



The Methodist Church

Memorials to the
Conference

Annual Conference 2015

Notes for the guidance of members of the Conference

1. Introduction to memorials

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

Each year the Methodist Council is required to appoint a Memorials Committee made up of representatives from Districts to aid the Conference in replying to each memorial. The replies to these memorials have been drafted by members of the Connexional Team and officers of other relevant bodies. They have been scrutinised by the Memorials Committee and amended where the committee felt it was appropriate.

The committee recommends to the Conference the replies printed in the Agenda under each memorial. The Conference binds itself either to agree each reply, to amend it, or to agree an alternative reply (see Standing Order 133(4), printed in the Rules of Procedure on page 12 of Volume One of the Agenda).

In some of its responses, the committee makes no comment on the substance of a memorial, but indicates that the reply of the Conference is given in other resolutions of the Conference. This kind of response does not mean that the committee has not taken seriously the points made in the memorial. It means that another report deals with the issue more fully. Debate on that report gives the Conference an opportunity to discuss the issues raised by the memorial.

2. Consideration of the memorials by the Conference

Any member of the Conference has the right to move an amendment to the reply recommended by the committee, or to propose that it is substituted by a different reply. Amendments to replies should be submitted in the form of a notice of motion, the deadlines for which can be found in the First Report of the Conference Business Committee on page 24 of the Agenda. However, members are urged to give notice of their intention to move an amendment as early as possible and not to wait until the deadline.

If the Conference rejects a reply, an acceptable alternative must, then or later, be put to and agreed by the Conference. In addition, any two members of the Conference may, by notice of motion submitted on the first day of the relevant session, propose that, instead of dealing with the committee's recommended replies in the ordinary course of business, the Conference shall debate a resolution based on one or more of the memorials.

This year, the Memorials Committee has recommended to the Conference Business Committee that the replies to any memorials which relate to other items of business in the Agenda be taken at the same time as that business, and that the remaining replies should be placed in the *en bloc* business of the Conference, unless the Business Committee feel that they should be debated. Any recommended reply to a memorial which is the subject of an amending notice of motion will automatically be removed from *en bloc* business (see Standing Order 134A(1)(c), Agenda p. 13).

Members of the Conference with questions on any matter affecting memorials and the procedures described above should consult the Memorials Secretary, Martin Harker. For example, if any member wishes to change the recommended reply of the committee, the Memorials Secretary would be happy to advise on how and when to propose either an amendment or the substitution of a different reply.

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

M1 Authorisation to preside at communion

The South Bedfordshire (34/4) Circuit Meeting (Present: 61; Voting: unanimous) asks the Conference to amend the 'Criteria for Authorising Persons other than Presbyters to Preside at the Lord's Supper' (CPD 2014, Book VI, Part 3, p750).

In paragraph 2, the Circuit Meeting would like the criteria for deprivation be changed from "if the answer is 13 or greater then deprivation is deemed to exist" to "if the answer is either 13 or greater, or, where it is requested, more than half of the Sunday services conducted by presbyters are communion services, then deprivation is deemed to exist".

Reply

The Conference thanks the South Bedfordshire Circuit Meeting for its memorial. The ministry of Methodist presbyters is a ministry of word and sacrament, shared with the One Church of Christ and in which we rejoice. However, it is some time since the criteria for the current deprivation figure were set. It therefore directs the Connexional Authorisations Committee, with the Faith and Order Committee, to reconsider the criteria and to report to the 2016 Conference.

M2 Review of ministerial training

The East Anglia District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 152; Voting: 146 for, 2 against):

- is grateful for the direction given by the 2013 Conference to the Methodist Council that, in consultation with the Ministries Committee, it shall initiate an appropriate process through which a review of ministerial training shall be conducted to ensure that the vision outlined by the Ministries Committee in the Fruitful Field Report is delivered;
- welcomes the statement in the Methodist Council's interim report to the 2014 Conference (Agenda pp. 293-294) that a review will be initiated, to report to the 2017 Conference;
- believes that such a review must include further consideration of the premises upon which the current provisions were proposed and adopted in 2012 in the light of subsequent developments and practical experience.

The Synod therefore asks the Conference to direct the Methodist Council to:

- (a) agree the terms of reference of the review; and
- (b) appoint an independent panel of not more than five persons to undertake the review which the Council shall itself consider no later than January 2017 in preparation for a report to the 2017 Conference.

Reply

The Conference thanks the East Anglia District Synod for this memorial.

The proposal endorsed by the 2014 Conference (Resolution 32/16) was in response to a memorial (M6) of the 2013 Conference which sought an urgent review to reconsider how ministerial training should be configured. By resolution 32/16 the Conference subsequently agreed the timescale of the review noting that the Ministries Committee, on behalf of the Methodist Council, would put in place a review process.

Whilst this memorial goes beyond the view of the Methodist Council (Agenda 2014, p. 294) that the Ministries Committee should act on its behalf, the memorial helpfully sets out the responsibility for both determining the terms of reference of the review and appointing the membership of a panel to undertake the review. The Conference notes the concern implicit in the memorial for the independence of any process and accepts the memorial.

The Conference, noting that the Ministries Committee is accountable to the Conference through the Council for matters of policy and process relating to ministerial training (Standing Order 32A1, clauses (2) and (3)) directs the Council to consult the Ministries Committee in the drafting of the terms of reference of the review.

M3 The Northampton District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 147; Voting: 139 for, 2 against)

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This memorial was received with the same text as M2. The Conference adopts the same reply.

M4 The York and Hull District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 103; Voting: unanimous)

This memorial was received with the same text as M2. The Conference adopts the same reply.

M5 The South East District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 133; Voting: 126 for, 7 against):

This memorial was received with the same text as M2, with the exception of replacing the words “an independent panel of not more than five persons” in point (b) with “a panel of not more than five persons independent of the Ministries Committee”. The Conference adopts the same reply as to M2.

M6 Review of ministerial training

The Cumbria District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 98; Voting: 83 for, 0 against):

- values the direction given by the 2013 Conference to the Methodist Council to initiate, in consultation with the Ministries Committee, an appropriate process for a review of ministerial training to ensure that the vision outlined by the Ministries Committee in the Fruitful Field Report is delivered
- values the statement in the Methodist Council's interim report to the 2014 Conference (Agenda pp. 293-294) that a review will be initiated, to report to the 2017 Conference.

The Synod therefore asks the Conference to direct the Methodist Council to:

- (a) agree the terms of reference of the review and include:
 - further consideration of the premises upon which the current provisions were proposed and adopted in 2012 in the light of subsequent developments and practical experience
 - evaluation of how well current training is preparing ministers for the breadth and variety of circuit ministry
 - the training and discernment process leading up to and including the candidate's portfolio
- (b) appoint an independent panel of not more than five persons to undertake the review which the Council shall itself consider no later than January 2017 in preparation for a report to the 2017 Conference.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as to M2.

