

Conference *News*

METHODIST CONFERENCE 2004 LOUGHBOROUGH

The Methodist Conference of 2004, hosted by the Oxford & Leicester, Nottingham & Derby and Lincoln & Grimsby districts, met in Loughborough. The Revd Will Morrey and Deacon Myrtle Poxon were inducted as President and Vice President of the Conference for 2004-5. Prior to the Representative session (26 June-1 July), the Ministerial session was held on 24-25 June and the Diaconal session on Friday 25 June. This year the Conference met in a residential centre, Loughborough University, for the first time.

- **Conference approved the report 'Priorities for the Methodist Church', which will form a focus for the whole Church over the next few years. The Priorities were drawn up following the 'Where are we heading?' consultation process. The report also reinforces the Our Calling process for reviewing local churches and circuits under the four themes in the remainder of this Bulletin.**

ACTION POINT - read Priorities for the Methodist Church and see how your local churches can support the priorities.

WORSHIP

- Conference passed resolutions brought by representatives of the Youth Conference calling for relevant worship and preaching in all Methodist churches, and the nurturing of prayer.
- Conference debated proposals from the mph concerning a supplement or successor to 'Hymns & Psalms'.

LEARNING & CARING

- Ecumenical conversations
 - Conference received reports on ecumenical work in Wales through ENFYS (the Covenanted Churches in Wales), in Scotland through the Scottish Church Initiative for Union Proposal (SCIFU) and in England through the Anglican-Methodist Covenant joint implementation commission
 - Conference welcomed The Most Revd Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, who gave an address on the Nature of the Church

- Conference received a report from the Faith and Order committee, '*Church, State & Establishment*' which outlines a Methodist perspective on these issues. This comprehensive report contains reflections on experiences, theology, a history of how the Methodist Church has discussed Establishment in the past, and recommendations on how to proceed in the light of the Anglican – Methodist Covenant.

ACTION POINT - read *Church, State and Establishment*

- Conference adopted a report calling for the Methodist Church to support the International Finance Facility. In addition to regular aid flows, donor governments in rich countries should guarantee additional flows of funds from the private sector to the developing world. This private sector finance would be a liability of the rich country governments and therefore would not increase the debt burden of the poorer nations. It would eventually be repaid out of rich country aid budgets but mostly after 2015. The IFF is therefore a means of bringing forward potential investment money to enable much earlier progress towards the development goals, and a continuation of the campaign for Trade Justice.

ACTION POINT - read the IFF report

- The report 'Guidelines for the Methodist People on the theology and practice of Inter Faith relations' was received. The resource '*Faith Meeting Faith*' is commended to Methodist churches throughout the Connexion.

ACTION POINT – use *Faith Meeting Faith*

- Conference adopted a motion objecting to the presence of obscene internet sites promoting violent pornography and instructing Connexional team members to work with Government and the internet industry on this issue.
- Conference expressed concern for the ongoing situation in Zimbabwe and resolved to set up a Zimbabwe Reference Group to support the Connexional Team in sustaining relationships with the Methodist Church Zimbabwe and review how support may be given.
- Conference expressed its support for the work of churches with a mission to people affected by alcohol or substance misuse and directed the Connexional Team to facilitate sharing good practice and to make contributions to debates about public policy.
- Conference expressed concern at the closure of Post Offices in urban, suburban and rural areas.

- Conference discussed the current grievance procedures for ordained people within the Methodist Church and instructed the Methodist Council to review this matter.
- Conference expressed its thanks to Mr Peter Cotgrove, who retired as Connexional Treasurer, and Revd Keith Reed, who had served as the Assistant Secretary of the Conference for the previous 7 years.

SERVICE

- Conference adopted the report '*What is a Deacon?*' which explains the calling and work of Deacons in the Methodist Church. This report follows the 'What is a Presbyter?' report which was adopted in 2002.

ACTION POINT - read *What is a Deacon?*

- Conference welcomed Revd David Wilkes, the first Methodist Chaplain General of the UK Land Forces, who spoke on the work of Forces Chaplains.
- Conference approved resolutions which will release resources for mission from circuit Advance Funds.
- Conference moved to ease bureaucratic processes by piloting a scheme whereby

property schemes for minor works under £12,500 in value (with some exceptions) can be approved at district level.

- Conference received reports and presentations from MRDF (Methodist Relief and Development Fund), MHA (Methodist Homes for the Aged) and NCH, the Children's Charity, on their work with vulnerable people.
- Conference approved a report on Governance and Accountability, which will bring reporting procedures more into line with Charity Commission good practice.
- Conference discussed and approved resolutions relating to serving alcohol on Methodist premises when a substantial proportion of a church's mission involves managing a conference centre.
- Conference approved resolutions to create one district for London (covering the area of the Greater London Authority), and to pursue flexible structures for districts.

ACTION POINT - read reports on London Methodism and Flexible District structures

- Conference discussed a range of reports which develop Methodist understanding of 'equal opportunities':
 - A Racial Justice Training Strategy was

approved

- An interim report on Domestic Abuse was received
- The Gender Justice Committee reported briefly
- Presbyters and Deacons affected by impairment were the focus of a longer report of work in progress, which included a draft code of practice.

EVANGELISM

- Conference received a report on rural issues and welcomed a new resource, '*Presence*', for use in rural situations.

ACTION POINT - get a copy of *Presence*

CONFERENCE IN 2005

The Revd Thomas Stuckey and Mr John Bell were designated as President and Vice President of the Conference of 2005, which will meet in Torquay.

For further information about items referred to in this Bulletin, or other outcomes from the Conference, please contact the Co-ordinating Secretaries' Office, 25 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 5JR
Tel: 020 7467 5143.

www.methodist.org.uk (Site Ref: MC240304)

This Conference Bulletin was edited by the Claire Boxall

It is a special edition of *Sharing News*, a regular supplement of Connexional news

Produced by the Communication Office, Methodist Church Connexional Team

Sharing News information:

communication@methodistchurch.org.uk

The Methodist Church 

For further information about items referred to in this Bulletin, or other outcomes from the Conference, please contact the Co-ordinating Secretaries' Office, 25 Marylebone Road, LONDON NW1 5JR Tel: 020 7467 5143, E-mail: co-ordsec@methodistchurch.org.uk

© Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes 2004