

Review of the Memorials Committee

Contact name and details	The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler, Secretary of the Conference SoC@methodistchurch.org.uk
Subject and aims	To undertake a review of the role and composition of the Memorials Committee and to bring recommendations to the 2020 Conference.
Background context and relevant documents	MC/19/41 Memorials Committee

1. The Methodist Council in its report to the 2019 Conference recommended that the composition of the Memorials Committee is reviewed, with a view to it being changed to include those who have more intentional links with other parts of the Church's oversight processes.
2. The Council acknowledged that whilst the current composition of the Committee enables representation of just under half the Districts at any one time, the Committee is not connected to the full range of strategic thinking in the Church undertaken by other bodies.
3. The deadlines for the submission of memorials and the short timescale for the drafting of replies to resource the Committee mitigate against a considered overview of the range of questions being raised in a particular case by the Council, the SRC or any other committee charged with proposing policy. Therefore, the Council concluded that it is not helpful for the Committee to stand alone in this way from other decision-making bodies given the importance of giving careful consideration to the view of the Districts and the Circuits as expressed in Memorials. This would serve to achieve greater coherence as the Conference seeks to honour the importance of the Circuits and Districts submitting memorials to the Conference, and ensuring that those memorials are given careful replies that relate to the activities of a range of bodies.
4. The Committee is established by SO 138 and meets once a year in late May to consider the memorials submitted by Circuits and Districts and to propose the replies which are to be put before the Conference. The current Committee membership is 20 persons and comprises a number of representatives from the Districts (on a rota basis). Each of the district representatives is intended to serve for three years to ensure some continuity.
5. The current Committee in addition to the convener appointed by the preceding Conference consists of:
 - (i) a former President or Vice-President appointed for three years, who shall be chair;
 - (ii) the President-designate, Vice-President-designate and Secretary of the Conference;
 - (iii) the Connexional Secretaries or their representatives;
 - (iv) one district Chair, and one synod secretary, each appointed for a period of three years;
 - (v) three ministers and ten other persons, each nominated by a district Policy Committee according to a rota.
6. Under the current arrangements, the first drafts of memorial replies are in most cases written by members of the Connexional Team who are invited to the meeting to present them and to answer any questions. Inevitably, the committee will often include no-one who has had detailed engagement with previous discussions about these questions in the various committees of the Church and therefore tends to depend heavily on the Secretary of the

Conference and the Connexional Secretary (who are members of the Committee) and the Assistant Secretary, Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice, and the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee (who are not).

7. The inclusion of the President and Vice-President designate is a curiosity as the committee makes decisions about the text of draft replies which might then be the subject of debate in the Conference. For the President and Vice-President designate to be in attendance would be helpful to them and to the committee but it might be prudent to maintain their independence from any controversial recommendations to the Conference. It is therefore proposed that the President and Vice-President designate attend the committee but do not vote.
8. The Business Committee needs to determine which memorials are to be taken with which items of business, which need a separate discussion, and which might be taken *en bloc*. It would therefore make sense for the Chair or a member of the Business Committee to be in attendance at the Memorial Committee's meeting though again without a vote.
9. In order to ensure that the quality of conversation remains and that there is a degree of representation of the Connexion retained, the following is proposed as a revised constitution of the committee:

138 Memorials Committee. (1) The Methodist Council shall annually appoint a committee to consider all memorials from Synods and Circuit Meetings and make a recommendation on each to the Conference.

See S.O. 133, 419 and 516.

(2) In addition to the convener appointed by the preceding Conference the committee shall consist of:

- ~~(i) a former President or Vice-President appointed for three years, who shall be chair;~~
- ~~(ii) the President-designate, Vice-President-designate and Secretary of the Conference;~~
- ~~(iii) the Connexional Secretaries or their representatives;~~
- ~~(iv) one district Chair, and one synod secretary, each appointed for a period of three years;~~
- ~~(v) three ministers and ten other persons, each nominated by a district Policy Committee according to a rota.~~
- (i) a former President or Vice-President appointed for three years who shall chair the committee;**
- (ii) the Secretary of the Conference and the Assistant Secretary of the Conference;**
- (iii) the Connexional Secretary;**
- (iv) the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice;**
- (v) the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee;**
- (vi) a member of the Ministries Committee;**
- (vii) a member of the Strategy and Resources Committee;**
- (viii) one district Chair, two presbyters, one deacon, one synod secretary and two lay persons, each nominated by a district Policy Committee from a different stationing region, according to a rota.**

Those appointed under paragraphs (vi), (vii) and (viii) are appointed for a period of three years. The President and Vice-President designate and the Chair of the Business Committee shall be in attendance but without a vote.

(3) Each member nominated by a district Policy Committee shall serve for a period of three years and shall in the first year of appointment be an elected representative of the District to the ensuing Conference. If any such member should cease to be a church member or minister in the District or should otherwise be unable to complete the full term of membership, the district Policy Committee shall nominate a substitute for the remainder of the term.

(4) The convener may invite other persons to attend the meeting of the committee in order to give information or otherwise assist the committee. Persons invited under this clause have no vote.

(5) The committee may, instead of proposing replies to particular memorials which it considers to be of special importance, recommend to the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Conference that arrangements be made for a resolution or resolutions based on one or more of them to be moved and debated in the Conference.

See also S.O. 133(2).

(5A) The committee shall recommend to the Business Committee which replies to memorials shall be proposed to be moved and voted upon en bloc under Standing Order 134A.

(6) The report of the committee shall clearly identify

(i) those memorials which require to be considered by the Presbyteral as well as the Representative Session of the Conference, being shared business as defined by clause 24(c) of the Deed of Union; and

(ii) those memorials which concern any of the matters specified in items (i) or (ii) of clause 25B(a) of the Deed, upon which the process prescribed by that clause will apply to the proposed reply.

Memorials from Synods must be sent so as to reach the convener by the Wednesday after the second Saturday in May (S.O. 419).

Memorials from Circuit Meetings must reach the convener by the 31st March (S.O. 516(4)).

(7) The committee shall meet in London shortly before the meeting of the Conference and its report shall, if possible, be printed for circulation in the Conference. If, however, in any particular year it should seem advisable to the convener of the committee and the Secretary of the Conference the committee may meet in the Conference town on the first day of the Conference.

(8) In respect of memorials remitted by the Conference for consideration and report by the Methodist Council or other committees the reports shall be included in the Agenda of the next following Conference unless the Conference specifies some other year.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

18/1. The Council receives the report.

18/2. The Council recommends to the Conference a revision to SO 138 as proposed in paragraph 9 above.