M7 Review of Fruitful Field

The 2013 Conference directed the Methodist Council, in consultation with the Ministries Committee, to initiate a review of ministerial training in order to consider how the original vision of Fruitful Field was being developed. The 2014 Conference was informed that after only a year of implementation, it was too early to initiate a review. The 2014 Conference therefore agreed that the Ministries Committee should initiate a review process to report back to the 2017 Conference.

The 2014 Conference was also informed that there was anecdotal evidence to suggest that a number of people were put off candidating because of the uncertainties surrounding training provision (Conference Agenda, p. 237). The review process should therefore also consider the impact of the new training arrangements on candidating, to see if there is empirical evidence to support this view.

The Manchester and Stockport District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 105; Voting: 104 for, 0 against) believes that three years after the Conference adopted the Fruitful Field proposals, it is now time to initiate that review process.

The Manchester and Stockport District Synod asks the Conference to direct the Methodist Council to:

- (a) Agree the terms of reference for the review which should include:
 - the wider implementation of Fruitful Field (not just ministerial training)
 - the provision of resources for lay training
 - the impact of the new training arrangements on candidating.
- (b) Appoint an independent Review Group to report back to the Conference no later than 2017.
- (c) Request an interim report from the Review Group to the Methodist Council by April 2016.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Manchester and Stockport District Synod for its memorial and notes the reply to memorials M2, M3, M4, M5 and M6. In accepting these memorials the Conference noted their concern for the independence of any process and the timescale for reporting.

The Conference directs the Methodist Council to ensure that the review raised in section (a) of the memorial takes place and to determine the most effective means of undertaking this review.

The Conference recognises that ongoing review and evaluation of the Learning Network continues to take place and that the 2014 Conference welcomed the outstanding inspection report of the Queen's Foundation by the Churches Quality in Formation Panel. In the course of the next connexional year the Network Committee will continue to review and monitor the Learning Network. Part of the internal audit processes of the Council have been allocated to this area of work.

The Conference therefore accepts point (a) of the memorial.

M8 Stationing of ministers recognised and regarded as Methodist ministers

The Channel Islands District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 40; Voting: unanimous) rejoices in the presence within the Connexion of ministers of other Churches, especially those who are given the status of being recognised and regarded as being in Full Connexion with the Conference.

The Synod expresses its concern that under current policies it is possible for a presbyter who has already served in one appointment to be:

- recommended for a stationing to another appointment
- and in possession of the necessary immigration status

but required to wait until stationing matching round three before being matched to an appointment, even in years when there is a clear shortfall in the number of available presbyters to fill the vacant stations.

The Synod therefore asks the Conference to direct the Stationing Committee to review the policies and practices relating to the matching of those who serve on our stations as being recognised and regarded as ministers in Full Connexion with the Conference so as to ensure that both ministers and Circuits are matched in a timely way, particularly when there is a shortage in the number of presbyters to fill the available stations.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Channel Islands District Synod for its memorial and shares in its celebration of the gifts that are brought into the Connexion by ministers who are recognised and regarded.

Most of those who serve our Connexion as ministers who are recognised and regarded do so for one appointment only. The understanding is that they are here to bring into our Connexion

something of the wealth of resources available elsewhere in God's Church and to grow in their own vocation through being among us for a season. It is exceptional for the arrangement to be continued into a second appointment and many of those who feel called to remain in Britain for more than five years seek to transfer to being in Full Connexion.

The small number of those who felt called to remain longer than five years and to move into a second appointment with the intention of returning to their home Church at the end of that period were stationed in round three this year. That practice accorded with the principle that under the covenant relationship we endeavour first to find optimal matches for those who are in Full Connexion. However, the Stationing Committee recognised that this disadvantaged not only the ministers who are recognised and regarded looking for a second appointment but also Circuits that might have benefitted from their ministry. It has therefore agreed that the October meeting of the Stationing Committee each year will decide the point in the matching process at which it would be appropriate for recognised and regarded ministers looking for a second appointment to be considered, based on the number of ministers and appointments available for stationing.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial and notes that the Stationing Committee has already addressed the issue.

M9 Financial pressures faced by young ministers

The Cardiff (2/9) Circuit Meeting (Present: 58; Voting: 51 for, 5 against) draws the attention of the Conference to the particular needs and challenges faced by ministers under 25 both financially and personally.

The Circuit Meeting believes that it is vital that future ministers, both presbyters and deacons, have the best environment in which to grow and develop their ministerial identity and personal character, not only throughout the whole of their ministry, but particularly in their initial appointment.

The Circuit Meeting is concerned that some ministers entering the ministry, particularly under the age of 25 may not have been adequately informed about the financial pressures faced in the active work, particularly in appointments where a vehicle may be necessary and where probationers are setting up home for the very first time. It also asks that it is made clear to those entering Circuit as probationers what financial support is, or is not available from the Connexion or their prospective Districts.

The Circuit Meeting affirms the vocations to the ordained ministry of young people in the Methodist Church and believes that manse-furnishing concerns and the cost of daily living should not stand as disincentives to anyone wishing to enter the ministry. It also understands that these challenges affect not only those entering the ministry under 25, but wishes, at this time, to draw particular attention to this issue.

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The Circuit Meeting therefore asks the Conference to consider how it might more suitably support its probationers and the Circuits to which they are stationed, and how it might improve and update the information given to student ministers.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Cardiff Circuit Meeting for its memorial and for its concern for those at the beginning of their ministry.

The Conference agrees that a minister entering his or her first appointment in his or her early twenties might do so in a position of limited financial resources. We might imagine someone who discerned a call whilst an undergraduate at university (and who therefore carries the debt of a student loan) and who tested it after graduation whilst working in a low-paid charitable post or an internship. A further two years full-time or three years part-time training (perhaps also in low-paid work) would have been completed before entering into the first manse and receiving the first stipend. At that point, having previously lived only with parents or in student accommodation, the probationer finds himself or herself with a four-bedroomed house to furnish and needing to buy or lease a car.

However, the Conference would also draw attention to the Church's contribution to the support of the minister by this point. A full-time student will have been in receipt of a bursary (in 2015/16 of £12,504 per annum). Each minister entering his or her first appointment can claim a (means-tested) grant of £5,000 and can apply for a loan of up to £5,000. From 1 September of his or her first appointment, the minister receives a manse and a stipend (which is index-linked) at a time when complaints from people in their mid-twenties about the difficulty of getting onto the housing ladder are commonplace. The Circuit reimburses all out-of-pocket expenses with a mileage allowance that includes an element for depreciation on the vehicle and the Connexion will fund the major part (if not the whole cost) of probation studies. The probationer may also find himself or herself in receipt of occasional income from weddings and funerals. The Conference therefore believes that whilst the provision is not so generous that a young minister without previous employment can move into his or her first Circuit able simply to buy all that might be desirable to furnish the manse and to purchase a new or even nearly-new car, it is more than sufficient for someone of modest needs.

