

# Memorials to the Conference

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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.

### 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 pages 25-28 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 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 Work with young people through 3Generate**

The Herefordshire (South and East) (5/24) Circuit Meeting (Present: 18; Voting: unanimous) draws the Conference's attention to the urgency and importance of our missional and ecclesiological work with young people through the work of 3Generate and asks the Conference to take the following action:

- 1) To set aside a percentage of the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF) and ring fence for 3Generate.
- 2) To ask if a mechanism could be devised where churches and individuals can give to the Mission in Britain (MiB) fund specifically to support 3Generate.
- 3) To ask all churches, Circuits and Districts to consider prayerfully the funds that they hold that are ring fenced for children and young people and consider releasing and transferring these funds to the Mission in Britain (MiB) fund specifically to support 3Generate.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Herefordshire (South and East) Circuit Meeting for its affirmation of the work of 3Generate.

It is important that the Church is able to use its resources as flexibly as possible to meet its priorities as reflected in the decisions of the Conference. This flexibility is an explicit aim of the Connexional Financial Strategy and reducing and/or merging restricted funds is part of the on-going work plan. The past two years have shown how frustrating it can be to have restricted funds tied up and unable to be used at the very time when releasing resources should be a priority. Ring fencing monies or seeking specific donations to fund 3Generate might introduce a level of uncertainty to the future of 3Generate. Using a restricted fund in the way proposed might also restrict how the monies are used creatively in the future to benefit work with children and young people throughout the Connexion, not just those able to attend an in-person event.

Given the importance of the work with children and young people, the budget for 3Generate has been retained in the Connexional Central Services Budget for three years commencing with 2022/23.

The Conference would always seek to encourage donations from individuals or churches to Connexional Funds, including the Mission in Britain Fund. The MiB Fund is currently significantly directed towards God For All, the connexional strategy for Evangelism and Growth. This strategy includes work with children and young people both through 3Generate and other initiatives.

Where churches, Circuits and Districts already hold funds for work with children and young people the Conference would strongly encourage the use of these funds in the local setting. Where no priorities are identified at the Church level, conversations around the Circuit Mission Plan are encouraged.

The Conference declines the memorial.

## **M2 Central Finance Board Investments**

The Bradford North (27/32) Circuit Meeting (Present: 32; Voting: unanimous) requests that the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church be asked to make, by 2030, 10% of its investments in activities directly aimed at reducing global heating.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Bradford North Circuit Meeting for drawing attention to the Climate Emergency and the role the Church can play through the use of its resources.

The Central Finance Board (CFB) remains deeply committed to addressing the climate emergency. In accordance with the Conference's concerns, the CFB has already disinvested from all its oil and gas holdings on the basis that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) concluded that none of the oil and gas companies had business plans that were aligned with the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement.

The CFB maintains a strong culture of engagement with investee companies on the issue of climate, with a particular focus on companies that are essential to a transition to a more sustainable planet. The CFB has played a key role scrutinizing the climate action plans of investee companies, ensuring such plans work towards a just transition for people and planet.

The CFB and its subsidiary, Epworth Investment Management, are also signatories to the Montréal Pledge, an initiative that encourages investors to measure, disclose and reduce the carbon footprint of their portfolios

The Epworth funds listed below report on their carbon footprint using independently verified data. As at 31 December 2021 all the funds were performing significantly better than their benchmarks. This marked improvement compared to previous years stems from divestment of the remaining oil and gas majors.

- The Epworth UK Equity fund had a carbon footprint 37% below its benchmark.
- The Epworth Climate Stewardship fund had a carbon footprint 78% below its benchmark.

- The Epworth Global Equity fund had a carbon footprint 66% below its benchmark.

There would be considerable challenges for the Central Finance Board in directing specific investment to activities "aimed at reducing global heating". It is likely many such activities will be undertaken by the very oil and gas companies that CFB has already disinvested from. Also, CFB is not a speculative investor in projects or activities. Instead, by holding a diverse portfolio of investments, avoiding investments in particular businesses, and encouraging better practices in others, it enables the Church to hold investments which are consistent with Christian teaching. Therefore, the Conference declines the memorial.

## **M3 Ethical Investments and HSBC**

The South Worcestershire (5/16) Circuit Meeting (Present: 46; Voting: 45 for, 1 against), aware of the long history of the Methodist Church with HSBC and its predecessor Midland Bank, wishes to express its deep concern on two particular issues involving HSBC at the current time. Firstly HSBC is named as one of largest investors in companies involved in the occupation of Palestinian land by the State of Israel. It is third in the list of lenders to some 50 companies profiting from the occupation, as listed in the 'Don't Buy into Occupation'

report by 25 Palestinian and European human rights organisations, which states that loans totaling \$114 billion were made to these companies between 2018 and 2021. HSBC has also made a loan of \$10m directly to the State of Israel.

Secondly HSBC has been one of the largest lenders to the fossil fuel industry over many years and although its new Coal Policy is an improvement it still falls short of the 1.5 degree target, and has more to do according to ShareAction and Banking on our Future. It has also sought to water down banking commitments on climate change through the Net Zero Banking Alliance.

The Circuit therefore urges the Conference to request JACEI and the Central Finance Board to engage actively in discussions with HSBC on these and other appropriate ethical issues, and with the relevant interest groups in Methodism, in the context of potentially serious reputational damage, and include any action taken in the next JACEI report; it also encourages those Local Churches, Circuits and other Methodist bodies which bank with or invest in HSBC to do the same.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the South Worcestershire Circuit for drawing attention to the ethical issues raised through the Church's ongoing relationship with the HSBC bank.

The Central Finance Board (CFB) continues to hear the concerns around HSBC, including its investment practices in Israel, its lending to the fossil fuel industry, and allegations of involvement in money laundering. In response to these concerns, the CFB, under the guidance of JACEI and related policies, has agreed to strengthening its engagement efforts with the bank, and to include any action in the JACEI report to the Conference. The Conference accepts the memorial.

### **M4 Connexional Levy and Property Improvements**

In the light of COP26 and the encouragement given to churches to reduce carbon emissions, the Stretford and Urmston (19/7) Circuit Meeting (Present: 16; Voting: unanimous) requests the Methodist Conference to give consideration to the following:

Where a Methodist building is being sold and a connexional levy is payable, the Circuit requests that part of the Levy could be returned to the Circuit concerned through the District to make improvements to property which would have an immediate impact in the reduction of carbon emissions. Such improvements might be, but not restricted to, the installation of a heat pump to replace gas boilers, the installation of solar panels and the provisions of charging points for electric vehicles.

It is understood that this would apply to buildings that are being used extensively during the week by church and community.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Stretford and Urmston Circuit for drawing attention to the Climate Emergency and the role the Church can play through the use of its resources.

When a property is sold, a connexional levy is taken (in the case where there is not a replacement project) but the majority of the proceeds are retained by the Circuit. The Conference would support the use of these circuit funds for investment in carbon reduction initiatives. To support the aspiration to achieve a net-zero carbon Church by 2030, a number of potential actions for churches and Circuits are referenced in the Action for Hope report (Conference Agenda Item 17 section T). In addition, the Connexional Property Team are planning to support managing trustees as follows:

- a. New guidance online (latest published 28 April 2022) which provides different levels of solutions;
- b. Developing relationships with partner organisations such as A Rocha who can provide specific and tailored support for churches;
- c. Developing opportunities for churches to source greener and cheaper energy;
- d. Providing, or signposting to, training and information sessions for managing trustees and others, such as District Property Secretaries to help keep informed on latest technologies, partnering and funding opportunities.
- e. Connecting and communicating with churches across the Connexion to encourage and facilitate shared learning, sharing of good ideas and practice, and ensuring this best practice is available to everybody across the Connexion.

The property levy that is taken for connexional purposes is currently deployed as follows:

- 45% to the Pension Reserve Fund to meet any additional liabilities arising from the pension schemes;
- 27.5% to the District Advance Funds (DAFs), where the Districts have discretion to allocate monies according to the needs in their area;
- 21.5% to the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF), to meet those priorities as determined from time to time by the Methodist Conference (including costs in relation to the Action for Hope project); and
- 6% to the Methodist Church Fund to subsidise the costs of the Assessment.

Given that Circuits can already use the proceeds of sales to fund carbon reduction initiatives, Districts have the discretion to use their DAFs for this purpose, and that some of the CPF is already being allocated to Action for Hope, the Conference declines the memorial.

