

THE DIACONATE (1997)

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The task engaging the Council's working party is to ensure that the Church's procedures and practices properly reflect the fact that the Methodist Diaconal Order is an acknowledged order of ministry, alongside the presbyteral order. Although clause 4 of the Deed of Union was recently changed so that those who are not presbyteral ministers are no longer necessarily regarded as lay, nevertheless most of our legislation and the practices it regulates still reflect that earlier assumption and need updating.
- 1.2 The working party has consistently been guided by the belief that Methodism regards lay, diaconal and presbyteral ministries as having different identities and emphases but equal value. Diaconal ministry within Methodism is neither of lower nor of higher status than presbyteral ministry. Nor is its nature such that deacons and deaconesses should be excluded from any sphere of ministry which may properly be exercised by both presbyters and lay people. Provision has therefore to be made for deaconesses and deacons to serve on committees, hold senior office, be members of the Conference, preach, and so on.
- 1.3 In each area where the Church has evolved legislation in relation to ministers the working party has examined its applicability to deaconesses and deacons, believing that as a rule parity of treatment is appropriate and that this should be made explicit. So, for example, procedures for candidature, training and probation, full connexion and ordination, stationing, discipline, superannuating, movement between the two orders and transfers from the orders of other Churches, ought to meet the same standard and be broadly similar.
- 1.4 At the same time there are areas of the life of the Methodist Church where the distinctive features of diaconal and presbyteral ministry require something other than a grouping together of the two orders. Thus we consider that there should be separate Ministerial (i.e. presbyteral – see below) and Diaconal Sessions of the Conference and that ministerial Synods and the diaconal Convocation should retain their exclusivity.
- 1.5 **The main recommendations will be found as bold text at two points within section 3: JUDGEMENT ON SOME KEY ISSUES (paragraphs 3.2.2 & 3.4.8), and as the bold sub-section headings in section 4: MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS.**

2. THE TASK OF THE WORKING PARTY

- 2.1 The Methodist Council established the working party following the 1995 Conference in order to explore the consequences of the Diaconal Order being an order of ministry. An interim report indicating the direction of thinking on major issues was received by the Conference in 1996.

- 2.2 At the same time a study guide “The Methodist Diaconal Order – An Order of Ministry” was published and sent to all ministers, deacons and deaconesses, as well as to members of the 1996 Conference. This has aided discussion of the issues throughout the Church in order to enable the Conference to consider the proposals enshrined in this report.
- 2.3 The necessary changes to the Deed of Union, if adopted, become special resolutions, to be confirmed in 1998, following appropriate consultation. The extensive changes to Standing Orders which will give effect to the proposals that follow will therefore be presented for adoption in 1998.
- 2.4 The members of the working party are: Rev Dr William R Davies (chair), Rev Eileen Appleyard, Rev Neil Dixon, Mrs Susan Howdle, Deaconess Kathleen Hutton, Rev Dr Stephen Mosedale (convenor), Mr Leon Murray, Mrs Sheila Russell, Deaconess Christine Walters, Rev Sandra Williams and Rev David Wood.

3 JUDGEMENT ON SOME KEY ISSUES

3.1 The Distinctive Role of the Diaconate

- 3.1.1 The detailed work on this theme which formed the report adopted by Conference in 1993 underlies all that follows in this report. We have noted that alongside the development of the Methodist Diaconal Order in recent years, diaconal ministry has been receiving renewed emphasis in many denominations. Despite widely different practices, there is a considerable agreement that the diaconate focuses and represents the servant role of the church in the world.
- 3.1.2 The Methodist Church believes that such diaconal ministry is different from, but neither inferior nor superior to, presbyteral ministry. The latter is a ministry of word and sacrament, pastoral care and oversight. Nor is either form of ordained ministry superior to the ministry of non-ordained members of the Church. We all share together in the ministry of the whole people of God.

3.2 The Diaconate as a Religious Order

- 3.2.1 The word “Order” in the title “Methodist Diaconal Order” (hereafter MDO), and in the previous “Wesley Deaconess Order” expresses the understanding that this is a religious Order. This report consistently uses “Order” with a capital to aid clarity as regards the distinction between a religious Order and an order of ministry. The MDO continues to explore its role and to develop its rule of life as such an Order; it does this with reference to the Religious Orders of other Churches.
- 3.2.2 The MDO would be strengthened as a religious Order if its rule of life were to be tested and endorsed by the Conference which is the supreme authority of the Methodist Church.** It is hoped that the current work within the Order might lead to the approval by Convocation of a new rule for adoption by the Conference in 1998.

- 3.2.3 We consider that such a rule, along with the provisions that will be included in our Constitutional Practice and Discipline (hereafter CPD) in order to implement this report, will give the Order clear boundaries within which to develop its life together, its styles of ministry, its mutual pastoral support, its patterns of prayer, and other ways in which it fulfils its servant calling.
- 3.2.4 In seeking to address sensitively this interface between being an order of the Church's ministry and being a religious Order, we are not unaware of some residual resistance to the recognition of the MDO as an order of ministry. Nevertheless we believe that Conference needs to hold to the courage of its repeated conviction, and that the Order will be strengthened as a result of its accountability to the Conference.

3.3 The Present Size of the Methodist Diaconal Order

- 3.3.1 At present there are around 220 ordained deaconesses and deacons, of whom about 80 are active. In addition there are around 40 students and probationers. There is every likelihood that the active membership of the Order will continue to grow by ten or more per year, and we are conscious that discussion is taking place within and beyond the Order regarding its optimum size.
- 3.3.2 Our proposals assume growth. At the present time there is a dearth of senior but still active members and some districts are devoid of active deacons and deaconesses. Some of our proposals, particularly as regards committee membership, need to be permissive of diaconal participation rather than directive at this time. We do not wish deaconesses and deacons to bear a disproportionate burden of district and connexional service, but as their number grows we consider that they need to be enabled to make their distinctive contribution in every arena of Church life and mission.

3.4 The Descriptions "Minister" and "Deacon"

- 3.4.1 We believe that the term "minister" should continue to be used to define ministers of the word and sacraments, that is presbyteral ministers, and that deacons and deaconesses should be the subject of a separate new definition in the Deed of Union.
- 3.4.2 As indicated above there is a sense in which all Christians are "ministers". But having acknowledged that there are two "orders of ministry" it might be thought not inappropriate to use the word "ministers" to encompass "presbyters, deacons and deaconesses". However, the common usage of the word "minister" is to describe a person ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament, that is a presbyter. This is the understanding inferred from the Deed of Union and therefore is the meaning to be read into every present reference to "minister" in CPD.
- 3.4.3 Even if the Church were to decide to replace every such reference to "minister" by "presbyter", it would be thoroughly misleading thereafter to start using "minister" in the wider sense to include deaconesses and deacons. Moreover we consider that the distinctiveness of the two forms or ordained

ministry would be blurred by adoption of any composite term that embraced both.

