

58. Memorials to the Conference

Notes for the Guidance of Members of the Conference

1. Introduction to Memorials

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

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

The Committee recommended to the Conference all the replies printed in the Agenda under each Memorial. The Conference binds itself either to agree this reply, to amend it, or to agree an alternative reply [see the Rules of Procedure printed at the beginning of Volume One of the Agenda, SO 133(4)].

In some of its responses, the Memorials Committee makes no comment on the substance of a memorial, but indicates that the reply of the Conference is given

in other resolutions of the Conference. This kind of response does not mean that the Memorials Committee has not taken seriously the points made in the memorial. It means that another report deals with the issue more fully. Debate on this report gives the Conference an opportunity to discuss the issues raised by the memorial.

In addition, this year the Memorials Committee recommended to the President, Vice President and Secretary of Conference under Standing Order 138(5) that arrangements should be made for resolutions to be moved and debated in the Conference on proposals for a new hymn collection. This is to facilitate a procedure during the Conference which will allow all the issues relating to the new hymn collection to be considered and the Conference to debate and express its mind on the issues in M42 – 44 alongside the other relevant issues.

At the end of this section of the Agenda, there is a list of memorials referred by previous Conferences to the Methodist Council or to committees, where a report was required to be brought to a subsequent Conference. This list indicates when the report will be brought and provides a reference to those reports before this year's Conference.

2. Consideration of the Memorials by the Conference

Any member of the Conference has the right to move an amendment to the reply recommended by the Memorials Committee or propose that it is substituted by a totally different

reply. Amendments to replies should be submitted in the form of a notice of motion, the deadline for which is teatime on the fourth day of the Representative Session, ie Tuesday. However, members are urged to give notice of their intention to move an amendment as early as possible and not to wait until the deadline.

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

This year, the Memorials Committee has recommended to the Business Committee that all the memorials be provisionally placed in the en bloc business of the Conference [this includes the formal replies to M42-44 about the proposed hymn collection, the substance of which will, as noted above be the subject of a separate report before the Conference]. Any recommended reply to a memorial that is the subject of an amending notice of motion will be removed from this list [see Standing Order 136(2A)].

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

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

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

M1 Stationing of Married Ministerial Couples

The Stockton (13/3) Circuit Meeting (Present: 58. Voting: unanimous) wishes to express its concern at the way in which married ministerial couples are being stationed.

We understand that the Stationing Matching Group endeavours to place single ministers near to valued "support networks", and married ministers near to their (non ministerial) spouse's work place. We support this approach wholeheartedly.

Our request is simply that the same consideration is given to ministers married to each other.

The reason for this request is that unfortunately in recent years of stationing we are aware of evidence contrary to our plea. We therefore request that the stationing of married ministerial couples be seen as a stationing priority, thus enabling such couples to fulfil their ministries either in the same Circuit, or nearby or preferably adjoining Circuits.

We ask Conference to direct the Stationing Matching Group to affirm the guidance set out in CPD Book VI section 3 and to

58. Memorials to the Conference

ensure that no policy decision is made in stationing which would undermine clause 1 in particular.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Stockton Circuit for expressing its concern. The Stationing Matching Group, the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee and the Stationing Committee greatly value the ministry of married couples as a gift to the Connexion. There has been an increase in the number of ministerial couples in recent years.

The Conference has been assured that the Stationing Matching Group, the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee and the Stationing Committee all affirm the Guidance set out in CPD Book VI section 3, including that in clause 1.

There are clear protocols agreed by the Stationing Committee which govern the stationing of married couples. They recognise the added complexity of their stationing requirements and the need for special consideration to be given to them both in the direct stationing of deacons and probationers and in the matching of presbyters.

M2 Support for Local Preachers

The Stokesley (13/5) Circuit Meeting (Present: 35. Voting: unanimous) regrets the considerable reduction in connexional support for local preachers and worship leaders.

The Methodist Conference is requested to direct the Methodist Council to review

its provision to ensure adequate support for local preachers and worship leaders in view of the major contribution made by them to the worship and life of the Methodist Church.

Reply

The Conference assures the Stokesley Circuit that there has not been a considerable reduction in the connexional support for local preachers and worship leaders as a result of the Team Focus process. The support is now provided in a different way. Supporting these important roles is a key function of the Discipleship and Ministries Cluster in the Connexional Team.

The Methodist Council and the Connexional Leaders' Forum have, during the course of this year, discussed the importance of the ministry of local preachers and worship leaders within the life of the Methodist Church. Both bodies have highlighted the need for developments in the nature of connexional support offered to these ministries and identified specific areas for further work. These areas include:

- ∞ initial learning and development for those seeking accreditation as local preachers or seeking to be commissioned as worship leaders, including the modification or replacement of the *Faith & Worship* course, the validation of alternative courses, and the continuing provisions made for accreditation of prior experience and learning;
- ∞ delivery mechanisms for initial

and continuing learning and development, including the role of the new Regional Training Networks;

- ∞ suitable ecumenical contexts for initial and continuing learning and development; and
- ∞ the mechanisms for acknowledging and celebrating the ministry of local preachers and worship leaders.

Work has already begun by the Connexional Team and will continue during the next connexional year. It will involve detailed consultation throughout the connexion.

The Conference therefore refers the memorial to the Methodist Council for consideration and initial report to the Conference in 2010 in the context of this wider work.

M3 Local Preachers' Sunday

The Rugby and Daventry (23/14) Circuit Meeting (Present: 43. Voting: 39 for, 1 against) request that Standing Orders should include the requirement for all Methodist Circuits to designate one Sunday in the year as Local Preachers' Sunday. This is in keeping with the Resolution of the Methodist Conference in 1963, which subsequently produced agreement between the Local Preachers' Department and the LPMMA (now replaced by LWPT) for an annual Local Preachers' Sunday, for which combined leaflets were consequently produced.

This specific requirement is needed to celebrate and encourage the work of local preachers and worship leaders. The

date of Local Preachers' Sunday is to be chosen as convenient to the local Circuit.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Rugby and Daventry Circuit for their memorial.

The Methodist Council and the Connexional Leaders' Forum have, during the course of this year, discussed the importance of the ministry of local preachers and worship leaders within the life of the Methodist Church. Both bodies have highlighted the need for developments in the nature of connexional support offered to these ministries and identified specific areas for further work.

One of these areas is the mechanisms for acknowledging and celebrating the ministry of local preachers and worship leaders. Work has already begun by the Connexional Team and will continue during the next connexional year. It will involve detailed consultation throughout the connexion.

Mindful of this ongoing work, the Conference refers the memorial to the Methodist Council for consideration and initial report to the Conference in 2010.

M4 Faith & Worship Course

The Holsworthy (24/11) Circuit Meeting (Present: 28. Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference to direct the Local Preachers' Office to reconsider the *Faith & Worship* course as being the only course of training for Local Preachers within the Methodist Church.

58. Memorials to the Conference

Our concerns are as follows:

- ∞ the course is extremely academic in character and precludes some people who might otherwise make excellent preachers;
- ∞ there is an assumption that 'one size fits all'; individuals are all different in the way they learn and grow;
- ∞ the course is very time consuming, demanding much from people who already work long and difficult hours;
- ∞ at present there is an inadequate way of recognising and crediting 'accredited prior achievement'; and
- ∞ the current course seems to be far removed from our original Methodist tradition in terms of call and vocation.

It is our conviction that at times *Faith & Worship* expects far too much of some people who feel a call towards being a local preacher.

In the light of this we ask that the Local Preachers' Office consider the possibility of replacing *Faith & Worship* with another, alternative, course for those who sense the call of God to local preaching, but for whom *Faith & Worship* is not the most suitable course. This would provide two alternative courses for local preachers in training. The decision as to which course was most suitable for which local preacher in training ought to be the responsibility of the Circuit Local Preachers Meeting, following consultation with the local preacher in training.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Circuit for their memorial.

The Methodist Council and the Connexional Leaders' Forum have, during the course of this year, discussed the importance of the ministry of local preachers and worship leaders within the life of the Methodist Church. Both bodies have highlighted the need for developments in the nature of connexional support offered to these ministries and identified specific areas for further work.

These areas include:

- ∞ initial learning and development for those seeking accreditation as local preachers or seeking to be commissioned as worship leaders, including the modification or replacement of the *Faith & Worship* course, the validation of alternative courses, and the continuing provisions made for accreditation of prior experience and learning;
- ∞ delivery mechanisms for initial and continuing learning and development, including the role of the new Regional Training Networks; and
- ∞ suitable ecumenical contexts for initial and continuing learning and development.