## **M5 Information Technology (IT) Provision for Ordained Ministers**

The Yorkshire West District Synod (Present: 112; Voting: 111 for, 0 against) notes that it was in 2007 that the Conference agreed the Computers for Ministry Report<sup>1</sup> which provided a scheme for ministers, in certain appointments, to claim money towards computer equipment. Although the scheme was changed to an allowance in 2017<sup>2</sup> it is the Synod's understanding that there has been no review of the provision of IT needed for ordained ministry, and how that is provided, since 2007.

As the 2017 Connexional Allowances Committee report states "*It is evident that computing and associated technology (eg mobile telephones) has advanced beyond recognition since 2007*". The COVID pandemic and an increasing digital first approach to mission and ministry has accelerated this again. The Synod recognises that as technology develops so do the associated costs. In particular the Synod would like to highlight to the Conference that:

- the IT hardware required for ministry now goes far beyond a desktop computer or laptop and printer to include mobile phones, webcams, projectors, recording equipment, mixing equipment, additional monitors (for efficient editing and screen sharing). In the pandemic many ministers have had to purchase equipment at their own expense to enable ministry. Some Circuits or churches now provide mobile phones for ministers whilst others expect ministers to cover this cost themselves.
- IT software and consumables have developed significantly since 2007 and many are now subscription based. The offers of free basic software such as antivirus or Microsoft Office with a computer have ceased and subscriptions to these and other software eg video editing can use up most of the annual Computers for Ministry allowance leaving little if anything left to purchase new hardware.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf07\\_51\\_Computers\\_for\\_Ministry\\_pc.doc](https://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf07_51_Computers_for_Ministry_pc.doc)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-2017-14-Connexional-Allowances-Committee.pdf>

- Collaboration between colleagues, lay and ordained, is crucial for ministry. The possibilities of platforms such as Microsoft Office 365 would greatly enhance this yet the current @methodist.org.uk email system only offers email and no other collaboration possibilities.
- GDPR has brought in many requirements relating to the storage of data yet ministers are expected to store data on their own personal computers as this is the only hardware provision they have. The Synod notes that the TMCP GDPR dos and don'ts<sup>3</sup> state: '*Don't encourage the use of personal devices for church business. Wherever possible issue phones, laptops etc to individuals for official business and ensure that these are returned at the end of that person's role or stationing.*' Given this 'don't' refers to stationing the Synod understands this relates to ministers yet the current Computers for Ministry provision expects ministers to provide their own IT equipment.

The Synod therefore requests that the Conference directs the Methodist Council to undertake a review of the provision of IT for ministers and to include in the review (amongst other things the Council may decide):

- The recommended specification for IT hardware and software required at the current time with a recommendation of how this is provided and what ministers are expected to provide, if anything, themselves.
- Whether mobile phones should now be provided.
- The possibility of providing Microsoft Office 365 to enable greater collaboration amongst ministers and for Circuits to be able to purchase additional licenses to enable lay and ordained colleagues/volunteers to collaborate together.
- Guidance about the storage of data in light of the disconnect between the current Computers for Ministry allowance system and TMCP GDPR advice.
- The best model for funding the provision which the review feels is required. The Synod is not expecting the connexional budget to cover the cost of the provision required but believes a co-ordinated and common approach directed by the Conference will best enable IT use in a digital first context of mission and ministry.

The Synod is aware that the review itself will both require personnel time and have associated costs when personnel capacity is limited and the connexional budgets are tight. The Synod is therefore aware that this piece of work may need to be planned into a future connexional year rather than be undertaken in 2022/23, however it does believe the work needs to be undertaken as we move forward in a digital first context of mission and ministry. In light of this rather than asking the Conference to undertake this work by a particular date the Synod asks the Memorials Committee to suggest an appropriate timeframe for the review in its proposed reply to the Conference.

## Reply

The Conference thanks the Yorkshire West Synod for drawing attention to the changing use of IT within the Church.

When the Computers for Ministry scheme was implemented in 2007 the scope of the proposals was carefully constructed due the complexity of the subject. These complexities included:

- data protection issues if a computer belonging to the Circuit were used for any private business by presbyters, deacons or their families;
- organising the updating and replacement of computers when these needs do not coincide with a presbyter's or deacon's move;

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.tmcp.org.uk/about/resources/guidenotes/data-protection-dos-and-donts>

- removal of personal data from equipment when a presbyter or deacon leaves an appointment;
- how to deal with the circuit computer if a presbyter or deacon preferred to use their own higher specification model;
- the overlap between what presbyters or deacons keep on their computers and must leave behind when they move (eg membership records) and what they will want to take with them (eg worship resources, Visual Liturgy).

None of these complexities have disappeared, but as the memorial highlights, the considerations about the scope and scale of IT equipment are now even greater. Even the limited aims of the original scheme proved to be undeliverable and in 2017 the scheme was amended to reflect the fact that ministers were making their own decisions about what IT equipment suited their needs. Given the variety of equipment available, the speed with which new technology becomes available, and the variability of how technology is used in different churches and Circuits, retaining flexibility in approach is preferable. For example, Circuits are already able to provide mobile phones, Office 365 or other tools to support ministers in their roles. No sooner might a standard be agreed than it becomes out of date or is insufficient for those with the skills and resources to be able to exploit technology more fully. Similarly, a connexional standard may impose costs on Circuits that are not affordable.

The Conference does acknowledge the apparent inconsistency in guidance concerning the use of personal equipment and best practice in relation to the General Data Protection Regulations is an issue. The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes are already undertaking a review of the dos and don'ts published on the website with a view to revising these before the start of the new connexional year. The revision will not only consider what is suitable guidance for ministers, but also consider how this affects volunteers within the church who use their own equipment.

Therefore, the Conference declines the memorial.

#### **M6     £150 Council Tax Rebate for Energy Costs**

The Lincolnshire District Synod (Present: 48; Voting 20 for, 1 against) considers unfair and unacceptable the response from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities of HM Government that the £150 Council Tax rebate for energy costs would not be available in respect of properties which ministers are required to occupy to carry out their duties and on which ministers are obliged to pay the bills for energy costs consumed therein because the council tax is paid by Circuits and Districts. It was a Conference decision that the Council Tax is payable by Circuits and Districts whilst ministers are required to meet the energy costs. If ministers paid the Council Tax and the energy costs, the rebate would be available to them and if Circuits and Districts paid the energy costs as well as the Council Tax the rebate would probably also be available.

The Lincolnshire District Synod believes therefore that the Conference should urge the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities of HM Government to instruct Local Authorities to make available the £150 Council Tax rebate for energy costs to Circuits and Districts who pay the Council Tax on properties which ministers are required to occupy to carry out their duties and on which ministers are obliged to pay the bills for energy costs consumed therein and the Conference should instruct Circuit Stewards and District Trustees to pass on to the ministers concerned any rebates received.

The Lincolnshire District Synod also asks the Conference to urge Circuit Stewards and District Trustees, as part of the covenant relationship with ministers, to carefully consider making an appropriate payment to represent the Council Tax rebate for energy costs to each minister occupying a manse and paying the energy costs thereon, whether or not the rebate

is received from the Local Authority, recognising that there may be income tax implications in making such a payment.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Lincolnshire District Synod for raising the issue of energy costs for ministers.

The Conference understands the concerns that the government decision in respect of the support for energy costs seems unfair and inadequate. However, the Connexional Team has already been in communication with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on this issue and therefore it is unclear what will be achieved by writing again on the same subject. It is worth highlighting that the situation is not particular to Methodist ministers and relates to all home occupiers who do not pay their own Council Tax. Furthermore, the Council Tax rebate is only available for properties in Council Tax bands A to D, therefore many manses in higher bands would not be eligible for the rebate regardless of this issue. It would be possible for the Conference to consider moving the payment of Council Tax to ministers however this is likely to cost ministers more in the long run than the benefit of the Council tax rebate which not everyone would be eligible for. Had the church bodies who pay the Council Tax been eligible for the rebate it could have used those funds for grants for ministers but unfortunately this is not the case.

The government is making available discretionary funding for every local authority to provide support to people who are not eligible for the Council Tax rebate. At the time of writing, it is unclear exactly how this will work and what eligibility criteria might apply. The Conference urges ministers to approach their local authority with a view to accessing the funding which the government says is in place. The Connexional Allowances Committee is already tasked with keeping the minimum stipend and allowances available to ministers under review. The Committee already includes consideration of inflationary pressures when setting these amounts and will also give particular regard to the impact of the local authority discretionary scheme.