- 3.4.4 We further recommend that the term “deacon” should then be used to describe both male and female members of the diaconal Order.
- 3.4.5 The MDO itself has not reached consensus over terminology that should be used of members of the Order, either descriptive or vocative. Some wish to be called “sister” or “brother” whilst others find these terms archaic. Some deaconesses would find it difficult to start to be called “deacon”.
- 3.4.6 Since gender distinction is not relevant to the calling as such we believe we should follow the lead of some other Churches in working towards the abandonment of the term “deaconess” when describing those ordained to diaconal ministry. Increasingly “deaconess” is a term used in other Churches for a woman in recognised but non-ordained service. Therefore we propose that we should use “deacon”, in parallel to our use of “minister” or “lay person”, to include both genders.
- 3.4.7 In view of the large amount of legislation that will need to be written or rewritten in order to implement the later recommendations of this report in acknowledging the order of diaconal ministry, and mindful that new ordination services and a new service book are about to be approved, we believe that now is the right time for Conference to endorse this step. This will obviate what would otherwise be very frequent use of such clumsy phrases as “deaconess or deacon” or “ministers, deacons and deaconesses”.
- 3.4.8 Whilst **we recommend that “deacons” become our official usage when speaking about all members of the Order**, we suggest that all existing individual deaconesses and deacons should have the freedom to continue to style themselves “deaconess”, “sister” or “brother” if they prefer.
- 3.4.9 It has then become our task to examine each reference to ministers in CPD, and to add reference to deacons, with or without adaptation, in those places where legislation or guidelines ought to include them.

3.5 Revising Part 7 of Standing Orders

- 3.5.1 The size of the task which the move to inclusivity entails is particularly evident from Book III, Part 7 of CPD. This consists of nine sections (70-78) covering ministers, running from candidature through to resignation and reinstatement, and a single section (79) covering all aspects of the Diaconal Order. We hoped it would not prove necessary to replicate all the ministerial procedures in the cause of achieving equivalence, but we were aware that many of the regulations concerning ministers needed in future to apply to deaconesses and deacons too.
- 3.5.2 It is proposed that the current provisions within section 79 which relate to the order of diaconal ministry should be incorporated into the appropriate places in sections 70-78, and that section 79 should in future only contain regulations which relate to the MDO as a religious Order. Sometimes in

those sections common to both orders the diaconal order will need separate Standing Orders from those for ministers; more often a clause will be adequate which makes explicit that a Standing Order written with ministers in mind is applicable as it stands, or with some proviso, for deacons.

4 MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 There should be a Diaconal Session of The Conference

- 4.1.1 The Conference has in the past rejected proposals that it should consist of a Representative Session only. We propose that since there is a Ministerial Session there should also be a Diaconal Session. To make deaconesses and deacons members of the Ministerial Session would blur the differences between the two orders of ministry in a way that neither would find helpful.
- 4.1.2 The business of the Diaconal Session would consist of matters relating to the diaconate in a comparable way to the business of the Ministerial Session in relation to ministers. Its agenda would thus include:
- Final decisions as to:
 - continuation of students and probationers
 - disciplinary appeals
 - Recommendations as to:
 - the acceptance of candidates
 - ordination and admission to full connexion and to membership of the Order (and reinstatements and transfers)
 - permissions to become supernumerary
 - Reports as to:
 - deaths, and the approval of obituaries (which we consider should then be printed in the Minutes)
 - resignations
 - First reading of stations
 - Appointment of officers to serve the Diaconal Session.
- 4.1.3 The Session would also engage in conversation regarding the servant ministry of the Church, and might discuss any matter on the agenda of the Representative Session in order to forward its views.
- 4.1.4 In addition the Diaconal Session would have shared business with the Representative Session as regards:
- the continuance of a separate Diaconal Session
 - the procedures of the Diaconal Session
 - the continuance, composition, functions and procedures of Convocation
- 4.1.5 It is considered that half a day should at present prove adequate for diaconal business. It is suggested that the service of remembrance for ministers

should include deaconesses and deacons as well, and be held at the conclusion of the Ministerial Session, at say 12 noon on the Friday. The Diaconal Session would then begin after lunch and conclude early evening. This proposed timing might have implications for the timing and/or constitution of the stationing committee.

- 4.1.6 As with the other Sessions, the President would preside at the Diaconal Session, and the Session would be serviced by the Secretary of Conference. Other secretarial functions could be exercised by deacons and deaconesses. In view of the size of the Session (see next section) and the relative non-complexity of its business, it is not thought necessary for this Session to have either a business committee or a committee of reference.

4.2 The Minimum Diaconal Membership of The Conference should be Twenty One

- 4.2.1 We think that a smaller figure would make for a group too small to be considered a viable Session of the Conference. Assuming that the provisional resolutions to reduce the size of the Conference are confirmed, then with a Conference of 384 members, 21 represents about 5.5% of the total. With the presence of the President and Secretary this would bring the minimum size of the Session to twenty-three.
- 4.2.2 We propose that the Warden should be an ex officio member of the Conference (as having many similar functions to district chairmen). Moreover, the figure of 5.5% suggests that at least one of the eighteen Conference-elected members of the Conference should be diaconal. The mechanism should simply be that where there is no continuing deaconess or deacon in this category then the diaconal nominee securing the most votes be elected regardless of number of votes cast.
- 4.2.3 As regards those appointed to the Conference by the Methodist Council it is not felt appropriate to designate any seat as specifically reserved for a member of the Order.
- 4.2.4 The other nineteen reserved diaconal seats (i.e. apart from the Warden and a minimum of one Conference-elected) would be filled by election at the district synods. The allocation of diaconal seats to districts would be part of the overall allocation, but would be made according to a rota in view of there being fewer seats than districts, and an unequal distribution of diaconal appointments between the districts.
- 4.2.5 The figures of one Conference-elected and nineteen district-elected members are minima. There is no reason why additional deaconesses and deacons should not be elected (including from districts that have no safeguarded diaconal seat) within that portion of the representation which provisional resolutions propose should no longer be specified. The Conference as a whole would consist of 33.3% ministers, 33.3% lay, 5.5% deacon(esse)s, and the remainder (about 28%) would be a variable mix.

