted together with any and all such other information as the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee may from time to time determine.

(4) The Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation shall report to the Presbyteral Session or the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may be, under

56. Candidating for Ministry – Standing Order amendments

the classification specified in clause (5) below, the vote for each candidate being recorded and no neutrals being allowed. In reaching its classification the committee shall apply the discernment criteria published under Standing Order 710(5).

(5) The Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation shall have three classes in which it may report on candidates in accordance with clause (4):

- (i) Recommended: those candidates in respect of whom the committee recommends by a majority of 75% or more that, if accepted on that basis, they may proceed immediately or after deferment to pre-ordination training;*
- (ii) Conditionally Recommended: those candidates in respect of whom the committee recommends by a majority of 75% or more that, if accepted on that basis, they must first fulfil a condition but, provided that condition is fulfilled within three years, may then proceed to pre-ordination training;*
- (iii) Not Recommended: those candidates whom the committee does not recommend by a sufficient majority, or whom it judges to be unsuitable or not called to the form of ministry for which they offered.*

The recommendations in classes (i) and (ii) above are subject to there being no obstacle found in the safeguarding check or Occupational Health assessment required by clauses (6) and (7) of this Standing Order. The report and the reasons given shall be made available to the candidate in writing.

(6) Every candidate recommended or conditionally recommended for training and every candidate not recommended for training, but who has appealed against the recommendation of the committee and whose appeal has been upheld, must undertake a safeguarding Disclosure and Barring Service check if based in a home district in England or Wales, or its equivalent if based in a home district in another legal jurisdiction. The check must be completed before the Conference to which the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or the Appeals Committee will report its recommendation.

(7) Every candidate recommended or conditionally recommended for training and every candidate not recommended for training, but who has appealed against the recommendation of the committee and whose appeal has been upheld, must undertake an Occupational Health assessment in accordance with Standing Order 715(2) below. The assessment, and any appeal against the recommendations of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee made in consequence of that assessment, must be completed before the Conference to which the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or the Appeals Committee will report its recommendation.

56. Candidating for Ministry – Standing Order amendments

(8) The committee may also advise on the desirable length and form of pre-ordination training for all candidates who are Recommended or Conditionally Recommended, shall make a judgment on any applications for deferment of pre-ordination training and, if it thinks fit, may for the purposes of Standing Order 713(10) advise a candidate whose offer is declined to re-offer in the following year.

715 Candidates' Health. (1) The Methodist Council shall adopt and publish, and may from time to time amend, the Candidates Health Policy to be applied by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee when considering and making a determination consequent upon the outcome of the Occupational Health assessment of a candidate recommended for training by the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or of a candidate whose appeal against the recommendation of that committee has been upheld.

(2) Every candidate for the diaconate or the presbyterate in the Methodist Church recommended for acceptance for training by the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation, or whose appeal against the recommendation of that committee in accordance with Standing Order 716(1) below has been upheld, shall undertake an Occupational Health assessment carried out by such external body or company as shall from time to time be appointed for this purpose by the Methodist Council.

(3) The Occupational Health assessment shall take place after the recommendation of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation, or the decision of the Appeals Committee, in the case of a candidate whose appeal in accordance with Standing Order 716(1) below has been upheld, has been communicated to the candidate.

(4) The report of the outcome of the Occupational Health assessment shall be made available to the candidate, to the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation and to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

(5) In the event that the Occupational Health assessment identifies adjustments that, for reasons of physical, mental and/or emotional health, will need to be put in place to enable a candidate to carry out the duties reasonably to be expected of a deacon or presbyter it shall be the responsibility of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee to make one of the following determinations:

- (i) that the candidate be recommended for acceptance unconditionally to the Conference;**
- (ii) that the candidate be recommended for acceptance conditionally to the Conference; or**
- (iii) that the candidate be not recommended for acceptance to the Conference.**

56. Candidating for Ministry – Standing Order amendments

The committee's determination shall replace the previous recommendation of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or, if applicable, of the Appeals Committee.

(6) In making the determinations required by clause (5) above the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall determine only whether any adjustments identified by the Occupational Health assessment are required and, if required, can reasonably and in timely manner be put in place having regard to and in all cases applying the Candidates Health Policy.

(7) Any candidate shall have the right to appeal against any recommendation made under clause (5) above, by following the appeals procedure detailed in Standing Order 716 below.

716 Appeals. (1) The candidate or the relevant member of the Connexional Team, or with the candidate's consent the candidate's Superintendent or Chair, may, by notice given in writing to the secretary of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation, or in the case of an appeal against a recommendation of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee in accordance with Standing Order 715(5) above to the secretary of that committee, within fourteen days of notification to the candidate in writing of the decision of the committee, appeal against the recommendation of the committee, on one or more of the following grounds:

- (i) that the procedural provisions of this Section have not been correctly followed;***
- (ii) that there are facts which were not available to the committee and which are such as to make its recommendation inappropriate;***
- (iii) that the judgment of the committee, as conveyed to the candidate in the official letter informing the candidate that the offer made has been declined, is questioned in writing by both the Superintendent and the Chair of the candidate.***

The notice of appeal must specify the grounds of appeal and a reasoned statement to support the appeal shall be supplied by the appellant(s).

(2) Every such case shall be considered by an Appeals Committee of eight persons, of whom seven shall be a quorum. In the case of an appeal by or on behalf of a candidate for the diaconate the committee shall always include at least two deacons. The members of the committee shall be selected by the convener from the panel appointed by the Methodist Council under Standing Order 326A. The convener shall be present throughout the meeting of the committee in order to advise on procedure and practice but shall not speak on the substance of the case and shall have no vote.

56. Candidating for Ministry – Standing Order amendments

(3) The Appeals Committee shall be supplied at its meeting with copies of all papers from Stage One and Stage Two of the appellant's Discernment of Ordained Vocation process in the case of every appeal and, where the appeal is under Standing Order 715(7) above, the Occupational Health assessment, whether that appeal is against the recommendation of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, and the secretary of the relevant committee shall expound its case for its recommendation.

(4) The candidate and any other appellant specified in clause (1) above shall have the right to attend the committee, to be present for the presentation of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation's case or that of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (as appropriate) and to reply. The candidate may be accompanied by a presbyter or deacon of the candidate's own choice.

(5) The candidate may be questioned about the grounds of the appeal and, where the appeal is under heads (ii) or (iii) of clause (1) above, the issues cited in the judgment of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee but there shall be no general rehearing of the case or repetition of the assessment procedures, as the case may be, of the relevant Committee.

(6) After the appellants and the secretary of the relevant committee have withdrawn, the Appeals Committee shall decide whether or not to uphold the appeal.

(7) Subject to the above the Appeals Committee shall regulate its own procedure.

(8) The Appeals Committee shall report to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may be, with the number of votes cast for and against its recommendation, no neutrals being allowed. Any recommendation at variance with that of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (as appropriate) shall require not less than six votes in favour.

717 The Conference. (1) The Conference in its Presbyteral Session shall first consider those presbyteral candidates in respect of whom there has been an appeal in accordance with Standing Order 716. The convener of the Appeals Committee shall present that committee's recommendation and the Conference shall vote upon each case in turn.

(2) When the cases specified in clause (1) have been dealt with all those candidates who have been recommended or conditionally recommended by a 75% majority or more by the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation, or by the Ministerial

56. Candidating for Ministry – Standing Order amendments

Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee in respect of cases dealt with under Standing Order 715(5), shall be proposed to the Conference en bloc.

(3) Those candidates whom the committee has listed as Not Recommended in accordance with Standing Order 714(5) or 715(5) and in respect of whom no appeal has been made under Standing Order 716 shall then be proposed en bloc to be declined by the Conference.

(4) No candidate for the presbyterate shall be recommended or conditionally recommended by the Presbyteral Session to the Representative Session for the presbyterate save by a vote of 75% or more of the members of the Conference present and voting.

(5) The provisions of Clauses (1) to (5) of this Standing Order shall apply to the Conference Diaconal Committee in considering and making its recommendations in respect of diaconal candidates, as if references to the Presbyteral Session were references to that committee.

(6) The candidates for the presbyterate recommended or conditionally recommended by the Presbyteral Session and the candidates for the diaconate recommended or conditionally recommended by the Conference Diaconal Committee shall be proposed respectively en bloc for acceptance or conditional acceptance as the case may be by the Conference in its Representative Session.

(7) No candidate shall be accepted or conditionally accepted save by a vote of 75% or more of the members of the Conference in its Representative Session present and voting.

718 Change of Order of Ministry. (1) A deacon in Full Connexion or diaconal probationer intending to offer as a candidate for the presbyterate shall inform the Superintendent, Chair and the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. A student deacon intending to offer shall inform the oversight tutor with overall responsibility for the student's training institution and the Warden.

(2) A presbyter in Full Connexion or presbyteral probationer intending to offer as a candidate for the diaconate shall inform the Superintendent and Chair. A student presbyter intending to offer shall inform the oversight tutor with overall responsibility for the student's training institution.

(3) Every such candidate must be prepared to accept the form and length of training prescribed by the Conference.

(4) Every such candidate for the presbyterate shall also be a local preacher.

56. Candidating for Ministry – Standing Order amendments

(5) The candidate shall arrange for the provision of such documentation and other information, and fulfil such other requirements as may be directed by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, including in the case of a presbyteral candidate such reports on the candidate's ability to lead worship and to preach as may be appropriate. The candidate must also demonstrate an adequate ability to benefit from study and to apply what has been learnt. In the case of a student or probationer this shall include reports from the relevant training institution.

(6) The provisions of Standing Orders 713 to 717 shall apply, and the period of pre-ordination training and probation shall be determined by the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or Conference Diaconal Committee when the candidate is accepted.

(7) A candidate who is a deacon shall cease to be in Full Connexion as a deacon and to be a member of the Methodist Diaconal Order on the commencement of pre-ordination training or on entry upon probation, whichever is the earlier. If for any reason pre-ordination training or probation for the presbyterate is not completed, the candidate shall be entitled to apply for reinstatement as a deacon under the provisions of Standing Order 761.

(8) A candidate who is a presbyter shall cease to be in Full Connexion as a presbyter on the commencement of pre-ordination training or on entry upon probation, whichever is the earlier. If for any reason pre-ordination training or probation for the diaconate is not completed, the candidate shall be entitled to apply for reinstatement as a presbyter under the provisions of Standing Order 761.

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

320 Ministerial Candidates Selection Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation. (1) There shall be a connexional Ministerial Candidates Selection Committee **for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation** appointed annually by the Conference and consisting of:

- (i) two Team members responsible for initial presbyteral and diaconal training and candidates, and
- (ii) not more than eighty other persons nominated by the Methodist Council of whom not more than twelve shall be involved in initial ministerial training.

In addition the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall have the right to attend meetings of the committee but shall have no vote.

56. Candidating for Ministry – Standing Order amendments

321 Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee. (1) The Methodist Council shall annually appoint a connexional Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee consisting of:

- (i) no more than two representatives of oversight committees of training institutions;
- (ii) three persons each of whom is was a ~~current or~~ recent member of a district Candidates Committee and three persons each of whom is a current or recent member of a district Probationers Committee;

326A Appeals. The **Methodist Council** ~~council~~ shall appoint an Appeals Panel consisting of persons who are not members of the ~~Ministerial Candidates Selection Committee~~ **for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation** to deal with appeals under Standing Order ~~715~~ **718** or 722(3). The council shall also appoint a convener of Appeals Committees.

402 District Committees

...~~(6) Subject to Standing Order 451 the~~ **The** persons who are eligible to be members of district committees are those who, if ministers or probationers, are members of or (in the case of forces chaplains and chaplains' assistants) entitled to attend the Synod or, if not ministers or probationers, are members in the District or members of other communions involved in partnership schemes within the District which have been approved by the Conference.

Section 45 District Candidates Committee: This section is to be revoked in its entirety.

48A5 Further provisions relating to modified constitutions.

(2) The provisions referred to in clause (1) above are the following:

- (i) *[revoked]*
- (ii) Section 43 (District Policy Committee);
- (iii) Standing Order 442 (chaplaincies);
- (iv) *[revoked]*
- (v) Standing Order 444 (formal education);
- (vi) ~~Section 45 (district Candidates Committee);~~ and
- (vii) Section 47 (property).

722 Pre-ordination Training.

(2) In the case of each person who is recommended by the ~~Ministerial Candidates Selection Committee~~ **for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation** for acceptance as a

56. Candidating for Ministry – Standing Order amendments

candidate the Connexional Team member responsible for pre-ordination training shall ensure that any training recommendations made by the ~~district Candidates Committee~~ or the Selection Committee are reviewed by a connexional allocations panel in the discharge of its responsibilities under clause (3) below.

730 Ministerial Transfer between Churches.

... (2) (a) Persons ordained to the ministry of word and sacraments in other conferences or other Christian churches, ordained deacons of the United Methodist Church or of a church with a three-fold order of ministry and officers of the Salvation Army who wish to be admitted into Full Connexion with the Conference as presbyters shall apply in writing to the President, by the date annually determined by the Ministerial Candidates Selection **and Probationers Oversight** Committee, and the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf shall arrange for the application to be considered as set out in the following clauses.

(b) Ordained deacons of other conferences or Christian churches or officers of the Salvation Army who wish to be admitted as deacons in Full Connexion with the Conference shall apply in writing to the President, by the date annually determined by the Ministerial Candidates Selection **and Probationers Oversight** Committee, and the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf shall arrange for the application to be considered as set out in the following clauses.

(3) So far as judged desirable, in each case, by the Ministerial Candidates Selection **and Probationers Oversight** Committee, the requirements of clauses ~~(4)-(7)~~ and ~~(5) (8)~~ of Standing Order ~~710~~ **714** shall apply as if the applicant were a candidate offering for the presbyterate or the diaconate. ...

.....

(5) Subject to clause (5B) below the Team member shall also:

- (i) ~~require the applicant, not later than the date determined by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committees, to complete and return to the Team member the medical questionnaire provided for that purpose, for consideration and report by a doctor specified by the Team member in consultation with the medical committee appointed by the Methodist Council;~~
- (ii) appoint and obtain a report from a connexional assessor, who shall meet the applicant and make such other enquiries as to the applicant's effectiveness in ministry as he or she thinks fit;

56. Candidating for Ministry – Standing Order amendments

- (iii) obtain a ‘fitness to minister’ assessment covering both physical and psychological wellbeing conducted by a provider of occupational health services.

(5A) The results of this assessment shall be disclosed to the Ministerial Candidates Selection Committee only after it has made its recommendation. The medical committee of the Methodist Council shall be consulted if the recommendation of the ‘fitness’ assessor contradicts a ‘recommended’ or ‘conditionally recommended’ report from the committee.

(5B) In the case of an applicant who is recognised and regarded as a presbyter or a deacon under clause 43(b), 44(b), 45(a) or 45A(a) of the Deed of Union the requirements of clauses (4) and (5) above shall apply only to the extent determined by the Ministerial Candidates Selection **and Probationers Oversight** Committee.

(6) The application shall be considered by the Ministerial Candidates Selection Committee **for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation**, meeting specially, if necessary, for the purpose. Clauses ~~(1) (2) to (9) (4) and (1) to (7)~~ of Standing Orders ~~713 714 and 715 respectively, and the whole of Standing Order 717~~ shall apply with any necessary modifications and, in particular, substituting ‘applicant’ for ‘candidate’ throughout, adapting clause (3) in the light of clause 5(iii) above, and adapting clause (9) **(5) of Standing Order 715** as set out in clause (7) below.

.....

(8)

- (ii) the Stationing Committee has approved outline provisions for the stationing of the minister including proposals about how she or he will exercise his or her ministry and the terms and conditions of service under which she or he will serve, and the Selection Committee **for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation** is satisfied that the applicant is willing and able to fulfil them.

(10) The applicant may, by notice in writing to the appropriate Team member responsible for candidates for the presbyterate or the diaconate, apply for a review of the recommendation of the committee, specifying the grounds of appeal. The notice shall be given so as to reach the Team member within fourteen days of notification in writing to the applicant of the decision of the committee. The appeal shall be dealt with under Standing Order ~~715 718~~(2) to (9) **(8)** except that there shall be no other appellant than the applicant.

.....

56. Candidating for Ministry – Standing Order amendments

(13) (a) If the Ministerial Candidates Selection Committee **for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation** recommends that an application be accepted

(14) The Presbyteral Session of the Conference and the Conference Diaconal Committee shall consider the reports received from the Ministerial Candidates Selection Committee **for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation** and (if applicable) the Appeal Committee on all applications for transfer under this Standing Order and make recommendations

731 Former Ministers of other Churches applying to be received into Full Connexion.

(2) Where such a person applies to be received into Full Connexion then the procedures of Standing Order 730 shall apply with the following variations:

- (i) The Ministerial Candidates Selection Committee **for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation** shall inquire into the reasons why the applicant is no longer regarded as a presbyteral minister or deacon, and shall be satisfied that, if he or she had been applying for reinstatement under Standing Order 761, the application would have been granted.

.....

- (iii) shall in no case be omitted, unless for good reason, stated in the Selection Committee's report **of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation** to the Conference.

732 Persons Recognised and Regarded as Presbyters or Deacons.

(3).....

(d) and in either case by the date annually determined by the Ministerial Candidates Selection **and Probationers Oversight** Committee under Standing Order 730(2)(a) or (b), as applicable.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

56/1. The Conference receives the Report.

56/2. The Conference amends Standing Orders as set out above.

