

Notice of Motion 2019/102: Marriage and Relationships

The Conference expresses its thanks to the Marriage and Relationships Task Group for their hard and careful work in bringing the report *God in love unites us* to the Conference. It endorses the report's conclusion that different convictions on the matter of marriage and relationships should be honoured within the life of the Methodist Church and provision should be made for them. However, the Conference is concerned that the proposed Standing Order amendments do not adequately embody the diversity of the belief of the Methodist people as well as a proposed diversity of practice. An alternative version of the Standing Order amendments would enable both a diversity of belief and a diversity of practice to be recognised and honoured in our Standing Orders. It also believes that the conscience provisions need strengthening beyond what was proposed in the report.

In report 10, *God in love unites us*, therefore delete existing resolution 10/9 and replace with new resolution 10/9 as follows:

10/9. The Conference amends Standing Orders as follows:

011A Marriage.

(1) *The Methodist Church welcomes everyone, whether or not a member, who enquires about an intended marriage in any of its places of worship.*

~~(1) (2) The Methodist Church believes that marriage is a gift of God and that it is God's intention that a marriage should be~~ ***is given by God to be a particular channel of God's grace, and that it is in accord with God's purposes when a marriage is a life-long union in body, mind and spirit of one man and one woman who freely enter it.*** ~~The Methodist Church welcomes everyone, whether or not a member, who enquires about an intended marriage in any of its places of worship.~~

(3) *The Methodist Church also acknowledges that some of its members believe that it is in accord with God's purposes when a marriage is a life-long union in body, mind and spirit of any two people who freely enter it.*

011B Divorce, Remarriage, Marriage of Same Sex Couples and Respect for Conscience.

~~(2)(1) Divorce~~ ***in a court of the land*** does not of itself prevent a person being married in any Methodist place of worship.

~~(3)(2) Under no circumstances does the Conference require any person authorised to conduct marriages who is subject to the discipline of the Church as a minister, probationer,~~ ***officer*** or member to officiate at ***or participate in*** the marriage of a particular couple, should it be contrary to the dictates of his or her conscience to do so.

~~(4)(3) Where a~~ ***minister, probationer, officer, or member, who is duly authorised to conduct marriages, but who for reasons of conscience will never officiate at the marriages of couples in particular circumstances for reasons of conscience, this shall form the basis of a pastoral conversation with the Circuit Superintendent and Chair of District. Where the exercise of conscience falls within the discipline of the Methodist Church, all involved shall do their utmost to ensure that the individual is not placed under any pressure to act against its dictates.*** ~~shall refer such couples to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented.~~

(4) Managing Trustees may determine whether or not Methodist premises for which they are responsible may be used for the solemnisation of marriages of same sex couples, whether or not there is a requirement that they be registered for such purposes.

(5) Mixed-sex couples who seek to be married in Methodist premises that are available for such purposes, but where the authorised person is prevented by conscience from officiating, shall be referred to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented.

(6) When a couple of the same sex seeks to be married in Methodist premises the Chair of the District shall be notified. Where the minister, probationer, officer or member who received the initial approach is unwilling to conduct the ceremony on ground of conscience, or the premises under consideration are not available for the marriage of same sex couples, the Chair shall then advise the couple where the marriage may take place and by whom it may be performed.

(7) Managing Trustees shall ensure that the Chair of the District is notified whenever Methodist premises are registered for the solemnisation of marriages of same-sex couples.

~~(5)~~**(8)** The Methodist Church opposes discrimination on the basis of **sexuality**, gender or race. Accordingly, if a couple is seeking to be married in a Methodist place of worship no objection to the performance by a particular minister, probationer, **officer** or member of any duty in respect of their proposed marriage shall be entertained on such a ground. No minister, probationer, **officer** or member shall perform the relevant duty or duties in place of the other person concerned or otherwise assist the couple to make the objection effective.

Proposed: The Revd D Paul C Smith

Seconded: The Revd Mark Rowland

(Signed by 4 other members of the Conference)

1. The Revd Delyth A Liddell
2. The Revd Loraine N Mellor
3. The Revd David M Goodall
4. The Revd Helen D Cameron

Budgetary implications

No connexional budget implications.

Note: The precise terms of the proposed amendments to Standing Orders are under discussion with the Law and Polity Conference Sub-Committee, but the Notice of Motion is printed now to give members of the Conference time to consider the substance of it.

Notice of Motion 2019/103: Amended reply to Memorial M28

Delete second paragraph

After new second paragraph (formerly third paragraph) insert:

In other cases, a complaint can be brought against an individual of the Church if they refuse to comply with recommendations following a risk assessment. It would be then be for the local complaint officers to decide how best to proceed. The Standing Orders allow for the appropriate use of the power of suspension in Standing Order 013 if the necessary delay means that the risk is still to be addressed.

Delete last paragraph and replace with:

Nevertheless the Conference accepts that it may be possible to streamline the process and directs the Law and Polity Committee to consider the inclusion of a provision for immediate referral to the Connexional Complaints Panel in such circumstances. The Conference also directs Law and Polity Committee to review Standing Order 1120(4) and (5) and to consider making additional provision for a direct referral to the Connexional Complaints Panel where the complaint is about non-compliance with a direction under SO 232(2)(i).

The Conference accepts the memorial.