Members of the Connexional Team have been diligent in visiting training institutions in order to discuss with those about to enter Circuit the financial provision that the Church makes for them and to ensure that they are aware of all that is available to them in terms of stipend, grants, and expenses. This information is freely available earlier in a minister's training if he or she wishes to ask the oversight tutor to supply it. The Conference is alert to the implication of the memorial that not all young ministers have been sufficiently aware of the detail of the arrangements for allowances. It therefore accepts the memorial and directs the Methodist Council to instruct the Connexional Team to ensure that those who candidate for

ministry are provided with the detail of connexional allowances and invited to discuss with their Superintendent or District Candidates Secretary the reality of living on a stipend and to consider in detail the nature of the sacrifice they are called to make if they are accepted by the Church.

M10 Maternity leave

The North Shields and Whitley Bay (20/5) Circuit Meeting (Present: 29; Voting: unanimous) draws the attention of the Conference to Standing Order 807A (Maternity Leave). Whilst the Circuit Meeting fully affirms and endorses this Standing Order, it is concerned about the lack of guidance that is provided for those experiencing a maternity leave. This should include:

- Help for Circuit and Local Churches in both preparing for the term of absence and ensuring there is adequate cover during that absence.
- Provision of appropriate levels of pastoral care and support for the individual concerned, both ante- and post-natal.

The North Shields and Whitley Bay Circuit Meeting, noting the helpful guidance that is provided around sabbaticals (Standing Order 744), including the District responsibility to ensure that a Sabbatical Support Group is formed, asks the Conference to instruct that a document be created which outlines good practice and offers models of such practice so that Circuits may be better prepared and those on maternity leave better supported.

Reply

The Conference thanks the North Shields and Whitley Bay Circuit Meeting for its memorial and notes the importance of appropriate arrangements for maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave. The Conference notes changes in April 2015 to legislation regarding maternity leave and the subsequent revisions to Standing Orders 807, 807A, 807B and 807D considered by this Conference (Agenda, report 17).

The request for guidance made in this memorial was considered by the Stationing Committee at its meeting in March 2015. The committee agreed that a set of guidelines should be developed and then presented to the Methodist Council for approval prior to its publication, to ensure that any such connexional guidelines are in keeping with recent changes to legislation.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial, noting that the Stationing Committee is already undertaking this work, and will present proposed guidelines for Circuits and churches regarding arrangements for maternity leave to the Methodist Council no later than October 2016.

M11 Sabbaticals

The Plymouth and Exeter District Synod, Presbyteral Session (Present: 65; Voting: 54 for, 5 against) asks the Conference to review the duration and frequency of ministerial sabbaticals to provide a greater measure of flexibility, proposing that participants accrue 2 weeks of sabbatical entitlement a year, with each sabbatical to be taken between 3 and 7 years after the last and with entitlement to a sabbatical to commence 3 years after reception into Full Connexion.

Introducing greater flexibility to the current provision of sabbaticals will:

- allow ministers the possibility of following through particular areas of interest/study on a more regular basis
- prevent some ministers coming to their sabbatical exhausted, and provide a pattern of rest, study and relaxation more suited to some people's temperaments and needs
- offer better provision for those in the last years of their active ministry
- facilitate better dovetailing between sabbaticals and ministers moving between appointments
- enable ministers to take a first sabbatical before the current ten years
- prevent the difficulties some ministers experience transitioning into sabbaticals and then re-entering work afterwards, and the loss of focus and question of role some experience through prolonged absence
- enable sabbaticals to fit more easily into ministers' personal and family circumstances, and
- be less disruptive to the life of the churches, Circuits and local communities, and less onerous in the provision of cover.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Plymouth and Exeter District Synod for its memorial. The Conference notes the importance of ministers being released from the ordinary duties of their appointments at periodic intervals to undertake programmes of study, research, work or experience (Standing Order 744(1)). The Conference also notes that a number of memorials concerned with the frequency, duration and flexibility of sabbaticals have been presented to the Conference in recent years. The Conference, whilst not committing itself to the particular proposals from the Plymouth and Exeter District Synod, notes the importance of periodic review to ensure best practice and directs the Ministries Committee to undertake a review of sabbatical policy reporting back no later than the 2017 Conference. The Conference directs the Ministries Committee to liaise with the Connexional Allowances Committee to identify any potential financial impact in relation to the sabbatical levy and permitted expense limits.

M12 Pastoral care of supernumerary ministers

The Newcastle upon Tyne (Central and East) (20/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 61; Voting: 57 for, 0 against) draws the attention of the Conference to the increasing numbers of supernumerary ministers in the Connexion. The Meeting records its appreciation of the pastoral care over many years that has traditionally been provided by District Chairs and Superintendent ministers and invites the Conference also to affirm this important aspect of ministry across the Connexion. However, the Circuit Meeting is aware that with the increasing pressures of other work it is unreasonable to expect these individuals to give as much time to pastoral care for each supernumerary minister. The Conference is invited to consider ways in which provision of pastoral care may be offered to supernumerary ministers, for example by requiring each Circuit or District to appoint an appropriate person to undertake this role on behalf of the District Chair or Superintendent minister.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Newcastle upon Tyne (Central and East) Circuit Meeting for its memorial and shares its concern that those who have faithfully served the Methodist Church as presbyters and deacons should receive appropriate pastoral care after they have sat down. It also shares the appreciation the Circuit expresses for the care that has been offered and still is offered in many places by District Chairs and Superintendents (and it would add the Warden of the Order where deacons are concerned).

Standing Order 424(1) notes that among the primary duties of a District Chair is that of “being especially diligent to be a pastor to the ministers and probationers” amongst whom are counted the supernumerary ministers in the District. Whilst the Conference recognises the truth of the memorial’s comment about the ever-increasing demands on the time of Chairs and Superintendents, it asks in the first instance that those who are charged with exercising this care should consider what good practice has been. Noting that the memorial is not prescriptive but gives an example of the way in which the pastoral care of supernumeraries might be enhanced, the Conference directs the Methodist Council to instruct the Connexional Team to ensure the memorial and the issues it raises are discussed with the District Chairs and at the annual Superintendents’ training event.

M13 Circuit assessments

The Romiley (19/16) Circuit Meeting (Present: 28; Voting: 26 for, 0 against) asks the Conference to review its connexional expenditure in the light of the 22% proportion of the Circuit’s District Assessment paid to the Connexion and hopes that this level of expenditure will not be repeated in the future.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Romiley Circuit Meeting for its memorial. It recognises the difficulties faced by some Circuits in meeting the assessment, and the pressures it can bring, noting that it is up to each District to allocate the share of the assessment paid by each individual Circuit.

The 2013 Conference agreed that the total Methodist Church Fund (MCF) assessment would increase by 2% per annum for three years, commencing in September 2014. This percentage is fixed, irrespective of changes to inflation, interest rates, wages growth or any other economic factors.

The Methodist Council is charged with bringing a recommendation to the 2016 Conference regarding the method of calculating the total assessment for the three years commencing 1 September 2017. The Conference instructs the Council to take the factors expressed within this memorial, in addition to those brought to the 2014 Conference, into account when determining that recommendation.