57. Oversight and Trusteeship

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler Secretary of the Conference soc@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

Section A: Introduction

1. “The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God’s love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.” So begins the Our Calling statement which the Conference developed from 1996 to 2004 and reaffirmed as the strategic driver of the Church’s mission at the 2021 Conference. This report is the latest in a series of reports of work which is designed to enable the Church to be more effective in fulfilling Our Calling through the streamlining and repurposing of our governance structures.
2. Discussions about the best configuration of the Church’s oversight and trusteeship structure have occupied the Conference (and indeed the Council, the Connexional Leaders’ Forum (CLF) and the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC)) for many years, but the current series began in earnest in 2017. That year the report of the triennial Statistics for Mission acted as a catalyst for conversations about how best to use our resources and organise ourselves. The 2018 Conference received a discussion paper entitled ‘Reaffirming *Our Calling*: the future call of the Methodist Church’. In 2019, the Conference received a report which outlined developments in ‘Reaffirming *Our Calling*’ and reported that ‘The CLF and the Council have engaged in fruitful conversations around oversight and trusteeship, considering structures with the aim of providing greater support; enabling ministry, mission and broader strategic thinking; and promoting better coordination. Questions were considered including: What can most effectively be provided by Circuits, Districts or the Connexional Team? What of our structures and patterns of oversight do we need to keep or lay aside, and why?’ The report went on to promise that ‘This conversation will continue at the 2019 Conference as similar questions are asked with a view to ensuring that Methodist oversight structures are as effective and supportive as possible.’
3. The 2019 Conference therefore engaged in workshops around those questions and the fruit of those discussions was fed back to the CLF and the Council.
4. The 2020 Conference received the report, ‘Reaffirming *Our Calling*: Oversight and Trusteeship’. That report included the identification of five ‘in principle’ issues that needed to be considered (and which have been borne in mind throughout subsequent stages of the work) and three areas where change seemed most to be needed – the trusteeship of local churches, the trusteeship and governance of the Connexion, and the structure and leadership of Districts.

57. Oversight and Trusteeship

5. That work was taken forward by a group which the 2020 Conference directed the Secretary to convene and which reported to the 2021 Conference. The Conference received the report, reaffirmed that Our Calling is the 'primary strategic driver for the Church's work', and directed that work be done by the Law and Polity Committee on the proposals for a Connexional Council, and by the SRC on the 'constitution, function and inter-relatedness of all connexional committees'. The Conference also directed the Council to establish a group to review the size of the Conference, resolved that more work be done in order that proposals on the reconfiguration of Districts could be brought to the Council, and resolved that the minimum size of a Local Church be raised to 12, offering models for the reorganisation of multiple worshipping communities into one society.
6. The 2022 Conference received a report on the constitution of the Conference from 2024, directing that its size be reduced from that date to 225 but referring to the Council the detail of how seats should be distributed. It also submitted a Special Resolution concerning the establishment of the Connexional Council to the Synods, agreed to the establishment of a Nominations Committee and directed the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group (OTTG) to take forward the aspects of the work that were not yet complete. It declined to receive the section of the report on reconfiguration of District boundaries.
7. As is clear from that partial summary, this has been a long and complicated piece of work with the Conference refining its intentions over the past six years. However, as has been noted many times before, the work on Oversight and Trusteeship has sought throughout to address two issues. One is the regulatory framework in which all charities are required to operate in the 21st century which has changed since the Methodist Church Act (1976) and which led to the Conference being registered as the charity trustee body in 2009. The other is the numerical decline which the Methodist Church in Britain has experienced, effectively since Union in 1932 but acutely in the last two decades and highlighted by the 2017 Statistics for Mission report. In broad terms, membership has approximately halved in number since the beginning of this century.
8. Driven as it has been by the desire to see the Church grow, the work on Oversight and Trusteeship cannot be (and was never intended to be) divorced from other significant pieces of work which the Conference has mandated in recent years. The reports on this work need to be read, therefore, in conjunction with the Evangelism and Growth strategy, particularly with regard to the arrangement in Local Churches, and with the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Strategy, particularly in relation to the work on nominations and discernment for leadership.

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9. The Oversight and Trusteeship project, then, has been an ambitious piece of work which has looked to reduce the burden of governance in all parts of the Church's life and to make the best use of increasingly limited resources, particularly of willing lay people who give their time and energy generously. Throughout, the interconnectedness of the Connexion's life has been recognised, so that the Conference, rather than being asked to receive separate reports on, say, the constitution of the Conference or the trusteeship of Local Churches, has been offered the work as a whole. Wishing to ensure the continuance of that practice, the 2022 Conference established the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group with a brief to complete three areas of work that remained unfinished from the 2021 report (the establishment of a Connexional Council, the revision of Connexional Committees, and the review of the provision for senior District roles), to review the Connexional Leaders' Forum, to consider questions of oversight in relation to Connexional Committees, and to consider the reports from those working on other resolutions to ensure comprehensive and coherent proposals. To that end, the resolutions of the 2022 Conference are set out below with, for ease of reference, an indication of where in this report or elsewhere in the Agenda the relevant report is to be found.

57. Oversight and Trusteeship

10. Resolutions adopted by the 2022 Conference.

| Resolution as adopted by the Conference | Action |
|---|--|
| 44/1. The Conference received sections A and B of the Report. | The Council continues to use the objectives, and the Connexional Team reports to the Council under those headings. |
| <p>Section C – The Constitution of the Conference (pages 470-480)</p> <p>44/2. The Conference received section C of the Report.</p> | |
| 44/3. The Conference resolved that, from the Conference of 2024, the total voting membership of the Conference shall be 225. The Conference directed the Methodist Council, in collaboration with the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee, to determine the distribution of seats and directed the Law and Polity Committee to bring draft Standing Orders to the 2023 Conference. The Conference further directed that the proportion of members of the Conference elected by the Synods shall not be less than 70%. | The Council has considered this and reports on it elsewhere in the Conference Agenda. |
| 44/4. The Conference adopted the ways of working set out in this report, with effect from the 2024 Conference. | |
| 44/5. WITHDRAWN | |

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| Resolution as adopted by the Conference | Action |
|--|--|
| <p>Section D The Connexional Council (pages 481 – 492)</p> <p>44/6. The Conference received section D of the report.</p> <p>(Special Resolution)</p> <p>44/7. The Conference amended paragraphs 1, 18 and 21 and adopted a new Section 9A comprising paragraphs 37A, 37B and 37C of the Deed of Union as set out in this report, and, in accordance with Standing Order 122(3) and 126(1)(d), directed that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) consultation on this resolution shall be with the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee who may approve or disapprove; and that b) this resolution shall be submitted for confirmation at the Conference of 2023 together with a report of the opinions of the bodies consulted, and such amendments as are confirmed shall take effect from a date specified by that Conference. | <p>This was submitted to Synods with a briefing note and is reported below.</p> |
| <p>Section E Connexional Committees (pages 492-502)</p> <p>44/8. The Conference received Section E of the report.</p> | |
| <p>44/9. The Conference directed the Secretary of the Conference to work with the co-chairs of the JDS Committee, the Chair of the SRC, the Youth President and two other persons to oversee a robust open recruitment process for an interim Nominations Committee and to bring nominations to the Council in October 2022.</p> | <p>A small group met to work on the process for this, and to establish an open recruitment process for the interim nominations committee (INC) which was appointed by the Council. Progress made by the INC is reported below.</p> |

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| Resolution as adopted by the Conference | Action |
|---|---|
| 44/10. The Conference directed the Council to appoint an interim Nominations Committee to serve until the 2023 Conference. | See 44/9. |
| <p>Section F District Reviews (pages 503-514) (order paper pages 25-29,47)</p> <p>44/11. DECLINED 44/12. WITHDRAWN 44/13. WITHDRAWN 44/14. WITHDRAWN 44/11A. The Conference received the Report. [supplementary update report]</p> | There was a survey undertaken with members of the Conference, as well as Zoom sessions to consider further the debate held at the Conference. The Council and the CLF have also discussed it. The Council resolved not to bring any further general recommendations for the Connexion as a whole at this stage. |
| <p>Section G The Local Church (pages 514-516)</p> <p>44/15. The Conference received Section G of the Report.</p> | |
| 44/16. The Conference directed the Faith and Order and Law and Polity committees to consider the issues involved in establishing and operating an online church, and to report to the Conference of 2023 together with any recommendations for any necessary amendments to the Deed of Union and Standing Orders. | A joint report from the Faith and Order and Law and Polity Committees is found elsewhere in the Agenda. |
| <p>Section H Discernment Panel (pages 516-518)</p> <p>44/17. The Conference received Section H of the Report and directed the Ministries Committee to continue its work on processes of discernment for senior roles and to report to the 2023 Conference.</p> | This is reported on in the Ministries Committee section of the Methodist Council report, elsewhere in the Agenda. |
| <p>Section I Conclusion (pages 518-520)</p> <p>44/18. The Conference received Section I of the report.</p> | |

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| Resolution as adopted by the Conference | Action |
|---|---|
| <p>44/19. The Conference delegated to the Council the appointment of an Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group to undertake the work referred to in the following resolutions, consulting and delegating as appropriate to progress the work as far as possible, including by bringing enabling or amending provisions in CPD.</p> | <p>The Council appointed the group in October 2022, and this constitutes its report to the Conference.</p> |
| <p>44/20. The Conference directed the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group to complete the outstanding work in connection with the following resolutions of the Conference 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) 30/6 (establishing a Connexional Council as a connexional trustee body and in replacement of the Methodist Council and Strategy and Resources Committee); b) 30/7 (revision of Connexional Committees, including in connection with the question of oversight set out in resolution 44/21 below); c) 30/10 (review of SO 426 and provisions for senior District roles, taking note of the Faith and Order Committee's work regarding the nature of a District Chair). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) This relates to resolution 44/7 above and is reported on below. b) This is reported on below. c) In the light of the 2022 Conference's decisions about Districts, the Faith and Order Committee is proposing delaying reporting on the role of a Chair until 2024. |

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| Resolution as adopted by the Conference | Action |
|--|--|
| <p>44/21. The Conference directed the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group, in consultation with the Faith and Order and Law and Polity committees, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) review the Connexional Leadership Forum's membership, responsibilities, and ways of working as raised in paragraphs 69 and 70 of section D of this report; <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) consider the questions of the oversight exercised by the Conference which are raised in Section E of this report, and to review further proposals relating to the committee structure in the light of their consideration. | <p>See Section F below concerning the Connexional Leaders' Forum and comment on reporting lines in paragraph 30.</p> |
| <p>44/22 The Conference directed the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group to draft a constitution and terms of reference for the Nominations Committee and to work with the Law and Polity Committee to bring draft Standing Orders to the 2023 Conference.</p> | <p>The Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group has considered draft terms of reference which are reflected in the draft Standing Order that is also provided in the relevant section below.</p> |
| <p>44/23 The Conference directed the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group to monitor, receive and consider all the reports from those working on the resolutions passed by the Conference in connection with this report to ensure that future proposals are comprehensive and coherent, and to bring a full report with recommendations to the 2023 Conference.</p> | |

11. The Council, at its October 2022 meeting, appointed the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group as follows;

The Secretary of the Conference (convener):
 The Connexional Secretary:
 Two representatives of the SRC:

The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler
 Mr Doug Swanney
 Dr Daleep Mukarji
 Mrs Anne Bolton

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Two representatives of the Law and Polity Committee:

The Revd Dr James N Tebbutt
Mrs Susan Howdle

Two representatives of the Faith and Order Committee:

The Revd Mark Rowland
The Revd Dr David M Chapman
The Revd Leslie M Newton

A District Chair:

Two lay people who are members of their DPC:

Mr David Pickles
Ms Sandie Smith

The OTTG met residentially in January 2023 (at which meeting and with the Council's permission, the Revd Rachel Parkinson attended in place of the Revd Leslie Newton). It then met online in March 2023, and undertook work outside of the meetings by electronic consultation.

***RESOLUTION

57/1. The Conference receives Section A of the Report.

Section B: District Reconfiguration

12. The 2022 Conference declined to receive the section of the Oversight and Trusteeship report which proposed the reconfiguration of Districts and their boundaries. The OTTG notes that the Methodist Council has adopted a clear line that it should not seek at present to instigate any general or connexion-wide processes under Standing Order 401(2), but that it encourages the conversations in regions to continue and, under that Standing Order, welcomes proposals for change from groups of Districts.
13. The Conference therefore will be asked to consider a recommendation from the Council for the creation of a new District in North West England.

***RESOLUTION

57/2. The Conference receives Section B of the Report.

Section C: The Connexional Council

14. One of the proposals that has been developed and refined over the last four years has been the proposal for a Connexional Council. Whilst the detail of this proposal (and indeed the suggested name of the body) has been subject to discussion and refinement over the last few years, two points have been central

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and consistently recognised. The first is that the Conference as a gathering of 306 (or even 225) persons is too large a body to exercise charity trusteeship as that is now understood, viz. 'The general control and management of the administration of the charity.' The second is that the Methodist Council as it currently exists is not adequately constituted to exercise such 'control and management' and that were a body effectively to do that, there would no longer be a need for the Strategy and Resources Committee. The Conference of 2021 therefore agreed in principle to the establishment of the Connexional Council, recognising that this would require a change to the Deed of Union, and this was further agreed at the Conference of 2022.

15. Therefore, under the terms of Standing Orders 122(3) and 126(1)(d), the 2022 Conference agreed to submit the following Special Resolution to the Synods and to the Law and Polity Committee concerning the establishment of the Connexional Council:

44/7. The Conference amends paragraphs 1, 18 and 21 and adopts a new Section 9A comprising paragraphs 37A, 37B and 37C of the Deed of Union as set out in this report, and, in accordance with Standing Orders 122(3) and 126(1)(d), directs that

- a) consultation on this resolution shall be with the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee who may approve or disapprove; and that*
- b) this resolution shall be submitted for confirmation at the Conference of 2023 together with a report of the opinions of the bodies consulted, and such amendments as are confirmed shall take effect from a date specified by that Conference.*

The voting has been recorded as follows:

| Synod | Present | For | Against |
|----------------------------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
| Wales Synod Cymru | 100 | 95 | 2 |
| Birmingham | 116 | 85 | 22 |
| Bolton & Rochdale | 57 | 45 | 9 |
| Bristol | 69 | 61 | 4 |
| Cumbria | 54 | 43 | 5 |
| Channel Islands | 35 | 35 | 0 |
| Chester & Stoke-on-Trent | 85 | 82 | 1 |
| Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly | 85 | 75 | 5 |

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| Synod | Present | For | Against |
|-------------------------------------|---------|-----|---------|
| Darlington | 70 | 54 | 11 |
| East Anglia | 109 | 61 | 46 |
| Isle of Man | 38 | 37 | 1 |
| Lincolnshire | 71 | 63 | 1 |
| Liverpool | 41 | 40 | 0 |
| Manchester & Stockport | 73 | 59 | 7 |
| Newcastle Upon Tyne | 113 | 68 | 35 |
| Lancashire | 57 | 36 | 12 |
| Nottingham & Derby | 109 | 78 | 24 |
| Northampton | 121 | 118 | 1 |
| Plymouth & Exeter | 89 | 70 | 15 |
| Sheffield | 67 | 56 | 4 |
| Southampton | 103 | 43 | 60 |
| Yorkshire West | 109 | 107 | 2 |
| Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury | 85 | 85 | 0 |
| Yorkshire North and East | 110 | 84 | 2 |
| Scotland | 44 | 44 | 0 |
| Shetland | 23 | 23 | 0 |
| Bedfordshire, Essex & Hertfordshire | 87 | 74 | 12 |
| London District | 170 | 136 | 20 |
| South East | 123 | 95 | 5 |
| Law and Polity Committee | 13 | 13 | 0 |

16. The procedure for considering amendments to the Deed of Union (under the Standing Orders referred to in the previous paragraph) does not require or invite comments to be made or for Synod discussions to be summarised and reported. However, the OTTG is aware of two inter-related concerns that were expressed about the effect of the proposed change to the Deed in some but not all Synods. One was that the Connexional Council might exercise its powers to the detriment of the authority of the Conference, and the other was that something of the representative nature of the Church's government will be lost when the Connexional Council comes into being as a body of only 18 to 22 persons.