Proposed: The Revd Stephen J Lindridge

Seconded: The Revd Richard M Andrew

(Signed by 4 other members of the Conference)

1. The Revd Nigel Cowgill
2. The Revd Julian M Pursehouse
3. The Revd Dr Jennifer A Hurd
4. The Revd Paul H Davis

Budgetary implications

No significant connexional budget implications.

Notice of Motion 2019/104: Amended reply to Memorial M55

Delete: 'The memorial asks the Conference to declare a climate emergency. The Conference itself cannot declare a climate emergency.'

Replace it with the following: Faced with a climate emergency, the Conference joins with Pope Francis and the Anglican Communion, in endorsing the call for urgent action.

Proposed: The Revd Dr Jonathan H Pye

Seconded: The Revd Sarah A Jemison

(Signed by 4 other members of the Conference)

1. Mr Richard Walsh
2. Miss Siân Davidson
3. The Revd Ruth M Crompton
4. Ms Charlotte Hambly

Budgetary implications

No connexional budget implications.

Notice of Motion 2019/105: Amended Reply to Memorial M12

The Conference believes that the draft reply to memorial M12 does not adequately address the matter raised by the Birmingham District Synod. It therefore adopts the following substitute reply as its response to Memorial M12:

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District Synod for its memorial.

The Conference is profoundly aware that Chairs of District carry significant responsibilities in their ministry. They are set out in Standing Order 424 and include leading all the people of the District in the work of preaching and worship, evangelism, pastoral care, teaching and administration. The Conference recognises that in periods when the Chair of a District is prevented through ill health or other reasons from engaging in ministry that these important duties cannot be left undone. The Conference expresses its grateful thanks to all those who take on these ministries in such times.

Standing Order 426(4) makes provision for the appointment of a temporary deputy Chair in the event of the Chair being unable to exercise her or his responsibilities on account of ill-health or other cause. The responsibility for making such an appointment lies with the Synod or the District Policy Committee (or the President or Vice-President should it be in an emergency). Unlike the provision (SO 426(2)) for the appointment of a permanent deputy or deputies, there is no exclusion of particular functions detailed in the Standing Order. The Conference notes that this therefore allows such temporary deputy Chairs to perform any of the duties of the Chair that the appointment specifies. One possibility would be for the appointment to specify all the duties of the Chair. The Conference trusts that all subject to its discipline will respect and honour the responsibilities entrusted to temporary deputy Chairs in this way.

The Conference notes that when District Chairs are unable to attend the Conference, substitutes are appointed to attend in their place. The Conference directs the Law and Polity Committee to explore a means by which a substitute can be appointed upon whom the District Policy Committee, any temporary Deputy Chairs appointed under SO 426(4) and the officers of the Conference are agreed.

The Connexional Leaders' Forum exists to allow those engaged in the leadership of the church to 'watch over one another in love in order to support each person in the exercise of his or her particular responsibilities' (SO 230) as well as to share together in other ways. The Conference considers that those deputising in the absence of a District Chair are in particular need of such support and may benefit from the fellowship and advice of more experienced Chairs of District. The Chairs' Meeting allows the sharing of stationing issues and other matters of mutual concern as well as reflection on the work of God in the Districts and Connexion (SO 230A). The Conference considers it important that all Districts are enabled to share in taking counsel together in this way. The Conference takes the view that attendance at these meetings is one of the duties of the Chair which it is possible for a deputy to fulfil by virtue of his or her appointment under SO 426(2) or 426(4) as the case may be. The Conference therefore directs that when a District Chair is absent through ill-health or for other reasons for a period of more than three months, those responsible for convening such gatherings shall ensure that any duly appointed deputy is invited and provided with the relevant documentation.

The Conference accepts the memorial.

Proposed: The Revd Mark Rowland

Seconded: Deacon Marilyn O S Slowe

(Signed by 4 other members of the Conference)

1. The Revd Ruth Wilson
2. Mr Stephen H Cooper
3. The Revd Andrew P de Ville
4. Mrs Jean Hamilton

Budgetary implications

No connexional budget implications.

Notice of Motion 2019/106: Amended reply to Memorial M24

Whilst there is much that is positive and to be commended within the Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' course, it has also produced some serious difficulties. Expecting all students to submit work electronically has caused serious problems that include:

- The age demographic of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders could mean they do not have the level of computer literacy demanded;
- Anecdotally, we have heard of high withdrawal rates, relating in part to IT;

- There are areas of the country where internet provision and broadband speed are inadequate for effective study.

The Conference therefore amends the reply be amended as follows. Delete the existing bullet points and replace with:

- that guidance be produced for Circuits about practical assistance for those who find it difficult to study and submit through electronic media;
- that Circuits be made aware of possible sources of funding to support those unable to buy equipment;
- that the electronic platforms used are as accessible as they can be to those with particular needs and varying levels of experience in using computers.
- that a means of submission be established for those who are demonstrably unable to access adequate broadband due to their location.

Proposed: Mrs Heather V Lovelady

Seconded: Ms Winnie Baffoe

(Signed by 4 other members of the Conference)

1. The Revd Stephen P Santry
2. The Revd Jacqui P Evans
3. The Revd Karen A Beecham
4. Deacon Deborah Marsh

Budgetary implications

There would be additional costs involved in this matter which would not be covered by existing budgets.