M14 Circuit assessments

The Peak (25/13) Circuit Meeting (Present: 25; Voting: unanimous) draws the Conference's attention to its belief that the increasing demands placed upon Circuits' finances through assessments bear no relevance to the actual ability of Circuits to pay. Membership rolls are falling and, in times of austerity, the squeeze on budgets becomes even tighter. Particularly in this rural Circuit, the local church contributions to the circuit budget are viewed as a gift, whereas the assessment from Central Office, and consequently the District, is seen as a tax. Will the Conference begin to take into account the abilities of some Circuits to meet increasing financial demands when the vast majority of their members rely upon fixed incomes and ludicrously low interest rates on savings? Should more thought be given to relocating Central Offices away from the capital?

Reply

The Conference thanks the Peak Circuit Meeting for its memorial. It recognises the difficulties faced by some Circuits in meeting the assessment, and the pressures it can bring. The Conference is appreciative of the view that local church contributions are seen as a 'gift' but reminds the Circuit Meeting that the majority of all Circuits' budgets are made up of ministerial stipends, national insurance and pensions, plus manse provision. These are a responsibility placed on local churches by the Church, part of the overall assessment. The other part of the assessment, which the Circuit sees as a 'tax' and is the subject of this memorial, is that contribution made for the work of the District and the wider Connexion. It should be remembered that this contributes towards the Methodist Church Fund and the

amount paid by each individual Circuit is determined by the District, based on their judgments on ability to pay, although the proportion per District is determined by the Conference. It should also be noted that this fund pays for such items as legal, property, financial and safeguarding services for the Church as well as contributing to the costs of the training and maintenance of student ministers. All these are necessary costs for the Church and many are legal requirements outside of its control.

The Conference notes that the Methodist Church Fund assessment is agreed annually by the Conference itself, not by any 'Central Office' and is one of the ways that the Church expresses its connexionalism via the sharing of financial resources.

The 2013 Conference agreed that the total Methodist Church Fund (MCF) assessment would increase by 2% per annum for three years, commencing in September 2014. This percentage was fixed, irrespective of changes to inflation, interest rates, wages growth or any other economic factors.

The Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) is responsible for overseeing the work of the Connexional Team and for the location of the office accommodation, on behalf of the Methodist Council. The location has been considered by the SRC on several occasions and this has been reported to the Council. Its view is still that the best location, taking into account many factors, is to remain in the present place.

The Methodist Council is charged with bringing a recommendation to the 2016 Conference regarding the method of calculating the total assessment for the three years commencing 1 September 2017. The Conference instructs the Council to take the factors expressed within this memorial, in addition to those brought to the 2014 Conference, into account when determining that recommendation.

M15 Consideration of ministers from other denominations in assessment calculations

The Trinity (25/19) Circuit Meeting (Present: 41; Voting: unanimous) notes that this Circuit, like many others, has a number of LEPs with a variety of presbyteral ministry posts. We seek clarification from the Conference about the way that the sharing of the connexional budget, and its devolvement to Circuits through the Districts, takes into account situations where ministry is provided by another denomination. In particular we request a clear statement that such ecumenical appointments should not impose significant extra financial burdens on churches and Circuits through the combination of the Methodist assessment and the equivalent methods of raising central funds by partner denominations. We recognise that there are some differences in stipends and ancillary costs across the denominations but seek reassurance that the Connexion will do all it can to treat Circuits with LEPs equitably. We ask the Conference to direct the connexional Strategy and Resources Committee, working

with the Ecumenical Officer, and to urge the various committees which deal with the Anglican-Methodist Covenant and our ecumenical partners such as the United Reformed Church and Baptist Church, to respond to requests for information and to seek changes in the allocation of budgets so that such ecumenical work is encouraged and not seen as an economic liability.

Reply

The assessment paid to support the work of the Methodist Church Fund (MCF) is an important embodiment of the connexional nature of the Church. The Conference therefore thanks the Trinity Circuit Meeting for drawing its attention to this subject. Similarly, it acknowledges the blessings that arise from the ministry of those ordained by other denominations and the potential for increased effectiveness in mission and ministry when undertaken ecumenically.

The total level of the MCF assessment is determined by the Conference using a formula that it agrees every three years; the next review being in 2016. This total is then apportioned between the Districts, with those shares being adopted by the Conference annually. The memorial is based on the correct understanding which is that the primary measure used to calculate the share of each District is the number of ministers within that District serving in appointments within the control of the Church and in receipt of a stipend. The number of lay employees is a secondary part of the calculation. In addition to those in Full Connexion with the Conference, the number of ministers includes all those that have been authorised to serve under Standing Order 733 or recognised and regarded under Standing Order 732. It does not include those serving as Associate Ministers. The Conference believes that the benefit of basing the share of the assessment primarily on the number of ministers in receipt of a stipend is that this reflects the ability of each District to pay an equivalent share of the assessment. For example, if approximately 5% of the ministers receiving a stipend are in a particular District, then the formula assumes that that District should be able to afford to pay approximately 5% of the total assessment.

Where a minister is provided by another denomination, their inclusion or not in the calculation will depend on their relationship to the Conference, and it would not seem appropriate to treat, for example, a United Reformed minister who was authorised to serve differently from, for example, one from the Methodist Church in Kenya.

Once the Conference has agreed the apportionment of the total MCF assessment by District, it is then for District Policy Committees to agree the proportion to be paid by each Circuit, and then the Circuit Meeting to decide the proportion by each of their Local Churches.

District Policy Committees and Circuit Meetings already have the authority to determine the share of the MCF assessment paid by each Circuit and church. Where particular issues arise

as the result of the perceived 'double-counting' of a minister by the Methodist Church and their own denomination, this should be resolved locally as part of the calculations performed within each District and Circuit.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

M16 Sale of model trust property for social housing

The South Kent (36/25) Circuit Meeting (Present: 36; Voting: unanimous) celebrates the priority of the Methodist Church for community development and social action, but believes that this priority is severely hindered by the restrictive nature of Standing Order 935. SO 935(1)(i) sets very narrow limits for the cooperation of the Church in the provision of social housing when Methodist Trust property is sold. The Circuit is pleased to note that the Releasing Property for God's Mission working group is due to report to the Conference this year. Alongside the working group's report, the Circuit requests that the Conference direct the Methodist Council to review and widen the types of social housing providers to whom Model Trust premises can be sold at an undervalue. The Circuit believes that such an interpretation is already within the purposes of the Methodist Church, but that this should be made clear by the revision of the Standing Order.

Reply

The Conference thanks the South Kent Circuit meeting for its memorial seeking to revise SO 935(i) to widen the types of social housing providers to whom Model Trust premises can be sold at an undervalue.

The Methodist Council in April 2015 received from the 'Releasing Property for God's Mission' working party a paper setting out recommendations that included a broader definition of housing associations for the purposes of Standing Order 935. The Council resolved that further work was required on the recommendations and appointed a working group to do so.

The Conference therefore accepts the direction to review the types of social housing providers to whom Methodist premises can be sold at an undervalue. However the Conference declines to direct the Council to widen the definition at least until such time as the Council has given such consideration to the paper 'Releasing Property for God's Mission'.