17. Both issues were considered by the OTTG, its predecessors, and the Law and Polity Committee during the preparation of the draft changes to the Deed. Counsel's opinion was obtained, as reported to the 2022 Conference (Report 44, Oversight and Trusteeship, paragraph 38). The OTTG has been aware of the Faith and Order Committee's 2021 report on Oversight and Trusteeship, recognising in particular that the process of appointment to the new body will be critical in ensuring that the Connexional Council is 'representative of the life of the Church and properly equipped to fulfil its functions'. The work to create the Nominations Committee was brought to the 2022 Conference precisely to address this point. Furthermore, the OTTG would also note that the changes to the Deed have been drafted in such a way (and, again, approved by Counsel) to ensure that the government and discipline of the Methodist Church remain with the Conference as its governing body, as set out in the Deed of Union amendments, and that the Conference will clearly continue to be constituted as a body that is representative of the whole Methodist Church.
18. In the light of this, the Conference is invited to confirm the following changes to the Deed of Union:

1 Particular Expressions. In this Deed, unless the context otherwise requires

(xA) 'the Connexional Council' means the body, so named, constituted under clause 37A;
~~(xA) (xB) 'the Convocation' means the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order, as constituted by Standing Orders;~~

18 General: Responsibilities. (a) The government and discipline of the Methodist Church and the management and administration of its affairs shall be vested in the Conference, and the Conference shall have and may exercise and shall perform all the powers, authorities, rights and duties necessary or desirable in its discretion **to fulfil its functions as the governing body of the Methodist Church, but not in such a way as to prevent or inhibit the members of the Connexional Council from or in performing their duties as its trustees.** ~~for such government, discipline, management and administration; and without prejudice to and not so as to limit or restrict in any way the general powers, authorities, rights and duties conferred or imposed by this clause or any powers, authorities, rights or duties confirmed or imposed by any other clause of this Deed upon the Conference it is hereby expressly declared that until the Conference otherwise resolves the~~

(b) **Without prejudice to the generality of sub-clause (a)** the Conference shall **in particular** have **final authority over:**

- (i) **doctrine, including its powers under section 3(2) of the 1976 Act;**
- (ii) **legislation, in accordance with clause 19, provided that Standing Orders may**

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confer on the Connexional Council the power to amend, supplement or revoke the legislation of the Conference, pending the next meeting of the Conference, if and only if that becomes necessary in order to meet legal requirements or to avoid infringement of the Methodist constitution;

(iii) connexional mission and policy;

(iv) connexional polity;

(v) the formation, admission and discipline of ministers, officers and members;

(vi) the stationing of ministers and probationers, in accordance with clause 20, subject to the powers of the President under clause 29;

(vii) the connexional budget and allocation of district contributions, to the extent and in the manner determined by Standing Orders.

(c) ~~The Conference shall have and may also exercise and shall perform the particular powers, authorities, rights and duties specified in clauses 19, 20 and 21 below.~~

21 Other Particular Powers. The Conference shall have power at its discretion, ***but not so as to prevent or inhibit the members of the Connexional Council from or in performing their duties as the trustees of the Methodist Church:***

- (i) to continue or found or authorise the founding of connexional funds or institutions for the promulgation of the Gospel at home and abroad, for assistance to Circuits or Local Churches or for the benefit of retired and superannuated ministers or the widows, widowers or children ***spouses, civil partners or dependants*** of deceased ministers or for other objects and purposes of or in connection with the Methodist Church ~~and to direct the application and management thereof and to approve any scheme for the amalgamation of any such funds or institutions, whether founded before or after the date of this Deed, and whether belonging to or connected with any of the said Churches or denominations existing at the date of union or to the Methodist Church and for the transfer in connection with any such amalgamation of any of such funds from the existing trustees or other persons having the legal control thereof to the trustees of any other of such funds or institutions;~~
- (ii) ~~to continue or establish such printing or publishing offices carried on or to be carried on by or on behalf of or in connection with the Methodist Church (hereinafter referred to as 'Book Rooms') as the Conference thinks fit;~~
- (iii) ~~to manage all matters connected with the Book Rooms and publications, connexional property, missions, colleges and schools of the Methodist Church;~~
- (iv) to elect committees for the management of the various connexional institutions; provided that the election of any such committee is not in contravention of any provision of any trust deed relating to the relevant institution;

- (v) to appoint boards and committees for the despatch of connexional business or for the exercise of any of the powers or duties of the Conference during or in the interval between its sittings, in such numbers and with such terms of reference, membership, powers and duties as the Conference thinks fit;
- (vi) to appoint such treasurers, secretaries, stewards, editors and other officers of connexional committees, funds or institutions as the Conference thinks fit and to specify their powers, duties and terms of office;
- (vii) to appoint such representatives or delegates as the Conference thinks fit to act for and represent the Conference;
- (viii) to delegate to any officer of the Conference or to any board, committee, officer, representative or delegate appointed in exercise of the powers conferred by this clause all or any of the powers of the Conference including, if the Conference thinks fit, power to sub-delegate any power of the Conference so delegated.

Section 9A. The Connexional Council

37A Constitution. (a) *There shall at all times be a Connexional Council, constituted as follows:*

- (i) *the President and Vice-President of the Conference;*
- (ii) *the Secretary of the Conference;*
- (iii) *other members of the council as prescribed by Standing Orders, which shall include a chair of the council.*

(b) The members of the council under head (a)(iii) shall be members of the Methodist Church with relevant skills and experience to oversee its connexional administration and shall be appointed by the Conference. Provision shall be made by Standing Orders for their appointment, normal period of service and possible variations in that period for good cause.

37B Responsibilities. *The members of the Connexional Council shall, without derogation from the position, authority and powers of the Conference as governing body, have the general control and management of the connexional administration of the Methodist Church, and shall accordingly be its trustees.*

37C Particular Powers. (a) *The provisions of sub-clauses (b) and (c) of this clause are without prejudice to the generality of clause 37B.*

- (b) *The Connexional Council shall have exclusive authority over:*
 - (i) *the direction and management of the persons stationed, appointed or employed, whole time or part time, to carry out connexional duties as a 'team', or by some other title, under Standing Orders;*

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- (ii) *all matters relating to or arising out of the employment of persons by connexional bodies;*
- (iii) *compliance with legal requirements affecting the conduct of connexional bodies, including requirements under charity law or regulation or the law of trusts or as to data protection, safeguarding children, vulnerable adults and others, or health and safety;*
- (iv) *recommendation to the Conference of legislation or guidance affecting Districts, Circuits or Local Churches to be adopted with respect to the subject-matter of head (ii) or (iii) above.*

(c) The Connexional Council shall, except on subjects assigned for this purpose by Standing Order to other bodies, formulate and analyse connexional policy options for presentation to the Conference with the council's appraisal and recommendations.

(d) The Connexional Council shall have such further powers, responsibilities and functions as may from time to time be delegated to it by the Conference in Standing Orders or by other means.

Amendments to the Model Trusts

19. With the proposed new relationship of the Conference to the Connexional Council as the trustee body, as well as the replacement for the Methodist Council, amendments are needed to the Model Trusts. The proposed changes are being brought to the Conference this year, as they will be subject to a special resolution and will need to come back for final approval in 2024 in time for the intended start date of 1 September 2024.
20. The principles upon which the proposed amendments below are based are these:

A. The creation of the Connexional Council

21. Generally, the Model Trust provisions under which powers and responsibilities are currently given to the Methodist Council should be amended by replacing references to the Methodist Council with references to the Connexional Council. This is because these functions, which have hitherto been exercised by the Methodist Council, are (as the text proposed to be amended in the current wording of the item in '1 Interpretation' shown in paragraph 26 below) "for the despatch of connexional business in relation to .. property affairs". These functions are also precisely of the type which are now generally intended to be exercised by the Connexional Council as the new trustee body, as part of the Connexional Council's "general control and management of the connexional administration of the Methodist Church" (clause 37B of the Deed of Union, which forms part of the special resolution which the Conference is being asked to confirm this year).

Therefore, under '1 Interpretation' in paragraph 26 below, the simple replacement of 'Methodist Council' with 'Connexional Council' is required. (As the Interpretation section lists all the items in alphabetical order, it should also be understood that in editing CPD this item will be moved further up the list, but it was not thought necessary to show the relevant deletion and insertion here.)

22. The list which then follows in A in paragraph 26 below reflects the same approach, in that those functions which have been regarded until now as appropriate for the Methodist Council to exercise in its general connexional responsibilities should pass to the Connexional Council. Whilst it is accepted that many of the property-related functions of the Connexional Council will in fact need to be exercised by committees operating under the aegis of the council, particularly the Resourcing Committee, following usual practice it is preferable not to enshrine such committees by name within the Model Trusts (because of the more complex requirements in the Model Trusts for amending such titles when necessary). The provision as to delegation by the Connexional Council within the definition below (paragraph 1) should generally suffice to enable such committees to be created and function, always subject to the authority and responsibility of the Connexional Council. However, it is thought that to be absolutely clear about the breadth of the power of delegation, a slight amendment should be included in the definition of the Connexional Council (to include "*or other body of persons*", as set out below).

B. The continuing powers of the Conference in relation to the Model Trusts

23. There are then the provisions in the Model Trusts under which the Conference itself has powers and functions. Generally speaking, these deal with matters which, under the principles reflected in the Deed of Union provisions being brought for confirmation to this Conference, are ones over which the Conference has final authority, in particular as to the formulation of connexional mission, policy and polity. Therefore, in the proposals below, the references to the Conference remain unaltered, with one exception. If it appears in due course that it will be more convenient or appropriate for certain of these functions to be exercised by the Connexional Council, this can and should be achieved by explicit delegation by the Conference.
24. The exception where a change is proposed relates to the category of Conference property. (This is a small group of properties, such as The New Room, Bristol and Westminster Central Hall, as opposed to 'connexional property' which would include, for instance, all manses occupied by ministers in the Connexional Team.) Currently, the managing trustees of Conference property are appointed directly by the Conference. It is proposed that, as for connexional property, the Connexional Council shall be the managing trustees of Conference property.

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Property Division and Property Secretary in the Model Trusts

25. One final minor point: a close reading of the Model Trusts shows that there are still outdated references to the Property Division, and the Property Secretary. This is because the Model Trusts operate under the Methodist Church Act 1976 (indeed are technically a Schedule to the Act), and the Act, which the Conference does not have power to amend, uses that terminology. Therefore, the language in the Model Trusts remains intact, but then Standing Orders spell out how it is 'translated' into current arrangements.
26. The proposed amendments, based upon the principles above, are set out below. The proposed changes from 'Methodist Council' to 'Connexional Council' are listed in A below, and the changes in relation to Conference property in B.

A Connexional Council

1 Interpretation In this Schedule [*i.e. the Model Trusts*], unless the subject or context otherwise requires –

'~~Methodist Council~~' **Connexional Council** means the body of persons of that name for the time being constituted by the Conference under the Deed of Union and Standing Orders for the despatch of connexional business in relation to (inter alia) property affairs or other the body of persons constituted for the time being under Standing Orders to discharge the responsibilities of the Property Division, and includes, where appropriate, any person or persons **or other body of persons** to whom any functions of such body under any provision of this Schedule may have been delegated by such body in accordance with any Standing Order made pursuant to paragraph 11 of this Schedule, and 'board of the Property Division' has the same meaning;

Replace "Methodist Council" by "Connexional Council" in the following instances:

3(2)(a)

3(3)

4(1)

5(2)

6(1)

6(2)

8(3)

11 (title and text)

11A

18(1)

19(2)

19(3)

21A(c)
26(1)

B Connexional and Conference property

1. Interpretation

'Conference trustees' means, in relation to any Conference property or any part of such property, **the Connexional Council** the persons or body of persons, being members of the Church, annually appointed by the Conference to be the managing trustees of such property or part property;

'Connexional Trustees' means, in relation to any Connexional property or any part of such property, **the Connexional Council** the person or persons for the time being constituting, in accordance with Standing Orders, the Connexional Trustees for that property or part property;

2. (1) [specifying who are the managing trustees]

- (d) Connexional property: the Connexional **Council** Trustees;
- (dA) Conference property: the **Connexional Council** Conference Trustees;

The Connexional Council: its constitution and terms of reference.

27. If the Conference agrees that the changes to the Deed of Union take effect from 1 September 2024, nominations for membership of the Connexional Council will be presented to the 2024 Conference. In order for that to happen, the Conference is asked now to agree on how the Connexional Council is to be constituted. The Conference is therefore asked to adopt the proposed Standing Order as set out below.

(1) (a) The Connexional Council constituted by clause 37A of the Deed of Union shall be appointed annually by the Conference and shall consist of:

- (i) the President and Vice-President of the Conference as required by clause 37A;**
- (ii) the Secretary of the Conference as similarly required;**
- (iii) the chair of the council appointed in accordance with clause (2)(a) below;**
- (iv) the chair or deputy chair of the Mission Committee;**
- (v) the chair or deputy chair of the Ministries Committee;**
- (vi) the chair or deputy chair of the Resourcing Committee;**
- (vii) up to fifteen other persons appointed in accordance with clause (2)(b) below.**

(b) The membership of the council shall comprise 18 to 22 persons in total.

(c) The members of the council shall all be members of the Methodist Church.

(d) In addition, the Assistant Secretary of the Conference, the Connexional Secretary and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice shall attend and have the right to speak but not vote. From time to time, in order to assist the council in dealing

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effectively with its business, other persons whose attendance is appropriate may also be invited to be present and speak but not to vote, in accordance with such terms of reference as the Conference may approve for the Connexional Council.

(2) (a) The chair of the council shall be appointed upon nomination by the Nominations Committee normally to serve, subject to the final sentence of this clause, for a period of four years and may be appointed for a further period of up to two years. The Nominations Committee shall also nominate for appointment by the Conference, from the members appointed under head (1)(vii) above, a deputy chair, who may hold office during the period of appointment under sub-clause (b) below. The provisions of Standing Order 316 shall apply to these appointments, with the officer referred to in clause (2) of that Standing Order being the Secretary of the Conference.

(b) The persons appointed under head (1)(vii) above shall be nominated by the Nominations Committee for their experience, expertise and representative roles, each person having the appropriate skills to serve on a trustee body. They shall normally serve for a period of four years and may be appointed for a further period of up to two years.

(3) The Secretary of the Conference shall be the secretary of the council and shall be responsible for preparing the agendas of the meeting, for the publication and implementation of its decisions, and for ensuring that it reports annually to the Conference and submits such other reports as are necessary to comply with legal requirements.

(4) The council shall normally meet at least six times a year, at appropriate times to enable the full participation of all those appointed to serve. Some, but not all, of these meetings may be held on-line or in hybrid form. Where urgent business requires it, the council shall have the power to make decisions electronically (by email or similar communication) between meetings.

(5) (a) If a person appointed to the council under clause (1) (iv), (v), (vi) or (vii) above resigns or ceases to be a member of the Methodist Church, the council shall have authority to appoint to its membership with immediate effect until the end of the next Conference an eligible replacement for that person.

(b) Any appointments made under this provision shall be reported by the council to the Conference.

28. Draft terms of reference for the Connexional Council

Responsibilities:

- a) The Connexional Council will be the Trustee Body of the Methodist Church in Great Britain as a charity, that is to say, the Council's members will hold the responsibilities as Trustees for the connexional work of the Methodist Church. The Church, of course, comprises Districts, Circuits, Local Churches and numerous other bodies which are and will continue to be separate charities, whether or not they are excepted from registration with the Charity Commission.

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- b) The Council will be appointed and will exercise its powers and responsibilities in accordance with the Deed of Union and Standing Orders as adopted by the Conference, and with its Terms of Reference as approved by the Conference.
- c) The Council will be accountable to the Conference which is the governing body of the Methodist Church, but the Conference shall not act in such a way as to prevent or inhibit the members of the Council from or in performing their duties as the trustees of the Methodist Church.
- d) Between the closing of any Conference and the opening of the next succeeding Conference, the expectation is that the Council will be empowered to act on behalf of the Conference in particular ways (which will be delineated in the Standing Orders), provided that such actions are not contrary to the Deed of Union or Standing Orders or any specific resolution of the Conference (cf SO 211(1)).
- e) The Council will be charged with responsibility to keep in constant review the life of the Methodist Church, to study its work and witness throughout the Connexion, to indicate what changes are necessary or what steps should be taken to make the work of the Church more effective, and, in partnership with others, to give spiritual leadership to the Church.
- f) The Connexional Council will exercise its responsibilities under the authority of the Conference which will remain the governing body of the Methodist Church. Accordingly, the Connexional Council will report annually to the Conference. The Council will generally report on all areas of its responsibilities, but in particular will bring to the notice of the Conference matters to which it believes the Conference ought to give urgent attention.
- g) The Connexional Council will implement the vision, strategies, decisions and directions set by the Conference. All this will be done to enable the Methodist Church to fulfil its calling as a Church to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission, and thus to fulfil its charitable objectives.
- h) The Connexional Council will consult and receive advice from other appropriate bodies.

Functions:

- i) The Connexional Council will exercise the general control and management of the connexional administration of the Methodist Church and report annually to the Charity Commission on the fulfilment of the Methodist Church's charitable objectives.

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- j) The Connexional Council will ensure that its activities and those of the Methodist Church in its connexional activities are subject to appropriate risk assessment and audit.
- k) The Connexional Council will be the managing trustee body of all connexional property (subject to any existing restrictions for connexional properties not presently held on the model trusts and pending the amendment of such arrangements where possible to enable the Connexional Council to become the relevant trustee body).
- l) The Connexional Council will be the trustee body of all connexional funds and have responsibility for the consolidated accounts.
- m) The Connexional Council will be responsible for the scrutiny and presentation for approval to the Conference of the financial statements and the budget for the central services of the Connexion together with the proposed allocation of district contributions.
- n) The Connexional Council will be the employing body for lay people in the Connexional Team and will make recommendations and nominations to the Conference for ministers to serve in the Connexional Team.
- o) The Connexional Council will have responsibility for the direction of the work of the Connexional Team and ensure that there is adequate supervision in place for the Secretary of the Conference and other senior members of the Team. The Council will receive regular reports from the Connexional Secretary on the work of the Team and monitor the Team's effectiveness in working towards the Conference's and the Council's objectives.
- p) Where appropriate the Connexional Council will scrutinise in detail and offer comment on reports from those bodies that are expected to report to the Conference.
- q) The Connexional Council will be responsible for ensuring the connexional work of the Methodist Church is compliant with legal requirements.
- r) The Connexional Council will formulate and analyse for impact and implications connexional policy options for presentation to the Conference.
- s) The Connexional Council will have responsibility for and receive and consider reports from the Mission, Ministries and Resourcing committees and will hold them to account, with the chairs or deputy chairs of each committee being members of the Connexional Council.

Constitution and ways of working:

- t) The Council will be constituted and work in the manner prescribed in relevant Standing Orders.

