

## 15. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity (1)

<b>Contact name and details</b>	Mrs Joanne Anderton Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice and Secretary to the Committee Email: lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk
---------------------------------	--

### SECTION A GENERAL REPORT

1. The Committee is charged under Standing Order 338 with the scrutiny of all new legislation which is proposed to the Conference in order to ensure its coherence with existing usage and Methodist polity. Various members of the Committee undertake this task and have commented upon all the proposals submitted to the Committee by the Methodist Council and other bodies. The Committee also seeks to ensure that Standing Orders comply with any changes in legislation or case law.
2. The Committee was deeply saddened by the loss in November 2022 of the Revd Dr Brian Beck, former Secretary of the Conference (1984-1998), aged 89. As Secretary of the Conference, Brian gave many years of service to the Committee and was a great supporter of the Committee's work. His name lives on in the 1988 Preface to *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*.
3. Mr Lynn John and Mr Andrew Maxfield have both resigned from the Committee during this connexional year. The Committee wishes to express its gratitude for their respective contributions to the Committee, and particularly to Lynn John for advising the Church in his professional capacity for over 30 years.
4. The Committee was pleased to welcome two new members in October 2022 - the Revds Andrew Charlesworth and Kenneth Howcroft - and has undertaken a membership recruitment process during the year. Interviews for the shortlisted candidates are due to take place in May 2023.
5. The Committee has also established a Committee Executive this year, to support and assist the Secretary and Chair of the Committee in prioritising the Committee's work and to be available for consultation as issues arise, particularly between meetings.
6. The Committee appointed Miss Elizabeth Ovey as its representative to the 2023 Conference under Standing Order 102(1)(iii).

## 15. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity (1)

7. The Committee appointed its 2023 Conference Sub-committee under Standing Order 338(6) as follows: the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice (Secretary and convenor), the Secretary of the Conference, the Revd Jennifer M Dyer, Mr David Gibson, the Revd Kenneth Howcroft, Miss Elizabeth Ovey, and the Revds Canon Julian Pursehouse, Ian Rutherford and Dr James N Tebbutt (Chair). Mrs Susan Howdle has been invited to act as a consultant and adviser to the Sub-committee if required.
8. The Committee appointed its Complaints and Discipline Sub-committee for the year in accordance with the Sub-committee's terms of reference. The Sub-committee met in January 2023 to discuss matters pertaining to the Church's complaints and discipline process. A report on progress with the review of Part 11 of Standing Orders appears elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.
9. The Secretary of the Committee meets regularly with the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee to collaborate on matters in which both Committees have an interest. The Committee has nominated the Revd Kenneth Howcroft to attend the Faith and Order Committee's meetings as an observer on the Committee's behalf.
10. The Committee has had another very busy year, meeting four times in total: in person in October 2022, and electronically in December, March and April 2023. The Committee has provided support and guidance to the Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Team on numerous matters and continues to assist with significant pieces of work being undertaken by the Church. Examples include:
  - a) Producing connexional guidance on church mergers and amalgamations under Standing Orders 605A and 942;
  - b) Reviewing and advising on connexional guidance on chapel closures under Standing Order 943;
  - c) Assisting the Ministries: Vocation and Worship Team in the annual review of the Church Stewards, Circuit Stewards and Superintendents' Handbooks, and reviewing and commenting on the proposed Handbook for Methodist Ministers;
  - d) Advising the Secretary of the Conference on matters relating to the review of Part 11 of Standing Orders;
  - e) Assisting the Faith and Order Committee in reviewing the current 'experimental' versions of the Church's marriage liturgies from a legal perspective.
11. Individual Committee members have also joined various working groups to assist in reviewing particular processes or guidance, notably: the Revd Dr James Tebbutt and Mrs Susan Howdle are the Committee's representatives on the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group.

## 15. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity (1)

12. The Chair and Secretary of the Committee are grateful to all the Committee members for their continued support and willingness to assist with the Committee's work. Further items will be reported in Part 2 of the Committee's report to the Conference.

### \*\*\*RESOLUTION

- 15/1. **The Conference receives the General Report.**

### SECTION B AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

As usual, the Committee submits a list of corrections to Standing Orders, consequent upon decisions already taken by the Conference, or to remedy minor errors or omissions. A further set of corrections and modifications will be presented in Part 2 of the Committee's report to the Conference.

1. **Standing Order 016A Single Transferable Vote**  
The amendments to Standing Orders 016A (1A) and (3A) approved by the 2022 Conference used 'will' instead of 'shall' to denote an obligation, which does not accord with CPD drafting protocol and was overlooked during the scrutiny process.

The Conference is asked to amend Standing Orders 016A(1A) and (3A) as follows:

- (1A) Voting ~~will~~ **shall** be by paper ballot or an agreed electronic voting system. Reference to ballot paper throughout this Standing Order ~~will~~ **shall** refer to the paper ballot or the equivalent electronic system.
  - (3A) The counting of the votes ~~will~~ **shall** be undertaken by a recognised single transferable voting method, as determined by the Methodist Council prior to the Conference.
2. **Standing Order 232(3A)(a) Safeguarding Committee**  
There is a numbering error in Standing Order 232(3A)(a), concerning the appointment of three-person panels to deal with certain safeguarding matters. This appears to be due to an addition made to, and consequent renumbering of, the subclauses of Standing Order 232(1), but without consequential amendment of the corresponding references in clause (3A).