M17 Retaining mission opportunities in rural areas

The Chester and Stoke-on-Trent Synod, Representative Session (Present: 123; Voting: 122 for, 1 against) is conscious that a significant number of former Methodist chapels across the Connexion have been sold and converted into luxury homes. Whilst an initial financial gain may be made many villages are left without an active Methodist presence.

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We request the Conference:

- (a) to direct that conversations be held with TMCP as Custodian Trustees to encourage and enable an appropriate interpretation of best value as against best price under charity law so that mission opportunities are not lost;
- (b) to encourage Circuits and churches to look at more innovative ways of disposing of some of their church properties, for example, where suitable, in partnership with the Addington Fund who provide homes for retired farmworkers in rural areas. In this way missional benefit may be maximised in such disposals; it would also be possible to grant a 99 year lease giving a rental value to the Methodist Church and a renewed pastoral opportunity – possibly for rural chaplains;
- (c) to encourage Districts, Circuits and churches to give grants to rural chaplains so as to extend their work in these areas.

We submit that this is one way in which the Methodist Church can obtain best value for its property rather than merely best price and can be seen to be an ongoing practical example of the Church's mission.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District Synod for its memorial seeking to encourage the innovative use of redundant chapel buildings for ongoing mission.

The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes are responsible for ensuring that managing trustees comply with charity law and the requirement of Model Trusts when disposing of property. It is not within the remit of TMCP to offer any interpretation of best value or best price that is not compliant with the law or Model Trusts. However the Conference accepts that any guidance produced must be kept under review and therefore accepts part (a) of the memorial.

The Conference notes that part (b) of the memorial seeks to expand the organisations that a disposal of model trust property at an undervalue can be made to for the purposes of providing social housing and expand the type of disposals allowed at an undervalue to include leases. The Conference also notes memorial M16 and the further work directed by the Council following receipt of the paper from the 'Releasing Property for God's Mission' working party. The Conference understands the aspiration of part (b) to encourage Circuits and churches to look at more innovative ways of disposing of church properties and directs the Council to ensure this forms part of the work being undertaken.

The Conference encourages all Districts, Circuits and churches to support rural chaplaincy and therefore accepts part (c) of the memorial.

M18 Replacement projects

The Cornwall District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 97; Voting: unanimous) is concerned that the current guidelines for classifying a property project as a replacement project are too restrictive.

When, in one of our Circuits, two chapels closed and buildings were put up for sale, with the intention of starting a new church, a new opportunity for mission in the same geographical location, we discovered that because no formal decision to amalgamate had been taken at the respective Church Councils, the project could not be designated a replacement project, and so the connexional levy would be applied to the sales.

We urge the Conference to direct that guidelines regarding the designation of replacement projects be rewritten to include:

- when a local Church Council is unable or unwilling to agree an amalgamation, but the property to be sold is in the same geographical area as the new 'replacement' project.

We ask that the new guidelines be presented to the 2016 Conference.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Cornwall District Synod for its memorial. The case which is cited in the memorial highlights the need for Local Churches to keep clear records of decisions regarding amalgamation, or transfer of membership to another Local Church prior to ceasing worship.

The Conference recognises that the replacement project guidance does not currently define an amalgamation. This is a matter that should be considered as part of the review of the replacement project guidance which is being undertaken by the Connexional Team. The Team is aware that the review will need to:

Offer a definition of an amalgamation for the purposes of classifying a project as a replacement. Clarify that it is only possible to classify a replacement project in the same geographical area when a formal amalgamation or transfer of membership to another Local Church has taken place.

The Conference therefore declines the specific request in the memorial.

M19 Management of listed buildings

The Sheffield District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 83; Voting: unanimous) would like clarification about the legal tension which local managing trustees of listed buildings find themselves in.

On the one hand they are obliged to pursue the charitable purposes of the Methodist Church including that of promoting the mission of the gospel. On the other hand they are legally obliged to maintain the listed premises within the terms of the listing. Frequently this tension arises when there is a fault in the building as listed, expense on which cannot be justified in purely mission terms. Such work is at much greater expense, absorbing much more time, involving more consultation, than unlisted properties. Thus precious resources, which could and should be spent on more mission priority activities, are used to fulfil the legal requirements of the listing.

At a time when mission is at the forefront of our priorities and when there is a shortage of resources and energy, this tension is hastening the premature closure of churches who cannot afford the extra cost of maintaining listed buildings, it is demoralising congregations who feel that they have legally binding burdens on them and, most significantly, it is taking away resources which could be used for mission purposes. Moreover other outside bodies seem to have more influence than local Methodist managing trustees over how they have to prioritise their spending because of the listed status of their property.

We urge the Conference to direct those responsible for property conservation and heritage to give greater assistance, including guidance on procedures; support (not just a list but tangible action) on applications to grant-making bodies; and on occasion acceptance that grants from the Connexion can assist in repairing listed buildings if this enables such churches to continue as mission centres.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Sheffield District Synod for its memorial. There are specified legal processes defined in Standing Orders that apply to all Model Trust property that is either listed or within a conservation area – these must be followed by managing trustees irrespective of the perceived tension between mission and conservation.

The Conference understands that part of the post of Fundraising Officer within the Connexional Team includes the availability to guide and assist local trustees in identifying grant-making bodies, and in preparing applications for funding for both property and personnel-based projects.

The 2014 Conference resolved that a working party be set up to look into the issues raised in relation to the property section in the General Secretary's report to that Conference. The working party considered issues in relation to the responsibilities and challenges of managing trustees, amongst others, and produced a report that was considered by the April 2015 Council as paper MC/15/43 (available on the Methodist Church website). The Council directed that further work be done on its recommendations, to be considered at its meeting in January 2016.

Various themes relating to Releasing Property for God's Mission, including those affecting listed buildings and those within conservation areas, were explored at a workshop as part of the 2015 Conference.

The Conference directs the Methodist Council to consider the contents of this memorial within the work it has committed to undertake and to include proposals in the report that it brings to the 2016 Conference.

M20 Authorisation of small property works

While recognising the expertise, helpfulness and dedication of the staff in the Connexional Team, the West Somerset (24/25) Circuit Meeting (Present: 35; Voting: unanimous) proposes that decisions regarding small property improvements and like-for-like replacement works be dealt with by the local church Managing Trustees without reference to others except the relevant Local Authority (for planning and conservation issues) as necessary. This might speed the consultation process and release staff in the Connexional Team to deal with larger projects and more urgent matters.

Reply

The Conference thanks the West Somerset Circuit Meeting for its memorial which highlights the need to correctly apply the requirements of Standing Order 930. Standing Order 930(1) already permits non-structural repairs to be undertaken without the need to obtain consent from the appropriate bodies.

The Conference is satisfied that Standing Order 930(1) already allows small property improvements and like-for-like replacement works of a non-structural nature to be undertaken without the need for consent, and therefore does not believe any changes are needed to Standing Orders. However, the Conference does recognise the lack of clarity that there is around what works are permitted without consent, and therefore directs the Methodist Council to ensure that guidance is drafted to clarify the application of Standing Order 930(1) and that it is made available on the Methodist Church website by 1 September 2016.