Further provisions about who may be invited periodically to attend the Council with a right to speak but not vote, will be brought to the Conference of 2024.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 57/3. The Conference receives Section C of the Report.**

Special Resolution, requiring 75% majority

- 57/4. The Conference confirms the amendments to the Deed of Union as set out in paragraph 18 and directs that they shall come into effect from 1 September 2024.**

Special Resolution, requiring 75% majority

- 57/5. The Conference amends the Model Trusts as set out in paragraph 26.**

- 57/6. The Conference adopts the Standing Order as set out in paragraph 27 to come into effect (subject to any changes adopted by the Conference of 2024) on 1 September 2024.**

- 57/7. The Conference approves the Terms of Reference for the Connexional Council as set out in paragraph 28 above.**

Section D: Connexional Committees

29. The 2022 Conference received a report indicating that further review of the connexional committees, subgroups and working groups would follow the Conference's decision in respect of the Connexional Council and that a timetable for the reorganisation of the committees would then be developed to ensure that the changes are timely and carefully managed. The OTTG has been aware of the complexity of this work and the danger of important areas of the Church's life being neglected or overlooked in the drive to streamline processes. However, it is clear that the time is ripe for a simplification of the committee structure of the Church.
30. The OTTG offers a revised plan indicating the way in which it now proposes that work on behalf of the Conference or the Council be organised. In doing so, it wishes to be clear that the relationship between committees can only partially be

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understood in terms of reporting lines. The diagram now before the Conference in the Appendix to this report aims to make clear the areas of work which will fall under the remit of the three major committees which will primarily report to the Connexional Council; it does not necessarily preclude any of those or any other committees from time to time reporting directly to the Council nor even, when justified, to the Conference. Neither is it intended to imply that an area of work necessarily requires a permanent committee to be part of the structure.

31. Whilst the OTTG suggests that every connexional committee should be subject to review, it recognises that until that work (which will take some time) is complete, for the sake of continuity some committees will need to remain in existence for a transitional period. It also recognizes that there are necessarily some committees which have a direct relationship with the Conference. The OTTG therefore recommends that the Faith & Order, Law & Polity and Safeguarding Committees report directly to the Conference along with those committees that are connected with the business of the Conference (eg, the Memorials Committee). The Nominations Committee will report to the Council and Conference as necessary. All other committees will report directly to the Connexional Council or else via one of the three major committees. At present, the assumption is that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee will report directly to the Council. In making these proposals, the OTTG is aware that further change might prove necessary and that the Conference and Connexional Council will want to keep the ways of working of the committee structure under review.
32. The work of Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) is of central importance to the life of the Church. As such, it needs both to be integrated into the missional work of the Church and to be something for which the Conference takes direct responsibility. For these reasons, the OTTG proposes that the JDS Committee report to the Council through the Mission Committee but that the Scrutiny Group report to the Conference.
33. Questions remain to be answered about the appointment of the various committees. Further work, therefore, is underway to differentiate which committees should properly be appointed by the Conference and which may be appointed by the Council, and this will be reported upon and reflected in the amended Standing Orders that will be presented to the Conference of 2024.
34. If the recommendations of this report are adopted, a number of connexional committees (and therefore several posts such as chair, secretary or convener of the associated committee) will become redundant. The OTTG is mindful that transitions need to be handled carefully and that it would not be helpful for everything to change on 1 September 2024. It therefore proposes that the SRC

bring proposals (via the continuing OTTG) to the Conference of 2024 for provision for those committees or other bodies that will be necessary for the Resourcing Committee to do its work and for other necessary functions currently undertaken by the SRC. The Mission Committee and Ministries Committee should during 2023-24 review in consultation with the OTTG what bodies are necessary for their work and bring proposals for the continuance, phasing out or adaptation of committees and subgroups to the Conferences of 2024 and/or 2025 with timelines for implementation.

35. The OTTG recognises that with these changes some longstanding and significant ministries will come to an end. Whilst there is no doubt that those who are called to serve the Church will not struggle to find opportunities to do so, it urges the Secretary of the Conference and others to ensure that all transitions are handled sensitively and that those who lay down responsibility do so knowing that they have the gratitude of the Church for all that they have done.

***RESOLUTION

57/8. The Conference receives Section D of the Report.

Section E: Nominations Committee

36. The 2022 Conference directed the establishment of a Nominations Committee, mindful of three concerns. One, in line with the JDS strategy adopted in 2021, was that the diversity of the Methodist Church should appropriately be represented in appointments, recognising that this might demand different methods of recruitment and discernment. The second, following the Faith and Order Committee's report to the 2021 Conference, was the recognition that the processes have to be rigorous and transparent for the Methodist people to have trust in the Connexional Council and other bodies. Finally, in line with the guidance from the Charity Commission included in the 2022 report on Oversight and Trusteeship, the Conference seeks assurance that those on the council have the appropriate skills.
37. Pending establishment of the Nominations Committee, including a Standing Order for it for approval by the 2023 Conference as set out below, the 2022 Conference directed that an Interim Nominations Committee ("INC") be established to bring nominations for its successor to the 2023 Conference, and established a process for the appointment of that interim committee. The OTTG regrets that the process to appoint the INC took far longer than had been hoped and is grateful to those who have served on that body for the work that has been done in a brief compass.

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38. The INC began its work following the Methodist Council in March 2023 and will bring, via the Order Paper, nominations to the Conference for its successor body (the Nominations Committee) and for the Chair of the Resourcing Committee. At this stage, it is not possible for further nominations to be brought to the 2023 Conference; if, as is proposed elsewhere in the report, the Conference determines that the Connexional Council should be brought into being from 1 September 2024, nominations would need to be brought to the 2024 Conference for immediate appointment. The OTTG therefore asks the Conference to agree that nominations for the Connexional Council be brought through the Methodist Council and that those whose names are presented to the Council in October 2023 or January 2024 be inducted and permitted to shadow the work of the Council for the remainder of that connexional year.
39. The experience of the INC in making its first nominations suggests that it would be helpful for there to be greater clarity about the process and responsibility of the Nominations Committee. It is therefore proposed that the responsible committee (through its chair) draft the necessary documentation (including a role description and person specification) and submit this to the Nominations Committee for its approval. The Nominations Committee will be responsible for authorising the recruitment process, including the members of the interview panel, which may include a member of the Nominations Committee. Following advertisement, shortlisting and interview, the chair of the interview panel will forward the name of the nominee together with a reasoned statement to the Nominations Committee for approval. The Nominations Committee will present the nomination to the Conference (or Connexional Council) as may be relevant in each case with an assurance that the process has been open, transparent and inclusive. If the Nominations Committee is concerned about any aspect of the nomination process, it will seek clarification as necessary from the interview panel.
40. The OTTG offers the following Standing Order for the Nominations Committee.

Nominations Committee

(1) The Conference shall appoint annually a Nominations Committee with the responsibility and functions set out in this Standing Order, and such other functions as from time to time the Conference shall specify.

(2) The committee shall consist of a chair and up to six other members. The members shall (subject to the need to ensure appropriate continuity and turnover) normally be appointed to serve for a maximum period of four years. The Secretary of the Conference shall act as its convener.

(3) It shall be the responsibility of the committee, acting in accordance with such terms of reference as are approved by the Conference from time to time, to ensure that the nominations which are made to the Conference or, as the case may

be, the Connexional Council for appointment to the bodies referred to below are brought as a result of processes which conform to the requirements for the body concerned (as defined in Standing Orders, its terms of reference or elsewhere) and are in accordance with the church's principles for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity as laid down in SO 336(1).

(4) The bodies referred to in clause (3) are:

- the Connexional Council*
- the Ministries Committee*
- the Mission Committee*
- the Resourcing Committee*
- the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee*

together with any other bodies for whose nominations the Conference may from time to time require the committee to take responsibility.

(5) In fulfilling its responsibilities, and acting in accordance with current best practice for recruitment to such appointments, the committee shall:

- (i) monitor and offer appropriate advice and recommendations to those responsible for the processes of approval of role descriptions for relevant appointments and of recruitment to those appointments;*
- (ii) bring to the Conference or Connexional Council, as required, the resulting nominations for appointment;*
- (iii) work with the chairs of the bodies concerned on a periodic review of those appointed to such bodies in order to ensure that the body continues to function appropriately;*
- (iv) advise the Connexional Council on matters concerned with training and self-evaluation of all those appointed to such bodies.*

(6) The committee shall report annually to the Conference on its work.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

57/9. The Conference receives Section E of the Report.

57/10. The Conference:

- a)** adopts the above Standing Order to come into effect (subject to any changes adopted by the Conference of 2024) on 1 September 2024;
- b)** resolves that a Nominations Committee constituted in accordance with its provisions shall meanwhile be appointed to exercise the committee's intended functions during the forthcoming connexional year; **c)** appoints the members of the Nominations Committee as follows: *[names to follow on the Order Paper]*

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- 57/11. The Conference directs the Nominations Committee to bring nominations for the persons to be appointed to the Connexional Council under clause (1)(a) (vii) (paragraph 27 above) to the Conference of 2024.**

Section F: The Connexional Leaders' Forum

41. The OTTG has endeavoured, in its work on the Connexional Council and committee structure, never to lose sight of the particular status of the Church in law as a charity. It recognises the importance of informed theological reflection in the life of the leadership of the Church and therefore the importance of spaces where those with responsibility can confer in a manner that enables them to listen to the Holy Spirit.
42. The Connexional Leaders' Forum as it exists under SO 230 was designed to serve that purpose. The OTTG has consulted with the CLF (in January and March 2023) to ascertain the views of the current members as to whether the present arrangement serves the needs of the Church as well as it might and whether it should be changed once the Connexional Council comes into being.
43. The CLF conversations indicated that what the current body has offered has been valued but that there has been some lack of clarity about its purpose and about who should determine its agenda. The conversations also noted the considerable overlap with the Meeting of the District Chairs and Warden of the MDO both in membership (Chairs currently constitute more than half the membership of the CLF) and agenda.
44. The CLF is not the only body that might take, or even that is charged with, responsibility for providing theological reflection in the life of the Church. For example, the President has hosted a gathering of past Presidents and Vice-Presidents; this happens occasionally and provides opportunities for the current presidency and senior members of the Connexional Team to reflect with those who have held the highest office in the Church.
45. The OTTG is therefore aware that other configurations of 'Connexional Leaders' and other ways of working might be developed to serve the Church in the future. Having considered the discussions of the CLF itself, the OTTG therefore proposes that the life of the CLF be paused with the Standing Order suspended, and that current members of the CLF be invited to a day of reflection in the 2023-24 connexional year to explore further models of enabling those with significant responsibility in the Connexion to confer and discern (without needing to make decisions) on matters relating to the calling of the Church in the present age.

***RESOLUTIONS

57/12. The Conference receives Section F of the Report.

57/13. The Conference adopts the proposal set out in paragraph 45 of the Report and accordingly suspends Standing Order 230.

Any proposals for consequential suspensions will appear on the Order Paper.

Section G: Conclusion

46. It is clear throughout this report that, whilst substantial progress has been made, a considerable amount of implementation work remains, which will not least involve significant amendments to Parts 2 and 3 of Standing Orders. The OTTG therefore recommends that it continue in being for what is expected to be one final year to bring to the Conference the outstanding work indicated in Sections D and F above.

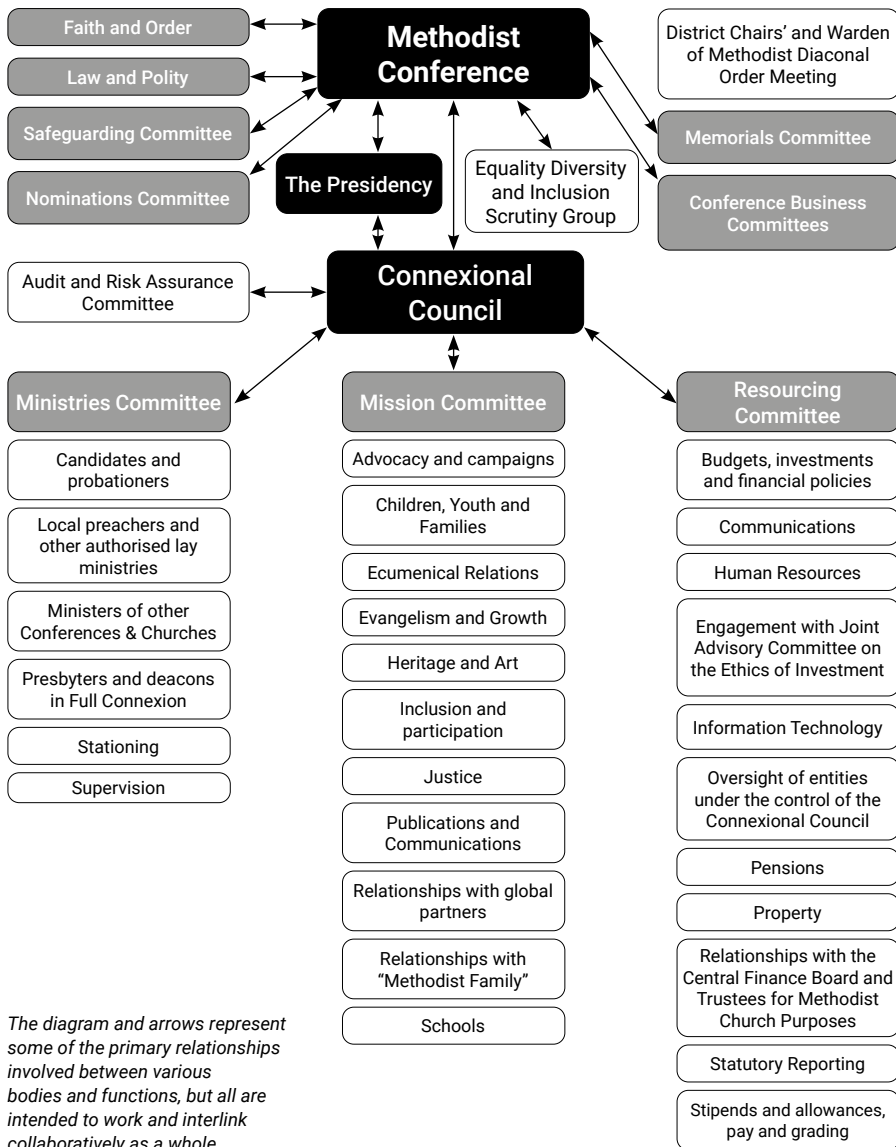
***RESOLUTIONS

57/14. The Conference receives section G of the Report.

57/15. The Conference appoints the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group (*names to be provided on the Order Paper*) to serve until the Conference of 2024 and directs it to report to the Conference of 2024 with proposals on the completion of the work detailed in Sections D and F above.

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APPENDIX



58. Proposal for a new District in North West England

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Sonia M Hicks Chair of the Council ChairCouncil@methodistchurch.org.uk |
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Background

- 1 The Bolton and Rochdale, Cumbria, Lancashire and Liverpool Districts brought a report to the January 2023 meeting of the Council, requesting that the Council initiate a consultation process with the Circuit Meetings and Synods of the four Districts concerned under the terms of SO 401. The Districts set out, in their report to the Council, the rationale for a proposal to merge into one District with effect from 1 September 2024.
- 2 The Districts in the region have a history of co-working and covenant, which has strengthened and enriched each partner. The membership in this area is dramatically smaller than when the present Districts were first conceived, and is likely to become smaller still should current trends continue. The governance burden of current structures is disproportionate to the region's size. It is challenging to fill the offices, lay appointments, and meetings.
- 3 The Districts noted that 2024 is a critical point for the Districts in the region, given the anticipated change of leadership. The new District model proposes a different way of being District. It is a collaborative matrix model where the proposed District Hubs interact with the proposed Mission Areas to provide sound governance and resourcing whilst releasing energy and personnel to support Circuits to focus on mission in their localities. The new District, to be known as the North West England District, will have a single Synod and a single DPC.
- 4 The proposal will include three District Hubs each with distinctive sub functions: Mission and Leadership, Administration and Compliance, and Ministry and Vocations. The District Chair and two District Secretaries will lead the hubs. They will provide district leadership, governance and resource collaboratively.
- 5 The larger District will still require a local expression. The Mission Areas are smaller geographical groupings of Circuits within the District, initially taking into account existing identities but moving towards different ways of gathering where appropriate. It is anticipated that there will be no more than four Mission Areas. Each will have a Mission Area lead whose primary role is to foster relationships and promote mission. They will deputize for the District Chair and hold a representative role, connecting with the wider community, ecumenical partners

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and leaders of other faiths. The Mission Area Lead role is presbyteral and will probably be part-time sitting alongside another presbyteral role. The Mission Areas will not hold governance responsibilities and so will not add a governance layer. The Mission Areas leads and district Hub leads will work collaboratively to ensure that Mission is at the heart of both loci of leadership.

- 6 The Council directed that a consultation process take place with the Circuit meetings and Synods of the participating Districts which has been undertaken.

