

59. Notices of Motion and Memorials referred to the Methodist Council

A. Notices of Motion referred to the Methodist Council

Notice of Motion 6 (2008): Conference Representatives Expenses

The Conference directs the Methodist Council to explore a way in which Conference representatives may have expenses provided in advance, if they feel that their financial situation would make attending the Conference difficult or limit their participation in the Conference.

Conference also directs the Methodist Council to ensure that representatives are made aware of such a facility in good time before the Conference.

Although recent reviews of Conference procedure and business have not felt it necessary to make any recommendation in this respect the Council has asked that this matter be explored further by the Conference Secretariat in consultation with the finance office and those with recent experience of Conference arrangements.

Notice of Motion 9 (2008): President/Vice-President nomination process (New Resolution 33/9)

The Conference, noting that not all members will be familiar with the nominees for the office of President and Vice-President, and believing that members would be better enabled to vote if they had the opportunity to hear the nominees addressing them, directs the Methodist Council in consultation with the Business Committee to consider whether and if so how arrangements for that purpose might

be made, and if appropriate, to bring proposals to the Conference of 2009.

The Methodist Council has taken on board the concerns raised by NM9. One challenge within the elections for the position of President and Vice-President includes the fact that people who are not members of that year's Conference can (and have) been nominated for either role. The Council has therefore directed the Governance Support Cluster in the Connexional Team (in partnership with the Conference Business Committee) to find a more participatory way for all members of the Conference in 2010 to engage with candidates for both positions. The result will be trialled at the Methodist Conference 2010. Should this be deemed successful then suitable amendments to SO 110(A) will be proposed at the Conference in 2011.

Notice of Motion 124 (2008): Grant-making framework

The Conference notices the valuable support previously received by the fund for Formation in World Mission from ecumenical sources and is concerned that this support should not be lost. The Conference therefore directs the Methodist Council to consider the grant-making framework set out in Appendix 3 to Agenda item 37 (Team Focus) and to make such amendments as may be necessary to ensure that the grants previously received may, if appropriate, be continued.

The Methodist Council has referred this notice of motion to the Connexional Grants Committee for consideration and report.

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Notice of Motion 201 (2008): Project to reach out to young people

Conference urges each circuit within the Connexional Year 2008/9 to invest in a new project to reach out to, and stand alongside, young people.

The Methodist Council has referred this Notice of Motion to the Discipleship and Ministries cluster, requesting those with particular responsibility for the Youth Participation Strategy to engage with the spirit of it.

Notice of Motion 202 (2008): Church Premises – request for amendment to Standing Orders

Can the Methodist Church amend its Standing Orders so that a viable shop can be hosted on Methodist premises, especially in small villages? To make a shop viable, the sale of tobacco, alcohol and lottery tickets will need to be permitted.

The Methodist Council has referred this Notice of Motion to the Support Services cluster in the Connexional Team for consideration and report.

Notice of Motion 203 (2008): Distinctive contribution of Diaconal representatives

Following the Resourced Debate 'Re-floating the Titanic or helping create a new boat!' diaconal representatives to Conference recognise that they have a distinctive contribution to make in the Church's engagement with contemporary

society, not least because of the Order's discipline and commitment of being stationed to where there is most need.

We thus invite Conference to direct Convocation to explore and clarify the distinctive contribution that the Order can make to the Methodist Church's response to today's rapidly changing society and report back to Conference in 2009.

In view of the cessation of the Diaconal Session of the Conference, the Methodist Council has responded to the opportunities and concerns raised by deacons in the Resourced Debate at the 2008 Conference by asking the Methodist Diaconal Order, assisted by the Connexional Team, to reflect thoroughly on the matters raised, keeping them under constant review, and to present their reflections to a future Council meeting.

Notice of Motion 204 (2008): Church and Community Relationships

Every Circuit with five or more churches is directed to either:

- i) sell one church and invest the proceeds in a social/community worker or pioneer minister;
- ii) gift the building to the community and resolve to pay for its upkeep for at least five years;
- iii) release at least one circuit minister (lay or ordained) from traditional circuit ministry for at least five years to serve in the community building bridges and engaging in the local agenda.