M21 Insurance for community groups using Methodist premises

The Oxford (23/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 26; Voting: unanimous) understands that community groups regularly using Methodist premises are not covered by Methodist Insurance's 'Church Shield' policy. Where groups are local affiliates of larger organisations, obtaining insurance cover through the parent body is straightforward, but where a local group is freestanding, the additional administrative and financial burden of arranging insurance can seem considerable. The Circuit is keen to encourage community use of our premises,

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as an expression of our mission, and is disappointed that current insurance arrangements do not facilitate this. The Circuit Meeting therefore respectfully asks the Conference to take this matter up with Methodist Insurance, with a view to obtaining a policy for Local Churches which better enables community use of our premises.

Reply

Managing trustees of Model Trust property have to strike a careful balance between the use of property for mission and their responsibilities for protecting the Church against liabilities. The Conference acknowledges that securing appropriate insurance is an important component of this and is grateful to the Oxford Circuit Meeting for highlighting it in this memorial.

The Conference understands that under the Church Shield policy Methodist Insurance Company (MIC) provides cover for activities and groups that are under the control of an individual Church Council and are run on Church premises or anywhere else within the geographical limits (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man). This is public liability insurance, which covers the Local Church for its legal liability to pay damages arising from accidental injury to a person or damage to property where the Local Church or those under its control can be found negligent subject to the conditions and exclusions of the policy. Employer's liability cover is also provided in respect of injury to local church employees and volunteers.

The Church Shield policy also automatically extends to provide public liability insurance for occasional hirers of the premises for private social events, up to three events per hirer in each period of insurance, and is intended to cover requests to hire the church or hall for one-off occasions such as children's birthday parties and family celebrations where no alternative insurance is in place. It must however be recognised that making a claim could affect the Local Church's claims experience and insurance premium.

MIC has confirmed that whilst it may provide an extension regarding private hirers wishing to use the church premises on an occasional basis, an independent community group or organisation does not fall within this category and therefore separate insurance cover is required. Independent community groups are separate organisations and have full responsibility for their own insurance arrangements; in many cases they will already have cover in place through national parent bodies or could obtain it from MIC.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

M22 TMCP

The Great Harwood (21/3) Circuit Meeting (Present: 23; Voting: unanimous) is aware of the importance of the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes legal section in ensuring that

legal matters executed by solicitors on behalf of churches, Circuits and Districts comply with Methodist and Charity Law legal requirements.

We believe that a good and helpful working relationship between the TMCP and other parts of the Methodist Church is crucial for all of those involved to fulfil their responsibilities efficiently.

Our considerable experience with the TMCP legal section during the last two years has been frustrating, particularly when legal contracts and agreements have been put at risk through the TMCP's delays and poor communication.

We ask the Conference to instruct the legal section of the TMCP to review their systems, staffing levels, training and procedures to ensure that they become a more efficient, user-friendly organisation, who offer prompt and meaningful advice to those who seek it from them.

We ask that the TMCP report to the 2016 Conference about their progress made in achieving these aims.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Great Harwood Circuit Meeting for its memorial and the concerns which it raises.

The Conference has no power to direct either the Board or staff of the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) either in terms of budget provision or operational matters. However, the Methodist Church Fund, through the Central Services Budget, contributes 35% of the staff costs of the legal team. Therefore it is important that the services which TMCP provides on behalf of the Team are kept under consideration and any concerns about the timescales within which TMCP is able to operate are addressed.

Last year it was reported to the Conference that a full internal review was being undertaken. This review has resulted in a restructuring of the legal team and increased investment in the provision of legal services to reflect the growing expectations on the part of many Managing Trustees. It is envisaged that these changes in process and structure will make TMCP more efficient, user-friendly and enable TMCP to offer prompt and meaningful advice.

The Conference appreciates that the changes in process and structure will take time to be fully embedded but it is noted that improvements have already begun to be made. However the Conference recognises that there are ongoing concerns about the service TMCP are able to provide and therefore directs the Methodist Council to enter into discussions with the Board and Chief Executive of TMCP to try and find ways to continue to improve the service provided to the Connexion.

The Conference directs the Methodist Council to report back to the Conference at the earliest practical opportunity, but no later than 2017, on the outcome of the discussions.

M23 Induction of Youth Presidents

The Southend and Leigh (34/10) Circuit Meeting (Present: 42; Voting: 41 for, 0 against) asks that consideration is given into how new Youth Presidents are formally welcomed into the role. We realise that finding a suitable time and venue may not be easy, however, if we recognise the importance of the role of Youth President, then there should be a formal public handover and welcome, as we have for each President and Vice-President of the Conference.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Southend and Leigh Circuit Meeting for its memorial. The Conference notes the Youth President's position (Standing Order 250(8)) as a representative of the Children and Youth Assembly and as an encourager and representative of children and young people in the life of the Church. Whilst not committing itself to any particular proposal, the Conference agrees that the way the Youth President is welcomed into his or her role should be reviewed. It directs that the Youth President's Advisory Group (Standing Order 250(9)), consisting of the Youth President-designate, the ex-Youth President, those elected by the Children and Youth Assembly to be representatives to the Methodist Conference, and those nominated by it to be appointed by the Conference as members of the Methodist Council, should work collaboratively with members of the Connexional Team to consider any changes of practice that would enable the Youth President to be welcomed and recognised in a way consistent with the culture of children and young people and the Standing Orders governing the role.

M24 Safeguarding Coordinators

The Strathclyde Circuit Meeting (Present: 39; Voting: 38 for, 0 against), values the guidance that is given in the Model Safeguarding Policies published by the Connexional Team. The Circuit Meeting recognises that the offices of Circuit and Church Safeguarding Adults Coordinator and Circuit and Church Safeguarding Children Coordinator are now an integral part of our life together. The Circuit therefore asks that:

- (a) these officers be included as obligatory appointments in Standing Orders 550 and 641 respectively along with Standing Orders to clarify the responsibilities of these officers and the Superintendent's responsibilities in regard to Safeguarding
- (b) the current Model Policies be incorporated in the Guidance section of CPD.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Strathclyde Circuit Meeting for its memorial and its careful thought about, and commitment to, the promotion of safeguarding in Circuits and Local Churches.

The Conference notes that these roles are included in the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policies approved by the 2010 Conference. The report to the 2012 Conference 'President's Inquiry (Safeguarding) 2011 – Implementation of Recommendations' also made recommendations in respect of the roles of Circuit and Church Coordinators which were accepted by the Conference. The Conference considers that the role outlines are most helpfully included in the safeguarding policies rather than in the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church.

The Conference does however note that the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policies, including Model Policies, are in need of updating and revision, and undertaking this would be an opportunity to specify the roles of the District Safeguarding Officer, the Circuit Safeguarding Coordinator and the Church Safeguarding Coordinator.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial but directs the Methodist Council to review and update the safeguarding policies and where appropriate bring the amended policies to the 2017 Conference.