Consultation Process

- 7 The Council appointed a scrutiny group to ensure that the proposals have been carefully set out by the regional review group and have been widely discussed both locally and at the Methodist Council.
- 8 The scrutiny group felt it was evident that there has been widespread consultation and discussions with the Districts and Circuits. Alongside this, excellent resources were produced to support this process which helped to outline the case and also to emphasise the support of the current District Chairs and leaders of synods. Much in-depth liaison, reflection and debate has been undertaken with the clear imperative of enhancing mission and the discussions held were robust, with considerable engagement with the proposals.
- 9 The report from the scrutiny group indicated that there was a substantial majority in support of the proposals and the Council is confident that there has been, and will continue to be, careful pastoral and prayerful liaison, outreach and discussion with the Circuits that were not in favour. The process was felt to be fair and equitable and that a firm proposal has been put forward and examined democratically, and the outcome is clear.
- 10 The Council received a further report from the Manchester and Stockport District. The Synod had voted, at its September 2022 meeting, not to participate in the process towards a new single District. However, when the Synod met in the spring of 2023, it considered the proposals further and resolved to ask the Council for permission to consult its Circuits on the proposal that the Manchester and Stockport District become part of the new District from September 2024. The Council has therefore directed that the Manchester and Stockport District be consulted on whether to become part of the North West England District from September 2024, and that the consultation be in a form similar to that previously undertaken in the Bolton and Rochdale, Cumbria, Lancashire and Liverpool Districts. The four Districts (Cumbria, Lancashire, Bolton and Rochdale, Liverpool) will be consulted on whether the North West England District may also include

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the Manchester and Stockport District and the Council will receive a further report by January 2024. The Conference is therefore asked to note that the resolutions presented here relate to the four Districts where the full consultation has been conducted, and that the Council will make a further report to the 2024 Conference.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 58/1. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 58/2. The Conference adopts the recommendation of the Council that the Bolton and Rochdale, Cumbria, Lancashire, and Liverpool Districts amalgamate to form the North West England District with effect from 1 September 2024.**

59. Memorials to the Conference

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| Contact name and details | The Revd Catherine Dixon Convener of the Memorials Committee memorials@methodistchurch.org.uk |
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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 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 to agree each reply, to amend it, or to agree an alternative reply (see Standing Order 133(4), printed in the Rules of Procedure on page 14 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 and the Conference will have opportunity to consider its reply to the memorial in the context of its debate on that report.

Similarly, the Conference is sometimes invited to adopt the same reply to more than one memorial. This does not imply that the Memorials Committee has not considered each memorial carefully, but merely that the memorials ask the same or very similar things of the Conference.

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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 deadlines for which can be found in the First Report of the Conference Business Committee on page 27-30 of the Agenda. 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 one other (M22) should be considered by the Conference including by the Presbyteral Session under clause 23(m) of the Deed of Union (ie, not as shared business) and that it should also be drawn to the attention of the Conference Diaconal Committee. The committee recommended that the remaining replies should be placed in the *en bloc* business of the Conference, unless the Business Committee feels that they should be debated. 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 page 15).

Members of the Conference with questions on any matter affecting memorials and the procedures described above should consult the Memorials Secretary, Catherine Dixon. 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 Methodist corporate email provision for ministers

The Scotland District Presbyteral Synod (Present: 27; Voting: 25 for, 0 against) notes the Methodist corporate email provision for ministers, namely the ministers.name@methodist.org.uk addresses, and is grateful for it. This provision allows for a professional face from Methodism when ministers are dealing with bodies outside the Church, and

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the corporate email provision should ensure that the email system used by ministers is in compliance with GDPR requirements and is suitable for the holding of confidential correspondence including meeting the standards expected around Safeguarding related matters. However, the Presbyteral Session of the Synod wishes to bring to the attention of the Conference, that at times the corporate email provision is not fit for purpose. This has included:

- On at least three occasions in this connexional year (2022/23) interruption to the email provision has occurred without prior notice.
- The system has been compromised on at least one occasion, and this has resulted in all @methodist.org.uk addresses being designated as spam for a time by major email providers.
- That there is limited storage capacity for historic emails on the system.

These issues have impacted the work of the Church in the following way – though this is not an exhaustive list:

- Property sales being delayed – and in some jurisdictions put at risk of falling through – due to not being able to send and receive documents, or such correspondence not being received due to the designation as spam.
- Impact on pastoral work, including the preparations for funerals.
- Uncertainty over the delivery of emails, with at times none being delivered, and at others some recipients receiving them and others not.
- When the @methodist.org.uk email addresses are designated as spam there is a negative impact on the reputation of the Methodist Church, both for those within the Church and also partners and bodies outside the Church.
- The general work of the Church is negatively impacted as correspondence cannot take place.

These issues are also making some users reconsider if the usage of the corporate email provision is practical, and also discourage those who do not use the corporate email provision from doing so.

The Presbyteral Session of the Synod notes that these issues are not a reflection on the system providers or their staff who have always responded promptly to issues raised by users and have resolved those issues within their control and gift. They give a high level of service within the constraints of the system they work with, and this is appreciated by users of the corporate email provision.

The Presbyteral Session of the Synod therefore requests that the Conference establishes a working group, drawn from the users of the corporate email provision, appropriate connexional officers and representatives from the system providers. The task of this working group would be to draw up the options to improve the corporate email provision in order to make it fit for purpose and meet all legal and church requirements

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– especially around GDPR, confidentiality and safeguarding – while also meeting the needs of users.

The Synod further requests that the working group report to the Conference of 2024, with costed recommendations around improving the corporate email provision.

Reply

The Conference is grateful to the Scotland District Presbyteral Synod for raising the issue of email provision for ministers.

Challenges with the existing email system have been evident for some time and work has been underway to identify a more reliable system. Initial draft proposals have been developed and the financial implications are being assessed. Whilst this work has taken longer than had been anticipated, it is now expected that a more robust email service can be implemented during the 2023/24 connexional year and therefore the burden of establishing a working group and bringing back proposals to the Conference of 2024 can be avoided.

The Conference, while accepting the principles of the memorial, recognises that work is already in progress and therefore declines the memorial.

M2 Resourcing the Church

The Bradford North (27/32) Circuit Meeting (Present: 27 Voting: unanimous) notes that the Methodist Church has stated that it seeks to be a growing, evangelistic, inclusive, justice-seeking and safe Church. The current focus on equality, dignity and inclusion training is part of this, helping us to be inclusive and to seek justice for all.

Our numbers are shrinking year on year, and we need to find ways to present the Gospel and talk about faith in ways that people can understand. Will we keep people safe and treat them equally only to make them face the trauma of closing their much-loved church building and having to look for a new home elsewhere?

We ask the Conference to place as much emphasis on helping us to grow and spread the Gospel in a way that people of today's world can understand, as they do on the other areas in the statement above; and for the resourcing, staffing and equipping to make that happen.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Bradford North Circuit Meeting for the memorial and especially for emphasising the importance of holding together the key Gospel commitments of evangelism, justice, inclusion, and growth.

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The Conference accepts this memorial, as it is deeply aligned with God for All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth (2020-2025), which seeks to expand the above commitments so that new people become disciples of Jesus Christ, faith deepens for everyone, and diverse communities and churches experience transformation.

The Conference encourages lay and ordained people alike to visit www.methodist.org/evangelism to explore the resourcing, programming, and accompaniment offered for the core areas of God for All: (1) a Methodist Way of Life and discipleship pathways; (2) evangelism training for leaders and churches; (3) leading churches into growth and transformation; and (4) starting new Christian communities, including Church at the Margins.

The Conference encourages the exploration of these commitments, as encouraged by the first five years of God for All. It also looks toward the 2024 Methodist Conference, which will consider an extension of God for All, in order to remain focused on embedding these commitments across the Connexion for the long-term.

M3 Annual Returns

The Birmingham (West) and Oldbury (5/6) Circuit Meeting (Present: 24; Voting: unanimous) notes the increasing burden on churches to provide annual returns to the Connexion. The answers to many of the questions are already submitted in the annual statement of accounts, have already been dealt with in previous years, are provided during the course of the quinquennial inspection or could be provided by the Methodist Insurance company.

We would remind the Conference and its officers that the information for these returns is mainly collected and submitted by volunteers, many of whom hold several other roles in their churches. Repetitive questions, dealing with issues which in any case are the province of the local Church Council or Circuit Meeting, sap energy and undermine the morale of our most committed members.

We therefore request:

- 1) That future annual returns only request information that the Connexion is required by law to collect;
- 2) That no information is requested which is already submitted by churches in their annual statement of accounts or through other channels;

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3) That future Conference decisions to request data are only made after an appropriate impact assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the collection of such data will assist the Connexion in our mission to bring people to Jesus.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Birmingham (West) and Oldbury Circuit Meeting for this memorial.

Standing Order 305 states that the Connexional Team is authorised by the Conference, as occasion may require, to obtain from Chairs and Superintendents such statistical returns and other information as are necessary for the business of the Team and Chairs and Superintendents shall furnish all such information in due form.

The Team has been aware over the last period that for some the process of collating and submitting information is falling to a smaller group of people, both volunteers or Superintendents, for which the Conference is grateful, and that for many this process is excessive and burdensome. At the same time there are often requests for the Team to be able to provide more detailed and nuanced information to assist with planning.

At present the Team has been carrying out a thorough review of what information is needed in the Annual Returns and is attempting to minimise this as much as is possible whilst ensuring that information which aids decisions of the Conference is provided.

This memorial draws the distinction between only asking for information that is required 'by law' and information which is not legally required but the Conference requests to see. The focus for the Annual Return needs to be those things that helps us fulfil *Our Calling* rather than only those things required by the laws of the legal jurisdiction in which the Circuit lies. Early discussions acknowledge that historically some questions are also asked to support the work of managing trustees, Circuits and Districts, rather than the Connexional Team, and therefore the purpose of some questions is being explored with others outside the Connexional Team, particularly District Property Secretaries.

The Conference would also want to point out that Annual Accounts are not submitted (nor should be) to the Connexional Team.

Given that the Conference believes that the work is already underway to reduce what is asked in the Annual Returns by using a more nuanced approach than is suggested by the Circuit, the Conference declines the Memorial.

M4 Statement of Methodist Leaders in Jerusalem

The Burnley and Pendle (21/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 34; Voting: unanimous) notes the tenth anniversary of the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and the statement

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made by Methodist Leaders who shared in the events marking this occasion. The statement can be accessed at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-worldwide/global-relationships/global-relationships-news/all-global-relationships-news/on-the-situation-of-the-palestinians/>

Since last October, when that anniversary took place, things have deteriorated further, including attacks on Christian personnel and holy places, and statements by Christian leaders seeking outside support. By mid-February in 2023, 50 Palestinians and 9 Israelis had been killed. In 2022 at least 170 Palestinians, including 30 children, were killed. Unfortunately with major news subjects elsewhere the plight of Palestinians has seldom reached the headlines.

Given the statements and actions of the recently-elected Government of Israel, the system of apartheid now being applied on the West Bank (and further afield), the ongoing pleas for support by Christian Palestinians, and the urgent need for effective economic action to persuade the Israeli Government to end its Occupation and engage in serious negotiations for a solution of peace-with-justice for all the people of the Holy Land, we ask the Conference to call on all Methodists to support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, as it did in the context of apartheid South Africa, and vigorously recommend all faith communities and public bodies in the UK to do likewise.

We ask the Conference to note in particular the naming of HSBC and Barclays Bank in the recent 'Don't Buy into Occupation' report as two of the three largest lenders to companies active in settlement construction, in contravention of international law, and encourage all Methodists, other Christians and others opposed to apartheid to urge these and indeed all banks to end this support which undermines international law.

Reply

The Conference is grateful to the Burnley and Pendle Circuit Meeting for highlighting the deteriorating situation in the West Bank as a consequence of the deepening occupation that violates rights and egregiously harms the livelihoods of so many in the region.

In recent years the Conference has heard of the worsening situation in the occupied Palestinian territories through memorials, reports of working groups, the accounts of partners in the region as well as through the visit of Presidents, Vice-Presidents, the Secretary of the Conference and others. The Conference acknowledges with sorrow the dire human cost arising from the Israeli Government policy to incorporate the occupied territories of East Jerusalem and much of the West Bank into the economic and security fabric of the State of Israel. The UN Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur, in his report of 21 March 2022 states that "since 1967, Israel has confiscated more than two million dunams of Palestinian land in the West Bank, which have been used to build settlements, Israeli-only highways and roads, recreational parks, industrial centres,

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military bases and firing zones, all for the purpose of cementing a permanent and immovable demographic presence".¹ These settlements encircle and cut-off Palestinian towns, deny access to olive groves or grazing land, and on some occasions have involved the demolition of Palestinian homes or whole villages.

The Conference has heard, through reports and memorials, detailed accounts of Palestinians' loss of freedom, land, homes, the system of administrative detention, lack of accountability over the shooting of unarmed Palestinians by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and failure to protect Palestinians from attacks by Israeli settlers. It is clear that the Government of Israel does not administer Area C of the West Bank on a temporary basis in the interests of the indigenous Palestinian people as the Oslo Accords intend. Rather, it operates a highly discriminatory planning process and what has been described as a 'matrix of control' that seeks to secure the territory for exclusive Israeli settlement on a permanent basis. The United Nations Human Rights Council, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, the Government and Parliament of Ireland, Amnesty International, Christian Aid², the Catholic concern International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity CIDSE³, and several others recognise the situation in the West Bank, as it pertains today, as one of *de facto* annexation which is a serious breach of international law. The Methodist Council also considers the larger part of the West Bank to be subject to *de facto* annexation by the State of Israel (MC/21/18). The Conference notes the significance of the United Nations General Assembly instruction to the international Court of Justice to provide an opinion on the legal status of the occupation, given the ongoing violation by Israel of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, enactment of discriminatory legislation and practices, and measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem.

The Methodist Council report MC/21/18 noted the passing of the Nation State law in 2018. Applying to all areas under Israeli Administration, the National State Law determines that "the land of Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish people, in which the State of Israel was established" and "the State views the development of Jewish settlement as a national value and will act to encourage and promote its establishment and consolidation". The privileging of Jewish settlement in the West Bank has been evident for many years to those who have lost their land and homes and, in Area C, find it almost impossible to secure from the Israeli Authorities planning permission for any Palestinian structure on their own land.

1 [A/HRC/49/28 \(un.org\)](#) page 12

2 ['Where is Palestine? A story of loss, inequality and failure'](#) Christian Aid

3 [Call for an inclusive peace – countering de facto annexation – CIDSE](#)

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Recognising that 'apartheid' has specific definition under international law the Methodist Conference notes that the UN Special Rapporteur, in his report of 21 March 2022 to the Human Rights Council, concluded that "the political system of entrenched rule in the occupied Palestinian territory which endows one racial-national-ethnic group with substantial rights, benefits and privileges while intentionally subjecting another group to live behind walls, checkpoints and under a permanent military rule "sans droits, sans égalité, sans dignité et sans liberté" satisfies the prevailing evidentiary standard for the existence of apartheid".⁴

The Conference further notes the recent claim of exclusive rights for the Jewish people made by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on assuming office in December 2022. In his statement he said "These are the basic lines of the national government headed by me: The Jewish people have an exclusive and unquestionable right to all areas of the Land of Israel. The government will promote and develop settlement in all parts of the Land of Israel – in the Galilee, the Negev, the Golan, Judea and Samaria."⁵ The Conference acknowledges that this statement is essentially political in nature and that many Jewish people in Israel and beyond will object to such bold assertions of exclusive rights.

The Conference is deeply disturbed by the increase in violence as highlighted by this memorial, and reiterates its opposition to violence on the part of any party or individual, considering all violent actions to be harmful and unwarranted in the process of working towards a lasting and just peace through negotiation.

The Conference recalls its consideration of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions in report 23 'Boycotts, Divestments, Sanctions' to the 2014 Conference and as expressed in the reply to the memorial brought by the Sheffield Circuit Meeting (M8) to the 2022 Conference. The Conference accepts this memorial, inviting Methodist people to engage with the principles proposed by the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and to determine how most appropriate to implement specific actions such that the cause for justice for all is advanced rather than hindered.

The Conference remains committed to prayer, asking for the provision of strength and perseverance to all in the region who are working to raise awareness and political support for a resolution to the ongoing crisis in Israel and Palestine.

4 [A/HRC/49/28 \(un.org\)](#) page 17

5 [Netanyahu's hard-line new government takes office in Israel - BBC News](#)

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M5 Methodist Liaison Office, Jerusalem and Statement from Methodist Leaders

The Darlington District Synod (Present: 68; Voting: 68 for, 3 against) notes the tenth anniversary of the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and calls upon the Conference to note the statement by senior Methodist leaders who shared in events marking this occasion last October and to share it with our church members. It can be accessed at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-worldwide/global-relationships/global-relationships-news/all-global-relationships-news/on-the-situation-of-the-palestinians/>

Since last October, when that anniversary took place, things have deteriorated further, including attacks on Christian personnel and holy places. Statements by Christian leaders seeking outside support have responded to this deterioration. Already by mid-February in 2023, 50 Palestinians and 9 Israelis had been killed. In 2022 at least 170 Palestinians, including 30 children, were killed. Unfortunately with major news subjects elsewhere the plight of Palestinians has seldom reached the headlines.

Given the statements and actions of the recently-elected Government of Israel, the ongoing pleas for support by Christian Palestinians, and the urgent need for effective economic action to persuade the Israeli Government to end its Occupation and engage in serious negotiations for a solution of peace-with-justice for all the people of the Holy Land, we ask that the Joint Public Issues Team to provide guidance upon how Methodists can better support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement.

We note in particular the naming of HSBC and Barclays Bank in the recent 'Don't Buy into Occupation' report as two of the three largest lenders to companies active in settlement construction, in contravention of international law, and encourages all Methodists, other Christians and others opposed to the unjust actions of the Israeli Government to urge these and indeed all banks to end this support which undermines international law.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Darlington District Synod for its memorial and adopts the same reply as for M4.