Work has already begun by the Connexional Team and will continue during the next connexional year. It will involve detailed consultation throughout the connexion.

The Conference therefore refers the memorial to the Methodist Council for consideration and initial report to the Conference in 2010 in the context of this wider work.

M5 Contemporary Worship and Faith & Worship Course

The Nottingham East (22/3) Circuit Meeting (Present: 51. Voting: unanimous) requests that the Connexion reviews and modifies local preacher training on worship, and the material available for training worship leaders, to recognise the fact that in the majority of growing Methodist churches, the traditional hymn-based service structure is no longer the norm (and should not be taught as the norm). Detailed instruction in the theory and practice of contemporary worship should be taught to preachers and worship leaders as a valid alternative ‘mindset’ and methodology.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Nottingham East Circuit for their memorial.

The Methodist Council and the Connexional Leaders’ Forum have, during the course of this year, discussed the importance of the ministry of local preachers and worship leaders within the life of the Methodist Church. Both bodies have highlighted the need for developments in the nature of connexional support offered to these ministries and identified specific areas for further work. These areas include:

- ∞ the role of local preachers and worship leaders in nurturing and enabling fresh ways of being Church.
- ∞ initial learning and development for those seeking accreditation as local preachers or seeking to be

commissioned as worship leaders, including the modification or replacement of the *Faith & Worship* course, the validation of alternative courses and the continuing provisions made for accreditation of prior experience and learning;

- ∞ continuing learning and development for local preachers and worship leaders;
- ∞ delivery mechanisms for initial and continuing learning and development, including the role of the new Regional Training Networks;
- ∞ suitable ecumenical contexts for initial and continuing learning and development; and
- ∞ the links between the ministry of local preachers and worship leaders on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the ministries of presbyters and deacons within circuits.

Work has already begun by the Connexional Team and will continue during the next connexional year. It will involve detailed consultation throughout the connexion.

Mindful of this ongoing work, the Conference refers the memorial to the Methodist Council for consideration and initial report to the Conference in 2010.

M6 Faith & Worship Course

The Nottingham East (22/3) Circuit Meeting (Present: 51. Voting: unanimous) requests that the Connexion reviews the syllabus of *Faith & Worship*, with a view to a more flexible and modular approach where some core subjects are required and

58. Memorials to the Conference

others can be selected from a 'menu' and credits can be gained from in-depth study.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as M5.

M7 Timing of Sabbaticals

The South Ribble (21/10) Circuit Meeting (Present: 38. Voting: 37 for, 1 against) draws the attention of the Conference to the issue of the spacing of sabbaticals generously allocated to ministers. The South Ribble Circuit proposes amending Standing Order 744(3) which makes provision for the years in which sabbaticals may be taken. Currently the S.O. reads, *"...the years in which sabbaticals may be taken shall normally be the tenth and each seventh year of travel after it..."* The amendment would read, *"...the years in which sabbaticals may be taken shall normally be the **seventh** year and each seventh year of travel after it..."*.

Reply

The Conference thanks the South Ribble Circuit Meeting for its memorial.

Work is already being undertaken by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, the Diaconal Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee and within the Connexional Team on nurturing healthy working cultures for ministers, and especially supporting ministers in their first appointment. The provision of training in supervision techniques for all superintendent ministers

in circuits to which probationer ministers are to be stationed has been one component of this ongoing work.

Mindful of this ongoing work, the Conference refers the memorial to the Methodist Council for consideration and report to the Conference in 2010.

M8 Timing of Sabbaticals

The Bolton and Rochdale Synod (R) (Present: 125. Voting: 102 for, 2 against) draws attention to the fact that Standing Order 744 (3) states that *"... the years in which sabbaticals may be taken shall normally be the tenth and each seventh year of travel after it"* We believe that ministers should be allowed to take a sabbatical after seven years of ministry. This view is based on the experience and advice of the District Sabbaticals Advisory Group.

Whilst we acknowledge that a sabbatical may be taken a year earlier in special circumstances, we believe that the 'ten year rule' should be abolished, thereby allowing ministers to take a sabbatical after their first **seven** years of ministry. Our thinking is as follows:

1. A considerable adjustment to a different pattern of life needs to be made when one becomes a minister. We argue that the oasis of reflection and recuperation offered by a sabbatical should be taken earlier rather than later. Recent statistics showing the number who leave the ministry in their second appointment support this view.

2. Given the average age of entrance to the ministry, some are fortunate to have one sabbatical before retirement if they have to wait ten years.

Our thinking reflects our conviction that sabbaticals are not only good for the ministry but also the local and wider church.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as M7.

M9 Use of AD and BC

The Newcastle District Synod (R) (Present: 201. Voting: 136 for, 38 against) is not ashamed to own that Jesus is Lord of all, including the world of academic history.

We deplore the current trend to replace AD (Anno Domini - Year of our Lord) and BC (before Christ) with the secular alternatives CE (Common Era) and BCE (Before Common Era). This is an attempt to write Christ out of history, and is patronising to other religions who have no problem with Christians proclaiming what they believe. The Newcastle Synod therefore requests the Methodist Conference to call upon all universities and academic institutions to revert to using AD and BC.

Even if this call falls upon deaf ears, the Newcastle Synod urges the Methodist Conference to take responsibility for all new publications issued in the name of Methodism, and to direct that they be unashamedly Christian and always use

AD and BC. This matter should not be left to the whims of individual editors. In particular, reprints of the *Faith & Worship* training course should stop using CE and BCE, because it makes no sense for Methodism to publish a course which is designed to train people to preach that "Jesus is Lord", if that course itself is not prepared to do so.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Newcastle Synod for its memorial and notes that the House Style 2009 document for the Connexional Team specifies that AD and BC shall be used, and contains the explicit instruction 'Do not use BCE or CE'.

However, the Conference recognises that there has in the past been a variety of practice, and some Methodist Church publications including *Faith & Worship* have used BCE and CE, in common with current academic practice. The Conference agrees that there should be a consistent practice within Church publications, and asks Methodist Publishing to ensure that new print runs of all established material should adjust this usage to AD and BC, as an appropriate practice for a body confessing Christian faith.

The Conference however does not agree to call upon all universities and academic institutions to revert to using AD and BC, as it believes that such a campaign at this time would be likely to be received merely with irritation by many scholars of a variety of faiths or none, and would thereby fail to commend the lordship of Christ to the secular world in a compelling way.

58. Memorials to the Conference

The Conference accepts the memorial in respect of its own practice, but declines the memorial in respect of seeking to change the practice of others.

M10 Compulsory sex education in Schools

The Alfreton (Watchorn) (22/10) Circuit Meeting (Present: 7. Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference to review and reject the statement by the Press Office dated 23 October 2008 regarding compulsory sex education in Schools ie Methodist Church welcomes compulsory education in schools about sex and relationships.

The effect of this legislation is to take away from Christian parents the right to remove their children from school sex education classes even when what is being taught is clearly contrary to the Christian values that they themselves hold and wish to pass on to their children. We are sure that the Church would not want to undermine those parents, but rather support them in the weighty responsibility they have in the light of Jesus' teaching, "whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." Matt 18: 6 (ESV).

Reply

The Conference thanks the Alfreton Circuit for their memorial but notes that the press release was issued according to the agreed procedures for speaking for the Methodist Church. It was authorised by a Senior Manager after consultation

with other colleagues as being not contrary to any statement of the Methodist Church and being coherent with agreed Methodist positions. The Sex and Relationship Education Policy of the Board of Management for Methodist Residential Schools was consulted.

Furthermore, the Conference notes that at the time of the press release, the matter of the parental right to withdraw had not been determined by the Government, but had been made the subject of a study as to whether this right should or should not be retained. The proposal now is that the parental right to withdraw their children from sex and relationship lessons is retained.

However, the Conference believes that ignorance in the area of sex and relationships is not a good preparation for young people to live in a culture which is highly sexualised, and would therefore encourage high quality education for all school students about sex and relationships.

The Conference would wish to support and not to undermine parents who wish to pass on Christian values to their children, but would encourage parents to take the opportunities offered by schools to understand and discuss what their children will be taught, and to reassure themselves that the discussion of values and moral judgements, the freedom to ask questions and the right of students to hold a stance consistent with Christian or other religious teaching will be included along with robust information.

The Conference declines the memorial.