M25 Suspension under the complaints and discipline process

The Lindisfarne (20/12) Circuit Meeting (Present: 14; Voting: unanimous) asks that the wording of Standing Order 1105 clause (11), concerning suspension of a minister or probationer under the complaints and disciplines procedure, should be altered to read as follows:

When considering whether or not to exercise the power of suspension given under clause (1) above in relation to a minister or probationer in a Circuit appointment, the person exercising the power must consult with the Connexional Complaints Officer and whoever else the Connexional Complaints Officer thinks fit. The person exercising the power must also consult with the Superintendent of the relevant Circuit (except in a case where the Superintendent is the respondent). Such consideration must have regard to the likely safety or other risk to the complainant, respondent, or any other individual arising from the suspension or a failure to suspend. It should also consider the likely effect in general of the suspension or failure to suspend on the complainant, respondent or any other individual, on their families and upon the Local Church and the wider community while the process continues.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Lindisfarne Circuit Meeting for its memorial and for raising such a sensitive matter.

It is important that whenever a suspension under either Standing Order 013 or Standing Order 1105 is being considered care be given to the wider impact of the suspension and that the person charged with authority to issue a suspension has access to advice. Those charged with the power to issue a suspension under either Standing Order are always urged to seek advice from the member of the Connexional Team who oversees the complaints and discipline processes or from the Assistant Secretary of the Conference. Such consultation seeks, amongst other things, to assess the wider impact of the suspension on both the person being suspended and the Circuit, however it is rightly the case that the person with authority to suspend must make the final decision and be in a position to offer the reasons for her/his actions if an appeal against the suspension is lodged.

The role of the connexional Complaints Officer as set out in Standing Order 1114 is to offer advice and assistance to local complaints officers, members of complaints team and Connexional Advocates in the performance of their duties under the complaints procedures and not to offer advice about suspension where a different and much wider range of considerations need to be taken into account. It is important that the act of suspension is, as far as possible, kept separate from the detail of any complaint, and therefore the connexional Complaints Officer should not be involved in conversations relating to a suspension.

The Lindisfarne Circuit Meeting can be assured that the concerns raised by the memorial are routinely those which are explored with a person considering a suspension. The memorial is therefore declined.

M26 Blessing of same-sex marriages

The Leicester (Trinity) (23/7) Circuit Meeting (Present: 40; Voting: 36 for, 0 against) notes that the Methodist Church is committed to affirming the participation of lesbians and gay men in the life of the Church. Therefore we consider it essential for the mission of the Church to LGBT people (lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people) and to the wider community, that Local Churches are able to offer their buildings for the blessing of same sex couples following a civil marriage. We do not consider it pastorally responsible to offer prayers without including blessing. We therefore ask the Conference to enable Church Councils to permit the use of their building for prayers of blessing. We also ask that Methodist ministers, in the prophetic tradition of the Bible, be enabled to offer a blessing to same sex couples where their conscience allows. A liturgy for this purpose should be provided.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Leicester (Trinity) Circuit Meeting for its memorial which highlights the commitment of the Methodist Church to encouraging Local Churches to welcome same sex couples and families and to ensuring their participation in the life and worship of the Church.

The Conference was asked in 2012 (by memorial M29) to revisit its 2006 ruling that the blessing of same-sex relationships should not take place on Methodist premises, the hope of that memorial being that the blessing of civil partnerships would be allowed on Methodist premises. The 2014 Conference received a report from the Working Party on Marriage and Civil Partnerships which had been directed by the 2013 Conference to provide a further response to M29 (2012). Following a proposal from the working party the 2014 Conference adopted amended guidelines which provide for prayers of thanksgiving to be offered on Methodist premises and by Methodist ministers or lay persons on the basis that no person or body should be required to act in a way contrary to the demands of their conscience. These guidelines are printed in Book VII, Part 10 of the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church. Whilst the resolution of the 2014 Conference does not permit the blessing of same-sex marriages, the amendments to the guidelines do enable local churches to provide a positive response to same-sex couples seeking prayers of thanksgiving following their marriage. The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

The Conference does however draw the Circuit's attention to the further decisions of the 2014 Conference, including its encouragement to the Methodist people to engage in a process of deep reflection and discernment regarding the issues raised in the report, including the question of whether to revisit the Methodist Church's definition of marriage. The Marriage and Relationships Task Group is currently coordinating this work, which includes developing materials to support local conversations, holding meetings for district representatives between June and October this year and running workshops at the 2015 Conference. Materials recommended by the group can be found at www.methodist.org.uk/who-we-are/views-of-the-church/human-sexuality/talking-of-marriage-and-relationships. Districts have been asked to report their conversations back to the group by February 2016, and the group will bring a further report to the 2016 Conference.

M27 Investment in fossil fuels

The Stratford and Evesham (5/15) Circuit Meeting (Present: 28; Voting: 21 for, 3 against) draws the Conference's attention to:

- The Statement of the 2011 Conference that: "The scientific analyses of climate change and the role of human greenhouse gas emissions are well-grounded. It is now morally irresponsible to fail to acknowledge and address the urgent need for radical cuts in

greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in order to prevent intolerable damage to human populations and mass extinctions of many plant and animal species” (*Hope in God’s Future*, 2011).

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimate of a ‘cumulative carbon budget’ up to 2100 for GHG emissions to stay within a 50% chance of limiting global warming to 2°C. Only a quarter of those GHG emissions now remain, yet proven fossil fuel reserves would release far greater volumes if burnt (*The New Economics of Climate Change*, Lord Stern and others, 2014).
- JACEI’s report to the 2014 Conference that at least two thirds of current proven reserves held by gas, oil and coal extraction companies must remain unburned if global warming is to be held below the internationally agreed level of 2°C, the point at which climate change is likely to become catastrophic. However, those same companies continue to plan to extract and sell all their reserves, in full knowledge of their incompatibility with the 2°C target, on the grounds that there is no legally binding target (eg *Energy and Carbon - Managing the Risk*, Exxon Mobil, March 2014; Shell’s strategic report for 2014, committing 85% of capital investments to further exploration and extraction).
- The fact that the Methodist Church in Britain holds approximately £58m, 6% of its investments, in fossil fuel companies (2012 figures) and can make a strong and positive statement by disinvesting from these sectors and supporting the increasingly urgent need for a legally-binding global cap on carbon emissions to be agreed in Paris in December 2015.
- Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s statement in April 2014 “We live in a world dominated by greed. We have allowed the interests of capital to outweigh the interests of human beings and our Earth. It is clear [the companies] are not simply going to give up; they stand to make too much money.” “People of conscience need to break their ties with corporations financing the injustice of climate change. It makes no sense to invest in companies that undermine our future”. An increasing number of church bodies concur, including the World Council of Churches and church bodies in Sweden, New Zealand, Australia and the US.

While recognising the efforts already made with Shell and BP, the Circuit Meeting nevertheless asks the Conference to request the Central Finance Board to work with JACEI to develop and implement criteria for swift disinvestment from fossil fuel stocks based on the following:

- (a) immediate disinvestment from companies involved in exploration for or extraction of coal, tar sands or other highly carbon-intensive fossil fuels;
- (b) total disinvestment in oil and gas companies by the end of 2018;

- (c) seek alternative investment in energy efficiency and low-carbon renewable energy generation wherever possible and appropriate.

