

63. Memorials to the Conference

Notes for the Guidance of Members of the Conference

1. Introduction to Memorials

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

The Methodist Council appoints a Memorials Committee made up of representatives from Districts each year 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 all the replies printed in the Agenda under each memorial. The Conference binds itself either to agree this reply, to amend it, or to agree an alternative reply [see the Rules of Procedure printed at the beginning of Volume One of the Agenda, SO 133(4)].

In some of its responses, the Memorials 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 Memorials Committee has not taken seriously the points made in the memorial. It means that another report deals with the issue more fully. Debate on this report gives the Conference an opportunity to discuss the issues raised by the memorial.

In addition, this year the Memorials Committee has recommended to the President, Vice-President and Secretary of Conference under Standing Order 138(5) that arrangements should be made for resolutions to be moved and debated in the Conference on the issues raised in M9 concerning the Methodist Council's review of the Resourcing Mission Office. This is to facilitate a procedure during the Conference which will allow all the issues relating to the review that are relevant to the Conference to be considered, and the Conference to debate and express its mind on them.

A list of memorials referred by previous Conferences to the Methodist Council or to committees, where a report was required to be brought to a subsequent Conference, will be placed on the Order Paper. This list will indicate when the report will be brought and provide a reference to those reports before this year's Conference.

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 Memorials Committee, or to propose that it is substituted by a totally different reply. Amendments to replies should be

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submitted in the form of a notice of motion, the deadline for which is lunchtime on the fourth day of the Representative Session, i.e. Tuesday. 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 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 Business Committee should exercise its own judgement as to whether other replies be debated separately or provisionally placed in the *en bloc* business of the Conference. Any recommended reply to a memorial that is the subject of an amending notice of motion will automatically be removed from *en bloc* business [see Standing Order 136(2A)].

Throughout each session, the Memorials Secretary, Martin Harker, is available to members of the Conference for consultation on any matter affecting memorials and the procedures described above. For example, if any member wishes

to change the recommended reply of the Committee, the Memorials Secretary is willing to advise on how and when to propose either an amendment or the substitution of a different reply.

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

M1 Age of ministerial candidates

The Wrexham (2/26) Circuit Meeting (Present: 38. Voting: unanimous) notes that the Conference has removed any formal age bar from the candidating procedure for Presbyteral and Diaconal Candidates. However Standing Order 710(5) states that: "Unless an exemption is granted in accordance with clause (6) below an offer will not be accepted unless the candidate can be stationed for a minimum period of ten years before 'normal Pension Date' as defined by the rules of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme and meet such other conditions of availability for stationing as are set by the Conference at the time of acceptance."

Further to this, Clause 710(6) says: "The connexional Ministerial and Diaconal Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committees shall make recommendations as to exemptions from the requirements of clause (5) above to the Ministerial and Diaconal Candidates Selection Committees respectively, who shall have the power to grant or withhold such exemptions."

The Wrexham Circuit recently had a candidate who was advised to withdraw

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from the candidating process on the grounds of her age. It therefore asks the Conference to consider on what grounds exemptions under clause (6) may be granted and whether these clauses still represent a bar to candidates on age grounds, contrary to the view expressed by the Conference in 2008, during the debate on the report of the Stationing Review Group.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Wrexham Circuit for its memorial.

A review of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme (MMPS) has been undertaken, and matters regarding the normal Pension Date are dealt with in significant detail within the Agenda and have been debated by the Conference. These may have repercussions for the upper age limit for candidates.

These matters have been discussed by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee during the 2009–10 connexional year. The committee was conscious of the need to balance the need to apply the maximum possible flexibility to the admission of candidates at the upper end of the age scale with the need to have regard to the cost of training programmes. However, the committee was eager both that a high degree of flexibility be applied, and that further work should be undertaken (especially in the light of decisions about the MMPS) to enable those at the upper end of the age scale to offer for the ordained ministry. The Wrexham Circuit can be assured that

the work of the Stationing Review Group remains at the heart of ministerial policy development.

The Conference refers this memorial to the Ministerial and Diaconal Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committees (recommending its subsequent delegation to the Shadow Ministries Committee), and requests that a report be brought to the Conference in 2011.

M2 Working with other denominations to provide ministerial oversight

The Barnet and Queensbury (35/35) Circuit Meeting (Present: 25. Voting: unanimous) notes the difficulty in finding presbyters to fill appointments in the Methodist stationing process and the concurrent problems in other denominations, particularly in the United Reformed Church.

The Circuit urges the Conference to look at ways and means to collaborate with other denominational authorities in providing a cohesive strategy to provide ministerial oversight for Methodist churches and local churches of other denominations.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Barnet and Queensbury Circuit for its memorial.

In the 2009–10 connexional year there was a shortfall of 34 presbyters for available stations, which was a decrease from the previous year and the same number as 2007–08. Work is currently being undertaken to address the concerns

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regarding the number of candidates through the organisation of successful 'Vocations Days' around the Connexion as well as through the production of engaging publications and through ensuring that the website is as accessible as possible. Significant improvements have also been made to the processes which support candidates as they produce a portfolio for the selection committees.

Ecumenical conversations about the provision and deployment of ministerial resources are a crucial part of the work of the Ministries & Learning Team within the Connexional Team, and the Team continues to engage with a number of partners to discern innovative and productive ways to share such resources. The development of policy in this area will be enhanced by the development of a Ministries Committee, as reported elsewhere in the Agenda. A joint meeting during the 2010–11 connexional year of the Methodist Council and the Mission Council of the United Reformed Church will provide another forum to discuss initiatives and strategies with partner denominations.

The Conference therefore accepts this memorial and welcomes the further work which is to be undertaken in this area by the Methodist Council and the Shadow Ministries Committee.

M3 Support for presbyters in training

The Crosby (18/8) Circuit Meeting (Present: 30. Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference to address with urgency the lack of sufficient number of presbyters to

serve the churches. This appears to be an accelerating problem with presbyters retiring and insufficient candidates coming forward to replace them.

Further the Conference is respectfully urged to allocate additional resources to support potential presbyters and their families through the training process. It is very sad when candidates feel unable to commence or continue training because there is insufficient funding to support them and their families whilst they are being trained.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Crosby Circuit for its memorial.

Work is currently being undertaken in a variety of areas to address the issues raised. In the 2009–10 connexional year there was a shortfall of 34 presbyters for available stations, which was a decrease from the previous year and the same number as 2007–08. Concerns regarding the numbers of candidates are being addressed through the organisation of successful 'Vocations Days' around the Connexion as well as through the production of engaging publications and through ensuring the website is as accessible as possible. Significant improvements have also been made to the processes which support candidates as they produce a portfolio for the selection committees. The issue of encouraging people to consider ordained ministry in the Methodist Church is one of partnership, with connexional initiatives operating alongside pastoral conversations with

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those who are showing a gift in ministry and leadership in the local church.

A significant increase was made to the funding available to all students for the ordained ministry at the start of 2008–09 and the Church continues to offer financial support for unforeseen circumstances through the Student Hardship Fund. Work is also progressing on the exploration of more 'on the job' training models for the future. We are confident that all these measures are beginning to address the issues raised. Moreover, the Conference does not believe that finance is the only factor determining the number of people offering for ordained ministry.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial.

M4 Book grants for pre-ordination students

The Chester and Stoke-on Trent District Synod (R) (Present: 155. Voting: unanimous) is concerned about the lack of parity between part-time and full-time students in pre-ordination training regarding the provision of a Book Grant. It understands that this grant has been lost to part-time students since the implementation of the decisions of the Methodist Conference of 2007 on the Report of the Training Institutions Review Group.

Careful study of that Report does not reveal any mention, or implied mention of the Book Grant, and the Chair of the Review Group has stated that according to his memory and his notes, the Book Grant was not considered as part of that Report.

We consider that it was the intention of the Conference that part-time students should have equality of standard of training provision and we consider that the Book Grant is a part of this provision.

The Synod therefore requests that the necessary steps be taken to reinstate this grant.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Chester and Stoke-on Trent District for its memorial.