- 4.2.6 If a substitute diaconal representative is required prior to the commencement of the Conference and the relevant District (having limited diaconal personnel) is unable to appoint another deacon or deaconess, then the small size of the Diaconal Session would make it advisable that the seat should not remain empty. It is therefore considered necessary to devise a procedure whereby a general reserve list could be utilised.
- 4.2.7 Members of the Order who are not elected as district representatives would be able to attend the Diaconal Session at their own charges and with the permission of the Warden. They would be able to speak but not vote. Officers of the Order with particular briefs would also be present without vote to present the relevant business.
- 4.2.8 It is recognised that diaconal representation to autonomous Conferences has to be in accordance with their varying theological understanding and operated at their discretion. If the associate members sent to our Conference by autonomous churches happen to include ordained deacons or deaconesses these would be entitled to attend the Diaconal as well as the Representative Session. Irish Methodism has only lay diaconal persons, who would therefore attend the Representative Session only. The United Methodist Church regards its deacons as “clergy”, but we consider that they should attend our Diaconal Session rather than Ministerial Session.

4.3 The Vice-Presidency should be open to Deacons and Deaconesses

- 4.3.1 Various possibilities for inclusion of deaconesses and deacons in the senior offices of the Church were considered in the light of other discussions under the aegis of the Methodist Council. We concur with the recommendation regarding senior offices that there must be opportunity for deacons and deaconesses to hold such a post, and propose that the office of vice-president should be open to lay persons, deaconesses and deacons.

4.4 Convocation should perform for the Diaconal Order most functions which the Ministerial Synods provide for presbyters.

- 4.4.1 Convocation includes sessions for devotion, study, fellowship, and conversation on the work of God, according to Standing Order 793, and offers opportunity for reflection on vocation and on the nature of the MDO as a religious Order. Some specific functions and appointments are also assigned in the aforementioned Standing Order. There are some considerable similarities with the functions of ministerial Synods (Standing Order 481 and the Agenda in Part 10).
- 4.4.2 Without wishing to equate ministerial Synods with Convocation we believe that the latter can serve many purposes which for ministers would be handled by the former.

4.5 Deaconesses and Deacons should be Members of the District Synods

- 4.5.1 In view of the above recommendation, we do not believe that deacons and deaconesses should become members of ministerial Synods. This is both because of the function of Convocation and also because of the relationship between ministerial Synods and the Ministerial Session of the Conference.
- 4.5.2 We do however consider that as a matter of discipline deaconesses and deacons should attend the representative Synod of the district in which they are stationed, or reside.

4.6 Members of the Diaconate should not have Church Membership recorded Locally

- 4.6.1 There can be no case for treating deaconesses and deacons differently from ministers in this respect. Membership of both orders of ministry is recorded connexionally and listed annually in the "Minutes of Conference". References in CPD which assume local membership of deacons and deaconesses should be adapted.

4.7 Deacons and Deaconesses who are Preachers should appear in the Local Preachers List on their Circuit Plan

- 4.7.1 Where deaconesses or deacons are local preachers (for not all are) their names should appear (with their dates of recognition) in the list of local preachers as evidence of their preaching status, even though they will also appear in the list of those stationed in the circuit. It may be noted from S.O.560 that membership of the local preacher's meeting does not require a preacher to have local membership, so the previous proposal does not create any difficulty.
- 4.7.2 Deaconesses and deacons engage in accompanied self-appraisal and further training, and both should include, for those who are local preachers, review and development of their preaching ministry. There is therefore no need to treat continuing local preacher development as a separate matter from their overall continuing review and training.
- 4.7.3 Any decision of a discipline committee, an appeal committee or the Diaconal Session of the Conference, which results in a deacon or deaconess ceasing to be in full connexion and in membership of the Order should carry with it a recommendation as regards continuing status as a local preacher (and member of the Church). Similarly any recommendation as to reinstatement should include a recommendation as to whether local preaching status should also be resumed, it being understood that preaching is not an essential element of diaconal ministry and that reinstatement as a deaconess or deacon need not necessarily imply reinstatement as a preacher.
- 4.7.4 Under S.O.766A deacons of other Churches authorised to serve are authorised to preach. This does not imply that all Methodist deaconesses and deacons should be preachers, but is understood to refer to authorisation of those from Churches in which all deacons are authorised preachers.

4.8 Deacons and Deaconesses should be Received into Full Connexion

- 4.8.1 We believe that there should be parity as regards language and procedures for admission to the two orders of ministry. To that end diaconal probationers should be received into full connexion as well as ordained, and the ceremony on the Sunday afternoon of the Conference should be similar to that for ministers. Being in full connexion means that the ministry is anchored within the British Methodist Conference which authorises its exercise.
- 4.8.2 A deaconess's or deacon's membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order (as a religious Order) is an additional element, marked within the ordination liturgy but distinct from the laying on of hands with prayer. To admit a person into the membership of the Order is thus an act of the Conference. It is subsequently "reported" to the Order in Convocation that these members have been added to it, but the Conference decision to receive into full connexion is what constitutes their right to membership of the Order.
- 4.8.3 It is inherent to the ministry of a deaconess or deacon, not least when working in marginalised places, to belong to the kind of community which is the MDO. No candidate should therefore be ordained to diaconal ministry in Methodism, who will not gladly belong to the Order.

4.9 Stationing should be the responsibility of the Stationing Committee and with the President having the same powers as for ministers.

- 4.9.1 Stationing procedures for the two orders should be complementary at least at the conclusion of the process. The stationing committee should become formally responsible for diaconal stationing, a first reading of stations should take place at the Diaconal Session of the Conference, and the final reading of a combined set of stations at the Representative Session.
- 4.9.2 The receipt of resignations during the course of the year, and emergency stationing should become the responsibility of the President in consultation with the Warden. This power should be enshrined in the Deed of Union (see clause 29).
- 4.9.3 The stationing policy sub-committee should advise on policy and priorities concerning diaconal stationing. Both the Stationing Committee and the policy sub-committee require revised constitutions that include adequate diaconal membership. In the case of the Stationing Committee it is considered that the inclusion of the Warden or her/his representative is the appropriate provision.
- 4.9.4 Acceptance of the Stationing Review Group's Additional Proposal A ("Arranged Stationing") will bring the two orders closer together at the beginning of the process. We consider however that just as there are special procedures for stationing ministerial probationers and for priority appointments, so too should there be at the present time a special model within the overall orbit as regards diaconal stationing. There is a number of dimensions which differentiate diaconal and presbyteral appointments, such as the specialist nature of the appointments and varied housing needs. It

should therefore continue to be the Warden who is responsible for the arrangements, but in close consultation with chairmen to ensure that diaconal stationing is clearly part of the process of ensuring the best possible staff team for each circuit.