## 15. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity (1)

The Conference is asked to amend Standing Order 232(3A)(a) as follows:

(a) When discharging the functions specified under clause (2)(i) and (ii) to (iv) above, the panel nominated shall contain ~~two persons~~ **one person** referred to in clause ~~(1)(i)(1)(ii)(a)~~ and ~~one person~~ **two persons** referred to in clause (1)(ii)(b).

### 3. **Standing Order 321(1)(xi) Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC)**

An amended form of wording for Standing Order 321(1)(xi) was proposed by Notice of Motion 104/2022 and approved by the 2022 Conference without being scrutinised by the Law and Polity Conference Sub-committee. The amendment introduces the concept of 'Justice, Dignity and Solidarity' as a defined term, without it being specifically defined but instead illustrated by a list of examples of what it might include. An editorial footnote to Standing Order 321(1) refers readers to Standing Order 336, which explains what the Church means by 'justice, dignity and solidarity', although the phrase itself is not defined within CPD.

Also, the reference to the full title of MCPOC in the amended Standing Order 321(1)(xi) may simply be shortened to 'the committee', since that is how MCPOC is referred to in the rest of the Standing Order.

The Conference is asked to amend Standing Order 321(1)(xi) as follows:

(xi) up to five further members, selected in collaboration with the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee, to ensure that leadership is offered regarding the concerns of ~~Justice, Dignity and Solidarity in areas including disability, race, gender, LGBTQ+ and mental health~~ **justice, dignity and solidarity**, having regard to the leadership also offered by other members of the ~~Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee~~ **committee**;

### 4. **Standing Order 410(1)(xiv) Constitution [of the Representative Session of the District Synod]**

Following the 2022 Conference's approval of the introduction of local lay-pastors in Section 56A, Standing Order 410(1)(xiv) was partially amended but omitted to include the relevant Standing Order reference relating to local lay-pastors:

## 15. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity (1)

The Conference is asked to amend Standing Order 410(1)(xiv) as follows:

(xiv) such numbers of eligible local lay-pastors and lay employees appointed in the District under Standing Order **56A1** or 570 as may be determined by the Synod;

5. **Standing Order 734 Presbyteral and Diaconal Probationers of other Conferences and Churches**

The title of Standing Order 734 was amended by the 2022 Conference in error and should revert to its previous form, since 'Ministerial' is a more accurate description for probationers of other Conferences and Churches.

The Conference is asked to amend the title of Standing Order 734 as follows:

**734 Presbyteral-*Ministerial*** and Diaconal Probationers of other Conferences and Churches.

6. **Standing Order 755 Methodist Diaconal Order Leadership Group**

The Methodist Diaconal Order Leadership Group referred to in Standing Order 755 actually functions under the title of 'Methodist Diaconal Order Support and Advisory Group'.

The Conference is asked to amend Standing Order 755 as follows:

**755 Methodist Diaconal Order Leadership *Support and Advisory* Group**

(1) The Conference shall each year appoint the Methodist Diaconal Order Leadership ***Support and Advisory*** Group upon nominations from the Methodist Council.

(2)-(4) [*unchanged*].

### \*\*\*RESOLUTION

- 15/2. **The Conference, by way of minor and consequential corrections, amends the Standing Orders as set out above.**

## 15. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity (1)

### SECTION C SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS

#### 1. **Special Resolution 41/4 (2022)**

The 2022 Conference passed Special Resolution 41/4 to delete the reference to 'Y Cyngor' in the Deed of Union, as follows:

*The Conference resolves to amend Clause 1(iv) of the Deed of Union, and directs that the required consultation under Standing Order 126(1) shall be with the Law and Polity Committee.*

The Committee considered and unanimously approved the Special Resolution at its meeting in October 2022. The formal proposal to confirm the Special Resolution is presented elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.

#### 2. **Special Resolution 43/4 (2022)**

On the Committee's advice, the 2022 Conference passed Special Resolution 43/4 proposing minor and consequential amendments to the Model Trusts. Standing Order 126(1)(a) requires Special Resolutions amending the Model Trusts to be submitted to the Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Scotland and Shetland Synods for consultation. This consultation has commenced and the outcome will be reported elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.

#### 3. **Special Resolution 44/7 (2022)**

The 2022 Conference passed Special Resolution 44/7 amending the Deed of Union in connection with the proposals to create a new Connexional Council and directed that the consultation under Standing Order 126(1) should be with the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee.

The Committee considered and unanimously approved the Special Resolution at its meeting in October 2022. The formal proposal to confirm the Special Resolution is presented in the Oversight and Trusteeship Report elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.

### \*\*\*RESOLUTION

#### 15/3. **The Conference receives the Report.**