The 2007 Training Institutions Review Group Report offered to the Conference a pattern for funding pre-ordination training that was "significantly different in some respects from that of recent years" and confirmed that "[t]ravel and related expenses will continue to be paid for part-time students". The total budget that was offered and accepted by the Conference of 2007 excluded the paying of Book Grants to any students, regardless of whether they are undertaking part-time or full-time programmes. Consequently, neither full-time nor part-time students presently receive Book Grants. It should be noted that each of the institutions which receive pre-ordination students, whether part-time or full-time, receive a sum of money to go towards library provision which enables access to books for all students.

Elsewhere in the Agenda it is noted that work has begun on the 'Fruitful Field' project which will carry out the agreed third year review of all the decisions relating to

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pre-ordination training taken in 2007 as well as supporting the governance bodies of the Methodist Church as they continue to exercise their oversight of the Church's learning and development infrastructure and programmes. Given the existing equality of provision between full-time and part-time students with regard to book grants, review of the decisions relating to pre-ordination training taken in 2007 are best taken in the context of this wider assessment of connexional provision.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

M5 Training of local preachers and worship leaders

The Sevenoaks (36/20) Circuit Meeting (Present: 31. Voting: unanimous) requests that the Conference take full responsibility for the financing of the development and training of preachers and leaders of worship.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Sevenoaks Circuit for its memorial.

The Church's preaching and worship-leading ministries are vital ministries which are at the heart of the Methodist Church's life. Much of the responsibility for the development and training of preachers and leaders of worship rests with Circuits, and much of this work is sustained and supported by a vast number of Methodist members who give freely of their time and of their gifts and graces. The Conference

is grateful for the care and attention given by so many to this area of the Church's life.

It is difficult to quantify the costs borne across the Connexion in providing development and training for the 9,704 local preachers presently authorised, the 1,658 persons on note and on trial, and a further significant number of worship leaders. It is therefore not possible to consider a commitment to meet such costs from the Connexional Central Services Budget. However, it is noted elsewhere in the Agenda that work will be undertaken by the Connexional Team during the 2010–11 connexional year, in collaboration with a wider range of stakeholders and practitioners, to develop a revised learning and development structure to resource the ministry of local preachers and worship leaders. Several factors will need to be taken into account, including (a) the learning outcomes for the period of initial learning; (b) the balance between initial learning and continuing learning and development; (c) the financial resources available to support initial and continuing learning and development programmes; (d) the role of Regional Training Networks, District and regional expert staff, and learning institutions in supporting learning and development programmes; (e) the work already undertaken by some Districts, institutions and ecumenical partnerships to design and implement alternative learning and development programmes; (f) supporting and resourcing the ministry of local tutors, Circuit local preachers secretaries and District officers. Proposals regarding a revised learning and development

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structure will be brought to the 2011 Conference, and will be subject to wider consultation during the spring of 2011.

The Conference is grateful for the support offered to local preachers and worship leaders by the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust, particularly through its caring work. LWPT was created in 2005 as the successor body (meeting a wider range of needs) to the Local Preachers Mutual Aid Association. The Methodist Council and the Connexional Team work collaboratively with LWPT, but neither the Council nor the Team directs its training or fundraising activities.

The Conference therefore refers the memorial to the Methodist Council for inclusion in ongoing work to develop a revised learning and development structure to resource the ministry of local preachers and worship leaders.

M6 Preaching by members other than local preachers

The Rochdale and Littleborough (6/4) Circuit Meeting (Present: 49. Voting: 28 for, 17 against) requests that the Faith and Order Committee be asked to reconsider regulations governing local preachers (SO 565B), namely that Methodist members, though not accredited as local preachers, but who are well able to lead Sunday services, may be authorised to preach and lead worship on a local basis in our Circuit pulpits. It would follow that such preachers be accountable to the Local Preachers' Meeting.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Rochdale and Littleborough Circuit for its memorial. The Conference recognises that some circuits have difficulties in filling pulpits with accredited local preachers. It wishes to reassure the Circuit that work is being undertaken connexionally to address the underlying issues.

The Church's preaching and worship-leading ministries are vital ministries which are at the heart of the Methodist Church's life. The training that they undertake is a vital part of their formation and, in the case of local preachers, is an important mechanism for ensuring that Methodist doctrine is upheld in worship and teaching. The training and subsequent accreditation of local preachers represents a commitment both to the importance of their ministry and to the Conference's responsibility to nurture and develop the gifts and graces of local preachers. It should also be remembered that all presbyters have been local preachers and this accreditation is one of the building blocks of their formation as ordained ministers.

It is noted elsewhere in the Agenda that work will be undertaken by the Connexional Team during the 2010–11 connexional year, in collaboration with a wider range of stakeholders and practitioners, to develop a revised learning and development structure to resource the ministry of local preachers and worship leaders. The work will consider the learning outcomes for the period of initial learning and the balance between initial learning and continuing

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learning and development, aiming to ensure that learning and development programmes are flexible, contextual and accessible to all who are called to exercise a ministry of preaching.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

M7 Inner city mission

The Forest (35/33) Circuit Meeting (Present: 44. Voting: unanimous) notes that in the report on the Urban Mission Development Project considered last year by the Methodist Council:

- a meeting of District Chairs reported difficulties facing ministers in urban settings, including lack of lay leadership for traditional Church roles (but felt especially acutely with regard to management of projects), lack of lay support in mission (as opposed to maintenance), and lack of funding for projects, buildings and additional ministries (though, through the sale of properties, some are well resourced);
- a survey of Methodist ministers in urban contexts revealed a feeling of isolation which the report recognised needed to be addressed.

Churches and individual members in the Circuit support Methodist work among the poor of inner London, and recognise these difficulties and concerns among those with whom they have contact.

The Circuit further notes that for some years the only funding of personnel for

urban mission at connexional level has been 50% support for the ecumenical Urban Mission Development Project Officer, and that the report on the project notes as a risk:

“No designated specialist in Connexional Team leads to marginalisation of urban mission agenda”.

The Circuit has further been informed that there is now no specific ‘Mission alongside the poor’ fund (as governed by S0351), nor a specific fund dedicated to inner city mission, because the 2008 Conference incorporated these funds into the ‘Mission in Britain’ fund. The Circuit notes that all Methodist support for urban mission appears now to require competitive bidding against a wider range of requests for funds.

In the view of the Circuit Meeting the work of churches and projects amongst the poorest and most needy in our society are at the heart of the Gospel message. Churches and projects which are effective should be helped to enhance their leadership, management and funding. However the lack of management expertise referred to by the District Chairs hinders them in the bidding process which is now required by the Methodist Church along with secular trusts and statutory bodies. Thus they cannot buy the requisite leadership and management because they do not have the expertise to bid.

The Circuit therefore asks the Conference:

- to resource a post at connexional level, shared ecumenically if

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- appropriate, specifically to assist missions supporting the poorest and most needy in our society in the inner cities to obtain sufficient funds for their work, and;
- to set aside funds for such work, from the former 'Mission Alongside the Poor Fund' or otherwise, and establish a mechanism whereby suitable projects can be identified and supported without their having to initiate the request for funds.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Forest Circuit for the concern expressed in its memorial.

The memorial quotes extracts from a thorough review of the Urban Mission Development Project, a partnership between the Methodist Church and the Evangelical Coalition on Urban Mission. This review was set in the context of an earlier decision of the Conference as part of the Team Focus process which decided that there would no longer be an urban mission post in the Connexional Team. The review suggested a number of ways that urban mission will continue to be supported by the Methodist Church:

1. The Coordinator of Evangelism Spirituality and Discipleship will be the link person with regard to urban mission issues.
2. The Methodist City Centre Network will continue to receive connexional

funding as an affirmation of its importance.

3. The Methodist Church supports the establishment of a non-aligned hub which focuses and disseminates the work of a number of different mission agencies. Negotiations are currently under way with interested denominations and agencies to further the establishment of this hub.
4. The review encouraged the organisers of the above hub to seek funding for this project from the Methodist Church via the Connexional Grants Committee.
5. The Urban Bulletin should be distributed to Methodist ministers at the Connexion's expense.

The memorial further expressed regret at the ending of the Mission Alongside the Poor Fund and asks for funds to be set aside for support of this sort of work. The Connexional Grants Committee (and its predecessors) has for some time given grants to urban mission projects. The review of grant-making which was part of Team Focus decided that the needs of urban mission can be met from existing funds and that there was no longer a need for a dedicated fund (which had not generally been well supported by donations from Methodist churches).