M11 Membership of Church Councils by Circuit Meeting Employees

The Romsey (26/8) Circuit Meeting (Present: 28. Vote: 28 for, 0 against) invites the Conference to amend Standing Order 610 4(vii) by adding the words '**or the Circuit Meeting**'.

Rationale:

The seven churches in the Romsey Circuit have been dismayed to find that, as a result of amendments made to SO 610 by the 2008 Conference, as a part of a revision of Standing Orders relating to lay employment, the Circuit Pastoral Assistant, Youth Worker and Admin Assistant are no longer eligible to serve as full members of their Church Councils as was the case under the earlier version of SO 610. This is because they are employed by the Circuit Meeting. The Circuit created these lay posts as a means of resourcing and supporting the day to day ministry and mission of its various churches. Each of the three employees is regularly and directly engaged in undertaking work on behalf of and with the various churches. Their contributions as Church Council members to the decision-making and oversight processes have previously been greatly valued and affirmed. The recent change in Standing Orders has left our churches impoverished.

Reply

The Conference recognises the concerns of the Romsey Circuit Meeting. The Law and Polity Committee has already undertaken work to amend Standing Orders in a way which meets these concerns and reports this elsewhere in the

Agenda.

The reply of the Conference is therefore found in the resolutions of the Conference.

M12 Membership of Church Councils by Circuit Meeting employees

The Eastleigh Circuit Meeting (26/2) (Present: 23. Voting: unanimous) invites Conference to amend Standing Order 610 4(vii) by adding the words '**or the Circuit Meeting**'.

Rationale:

The amendments made to SO 610 by the 2008 Conference, as a part of a revision of Standing Orders relating to lay employment, have meant that lay members of circuit staff teams who are designated by the Circuit Meeting to work primarily in one or more of its churches are now unable to serve in that capacity as full voting members of the Church Councils of those churches as was the case under the earlier version of SO 610.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as M11.

M13 Calculation of Circuit Assessments

The Ryton and Prudhoe (20/4) Circuit Meeting (Present: 20. Voting: unanimous) asks the Conference to note that:
(i) Resolution 35/4 of the Conference of 2000 responded to the 1999 Conference Report *Membership and Christian Discipleship* by requiring all Circuits to have ceased using membership as the

58. Memorials to the Conference

sole basis for the apportionment of circuit assessment by September 2005;

(ii) in setting out the reasoning for Resolution 35/4 and a proposed timetable the 2000 Conference noted 'It is not at this stage however considered that the issue requires to be enshrined in Standing Orders';

(iii) some Circuits are still declining by majority vote of the Circuit Meeting, despite requests from individual local churches in those Circuits, to implement Resolution 35/4, on the basis that it is not yet enshrined in Standing Orders;

and therefore requests that the Conference respond to this lack of clarity and this disregard of a Conference resolution by enshrining that resolution in Standing Orders at the earliest opportunity, and therefore ensuring it is no longer capable of being presumed to be subject to the discretion of the Circuit Meeting, contrary to the wishes of the Conference.

Reply

The Conference of 2000 resolved that from the connexional year beginning 1 September 2003 all circuits should begin to collect assessments from Local Churches in a way that does not apportion the amounts solely according to membership (in other words, membership could be a criterion, but not the only criterion). The expectation was that any transitional arrangements would be completed by 1 September 2005. The Conferences of 2001 and 2002 received reports that leaflets giving

advice on this matter had been sent to all superintendents, circuit treasurers and district treasurers in 2001.

A Conference resolution of this type is mandatory, and does not necessarily require to be enshrined in Standing Orders. In this case, however, it might assist the various bodies in the connexion to remember and comply with the requirement if it is mentioned in Standing Orders.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial, and directs the Methodist Council to remind all churches, Circuits and Districts of the requirement, and directs the Law and Polity Committee to produce a Standing Order to encapsulate its substance.

M14 Preaching by those holding sexist and racist views

The Manchester and Stockport Synod (M) (Present: 39. Voting: unanimous) rejoices in Methodism's ethos as a broad church and as a church which is generous in hospitality offered to those of other traditions. That said there are certain Methodist convictions which are non-negotiable – principally our commitment to inclusivity and equality with respect to race and gender.

The synod is disquieted to learn of the practice of giving a high profile place in a Methodist pulpit to those who are publically known strongly to challenge this inclusivity: for instance where the name of the person invited is strongly linked to the belief that women should be excluded from leadership and teaching positions simply

by virtue of their gender. This is offensive to the Methodist conscience, damages morale and the church's reputation, and undermines the place of women within the church. It is a form of institutional sexism which is inimical to a culture and ethos of acceptance and inclusivity. It consequently urges Conference to introduce a new Standing Order – or amend an existing one - along the following lines:

'It is the responsibility of superintendent ministers to endeavour to ensure that those who teach or preach in Methodist Churches do not hold convictions contrary to Methodism's non-negotiable stance on racism and sexism.'

Reply

The Conference is grateful to the Manchester and Stockport Synod for the opportunity to reaffirm its ethos as a broad church that is generous to those of other traditions, and its commitment to inclusivity and equality with respect to race and gender.

With regard to preaching and teaching, the Conference notes that what matters is not the known or suspected personal views of the preacher or teacher but what that person says publicly in teaching and preaching. Standing Orders and the Model Trusts state that managing trustees and the Superintendent have a general responsibility to ensure that teaching and preaching offered in Methodist premises at non-Methodist public religious meetings does not offend Methodist doctrinal standards. Local Preachers and Worship Leaders are required to speak

in accordance with those standards. Ministers and deacons admitted into full connexion or recognised and regarded as such and probationer ministers and deacons are *"required to uphold the authority of the Conference in the life of the Church and to observe its discipline. To this end they shall study its proceedings, loyally carry out its directions and make its decisions known..."* (S.O. 740(2) and (3)).

Public preaching or teaching in the name of the Methodist Church in deliberate contradiction of the Conference's policies of inclusivity and equality with respect to race and gender should therefore be the subject of a complaint against the person concerned, either on the grounds of failing to uphold our doctrines or discipline, or of conduct unbecoming of someone performing a public office in the Methodist Church.

The Conference therefore judges that it is not necessary to amend the current Standing Orders.

M15 Confidentiality and Prayer

The Dorking and Horsham (36/10) Circuit Meeting (Present: 45. Voting: unanimous) recognises the responsibility of ministers and lay people in the Methodist Church to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality in all matters relating to church life. The report *With Integrity and Skill: Confidentiality in the Methodist Church* adopted by the Conference in 2008 is a helpful contribution to understanding our duty to preserve confidentiality in all areas of church life.

58. Memorials to the Conference

However, this circuit meeting is concerned that the Church's ministry of prayer may be seriously undermined by the restrictions imposed in the report. *The Guidelines for Good Practice in Confidentiality and Pastoral Care* state that: 'People's names and situations should only be mentioned in public worship and contexts of open prayer if they have given express permission. This applies to prayers written in books, hung on prayer trees and passed on to prayer chains and networks' (§12.9).

Whatever the constitutional and legal status of such advice, it is to be hoped that all Methodists will conscientiously follow guidelines set by the Conference in the interest of good practice in confidentiality and pastoral care. However, guidelines that are impracticable cease to be useful in the life of the Church and so become generally ignored contrary to the desire and intention of the Conference.

These particular guidelines leave individuals leading prayer in public worship no discretion to respond to particular situations. Examples can be given of pastoral situations where congregations in our circuit would have been deeply upset by a failure to pray for named individuals, though it was impossible to secure their 'express permission'.

Equally, since there is no way of ascertaining whether a prayer request placed on a prayer tree has the 'express permission' of any named individual the guidelines in effect exclude this form of prayer from Methodist churches.

In view of its concerns, the Dorking and Horsham Circuit Meeting respectfully asks the Conference to:

- (1) clarify its intentions in directing that the guidelines concerning public prayer be printed in the *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*;
- (2) reconsider whether these guidelines are not too restrictive and allow insufficient discretion to those leading public worship;
- (3) revise the guidelines to take account of the concerns expressed in this memorial;
- (4) provide appropriate training material for those leading prayers in Methodist worship so that they are aware of the pastoral sensitivities involved when individuals are named; and
- (5) reaffirm the Church's commitment to corporate prayer at the heart of Methodist worship as an effective means of grace through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Reply

The Conference is grateful to the Dorking and Horsham Circuit for the opportunity to affirm its commitment to the importance of corporate prayer at the heart of Methodist worship, and of the efficacy of prayer as a means of grace. That prayer may be offered in a variety of ways, including words and silence. With regard to intercessory prayer, the latter may be a particularly appropriate way of proceeding,

whereas pastoral sensitivities may be raised by the former.