- 4.9.5 At present deacons and deaconesses are usually initially appointed for three years because this is often a more suitable time span for a diaconal project, than the five year norm for an initial appointment to settled pastoral presbyteral ministry. We do not believe that this divergence should cease, but the Standing Order which already allows for an appointment of less than three years should be modified to allow for longer terms up to five years in appropriate circumstances.
- 4.9.6 Extensions of initial appointments currently operate by a very similar mechanism to that for presbyters and we merely need to bring diaconal appointments within the Standing Orders that cover such matters as voting majorities. An extension must be in consultation with the Warden.
- 4.9.7 We consider it important to avoid the term “invitation” in speaking about diaconal appointments. The circuit is asked to confirm acceptance of a proposed appointee, but this is very different from the ministerial process. Similarly an extension needs to be called that and not a “renewal”.
- 4.9.8 Curtailments are currently handled by the Warden in consultation with the chairman of the district, whereas presbyters are dealt with by a district committee (S.O.544). The latter model ought to be adopted for deaconesses and deacons. When a circuit or a member of the Order wants a curtailment they should contact the chairman who will consult the Warden, then set up a committee if necessary and report the outcome to the Warden. The committee should be the same size as for presbyters (i.e. 6 persons) but should consist of two presbyters, two deacons or deaconesses (nominated by the Warden), and two laypersons (including the district lay representative to the Stationing Committee). We consider that the equivalent committee for the curtailment of presbyters should include “at least two ministers and at least two lay persons” among the six and thus provide the option for diaconal members.
- 4.9.9 We recommend that the regulation regarding resignations (S.O.786(7)) be amended so that notice is given not to the Warden but to the President, who shall notify the Warden, and thereafter follow the procedures for ministers except that final report would be to the Diaconal and Representative Sessions. Similar procedures to those for ministers, should apply as regards reinstatements; the Warden would of course be kept informed.

4.10 Diaconal Procedures for Candidature, Training and Probation, and Transfer from Other Denominations, should be written down and incorporated in Standing Orders

- 4.10.1 There is a huge disparity in the amount of existing legislation as between the diaconal and presbyteral orders in these areas. We recommend that the MDO should set down its procedures which can then be adopted as separate

Standing Orders in the Sections dealing with candidature (Section 70) and training and probation (Sections 71).

- 4.10.2 Transfer of presbyters or deacons from other denominations should be treated in comparable ways using the candidating procedures. In transferring deacons, and in view of widely divergent practice of diaconal ministries, we need to be clear in any specific case whether ordination to life-long service has taken place (regardless of whether it was expected to be subsumed in presbyteral ordination subsequently).

4.11 There should be equivalent Procedures for Candidature to one order of ministry from within the Other.

- 4.11.1 Procedures exist (S.O.760A) for offering from the diaconate to the presbyterate, and similar procedures should apply for the reverse movement. If a person were accepted as a candidate by the Conference, then being in full connexion would cease from 1 September following, and in the case of deaconesses and deacons so would membership of the MDO. Reinstatement would be possible under suitable circumstances if, during the course of probation, ordination to the new order was not recommended.
- 4.11.2 The MDO is discussing whether some kind of extended membership might be created by which laypersons and presbyters could be in association with the Order. Among benefits of such a development would be that deacons and deaconesses could continue association with the Order if accepted for presbyteral training.
- 4.11.3 In that Methodism sees the two orders of ministry as separate and equal, it is our judgement that for any person changing to the alternative order of ministry separate ordination is essential at the end of probation. Specifically, we judge that ordination to presbyteral ministry does not include automatic ordination to the diaconate. We have consulted with the Faith and Order committee which concurs. Deaconesses and deacons are called to focus and represent servant ministry. Diaconal ordination adds a specialised representative role to the truth that all God's people (including the unordained laity and the ordained presbyters) are called to serve.

5 OTHER PROVISIONS IN STANDING ORDERS WHICH NEED AMENDMENT

- 5.0 Standing Order changes will be brought to the Conference for approval in 1998. In addition to those which cover matters addressed in the previous sections of the report there will also be those which relate to the following matters:

5.1 Committee Constitutions and Other Roles

- 5.1.1 In various places deaconesses and deacons are excluded from participation in committees by specification of a total consisting of so many ministers and so many laypersons.

- 5.1.2 We consider there is no compelling need at this time to change this as regards:
- Committee to advise on special financial appeals to the Connexion (S.O.214(2))
 - Lay Assessors for ministerial candidates (S.O.701(5))
 - Trial services for candidates and probationers (S.O.703(1) and 717(3)).
- 5.1.3 We consider that an option for inclusion of deacons or deaconesses should be created in the case of:
- Methodist Publishing House Board (S.O.242(2)). We suggest that “four lay persons” might be changed to “four other persons not being ministers”.
- 5.1.4 We consider that inclusion of deaconesses and deacons should be required insofar as possible as regards:
- Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (S.O.321)
 - District Candidates Committee (S.O.483)
 - District Probationers Committee (S.O.484)
 - Connexional Advance and Priority Fund (S.O.971(1)).
- 5.1.5 As regards membership of the Methodist Council we note that there is now a specific person representing the Order, although this may not be a privilege that ought to be sustained permanently. In any case we think that there should be an option for including deaconesses or deacons in the district representation (S.O.210(1)) by opening up the places reserved for circuit ministers to be filled by either circuit ministers or deacons in circuit appointments. In this context we notice that non-circuit ministers (e.g. tutors, chaplains, those in sectors, those without appointment) form a much larger group currently excluded than that of deacons and deaconesses in circuit appointments.

5.2 Deacons and Deaconesses and Holy Communion

- 5.2.1 The practice of administering extended communion (S.O.609(1)) is currently exclusive and needs to be amended to allow for deacons and deaconesses as well as lay persons. It is considered that authorisations to preside at communion (S.O.011) should continue to remain possible for deaconesses and deacons in appropriate circumstances, although we endorse the MDO’s wish that this should be in exceptional cases only.

5.3 Involvement in Circuit and Local Church Life

- 5.3.1 Various circuit and local meetings need constitutional changes to permit the involvement of deacons and deaconesses now that it is proposed they should not have local membership, nor do they technically have pastoral charge.