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This should follow from an audit of circuit resources and development of a clear circuit mission strategy.

The Methodist Council referred this Notice of Motion to the Christian Communication, Evangelism and Advocacy cluster for consideration and report.

B. Memorials referred to the Methodist Council

M5 (2008): Circuit responsibility for local church property

The Bristol West (7/3) Circuit Meeting (Present: 25. Voting: 22 for, 3 against) urges the Conference not to entertain any proposal to amend Standing Orders so as to make Circuit Meetings the Managing Trustees for local church property. Its opposition is based on these considerations:

- ∞ that responsibility for the management of local property both in terms of finance and the practical stewardship of real property should belong to those whose local membership leaves them best placed to understand the local mission of the Church;
- ∞ that any move to place this responsibility with the Circuit Meeting is contrary to the spirit of recent legislation concerning charities;
- ∞ that the majority of members of the Circuit Meeting have no knowledge or understanding of local conditions;
- ∞ that such a change in our usage and practice would be a breach of faith with those who have contributed generously and sacrificially to the

maintenance of local churches and projects in the past;

- ∞ that Circuit Meetings do not have sufficient time to consider property issues for all the local Churches; and
- ∞ that urgent property issues arise regularly which require not only action at local level but responsible decision making as well. Such decisions cannot be safely left in the hands of a body which meets infrequently and has limited local knowledge.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Bristol West Circuit for its expression of its concerns. There is at present no intention of amending Standing Orders to make it mandatory that the Circuit Meeting acts as the Managing Trustees for all Local Church property and affairs. It is, however, already possible for Local Churches and Circuits to delegate their powers and duties under paragraph 16(k) of the Model Trusts, to the bodies there specified, with the consents required by SO 911.

Any Managing Trustees, be they the Church Council or Circuit Meeting, must pay proper respect to the intentions of those who have voluntarily supported local causes as they seek to exercise proper stewardship of the gifts God has given in meeting the needs of the Kingdom. Similarly, it is the duty of any Managing Trustees, be they the Church Council or the Circuit Meeting to ensure that they have knowledge and understanding of local conditions, and to ensure that they meet and communicate as frequently as is necessary to fulfil their responsibilities and expedite the Church's

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mission. The changes in charity law, including the additional responsibilities of registration, and their implications for Methodist practice are reported elsewhere in the Conference Agenda. This work is ongoing.

The Conference refers the memorial to the Methodist Council for consideration and report to the Conference no later than 2010 in the context of that work.

Progress report

The Methodist Council referred this Memorial to the Governance Support cluster for consideration and support.

M7 (2008): Candidates for the Ministry – Pre-requisites

The Woking and Walton-on-Thames (36/6) Circuit Meeting (Present: 29. Voting: 26 for, 0 against) is concerned that Standing Order 710(2)(ii) gives responsibility for the criteria required of “a portfolio of experience” to be determined “by the responsible member of the Connexional Team.” We believe that this places an undue burden of responsibility upon just one person, and that any criteria should be developed collegially by the Formation in Ministry Team in consultation with the Training Institutions. We further believe that the criteria of what is “the required standard” must be clearly defined and published, so that all who are involved in the candidating process can work to clear, common standards. More fundamentally, we believe that the need for a “required standard” begs the question, “What kind of ministers does the Church want and need?”

The Woking and Walton-on-Thames Circuit Meeting therefore requests that;

- (a) a committee appointed by and responsible to the Conference, shall determine the “required standard” for candidating for the ministry, and not a single member of the Connexional Team;
- (b) the agreed “required standard” be published on the Methodist Website each year by 1st September, and circulated to each potential candidate who has expressed an interest, and to their Superintendent minister;
- (c) the Methodist Council continues to explore what kind of person the Church is seeking for its ministry, and the kind of ministry it envisions for the future, already begun in What is a Presbyterian? and What is a Deacon?; and
- (d) that SO 712(2)(ii) is amended as follows:

“... by the submission of a portfolio of experience of the required standard, as determined by the Committee appointed by the Conference, of his or her sustained and systematic engagement in a process of vocational exploration and discernment; and that the required standard shall be published on the Methodist website annually by 1st September, and a copy circulated to all potential candidates who express an interest and their Superintendents. Furthermore, the portfolio shall form a component part of the candidating process and shall not be a precursor to it.”