These issues are explored in paragraphs 8.15-17 of the report *With Integrity and Skill* which underlie number 9 in the *Guidelines for Good Practice in Confidentiality and Pastoral Care* (as it appears in the *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*) to which the Circuit refers. Those paragraphs are as follows.

8.15 *Prayer Support*

The caring ministry of the Church includes and is supported by a ministry of prayer. Individual prayer offered for a person in a time of need is one expression of the prayer ministry of the whole people of God. There are times when it is entirely appropriate for public prayer in church or in prayer groups to include mention of the needs of individuals. However this is only appropriate if the person in question has given permission for their situation to be prayed for – they should always be able to dictate the boundaries of information offered in prayer. They may be happy to have their name mentioned but not the details of their situation. When seeking permission for prayer to be offered for an individual the pastoral worker should identify to that individual the group within which prayer will be offered.

8.16 *It is increasingly the case that when a preacher or worship leader leads intercessions they ask the congregation for prayer concerns. This can be an occasion when it*

is difficult for confidentiality to be maintained unless boundaries are suggested to the congregation (eg. topics for prayer are welcome but not named individuals). Written prayer requests in books that are brought forward during the service can also be a means of breaching confidentiality. Some people offer prayer support to individuals through prayer 'chains' or networks. Such an extended community of prayer, whilst an important ministry, is a place where the boundaries of confidentiality can be unclear. A member of the network may know an individual that they are asked to pray for even though that person would not wish their story to be known. A pastoral worker should ensure that the permission of the person is sought before their story is passed on and should give a clear description of the nature of the prayer network.

8.17 *If people have given clear permission that they and their situation can be named in church or to a prayer network that is acceptable. In any other situation we might assume that God knows our needs and the needs of others in more detail than we ever can and that to offer themes of prayer without naming names is an effective prayer. When inviting participation in intercessory prayer, the practice of praying for our own concerns in silence allows a corporate context for the offering of personal prayer.*

58. Memorials to the Conference

The Conference reaffirms the spirit and substance of those paragraphs. Prayer is not offered to prevent a congregation being upset, but for the glory of God and the benefit of others. There is a need for careful discernment of what individuals wish or do not wish to be disclosed about themselves, particularly if they are not in a position to be asked directly, such as after an accident. The Conference therefore judges that the guidelines do not need revision.

The Conference recognises that these are matters of great sensitivity. In directing that the guidelines be published in the Guidance section of CPD it intended that they set the norm for practice throughout the Connexion. The Conference therefore directs the Methodist Council to ensure that appropriate material about these matters be included in the initial and further training of all who lead worship.

M16 Legislative Burden on Voluntary Organisations

The Rotherham & Dearne Valley (25/17) Circuit Meeting (Present: 74. Voting: 70 for, 4 against) perceives that society's move to a claim and compensation mentality has created legislative responses (often under the heading of Health and Safety) which are out of proportion with the benefits they achieve. Because legislative measures introduced usually involve costs both of a financial and human resources nature, they are seriously impairing the ability of voluntary sector organisations to realise the full potential of the contribution they make to society in this country and others abroad. We request the Conference to urge

the Government to address the increasing burden being put on voluntary organisations which is affecting their ability to focus and address identified needs in community situations.

Reply

The Conference notes the concerns of the Rotherham and Dearne Valley Circuit Meeting and recognises that legislation in recent years has tended to place a greater burden on the voluntary sector, including churches, particularly in relation to charity trusteeship.

The well-publicised compensation culture is naturally a concern to many, though, in the Methodist context, this has not been particularly evident. There is much helpful guidance for charity trustees which can assist Methodist trustees to adopt best practices. Specialist insurance is provided in church policies to help when things do go wrong, inadvertently, and when trustees have acted in good faith.

Health and Safety concerns can impose additional requirements on trustees. In the case of the Methodist Church, however, this has not generally been seen to be costly and there is little evidence of cases where Health and Safety issues are 'out of proportion' to the benefits they achieve.

The Conference acknowledges the relevance of the Circuit Meeting's memorial though it also believes that the requirements and guidance of such legislation do help focus Methodist trustees on their specific responsibilities. It further believes that the appropriate

way to express concerns of Methodist bodies and many local volunteers is via the Churches Legislation Advisory Service (CLAS) and asks Methodist representatives on CLAS to ensure these concerns are noted and discussed with other denominations so that a collective case can be made to the relevant government departments in appropriate cases.

M17 Complaints and Discipline

The Bromley (35/42) Circuit Meeting (Present: 24. Voting: 22 for, 1 against) requests that where a minister or deacon is suspended pending consideration of a disciplinary charge, any such disciplinary charge should be presented to that minister/deacon not more than 6 weeks from the date of suspension; and where a hearing is required, the initial hearing should take place not more than 6 weeks from the date on which the disciplinary charge is presented to the individual.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Bromley Circuit and takes very seriously the concerns which are raised by this memorial, recognising that they have pastoral implications for both the person suspended and the Circuit in which the presbyter or deacon is stationed.

The revision of the complaints and discipline procedures approved by the Conference of 2008 introduced an additional number of clearly defined timescales at various stages in the procedures. One of the objectives of the changes approved by the Conference was

to ensure that cases were dealt with more quickly. In earlier years approval of the reduction in the size of the Connexional Discipline Committee had helped to reduce the time taken in arranging hearings. However, the provisions of such timescales in the Standing Orders often have to exist alongside a number of external and internal factors which can lead to delays. For example, where a criminal investigation is in place it would generally be inappropriate for a charge to be formulated prior to the conclusion of that investigation. Whilst every effort is made to encourage investigative and prosecuting authorities to deal with the matter as quickly as possible, such approaches rarely achieve the desired aim. Occasionally the ill health of a presbyter or deacon can cause a delay in the first stage of a hearing, and the very proper need to ensure that a committee is appropriately constituted to deal with the particularities of a case can take time as demands are made on people who give freely of their time to serve the church in this way.

The Conference believes that to add even tighter timetables to the complaints and discipline procedure would risk imposing unachievable aims and would not be helpful at this time. Assured that those responsible for the administration of the complaints and discipline process keep this matter under review, the Conference therefore declines the memorial.

M18 Authorisation to preside at Communion

The Erewash Valley (22/20) Circuit Meeting (Present: 28. Voting: 24 for, 0

58. Memorials to the Conference

against) in view of the declining number of Presbyters within the Connexion requests the Conference to explore the possibility of a more flexible system of local preachers being authorised to administer Holy Communion.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Erewash Valley Circuit for raising the issue of the authorisation of lay people to preside at the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In recent years this has been the subject of a number of memorials, and has also been addressed in two Connexional reports; *Authorisation to Preside at the Lord's Supper* (1996) and *His Presence Makes the Feast* (2003) and in a chapter of the First Interim Report of the Joint Implementation Commission, *In the Spirit of the Covenant* (2005). In its replies to memorials and in these reports the Conference has reiterated the position set out in clause 4 of the Deed of Union and interpreted by SO 011 and Book VI Part 8 of CPD, namely, that presidency is an essential part of what a presbyter is, and that it is a duty not a right. Since the Conference sets apart its presbyters for the ministry of word and sacraments, the only criterion under which a lay person, deacon or probationer may be authorised to conduct a service celebrating the Lord's Supper is where "a significant number of church members or Christians in the local community is deprived of reasonably frequent and regular celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper through lack of ministers".

Any extension of authorisation, whether to probationers, pioneers, Local Preachers or others, needs to be in harmony with the Methodist Church's understanding of presbyteral presidency, an understanding reflecting our place in the universal Church of Christ and respecting our Covenant with the Church of England. The Methodist Diaconal Order continues to resist deacons receiving such authorisations, save only in extreme circumstances and even then after careful consideration, because they fully recognise and affirm the ministry of word and sacrament that belongs to presbyters.

The Conference acknowledges that its guidance on this issue is now a decade old, and recognises the increasing fluidity of presbyteral roles within the Methodist Church and the mission imperative incumbent on all Circuits. It therefore directs the Faith and Order Committee to review the interpretation of Clause 4 of the Deed of Union found in SO 011 and the Guidance material found in Book VI Part 8 in the light of previous reports and memorials on this issue. Recognising the practical and ecumenical dimensions of the subject, and the anomaly of deacons receiving lay authorisations, the Conference further directs that this review should include consultation with the Authorisations Committee, the Joint Implementation Commission and the Methodist Diaconal Order.