The Conference believes that these recommendations adequately meet the needs of urban mission and therefore declines the particular requests in the memorial.

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M8 Releasing financial resources for mission priorities

The North Lancashire District Synod (R) (Present: 130. Voting: 107 for, 2 against) welcomes the Conference's decisions over recent years to encourage the release for mission priorities of the substantial financial resources of Methodism that are currently tied up in under-utilised property and excessive reserves; and so asks that the Methodist Council be directed to urgently consider further ways of:

- i) releasing more financial resources from under-utilised buildings and funds; and
- ii) ensuring these are employed for mission priorities – via the Connexion, the Districts, and Circuits as appropriate.

Reply

The Conference thanks the North Lancashire Synod for raising this issue.

There are already a number of ways in which the matter is being addressed. Across the Connexion the *Regrouping for Mission: Mapping a Way Forward* programme is acting as a catalyst for churches, Circuits and Districts to evaluate their mission strategies and to evaluate the resource implications. Encouraged by the Conference request in 2008 to work more closely with the United Reformed Church on common issues, a joint working party has been established to look at the use of church buildings, recognising that many ecumenical partners

face the same challenges. Some output from this work is likely to be considered at a joint meeting of the Methodist Council and the URC Mission Council in October. The Law and Polity Committee is working with legal advisors to enable more straightforward guidelines to be produced regarding the clause in Model Trust 20 that encourages the sale of redundant buildings to other denominational groups for continuing Christian worship.

Capital released from under-utilised buildings and manses is currently channelled into mission and ministry work at local and national level via levies into the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF).

However, there may be much potential in a more holistic and strategic review of the situation, so the Conference accepts the memorial and asks the Methodist Council to act accordingly.

M9 Relocation of Methodist Property Office responsibilities

The Birmingham District Synod (R) (Present: 141. Voting: 134 for, 0 against) expresses its deep concern about the Methodist Council's decision to relocate some of the Property Office responsibilities to London. We feel that, despite some consultation, the views of those who handle property at Circuit and District level have not been fully taken into consideration. There is a deep anxiety about the loss of expertise, property resources and their support from TMCP being split between Manchester and London. We ask the Conference to reconsider the decision of

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the Methodist Council and to consider keeping all the Property Resources in Manchester.

Reply

The Memorials Committee thanks the Birmingham Synod for its memorial. It has recommended that in accordance with Standing Order 138(5) the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Conference make arrangements for the Conference to debate the issues in this memorial that it is proper for the Conference to debate; and that an additional report of the Methodist Council's actions be provided to facilitate that debate. The reply to the memorial is therefore contained in the resolutions adopted by the Conference in relation to that report.

M10 Ministerial pension age

The Christchurch and Lymington (26/18) Circuit (Present: 26. Voting: 25 for, 0 against), while recognising the cost of retaining a Defined Benefit pension scheme for its ministers, is concerned at the sudden and significant consequences in respect of the raising of the normal Pension Date to the age of 68. It believes that many, if not most, ministers will wish to superannuate once they can receive the state pension, and that the ministers' scheme should not penalise them for doing so. The Circuit therefore requests that the NPD be tied to the state retirement age.

The following memorial was also received with the same text as above. The Conference adopts the same reply.

M11 Nottingham and Derby Synod (M) (Present: 109. Voting: 105 for, 0 against)

Reply

The Conference thanks the Christchurch and Lymington Circuit for expressing its concerns regarding the review of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme (MMPS). The Conference is deeply mindful of its concern for the welfare of presbyters and deacons on the one hand and of Circuits on the other. These matters are therefore dealt with in significant detail within the Conference Agenda and have been debated by the Conference.

The reply to this memorial is therefore contained in the resolutions of the Conference.

M12 Ministerial pension age

The Southampton District Synod (R) (Present: 151. Voting: 115 for, 27 against), while recognising the cost of retaining a Defined Benefit pension scheme for its ministers, is concerned at the sudden and significant consequences in respect of the raising of the normal Pension Date to the age of 68 from 1 September 2010. It believes that many, if not most, ministers will wish to superannuate once they can receive the state pension, and that the ministers' scheme should not penalise them for doing so. The District therefore requests that the NPD be linked to the state retirement age.

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Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as M10.

M13 Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme

The North Lancashire District Synod (R) (Present: 130. Voting: 117 for, 3 against), aware of the financial climate which has obliged pension providers to re-examine the cost and range of benefits previously provided, appreciates the difficulties facing the Methodist Church and the Ministers Pension Scheme in particular.

Nevertheless, it reminds the Conference that the current level of benefits makes no allowance for the loss of free accommodation on retirement and urges the Conference:

1. not to reduce the annual rate of pensions accrual from 1/70ths of final stipend to 1/80ths of final stipend from the 1 September 2010 as proposed;
2. to raise the normal retirement age in tandem with the state retirement age as it rises and not before;
3. to reconsider the proposed reduction in benefits for those taking early retirement on health grounds; and
4. to apply the alternative levy on stipends of 7% split between the Circuit and the minister as Conference may determine.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as M10.

M14 Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme

The Brownhills and Willenhall (28/2) Circuit Meeting (Present: 57. Voting: 56 for, 1 against) wishes to express its opposition to the proposal to reduce benefits under the Ministers' Pension Fund to those who have to retire early due to ill health and asks the Conference to maintain the current level of benefits in such cases.

Whilst we realise the need to reduce the overall cost of the scheme, we feel that it is an expression of the Church's pastoral care for its ministers to provide an adequate pension for those having to retire on health grounds, especially as we believe that the stress of ministerial life sometimes has a direct bearing on the need for such retirements.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Brownhills and Willenhall Circuit for expressing its concern. It would like to clarify that the proposal is to change the benefits paid to ministers who retire early due to ill-health, not specifically reduce them. Although the overall impact of the proposed new rules is to reduce the cost, there will be some ministers (primarily those who have served for a long period of time) who will receive a higher pension than would have been

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the case under the existing rules. However, these issues are dealt with in more detail elsewhere within the Conference Agenda and have been debated by the Conference.

The reply to this memorial is therefore contained in the resolutions of the Conference.

M15 Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme

The Plymouth and Exeter District Synod (R) (Present: 112. Voting: 108 for, 0 against) are seriously concerned by the changes to the Methodist Ministers Pension Scheme (MMPS) proposed by the trustees and notified in the letter of March 2010 sent to all active members of the MMPS. We believe that the reductions in benefits are ill-considered and will lead to hardship in retirement for many ministers and their families. Our main concerns are:

- a. The proposed change to the scheme's Normal Retirement Date is too abrupt and introduced with too little notice.
- b. The proposals cause particular difficulties for ministers in their last appointment and their Circuits. The proposals will require the suspension of SO 545(3B).
- c. The assertion that Circuits cannot pay the increased contributions is untested and inconsiderate of the efforts of those Circuits which have already budgeted to meet them.
- d. The trustees do not appear to have considered any alternatives to their proposals.
- e. The proposals and the way in which the review of MMPS costs

and benefits has been handled are inconsistent with the spirit of the covenant relationship between ministers and the Methodist Church.

We ask the Conference to examine critically the assertion that Circuits cannot pay the contributions set by Resolution 31/2 of the Conference of 2009 and to urge the trustees of the MMPS to present alternative methods of funding the scheme's deficit to the Conference of 2011 after extensive and substantive consultations with MMPS members.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Plymouth and Exeter Synod for expressing its concerns regarding the review of benefits paid by the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme (MMPS). These matters are dealt with in significant detail within the Conference Agenda and have been debated by the Conference.

Regarding consultation, the Conference notes that the broad proposals of the review were presented to the Methodist Council on 1 February, and were therefore available publicly via the Methodist Church website from late-January, several months prior to the formal statutory consultation.