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The following memorial was also received with the same text as above. The Conference adopts the same reply.

M8 (2008): South-East Synod (M)
(Present: 109. Voting: 105 for, 2 against).

Reply

The Conference thanks the Woking and Walton-on-Thames Circuit and South East Synod for the concern about the candidating process expressed in the memorial. The contents of the memorial are referred to the Methodist Council and the Training Strategy and Resources Executive for further consideration and report to Conference 2009.

Progress report

The Methodist Council is assured that work on this matter is listed under the priorities for the Discipleship and Ministries cluster in the Connexional Team and will be undertaken in conjunction with those responsible for discernment and selection. It has not yet been possible to undertake such work due to a delay in the appointment of relevant team members.

M9 (2008): Portfolio of Experience and Candidating

The Woking and Walton-on-Thames (36/6) Circuit Meeting (Present: 29. Voting: 27 for, 0 against), in the light of the experience of Standing Order 710(2)(ii) believes that, as the portfolio of required work is connexionally assessed, and as the timetable requires it to be submitted alongside other components of the initial procedure of candidating (SO 711), it

cannot be said to be a pre-requisite to candidating, but is in fact, a component in the candidating process itself.

The Woking and Walton-on-Thames Circuit Meeting believes that the candidate's written component should provide a helpful basis for the District and Connexional process to engage with the candidate in the process of discernment; rather than be used alone and separately to determine the suitability of a candidate for the ministry.

The Woking and Walton-on-Thames Circuit Meeting requests that the processes outlined in SO 710(2)(ii) shall be included within the Initial Procedures as detailed in SO 711. Further, the written portion of a candidate's offer for ministry shall not be used to pre-judge the suitability of a candidate's offer for the ministry, but should be used alongside the other processes of candidating as outlined in SOs 711 -713.

The following memorial was also received with the same text as above. The Conference adopts the same reply.

M10 (2008): The South-East Synod (M)
(Present: 109. Voting: 104 for, 3 against)

Reply

The Conference thanks the Woking and Walton-on-Thames Circuit and South East Synod for the concern about the candidating process expressed in the memorial. The contents of the memorial are referred to the Methodist Council and the Training Strategy and Resources Executive for further consideration and report to Conference 2009.

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Progress report

The Methodist Council is assured that work on this matter is listed under the priorities for the Discipleship and Ministries cluster and will be undertaken in conjunction with those responsible for discernment and selection. It has not yet been possible to undertake such work due to a delay in the appointment of relevant team members.

M11 (2008): Candidating and the Appeals Process

The Woking and Walton-on-Thames (36/6) Circuit Meeting (Present: 29. Voting: 27 for, 0 against) was deeply concerned to discover that, if a candidate is deemed not to have produced "a portfolio of experience of the required standard," (SO 710(2)(ii)) and is consequently barred from the process of candidating for the ministry, that there is no process to appeal against the decision. The Woking and Walton-on-Thames Circuit Meeting believes that this offends against natural justice, the fairness of Methodism, and the rigorous appeals procedures set down in SO 715 relating to all other steps in the candidating process.

Whilst believing that the portfolio of experience properly belongs within the process of candidating itself, rather than as a pre-requisite, we believe that if it remains outside the process, that SO 715 must be amended in order to include SO 710(2)(ii) within its orbit, otherwise it means that the decisions of the connexional assessment panel are not open to challenge or scrutiny, but are final and absolute.

The Woking and Walton-on-Thames Circuit Meeting therefore requests that the Formation in Ministry Team and Law and

Polity Committee work to include all parts of the candidating process - including all written pre-requisites, to be subject to an appeals process.

The following memorial was also received with the same text as above. The Conference adopts the same reply.