The Conference therefore refers the Memorial to the Faith and Order Committee for report to the Conference of 2010.

M19 Authorisation to Preside at Communion

The Kent Thameside (36/21) Circuit Meeting (Present 51. Voting: unanimous) celebrates the good news that many lay-led fresh expressions of church are growing and forming Christian community together. In view of the challenging and culturally complex situations of these cutting edge projects, it is desirable that the fresh expression pioneer be equipped and affirmed by the Methodist Church to offer a full sacramental life to these developing and fragile communities.

In light of the drive towards innovative fresh expressions of church and the necessity of pioneering leaders in the outworking of this priority (many of whom are lay people who have no explicit call to formal ordination within the Methodist Church), the Kent Thameside Circuit requests that Conference reconsiders the grounds on which a dispensation to preside at the Lord's Supper is granted. In particular, it requests that that mission as well as pastoral deprivation be considered a valid basis on which a dispensation could be granted, subject to the proper consideration of the District Policy Committee.

The Kent Thameside Circuit therefore requests that a report examining this issue be brought to the Conference of 2010 for its consideration.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as M18.

M20 Authorisation to preside at Communion

The North Lancashire Synod (R) (Present: 143. Voting: unanimous)

- ∞ recognising the great variety of contexts for ministry and mission into which many presbyteral probationers are now rightly stationed; and
- ∞ noting that the *Criteria for Authorising Persons other than Ministers to Preside at the Lord's Supper* (CPD pp.825-826) were last reviewed more than a decade ago, when 'Probationer Appointments' were assumed to fit a relatively standard circuit appointment model,

requests that the Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to review the current criteria and suggest what changes, if any, should be made in the light of the range of new situations within which our presbyteral probationers are now helping to lead our work, witness and worship.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as M18.

M21 City of Sanctuary

The Sheffield District Synod (R) (Present: 173. Voting: 173 for, 0 against)

- ∞ recognises that the City of Sanctuary movement is now a national grassroots movement, offering an opportunity to work with local people of different backgrounds to create a culture of welcome and hospitality

58. Memorials to the Conference

- for refugees and asylum seekers; and
- ∞ applauds the lead given by Sheffield, and those cities which are now working towards the City of Sanctuary vision and designation.

It therefore requests that Conference takes appropriate steps nationally to inform, support and encourage all Districts, where they have not already done so, to support their relevant cities in the process towards the designation 'City of Sanctuary'.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Sheffield Synod for its Memorial and directs the Methodist Council to ensure that information is made available on the City of Sanctuary movement to churches, circuits and districts.

The Conference accepts the Memorial.

M22 Cities of Sanctuary

The London Synod (R) (Present: 179. Voting: 176 in favour, 1 against) supports the principle of creating a grassroots network of Cities of Sanctuary, working with local people to create a culture of hospitality and welcome for refugees and asylum seekers.

The Synod congratulates the Methodists in Sheffield for their key role in creating the first UK City of Sanctuary and commends those cities working towards designating themselves in this way.

It therefore requests that the Conference takes appropriate steps nationally to inform, support and encourage all Districts, where they have not already done so, to support their relevant cities in the process towards becoming Cities of Sanctuary.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as M21.

M23 Broadcasting by the BBC

The East Anglia Synod (R) (Present: 155. Voting: unanimous) believes in the importance of high-quality religious broadcasting and would like to express gratitude for the outstanding work of the BBC in the field of Religion and Ethics.

We share the concerns of The Methodist Church expressed to the Director General of the BBC in a letter dated 7th February 2009 and the wider public over recent structural changes to the BBC's Religion and Ethics team and are concerned that these changes should benefit, rather than diminish, the creativity and scope of the team's work.

This Synod therefore requests that the Methodist Conference of 2009;

- ∞ **affirms** the valuable and professional work of the BBC's Religion and Ethics Team and urges that the Christian representation on this team should be maintained;
- ∞ **encourages** the Methodist people to take an active interest in religious broadcasting, engaging in

dialogue and sharing their views on programmes with those involved in their production;

- ∞ **asks** the Connexional Team's Media Service to monitor the situation, to seek to work closely with the BBC in a variety of contexts and to continue to offer support and encouragement to BBC staff; and
- ∞ **recognises** that there has been significant Methodist representation on and engagement with the Churches Media Council, and asks that this work continues with the Church and Media Network, which will be established from 1st September 2009.

Reply

The Conference thanks the East Anglia Synod for its concerns and shares its praise for the work of BBC Religion and Ethics. The work of the BBC Religion and Ethics department – and its predecessor departments – has been a great benefit both to Christians in Britain and in raising and discussing matters relevant to all faiths.

The Methodist Church, especially the Media Service in the Connexional Team, deals regularly with BBC Religion and Ethics, as well as other parts of the BBC such as News and Current Affairs and regional and local radio. The Connexional Team also regularly meets with senior BBC staff, mainly through the Churches Media Council, and this will continue with its successor the Church and Media Network, which the Team will continue to support and be active members of.

The letter to the Director General of 7th February came in response to structural changes to the BBC that many people feared could lead to a downgrading of the importance of Religion and Ethics within the BBC. The Media Service had an immediate response from a senior BBC executive who pointed out that the changes could potentially benefit Religion and Ethics.

BBC Religion and Ethics is not intended to be a representative body, and the quality of its programming reflects that it attracts skilled broadcasting professionals who have an interest in religion, rather than representatives of any particular faith.

The Conference accepts the concerns raised in this memorial. It encourages the Media Service to continue to work closely with the BBC and encourages the Methodist people to continue to take an active interest in religious broadcasting.

M24 Fund for World Mission

The Cornwall Synod (R) (Present: 63. Voting: 58 for, 3 against) is concerned at the apparent delays in banking cheques sent for the World Church Fund and in claiming income tax rebate, especially bearing in mind the great need of our overseas churches and the high interest rates in many countries overseas. It would expect cheques to be paid in within three working days of their receipt rather than two or three weeks, and income tax rebate to be claimed at least quarterly rather than annually. It asks for a clear statement of the policy of the Finance Department and of any improvements which are planned,

58. Memorials to the Conference

bearing in mind that our current financial crisis means that in many countries literally every penny counts.

Reply

The Conference agrees with the Synod on the importance of payments being received promptly into the Fund for World Mission (FWM). This can best be achieved by churches and Circuits utilising the existing facility for ordering their own dedicated FWM paying-in books. This allows local treasurers to pay cheques directly into the FWM at their local bank branch without the risk of possible fraud and delays incurred via the postal system.

Although arrangements for reclaiming gift aid will remain under review, the ability of the Fund for World Mission to make prompt payments is not influenced by this factor.

M25 Ministerial Stipends

The Rotherham and Dearne Valley (25/17) Circuit Meeting (Present: 74. Voting: 64 for, 5 against) respectfully requests that when considering ministerial stipends and associated costs, the current economic climate is considered and that its effect on the finances of members of the Methodist Church is not overlooked.

Reply

The Conference shares the concerns of the Circuit Meeting with regard to the effect of the current economic climate on the Church's ability to pay increased Ministerial Stipends and associated costs. Annual

increases are automatically linked to the state of the economy as they are calculated using a combination of the seasonally adjusted average earnings increase (AEI) and the Retail Price Index excluding mortgage interest (RPIX). In this way the economic circumstances are reflected in increases in ministerial stipends.

M26 Circuit Advance Funds

The North East Somerset and Bath (7/13) Circuit Meeting (Present: 71. Voting: unanimous) recognised that as a result of circuit amalgamations under the process of *Reconfiguring for Mission*, new larger Circuits can now draw less money in total from Circuit Advance Funds under the provisions of SO 955(2) than the total the previous could have drawn before merging.

The Circuit Meeting requests the Conference to consider ways of addressing this issue which will ensure that all Circuits have relatively equitable access to the funds held in Circuit Advance Funds for purposes of mission.

Reply

The Conference thanks the North East Somerset and Bath circuit meeting for its Memorial. The Conference made substantial revisions to Part 9 of CPD, as a result of which the distinction between Circuit Advance Funds and other money held by Circuits on the Model Trusts, was abolished and restrictions on the use of Model Trust money by the Circuit were reduced. The reply to the Memorial is therefore contained in the resolutions of the Conference.