The Conference wishes to remind ministers that should they ever be in acute financial need the Fund for Support of Presbyters and Deacons is able to make one off grants in these circumstances. It also urges those facing financial hardship to come forward sooner, rather than later, given that early intervention is always going to be preferable to waiting for circumstances to deteriorate.

While declining to enter into further communication with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on this issue, the Conference does encourage circuit stewards and District Treasurers to consider carefully whether it would be appropriate to make a payment in lieu of the rebate to each minister occupying a manse, and as part of that process to enter into a conversation with said ministers about the appropriateness of such payments and the income tax implications.

### **M7 Living Wage**

The Wharfedale and Aireborough (27/15) Circuit Meeting (Present: 23; Voting: unanimous), while fully supporting the Conference decision of 2007 to make the Living Wage the minimum basic salary for lay employees, requests that the blanket application of this to under-18 students be reviewed.

The *Living Wage Foundation*, which sets the Living Wage hourly rates, makes its calculations on “the cost of living based on a basket of goods and services” and the aim is for households to earn enough to reach a minimum acceptable living standard as defined by the public. (Living Wage Foundation website March 2022).

The 2010 Conference Report which set out the implementation of the Living Wage also refers to households and people with family responsibilities and does not seem to have in mind under-18 students. That report states that “The arguments for the Living Wage are based around practical need”. Since the law changed in 2013 under-18s have to be in education or training even if they also are in employment and there are bursaries to support this where there is financial need. That means that under-18s are normally in a different financial situation to those the Living Wage has been devised to help. We note that the government minimum wage provides a tapered minimum hourly rate with the under-18s rate from April this year being £4.81 an hour and the over-23s rate (National Living Wage) being £9.50.

Our recognition that this is an area which the Methodist Church could helpfully review comes out of a particular mission situation in our Circuit. One church runs a café and has experience of how employing under 18 students on a Saturday to do duties normally undertaken on weekdays by volunteers, can bring real benefits to church and community and to the young people themselves.

Paying the real Living Wage does not reflect the need of the students, nor the work they are asked to do, and would mean that the adult employees would have to be paid significantly more to reflect their level of experience and skill and bring the financial stewardship of the café into jeopardy. The café could run without the young people but much would be lost.

We ask that the Conference direct the Methodist Council to review the paying of the real Living Wage to under-18 students particularly where the work expected is not the same as that of an over-18. As part of a review the Methodist Council could consider a wage rate for under 18s based on the Real Living Wage (£9.90 out of London currently) but given a *percentage* taper which could be in line with that made by the government for under-18s minimum pay.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Wharfedale and Aireborough Circuit for its memorial, and for its request to review the blanket application of the Living Wage to be the minimum basic salary for lay employees under the age of 18.

Whilst the Conference is in sympathy with the challenges of paying the Living Wage to employed staff under the age of 18 as outlined in the memorial, the decision of the Conference [[www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/confrep-11-the-living-wage-170510.pdf](http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/confrep-11-the-living-wage-170510.pdf)] is that all employed staff whether by Districts, Circuit or Local Church are paid the Living Wage as a minimum basic salary to demonstrate the church’s obligation to be an ethical and responsible employer and to demonstrate the Church’s commitment to social justice and placing our beliefs at the centre of what we do. The issues of wage poverty can be as real for under 18s as for over 18s as they seek to support themselves and their families.

The Conference notes that whilst the Living Wage Foundation states that the Living Wage is voluntarily recommended to all employed staff over the age of 18, the Conference chose not to make this distinction in the resolutions it passed on this subject.

The Conference declines the memorial.

### **M8 Cry for hope**

In the light of:

- the *Cry for Hope* by Palestinian Christians, which Conference 2021 commended to the Methodist people for prayer and study

- the detailed description of Israel as an apartheid society by the late lamented Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International
- the clarity in the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism that criticism of the state of Israel is not in itself anti-Semitic

the Sheffield (25/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 64; Voting 59 for, 0 against) requests Conference to urge the Methodist people to support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign referred to in *Cry for Hope* as a key means of bringing about non-violent change in Israel/ Palestine.

### Reply

The Conference thanks the Sheffield Circuit Meeting for the memorial and reaffirms its commendation of 'Cry For Hope: A Call To Decisive Action', a statement made by the Palestinian-led coalition 'Global Kairos for Justice'.

In 2014, at the request of the Conference, the Methodist Council presented to the Conference a briefing on the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. The briefing describes the movement's aim to, in the light of on-going illegal occupation and oppression of Palestine, encourage non-violent punitive measures until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law. The Methodist Council briefing notes the historicity of the contrasting narratives on all sides of this conflict, the need for sustained dialogue, the power imbalance that exists in Israel and Palestine and the BDS movement's assertion that proposals for mutual dialogue are flawed when there is no mutuality.

Since the Conference received the Methodist Council briefing in 2014, the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem has reported the demolition of 1,068 Palestinian houses leaving 3,934 people homeless (including 2044 minors) and in addition the demolition of 2,000 non-residential structures.<sup>4</sup> Over the same period B'Tselem also reports the killing of 1,102 Palestinians by Israeli security forces<sup>5</sup> and of 63 Israeli civilians or security forces by Palestinians. Since 2014, at any one time the Israeli Government has held between 355 and 584 Palestinians in administrative detention without trial. The United Nations Security Council in December 2016 passed resolution 2334 condemning "all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, including, inter alia, the construction and expansion of settlements, transfer of Israeli settlers, confiscation of land, demolition of homes and displacement of Palestinian civilians, in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant resolutions".

In 2018, the Conference, in its reply to memorial M37 'Situation in Palestine', noted changes in Israeli law that have deepened the occupation and diminished the status and rights of non-Jewish residents in Israel including the introduction of 'The Basic Law: Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People' in 2018 and the 'Law for the Prevention of Damage to the State of Israel through Boycott' in 2011. The Conference notes the decision on the 25 May 2021 of the Irish government, and of the Irish parliament in a unanimous vote, to recognise that Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem and its settlement activity there and in other areas

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<sup>4</sup> B'Tselem database of house demolitions – figures for January 2015 to March 2022  
<https://statistics.btselem.org/en/demolitions/pretext-unlawful-construction>

<sup>5</sup> The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs database records 1,162 Palestinian deaths from Israeli security forces over the same period, and 37 Palestinians killed by Israeli settlers or other parties. [www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties](http://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties). (These figures do not include the much larger death toll from the Gaza war of July/August 2014).

of the West Bank, amount to an unlawful de facto annexation of that territory and a serious breach of international law.<sup>6</sup>

The Conference opposes all instances violence and deplores the indiscriminate firing of rockets from Gaza directed towards Israeli neighbourhoods and urges instead non-violence means of expression and protest.

The Conference has already provided a degree of support for some aspects of the call for boycott, divestment and sanctions. In 2010 Conference resolution 14/9 called for a boycott of goods from settlements in the occupied territories.

On divestment, the 2021, the Conference resolution 3/5 (as its further reply to 2020 memorials M7-M9) endorsed the recommendation of the Methodist Council on the exclusion from investment of companies operating in settlement areas in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) have since advised the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church (CFB) on the revision of the Israel/Palestine investment policy in this regard. JACEI will use independent research to assess companies against the investment policy on a case by case basis taking into account the degree of involvement in the occupation.

With respect to sanctions on Israel, the reply of the Conference (2021:3/5) to Memorials M8-M11 'Cry of Hope' calls upon the British Government to end support for military contracts with Israel whilst that country remains in violation of international law. The Conference notes that Israeli defence companies such as Elbit Systems have won multi-million pound UK defence contracts in strategic aspects of defence yet provide and service aerial drones that have been use in attacks on Gaza.<sup>7</sup> In view of the illegality of the occupation the conference calls on the UK government to suspend the right of Israeli defence companies involved in the occupation to tender for Ministry of Defence contracts.