- 5.3.2 It is also the case that ministers residing in a circuit (but not stationed in it) have membership of certain meetings whereas deaconesses and deacons in the same situation do not. This discrepancy needs correcting.
- 5.3.3 The right to preside at meetings (S.O.502) belongs to a superintendent who may appoint a deputy (Clause 1(b)), or failing that the ministers have the right to preside in order of seniority (Clause 1(c)). In practice the minister in pastoral charge normally presides at Church Councils. We are concerned that members of the Diaconal Order should not be expected to chair major meetings unwillingly, and therefore will not propose any amendment of clause (1(c)), but would interpret clause (1(b)) as allowing the superintendent to appoint a deacon or deaconess in particular cases. It is considered that in clause (2) which concerns chairing of committees there should be express provision for deaconesses or deacons as well as lay persons to fulfil this function.
- 5.3.4 The reference to circuit leadership teams (S.O.515(2)) needs to include deaconesses and deacons.

5.4 Disciplinary Matters

- 5.4.1 Section 02 already fully covers deacons and deaconesses. We need only to make provision for the Diaconal Session of Conference to be the responsible body for deaconesses and deacons in those cases where the Ministerial Session is responsible for presbyteral cases.
- 5.4.2 As regards continuance in training/probation (Section 03) it is the connexional Diaconal Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee that handles all cases whereas college and course oversight committees or district probationers committees handle presbyteral cases. It is recommended that this difference continue until the Order is significantly larger.
- 5.4.3 In Section 04 which deals with incompetence, we would again recommend a change from the Warden being the responsible person to the President after consulting the Warden.

5.5 Seniority and Arrangement of the Stations (S.O.737)

- 5.5.1 We recommend, after consultation with those working on the arrangement of the stations, that there should be a single list of district and circuit stations, and that under each circuit ministers and deacons and deaconesses in circuit appointments should comprise a single list according to seniority. Deacons and deaconesses should be indicated with a symbol after their names. Our preference would be that a form is adopted that uses appropriate symbols for every category of ministry rather than making itinerant presbyters appear to be the norm.
- 5.5.2 We see no need to construct Standing Orders for deacons and deaconesses to parallel those for presbyters as regards base of ministry, or transfers between

Welsh and English work (S.O.721-724). Standing Order 726 (Residence abroad) should cover deaconesses and deacons.

5.6 Sector and Other Appointments (Section 74 & S.O.762)

- 5.6.1 Currently the pastoral committee of the Order deals with applications. We recommend adoption of the procedure for ministers using the Advisory Committee on Ministerial Appointments. It should in future consult with the Warden and advise the President. To this end it needs renaming as the Advisory Committee on Ministerial and Diaconal Appointments, and must have adequate diaconal personnel at its service.

5.7 Terms of Service

- 5.7.1 Small unintentional differences in relation to stipends (S.O.751 and 791(7)) and sabbaticals (S.O.757) will need bringing into line. Procedures for accompanied self-appraisal (S.O.755) are already standardised.
- 5.7.2 Other ministerial regulations which need to be specifically applied to members of the Diaconal Order as well concern removal date (S.O.737), permission to study (S.O.758), and maternity leave (S.O.761)
- 5.7.3 Manse accommodation (S.O.753) should increasingly become the norm for diaconal housing also (S.O.792). However there needs to be more flexibility to enable residence in particular localities where such accommodation is not available, and therefore the existing minimum of two-bedroom accommodation and the provision for consultation with the Warden should remain. So should S.O.792(2) requiring inspection of accommodation prior to the appointment beginning.
- 5.7.4 S.O.763 which concerns arrangements for sharing a manse when two ministers are married to each other should likewise be modified to apply where a deacon and deaconess are married to each other, or to a minister.

5.8 Procedures for Superannuating

- 5.8.1 We recommend that the term “supernumerary” be used in preference to “retired” to describe those deacons and deaconesses no longer stationed for active work. Application procedures should be in line with those for presbyters (Section 77), with permission sought from Convocation, confirmed by the Diaconal Session, and reported to the Representative Session. Supernumeraryship on the grounds of ill health should be considered by the medical committee after notice has been given both to the chairman of district and the Warden. The current provisional resolution allowing the President to authorise mid-year superannuation should be extended to deaconesses and deacons, and presbyteral procedures for return to full work should also apply.

6 REPLY TO MEMORIAL M42 (1996)

Date of Commencement of Ministry

The Gateshead and Jarrow (20/14) Circuit Meeting requests that Wesley Deaconesses and members of the Diaconal Order, when they become Ministers, have the date of the beginning of their Ministry stated in the minutes of the Methodist Conference.

Reply of the 1996 Conference

The memorial is referred to the Methodist Council for consideration by its working party on the Diaconate and report to the Conference in 1997 or 1998.

Recommended Response of the Working Party

Deacons and deaconesses already have their year of entry recorded in the Minutes. It is understood that what the Gateshead and Jarrow circuit seeks is that the Minutes of Conference should record the year of entry to the diaconate rather than presbyteral ministry for a presbyter who was previously a deacon or deaconess.

The year of entry is indicative of seniority (See S.O. 720), and therefore determines for example who is acting superintendent in case of need. The year is also relevant in relation to further training and sabbatical entitlements. It also has to do with pension rights but such information is separately maintained by the Methodist Ministers' Pension Fund.

It is noted that similar requests to that within this memorial might apply to ministers transferring from another denomination.

Having considered the issues the Council recommends that there be no change to the existing practice as regards the year of travel or the calculation of seniority, but that in the case of ministers who previously served as deaconesses or deacons the information "(Ordained deacon(ess) *year*)" be added for information only at the end of the entry. This would only apply to prior diaconal ministry following ordination in the Methodist Church; no other kind of prior service would be so noted.

If the Conference accepts the recommendation within the body of this report that would allow for a presbyter to candidate for the diaconate then a similar provision noting prior service as an ordained presbyter should apply once such a person was ordained a deacon(ess).

RESOLUTIONS

- 1 The Conference adopts the report.
- 2 The Conference amends the Deed of Union as follows, deletions being shown ~~thus~~, and insertions *thus*.