M27 Circuit Advance Funds

The Harrow and Hillingdon (35/36) Circuit Meeting (Present: 62. Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference reconsider the way in which the levy is made on Circuit Advance Funds (CAFs) to resource District Advance Funds. Under SO 955 (6), Circuits contribute annually 2.5% of their advance fund up to £100,000 or the first £100,000, and 5% of their advance funds balances exceeding £100,000, to the District. Current low interest rates effectively penalise circuits with large CAFs even when they are actively considering ways to resource mission and ministry projects (which they cannot do all at once). In other words, the interest earned will be far less than the amount of levy to the district. The levy was set at a time when the bank interest rates were around 5-6%. That situation is no more and will take a long time, if at all, to come back to those levels.

Our suggestion is that the percentage for the annual levy should more equitably be pegged to the average of bank base rate or the London Inter-Bank Offered Rate (LIBOR) at the year end. By relating it to the bank base rates or LIBOR, the fluctuations between the interest-earning capacity of the funds and the levy will be avoided. In addition, we think that there should be a cap of say £25,000 on the annual levy.

Reply

The Conference recognises the concerns of the Harrow & Hillingdon Circuit Meeting and refers the memorial to the Council for

further investigation and report back to the Conference of 2010.

M28 Candidating

The Scotland Synod (M) (Present: 33. Voting: unanimous) requests that the Conference note its concerns about the processes used for candidates for the presbyteral and diaconate ministries in the current connexional year, and to help improve them for the future offers the following suggestions:

- (i) a presbyter be appointed to be responsible to Conference for the processes and to be readily available to offer advice to candidates and those carrying out the selection process for the presbyteral ministry;
- (ii) any conditions, in addition to a call to ministry, are required before the process may start, and which will be necessary to achieve for its successful completion, are clearly set out;
- (iii) only those things that can be reasonably expected of a candidate form part of what candidates are expected to do between the last date for the notification of potential candidature and the start of the assessment process; and
- (iv) that all candidates be assessed by an appropriate District Candidates Committee.

The following Memorial was also received

58. Memorials to the Conference

with the same text as above. The Conference adopts the same reply.

M29 Scotland Synod (R) (Present: 73. Voting: unanimous)

Reply

The Conference thanks the Scotland Synod for its memorial.

A Discernment and Selection Co-ordinator has been appointed to the Connexional Team, who is in fact a presbyter. The reconfigured Connexional Team is tasked with reviewing and recommending any changes to the relevant procedures. The Conference therefore refers the memorial to the Methodist Council for consideration in the context of that wider review.

M30 Methodist Ministers' Pension Fund

The Peak (25/13) Circuit Meeting (Present: 30. Voting: unanimous) recognises the legal requirement to take appropriate action to make good the £39.2m deficit on the Methodist Ministers' Pension Fund.

A number of churches in our Circuit are already struggling to meet their assessments, with the difficult economic crisis not giving us grounds for expectation of increases in our income. We desperately need to contain and wherever possible reduce our expenditure if we are to avoid church closures or staffing cuts or both. The prospect of substantial increases in circuit pension contributions can only make matters worse.

We request the Conference to note our concern and take the following actions:

- a) take all possible action to see whether or not there are any district or connexional Funds or reserves or assets that could be used rather than placing the burden on churches, via the assessment, to fund what is likely to be a major share of this deficit;
- b) if there are no other alternatives, then, as an emergency measure for the next two connexional years, permit Circuits to withdraw from their Circuit Advance Fund up to an additional £1,000 per year for each of their circuit ministers. Any Circuit not having sufficient funds should be permitted to apply to their District for assistance;
- c) close the existing Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme (MMPS) scheme from 31st August 2010, preserve all existing benefits and offer new ministers and deacons the option to join either a new defined contribution scheme, based upon a fair and reasonable fixed percentage contribution, or put an equivalent percentage into the person's existing personal pension plan; and
- d) reject any proposal to create a Pensions Reserve Fund by the use of Connexional Advance and Priority Funds.

Reply

The Conference notes the concerns of the Peak Circuit Meeting and recognises the need for a holistic approach to resolve the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme (MMPS) past service deficit and responds to the points raised as follows.

- a) Action has already been taken to establish where there are Connexional free reserves available. This found that there are no connexional free reserves available on the scale required to address the actuarial deficit.

Circuits are the effective 'employing bodies' and therefore have the responsibility to make appropriate contributions to the pension scheme on behalf of their minister(s). *The Mapping a Way Forward* process is helping Circuits to discern the appropriate structure for delivering mission in their locality and the Methodist Council has recognised that the cost of ministerial staff, including pension costs, will be a factor in this.

- b) The Conference notes that in response to other Memorials elsewhere in the Agenda, the Methodist Council will be reviewing the use of Circuit Advance Funds and District Advance Funds.
- c) Closing the MMPS would have no impact on the existing deficit of £39.2million which would still be payable since it relates to past service. The Conference draws the Circuit's attention to the report elsewhere in the Agenda from the

Methodist Council which proposes that a full review of benefits be performed for report to the Conference in 2010.

- d) The demographics of the membership of the MMPS make it possible that the deficit will be a feature of future triennial valuations. The majority of the Church's assets consist of property and the proposed Pension Reserve Fund is designed to direct a portion of these assets - when they are no longer required for buildings - into pension contributions in the future. This would reduce the risk of asking for large increases in pension contributions from Circuits after future valuations. The establishment of a Pension Reserve Fund would require a change in Standing Orders so that the Connexional Advance and Priority Fund can be used for this purpose.

The Conference therefore notes that action has already been taken on the lines set out in point a) of the Memorial; declines the specific proposal in point b); declines point c); and notes that the reply to point d) is contained in the resolutions of the Conference concerning the setting up of a Pensions Reserve Fund.

M31 Sale of Methodist Property to other Denominations

The Grimsby and Cleethorpes (17/5) Circuit Meeting (Present: 51. Voting: unanimous) expresses its gratitude that Model Trust 20 permits the sale of Methodist property to other denominations at an undervalue, on appropriate

occasions and under strict conditions.

The Circuit recognises that such sales should always remain exceptional. However, it considers that the present criteria are in some respects too restrictive in the present mission context. Now that the Methodist Church can no longer do everything or be present everywhere, we believe that it would be appropriate to be more ecumenically generous in these matters. In particular, it would be helpful if Managing Trustees were able to consider such sales in situations where they would allow the continuance of Christian worship and witness when the Methodist Church no longer has the human resources to do this. The current expectation that the selling and buying congregations will have a prior relationship with each other is a particular hindrance in this regard.

The Circuit therefore requests the Conference to direct the Methodist Council to reconsider the criteria under which a Model Trust 20 application for sale at an undervalue might be approved, in the light of the changing context of mission in Britain today.

Reply

The Conference notes the concern of the Grimsby and Cleethorpes Circuit Meeting and acknowledges that there is an important balance to be struck between the requirement for a flexible approach to mission, and protection of Methodist Church assets held under the Model Trusts.

The Conference wishes to ensure that such sales remain the exception, but

does not wish to discourage worthwhile applications from being submitted for consideration. Although it notes that it is not the case that the current expectation is that the selling and buying congregations will have a prior relationship, it refers the memorial to the Methodist Council in order to review the current policy and report to the Conference in 2010.

M32 Timings for the calculation of district contributions to the Methodist Church Fund

The York and Hull Synod (R) (Present: 155. Voting: 135 for, 4 against) urges Conference to direct the Support Services cluster of the Connexional Team to review the timings on which connexional charges for the Methodist Church Fund are calculated before being allocated to the Districts.

Reply

The Conference notes the desire of the York and Hull Synod for connexional assessment calculations to be based on the most accurate and up-to-date information available. It refers the memorial to the Methodist Council to initiate a feasibility study of the annual assessment process for report to the Conference no later than 2011.

M33 Pension provision for lay employees

The Liverpool Synod (R) (Present: TBC. Vote: 62 for, 16 against) in view of the wide disparity in pension provision for lay employees employed in local Circuits and

churches, in comparison with ordained ministers of the Methodist Church and with lay employees at Methodist Church House, the Liverpool District Synod requests that the Conference implement an immediate and urgent review of the Church's pension provision for all lay and ordained ministry, with a view to moving to equality of pension provision.

Reply

The Conference notes the concerns of the Liverpool Synod regarding pension provisions within the church for lay employees and ministers.

The Pension and Assurance Scheme for Lay Employees of the Methodist Church is open to all non-ordained employees of eligible Methodist bodies who are themselves eligible and have opted to become members of the scheme. The provision of pensions is related to the actual employing body for each individual and since the Methodist Church as a whole is not legally an employer it is impossible to administer a scheme on the basis that it is. Rather, individual Circuits and Districts as statutory employing bodies have the responsibility for pension provision for their employees.