In response to the request of the Sheffield Circuit, the Conference therefore invites the Methodist people to support the above measures in relation to boycott, divestment and sanctions until such time as Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and complies with the precepts of international law. The Conference supports the right of any individual or institutional investor to join a divestment campaign in the cause of justice and expresses concern over the UK government's interest in curtailing such rights with new primary legislation.<sup>8</sup>

The Conference acknowledges the deep divisions that exist over the aspirations of two peoples in the land for self-determination as well as the desire of many for security, understanding, mutual respect and beneficial co-existence. The Conference urges leaders on all side of this conflict to return to a path of dialogue and accommodation of needs of all peoples. It applauds the many positive educational initiatives in the region and beyond including the work of the Abraham Initiatives supported by the Council of Christians and Jews. It deplores antisemitism in its different expressions, directs people to the 2018 memorial M26 on antisemitism and welcomes definitions and declarations on antisemitism that improve understanding and awareness. It urges people to pray for trust, security and freedom from fear, in order that the region may become a place for two nations and three faiths to co-exist with parity of esteem, building a lasting peace for all.

## **M9 Palestine and the World Council of Churches Assembly**

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<sup>6</sup> Dáil Debates, Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2021, Vol. 1007, No. 5 [Annexation of Palestine: Motion \[Private Members\] – Dáil Éireann \(33rd Dáil\) – Tuesday, 25 May 2021 – Houses of the Oireachtas](#)

<sup>7</sup> Elbit Systems UK [Elbit Systems UK Ltd | Elbit Systems UK \(elbitsystems-uk.com\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> Right to Bouycott coalition [Right to Boycott | Protect the right to boycott](#)

The Birmingham District Synod (Present: 101; Voting: 87 for, 1 against) welcomes the Statement from the Sabeel-Kairos March 2022 Theological Consultation on Israel Palestine as a 'Call to Karlsruhe ', and urges the Conference to do likewise. It then requests the Conference to authorise and empower our representatives to the World Council of Churches' Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, in September to urge the Assembly

a) to study the Statement, alongside the 'Cry for Hope' from Palestinian Christians of July 2020 and encourage member Churches to inform the Palestinian Christian community of their response;

b) to continue the support of the WCC for the much needed and effective Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), as an expression of the WCC's involvement in activities which promote justice and peace;

c) to encourage the formation of a structure to monitor the situation in Israel Palestine, as it used to have in the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum, so that Palestinian Christian voices may be heard, and which could then assist the WCC to engage with its member Churches, when appropriate, to work together in taking specific actions in relation to this ongoing crisis.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District Synod for its memorial with respect to Sabeel-Kairos March Theological Consultation of March 2022.

The Conference welcomes the attention given by the Synod to the valuable work of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), recognises that EAPPI continues to prevail in its protection work in the face of financial, logistical and political challenges and urges its continued support by WCC.

The Conference recalls its reply in 2021 to Memorials M8 to M11 in which it commended the document "Cry of Hope" for careful and prayerful study. The Conference appreciates the breadth of the statement of the Sabeel-Kairos March 2022 Theological Consultation and its significant implications. While recognising the urgency of the situation faced by Palestinian Christians, the Conference has not had the opportunity to give due consideration of the outcome of this theological consultation and therefore is not in a position to urge its consideration by the WCC General Assembly or to offer the Palestinian Christian community a response of the Methodist Church in Britain at this time. The Conference therefore declines the memorial's request in relation to the theological consultation, however it recognises the importance of giving a response from the Methodist Church to Palestinian Christians as soon as possible. In the light of the Church's ongoing engagement with "Cry for Hope", the Conference encourages our representatives to the WCC Assembly to promote the importance of the WCC recreating a forum to monitor the situation in Israel Palestine, for the reasons and purpose suggested in the memorial.

### **M10 Korea**

The Bristol District Synod (Present: 94; Voting: 93 for, 0 against) asks the Methodist Conference to affirm its support for a lasting peace settlement to end the Korean War and instructs the President and Vice-President to sign the Korean Peace Appeal on its behalf.

The Methodist Conference commends the Korean Peace Appeal and urges Synods, Circuits, Local Churches and individuals to sign the Korean Peace Appeal in solidarity with ecumenical partners in Korea.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Bristol District Synod for its memorial drawing attention to the Korea Peace Appeal in support of efforts for peace and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula.

The Conference confirms that the Korea Peace Appeal, the text of which can be found at <https://en.endthekoreanwar.net/>, has the full support of our Partner, the Korean Methodist Church. The Conference also recognises that the World Methodist Council has advocated for re-unification, and has invited all its member churches to assist in spreading the word and calling for prayer for the Korean Peninsula.

In January 2022, the National Christian Council in Korea (NCCK) and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), hosted a webinar to discuss the Korea Peace Appeal with representatives of churches in Britain. The Conference therefore welcomes the opportunity provided by this memorial to express its support for efforts to bring about a Peace Treaty formally to end the Korean War, and promote links between North and South Korea and sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula. It is pleased to be acting in this respect alongside the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church and other ecumenical partners.

The Conference endorses the Korea Peace Appeal as a further expression of its commitment to building peace, reaffirming the need and opportunity for reconciliation, re-unification and a lasting peace settlement.

The Conference accepts the memorial.

#### **M11 Tenant Farmers**

The Plymouth and Exeter District Synod (Present: 77; Voting: 76 for, 0 against) wishes to convey to the Conference our collective disquiet at the practices currently being undertaken by some of the country's largest landlords in taking back land from their tenants in order to gain the biggest financial advantage from the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS). In a number of cases, such land is being left for rewilding whereas it had previously been used for food production and the sustaining of a local economy. This activity is to the detriment of local societal cohesion, as well as denigrating the efforts of (in some cases) multi-generational tenant families and seems to be against the charitable aims of at least one large landlord - the National Trust.

We urge the Conference to write to the Minister for The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to ask for a review of the new funding policy for farming now that knowledge of unintended consequences is growing. We believe that in a time of economic and international uncertainty, there needs to be a greater focus on food security and maximising the availability of land to help meet the needs of our nations, and other nations around the world. We also believe that we should not be engaging in policies that increase the number of food miles when we are facing a climate change emergency.

We also ask the Conference to invite all who are members of the National Trust to contact the organisation as a matter of urgency and question their current practices which, although financially beneficial to the organisation, are detrimental to the life of our communities.

#### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Plymouth and Exeter District for raising important concerns about the position of tenant farmers. The Conference recognises that tenant farmers as both food producers and custodians of our countryside are having to operate under increasingly restrictive tenancy terms and short-term security of occupation. The Conference believes it is important that the management of our agricultural land balances the important needs of ensuring sustainable food production, good environmental and animal welfare practices

underpinned with social justice for all those involved in the management of that land whether as owners, tenants or workers and the need to reduce carbon emissions. The Conference is aware of guidance issued jointly by the Tenant Farmers Association and Country Land and Business Association aimed at encouraging tenants and landlords to work together towards ensuring that the joint objectives referred to above are met. ([https://tfa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CLA\\_TFA\\_Env-agreements-guidance\\_FINAL.pdf](https://tfa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CLA_TFA_Env-agreements-guidance_FINAL.pdf)).

The Conference is also aware that the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has established a Tenancy Working Group for England, with Baroness Kate Rock as its Chair, which has been given the task of considering what more the UK Government needs to do to encourage joint working between landlords and tenants and to prevent bad practice. It is also understood that the Welsh Government is planning to establish a similar group later this year. The Conference would certainly wish to support these initiatives to find solutions to the real problems which tenant farmers are currently facing but considers it inappropriate to single out one landlord for particular criticism. The President and Vice-President therefore will communicate to DEFRA the Conference's disquiet at the practices currently being undertaken by some of the country's largest landlords in taking back land from their tenants in order to gain the biggest financial advantage from the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) and to the Minister for The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) its request for a review of the new funding policy for farming now that knowledge of unintended consequences is growing.

### **M12 Energy Efficiency Rating of Methodist Buildings and Standing Order 973**

The Manchester and Stockport District Synod (Present: 60; Voting: 48 for, 4 against) notes that, in response to the 2009 report 'Hope in God's Future' it is now a requirement, embedded in Standing Orders, to require a current Energy Performance Certificate for manses. Standing Orders (Book VI Part 2 Guidance Section 1C 3) now state that "Circuits should seek to provide manses to meet a minimum of a 'C' energy efficiency rating".

However, the Synod believes that the Methodist Church should go further than this and should require local churches and circuits to work towards all our buildings meeting the minimum of grade C efficiency rating. In order to encourage this, the Synod proposes that projects to improve the energy efficiency of Methodist buildings should be regarded as 'replacement projects' under Standing Order 973.

The Synod therefore proposes that paragraph 2 of Standing Order 973 should be amended to allow carbon reduction projects, aimed at bringing a building up to at least grade C in its EPC, to be treated as replacement projects.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Manchester and Stockport District Synod for drawing attention to the Climate Emergency and the role the Church can play through the use of its resources.