It also needs to be clarified that it was the Conference of 2009 that expressed concerns about the ability of Circuits to pay an additional 7% of stipend in contributions from September 2010. As a result of this, it asked the trustees to perform a review

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of scheme benefits on its behalf and to bring proposals to the Conference in 2010. This was in part due to responses received to the consultation on MMPS changes in 2009.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

M16 Pensions for ministers and lay people

The Christchurch and Lymington (26/18) Circuit Meeting (Present: 26. Voting: 24 for, 0 against) understands that there are differences between the lay and ordained defined benefits pension schemes whereby the lay members make a lesser contribution for similar benefits on retirement. It notes that the Deed of Union Part 1 para 4 makes it plain that there is no difference in kind between lay and ordained members of the Church and requests that any differences in pension cost or provision between these parties be equalised as an expression of this principle.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Christchurch and Lymington Circuit for its interest in arrangements for pension provision for lay employees and ministers. It is grateful for the reminder that the Deed of Union states that there is no difference in any kind between lay and ordained members of the Church. However, this is a clear reference to the status of Church members – not to its employees. The Methodist Church has a clear policy that it does not require its lay employees to be members of the

Church, and although many employees are also members, those two relationships are quite different.

The Methodist Council acts as the employing body for lay staff on behalf of the Conference. It has a clear contractual relationship with its lay employees, irrespective of whether or not they are members of the Methodist Church. This is in contrast to the significantly different covenantal relationship between the Conference and its ordained presbyters and deacons. Ordained ministers are legally designated as 'office holders' and not employees – a distinction that the Church continues to have successfully upheld by the British judiciary. For this reason there are numerous differences between the 'terms and conditions' of lay employees and ministers. The Church makes no attempt to equate the provision of a stipend and manse to ministers with the contractual salary scales used to remunerate lay employees. Annual increases to stipends and salaries are also calculated in completely different ways and by different bodies which report to the Conference. The arrangements for working hours, holidays, sickness, etc. are all significantly different. The life-long covenantal relationship with ministers is also expressed by the benevolent funds that are now held under the umbrella of the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons and the availability of subsidised retirement housing via the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society. All of these are an expression of the relationship that exists between the Conference and its ordained ministers, which is completely different to the relationship between the Conference and those lay staff that are

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employed via the Council. Any differences in pension provision must therefore be viewed within this wider picture. The comparative contribution rates for the pension schemes are determined in accordance with Pensions Law by the relevant Trustee Boards. As a result of the 2008 valuation the total contribution rate required for the ministers' scheme is 38% of stipend, whilst for the lay scheme it is 32.1% of salary.

In concluding there are two pertinent issues:

1. The quote from the Deed of Union refers to the status of members within the Church – not of employees.
2. The relationship between the Conference and its ordained ministers and its relationship via the Council with its lay employees are completely different in both practical and legal terms. It is therefore impossible to make clear comparisons between the pension provision for each group.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

M17 Assessments

The Launceston Area (12/17) Circuit Meeting (Present: 31. Voting: 30 for, 1 against), whilst fully understanding the reasoning behind the dramatic increase in the connexional assessment, wish to make the following statements and ask that the Conference consider the ensuing requests:

1. Budgets are prepared by the Circuit for approval at the February Circuit Meeting and include some substantial

financial commitments particularly in relation to our outreach to youth, children and families.

The extra assessment came from the Conference after the Circuit had completed the annual budget for the year 2009–10 thus adding to considerable expenditure planned for the year ahead. We ask the Conference to consider the connexional assessment further in advance in order that Circuits may have time to include any additions in their initial computations.

2. The average wage in Cornwall is lower than the national average but at the same time the cost of living is higher. For example water charges are the highest in the nation.

Our Circuit consists mainly of small rural chapels with a high proportion of retired members whose income from pensions and investments has been significantly reduced during the current economic downturn.

Such a large increase in assessments has caused a number of churches difficulties in meeting their share and has led them to consider whether or not they can remain open.

We ask the Conference to provide workable suggestions as to how other costs/expenditure that we are currently committed to, can be reduced in order to meet increased assessments.

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3. We would ask the Conference to give assurance that when the economic situation improves the assessment will reduce accordingly.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Launceston Area Circuit for drawing its attention to the financial pressures of carrying out mission and ministry within a rural context.

One of the benefits of being a connexional Church is the ability to deploy resources across the whole Connexion for the mutual benefit of each Church and Circuit. The size of the connexional assessment is partly determined by annual changes in Church membership. As a result, the fairness of this calculation is directly affected by responses to the annual statistics for mission survey. The Conference therefore reminds all Circuits that they are required to participate in this.

The Conference notes that the overall connexional assessment will decrease from £11.72m in 2009–10 to £11.32m in 2010–11, with the result that there will be no increase in the amount paid by the Cornwall District. However, it also reminds treasurers that the share of the connexional assessment paid by each Circuit is determined by each District and is not a matter for the Conference.

This should be clear at local level because the Conference has agreed that in every Circuit the separate elements of the total

assessment (Circuit; District; central connexional) requested from churches should be clearly distinguished.

The Conference also notes the material to be found elsewhere in the Agenda laying out a three-year trend in the connexional element of the assessment as part of a three-year connexional financial plan.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

M18 Reclaiming ministers' sick pay

The Delamere Forest (11/3) Circuit Meeting (Present: 35. Voting: unanimous) is concerned about the unfairness to Circuits of the inequitable situation arising during a period of a minister's sick leave, when a Circuit cannot reclaim statutory sick pay if the minister's stipend is paid monthly but can if the minister is paid quarterly.

It can see no reason in employment legislation why this should be the case, and believes that a Circuit should not be penalised because a minister has made a legitimate choice for a monthly payment of stipend. Neither should a minister, knowing this to be the case, feel pressured to return to work early because the Circuit has not been able to pay for the work to be covered in their absence, or, additionally, feel pressured to be paid quarterly rather than monthly.

The Circuit asks that this situation be rectified by the Connexion at the earliest opportunity.

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The following memorials were also received with the same text as above. The Conference adopts the same reply.

M19 Mow Cop, Biddulph and Congleton (11/09) Circuit Meeting (Present: 83. Voting: 82 for, 0 against)

M20 The Whitchurch (11/13) Circuit Meeting (Present: 28. Voting: unanimous)

Reply

The Conference thanks the Delamere Forest Circuit for its memorial and notes the concerns regarding equitable claims for statutory sick pay for ministers. In its report, the Connexional Allowances Committee (CAC) informs the Conference that research has commenced regarding a resolution of this situation. The Conference directs the CAC to work accordingly with the appropriate Connexional Team officers and report progress to the Conference in 2011, with a view to implementing any solution at the earliest possible opportunity.

M21 Assistance to Circuits where a minister is under suspension

The London Mission (North-West) (35/12) Circuit Meeting (Present: 18. Voting: unanimous), in view of its recent experience, requests the Conference to consider helping Circuits where a minister is under suspension so that the whole cost does not fall on that Circuit. Such assistance could come either through a connexional fund that already exists or through a fund set apart for this particular purpose.

Reply

The Conference thanks the London Mission (North-West) Circuit for drawing its attention to the costs that can result from having a minister who is under suspension. However, it notes that Circuits are already able to apply to the Methodist Church Fund for discretionary assistance with these costs under SO 013(11).

The Conference does not see a requirement to change these arrangements, so the memorial is therefore declined.

M22 Phasing out of cheques

The Oxford (23/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 35. Voting: unanimous) notes that since the banks' announcement of their intention to phase out cheques, there has been much discussion about the need to have suitable payment alternatives in place before that happens. However, little mention has been made of dual signatures. One of the main reasons that charities, including churches, use cheque-based accounts is the security provided by cheques requiring multiple signatures. In light of this, the Circuit Meeting asks the Conference to make representations to the appropriate bodies asking that banks:

1. develop secure but practical alternatives for multi-authorised transactions;
2. maintain cheque accounts until those alternatives are in place.

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Reply

The Conference thanks the Oxford Circuit for highlighting these concerns, particularly given the modifications in 2009 to SO 012(1) regarding electronic authorisations.

As an active member of the Churches' Legal Advisory Service (CLAS), the Methodist Church is involved in consultations with The Payments Council regarding the planned phasing out of cheques by late 2018. CLAS has been invited to join a Voluntary Sector Liaison Group through which it has already been able to highlight many of the issues facing churches and other charities if these proposals are accepted.