New legislation regarding employers' responsibilities for pension provision will come into effect in April 2012. This will provide an appropriate opportunity for Methodist employing bodies to review the policies and practices in this area. It will be for this review process to determine the viability of achieving greater equality of pension provision between Methodist

employing bodies.

M34 Training and Support for Local Preachers

The Bristol District Synod (R) (Present: 125. Voting: unanimous) notes the recent changes of personnel and administration within the Connexional Team. In the light of the decisions a) to dispense with the dedicated post of Local Preachers' Secretary and b) to abandon a connexional training course for local preachers, the Synod requests the Connexional Team to reconsider the whole issue of training and support for local preachers by means of a thorough assessment of the impact of the changes on the Circuits. Without a nationally agreed system there will be problems when preachers re-locate and when there is any discussion with other denominations about preacher recognition. Despite the reassurances already given to preachers, the changes also appear to represent a lack of commitment to properly supporting our local preachers, without whose gifts and service the gospel would not be shared as widely as it is.

Reply

The Conference assures the Bristol District Synod that no proposal to abandon a connexional training course for local preachers is being considered by the Conference or the Methodist Council.

The Methodist Council and the Connexional Leaders' Forum have, however, during the course of this year,

58. Memorials to the Conference

discussed the importance of the ministry of local preachers and worship leaders within the life of the Methodist Church. Both bodies have highlighted the need for developments in the nature of connexional support offered to these ministries and identified specific areas for further work. These areas include:

- ∞ initial learning and development for those seeking accreditation as local preachers or seeking to be commissioned as worship leaders, including the modification or replacement of the *Faith & Worship* course, the validation of alternative courses and the provisions made for accreditation of prior experience and learning;
- ∞ delivery mechanisms for initial and continuing learning and development, including the role of the new Regional Training Networks;
- ∞ suitable ecumenical contexts for initial and continuing learning and development; and
- ∞ the mechanisms for acknowledging and celebrating the ministry of local preachers and worship leaders.

Work has already begun by the Connexional Team and will continue during the next connexional year. It will involve detailed consultation throughout the connexion.

The Conference therefore refers the Memorial to the Methodist Council for consideration and initial report to the Conference in 2010 in the context of this wider work.

M35 Accredited Preachers and Readers

of other churches

The Southampton Synod (R) (Present: 208. Voting: 206 for, 1 against) invites the Conference:

- a) to confirm that accredited and trained preachers and readers of other churches recognised by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland who wish to share their ministry on a regular basis at the invitation of the local circuit are to be welcomed and affirmed;
- b) to be more flexible in the way in which accredited preachers and Readers of other churches recognised by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland who transfer their membership to the Methodist Church, or who are received into 'extended membership' [under the provision of Clause 8 of the Deed of Union and Section 13 of CPD] can be admitted as local preachers.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Southampton Synod for its Memorial. The Conference is able to offer the confirmation requested, and is content that the provisions of Standing Orders 566A and 566B provide sufficient flexibility for the admission or authorisation of lay preachers and readers of other churches.

M36 Accredited Preachers and Readers of other Churches

The Romsey (26/8) Circuit Meeting

(Present: 28. Vote: unanimous) invites the Conference to be more flexible in the way in which accredited preachers and readers of other churches recognised by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland who transfer their membership to the Methodist Church, or who are received into 'extended membership' (under the provision of Clause 8 of the Deed of Union and Section 13 of CPD), can be admitted as local preachers.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Southampton Synod/Romsey Circuit for its Memorial. The Conference assures the Synod/Circuit that the maximum amount of flexibility is contained with Standing Orders 566A and 566B for the admissions and authorisation of lay preachers and readers from other churches. This flexibility is fully utilised when considering such applications and the processes for validating and acknowledging prior experience and learning have been simplified during this Connexional year. Further information can be obtained from the Discipleship and Ministries Cluster.

M37 Offering for ordained Ministry

The Bristol and South Gloucestershire (7/2) Circuit Meeting (Present: 89. Voting: 82 for, 7 against) concerned at the continuing reduction in the numbers of those offering for Presbyteral and Diaconal Ministry requests that the Conference explore new, contemporary and exciting ways to present to the Methodist people the challenge of offering for ordained Ministry and to review and adopt

appropriate selection criteria to meet the needs of today's church.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit Meeting for its memorial, and reaffirms its commitment to ensure that the call to ordained ministry be heard afresh among Methodist people. The reconfigured Connexional Team includes a number of new posts whose focus is to enable the Methodist Church to be creative in responding to those hearing a call. There is also on-going work in the Ministerial and Diaconal Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committees to review the selection criteria in the light of developing pioneering and other forms of ministry. Any developments from this work will be brought to the Conference in due course.

M38 Absence by Presbyters and Deacons from work

The Inverness (31/13) Circuit Meeting (Present: 12. Voting: unanimous), conscious that the current Standing Orders relating to presbyters and deacons suffering from extended periods of sickness attempt to do so in a pastorally sensitive manner, is also aware that the result can be additional stress on others, both ordained and lay. This can have a deleterious effect on the mission of the church, and, as a result calls on the Conference to lay down a sequence of events that will remove the burden of such cases from a Circuit and allow the mission of the church to move forward, by making it possible, should a Circuit so request, that after a period of either six months

58. Memorials to the Conference

continuous absence from work for ill health or of six months absence in a single connexional year, by a minister, the station may be declared vacant.

Reply

The issues raised by the Memorial are complex, and are receiving attention which will be brought to the Methodist Council supported by expertise drawn from several clusters of the Connexional Team. The issues also pertain integrally to ongoing work within the Connexional Team relating to the well-being of ministers, and the financial implications of such cases for Circuits.

Mindful of the need for this further work to be completed before constitutional changes are made in this area, the Conference refers the memorial to the Methodist Council for consideration and report to the Conference no later than 2011.

M39 Absence by Presbyters and Deacons from Work

The Weymouth (26/21) Circuit Meeting (Present: 27. Voting: 23 for, 0 against) urges Conference to agree that a Circuit should not bear the financial consequences if a minister goes on long-term sick leave. After six months all costs of supporting the minister should move from the Circuit to the Connexion, and a fair rent be paid to the Circuit if the minister continues to occupy the manse.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as M38.

M40 Use of Ministerial Training Fund

The Brighthouse (27/4) Circuit Meeting (Present: 14. Voting: 13 for, 1 against) in the light of the apparently overlooked amount of £6million in the Ministerial Training Fund strongly recommends that these funds, designated for Ministerial Training be used to expand the training of current candidates, take steps to attract new candidates and to reimburse the costs met by smaller hosting Circuits in support of ministers in training on placement.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Brighthouse Circuit Meeting for its memorial which relates to the Training Assessment Fund. The issues raised are dealt with in the report found elsewhere in the Agenda. The reply to this memorial is therefore contained in the resolutions of the Conference.

M41 Annual Development Review (ADR)

The London Synod (M) (Present: 109. Voting: part 1: 91 for, 18 against; part 2: 85 for, 9 against; part 3: 74 for, 23 against) affirms that thoughtful reflection on the actual practice of ministry, in the company of either peers, or an appropriately trained supervisor, or facilitator using the ADR process, is a necessary and expected component of that ministry. To this end the Ministerial Session of the London District Synod asks all ministers to identify annually to their District Chair their chosen method of Reflective Praxis, naming either:

- ∞ the reviewers they will work with in the annual ADR process; or
- ∞ their supervisor with whom they meet regularly (listing his or her qualifications and how frequently they meet); or
- ∞ the frequency of their meetings with their Peer Supervision Group or their Co-Consultancy group, and the names of those colleagues involved in their group.

In making this affirmation and naming this responsibility for all ministers, the Ministerial Session of the London District Synod then calls upon the Conference to similarly provide a greater flexibility than the proposed ADR process allows to the processes designed to help ministers identify those areas of their ministry that could be helped by further development. The Ministerial Session of the London District Synod asks the Conference to establish a Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice on the model developed by the Uniting Church in Australia.

Reply

The matters raised in the first two paragraphs of the memorial are addressed in the report on ADR found elsewhere in the Agenda, and the reply of the Conference is therefore contained in its resolutions on that report.

With regard to the issue raised in the third paragraph, the Conference refers the matter to the Methodist Council for report to the Conference no later than 2011.