1 Particular Expressions.

- (iA) *'in the active work'* when used in relation to a minister or deacon means one who is not a supernumerary nor without appointment under any Standing Order in that behalf;

- (ii) 'admitted into full connexion' in reference to a minister *or deacon* means that he or she has been admitted by the Conference into full connexion as a minister *or a deacon respectively* of the Methodist Church and is entitled to the *that* status of such a minister;
- (xA) *'the Convocation' means the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order, as constituted by Standing Orders;*
- (xiA) *'deacon' when used in relation to the Methodist Church includes 'deaconess' and means a person ordained in accordance with Standing Orders to the office and ministry of a deacon, admitted into full connexion as a deacon and received into full membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order, or a person recognised and regarded as a deacon admitted into full connexion under the provisions contained in this Deed;*
- (xiB) *'Diaconal Session' means a session of the Conference of which, except for the President and Secretary and any other officers of that session appointed under Standing Orders, only deacons are members;*
- (xivA) *'lay' when used in relation to the Methodist Church refers to a person who is neither a minister nor a deacon;*
- (xviiiA) *'the Methodist Diaconal Order' means the body constituted under that name and regulated by Standing Orders;*
- (xx) ~~'minister in the active work' means a minister who is not a supernumerary nor a minister without appointment under any Standing Orders in that behalf;~~
- (xxii) 'Ministerial Session' when used in relation to a Synod means a session of the Synod of which only ministers and *ministerial* probationers are members;
- (xxv) 'overseas District' means a District of the Methodist Church other than a home District and 'overseas station' means any station to which a minister, *deacon* or probationer is appointed by the Conference outside the home Districts;
- (xxviii) 'probationer' means a person who has been admitted by the Conference upon probation for the ministry *or diaconate* ~~and is fulfilling ministerial duty by the appointment of the Conference~~ *and is appointed to a station by the Conference* but has not yet been admitted into full connexion as a *minister or deacon respectively, and 'ministerial probationer' and 'diaconal probationer' have corresponding meanings;*
- (xxix) 'Representative Session' when used in relation to the Conference *means a session of the Conference other than the Ministerial or Diaconal Session and when used in relation to* ~~or~~ a Synod means a session of the ~~Conference or Synod respectively~~ other than the Ministerial Session;
- (xxxi) 'the stations' means the Circuits and other stations to which ministers, *deacons* and probationers are appointed by the Conference under clause 20 of this Deed and the verb 'to station' has a corresponding meaning;

(xxxii) 'supernumerary' means a minister *or deacon* permitted or directed under the provisions of this Deed or of Standing Orders to retire from the active work of the ministry;

(xxxv) '*the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order*' or '*the Warden*' means the person appointed in accordance with Standing Orders to have responsibility for the oversight of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

13 The Sessions. The Conference shall meet in Representative Session, ~~and~~ in Ministerial Session *and in Diaconal Session*, each constituted as provided below.

14 The Representative Session [*in the form provisionally adopted by the 1996 Conference*]

(1) **Numbers.** The Conference in its Representative Session shall consist of the number of persons prescribed by Standing Orders, of whom at least one third shall be ministers, ~~and~~ at least one third shall be lay persons *and at least the minimum number similarly prescribed shall be deacons*.

(2) **Membership.** The Conference in its Representative Session shall comprise:

- (i) the persons who when it commences its sitting hold office as the President, the Vice-President and the Secretary of the Conference;
- (ii) the ex-Presidents and ex-Vice-Presidents of the Conference who took office as President or Vice-President during the two Conferences next before the last preceding Conference;
- (iii) the President-Designate, the Vice-President Designate and (if any) the Secretary-Designate nominated by the last preceding Conference;
- (iv) assistant secretaries and other officers of the Conference, as prescribed by Standing Orders;
- (v) the Chairman of each home District;
- (vi) *the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order*;
- (vii) the Vice-President and the Secretary of the Irish Conference;
- (viii) the members and associate members appointed by or on behalf of the conferences and churches as prescribed in sub-clauses (3) and (4) below;
- (ix) The Conference-elected representatives, as prescribed below;
- (x) representatives of connexional committees, funds and institutions, as prescribed by Standing Orders;
- (xA) representatives, as prescribed by Standing Orders, of a Methodist Youth Conference to be established in accordance with Standing Orders;
- (xi) members elected by the Representative Sessions of Synods, as prescribed below.

(3) **The Irish Conference and the General Conference of the United Methodist Church.** The Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the General Conference of the United Methodist Church shall be entitled to appoint annually to the Conference four persons and two persons respectively.

(4) **Other Conferences and Churches.** (a) Persons may be appointed as associate members of the Conference by or on behalf of other autonomous Conferences not represented under sub-clause (3), by other churches in Great

Britain, by other Methodist churches and by united churches in which Methodists have joined.

(b) The numbers of such persons and the identities of the appointing bodies shall be prescribed by Standing Orders, which may make provision for the representation of some or all such bodies to be according to a rota.

(c) Associate members shall not be entitled to vote, and shall not be counted for the purposes of sub-clause (1), but shall for all other purposes, including the right to speak, be members of the Conference.

(5) Conference-elected Representatives. (a) The conference-elected representatives shall be elected by the Conference ~~and shall consist of equal numbers of ministers and lay persons.~~ ***At least one third of them shall be ministers, at least one third shall be lay persons, and at least one shall be a deacon.***

[Note: this wording incorporates both the proposal in this report as to diaconal representatives and that of the Methodist Council on the Commission on Conference as to the one-third proportions. If the latter is not adopted, this item will be moved in an amended form.]

(b) The numbers, term of office and other matters concerning the election and service of conference-elected representatives shall be prescribed by Standing Orders.

(c) Any conference-elected representative who becomes incapable of acting or unfit to act or ceases to be a member of the Methodist Church or, being a minister ***or deacon*** when elected, ceases to be a ~~minister~~ ***such*** shall be disqualified from being a conference-elected representative and his or her office shall forthwith become vacant.

(d) Casual vacancies occurring from time to time in the number of the conference-elected representatives shall be filled by the Conference.

(6) Synod Representatives. Except as provided in heads (i) to (xA) of sub-clause (2) ***and in clause 17(a)*** all members of the Representative Session of the Conference shall be elected by the Representative Sessions of the home Synods, the numbers of ministers, ***deacons*** and lay persons to be elected by each Synod being specified by the preceding Conference in accordance with rules prescribed by Standing Orders.