Recognising the attraction of internet banking to many churches and circuits, senior members of the Connexional Team have also commenced discussions with a bank that is committed to high standards of ethical behaviour about the availability of current accounts which offer dual authorisation transactions. The wider Connexion will be kept appraised of future developments via the network of district treasurers.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial.

M23 Connexionally-mandated officers

Tynedale (20/8) Circuit Meeting (Present: 58. Voting: unanimous) wishes to express its concern at the number of full time District and Regional Officers that the Conference has made mandatory i.e. TDOs. DEEs, DDEs. It believes that the

Circuits cannot afford all of them, both because there is a shortage of ministers to station and also because churches are struggling to meet assessments. The cost of these appointments is not only a higher level of District assessments and a reduction of connexional funds for other purposes but also a reduction in the number of ministers and lay workers, often those perceived as being among our best, available to station in Circuits, which the Tynedale Circuit believes should be the priority as the most direct way to enable the mission encapsulated in *Our Calling*.

The move to larger Circuits has also increased the level and variety of skills and experience at Circuit level thus reducing the need for the stimulation of external input from trainers and enablers. Recognising the missional nature of Circuits we ask the Conference to delegate to Synods the decision whether or not to appoint District and Regional Officers.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Tynedale Circuit for its memorial.

The Conference of 2008 approved the setting up of District Development Enablers (DDEs) for a five-year period, and the creation of the Training Officer (TO) posts as part of the reconfiguration of the training infrastructure. The 'mandatory' element is paid for centrally. Some Districts as part of their mission strategy have chosen to supplement the central resources to pay for more hours of work by these staff. District Evangelism Enablers are not in any way mandatory and have

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been appointed where the relevant Districts believe that to be a priority use for their own resources. In a number of cases DEEs are supported by connexional grants.

For the DDE and TO posts that have been centrally funded, no additions have been made to the connexional element of the District Assessments, which have been reduced in real terms in line with the decision of the 2007 Conference. This should be clear at local level because the Conference has agreed that in every Circuit the separate elements of the total assessment (Circuit; District; central connexional) requested from churches should be clearly distinguished.

The central services budget being presented to the Conference for 2010–11 does not change this general position. Central funding for DDEs is proposed to come from the reserves of the Connexional Priority Fund and funding for TOs to come from within the Learning budget as part of Core Costs. There is no direct sense in which these appointments or their funding reduce the number of ministers and lay employees available to the Circuits, except where a District has believed it right to appoint someone who might have been available for a Circuit post or station to a District role.

Nevertheless, viewed from the perspective of the whole Connexion, the Tynedale Circuit is correct that the funding of these two large groups of staff does mean a reduction in the resources available for other purposes. Currently the Learning budget is being scrutinised under the 'Fruitful Field' project described elsewhere

in the Agenda and further work will be done on this in the coming connexional year. The whole Regrouping for Mission process does have at its heart the ongoing discovery of how best to ensure mission is the priority for the Church, and this will continue to be worked on in cooperation with Districts and Circuits.

The Conference refers the memorial to the Methodist Council for consideration alongside the 'Fruitful Field' project and *Regrouping for Mission*.

M24 Banking ethics

The Lancaster (21/17) Circuit Meeting (Present: 46. Voting: unanimous) noting the need for the Methodist Church to uphold and be seen to uphold the highest standards of ethics in the conduct of its affairs and acknowledging the work of the JACEI in relation to CFB investment, requests that the Conference directs the Connexional Team to review its banking arrangements, taking advice from appropriate experts, to ensure that its bankers have in place, and demonstrably abide by, a clear ethical policy which accords with the policies of the Church.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Lancaster Circuit for reminding it of the valuable work done by the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment and of the need to be alert to the business ethics of the providers of services to the Methodist community.

The Conference notes that it is unlikely that any bank or other major company

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which provides professional services to the Methodist Church, either connexionally or locally, will never make a decision that conflicts with the preferences of some Methodists. The Church does not endorse every action of every company with which it does business. As the Lancaster Circuit acknowledges, HSBC has a better record than many of its competitors in some areas that have rightly been of concern to Christians.

Nonetheless the matter of our main connexional banking relationship was raised during the 2009 Conference. Discussions have taken place since between senior Connexional Team staff and one of the banks which has a strong and rigorously enforced ethical policy. Issues concerning the range of services that could be provided and the costs of transferring the very large number of accounts the Methodist Church uses were considered. There are more urgent priorities within the Finance team at present than progressing this work immediately but in the longer term the Connexional Team wants to work entirely in the spirit of this memorial without compromising the standards of service and related costs, about which the wider Connexion also feels strongly.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial and welcomes the work that continues in this area.

M25 Methodist Relief & Development Fund

The Mid Norfolk (14/16) Circuit Meeting (Present: 52. Voting: 45 for, 1 against)

applauds the work of the Methodist Relief & Development Fund (MRDF) in reaching the most deprived communities in the world, yet is deeply concerned by the current financial situation which has resulted in a funding crisis. Since the Trustees of MRDF are appointed by the Methodist Council, and a Council member is responsible for linking between the Council and MRDF, we ask if the Methodist Council will explore the possibility of releasing some of the uncommitted funds from the World Mission Fund, whose Reserve Policy adjusted to the 31 January 2009 gave an excess free reserve of £4,635,000, towards the work of MRDF. Is it the best use of our stewardship to keep reserves when there are such urgent needs for the committed work of MRDF? We believe Church Governance would allow such a transaction, since a comparable situation already exists whereby the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons (which is administered by the Methodist Council) makes an annual grant to the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society. We ask that Standing Order 245 be amended to allow the Methodist Council or any committee or officer to whom it may delegate its powers, to seek additional funds from the Fund for World Mission to meet projects that have already been committed by MRDF.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Mid Norfolk Circuit for its concerns for the continued work of MRDF. Some money from the World Mission Fund (WMF) is used for relief purposes and the current best estimate of "free" reserves in the Fund

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is also around £4m. These are used for the same purposes as the rest of the Fund, and the priorities for the use of that Fund were discussed at the All Partners Consultation, involving all the Partner Churches of the Methodist Church, in June 2010.

The restrictions on the use of the WMF are clearly laid out in Standing Orders, and it is on that basis that Methodists have loyally given over many years. Its focus is on funding mission work via Partner Churches around the world, many of whom have social development programmes. MRDF has been highly successful at delivering much-needed aid in some of the world's most deprived areas. It does this by working with a wide-range of partners that are best equipped and located for each particular project; many of which are outside of the global Methodist family. In this way the work of MRDF and that funded by the WMF are seen as distinctive, but complementary. For funds to be transferred from WMF to MRDF would need MRDF to choose to support projects that fell within the terms of the restrictions on the use of WMF money.

The relationship between WMF and MRDF is set out in a Memorandum of Understanding which does not include any provision for, or expectation of, transfers of funds and so unless MRDF were to ask for this Memorandum of Understanding to be redrawn, the approach suggested by the memorial would not seem appropriate.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

M26 Israeli settlements

The St Austell (12/7) Circuit Meeting (Present: 49. Voting: 47 for, 0 against), recognising the need for peace and justice for all people in Palestine and Israel, asks the Methodist Conference:

1. to express its grave concern that, despite continuing international pressure over many years, the Israeli Government continues to permit the building of new settlements and the expansion of existing ones in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, despite the fact that the settlements are illegal according to international law and are generally accepted to be the major obstacle to peace in the region
2. to acknowledge the work done by the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) in producing its 'Guidelines for Constructive Engagement related to Israel/Palestine' published in March 2007
3. to draw the attention of the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church and the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) to the following analyses, which have been published since these guidelines were agreed
 - a. the website www.whoprofits.org a list of those companies (many of them well-known international names) that profit from the continuing Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem which has

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- been researched by the Coalition of Women for Peace, an Israeli peace group,
- b. the work of Quaker Peace and Social Witness (www.quaker.org.uk/help-end-trade-israeli-settlements)
 - c. the research paper “UK economic links with Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian ‘territory’ produced in February 2009 by the Sir Joseph Hotung Programme for Law, Human Rights and Peace Building in the Middle East at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London (www.soas.ac.uk/lawpeacemideast/file49531.pdf)
4. to ask the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church and the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment to take into account these analyses in future when making decisions about investment
 5. to express its concern that products from illegal Israeli settlements continue to be available for purchase in stores in the United Kingdom, and that the labelling of these products is often ambiguous
 6. to urge the Government to introduce legislation at the earliest opportunity to ban the sale in the United Kingdom of any products that originate wholly or partially from illegal Israeli settlements
 7. until such a ban comes into force, to urge all Methodists not to purchase any products that originate wholly or partially from illegal Israeli settlements
 8. until such a ban comes into force, to urge other supermarkets to follow the lead of the Co-operative Group and Marks & Spencer plc and to cease to purchase any products that originate wholly or partially from illegal Israeli settlements.