Through Action for Hope, the Connexional Property team and others outside the Connexional Team, a great deal of work is being undertaken to assess how church buildings may be improved to achieve a C rating or better. It is accepted amongst colleagues from other denominations that this is quite a complicated process compared to a domestic property such as a manse and therefore having a rating system may not be the most efficient way to benchmark success. We need to understand more about how we can achieve carbon reduction across our buildings before agreeing the mechanism by which we measure this.

One particular element of this ongoing research is around how to measure embodied carbon in our properties. This is an approach which considers the carbon efficiency already

inherent in the existing fabric of the building and its retention against demolition or major remodelling to be replaced with new carbon using materials.

When any property is sold, the majority of the capital receipt is already available for reinvesting in the circuit as appropriate. Some, or all, of these funds could be directed towards net zero carbon initiatives suggested in the Memorial.

In terms of the repayment of the remaining capital receipts through reimbursement of the levy, there is already a mechanism for this in place. This is set out through the criteria adopted by the Council as required by Standing Order 973 updated in 2021. Through criterion 2) Review of Mission – one or more dispositions, there is scope for an element of a larger building project to include energy saving and renewables elements as part of the works for which the levy is being sought to be reimbursed. It may not be appropriate to amend the criteria to allow reimbursement of the levy for replacement projects where the review of mission had not been undertaken. The Church might spend considerable resources in improving the carbon efficiency of buildings for which it no longer has a purpose.

The Conference, therefore, refers this memorial to the Methodist Council to allow the practical, financial and policy issues raised to be more fully explored.

### **M13 Climate Change and Energy Efficiency of Manses**

The Cumbria District Synod (Present: 60; Voting: unanimous) wishes to express concern about the poor energy efficiency of many manses, in the light of both rising energy prices, and the climate emergency.

The guidelines on manse provision (CPD Book VII Parts 1 and 2) state that an incoming minister should be provided with “a current energy performance certificate” (‘EPC’), and that “Circuits should seek to provide manses to meet a minimum of a ‘C’ energy efficiency rating”. However many manses have never been assessed and have no EPC.

Current government regulations for rental properties require that properties with an EPC rating below E cannot be let without making significant energy improvements. As ministers are not tenants, this regulation does not apply to manses. However, given the Methodist Church’s commitment to a Net Zero future, and concern for the wellbeing of ministers, it ought to be a priority to replace or improve manses that do not meet this standard.

To address these concerns, we ask the Conference to:

- direct that the EPC rating of the manse be given on all circuit stationing profiles;
- direct the Ministries Committee to consider what action needs to be taken to ensure that no minister is expected to live in a manse that would not meet current minimum requirements for a rental property.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Cumbria District Synod for its memorial, particularly in the context of the climate crisis and the ongoing work in addressing the net zero carbon of all our property. There is much work being undertaken on this matter and it is clear that encouragement for all manses to have an EPC rating of C or above is a positive step forward.

There are a number of public sources of guidance on this matter already available to ministers if required – these are all referred to on the Methodist Church website property pages here – <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/guidelines-for-manses/>.

This also makes reference to an open public government database which records all EPC ratings available - <https://www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate>. In fact, an EPC certificate has to be provided for all new property purchases in the last few years.

In addition to this, the latest guidance for Quinquennial Inspections is also advocating that inspectors consider the environmental and energy issues associated with a property along with the remedial works required to improve such issues. This gives an opportunity for a Circuit to look to improve its current energy efficiency of its manse portfolio as part of a strategic approach to its accommodation stock.

The Conference accepts the memorial.

#### **M14 Framework for Quinquennial Reports**

Noting the urgency with which we need to make our buildings more energy efficient and the need for professional advice to enable Managing Trustees to respond to this challenge, the Bristol District Synod (Present: 101; Voting: unanimous), asks the Conference to put in place measures to amend the current framework for quinquennial reports on church properties, including all Manses, to require surveyors (who are suitably qualified) to identify and roughly cost works that will reduce the carbon footprint of the property as prioritised by Managing Trustees.

We note the object of a Quinquennial solely concerns maintaining the worth of properties and urge that the objects be expanded to include the reduction of the carbon footprint of all Church buildings.

#### **Reply**

The Quinquennial Inspections (QI) guidance for managing trustees was updated last year - <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/quinquennial-inspections/> and is available to trustees and inspectors on the Methodist Church website.

In the latest guidance there were additional requirements for an inspector to consider the environmental and energy issues of a building within the inspection – this is being reviewed during the connexional year 2022/23 with the support of District Property Secretaries. The connexional property team is also working with the Action for Hope group to look further at how we can support churches to look at reducing their carbon footprint and have provided a new set of advice and guidance on a specific section of the property pages of the website. Within the current template for a QI inspection there is a specific requirement for an inspector to highlight matters for repair or improvement and to indicate approximate costs for achieving these.

As greater understanding of net zero is gained then it is the intention of the Property Team to further develop the QI and reporting guidance in this regard so that it is proportionate to the church building and ensures that measures are achievable for managing trustees. As work is already underway in this area the memorial is accepted.

#### **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:

- 1) To signpost people to the anti-bullying policy in the current Safeguarding policy. To ensure there is work done to include anti-harassment in Policy (as indicated in Positive Working Together and in the Conference 2015 Report).

- 2) 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).
- 3) To change the status of The Shared Commitment from being 'guidance' to being the expected behaviour of every person in Methodist Church life.
- 4) 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.
- 5) 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.
- 6) To integrate the Shared Commitment from Positive Working Together into other Conflict Resolution courses being used in the Methodist Church.
- 7) 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.

### **M16 The 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Birth of Hugh Bourne**

The Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District Synod (Present: 93; Voting: unanimous) notes that 2022 is the 250th anniversary of the birth of Hugh Bourne, one of the co-founders of Primitive Methodism.

The Synod asks the Conference to encourage all churches to promote the range of anniversary events, as detailed on the Englesea Brook website, and spend time exploring the story of Hugh Bourne and Primitive Methodism in their local area. The conference invites preachers to use the anniversary service produced by the volunteers and staff from Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum ([engleseabrook.org.uk](http://engleseabrook.org.uk)) to explore the theme for their celebratory year 'Transformed Lives; Transforming Lives', which can be found on the website.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District Synod for the memorial, and recognises the significance of this anniversary year and the contribution of Hugh Bourne to the Church. The Conference also thanks the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District and Englesea Brook for all they are doing to celebrate Hugh Bourne's legacy, and accepts this memorial. Preachers are encouraged to use the anniversary service provided, and all are encouraged to promote and join with the year of celebratory events at Englesea Brook.

### **M17 Ecumenical Appointments of Ministers**

The Cumbria District Synod (Present: 60 Voting: unanimous) celebrates that, to develop *Our Calling* first adopted in 2000, the Conference of 2004 resolved that the Priorities for the Methodist Church are as follows:

In partnership with others wherever possible, the Methodist Church will concentrate its prayers, resources, imagination and commitments on this priority: to proclaim and affirm its conviction of God's love in Christ, for us and for the world; and renew confidence in God's presence and action in the world and in the Church.

Seeking to be "In partnership with others wherever possible", the Cumbria District entered into a Covenanted Partnership in Extended Area (a 'CPEA') on Advent Sunday 2016, renewed on Advent Sunday 2021. The Cumbria Methodist District, its Circuits and Local Churches, are working with others in ecumenical Mission Communities throughout the county and in other imaginative ways to proclaim God's love for all and renew confidence in God's presence and action in the world and the Church. As Methodists, working in partnership with others has also been a prime strategy for fulfilling *Our Calling, Our Calling* having been most recently reaffirmed in the Conference of 2021, and which the Cumbria District Synod similarly celebrates and seeks to fulfil.

As part of these endeavours, a number of joint ministry posts within the County have emerged. Some of these are shared posts to serve time-honoured or traditional church congregations and their communities; others are to serve in pioneering and fresh ways; both types are variously served by either Methodists or ministers from ecumenical partners.

The Cumbria District Synod recognises that the recruitment process for joint posts can be challenging because different denominations have different methods of appointment: some processes involve a 'call' and application process; others (in Methodist terms) a 'direct stationing'; whereas the standard method for the Methodist Church is an itinerant, stationing

system. All such systems have principled reasons behind them, but the difficulty is often that they do not mesh well together. To operate more than one system at any one moment rarely works. For example, if a profile is submitted for Methodist stationing and a match made, through that period of the process the post cannot be advertised for non-Methodist candidates and explorations such as interviews with other candidates cannot be held. Likewise, if other denominations are in the middle of their recruitment process for a joint post, a profile cannot be actively considered in stationing matching. It leads very much to an 'either/or' approach, save, in the Methodist context, for the occasional agreement by the Stationing Committee to allow a post to be advertised.