M12 (2008): The South-East Synod (M) (Present: 109. Voting: 103 for, 2 against)

Reply

The Conference thanks the Woking and Walton-on-Thames Circuit and South East Synod for the concern about the candidating process expressed in the memorial. The contents of the memorial are referred to the Methodist Council and the Training Strategy and Resources Executive for further consideration and report to Conference 2009.

Progress report

The Council is assured that work on this matter is listed under the priorities for the Discipleship and Ministries cluster and will be undertaken in conjunction with those responsible for discernment and selection. It has not yet been possible to undertake such work due to a delay in the appointment of relevant team members.

M13 (2008): Candidates for the Ministry - Pastoral Follow-Up

The Woking and Walton-on-Thames (36/6) Circuit Meeting (Present: 29. Voting: 27 for, 0 against) is concerned that, when a person's candidature for the ministry is declined, that the responsibility for

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pastoral care and follow-up falls solely to the Circuit. We believe that where a candidate's offer for the ministry is declined by the Circuit, District, or Connexion, that an offer of a pastoral conversation should be made to each candidate within an appropriate time-frame following the decision. This should be offered by a person able to represent the body which had made the decision.

The following memorial was also received with the same text as above. The Conference adopts the same reply.

M14 (2008): The South-East Synod (M) (Present: 109. Voting: 106 for, 2 against)

Reply

The Conference thanks the Woking and Walton-on-Thames Circuit and South East Synod for the concern about the candidating process expressed in the memorial. The contents of the memorial are referred to the Methodist Council and the Training Strategy and Resources Executive for further consideration and report to Conference 2009.

Progress report

The Council is assured that work on this matter is listed under the priorities for the Discipleship and Ministries cluster and will be undertaken in conjunction with those responsible for discernment and selection. It has not yet been possible to undertake such work due to a delay in the appointment of relevant team members.

M24 (2008): Eligibility to vote on stipends

The Derby (South) (22/8) Circuit Meeting (Present: 39. Voting: 35 for, 1 against) considers that it is no longer appropriate for ministers to vote on the recommendations for their stipends and other allowances at Conference. This should be for the sake of transparency of process and the avoidance of suspicion that self-interest affects the vote.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Derby (South) Circuit for its concern. It recognises that there is some public concern about various sections of society (e.g. Members of Parliament) being able to decide their own levels of pay and allowances; and some assumption or fear that even public servants cannot be trusted not to act inappropriately in their own interest. But it also recognises that presbyters and deacons have an essential role to play in the oversight of the whole church, of which they are part; that not all presbyters and deacons who are members of Conference receive a stipend or allowances or housing from the Church; and that the recommendations about stipends and allowances are made to the Conference by the Connexional Allowances Committee and calculated according to agreed formulae.

It therefore judges that the matter would bear re-examination, and refers the memorial to the Methodist Council for consideration and report to the Conference in 2009.

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Progress report

The Methodist Council is assured that work on this matter is listed under the priorities for the Governance Support cluster in the Connexional Team. The Council recognises that it will not be possible to undertake this work in time to report to the Conference of 2009, and so requests permission to report to the Conference in 2010.

M25 (2008): Consultation with Circuits and Districts

The Northampton Synod (R) (Present: 157. Vote: 153 for, 2 against) notes that there have been some significant changes recently in the structures and practices of the Methodist Church, many associated with the Team Focus projects. The Synod appreciates that change is and will be necessary as the Church endeavours to make the best use of its resources.

The Synod is, however, concerned about the nature and particularly about the timing of the consultation which takes place in connection with these changes, many of which can affect Circuits and Districts significantly. Proposals are often well advanced before there is any discussion with Districts, and the timescales of Conference approvals preclude any meaningful input. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience at district and circuit level which the Synod believes could be better used earlier in the process.

The Synod understands that consultation on everything with every District may be impractical, but would suggest to Conference that, when a major project is

being created, a number of Districts are asked to be represented on the project team by individuals with the appropriate knowledge and experience. The Synod would further suggest that all Districts are kept informed of progress on the project and given the opportunity to comment. In almost all cases this could be done without the need to hold meetings. This methodology need not introduce any delay, and could help significantly in getting support for the final proposals which would be submitted to Conference.