Reply

The Conference thanks the St Austell Circuit for its memorial. The Conference acknowledges the concerns expressed, and considers that these can be most appropriately addressed in the context of the response of the Conference to resolutions 14/1–11 (Justice for Palestine and Israel).

The Conference notes the publication (10 December 2009) of technical advice by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on the labelling of produce grown in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This has helped to clear much of the ambiguity that previously existed over appropriate labelling of settlement produce in the UK.

The European Commission requirements for retail labelling are designed to provide information to consumers on – amongst other particulars – the origin of products. DEFRA guidance states that for produce from the West Bank, labelling must state the country of origin as “Produce of the West Bank”. DEFRA further advises that traders and retailers may wish to indicate whether the product originated from an

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Israeli settlement or from Palestinian producers. This could take the form, for example, of “Produce of the West Bank (Israeli settlement produce)” or “Produce of the West Bank (Palestinian produce)”, as appropriate.

The Conference further notes the work of the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR) and the Connexional Team in determining the position of major supermarkets with respect to this advice and directs people to the resources available via the websites of ECCR and the Methodist Church.

M27 Mental health in the armed forces

The Lincoln and Grimsby District Synod (R) (Present: 102. Voting: unanimous) asks the Conference to urge the British Government to make full and extended provision to ensure a coordinated response for the mental health and social care for returning military personnel, particularly for those held within our prisons.

Reply

The Conference shares the concerns of the Lincoln and Grimsby District for the welfare of ex-military personnel.

The impact of combat upon people leaving the armed forces – and upon their families – is significant. For every person who is killed in combat, more are injured, and many more have injuries which are invisible, often psychological, and which may only emerge after many

years. Research in 2008 suggested that 6% of homeless people in London were ex-servicemen and women, and 9% of the country’s prisoners were former armed forces personnel.

Much has been done to assist people leaving the forces, but many of the problems only emerge a number of years after they have left.

Methodist chaplaincy to the armed forces is marking its 150th anniversary this year. Forces chaplains are involved in helping people prepare for civilian life. Many churches around the country already recognise their pastoral responsibilities to former members of the armed services, and their loved ones, who are suffering from the long-term impact of war. The Government, statutory bodies and charities have all made efforts to support ex-service personnel.

Over recent years, however, UK forces have been involved in an increased number of conflicts, and the number of individuals affected by mental health problems, family breakdown and imprisonment is likely to continue to rise over the coming years.

The Conference accepts the memorial and affirms the work of churches offering support to individuals and families, supports forces chaplains working directly with people serving in the armed forces, and acknowledges the need for the Government and other agencies to continue to offer help to people damaged by conflict whilst in the services.

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M28 Palm oil

The Sheffield District Synod (R) (Present: 144. Voting: 142 for, 2 against) requests that the Methodist Church work closely with organisations such as Christian Ecology Link (CEL), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and Friends of the Earth (FoE) to raise the awareness of the Methodist people and encourage positive action, such as lobbying supermarkets and gaining the support of MPs, in respect of the drastic deforestation taking place in places like Indonesia and Malaysia in order to produce palm oil.

The harvesting of this product, of which Britain is the second largest importer in Europe, is found in one in ten supermarket products, including Kit Kats, Cadbury's chocolate, bread, washing liquids (especially those produced by Proctor and Gamble), Flora spreads, Mr Kipling cakes, and various brands of frozen fish.

According to British Government figures, deforestation accounts for 18% of CO₂ emissions and so the production of this oil is adding significantly to global warming. In addition indigenous people in Sumatra and Borneo are forcibly being expelled from their land by multi-nationals. WWF estimates that 80% of orangutan habitat has been lost in the past 20 years. Experts warn that if the rate of deforestation continues at the current rate, then orangutans will be extinct in the wild by 2018. At present only 4% of the palm oil produced is from sustainable resources. (Source: *The Independent*)

We therefore request that the Conference works with appropriate non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to increase awareness of these issues throughout the Methodist Church and, with that growing awareness, encourage people to change their shopping habits in order to preserve the declining habitats mentioned above, the land of indigenous people and the massive deforestation that is taking place.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Sheffield District Synod for its memorial. It accepts the memorial and directs the Joint Public Issues Team to work with NGOs and ecumenical partners in order to bring this issue to the attention of Methodists and to support them in writing letters to supermarkets and other companies.

The Conference further invites the Joint Public Issues Team and the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church to make appropriate representations to companies and to Government and to report to the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment regarding palm oil.

M29 Hunting with dogs

The St Albans and Welwyn (34/13) Circuit Meeting (Present: 35. Voting: 16 for, 8 against) notes with concern that many Members of Parliament, contrary to the wishes of the majority of their constituents, are calling for the repeal of the *Hunting Act (2004)*. Whilst recognising that in an imperfect world there needs to be control of predators where there is a serious threat to the welfare of

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agricultural livestock or endangered species, we believe that hunting for sport is incompatible with the Christian doctrine of creation and responsible stewardship. We believe hunting and coursing not only to be cruel to animals but also demeaning to those who participate in it. We ask the Methodist Conference to call for a more effective enforcement of the *Hunting Act*, rather than its repeal, and instead urge the Government to focus its attention on the real needs of the farming and rural communities, such as support for home produced food, affordable housing for the local workforce, and investment in rural schools, transport and post offices.

Reply

The Conference thanks the St Albans and Welwyn Circuit for its memorial and shares the concerns expressed for the welfare of people living in the countryside.

The Hunting Act 2004 outlawed hunting wild mammals with dogs. The Act does not seem to have had the feared impact on jobs and now appears to be supported by the majority of the population (an Ipsos MORI poll in 2009 pointed to 75% support for the ban on hunting). Some people, however, still believe the repeal of the Act should be a priority for the Government.

The 1980 Methodist Statement on the Treatment of Animals affirmed that *“The theological basis for an attitude to the animal creation must rest on the concept of stewardship rather than lordship, must accept the implications of the reality of the interdependence of life on our planet, and must express the conviction that creation*

is good.” It also asserts that *“Patently cruel sports, such as stag hunting and hare coursing, are to be condemned, not only for the suffering imposed on the animal but also for the effect on the human participant.”* The Conference would be unlikely to support the repeal of the Hunting Act.

The Conference shares the concerns of the authors of the memorial that there are many wider concerns to people living in rural areas than hunting: affordable housing, transport and access to services are crucial for everyone who lives in the countryside; other issues affecting farmers in particular might include the impact of Bovine TB, the effectiveness of the Rural Payments Agency, and the future of regional funding. The Methodist Church already engages with the Government, together with other Churches, on a range of rural issues through the Arthur Rank Centre, and appoints a Rural Officer jointly with the United Reformed Church.

It is not clear at this time whether the repeal of the Hunting Act will be a priority for the new Government, but the Conference believes that it should not put its efforts into advocating for or against specific legislation on hunting.

The Conference accepts the encouragement in the memorial to continue the wider work of supporting rural communities.

M30 Alcohol on Methodist premises

The London Mission (North-West) (35/12) Circuit Meeting (Present: 18. Voting: 14

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for, 3 against) notes that it is several years since the general question of using alcohol on Methodist premises was discussed. The Circuit requests the Conference to initiate a questionnaire on this issue to go to every Circuit with a view to the Conference eventually relaxing its restrictions on the use of alcohol.

Reply

The Conference notes the London Mission (North-West) Circuit's concern that churches may miss out on income from receptions held after weddings and baptisms because people wish to serve alcohol.