Thus, even after sensitive and respectful negotiation between ecumenical partners, it can be difficult to ensure that a joint ministerial post might be open to ministers of each participating denomination (as opposed to a policy of rotation, which in many instances has become increasingly challenging).

This might be in a Local Ecumenical Partnership, an ecumenical covenanted Mission Community, or an Ecumenical Pioneering post. The Cumbria District Synod is aware that such difficulties are regularly experienced more widely in other ecumenical contexts in the Connexion.

The Cumbria District Synod affirms the Methodist itinerant, stationing process for ordained ministry in the Methodist Church as the general approach for the Methodist Church. Yet it recognises that in some instances it is appropriate for the Stationing Committee to give consent for particular posts to be advertised, such as in chaplaincy or other contexts, including occasionally for circuit contexts.

However, the Synod also expresses some confusion and concern as to why some posts receive permission for advertisement and others do not and the reasoning for this, and in particular whether sufficient attention is being paid to the Conference's priority that the Methodist Church will work "In partnership with others wherever possible", a priority that should presumably rank not only alongside but above some of the other considerations that may be being applied.

For example, the Cumbria District Synod expresses concern that an application to advertise a joint post to serve the Anglican and Methodist congregations of the Sedbergh Circuit was declined in July 2021, notwithstanding that it appeared to have parallels with another ecumenical post for which permission had previously been given elsewhere in the Connexion. There is particular concern that the Committee's advice that the Circuit should instead submit a profile into the stationing process appeared to dismiss the relational, practical and ecumenical considerations which had been expressed to the Committee prior to its decision. The Synod recognises that the Stationing Committee has a difficult role and must balance several considerations in any instance, but in the invitation to submit a profile instead, there was an implication that our Anglican partners should simply accept a Methodist minister on a Methodist timescale and subject to available Methodist resource. However unintended, this risked being at the least insensitive, and was not an example of seeking to work with others wherever possible.

The Sedbergh Circuit meeting resolved not to submit a profile, and an Anglican priest has now been recruited. This priest will work alongside another Anglican priest in the ecumenical Mission Community and the Circuit, both priests with (subject to Conference's approval) Authorised Presbyterian status, with both being funded ecumenically. This reflects an imaginative pooling of denominational resources both to serve their existing congregations (being funded equally by the Anglicans and Methodists), but also equally to put their resources into pioneering mission in that context (the latter being funded equally by Anglicans, Methodists and the United Reformed Church).

The local desire, supported by county denominational bodies, was for both posts to have been equally open to the different participating denominations; however, for the time-honoured post this was not permitted on the Methodist side, so that it had to be either an Anglican or a Methodist.

This illustrates the challenges involved, and the Cumbria District Synod's concern that the Methodist Church's priority, to proclaim God's love and renew confidence in God's presence through working with others wherever possible, is not being sufficiently taken into account in the Church's present approach to stationing matters. Even beyond the Methodist Church's Priorities, the missional and ecumenical imperative of Christ's prayer for unity and its witness to the world in John 17 requires, the Synod believes, a more imaginative approach to the stationing of ministers.

The Cumbria District Synod notes that the Methodist Council (Resolution 41/6 at its April 2022 meeting) has directed the Ministries Committee in consultation with the Stationing Committee to conduct a thorough review of the stationing process and to report to the Conference in 2023.

Accordingly, the Cumbria District Synod asks the Conference to direct:

- a) the Ministries and Stationing Committees to consider in their review of stationing processes the issues raised in this memorial, including to:
  - i. develop and publish criteria for enabling the consistent consideration of posts that require permission to advertise (or any similar process), and to
  - ii. ensure that such adjustments are allowed for or made as may be needed to allow for recruitment and appointment to joint ecumenical ministerial posts (and not merely on a rotational basis), so as to respect and embody the Methodist Church's Priorities referred to above, including to enable working "In partnership with others wherever possible"; and, in the meantime,
- b) the Stationing Committee to take into account and apply the Methodist Church's commitment to working "In partnership with others wherever possible" when considering applications in connection with ecumenical and joint ministry posts.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Cumbria District for the memorial and raising matters around the stationing process, with particular reference to ecumenical appointments.

Work being undertaken in relation to the review of the stationing processes will include the matters raised in this memorial. Therefore, the Conference accepts the memorial and directs the Ministries Committee to include the matters to be considered in the review being done by the Stationing Review Group.

## **M18 Church Closures**

The South Holland (17/15) Circuit Meeting (Present: 26; Voting: 23 for, 0 against) draws the Conference's attention to the situation regarding the forced closure of churches in the Circuit under SO 605A(1).

A Circuit Meeting is the closest primary unit of Mission in contact with management of rural churches.

Within this latest CPD it removes any flexibility or discretion by instructing Circuit Meetings must close a church if after four consecutive quarters the churches membership numbers are below twelve.

We want to register our opposition to this ruling and ask the Conference to reconsider this instruction.

We owe all our members and the communities we serve a Duty of Care and Freedom of Choice at which church they worship.

Rural churches continue to play a vital role in the life of villages. We think it is entirely wrong that a sound church building with a small and dedicated membership and worshipping congregation that is financially viable should have to close due to a membership number imposed by Conference not being achieved.

We know of folk who worship regularly but do not want to become members when we explain what this discipleship entails. Not all members want the responsibility of church management positions. In rural areas village churches are a focal point for the community. Often the only meeting point for social and other occasions.

This has become more apparent during the restrictions of the Pandemic. We have often heard the comment; "We have missed meeting people at Lunch Club, Craft Club or Coffee Mornings." Folk have missed the essential social contact of other human beings. Forced closure of a church will take this away permanently.

Loneliness and isolation are part of village life for some. But it affects all ages. When a chapel is closed under the new ruling what happens to the displaced members? Not all will attend another church. Due to age, lack of transport, loyalty to their old church, lack of confidence, averse to change. No friends or acquaintances, other than at the local church. They will become isolated. How can any fund raising for Mission projects be carried out with confidence if the threat of closure is hanging over the chapel and its members.

A Church Council will know when a church has to close. When it is no longer financially viable, congregation numbers degraded and no-one able to manage the church affairs. Circuit Meetings must have the discretion to support the church further or agree with their request for closure.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the South Holland Circuit Meeting for its memorial, and agrees with the vital role that rural churches can play in the life of village and other rural communities or networks. The Conference affirms the pastoral and social activities that the Circuit Meeting describes, including to help overcome loneliness and isolation.

The Conference also agrees with the South Holland Circuit Meeting that "not all members want the responsibility of church management positions". The need to lessen and share some of the responsibilities of trusteeship at local level, and to help local church life to flourish, was one of the prime reasons behind the Conference's decisions in 2021 regarding Oversight and Trusteeship. The Conference is therefore concerned that the Circuit Meeting may have misunderstood the intention behind, and the possible applications of, Standing Order 605A. The Circuit Meeting may also have confused the closure of a 'Local Church' (or 'society' and its congregation) with the closure of a 'chapel' (the building).

The South Holland Circuit Meeting may recall that provisions for a Local Church to close when numbers became too small already existed. However, the 2021 Conference increased the minimum number from 6 to 12 (to match the minimum number for forming a new Local Church), in part to help ensure that more congregations considered the possibility of entering into schemes with other congregations to form multi-site churches, including to help share and in some cases reduce the burden of trusteeship.

To enable such schemes to be developed more easily and widely, the new Standing Order 605A was adopted (together with some related provisions). Under this Standing Order, the processes set out will sometimes be led by the Circuit Meeting when a Local Church's membership falls below 12 for four successive quarters, but at other times may be initiated by a congregation itself. Either way, the idea is that if there is still merit in a congregation continuing to meet with its own identity, it can do so but by becoming part of a merged and often multi-site church in which the burden of trusteeship is shared.