M6 Antisemitism

The Lincolnshire District Synod (Present: 64; Voting: 52 for, 3 against) notes that, according to Home Office statistics, Jews are more than five times likelier to be targets of hate crimes than members of any other faith group with some 730 hate crimes per 100,000 of the Jewish population in 2021/22.

The Jewish community is suffering an average of more than five hate crimes every single day.

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The Lincolnshire District Synod calls on the Methodist Conference to

- express sorrow at such figures
- urge greater understanding of the roots of all forms of Jew-hatred
- commend for study the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism.
www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism
- reaffirm the Methodist Church EDI Toolkit Definition of Antisemitism: *Any belief, policy or action that discriminates against or incites hatred towards Jewish people, either by race or religion, or caricatures Jewish people and culture. This can include denying the right of Israel to exist, or judging it by standards not applied to other nations*

Reply

The Conference thanks the Lincolnshire District Synod for its memorial.

The Conference expresses deep sorrow at the rise of antisemitic attacks. In particular the Conference recalls its reply to Memorial 26 in 2018 deploring the rising incidence of such attacks and condemning antisemitism as evil and wrong. It also recalls its replies to memorial 32 in 2011 and memorial 35 in 2006, when the Conference affirmed that it identifies itself with the Charta Oecumenica, adopted in 2000 by the Conference of European Churches, which stated that:

'We deplore and condemn all manifestations of anti-Semitism [sic], all outbreaks of hatred and persecutions. We ask God for forgiveness for anti-Jewish attitudes among Christians, and we ask our Jewish sisters and brothers for reconciliation.

The Conference deplores all forms of antisemitism and racism and urges greater understanding. It commends the work of the Justice Dignity and Solidarity committee and notes the mandatory EDI training the Conference agreed in 2021. The Conference is committed to life-long learning about the riches of human diversity and to learning from one another.

The Conference welcomes all declarations on antisemitism that have gained a significant degree of support within the Jewish community in order that together these declarations may help to highlight and address antisemitic attacks.

The Methodist Conference reiterates its commitment to oppose antisemitism and further stands by all who are discriminated against or persecuted on grounds of their religion or ethnicity, and accepts the memorial.

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M7 Rural Mission Policy

The Birmingham District Synod (Present: 96; Voting: 83 for, 0 against) has seen a considerable acceleration in the decline of rural Methodist Churches since 2019 and believe this to be reflected across the Connexion. At the current pace it will only be a few years before Methodism becomes little more than a memory in the countryside with chapels converted to dwellings, commercial use, or demolished with perhaps little more to show than street names such as "Chapel Street". We believe that the distinctive contribution made by the Methodist Church has a vital part to play in rural communities in the twenty first century and beyond.

The District is asking the Conference to appoint a suitable team, which should include the Connexional Rural Officer, to research the current situation in circuits who have, or used to have until recently, places of worship and community engagement in rural communities. How many such places were there in 2019 and will there be in 2023?

This research team should report to Conference 2024 with accessible information that can assist Districts and Circuits in forming a Mission Policy. The research should include examples of models of mission and ministry that have enabled a continuing Methodist presence after a chapel has closed as well as analysis of why congregations have ceased to meet. Funding for this work could be paid for from the Connexional Levy on the sale of rural chapels and manses which has seen a considerable boost in recent years.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District Synod for its memorial, and acknowledges the reality being described and shares the hope for maintaining an important rural presence. Rural Mission and Ministry is and will continue to be a key part of the work of the Church, as shown in the expanded commitment to rural areas in creating a full-time Rural Officer role in 2020, and the inclusion of rural work in God For All (GFA). For the proposed extension of GFA (scheduled to come to the Conference in 2024), an expanded section on rural mission and ministry is planned, as well as joined-up work alongside Heritage and Property Services to offer more specific support for small and rural churches.

In addition, the recent Merge Churches for Mission work (which is ongoing and will continue to develop) provides in many ways the particular mission guidance that the memorial asks for. This guidance includes mission help, pastoral support, legal considerations, and many stories and testimonies of churches. This guidance goes beyond just rural contexts, but its focus on the experiences of small churches will mean that it will serve the needs of rural churches well. <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/lead-churches-into-growth/merge-churches-for-mission>.

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An extensive toolkit of general mission planning resources, including step-by-step video guidance, is also available to support churches and Circuits as they prayerfully and carefully develop mission policy and plans for their contexts. <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/lead-churches-into-growth/write-a-great-mission-plan/mission-planning-toolkit>.

Further, the Rural Officer is currently building a network for those starting or maintaining a Christian presence in a community without a chapel building. This includes provision for those who wish to focus on discipleship and a Methodist Way of Life, ecumenical partnerships, and/or replanting and New Places for New People. See <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/rural-hope> and <https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/rural-hope-1123799>.

As much of the work requested by this memorial is already ongoing, the Conference declines the memorial.

M8 The District Probationers' Committee and Probationers Retreat

The Darlington District Presbyteral Synod (Present: 41; Voting: unanimous) asks the Conference to reconsider the size and composition of District Probationers' Committees, their ways of working, and the provision of the district probationers' retreat.

Whilst it is already possible for Districts to establish joint probationers' committees, a number of factors indicate that a connexional review would be helpful, not least to explore potential models that might best enable districts to exercise these particular oversight responsibilities. The Darlington District is already in conversation with other Districts about joint working, but notes that shared, connexional, discernment regarding best practice and the parameters of possible models is important.

As there are also broader conversations currently being undertaken about the size and shape of Districts, such a review is timely.

Some of the factors shaping the current conversations include:

- Identifying and recruiting people who have the time and capacity as well as the necessary gifts, aptitudes and experience to serve on the District Probationers' Committee;
- Effective ways of working with a large committee when there is only one probationer;
- The geographical challenges of combining committees across Districts. This can change the nature of the experience and it raises questions about the extent to which particular cultural and contextual understanding and knowledge within the committee is important at this stage of the process. Some Districts

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have found that the broader contextual knowledge of the probationer's circuit and its relational dynamics has been an invaluable part of the process;

- Under the current Standing Orders (SO 484(4)), if more than two Districts seek to establish a joint committee then the balance of the committee is increasingly affected by the proportion of presbyters (Chairs of District, probationers' secretaries and (where applicable) the presbyteral secretaries of the Synods).

For several years the Darlington District has combined with three other Districts to provide the annual probationers' retreat. These have been invaluable in providing space to reflect on ministry and time for prayer and spiritual and personal reflection. They also offer an opportunity for fellowship with other probationers, mutual support and learning, as well as a chance to deepen relationships, not least with the Chairs of District and District Probationers' Secretaries. As there is now a relatively small number of probationers involved, it may be beneficial for a larger number of Districts to work together in this respect. The Darlington District thinks it is therefore timely for the Conference to explore whether this retreat should instead be offered connexionally (as a single retreat, or perhaps with one offered in the north and one in the south), alongside looking at ways in which more Districts might combine to offer such retreats in the future. It would be helpful to identify what might be gained, and what lost, in different ways of working.

Whilst such a review is undertaken, in order to help District Probationers' Committees work effectively, pastorally and robustly, the Darlington District asks that SO 484(1) is amended to allow for the possibility of a smaller committee.

The Darlington District therefore asks the Conference to direct the Ministries Committee to:

- Review the size, composition and ways of working of the District Probationers' Committee, including looking at the questions that arise when joint Probationers' Committees are formed;
- Review the role and nature of the district probationers' retreat and look at how provision might best be made for this, including considering offering it connexionally.

It also asks the Conference to amend SO484(1) as follows:

484 Probationers Committee. (1) Subject to clause (4) below, the Synod shall appoint a district Probationers Committee consisting of the Chair of the District, the secretary and (if appointed) the presbyteral secretary of the Synod, a district probationers secretary and **between seven and** eleven other persons of whom one shall be a deacon, **at least two and up to** four shall be presbyters and **at least four** the remainder lay.

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Reply

The Conference thanks the Darlington District Presbyteral Synod for its memorial and for drawing the attention of the Conference to the structures and operations of the District Probationers' Committees, and the provision of the district probationers' retreat.

In recent years adaptations to SO 484 have permitted two or more Synods together to appoint a Probationers' Committee which shall fulfil the functions of, and shall be, the District Probationers' Committee for both Districts. This is a permissive provision but does not require Districts to operate in this way. Some of the factors listed could be answered by a District choosing to retain its own single District Probationers' Committee. As the memorial itself identifies, there are significant differences in the numbers of probationers serving in the different Districts at any one time. Therefore the Conference believes that the current provisions allow for the flexibility requested by the memorial and that each District has the capacity to review its own practice with regard to its Probationers' Committee.

The subject of district probationers' retreats has been discussed regularly by District Probationers' Secretaries, by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC), and by Connexional Team members in consultation with the Chairs' Meeting, for a number of years. It has been previously proposed that a connexional retreat would now be preferable, to take account of the difficulties Districts can experience when they have a low number of probationers, who can be outnumbered by retreat leaders and district officers at the retreat. However, although there is not unanimity in those groups on this, the preference has always been for maintaining district or regional retreats for probationers and for allowing regional flexibility in deciding how best to make the provision. The pastoral relationships that develop between probationers, their Chair of District and District Probationers' Secretary are immensely valued, and the contextual nature of the retreat is regarded as important. Various ways of solving the issues for low numbers of probationers are already employed across the Connexion, such as combining a probationers' retreat with an under 5s retreat, or reducing the numbers of district officers present at each element of the retreat, or combining with (an)other District(s) in a region. The Conference therefore does not believe that there is sufficient benefit to be gained from carrying out that consultation at this stage but does encourage the Chairs' Meeting further to explore what may now be desirable with a view to implementing a way forward upon which it is agreed, in consultation with the Ministries Committee.

The Conference acknowledges that there are difficulties in identifying sufficient people to serve on the District Probationers' Committee, whether that is in one District or serving more than one District. Although it is important to ensure that all probationers receive similar levels of oversight, it is recognised that the flexibility in the size of the Probationers' Committee proposed in the memorial would be beneficial and

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therefore that portion of the memorial relating to the change to SO 484(1) is welcomed and accepted.

A consultation regarding the ways of working of District Probationers' Committees was held in 2022, overseen by MCPOC. This has resulted in guidance to be issued to District Chairs and Probationers' Secretaries in 2023. Members of the Connexional Team continue to be in ongoing consultation with all District Probationers' Secretaries, whose voice, individually and collectively, is thus heard frequently by both MCPOC and the Ministries Committee. The Conference does not believe that there is need for a further review to be carried out at this stage.

Therefore the Conference declines the first section of the memorial, but accepts the proposed change to SO 484(1).

M9 District Probationers' Committee and Probationers' Retreat

The Newcastle upon Tyne District Synod (Present: 115; Voting: 112 for, 0 against) asks the Conference to reconsider the size and composition of District Probationers' Committees, their ways of working, and the provision of the district probationers' retreat.

Whilst it is already possible for Districts to establish joint Probationers' Committees, a number of factors indicate that a connexional review would be helpful, not least to explore potential models that might best enable Districts to exercise these particular oversight responsibilities. The Newcastle upon Tyne District is already in conversation with other Districts about joint working, but notes that shared, connexional, discernment regarding best practice and the parameters of possible models is important. As there are also broader conversations currently being undertaken about the size and shape of Districts, such a review is timely.

Some of the factors shaping the current conversations include:

- identifying and recruiting people who have the time and capacity as well as the necessary gifts, aptitudes and experience to serve on the District Probationers' Committee;
- effective ways of working with a large committee when there is only one probationer;
- the geographical challenges of combining committees across Districts. This can change the nature of the experience and it raises questions about the extent to which particular cultural and contextual understanding and knowledge within the Committee is important at this stage of the process. Some Districts have found that the broader contextual knowledge of the probationer's Circuit and its relational dynamics has been an invaluable part of the process.
- Under the current Standing Orders (SO 484(4)), if more than two Districts seek to establish a joint committee then the balance of the Committee is increasingly

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affected by the proportion of presbyters (Chairs of District, probationers' secretaries and, where applicable, the presbyteral secretaries of the Synods).

For several years the Newcastle upon Tyne District has combined with three other Districts to provide the annual probationers' retreat. These have been invaluable in providing space to reflect on ministry and time for prayer and spiritual and personal reflection. They also offer an opportunity for fellowship with other probationers, mutual support and learning, as well as a chance to deepen relationships, not least with the Chairs of District and District Probationers' Secretaries. As there is now a relatively small number of probationers involved, it may be beneficial for a larger number of Districts to work together in this respect. The Newcastle upon Tyne District thinks it is therefore timely for the Conference to explore whether this retreat should instead be offered connexionally (as a single retreat, or perhaps with one offered in the north and one in the south), alongside looking at ways in which more Districts might combine to offer such retreats in the future. It would be helpful to identify what might be gained, and what lost, in different ways of working.

Whilst such a review is undertaken, in order to help District Probationers' Committees work effectively, pastorally and robustly, the Newcastle upon Tyne District asks that SO 484(1) is amended to allow for the possibility of a smaller committee.

The Newcastle upon Tyne District therefore asks the Conference to direct the Ministries Committee to:

- review the size, composition and ways of working of the District Probationers' Committee, including looking at the questions that arise when joint Probationers' Committees are formed;
- review the role and nature of the district probationers' retreat and look at how provision might best be made for this, including considering offering it connexionally.

It also asks the Conference to amend SO 484(1) as follows:

484 Probationers Committee. (1) Subject to clause (4) below, the Synod shall appoint a district Probationers Committee consisting of the Chair of the District, the secretary and (if appointed) the presbyteral secretary of the Synod, a district probationers secretary and **between seven and** eleven other persons of whom one shall be a deacon, **at least two and up to** four shall be presbyters and **at least four** the remainder lay.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Newcastle upon Tyne District Synod for its memorial and adopts the same reply as for M8.

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M10 District Probationers' Committee and Probationers' Retreat

The Scotland District Presbyteral Synod (Present: 28; Voting: 25 for, 0 against) asks the Conference to reconsider the size and composition of District Probationers' Committees, their ways of working, and the provision of the district probationers' retreat.

Whilst it is already possible for Districts to establish joint Probationers' Committees, a number of factors indicate that a connexional review would be helpful, not least to explore potential models that might best enable Districts to exercise these particular oversight responsibilities. The Scotland District is already in conversation with other Districts about joint working, but notes that shared, connexional, discernment regarding best practice and the parameters of possible models is important. As there are also broader conversations currently being undertaken about the size and shape of Districts, such a review is timely.

Some of the factors shaping the current conversations include:

- Identifying and recruiting people who have the time and capacity as well as the necessary gifts, aptitudes and experience to serve on the District Probationers' Committee;
- Effective ways of working with a large Committee when there is only one probationer;
- The geographical challenges of combining committees across Districts. This can change the nature of the experience and it raises questions about the extent to which particular cultural and contextual understanding and knowledge within the Committee is important at this stage of the process. Some Districts have found that the broader contextual knowledge of the probationer's Circuit and its relational dynamics has been an invaluable part of the process;
- Under the current Standing Orders (SO 484(4)), if more than two Districts seek to establish a joint committee then the balance of the Committee is increasingly affected by the proportion of presbyters (Chairs of District, probationers' secretaries and (where applicable) the presbyteral secretaries of the Synods).

For several years the Scotland District has combined with three other Districts to provide the annual probationers' retreat. These have been invaluable in providing space to reflect on ministry and time for prayer and spiritual and personal reflection. They also offer an opportunity for fellowship with other probationers, mutual support and learning, as well as a chance to deepen relationships, not least with the Chairs of District and District Probationers' Secretaries. As there is now a relatively small number of probationers involved, it may be beneficial for a larger number of Districts to work together in this respect. The Scotland District thinks it is therefore timely for the Conference to explore whether this retreat should instead be offered connexionally (as a single retreat, or perhaps with one offered in the north and one in the south), alongside looking at ways in which more Districts might combine to offer such retreats in the future. It would be helpful to identify what might be gained, and what lost, in different ways of working.

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Whilst such a review is undertaken, in order to help District Probationers' Committees work effectively, pastorally and robustly, the Scotland District asks that SO 484(1) is amended to allow for the possibility of a smaller committee.

The Scotland district therefore asks the Conference to direct the Ministries Committee to:

- Review the size, composition and ways of working of the District Probationers' Committee, including looking at the questions that arise when joint Probationers' Committees are formed;
- Review the role and nature of the district probationers' retreat and look at how provision might best be made for this, including considering offering it connexionally.

It also asks the Conference to amend SO 484(1) as follows:

484 Probationers Committee. (1) Subject to clause (4) below, the Synod shall appoint a district Probationers Committee consisting of the Chair of the District, the secretary and (if appointed) the presbyteral secretary of the Synod, a district probationers secretary and **between seven and** eleven other persons of whom one shall be a deacon, **at least two and up to** four shall be presbyters and **at least four** the remainder lay.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Scotland District Presbyteral Synod for its memorial and adopts the same reply as for M8.

M11 District Probationers' Committee and Probationers' Retreat

The Cumbria District Presbyteral Synod (Present: 33; Voting: unanimous) asks the Conference to reconsider the size and composition of District Probationers' Committees, their ways of working, and the provision of the district probationers' retreat.

Whilst it is already possible for Districts to establish joint Probationers' Committees, a number of factors indicate that a connexional review would be helpful, not least to explore potential models that might best enable Districts to exercise these particular oversight responsibilities. The Cumbria District is already in conversation with other Districts about joint working, but notes that shared, connexional, discernment regarding best practice and the parameters of possible models is important. As there are also broader conversations currently being undertaken about the size and shape of Districts, such a review is timely.