The supply, sale or use of intoxicants is not permitted on Methodist premises in any circumstances, with the exception of Methodist premises where *"a significant part of the mission and activity of the Methodist Church carried out on the relevant premises involves the use of the premises as a conference centre"* (SO 922(3A)). The Conference voted to allow the exemption for conference centres in 2004, and has subsequently rejected requests to rescind the policy.

Whilst the income from receptions can be valuable to churches, churches do not exist primarily to offer reception venues. Only those churches which have developed conference centre premises as significant parts of their mission have an exemption from the ban on intoxicants. Many people who attend celebrations associated with religious ceremonies in Methodist churches appreciate knowing that they will not be served alcohol. Groups such

as Alcoholics Anonymous choose to meet on Methodist premises for the same reason.

The memorial requests that the Methodist Church begins a consultation process with a view to "eventually relaxing its restrictions on alcohol". The Conference rejects the request for a consultation exercise as this would be costly and it sees no widespread demand for such a relaxation. It does not believe such a move would accord with our Church's messages on alcohol consumption as embodied in the use of our church premises.

Whilst the Conference appreciates the concern of churches to maximise their incomes from lettings, it believes that the current position should be maintained and therefore declines the memorial.

M31 Methodist maintained schools

The Chorley (6/12) Circuit Meeting (Present: 25. Voting: unanimous) asks the Conference to note the significant contribution that the Methodist maintained schools make to the mission of the Church. In noting this important mission field, reaching 10,000 families through their children, the Conference is asked to agree to continue to support all its Methodist schools in the vital work that they do and to commit to maintaining and developing the support schools receive from Methodist Church House.

The following memorials were also received with the same text as above. The Conference adopts the same reply.

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M32 Darlington District Synod (R)
(Present: 105. Voting: 100 for,
0 against)

M33 Liverpool District Synod (R) (Present:
104. Voting: 98 for, 2 against)

Reply

The Conference thanks the Chorley Circuit for its memorial.

The Conference understands that the Methodist Council remains committed to the support of the 64 maintained schools throughout the Connexion. The work that these schools undertake is at the heart of the Education Commission which has been created this year to undertake a review of our involvement in education and to report to the Conference fully in 2012. To ensure that support continues whilst this work is being done, the post of Schools Coordinator has been created within the Connexional Team with a proportion of the funding for the post coming from the Board of Management for Methodist Independent Schools. We have started to consolidate the information we hold about Methodist maintained schools and are now in contact with the Superintendents involved in these schools to ensure appropriate support and information can be given by the Team. The review of committees has enabled the creation of a new Maintained Schools Committee to engage with policy matters whilst a larger Stakeholders Forum will ensure that District representatives remain connected and consulted. The Team encourages all Districts with schools to take advantage of the Stakeholders Forum. By ensuring that work regarding schools

is done as part of the wider Children and Youth agenda we are hopeful that positive networking opportunities will be offered as well as good practice shared. The Team continues to work closely with ecumenical partners, including The National Society of the Church of England, to ensure that we work together wherever possible for the best outcome of the schools; this can be seen in our joint accreditation bid to ensure that we can continue to open new schools where desired.

During the stationing process Circuits are required to fill in a Circuit profile form which contains a statement by the Circuit of the appointments they intend to be filled as well as an indication of the expectations to be placed upon any minister being stationed there. We affirm and encourage the practice of Circuits which have close ties to any schools, but especially Methodist maintained schools, making this a clear part of the profile, leaving to Circuits the decision of how much work this should entail.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial.

M34 Methodist maintained schools

The North Lancashire District Synod (R) (Present: 130. Voting: 127 for, 0 against) encourages the Conference to celebrate the significant contribution that the Methodist Maintained Schools make to the mission of the church, reaching 10,000 families through their children and requests the Conference to continue to support all its Methodist schools in the vital work that they do.

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The Synod asks the Conference to commit to maintaining and developing the support schools receive from the Connexional Team.

At every level of the stationing process where a minister has responsibility for a Methodist maintained school this should be considered equivalent to the time required for a church of equivalent size.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as M31.

M35 Child protection case review

The Nottingham and Derby Synod (R) (Present: 184. Voting: 179 for, 0 against) asks that the Conference direct the Methodist Council and the Law and Polity Committee to make immediate arrangements for the conduct of a past child protection cases review and that the Conference direct the Methodist Council and the Law and Policy Committee to make arrangements for the risk assessments to be conducted to assess the ongoing risk (if any) posed to children and young people by all those whose cases arise as a result of such a past child protection cases review.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Nottingham and Derby Synod for its memorial. The need for a review of past child protection cases has already been noted by the Methodist Council and the resolution in the report 'Safeguarding Children

and Young People' (MC10/37, printed below) was agreed by the Council. Such a review process has significant resource implications and requires setting up in a careful and thorough way. It will involve the diligent examination of any records which have been kept according to relevant and designated criteria of risk. It will concern relevant information held by individuals, personnel files and District or Circuit files for incidents or complaints involving any risk of harm or actual harm to children which may or may not have been acted upon by the Church, or reported to the authorities, in the way they would be now.

The review process itself could therefore take a number of years. A strategy for a review process will therefore be presented to the Methodist Council as soon as possible and progress on this will be reported to the Conference in 2011.

MC10/37 Resolution 9.2

The Methodist Council notes the concerns and implications for the safeguarding and protection of children and the risks of harm to children raised by past cases, which may not have been known before or which may or may not have been dealt with adequately in the past and therefore still hold some risks for the Methodist Church. It therefore further directs that these concerns be taken up by the Safeguarding Adviser and a strategy for addressing them be brought to Methodist Council as soon as possible.

In particular these concerns include:

- a) *The need for a review of past child protection cases on the model of similar work done in other Churches;*

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- b) *The consequent need for consistent keeping of records, including personnel files;*
- c) *The trauma and harm triggered for survivors of abuse by the ongoing annual publication of ministers and preachers who, following police and disciplinary cases (including cautions or convictions) for harm to children or vulnerable adults, remain on the accredited preacher lists (circuit preaching plans), in the Minutes of Conference or published obituaries;*
- d) *Information sharing between ministers, circuits and districts; a whistle blowing policy and responding well to survivors of abuse.*

Any such review should include all ministers, local preachers and lay employees working with children and District officers working with children.

M36 Child protection: Minutes of Conference and case review

The Wales Synod (M) (Present: 77. Voting: 65 for, 12 against) asks that the Conference directs the Methodist Council and the Law and Polity Committee to amend Standing Order O10 (2) with the addition of:

(iii) no person who has been convicted or has received a simple or conditional caution from the police concerning sexual offences against children shall have their name listed in the Minutes of Conference, Circuit Plan or any other official Methodist Church documentation; nor shall they be accorded the usual obituary in the Minutes of Conference.

The Wales Synod also asks that the Conference direct the Methodist Council and the Law and Polity Committee to undertake a feasibility report concerning the way forward in conducting a past child protection cases review, similar to the work done in other Churches. The Wales Synod asks that the feasibility report be completed as a matter of urgency, i.e. within the next 12 months.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as M35, noting that the past cases review will include within its remit the need to address the additional concerns raised in this memorial.

M37 Confidentiality and pastoral care

The Weston-super-Mare and Burnham on Sea (7/17) Circuit Meeting (Present: 38. Voting: 34 for, 0 against) recognises the need and value of the publication of Good Practice in Confidentiality and Pastoral Care accepted by the Conference of 2008, but is concerned that section 9 on Prayer Support is too restrictive and unrealistic. The dying, the unconscious, and seriously ill brothers and sisters in Christ who are unable to speak should not be denied the prayer support of the Christian community whether in public worship or prayer meetings or fellowships simply because they are unable to give permission for their name(s) to be mentioned. Serious casualties in road accidents or members taken ill on holiday become the subjects of prayer as soon as news of the accident or illness is received. If regulation is too strict and politically correct we are in danger of failing in the Christian duty of love and care.

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As it stands at present the guidance prevents us from praying for the Royal Family, the Government, other national leaders both Church and State, in the event of a major incident or catastrophe, as express permission to pray for them, in public worship is not readily available.

We request that Conference directs the appropriate Committee, group or cluster to reword Section 9 to take account of our concerns which we believe are shared by many Methodists.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Weston-super-Mare and Burnham on Sea Circuit for its memorial.