15A The Diaconal Session

- (a) The Conference in its Diaconal Session shall consist of***
- (i) the President and Secretary of the Conference;***
 - (ii) all those members of the Representative Session of the Conference who are deacons, including any persons ordained to the office and ministry of a deacon who are appointed under clause 14(3);***
 - (iii) those persons, whether deacons or not, appointed by the last preceding Conference as assistant secretaries or other officers of the Conference in its Diaconal Session;***
 - (iv) as associate members, any persons ordained to the office and ministry of a deacon who are appointed as associate members under clause 14(4);***

(v) *subject to sub-clauses (b) and (c), such other deacons as attend under their own arrangements and with the permission of the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order.*

(b) *Persons who are members of the Conference under heads (iv) and (v) of sub-clause (a) shall not be entitled to vote nor, except as otherwise resolved by the Conference at the time, to be present during any closed meeting of the Conference.*

(c) *Any meeting of the Conference in its Diaconal Session convened under clause 24(i) shall be a meeting of those only who are members under heads (i) and (ii) of sub-clause (a) above.*

17 Substitutes. (a) The Conference shall have power to elect a substitute for any member . . . except . . . or a member elected . . . ~~or by a Representative Session of the Synod,~~ *but in the case of a member elected by a Representative Session of a Synod only upon nomination in accordance with Standing Orders:*

- (i) *if the member is a deacon, by the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order; or*
- (ii) *otherwise, by an officer or officers of that Synod.*

[Note: this wording incorporates both the proposal in this Report and that in the Methodist Council report as to substitutes for District Representatives. If the latter is not adopted this item will be moved in amended form.]

(b) ~~While the Conference meets first in Ministerial Session it shall in that session have power to elect such a substitute for any such member who is a minister.~~

The Conference shall have power when meeting before the Representative Session to elect in the Ministerial or in the Diaconal Session such a substitute for any such member of that session.

19 Standing Orders. The Conference shall have power from time to time to make, amend or revoke Standing Orders or other rules or regulations for the constitution and procedure of the Conference, for the summoning and meeting of the Conference in the interval between its ordinary meetings, for the determination of the privileges and obligations of ministers, *deacons* and probationers whether as a whole or by categories, including eligibility for membership of the Conference and appointment to the stations, and for the government of the Methodist Church in general and shall also have power to adopt in any special case that may arise any means that it may deem necessary to meet it; provided that no such Standing Order, rule, regulation or means may be contrary to law or to this Deed or to the purposes of the Methodist Church.

20 The Stations. The Conference shall annually appoint as ministers, *deacons* and probationers to the Circuits and other stations such persons as it thinks fit and in the exercise of this power it shall be lawful for the Conference notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in the trust deeds of any of the said Churches or denominations existing at the date of union to appoint a minister to the use and enjoyment of any place of worship for more than three years successively.

21 Other particular powers. The Conference shall have power at its discretion:

- (i) to continue or found or authorise the founding of connexional funds or institutions for the promulgation of the Gospel at home and abroad, for assistance to Circuits or Local Churches or for the benefit of retired and superannuated ministers *or deacons* or the widows, widowers or children of deceased ministers *or deacons* or for other objects and purposes of or in connection with the Methodist Church and to direct the application and management thereof and to approve any scheme for the amalgamation of any such funds or institutions, whether founded before or after the date of this Deed, and whether belonging to or connected with any of the said Churches or denominations existing at the date of union or to the Methodist Church and for the transfer in connection with any such amalgamation of any of such funds from the existing trustees or other persons having the legal control thereof to the trustees of any other of such funds or institutions;

23 Functions of the Ministerial Session.

(b) While the Conference meets ~~first~~ in Ministerial Session *before the Representative Session* it shall in that session have power to appoint the ministerial members of any committee required by Standing Orders to be appointed by the Conference from among its own members and to function in both ~~sessions~~ *that and the Representative Session*.

(h) Admission (including re-admission) into full connexion *as a minister*, whether of probationers or others, shall in all cases be by the Conference in its Representative Session, which shall by the same act resolve that any person thus admitted and not already ordained shall be ordained by the laying-on of hands, but no person shall be presented for admission into full connexion without the judgment of the Ministerial Session that he or she is fit for such admission and, if appropriate, ordination.

(i) [*Final sentence, in the form provisionally adopted by the 1996 Conference:*] Any permissions granted by the President shall be reported to the Conference in both ~~sessions~~ *the Ministerial and Representative Sessions*.

(j) The deaths of all ministers shall be reported to the Conference in both ~~sessions~~ *the Ministerial and Representative Sessions* and obituaries shall be approved by the Conference in its Ministerial Session and reported to the Representative Session and there incorporated in the said Journal.

(k) The resignation of a minister or withdrawal of a *ministerial* probationer shall be reported to the Conference in both ~~sessions~~ *the Ministerial and Representative Sessions*.

(l) The Conference in its Ministerial Session shall have such functions in relation to the stationing of ministers and *ministerial* probationers as may be prescribed by Standing Orders.

(m) The Conference may in its Ministerial Session discuss any subject in the Agenda of the Representative *or the Diaconal* Session or any other subject within the jurisdiction of the Conference and communicate its views thereon to ~~the Representative Session~~ *one or both of the other sessions* by resolution or otherwise.

23A Functions of the Diaconal Session. (a) *In addition to any powers conferred by any other clause of this Deed the Conference shall in its Diaconal Session have the powers and perform the functions specified in the following sub-clauses.*

(b) *While the Conference meets in Diaconal Session before the Representative Session it shall in that session have power to appoint the diaconal members of any committee required by Standing Orders to be appointed by the Conference from among its own members and to function in both that and the Representative Session.*

(c) *The Conference shall in its Diaconal Session make such other appointments as may be prescribed by Standing Orders.*

(d) *The Conference in its Diaconal Session shall have exclusive jurisdiction over the following business:*

- (i) *continuance or discontinuance in training or on probation or reinstatement of each student or probationer in training or on probation for diaconal ministry;*
- (ii) *any appeal to the Conference arising out of any charge against a deacon or probationer or a student in training for diaconal ministry.*

(e) *The decisions of the Diaconal Session in the exercise of its jurisdiction under sub-clause (d) and all appointments made by the Conference in that session in exercise of its powers in that behalf shall be reported to the Conference in its Representative Session and there incorporated in the Journal provided for by Clause 36.*

(f) *The Conference shall in its Diaconal Session engage in conversation on the servant ministry of the church.*

(g) *Acceptance of candidates for diaconal ministry shall be by the Conference in its Representative Session, but no candidate shall be proposed for acceptance except upon the recommendation of the Diaconal Session.*

(h) *Admission (including re-admission) into full connexion as a deacon, whether of probationers or others, shall in all cases be by the Conference in its Representative Session, which shall by the same act resolve that any person thus admitted and not already ordained shall be ordained by the laying-on of hands, but no person shall be presented for admission into full connexion without the judgment of the Diaconal Session that he or she is fit for such admission and, if appropriate, for ordination.*

(i) *The Conference shall by Standing Order prescribe the circumstances in which a deacon may or shall become supernumerary on the ground of age, years of travel, ill health, compassion, difficulty of finding an appointment or otherwise. A deacon may be directed to become supernumerary by any competent church court upon finding a charge against him or her proved, and may in cases of urgency arising between meetings of the Conference be permitted by the President to become supernumerary on the ground of ill health, but otherwise all permissions and directions to become supernumeraries shall be given by the Conference in its Representative Session. All cases requiring a decision of the Conference shall be considered first by the Diaconal Session, which shall recommend to the Representative Session who shall become supernumeraries and*

on what grounds. Any permissions granted by the President shall be reported to the Conference in both the Diaconal and Representative Sessions.