Reply

The Conference recognises that the Methodist Connexion has a valuable tradition of Christian conferring in which people participate in a variety of ways both in the forming of vision and policy and in the making of decisions. Doubtless consultations with Districts could have been better and more wide-ranging in recent years. Care has been taken to cater for the different needs of districts, in all their variety of size and context. But there is always more to be done and done better.

The Conference is grateful to the Northampton District for underscoring the importance of the Team and the Districts working together to develop major proposals for change which affect the whole Church. That theme has been integral to the Team Focus process from beginning to end. At every point, from the earliest explorations of what might be entailed in a root and branch review of the Connexional Team, through every ground-clearing project, to detailed proposals for change, Districts have been involved in

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one way or another. For this, the Team is immensely grateful.

Over the last few years there have been many opportunities for people to participate in creating vision and policy and in making decisions. The ways in which Districts have been involved have varied according to circumstances. Sometimes the whole connexion has been invited to take part in electronic forms of consultation, as in the work of the Conference Review Group and the discussions about new resources of hymns and songs. The Stationing Review Group has engaged in widespread discussions. Sometimes all Districts have been directly involved either through representative bodies or through particular officer, or through individuals and groups, most notably in the emerging proposals for property consents and in the development of District Development Enablers and regional Training Officers. On other occasions a representative District Chair has contributed district perspectives to ongoing work. In all instances, Districts in general have had opportunity to contribute through their representatives in particular networks (like the Connexional Leadership Team, CLT) and connexion-wide bodies (like the Methodist Council, the Resourcing Mission Grants Committee and above all the Conference).

The same is true of allied processes of change that have run concurrently with Team Focus, e.g. the Training Institutions Review and its implementation. In the case of *Mapping a Way Forward: Re-grouping for Mission*, the bulk of the energy is to be found in the Districts, co-ordinated

through CLT and reporting to the Council through the Strategy and Resources Committee.

The biggest challenge for the future is to find effective forms of local church, circuit and district participation in and ownership of proposals for significant connexional projects. It will never be a straightforward issue to decide when and how to consult all the Districts. The Conference therefore encourages the Districts and the Connexional Team to help each other through excellent ongoing communication. Certainly the forming of appropriate project management groups will be important, even if the particular suggestion in the memorial cannot be pursued mechanically, lest the numbers on project management groups become unwieldy.

The Conference also encourages Circuits and Districts to do their best to consult with other Districts and the Team about policies, projects and major innovations that are emerging in particular places. The Conference therefore thanks the Northampton District for raising its concerns, and refers the memorial and this reply to the Methodist Council as the connexion continues to discern appropriate ways of engaging in Christian conferring.

Progress report

The Methodist Council is pleased to report that work on this matter is listed under the priorities for the Governance Support cluster in the Connexional Team, as it is clearly of considerable importance to ensure that there are adequate and appropriate opportunities for consultation.

M26 (2008): Churches Agency for Safeguarding

The Southampton Synod (R) (Present: 199. Voting: 197 for, 2 against) urges Conference to make strong representations to the Churches Agency for Safeguarding to relax its policy whereby only ministers and deacons are permitted to act as verifiers of the identities of those applying for CRB disclosures for Methodist purposes.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Southampton Synod for this memorial and refers it to the Methodist Council.

Further reply

The Council at its April 2009 meeting adopted a resolution permitting safeguarding contacts and administrators whose details are entered for the purpose on the connexional database and for whom this has been negotiated as part of their job descriptions or role outlines to act as verifiers for CRB disclosure applications in addition to presbyters and deacons.