The 2008 Conference accepted the guidelines relating to confidentiality and prayer, and further reinforced its belief in these in response to a memorial (M15) from the Dorking and Horsham Circuit in 2009.

It should be noted that the Conference report, *With Integrity and Skill*, and the associated *Good Practice in Confidentiality and Pastoral Care* document are concerned with protecting and respecting the right to privacy of individuals. The Royal Family and other national leaders are public figures whose permission need not be sought in order to pray for them. Those who are seriously ill and unable to communicate are likely in most instances to have family members or friends who are communicating news of their relative or friend to the church community and who would be able to offer advice and guidance

on their behalf. The Conference is confident that, when applied appropriately, contextually and with sensitivity, the guidelines as currently worded are appropriate.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

M38 Public statements on the future of the Methodist Church

The Bideford (24/23) Circuit Meeting (Present: 28. Voting: 15 for, 9 against) was disappointed by the remarks made by the President to the General Synod of the Church of England on 11 February. They have resulted in a greater degree of misunderstanding between ourselves and our local covenant partners. As a Circuit we are committed to mission and believe that the President's remarks have been detrimental to our effectiveness.

We therefore ask the Conference to direct that henceforth any public remarks by the President, Vice-President or members of the Connexional Team concerning the future of the Methodist Church shall be authorised by the Methodist Council before utterance or other publication.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Bideford Circuit for its memorial and acknowledges the disappointment felt following the speech by the President and Vice-President to the Church of England General Synod and the reporting of it. The policy document '*Speaking on behalf of the Methodist Church*' sets out guidelines to which

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representative officers of the Church and all Connexional Team staff are bound, including the President and Vice-President. The report on the Presidency elsewhere in the Agenda discusses this further. The Social Media Guidelines Report before the Conference reiterates the current policy and applies it to new forms of media. The Pastoral Letter issued by the President, Vice-President and General Secretary for use in all local churches after the speech at the Synod clarified that the speech was in line with Methodist policy and also addressed the way in which the media coverage took the speech in a different direction. The future of the Methodist Church is always to be seen in terms of God's mission in the world. Any particular plans or proposals regarding changes to the Methodist Church as it is currently configured would necessarily go to the Methodist Council and the Conference, in which case a formal statement would be agreed and authorised.

M39 Public statements on behalf of the Methodist Church

The Ripon (29/24) Circuit Meeting (Present: 33. Voting: 31 for, 0 against) prayerfully supports its connexional officers in the considerable responsibilities they carry both within the Church and in the wider community. In the light of the confusion, misrepresentation, misunderstanding and anxiety arising from the concluding remarks in the President's address to the General Synod of the Church of England on the 11 February 2010, we urge the Methodist Council to ensure that there are in place internal mechanisms by which:

1. Public statements are clear and unambiguous
2. A distinction is made between statements which are a matter of personal opinion or conviction and those that are made on behalf of the Methodist Church and which therefore carry the authority of the Methodist Conference directly or delegated.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Ripon Circuit for its memorial and notes the concerns expressed regarding misrepresentation and misunderstanding which can occur following public statements. The proposals in the memorial are in line with the agreed policy on '*Speaking for the Methodist Church*', which has been further considered by the Conference in the report on Social Media Guidelines. The Conference reassures the Circuit that internal mechanisms are in place, and are under regular review.

The Conference also draws the Circuit's attention to its reply to M38 from the Bideford Circuit which raised a related point.

M40 Use of Methodist premises by other faiths

The Falmouth and Gwennap (12/3) Circuit Meeting (Present: 48. Voting: 39 for, 6 against) believes that existing Standing Orders offer insufficient guidance on the use of Methodist premises by people of other faiths in the multi faith society which we now enjoy. We therefore call upon the Methodist Conference to amend existing

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Standing Orders in order to provide clear guidance as to what persons or groups, and under what conditions, we may offer the hand of Christian friendship in allowing those of other faiths access to and use of our premises, either the worship area or ancillary rooms.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Falmouth and Gwennap Circuit for articulating the need for greater clarity on a subject that is of growing concern in many parts of the Connexion.

In the last few years considerable work has been undertaken to clarify the legal position in respect of permitted usage of Methodist property in accordance with the Methodist Church Act, the Model Trusts and the Deed of Union. Counsel's opinion has been sought on two occasions and has confirmed the limited use of Methodist property by people of other faiths.

As the Connexional Team receives a number of requests each month for clarification on permitted use of property the Conference accepts the memorial and directs the Methodist Council, in conjunction with the Law and Polity Committee and the Faith and Order Committee, to provide material for Managing Trustees which sets out the legal position and offers advice, and to consider how best this might be made available.

M41. Eligibility for membership of the Youth Assembly

The Wales Synod (R) (Present: 129. Voting: 128 for, 1 against) is very supportive

of the work done in encouraging young people to speak to and inform the Methodist Church through the Youth Assembly. In order for this to be as representative and widespread as possible the Representative Session of Wales Synod requests the Conference to consider amending Standing Order 250 (4) so that the requirements for being elected as a District representative to the Assembly are the same as the requirements for being a non-elected member of the Youth Assembly.

This would, in turn require an amendment of Standing Order 417A(2)(i), replacing "a member" with "involved".

At the present time it is only members of the Methodist Church who are eligible to be elected as District representatives. This would mean there would be a standard requirement of eligibility for membership of the Youth Assembly, whether attending at their own expense or as District representatives. If young people who are involved in the life of the Church are to be encouraged to engage with the Church it is important that we hear as broad and representative a voice as possible and give value to their input. This change does not negate the requirement laid down in Standing Order 250 (7) that those members of the Youth Assembly elected as representatives to the Methodist Conference shall be members of the Methodist Church.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Wales Synod for its memorial.

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The ongoing work of enabling young people to change the way that the Church supports them in their faith journey is of paramount importance to the whole Church. The changes made to create the Youth Assembly last year have already begun to bear fruit for young people and for that we give thanks. Work has begun in this connexional year to identify the best way forward in relation to the Standing Orders and constitution of the Youth Assembly, with the process being firmly grounded with young people themselves. As those questions are asked there will be more work to be done in the coming year to ensure that the Church has made provision for young people in a way that they feel honours them. In light of the work that is indicated in the report of the Law and Polity Committee, where various aspects of the constitution of the Youth Assembly are already under consideration, it would be wise to bring all these changes together rather than in a piecemeal fashion.

The Conference therefore refers this memorial to the Methodist Council and the Law and Polity Committee for consideration in that process.

M42 Correct titles in the Minutes of Conference

The North Lancashire District Synod (R) (Present: 130. Voting: 123 for, 0 against), recognising the Conference's decisions to refer to Presbyters and Deacons with the title Ministers in the Methodist Church, believes this should be reflected in the *Minutes of the Conference*.

The Synod requests that the Conference directs those responsible for producing the annual *Minutes of the Conference* make the following changes:

- for the Minutes of 2010 change the page titles in the Minutes of Conference “addresses of ministers” to read “addresses of presbyters”;
- in the connexional year 2010–11 arrange a conversation to take place with the Diaconal Order to see if the Order wishes for the addresses of deacons to continue to be held as a separate category;
- should the deacons wish to bring the addresses of all “Ministers in the Methodist Church” under one title, to make provision for doing so for the Minutes of 2011.

Reply

The Conference thanks the North Lancashire Synod for its memorial.

The decision of the Conference of 2009 to clarify the use of terms was the first step in a longer process of clarification. Following this decision both the Deed of Union and Standing Orders require amendment and it would follow that the *Minutes of the Conference* would then also be updated to reflect this change. At present the Minutes reflects what is stated in the Standing Orders and the Deed of Union. There is a report elsewhere in the Agenda from the Law and Polity Committee on changes to the Deed of Union in respect of terms. Once Clause 4 of the Deed has been changed to include the term Presbyters and Deacons the work

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can then begin in the next connexional year to amend Standing Orders. Once this is done it will be the right time to address the issue of the changes in the Minutes suggested in the memorial which will require further conversations with the Diaconal Order.

The Conference refers this memorial to the Law and Polity Committee for consideration alongside the changes to Standing Orders, whilst consulting with the Diaconal Order about their preferences in relation to the *Minutes of the Conference*.