(j) The deaths of all deacons shall be reported to the Conference in both the Diaconal and Representative Sessions and obituaries shall be approved by the Conference in its Diaconal Session and reported to the Representative Session and there incorporated in the said Journal.

(k) The resignation of a deacon or withdrawal of a diaconal probationer shall be reported to the Conference in both the Diaconal and Representative Sessions.

(l) The Conference in its Diaconal Session shall have such functions in relation to the stationing of deacons and diaconal probationers as may be prescribed by Standing Orders.

(m) The Conference may in its Diaconal Session discuss any subject in the Agenda of the Representative or the Ministerial Session or any other subject within the jurisdiction of the Conference and communicate its views thereon to one or both of the other sessions by resolution or otherwise.

24 Transaction of General Business.

(a) In this clause 'general business' means decisions on matters of policy or principle, the adoption, amendment or repeal of Standing Orders, other general resolutions and all other business of the Conference not involving decisions on matters within Clause 23 *or* 23A as to particular persons.

(c) In this clause 'shared business' means any general business which concerns:

- (i) **
- (ii) the procedure of the Ministerial Session of the Conference; or
- (iii) the continuance, composition, functions or procedure of the Ministerial Session of the Synods; *or*
- (iv) *the continuance as a separate body of the Diaconal Session as provided by this Deed or the definition, by virtue of this Deed, of the relative duties and privileges of that and the Representative Session respectively; or*
- (v) *the procedure of the Diaconal Session of the Conference; or*
- (vi) *the continuance, composition, functions or procedure of the Convocation.*

***[Note: a further amendment inserting a new clause (c)(i) will be moved under the business of the Law and Polity Committee.]*

(d) Shared business *which concerns head (i), (ii) or (iii) of sub-clause (c)* shall be dealt with as specified in sub-clauses (e) to (j), which relate only to such business except as provided in clauses (k) and (l). *Shared business which concerns head (iv), (v) or (vi) shall be similarly dealt with, substituting the words "Diaconal Session" for "Ministerial Session" in sub-clauses (e) to (l) wherever they occur.*

(i) Adoption by the Representative Session of a resolution in any other form shall be conditional upon ratification by the Ministerial Session, which shall be reconvened for the purpose only of deciding whether to concur with the resolution of the Representative Session or to reaffirm its own decision, and may deal with that

matter with or without notice, adjournment or debate, and in the presence or absence of the ~~lay~~ members of the Conference *who are not members of that reconvened session*. Concurrence by the Ministerial Session shall dispose of the business.

25 Reference between Sessions. ~~Either~~ Any session of the Conference may refer or delegate to ~~the other~~ *another*, for comment or decision, any matter within the jurisdiction of the referring session. The majority required for delegation of a matter for decision shall be that required for a substantive resolution on that matter. Any comment or decision on any such matter shall be reported to the referring session and any such decision so reported to the Representative Session shall there be incorporated in the Journal provided for by Clause 36.

27 The Vice-President. There shall be a Vice-President of the Conference who shall be a lay member of the Methodist Church *or deacon* and shall be elected by the Conference by a clear majority of the votes cast. He or she shall be designated at the preceding Conference by ballot and by a clear majority of the votes cast.

28 Who presides at the Conference.

(d) If the President is absent from any meeting of the Diaconal Session such other minister or deacon as the Conference may choose shall during the absence of the President preside and act as President of the Conference and in each such case with all the powers rights and duties of the President.

29 The President and the Stations.

(a) If any person appointed as minister or probationer to any station for any year dies or ceases to be in the active work the President may appoint another person as minister or probationer to take the place for such year or the remainder of such year (as the case may be) of the person so dying or ceasing to be in the active work. *The President may, after consulting with the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, exercise similar powers in relation to diaconal appointments.*

(b) If in the opinion of the President it becomes necessary or expedient during the year to remove from or appoint to a station as minister or probationer any person (including a ministerial student) so appointed or eligible to be so appointed or to change the appointment of anyone so appointed the President may effect that appointment, removal or change of appointment in such manner as he or she thinks fit. *The President may, after consulting with the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, exercise similar powers in relation to diaconal appointments.*

40 Church Courts. District Synods (which shall include all the ministers *and deacons* stationed in the District), Circuit Meetings, Church Councils, Local Preachers' Meetings, General Church Meetings and any other meetings and committees shall be constituted in such manner, of such persons, and with and subject to such powers, duties and provisions as may consistently with this Deed be provided in that behalf from time to time by the Conference.

43 The Irish Conference.

(a) Subject to such provisions of law (if any) as may be applicable in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland and in accordance with the provisions constituting the Methodist Church in Ireland the President of the Conference shall also be the President of the Irish Conference and the Conference shall appoint annually two other ministers, its Vice-President and two ~~lay~~ **other** persons as representatives to the Irish Conference. The appointment of such other ministers may be made by the Conference in the Ministerial Session.

45 Ministers of other Churches.

(a) Such other persons as the Conference may from time to time specify, if appointed by the Conference to the **ministerial** stations in the home Districts or overseas, shall during the period of such appointment only be recognised and regarded as ministers of the Methodist Church admitted into full connexion.

45A Deacons of other Churches.

(a) Such persons as the Conference may from time to time specify, if appointed by the Conference to the stations in the home Districts or overseas, shall during the period of such appointment only be recognised and regarded as deacons of the Methodist Church admitted into full connexion.

(b) They shall be eligible for membership of the Conference and of other church courts during the period of such appointment as if they were deacons in full connexion with the Conference.

(c) Persons who under the provisions of this clause are recognised and regarded as deacons of the Methodist Church admitted into full connexion shall be subject to the rules and discipline of the Conference of the Methodist Church while filling any appointment in the home work or serving in any of the overseas stations of the Methodist Church.

3 The Conference directs the Council to bring to the 1998 Conference the changes to Standing Orders which will give effect to the proposals within this report.

4 The Conference adopts the recommended reply to Memorial M42 of 1996.

(Agenda 1997, pp. 165-191)

A further report, consisting mainly of changes to Standing Orders, was brought to the Conference of 1998 (*Agenda 1998*, pp. 503-577).