Standing Order 605A therefore allows for a number of possible scenarios and arrangements. There might be occasions when a congregation's life does come to an end, either because there are too few left to meet or serve with sufficient capacity to maintain a congregation (sometimes perhaps with a now burdensome chapel), or because by preference those members now prefer to worship with another congregation elsewhere. However, there will also be many occasions when a congregation desires and it is appropriate for it to continue, but now as part of a merged and often multi-site Local Church with a common Church Council. Sometimes this will include continuing to use the chapel associated with that congregation, or sometimes the congregation might choose to meet and worship elsewhere without the burden of maintaining their own building (such as in a community hall). Either way, the operation of Standing Order 605A can release a congregation to continue and even increase their worship, fellowship and outreach activities (for which examples can be given).

In these arrangements, a consultative and collaborative approach between the congregation(s) involved and the Circuit Meeting may enable possibilities to be explored and good outcomes to be reached, involving two or more congregations, including where appropriate retaining the chapels with which they have previously been associated. In any such arrangements, it will be important to ensure that there is appropriate sensitivity and space for the previous congregations to maintain a sense of identity and have appropriate influence over their own activities if desired, albeit working within the responsibilities and obligations of the larger body of which they are now a part.

The different possibilities are emphasised by the footnotes to Standing Order 605A, including at 605A(1) that: "This 'closure' or cessation of the Local Church (i.e. its membership) should be clearly distinguished from closure of its chapel, which is an entirely separate matter, and may or may not be happening. For closure of chapels see S.O. 943."

Thus Standing Order 605A is not designed simply to 'close' churches; rather it is designed where possible to enable congregations with smaller memberships to continue to meet, but not to be burdened with the responsibility of functioning as a separate charity and 'Local Church' by themselves.

Guidance notes, creative examples (such as those included in the Oversight and Trusteeship Report to the 2021 Conference at pp.429-436 of the 2021 Agenda) and template resolutions for entering into merged Local Church and multi-site schemes are being prepared for inclusion on the Methodist Church website. These notes will also remind of the creative use that can be made by local trustees of the powers of delegation, also to help release or share burdens so as to allow local church life to flourish.

The Conference hopes that its reply to this Memorial will help the South Holland Circuit Meeting to appreciate more fully the constructive possibilities that Standing Order 605A and its related provisions are intended to encourage, to sustain the life, work and witness of Local Churches, in rural communities and elsewhere.

The Conference declines the memorial.

## **M19 Affordable Housing**

The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly District Synod (Present: 67; Voting: 63 for, 0 against) notes that many localities in the UK suffer from a shortage of affordable housing, with a devastating impact upon the wellbeing of so many. In some areas of Cornwall properties on the market are bought up as second homes, or for Airbnb, thus outbidding local people. It is even the case that some schools are unable to offer the same quality of education because of a consequent decline in the number of children in such localities. In seeking to sell a small field the Bodmin, Padstow and Wadebridge Circuit Meeting resolved to include, in an outline planning application for residential development, a proportion of affordable homes. This, however, has been declined by TMCP since only a development with 'executive housing' can achieve the 'best price' possible. The managing trustees thus experience a disquieting tension between this requirement and a commitment to social justice and the wellbeing of our communities. This tension might be felt especially keenly by superintendents having to administer our procedures. Moreover, in the eyes of many, the church suffers significant reputational damage. The church is seen to be making money through building 'executive' type houses whilst first time buyers, and low income workers such as nurses, teachers and in the hospitality industry, resort to sofa surfing and are even unable to take up posts in commutable distances of employment

We understand our experience is similar to that of others. We hear also of tenants having to be evicted because unable to meet a rent increase arising out of TMCP's insistence upon an annual rental review based upon a professional evaluation.

Because of the housing crisis – the worse for many decades - we submit this is a dilemma that requires the church's urgent attention. *Prima facie*, our present rules, no doubt reasonable in the past, are no longer fit for purpose in a time of severe housing shortage. We note the Conference Report Strategy, Dignity and Solidarity (2021) speaks of the need to audit, and where needed change, current practice in order to honour our commitment to social justice. (Agenda pp. 754, 765, 768)

This memorial, whilst recognising that there is no easy solution, therefore urges that the Conference directs the Methodist Council, in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee, TMCP, and others as appropriate, to appoint a task group with the following brief:

1. To explore the desirability of a change in our practice.
2. To explore the legality of any possible change, including where appropriate consultation with the Charity Commission, and gaining the best legal advice as to how the charitable aims of the Methodist Church as defined by the *Methodist Church Act 1976* might be interpreted. In particular, it would appear Paragraph 4(b) of the act permits a circuit to identify making provision for affordable housing to be one of its 'charitable purposes.'
3. To consult, as deemed appropriate, ecumenical partners. We note the Anglican Report *Coming Home* (2021)
4. Should a change be desirable and possible, to recommend codes of practice and safeguards: for instance to ensure our proper responsibility for guarding charitable assets; to ensure proper accountability of managing trustees to the wider connexion; and to ensure proper provision of restrictive covenants for any sale, so as to safeguard the 'affordable' designation of any property sold.

## Reply

The Conference thanks the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly District Synod for its memorial and sympathises with its desire to champion social justice.

The Conference notes that it is difficult to comment on particular cases without all the facts, and reminds the Synod that the need to obtain 'best price' is a fundamental requirement of charity law not just the Model Trusts. The Charities Act 2011 obliges charity trustees to

dispose of charity land on the best terms reasonably obtainable, and this is reflected in Model Trust 16(1)(b). This is to enable the charity to maximise the return it makes from the property in order to reinvest the money in furthering the charity's purposes. TMCP is simply applying the requirements under charity law and the Methodist constitution along with accompanying policy.

However, it is possible for managing trustees to apply to the Methodist Council under Model Trust 20 in certain circumstances to sell Methodist property at below best price where such a sale would further Methodist Church purposes.

The Connexional Property Support team, in close collaboration with TMCP and other Connexional Team colleagues, are a resource for managing trustees to provide guidance at an early stage and ongoing guidance and support on how best to maximise the use of Methodist property for furthering the Church's mission, for example, by partnering with a local charitable housing association.

In view of the various possibilities and resources already available, the Conference sees no need for further work to be done to explore any change of practice, and therefore declines the memorial.

## **M20 Safeguarding**

The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly District Synod (Present: 94 for: 43 against: 32) expresses its disquiet that when a safeguarding complaint is lodged this is addressed by a panel of the Connexional Safeguarding Committee. It is not clear, however, from Standing Orders 232-237, that its processes are sufficiently robust and transparent to ensure fairness to all concerned. With only limited grounds for later appeal, the panel appears generally to comprise only three people. Yet it has authority based on an adjudged 'risk', to implement a Safeguarding Contract with severe restrictions upon a person's life and work. It thus has powers that can be devastating for someone and their family. Yet it is unclear that these powers are properly accountable, neither is it clear that the trust and confidence of the church is being maintained.

A model of best practice is found in our Complaints and Discipline procedures, based on a commitment to fairness and natural justice. (Standing Orders 1100(3)(v) and 1102(1)) This commitment is expressed through rigorously defined 'due process', the appointment of those with legal expertise as chairs, and through proper scrutiny of evidence. It also seeks initially a facilitated reconciliation between complainant and respondent.

This memorial proposes that a task group be set up to explore how 'Safeguarding Panels' may better model such best practice. We urge at least that membership of such panels be augmented by some appointed by the Conference to address Complaints and Discipline (pages 61-3 of the 2021 *Minutes*), including for all panels someone with legal expertise. The further option should also be explored, namely that complaints deemed to concern 'safeguarding', but not referred to the police, should be addressed directly through our Complaints and Discipline procedures, members of Connexional Safeguarding Committee being co-opted or consulted so as to contribute their expertise. This is indeed already envisaged in Standing Orders 1111(1) (ii) and 1112(2). For such an option those with specific 'safeguarding' expertise may 'advise', but the wider court of competent jurisdiction will 'decide'.

The Church must of course be vigilant to ensure it be a 'safe place' and that those acting on the church's behalf must be 'safe'. But the church must also be a place of justice, fairness, and grace. And the Methodist people must have confidence in, and trust, the church's processes. Justice must be 'seen to be done'. That trust and confidence is precious, and the church must constantly watch lest it be endangered. This memorial is proposed in the

interests of justice and fairness to all, both complainants and respondents, and in the interest of maintaining confidence and trust in our processes.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly District Synod for the memorial and for raising the concerns it contains.

The Conference agrees that it is vital that confidence and trust in our processes are maintained and that the way in which those processes operate affords justice and fairness to all and that these principles should be consistently applied. It notes, however, that the relationship between the Safeguarding and Complaints and Discipline processes is one that has been the subject of much discussion and has been considered within the ongoing review of Part 11 of CPD which the Council now intends to report to the Conference in 2023. Rather than establish a separate task group to consider the District's proposal, the Conference refers this memorial to the Council to be considered by those working on the review of Part 11.