Some of the factors shaping the current conversations include:

- Identifying and recruiting people who have the time and capacity as well as the necessary gifts, aptitudes and experience to serve on the District Probationers' Committee;

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- Effective ways of working with a large Committee when there is only one probationer;
- The geographical challenges of combining committees across Districts. This can change the nature of the experience and it raises questions about the extent to which particular cultural and contextual understanding and knowledge within the Committee is important at this stage of the process. Some Districts have found that the broader contextual knowledge of the probationer's Circuit and its relational dynamics has been an invaluable part of the process;
- Under the current Standing Orders (SO 484(4)), if more than two Districts seek to establish a joint committee then the balance of the Committee is increasingly affected by the proportion of presbyters (Chairs of District, probationers' secretaries and (where applicable) the presbyteral secretaries of the Synods).

For several years the Cumbria District has combined with three other Districts to provide the annual probationers' retreat. These have been invaluable in providing space to reflect on ministry and time for prayer and spiritual and personal reflection. They also offer an opportunity for fellowship with other probationers, mutual support and learning, as well as a chance to deepen relationships, not least with the Chairs of District and District Probationers' Secretaries. As there is now a relatively small number of probationers involved, it may be beneficial for a larger number of districts to work together in this respect. The Cumbria District thinks it is therefore timely for the Conference to explore whether this retreat should instead be offered connexionally (as a single retreat, or perhaps with one offered in the north and one in the south), alongside looking at ways in which more districts might combine to offer such retreats in the future. It would be helpful to identify what might be gained, and what lost, in different ways of working.

Whilst such a review is undertaken, in order to help District Probationers' Committees work effectively, pastorally and robustly, the Cumbria District asks that SO 484(1) is amended to allow for the possibility of a smaller committee.

The Cumbria District therefore asks the Conference to direct the Ministries Committee to:

- Review the size, composition and ways of working of the District Probationers' Committee, including looking at the questions that arise when joint Probationers' Committees are formed;
- Review the role and nature of the district probationers' retreat and look at how provision might best be made for this, including considering offering it connexionally.

It also asks the Conference to amend SO 484(1) as follows:

484 Probationers Committee. (1) Subject to clause (4) below, the Synod shall appoint a district Probationers Committee consisting of the Chair of the District,

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the secretary and (if appointed) the presbyteral secretary of the Synod, a district probationers secretary and **between seven and** eleven other persons of whom one shall be a deacon, **at least two and up to** four shall be presbyters and **at least four** the remainder lay.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Cumbria District Presbyteral Synod for its memorial and adopts the same reply as for M8.

M12 Access to the Worship: Leading and Preaching Course

The Yorkshire North and East District Synod (Present: 74; Voting: 69 for, 4 against) draws the Conference's attention to issues around inclusion and accessibility to the Worship: Leading and Preaching (WLP) course.

We recognise that the content and delivery of WLP has been the subject of previous memorials to the Conference, most recently M3 (2020) and M5 (2021) both of which included issues around accessibility. We believe that these issues have not yet been fully addressed.

The Methodist Council report part 2 (Agenda 2 page 160) to the 2022 Conference highlighted that "The Local Preachers' Study Board (LPSB) has fully embraced the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) strategy, and a sub-group has been established to advise on improvements to training and development". We ask that this sub-group consider the accessibility of WLP to people who cannot use computers or are not online.

This year one of our Circuits contacted the local preachers' office to discuss options for an individual who is academically able to undertake the training, but has additional needs which lead to them not being able to use computer software. Replies received indicated that there is no other way of accessing the course except online. We believe that this raises serious concerns around inclusion (individuals not coming forward to train as local preachers or worship leaders because of concerns around accessibility to training needs) and could benefit from comparison with reasonable adjustments made in secular workplaces with regards to training and development. In moving towards a 'digital first' approach we are perhaps excluding and discriminating against those for whom digital is not an option.

We request that the Conference directs the Local Preachers' Study Board to investigate ways in which WLP can be adapted and to show how it is working with the JDS strategy team so that "All can participate fully in the life of the church".

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Reply

The Conference thanks the Yorkshire North and East District Synod for its memorial and its concerns regarding the accessibility of the Worship: Leading & Preaching course to those who cannot use computers.

The Worship: Leading and Preaching course has been developed as a blended learning course, allowing full use to be made of a range of media including video, audio and written content. The course materials are centred around a website, requiring use of a computer or other device. Use of technologies such as online project assessment and video conferencing have proven invaluable in increasing access to training, especially for those with no local tutor, or those with additional learning needs who depend on technologies such as audio transcription.

The Conference recognises however that for some, the use of technology can be a barrier. For this reason, reasonable adjustments can be made. The portfolio projects are designed to allow students to present work in media other than written text and with the co-operation of the Tutor, project work can be presented without use of computer software. Course materials can be printed or transcribed to audio for listening. The Learning Network can provide support by advising Circuits what adaptations can be put in place to facilitate learning. The Officer for Worship and Local Preaching would be more than happy to discuss the requirements on a case-by-case basis to ensure that no one who is called by God to lead worship and preach is excluded from being equipped by the Church to serve.

The Conference notes the wording of the memorial with regard to advice received from the local preachers' office and directs the Connexional Team to investigate how the communication of inaccurate or misleading information can be avoided in future.

The Local Preachers' Board of Studies is currently working with the Justice, Diversity and Solidarity Strategy Group in various areas where accessibility of training materials can be improved. This has already borne fruit in the provision of training in study skills, advanced training for tutors, and review of cultural and language-specific content relating to inclusion. We remain committed to the aim of equipping the people of God in worship and in the proclamation of the gospel.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial, but notes that the Board of Studies remains committed to improving the accessibility of the course and the Learning Network to the support of students, tutors and mentors, including those who cannot make use of computer software.

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M13 Ministerial Development Review

The Newcastle upon Tyne District Synod Representative Session (Present: 115; Voting: 111 for, 1 against) following a unanimous recommendation from the Presbyteral Session welcomes the advent of 'The Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers' and the opportunities that this brings for reflection on the ministry of the whole people of God. Given that the Covenant is about a partnership between church and minister, the existing process of Ministerial Development Review (MDR) no longer seems appropriate, given that it is purely minister-centred. Furthermore, many of the commitments and expectations within the covenant more than adequately cover the requirements of MDR.

The Ministerial Covenant also references CPD Book VII Guidance, Part 3 re the expectation that full-time stations will involve only 12 sessions a week. We are concerned that engaging in MDR and regular review of the Commitments and Expectations will make heavy/unrealistic demands on time for both lay and ordained.

Ministers are discovering the value of our supervision system and finding the benefit of this for the development of ministry. This requires 6 sessions a year and preparation as well as training for those involved in its delivery.

The Synod believes that it would be better, in the light of the covenant relationship and alongside supervision, to use the commitments of the Covenant instead of MDR for members, presbyters and deacons to review and develop the ministry of members, presbyters and deacons within the District.

In addition, we ask the Ministries Committee to consider the question of withdrawing the mandatory requirement to engage in MDR.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Newcastle Upon Tyne District Synod for the memorial and particularly for its welcome of 'The Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers' (2022), which now forms Part 6 of Book IV of CPD and is entitled 'Renewing Full Connexion: Commitments and Expectations'.

'Renewing Full Connexion' sets out mutual expectations of ministers, members and the Church and can offer a helpful framing of a range of conversations including supervision, MDR, discernment processes and as part of the lifelong work of reflecting on ministry of both lay and ordained.

The purpose of the Ministerial Development Review (MDR) is set out in Standing Order 743 as being a process which enables every presbyter or deacon to reflect, with input from others, on how the ministry of that presbyter or deacon is being experienced and

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fulfilled both in relation to the Church as a whole and within the particular context in which the ministry of the relevant presbyter or deacon is being exercised.

MDR offers an opportunity for feedback from those amongst whom ministry is exercised, in a way which supervision does not. The Ministries Committee has recently reviewed MDR and recognised it is one part of a suite of support and accountability tools for ministers and the Church. In 2021 a new resource supporting MDR was launched, which can be accessed at [ministerialdevelopmentreview_final.pdf \(methodist.org.uk\)](#) on the Methodist Church website.

Whilst the Conference declines the proposal to remove MDR, it recognises that there is further work to be done, in order for 'Renewing Full Connexion' to bear fruit in the life of the church and directs the Ministries Committee to consider these matters and to report to the Conference of 2025.

M14 Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

The Nottingham Trent Valley (22/4) Circuit Meeting (Present: 39; Voting: unanimous), with reference to the decision of the 2019 Conference to undertake a review of Part 11 of the Standing Orders, asks the Conference that the following proposals are considered as part of that review, with a view to improving the experience of all those affected by the processing of complaints about and between ministers:

- We request the involvement of an independent professional body to manage/ co-ordinate the processing of complaints.
- We request the provision of specific and separate third-party support for Circuit Leadership Teams and individual congregations affected by complaints involving any member(s) of their ministerial teams during and after the processing of these complaints, to include:
 - The sharing of appropriate (non-confidential) information about the process and its progression, promoting a sense of transparency;
 - Advice and guidance on activities and communications with the minister(s) involved during the process;
 - Advice and guidance on representations to a Connexional Complaints Panel;
 - Communication about processes, progress, actions taken and outcomes in order to mitigate damaging rumour-mongering;
 - Pastoral care and prayer.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Nottingham Trent Valley Circuit Meeting for the memorial and for raising these concerns.

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The Conference agrees that it is vital that confidence and trust in our processes are maintained and that the experiences of all those affected by the processing of complaints about and between ministers and other church officeholders is improved.

The Conference notes the Circuit Meeting's requests for the involvement of an independent professional body to manage/co-ordinate the processing of complaints, and for third-party support to be provided to Circuit Leadership Teams and individual congregations affected by complaints.

The Conference understands that these issues are already being considered within the overall review of the Church's complaints and discipline process ("the Part 11 Review"), as reported elsewhere in the Council's first Report to the Conference, Section H (page 71 of the Agenda).

Notwithstanding the above, the Conference, by way of interim reply, refers it to the Methodist Council for consideration by those working on the Part 11 Review.

M15 Funding the payment of a stipend for a minister during long-term absence

The South Worcestershire (5/16) Circuit Meeting (Present: 43; Voting: unanimous), draws the Conference's attention to the disparity over funding the payment of a stipend for a minister's long-term absence during a disciplinary investigation compared with the funding arrangements when a minister is on long-term sick leave. In both cases the minister is entitled to be paid their full stipend until there is an outcome.

In the case of long-term sick leave, the Circuit can be reimbursed by the Methodist Church Fund for the cost of the stipend after 6 months of absence (see SO 365). According to SO 365, Circuits are required to bear the full cost of payment of a stipend to a minister for the first 6 months of absence due to sickness or injury. After this period, a Circuit may apply to the Methodist Church Fund for reimbursement of stipend costs (less credit for Social Security Benefits and Statutory Sick Pay) paid by the Circuit to the minister for the next 12 months.

However, when a minister is suspended during a disciplinary investigation, there is no provision to reimburse a Circuit, even when a suspension lasts for more than 6 months. Instead, the Circuit must continue to bear the stipend cost in full, however long the process takes, and it can go on for a very long time (well over a year).

The South Worcestershire Circuit asks the Conference to urgently address this disparity and take action to provide funding for Circuits to pay a stipend where a minister is suspended for longer than 6 months.

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Reply

The Conference thanks the South Worcestershire Circuit Meeting for this memorial relating to long term absence of a minister.

The Conference appreciates the reasons for the Circuit raising these concerns and notes that other Circuits will have experienced similar situations. The suspension of a minister, particularly when extended over many months, can lead to understandable frustration about the continuing costs of ministry. However, the Conference notes that a stipend is not a wage (a payment for work undertaken) but a living allowance and that the Circuit will have budgeted for the costs of stipends; it will not have budgeted for additional costs incurred if others serve in place of the suspended minister.

SO 365(7)(i) permits reimbursement of 'any payments, expenses or liabilities incurred or arising in connection with any actual or potential disciplinary proceedings against any person'; the Council [MC/20/113, October 2020] delegated to the Secretary of the Conference decisions about when and what payments should be made under this Standing Order. Clearly, additional costs to supply ministry in the stead of a suspended presbyter or deacon can be regarded as a legitimate additional expense. However, the Conference agrees that that might helpfully be made clearer in the Standing Order. The Conference therefore declines the memorial but directs the Ministries Committee in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee to review and amend the text of Standing Order 365(7) in line with the current de facto policy.

M16 Funding the payment of a stipend for a minister during long-term absence

The Birmingham District Presbyteral Synod (Present: 61; Voting: unanimous) draws the Conference's attention to the disparity over funding the payment of a stipend for a minister's long-term absence during a disciplinary investigation compared with the funding arrangements when a minister is on long-term sick leave. In both cases the minister is entitled to be paid their full stipend until there is an outcome.

In the case of long-term sick leave, the Circuit can be reimbursed by the Methodist Church Fund for the cost of the stipend after 6 months of absence (see SO 365). According to SO 365, Circuits are required to bear the full cost of payment of a stipend to a minister for the first 6 months of absence due to sickness or injury. After this period, a Circuit may apply to the Methodist Church Fund for reimbursement of stipend costs (less credit for Social Security Benefits and Statutory Sick Pay) paid by the Circuit to the minister for the next 12 months.

However, when a minister is suspended during a disciplinary investigation, there is no provision to reimburse a Circuit, even when a suspension lasts for more than 6 months. Instead, the Circuit must continue to bear the stipend cost in full, however long the process takes, and it can go on for a very long time (well over a year).

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The Birmingham Presbyteral Synod asks the Conference to urgently address this disparity and take action to provide funding for Circuits to pay a stipend where a minister is suspended for longer than 6 months.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District Presbyteral Synod for its memorial and adopts the same reply as for M15.

M17 Membership and Statistics for Mission

The North Bedfordshire (34/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 63; Voting: unanimous) is concerned by the reliance in SO 605A, which deals with the cessation and merger of churches, on membership numbers. This is because it feels that membership lists do not always reflect what is happening in terms of mission, especially in some of our smaller rural churches. In some places, membership numbers may be poor, but there could still be very rich mission.

The Circuit was further concerned that 'Statistics for Mission' which now requests only membership numbers and attendance at 'main worship services' further perpetuate a narrow view of belonging that does not reflect the missional engagement of the Church and its impact, particularly in some rural settings. This is especially true when mission and evangelism are ongoing works in progress and getting people to a point of membership as it is currently understood may take many years.

It is our view therefore that our understanding of membership and belonging and the current 'statistics for mission' both need looking at again in order to take account of the full spectrum of contexts that we have in the Methodist Church.

Reply

The Conference thanks the North Bedfordshire Circuit Meeting for its memorial and for its attention to the breadth of the mission of its churches. The Conference of 2022 received the report *Methodist Membership in the 21st Century* which gave attention to some of the challenges relating to our current understanding and practice of membership but reaffirmed its importance. Among other things, membership expresses our commitment as Methodists to the work of the church in a particular place and our willingness to share in it. Thus membership is an appropriate category in Standing Order 605A: it asks, 'Are there enough people who are committed to the work of the church in this place in order for it to function effectively as a Local Church?'

The Conference also directed the Faith and Order Committee to engage in further work on the understanding of membership and report to the Conference of 2024. This work will consider:

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[...] some of the questions requiring attention, including those questions around ecclesial identity and the extent to which membership is essential to Methodist identity, especially in relation to ecumenical, online and New Places for New People contexts [...]; and how different understandings of membership in Methodist Churches around the world impact on those who also wish to belong to the Methodist Church in Britain, for example through the Fellowship Groups.

Where a particular Local Church has fewer than the minimum number of members specified in Standing Order 605A, there are more options than simply closure of both building and congregation.

These were set out in detail in the response to Memorial M18 (2022) and provide ways forward for local congregations in such situations. These may include retaining their own buildings, services of worship and so on and allow for the continuation of a congregation's rich mission to which the Circuit Meeting refers. As the reply noted, "The operation of Standing Order 605A can release a congregation to continue and even increase their worship, fellowship and outreach activities."

The Conference is aware that while some would wish for a more detailed and nuanced collection of information in the Annual Returns, others continue to find them excessive and burdensome. Work is currently underway to review the Annual Returns, including what information is requested.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial, but directs the Faith and Order Committee and those engaged in the review of the Annual Returns to note its comments.

M18 EDI Training

The Nidd Valley (29/26) Circuit Meeting (Present: 35; Voting: unanimous) welcomes the Methodist Church in Britain's desire to become a welcoming and inclusive church; it is a key part of being a Christian in the twenty-first century. However, at a time when numbers across the Connexion are declining, our focus also needs to be on mission, discipleship and worship, rather than increasing governance demands.

The Conference of 2021 adopted the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Strategy which included the creation of mandatory EDI training. This has great value. However the obligation to undertake this training is adding a greater burden onto the declining numbers of volunteers and staff, and is making it harder to find volunteers to take on important positions of responsibility. By being only available online the course itself defeats the object of being inclusive.

Unfortunately the course is too long; Circuits are already creaking under the weight of imposed governance. We look to the Connexion to recognise the challenges of circuit life

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and relieve us from the burden of governance, which will not grow the church, in order to allow us to focus on mission, discipleship and worship which will grow the church.

The meeting requests that the Conference review the structure, participation and delivery of this new course, finding ways to make this more accessible and less demanding on Circuits who are already over-stretched.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Nidd Valley Circuit Meeting for the memorial and the encouraging engagement with the JDS strategy.