Reply

The Conference notes the concerns raised by the Stratford and Evesham Circuit Meeting and thanks the Meeting for its memorial.

Since the direction given by the Conference in 2014, the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) has undertaken further work and provided advice to the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church (CFB) in relation to investment in fossil fuels. A report on this work can be found in the Conference Agenda (p. 141).

A position paper and policy paper have been developed by JACEI and the CFB. The policy paper “Policy on Climate Change – Implications for Different Fuels” has been approved by the Board of the CFB. These papers are available on the CFB and Methodist Church websites. The CFB has also published a policy paper on the implications of the climate change policy for investments in the electricity generation industry.

The CFB will evaluate the suitability of companies for investment on the basis of these policies on a case by case basis using the guidance of the JACEI/CFB position paper, CFB policies and seeking the guidance of JACEI. This will take into account the investment plans of companies involved in the extraction of coal and tar sands. However, as this approach is not consistent with the demands of the memorial, the memorial is declined.

M28 The Lancashire District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 134; Voting: 71 for, 36 against)

This memorial was received with the same text as M27, with the exception of the paragraph beginning “While recognising...”, which was replaced by the paragraph below:

The Synod asks the Central Finance Board to review its policy of engaging with companies involved in exploration or extraction of fossil fuels and divest from fossils stocks based on the following timetable:

The Conference adopts the same reply as to M27.

M29 Investment in fossil fuels

The West Yorkshire District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 110; Voting: 83 for, 0 against) asks the Conference to request the Central Finance Board and JACEI to develop an urgent action plan based on:

- (a) immediate divestment from companies involved in exploration for or extraction of coal, tar sands or other highly carbon-intensive fossil fuels;
- (b) total divestment from companies involved in oil and gas exploration and extraction by the end of 2018;
- (c) seeking alternative investment in energy efficiency and low-carbon renewable energy generation wherever appropriate.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as to M27.

M30 Tax justice

The Birmingham District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 111; Voting: 101 for, 8 against) welcomes the progress that has been made on communicating the issue of tax justice throughout the Methodist Church by the Methodist Tax Justice Network (MTJN), especially in association with the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) and the World Church Relations (WCR) team. In light of ongoing revelations about the degree of global tax-dodging it encourages the further development of this work by these and other elements of the Church by:

- (a) requesting the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network to incorporate into its educational materials the issue of tax justice, in the context of any work on Biblical teaching, the economy, poverty or inequality, noting that assistance from the MTJN is on offer if required;
- (b) encouraging the JPIT, as resources allow, to further develop a focus on tax justice in its work on economic, justice and equality issues, working with the MTJN, and including such areas as education, promotion, campaigning and discussion of a Global Wealth Tax as a key means towards slowing the growing inequality in the human community;
- (c) requesting the WCR team to continue to offer information and discussion on tax justice to our World Church partners, in the context of One Mission, with the aim of facilitating direct partnerships between MTJN and partner churches or other partners to engage around tax justice;
- (d) calling upon JACEI in conjunction with the Central Finance Board urgently to develop a position paper leading towards a policy statement on tax justice in order to address companies in which the Church invests on this issue, taking into consideration the policy areas set out in section (e), and to keep the Church informed on progress;
- (e) urging HM government, alone and through the EU and the OECD, both to bring to justice

individuals and companies guilty of tax evasion, and to develop effective policies to tackle tax avoidance, in relation to automatic information exchange, country-by-country reporting, complete financial transparency, rapid eradication of tax havens and creation of a public register of beneficial ownership of all companies and trusts, as advocated by the Tax Justice Network, Christian Aid and others, and to adopt within the next 12 months legislation as per the proposals set out in the Tax Dodging Bill.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District Synod for this memorial and the Methodist Tax Justice Network for bringing this issue to the attention of Methodists in Britain. The Conference recognises that by taking measures to avoid paying tax which is owed, companies and private individuals deprive countries of financial resources needed to meet their educational, health, social and other needs, and affirms the work of the Joint Public Issues Team alongside Christian Aid, the Methodist Tax Justice Network and other partners.

The Conference directs the Methodist Council to ensure that the Connexional Team work with JACEI and the Central Finance Board to identify when further work on these issues can be completed and further directs that the Council review progress in this area of work no later than January 2017.

M31 HSBC

The West Yorkshire District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 110; Voting: 33 for, 24 against) urges the Methodist Conference to investigate the use of HSBC Bank by the Central Finance Board in the light of recent disclosures about tax avoidance, money laundering and loans to arms manufacturers, all of which appear to be in direct contradiction of the ethical statements of The Central Finance Board.

Reply

The Conference thanks the West Yorkshire District Synod for this memorial and for highlighting the important role that ethics plays within decisions regarding companies providing services to the Central Finance Board (CFB) as an important part of the Methodist Church. It notes that HSBC bank is used by many parts of the Church, all of which require a wide range of banking services in order to undertake their roles effectively.

The Conference understands that the CFB relates to HSBC both as a shareholder and as a customer and is already actively engaged with bank executives, specifically regarding the issues raised within the memorial. The CFB has met with HSBC executives on a number of occasions over the past few years and raised serious concerns about a range of ethical issues. It has reported on these concerns to the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of

Investment, the body established by the Conference to offer advice to the CFB on ethical aspects of investment, and plans continued shareholder engagement with the company to emphasise the ethical standards which are expected. The CFB is also part of a group of Methodist bodies, including the Connexional Team, undertaking a joint approach to HSBC with regard to a number of matters including ethical issues.

The Conference does not, therefore, believe it appropriate to initiate a new investigation as requested, and so declines the memorial, but does commend the CFB to take the serious issues which this memorial raises into account during its ongoing engagement with HSBC and to include an account of this engagement in the annual CFB report to the Conference as soon as practicable.

M32 World population

The Stamford and Rutland (23/22) Circuit Meeting (Present: 26; Voting: 22 for, 2 against) recognises that there is a moral and theological issue with regard to the extinction of species and deterioration of the earth's climate and natural resources due to population increase. This is exemplified by current trends in extinction due to habitat destruction primarily due to the need for food production, and to possible rising of sea levels due to global warming. The Circuit Meeting also recognises the Connexion has already begun to address similar issues through reports such as Operation Noah.

The Circuit Meeting therefore proposes that the Methodist Connexion takes seriously and promotes discussion and appropriate action on the issue of the effects of overpopulation on the earth and its people.

Reply

The Methodist Conference appreciates the concerns expressed by the Stamford and Rutland Circuit Meeting. World population reached 7 billion in 2011. Future projections are contested but the UN Population Fund states that population is expected to rise above 9 billion by 2050. As the memorial indicates, the impacts of such growth are hugely challenging. The Conference statement *Hope in God's Future* addresses the theological issues related to rising sea levels due to global warming.

The issues around growth in global population and appropriate action are contentious and sensitive. While accepting that the concerns are serious it is not clear that the Methodist Church could offer a distinctive contribution in this respect. The Conference does however encourage Local Churches and Circuits to make use of existing materials on this subject, for example those produced by Christian Aid.

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