## **M21 District Safeguarding Officers**

The Plymouth and Exeter District Synod (Present: 77; Voting 68 for, 0 agains) draws the attention of the Conference to the current arrangements for the employment of District Safeguarding Officers. Each one is employed/deployed by the District they serve with all the usual requirements for good employment practices in place. However, each District Safeguarding Officer is also assigned a Connexional Casework Supervisor and is required to work to a reporting timetable set by the Connexional Safeguarding Team. In addition, a District Safeguarding Officer can be required to undertake responsibilities beyond the remit of the District. There are occasions when the work of a District Safeguarding Officer is determined without reference to the employer. There are also occasions when a District Safeguarding Officer is placed in a difficult position because of these arrangements.

We believe that the time has come for all District Safeguarding Officers to become employees of the Methodist Council so that there is clarity in the arrangements and consistency of practice across the Connexion.

The Plymouth and Exeter District Synod asks the Conference to direct the Methodist Council to consider this matter and bring proposals to the Conference of 2023.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Plymouth and Exeter District for its memorial.

The role of the Connexional Safeguarding Casework Supervisor was created in 2018 and was designed to ensure that there was sufficient support for the development of policy and procedures, adequate provision of training, work with survivors and DBS management, whilst at the same time ensuring that Districts were able to manage their own Safeguarding. It has been clear that the implementation of the scheme has met with mixed responses and the Conference welcomes the District's suggestion that the current arrangement be reviewed.

The Conference has before it the Oversight and Trusteeship proposals which, if adopted by the Conference, will result in a reconfigured Districts structure. Those who prepared that report were aware that the ways in which District work regionally are different for stationing from those of the Learning Network and that neither corresponds to the Safeguarding quadrants. For these reasons, resolution 44/14 requests 'a plan for a single support structure for the new Districts incorporating stationing, safeguarding and learning with a corresponding alignment of the dispersed members of the Connexional Team.'

The Conference therefore refers this memorial to the Council, directing that it be considered as part of the work required by 44/14 if adopted or in its own right if not.

**M22 The use of alcohol in Holy Communion when presbyters are invited to preside by other denominations.**

The Cumbria District Synod (Present: 60; Voting: 58 for, 0 against) affirms the Methodist Church's historic commitment to using only non-alcoholic wine in services of Holy Communion and the general prohibition against alcohol on Methodist premises. The Synod affirms that these provisions help to ensure that Methodist services and premises offer a safe space for all, and affirms that these provisions can also help to draw attention to the risks associated with the consumption of alcohol.

The Cumbria District Synod also affirms the Methodist Church's various ecumenical commitments that reflect Christ's prayer for unity and its witness in mission in John 17, including for example as reflected in the Priorities for the Methodist Church endorsed by the Conference of 2004:

In partnership with others wherever possible, the Methodist Church will concentrate its prayers, resources, imagination and commitments on this priority: to proclaim and affirm its conviction of God's love in Christ, for us and for the world; and renew confidence in God's presence and action in the world and in the Church.

Seeking to be "In partnership with others wherever possible", the Cumbria District entered into a Covenanted Partnership in Extended Area (a 'CPEA') on Advent Sunday 2016, renewed on Advent Sunday 2021. The Cumbria Methodist District, its Circuits and Local Churches, are working with others in ecumenical Mission Communities throughout the county and in other imaginative ways to proclaim God's love for all and to renew confidence in God's presence and action in the world and the Church. Working as ecumenical mission communities means that services are regularly taken by Methodists and our ecumenical partners in each other's churches, not merely advancing ecumenical fellowship and joint acts of worship, but thereby sharing limited resources, including in sparsely populated rural or other areas.

At times this has included ecumenical hospitality for services of Holy Communion in a variety of ways. In exercising this hospitality, wherever there has been an ecumenical service of Holy Communion on Methodist premises, the wine served has been non-alcoholic, in accordance with Methodist practice. Additionally, where a minister of another denomination has been invited to preside on Methodist premises, whether through formal ecumenical partnership or informally as a matter of ecumenical welcome, the requirement has again been for non-alcoholic wine to be used even if their usual denominational practice would be to require alcoholic wine. The Cumbria District Synod does not in any way seek to change this.

Where ecumenical hospitality is expressed the other way, and Methodists are invited to share in Holy Communion in the premises of other denominations who may use alcoholic wine, the Cumbria District Synod recognises that where the presiding minister is not a Methodist and the service is according to the rites of another denomination, the Conference cannot legislate regarding the wine used in those circumstances, and that attendance and consumption of alcoholic communion wine in those circumstances is a matter for individual Methodists.

However, the Cumbria District Synod draws the Conference's attention to the situation where a Methodist presbyter is invited to preside at a service of Holy Communion in another denomination's premises and where that denomination's practice is to use alcoholic wine (in

this scenario, it may not be material as to whether or not other Methodists are present in the congregation). The Synod is aware that such invitations are periodically expressed in many other parts of the Connexion.

In these circumstances, the Cumbria District Synod notes the reply to memorial M27 adopted at the 2013 Conference. That memorial concerned a request to allow the use of alcoholic wine on Methodist premises as part of ecumenical hospitality. It has already been stated that the Synod is not seeking for this to happen and affirms that services of Holy Communion on Methodist premises should only use non-alcoholic wine. However, the focus of the present memorial concerns Methodist presbyters presiding at other denominations' services of Holy Communion when invited to do so, and for this the following paragraph from the 2013 reply is pertinent:

It is important to be clear what the Methodist Church's rules are on those matters relating to the subject of this memorial. One is that "in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper the wine used shall be non-alcoholic" (Standing Order 922(2)). The Methodist Church, in line with most other denominations, holds that the rules relating to a service of Holy Communion are determined by the denominational identity of the person conducting it; this is what determines whether the sacrament is celebrated "in the name of the Methodist Church". *The Methodist Worship Book* states that the wine used in Holy Communion shall be "the juice of the grape" (pp116, note 5). These rules, therefore, apply when a Methodist is presiding wherever the service is held, whether or not a sharing agreement exists, and whether or not a local ecumenical partnership (LEP) has been designated.

This (re)states that the denominational identity of the person conducting the service determines the denominational identity of the service, meaning that a Methodist presbyter invited to preside at Holy Communion in say an Anglican church should insist on non-alcoholic wine being used. The Cumbria District Synod is concerned that, notwithstanding the Methodist Church's commitment to working with others wherever possible, the Methodist Church is on the one hand saying to non-Methodist ministers "where appropriate you can preside at our communions, but you must use non-alcoholic wine, because that is Methodist practice", and on the other hand, if accepting an invitation to preside at another denomination's Communion service, the Methodist presbyter must say: "I am willing to do so but you must use non-alcoholic wine because that is Methodist practice". The Synod is concerned that we are 'wanting to have our cake and eat it', and sometimes that will be neither mutual nor humble, and at risk of being arrogant and presumptive.

The Cumbria District Synod further notes that the Methodist Church has previously balanced its general stance regarding alcohol with other considerations, for example permitting the use of alcohol under Standing Order 922(3A) where a significant part of the mission and activity of Methodist premises is as a conference centre. The Synod would hope that the Conference might consider that advancing mutual respect, unity and mission is of similar or greater significance than the considerations that permit conference centre business for missional purposes.

Accordingly, the Synod asks 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.

The Cumbria District Synod emphasises that, if permitted by the Conference, this should only be in those instances where the Methodist presbyter themselves might be willing, in

accepting an invitation to preside in another denomination's premises, to use alcoholic wine if customary in that denomination (ensuring, in effect, a conscience clause). The Synod also emphasises that its overall aspiration through this memorial would be that if Methodist understanding and practice could be developed in the specific and limited circumstances requested, this is likely to increase a gracious and mutual respect between different denominations so as to advance unity and mission, not just in principle but in practice.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Cumbria District for highlighting how it may be relationally unhelpful to require Methodist presbyters to use non-alcoholic wine when they are invited to preside at a service of the Lord's Supper in another denomination's context. It notes that the memorial requests development of Methodist understanding and practice in limited and specific circumstances. It therefore accepts the memorial and directs the Faith and Order Committee in consultation with the Connexional Ecumenical Officer to consider the matters raised in this memorial and report to the 2023 Conference.