Whilst the Conference understands the concerns raised over the length of the training material on MCBX, one of the advantages of an online learning option is that individuals are able to study at their own pace as and when time is available. From the feedback that has been received by the Connexional Team the average time that the training is taking for individuals to complete is between 2 – 4 hours to complete, although it recognises that this has been longer for some individuals.

The Conference acknowledges the challenges inherent in recruiting and retaining volunteers at this time and emphasises the need to ensure that all those in church roles are suitably equipped to carry out their role as we continue to minimize the risks of any kind of discrimination.

This training enables the Conference to have an assurance that there has been a consistent approach and understanding of the fundamentals of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) which hopefully ensures that our mission, discipleship and worship are free of discrimination as we strive to become a fully inclusive church.

The EDI training was planned to be reviewed six months after its launch. This review took place in April 2023. As a result of the feedback that had been received some amendments to the online material have been made on MCBX. In addition to this the Connexional Team, having heard concerns over the ability to engage only on line, have produced and made available additional resources that enable people to engage with the training in groups locally. (<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/training-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity/mandatory-edi-training-equality-diversity-and-inclusion/training-resources/>)

Whilst the Conference agrees with the challenges that are highlighted within this memorial it believes that these have already been addressed through the work that the Connexional Team has undertaken in providing the additional resources and therefore declines the memorial.

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M19 EDI Training

The Bede (20/13) Circuit Meeting (Present: 34; Voting: unanimous) is very concerned that the EDI training is mandatory for local preachers and church stewards. Attention is drawn to the additional time it takes to complete the training and the difficulty in accessing the course for those who do not have a computer, or the necessary computer skills. The concern is that many will resign from these positions.

We therefore ask the Conference to:

- change the wording from 'mandatory' to 'highly recommended'
- reduce the length of the training
- make the training more accessible through a variety of delivery methods, for example small group sessions.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Bede Circuit Meeting for the memorial and the concerns raised through the memorial.

This training enables the Conference to have an assurance that there has been a consistent approach and understanding of the fundamentals of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) which hopefully ensures that our mission, discipleship and worship are free of discrimination as we strive to become a fully inclusive church. The Conference therefore resists the request to change the wording from 'mandatory' to 'highly recommended'.

Whilst the Conference understands the concerns raised over the length of the training material on MCBX, one of the advantages of an online learning option is that individuals are able to study at their own pace as and when time is available. From the feedback that has been received by the Connexional Team the average time that the training is taking for individuals to complete is between 2 – 4 hours to complete, although it is recognised that this has been longer for some individuals as highlighted within this memorial.

The EDI training was planned to be reviewed six months after its launch. This review took place in April 2023. As a result of the feedback that had been received some amendments to the online material have been made on MCBX. In addition to this the Connexional Team, having heard concerns over the ability to engage only on line, has produced and made available additional resources that enable people to engage with the training in groups locally. (<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/training-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity/mandatory-edi-training-equality-diversity-and-inclusion/training-resources/>)

The Conference therefore declines this memorial whilst recognising that the accessibility of the training material has already been addressed through the work that the Connexional Team has undertaken in providing the additional materials.

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M20 SO 650(6)

The Notting Hill (35/14) Circuit Meeting (Present: 6; Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference to direct the Law and Polity Committee to bring an amendment to Standing Order 650(6), clarifying intentions on the uses of the General Church Fund and the purposes of the Local Church.

Standing Order 650(6)(v) states that the purposes of the Local Church include, subject to provisos, the support from the General Church Fund of any other charitable fund or body, except if such support would be contrary to the purposes of the Methodist Church or its discipline.

Discussions between the Notting Hill Circuit and legal officers from TMCP and the Connexional Team in recent years have revealed an interpretation of this Standing Order which we believe is contrary to guidance received in previous decades, is not widely known across the Connexion, and does not compare well with practice among our ecumenical partners.

This interpretation states that Methodism's own needs are so great across the Connexion that Local Churches with spare resources in their general funds should support solely Methodist causes. In other words, that clauses SO 650(6)(i)–(iv) are sufficient, and clause (v) is effectively redundant. Grants to any other bodies cannot be justified. In other words, grants from general church funds to charitable organisations such as Christian Aid and the Fund for Human Need are not permitted.

The Notting Hill Circuit requests amendment to SO 650 to make provision so that:

- (i) The purposes of the General Church Fund should not be exclusively confined to funds within the Connexion, but may apply to other charitable purposes locally and globally as an expression of Christian witness and service.
- (ii) Support to charitable organisations with which the church is involved as part of its work among the local community should be made possible, under such criteria as the Law and Polity Committee recommends.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Notting Hill Circuit Meeting for its Memorial.

Following the concerns expressed by the Notting Hill Circuit in the memorial, the views of the Law and Polity Committee have been sought and research has been undertaken into the way in which Standing Order 650 has been understood in earlier times. It is clear from that research that the earlier understanding was that it is in principle open to a Local Church to decide, under Standing Order 650(6)(v), to apply sums from the general church fund in making donations to non-Methodist charitable funds or bodies, subject to

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certain safeguards or caveats. The Law and Polity Committee has now confirmed that that is also its understanding of the effect of Standing Order 650. Those safeguards or caveats are as follows:

1. It will be appreciated that under Standing Order 650(4) the payment of the circuit assessment is the first charge on the general church fund and the discretion given by Standing Order 650(5) to apply funds for the charitable purposes of the Local Church is subject to performance of that obligation. (Standing Order 917(3) similarly makes model trust money which is local property applicable for the purposes for which the general church fund may be applied under Standing Order 650(4) or (5), but subject to paying (i) taxes, assessments, rates and similar outgoings in respect of the property, (ii) appropriate insurance premiums and (iii) interest on relevant borrowings. If the model trust money in question is capital money, Standing Order 917 is itself subject to Standing Order 916.)
2. Some content must be given to the words “subject to (i), (ii) and (iii) above” in Standing Order 650(6)(v). Nevertheless the Committee does not hold the view stated in the memorial that Methodism’s own needs are so great that Local Churches should support solely Methodist causes and paragraph (v) is effectively redundant. The Committee’s view is rather that before the Church Council or the body to whom authority is delegated decides to apply sums from the general church fund under paragraph (v) it should consider the possibility of one or more alternative applications under paragraphs (i), (ii) and (iii). It is therefore perfectly possible for the relevant body, having weighed up the competing demands of the purposes identified in Standing Order 650(6), to decide, for good reason, to make a donation to a body such as Christian Aid or the Fund for Human Need. It would also be possible to support charitable organisations with which the church is involved as part of its work among the local community.
3. In making a decision as to the application of the general church fund (or model trust money which has become applicable for the purposes specified in Standing Order 650(4) and (5), the relevant body is of course acting as a charity trustee and so must comply with the ordinary duties of charity trustees. Those duties require that the trustees should always act in the best interests of their charity, which necessarily involves acting prudently and responsibly to further the charity’s purposes. In the case of a local church, Standing Order 650(6) makes clear that the charity’s purposes include wider Methodist purposes and the “subject to” requirement ensures that they are not overlooked. Clearly the amount of any donation to a particular purpose as well as the principle of whether such a donation should be made will be part of the consideration required.
4. Paragraph (v) is also subject to an exception excluding support for a fund or body where such support would be contrary to any purpose of the Methodist Church or to Methodist discipline. Although the scope of this exception is undefined, the Committee

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takes the view that there would be no room for doubt in the case of most concrete examples and certainly none of the examples given by the Notting Hill Circuit Meeting would give rise to any such concern.

In the light of the above clarification of the Law and Polity Committee's understanding of the effect of Standing Order 650, the Conference does not regard it as necessary to direct the Committee to bring to the Conference the particular amendments proposed in the memorial. The Conference does, however, recognise that the terms of the Standing Order have given rise to some uncertainty and that any clarification may give rise to issues of policy going beyond the purview of the Law and Polity Committee. The Conference therefore, by way of interim reply, refers the memorial to the Methodist Council, in conjunction with the Law and Polity Committee, for consideration and report, to the Conference of 2024 if possible.

M21 Locally Resident Members

The Ashbourne (22/11) Circuit Meeting (Present: 23; Voting: unanimous) requests that the Methodist Church fully implements the stated aims of its own Equality and Diversity policy by eliminating unfair discrimination. In the instance of Oversight and Trusteeship this has specific reference to the definition of 'locally resident' church members. To apply such a definition of 'locally resident' is institutionalised discrimination based on geographical area. We ask that the term 'locally resident' be abolished and we urge the Connexion to review the definition of 'locally resident' member giving due consideration to regular, involved and committed members of congregations.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Ashbourne Circuit Meeting for the Memorial. The Conference is sensitive to the concerns raised.

Having consulted with the Law and Polity Committee and the EDI Adviser in the Connexional Team, the Conference is advised that living within or outside a geographical location is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 and therefore cannot legally be considered to be discriminatory. In any case, there is nothing to prevent a person living outside the local area being a member of a church, provided that the church is prepared to have them as a member. The only provisions that use the phrase are Standing Orders 605 and 605A, which say that a Local Church cannot be formed or reconstituted, or continue to be entitled to be recognised as a Local Church beyond four quarters, if fewer than twelve of its members are locally resident.

It is important to recognise that the existing definition in Standing Order 605(3) does not provide a fixed geographical boundary within which someone is 'locally resident'. Rather a person is locally resident for these purposes 'if resident in such a place that the Local Church in question is a natural centre for worship or fellowship.'

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Paragraph 8.3 e) at page 428 of the Oversight and Trusteeship Report 30 to the Conference of 2021 reported that the Law and Polity Committee had considered whether 'locally resident':

"might be widened or alternatively more closely defined than as presently set out in Standing Order 605(3). However, the Committee advises against this at this time, so as to continue to allow careful reflection in each Circuit's context as to how "locally resident" might be most sensibly understood and applied, including as part of the process of considering what might be the minimum number of trustee bodies required. (If at any stage the Conference prefers to establish instead a wider or narrower understanding, this can of course be developed.)"

The requirement that a Local Church have a minimum number of locally resident members is not an arbitrary restriction but is related to the nature of the Local Church's mission. *Called to Love and Praise* noted that 'the local Church has the task of sharing in the whole ministry of Christ both in its neighbourhood through worship, fellowship, pastoral care, mission and service, and also in the wider world by its prayers, gifts and outreach.' (§4.7.3) In order to fulfil the first aspect of this, it is essential that the Local Church has a core of members who are rooted in the neighbourhood(s) in which it is seeking to exercise these ministries. This is, of course, not to say that members who live elsewhere cannot make a valuable contribution to a Local Church's mission and ministry. However, Christian ministry and mission is in, among and alongside – incarnational in other words – rather than 'done to' from outside. The requirement is an expression of these missional principles.

The concept of 'locally resident' in SO 605(3) is deliberately flexible as what is 'a natural centre' will be a question to be determined according to the local context. There may be more than one Local Church which is such a 'natural centre' in a given case. To use the memorial's example of an individual with a disability who worships at a church other than their nearest one because its facilities are more suited to their needs, the Conference would consider that church clearly to be a 'natural centre for worship or fellowship' for that person (and for any family members, companions or carers who accompany them). At the same time, the Conference encourages all Local Churches to make their premises as accessible as possible.

In reflecting on the meaning of 'natural centre for worship or fellowship', it is important to pay attention to the local context of both the church and local community as well as the members concerned. For example, a town or city centre church may be a natural centre for quite a wide area. Similarly, a church which offers worship in different languages may be a natural centre for people who speak those languages. The Conference encourages a flexibility of approach while holding the principle that Local Churches must be rooted

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in the communities they seek to serve. As a result, the Conference considers that the existing definition of 'locally resident' continues to be appropriate and therefore declines the memorial.

In declining the memorial, the Conference notes the work currently being undertaken around the concept of "online church" reported elsewhere in the Conference Agenda and acknowledges that it may be necessary in the future to consider how the requirement for locally resident members should apply to Local Churches that meet for worship predominantly or wholly online.

M22 Annual Affirmations

The Plymouth and Exeter District Synod (Present: 89; Voting: 66 for, 8 against) requests that Conference instructs the Faith and Order committee to consider whether the questions asked of presbyters in the Presbyteral Session of Synod remain appropriate, if they are appropriate then the Faith and Order Committee be tasked with amending them so that all presbyters are able to answer them.

A possible way forward would be to replace the two questions with just one such as the following:

Does each of us continue faithfully within the Methodist Church to discharge the obligations laid upon us by the ministry which we have received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God?

Background – There are two questions asked annually of presbyters which are required to be answered as one.

1. Do you continue to faithfully discharge the obligations laid upon us by the ministry which we have received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God?
2. Do you continue to believe and preach our doctrines and administer our discipline?

If the answer is not yes to these questions then potential disciplinary issues are raised for presbyters.

Since the Conference resolutions on Marriage and Relationships there are a number of presbyters who feel unable to answer "yes", however they wish to stay within the Methodist Church. In bringing this memorial we recognise the contribution made by the Secretary of the Conference and others in the pamphlet published in 2021 "The Annual Affirmation", however we note that this has not had the effect of moving us forward.

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We long to live with contradictory convictions and move towards doing this in peace with each other, however asking the question and pointing out the difference each year perpetuates and exacerbates the difference.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Plymouth and Exeter District Synod for its memorial and for its concern for living well with contradictory convictions. The Conference is aware that the Annual Inquiry continues to cause challenges in some Synods.

The content of the affirmations in the Annual Inquiry is essential to what it means to be in 'Full Connexion' with the Conference, as well as essential for the Methodist Church as it seeks to remain faithful to the apostolic mission. The Conference reminds presbyters that being in Full Connexion means that they are entitled to the full status and privileges, and are subject to all the obligations of a presbyter of the Methodist Church. In being received, presbyters affirm that they accept these obligations, believe and will preach our doctrines, and will faithfully observe and administer our discipline as determined by the Conference. This is an enduring commitment, for as long as the presbyter remains in Full Connexion, and it is therefore appropriate that it be reaffirmed each year in the Annual Inquiry. It expresses specific commitments, not simply a general one to Christian ministry in a broadly Methodist context.

The Conference is obliged by the Deed of Union to uphold its doctrinal standards – not just as a formality but in its ministry and mission. The doctrinal standards are contained in clause 4 of the Deed of Union and the term 'our doctrines' in the promises made at reception into Full Connexion and reaffirmed in the Annual Inquiry refers to the doctrines specified by clause 4. Expecting its preachers (itinerant and local) to affirm (in their respective ways) the doctrinal standards, is part of the way in which the Methodist Conference maintains and transmits its doctrinal standards and so remains faithful to the apostolic mission.

The doctrinal standards are integral to the 'obligations' laid upon presbyters and are intended to safeguard the integrity of 'the gospel of the grace of God' as this has been received and transmitted by the Methodist Church. In specifying 'standards' of preaching, the Deed of Union deliberately does not seek to create a 'system of formal or speculative theology' but does seek to 'secure loyalty to the fundamental truths of the gospel of redemption and ensure the continued witness of the Church to the realities of the Christian experience of salvation.' The doctrinal standards therefore permit a broad theological outlook, though there are limits. To remove the doctrinal question from the Annual Inquiry would be to broaden this significantly further and to such an extent that it would be inconsistent with the Methodist tradition. For example, were the memorial's proposal to be adopted, Methodist presbyters would in effect no longer be expected to subscribe to the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation.

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Furthermore, to drop the requirement for presbyters to 'administer our discipline', as the memorial proposes, would also have serious consequences. As authorised public representatives of the Methodist Church, presbyters have a duty to administer 'our discipline' for the sake of the peace and good order of the church. As sign, instrument and foretaste of the reign of God, the Church is subject to the rule of Jesus Christ to which the polity of the Methodist Church seeks to bear witness, however imperfect and in need of constant reform it may be.

Importantly, the Annual Inquiry does not require presbyters to subscribe to an understanding that marriage may be between two persons of the same sex, any more than it imposes a particular theology of atonement or of the sacraments. It should be noted that the doctrinal standards say nothing about marriage. Therefore presbyters may express varied theological understandings of marriage and practise those in their ministry while still affirming the Annual Inquiry: indeed our discipline (as expressed in Standing Orders) makes explicit provision for the different understandings of marriage held within the Methodist Church, including the understanding that marriage is only between one man and one woman.

While the question raised by this memorial concerned the Presbyteral Session of the Synods and therefore the reply has addressed the affirmations made by presbyters, the Conference notes that similar affirmations are made each year by deacons and that the same principles apply. The Conference reminds all its ministers of the positive intention of the Annual Inquiry as a way of affirming and renewing their commitment as ministers of the Methodist Church, alongside those with whom they share that ministry.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

M23 Data Protection

The Liverpool District Synod (Present: 47; Voting: 45 for, 0 against) is grateful for the work that TMCP have undertaken to ensure that churches, Circuits and Districts are complying with Data Protection. However, we realise that there is still some non-compliance amongst churches, which is difficult to track with the existing system.

The Synod requests the Conference to direct the connexional online suite team to work together with TMCP to bring the existing Data Protection Annual Checklist into the online suite. This would bring all annual reporting under one system and would allow Circuits to see the progress and offer support/help where required.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Liverpool District Synod for the memorial and for raising the concerns it contains.

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TMCP have welcomed the Circuit's suggestions and have agreed to work with the Connexional Team to explore ways in which the Checklist might be brought into the Online Suite.

The Conference, therefore, by way of interim reply, refers this memorial to the Council to investigate with the Connexional IT team and TMCP what options might be available to make the completion of the Data Protection Checklist easier for managing trustees, and to report back to the Conference of 2024.

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