M42 New Hymn Book

The Whitehaven (9/4) Circuit Meeting (Present: 26. Voting: 16 for, 7 against) notes with some concern that the production of a new Methodist hymn resource is to continue and an initial list is to be presented to this Conference (2009). We would respectfully ask the Conference to reconsider this commitment in the light of the current worldwide financial crisis. Although here in the West the economic downturn has been conceived of largely in Western terms, there is no doubt that its impact will have far reaching repercussions well into the future, not least in countries of the developing world. They are likely to experience hardship and difficulty long after the West has made a complete recovery.

It is further noted that a hymn book called *Methodist Hymns Old and New*, published by Kevin Mayhew, was available a few years ago, and this contained a comprehensive selection of hymns and worship songs which could have been well used by our churches had the offer been followed through at the time.

The Whitehaven Circuit questions whether the production of a new Methodist hymn resource is the best use of our Connexional finances at this time when they could be used to better effect in serving the needs of our troubled world.

Reply

Following a recommendation from the Memorials Committee under S.O. 138(5) that resolutions based on this and other Memorials be moved and debated in the Conference, the reply of the Conference is

58. Memorials to the Conference

contained in its own resolutions.

M43 New Hymn Book

The Oxford (23/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 37. Voting: unanimous) is profoundly grateful to the Music Resources Group for its work on the proposed new music resource, *Singing the Faith: resources for worship*. The meeting believes that the collection and analysis of material from many different publications will be immensely valuable to Local Churches, and that the debate and discussion generated by the process will also benefit the Connexion as we continue to reflect on the articulation of our faith in music and lyrics.

While appreciating the work of the Music Resources Group, however, the meeting believes that the production, in book form, of a replacement for *Hymns & Psalms* is unrealistic. It therefore respectfully asks the Conference to reconsider the decision of 2007 to replace *Hymns & Psalms* as an authorised collection, and to revert to the original proposal for a supplement and/or an electronic resource.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as M42.

M44 New Hymn Book

The Bristol and South Gloucestershire (07/02) Circuit Meeting (Present: 87. Voting: 68 for, 19 against) expresses its concern at some of the information circulating about a proposed new

Methodist Hymn Book. It requests the Conference:

- a) to re-affirm *Hymns & Psalms*, published in 1983, as the Church's authorised hymn book, encouraging its availability in every Methodist Church;
- b) to re-affirm that *Hymns & Psalms* continues to be offered as a contribution to the life and worship of the universal church (as stated by the Conferences of 1979 and 1983);
- c) to invite the compilation of a supplementary resource of hymns and worship songs, not contained in *Hymns & Psalms*. Such supplement, authorised by the Conference, to be available in the first instance online, and for use at the discretion of, and in the means most suitable by the Local Church;
- d) to ensure that the means by which the supplement is available should be in a manner easily and regularly updated and added to; and
- e) to ensure that all copyright arrangements necessary for words and music are in place to enable the material to be used easily and legally across the Methodist Church.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as M42.

M45 Sale of arms to Israel

The Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury

Synod (R) (Present: 160. Voting: 154 for, 1 against) recognises that in the recent violent conflict in Gaza human rights abuses and war crimes were committed on both sides. Weapons banned under Geneva Convention were used in highly populated areas and bombs and rockets used indiscriminately. Synod is further aware of the fact that the UK continues to sell arms to Israel despite the UN stating that Israel violates humanitarian law.

In the pursuit of justice and peace in the Middle East the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod calls on Her Majesty's Government and the European Union to embargo the sale of arms and military equipment to all sides in the area.

We call upon the Methodist Conference to resolve to make representation to Her Majesty's Government for such an embargo to be instituted.

Reply

The Methodist Conference thanks the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District for raising this issue that has been of concern to many in our churches and beyond.

The Conference notes previous resolutions relating to Gaza and the occupied territories; acknowledges the considerable suffering in Gaza arising from the recent conflict; notes that UK export licences are subject to criteria agreed by the EU and notes the statement of the Foreign Secretary on this subject on 21 April 2009 undertaking to keep further exports under review in the light of the conflict in Gaza. The Methodist Conference directs that

appropriate representation be made to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

M46 Prevention of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

The Otley and Airborough (16/15) Circuit Meeting (Present: 53. Voting: 53 for, 0 against) notes that carbon monoxide is a highly poisonous gas that has no colour, taste or smell. It can be produced by any appliances burning gas, wood, oil or coal. It can kill or cause lasting health damage. Annual servicing of appliances helps to reduce the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning. In addition a carbon monoxide detector provides an audible alarm alerting occupants to the presence of this dangerous gas.

Recognising our continuing care for those who have served the church as ministers and deacons, Circuits are invited to provide alarms for supernumeraries and/or their surviving spouse upon request, the Conference directs the Secretary of the Conference to write to all Circuits informing them of this memorial and to write to all supernumeraries or their surviving spouse informing them of this offer from their local Circuits. Further the Secretary of the Conference to include an annual reminder in an appropriate mailing.

It is noted that people with respiratory or cardiac problems and elderly people can be more quickly and severely affected by carbon monoxide. Detectors can be purchased from £10 and last 5-6 years.

58. Memorials to the Conference

Reply

The Conference thanks the Circuit Meeting for raising an important issue and recognises its concerns that many homes with appliances burning gas, wood, oil or coal do not have carbon monoxide alarms. However, the Conference does not believe the Circuit's suggestions would adequately resolve this issue and instead encourages all Circuits to take the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning seriously by drawing the attention of this matter to all people in their Circuit.

M47 Annual Development Reviews

The Plymouth & Exeter District requests that the group charged with the formulation of an annual review of ministers consider the following proposal. That District Chairs be appointed as formal appraisers of Circuit Ministers, presbyteral and diaconal. The District Chair, or their delegated substitute, shall meet with each minister on a biennial basis. In alternate years a minister and a lay person, both appointed by the local circuit, shall meet with the appraisee in a peer review. Records of both meetings shall be agreed, signed and retained by the District until forwarding them to any future District that the minister may serve in.

The Conference adopted the following reply:

The matters raised in the memorial are addressed in the report on Annual Development Reviews found in the Agenda, and the reply of the Conference is therefore contained in its resolutions on that report.

M48 Criteria for Candidating

The Synod of the Nottingham and Derby District of the Methodist Church at its meeting on April 25th 2009 considers that SO 710 (1) (a) should be reexamined and suggests the following amended form of words (amendments in underlined italics):-

"A candidate for the diaconate or the presbyteral ministry in the Methodist Church shall have been baptized and usually shall have been a member of the Methodist Church in good standing for at least three continuous years up to and including January 15th of the year of candidacy."

The Conference adopted the following reply:

The Conference thanks the Nottingham and Derby Synod for its memorial. It feels the most appropriate way to provide the clarification that the Synod is looking for is through guidance, rather than an amendment to the standing order. The Conference therefore refers the memorial to the Methodist Council for consideration alongside the work already underway on preparing a handbook for candidates.

58. Memorials to the Conference

Referred Memorials

Memorials from previous Conferences referred for report to the Conference of 2009:

| Year | No | Title | Who referred to | How dealt with |
|------|---------|---|--|---|
| 2005 | M16 | Use of Assets | Methodist Council | Report on Notices of motion and memorials referred to the Methodist Council. |
| 2007 | M27, 28 | Deadline for submitting standard form of accounts | Methodist Council | Methodist Council recommends deferral to 2010. |
| 2007 | M55 | Nature of Membership | Faith and Order Committee | Faith and Order report: further report in 2010. |
| 2008 | M24 | Eligibility to vote on stipends | Methodist Council | Methodist Council recommends deferral to 2010. |
| 2008 | M27 | Size of circuit meetings | Law and Polity Committee and Methodist Council | Report on Notices of Motion and Memorials referred to the Methodist Council: defer to 2010. |
| 2008 | M30 | Internet Banking | Methodist Council | Use of Internet Banking report |

Memorials from previous Conferences referred for report to future Conferences

| Year | No | Title | Who referred to | Year referred |
|------|-----|--|-------------------|--|
| 2006 | M39 | Bullying and Harassment | Methodist Council | [no date] |
| 2008 | M5 | Circuit responsibility for local church property | Methodist Council | No later than Conference 2010. |
| 2008 | M25 | Consultation with Circuits and Districts | Methodist Council | Report on Notices of Motion and Memorials referred to the Methodist Council. |
| 2008 | M26 | Churches Agency for Safeguarding | Methodist Council | Report on Notices of Motion and Memorials referred to the Methodist Council. |