M27 (2008): Size of circuit meetings

The Bristol Synod (R) (Present: 151. Voting: 146 for, 0 against) noting the amalgamation of many of its Circuits in September 2008, expresses its concern that in adherence to Standing Order 510, the membership of such new Circuit Meetings could be so large as to make administration of the Circuit Meeting and the finding of suitable venues problematic. In the Bristol District in 2008 three schemes of amalgamation will take place which in two instances

involves the joining of five Circuits together. The Synod requests that Conference review the membership of Circuit Meetings in the light of larger Circuits, report to the Conference of 2009 and offer interim guidance for best practice to those larger Circuits being created in 2008.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Bristol Synod for raising its concern. It recognises that there is a tension in larger Circuits between ensuring adequate participation in the governance and oversight of the Circuit by people from its constituent Churches and ensuring that the number of members and the venues used by the meeting enable it to fulfil its purposes most effectively and expeditiously. The Conference therefore refers the matter to the Law and Polity Committee and the Methodist Council for consideration and report to the 2009 Conference.

It also draws attention to the fact that Standing Order 510 already allows discretion about the number, if any, of representatives of each Church Council to be elected to the Circuit Meeting and of additional members to be appointed by the Circuit. It also notes that the Circuit Meeting is only required to meet twice a year, and that Standing Order 551 empowers the Circuit Meeting to appoint other officers and committees which can meet at other times to assist it in fulfilling its responsibilities.

Progress report

The Law and Polity Committee notes that this question raises issues about

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the number of "charity trustees" in a particular governance body that the Charity Commission might or might not accept. The interim guidance in the reply to the memorial of the 2008 Conference stated that under the current Standing Order 510 the maximum membership of the Circuit Meeting in large Circuits could be made smaller by reducing the number of representatives of each Church Council and the number of additional members appointed by the Circuit Meeting itself to zero in either or both cases. Beyond that the options would involve reducing the number of people in some or all of the following categories who are members of the meeting.

- (a) *The ministers, deacons, probationers and persons authorised to serve the Church as ministers or deacons appointed to the Circuit, and the circuit stewards.*
- (b) *Other ministers, deacons and probationers stationed in the Circuit.*
- (c) *Either the church steward or the church treasurer from each Local Church, or both.*

The Law and Polity Committee considers that decisions about these options are primarily matters of policy. The Methodist Council has not yet, however, been able to discuss the matter in the light of that advice. It will do so in the connexional year 2009-10 and report to the Conference of 2010.

M16 (2005): Use of Assets

The Liverpool Synod (R) (Present: 129.
Voting: 105 in favour, 9 against) notes

that the Methodist Church has assets worth over £3billion, (approx. 6200 church buildings) but is becoming increasingly cash-poor. Staff redundancies and reduced grant-making is one result of this. Many churches are struggling to meet their Circuit assessment which is compounded by a declining membership and ageing congregations, many of whom are living on modest fixed incomes.

The Liverpool Synod asks the Methodist Conference to consider ways in which local churches and Circuits can be encouraged to review actively and analytically the number of buildings they need for worship (i.e. their assets). Many of our church buildings were built to accommodate four times the number of members we have today, and are old and expensive to heat and maintain. This review should include considering mergers between Methodist Churches as well as with ecumenical partners; also whether reducing the number of Circuits would help to make better use of resources.

Possibly as many as 25% could be sold in order to invest the proceeds in a focus on mission and encourage a renewed commitment to working in tune with the will of God.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Liverpool District for the concerns contained within this Memorial and refers it to the Methodist Council for further consideration and report to the Conference no later than 2007.

Further reply

The Conference apologises to the Liverpool District for the delay in bringing a further reply to this memorial. It is, however, pleased to be able to assure the District that in the intervening years three processes have been put in place which severally and together should serve to encourage Local Churches, Circuits and Districts to undertake the sort of review

envisaged in the memorial. They are on the process Mapping a Way Forward which is referred to in the Methodist Council report elsewhere in the Agenda; the forming of the Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission, referred to in the Responding to an Anglican-Methodist Covenant report; and the formation of the Strategic Oversight Group for the implementation of the joint Methodist-URC resolution.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 59/1.** The Conference received the Report on responses to Notices of Motion referred to the Methodist Council.
- 59/2.** The Conference adopted the further reply to M26 (2008).
- 59/3.** The Conference adopted the further reply to M16 (2005).
- 59/4.** The Conference received the progress reports on Memorials referred to the Methodist Council by the 2008 Conference.