

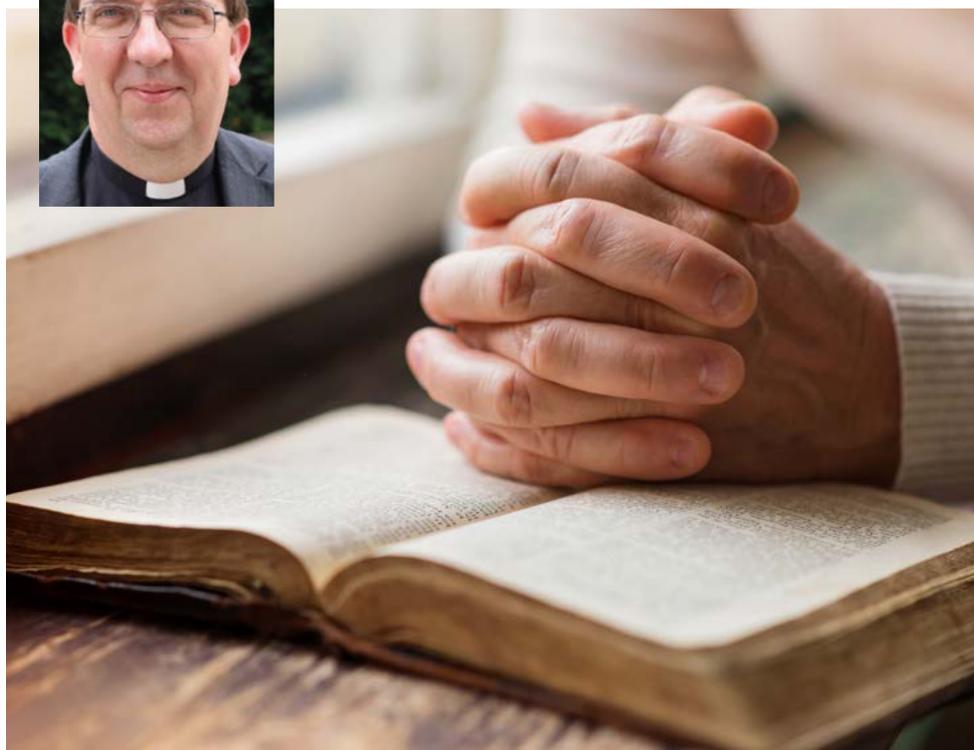
Review of the Year



2018/2019

Welcome

from the Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler



Sisters and brothers,

It is encouraging from time to time to be able to take a step back from the work in which we engage in day by day and to see all that has been achieved over a longer period. This report gives us that overview for the past year and shows how we have grasped opportunities and faced challenges in order to use the resources of the Church in response to Our Calling to enable worship, learning and caring, service and for evangelism across the Connexion.

The Methodist Church often delights in focusing on the numbers, and this report contains even more numbers for us that provide an insight into our financial resources. It is, however, worth noting that the figures represented in this report show far more than our bank balance. They are indicative of a huge amount of work and great generosity. Therefore, this report

reflects the great debt of thanks that the Church owes to so many people – those who give week by week, those who have given in the past, those who exercise trustee responsibilities, those who act voluntarily, and those in paid positions administering our finances. We owe a debt of thanks to all these members of the Church and, as we receive this report, we continue to pray for one another and to support each other. In its narrative and numbers, here we see in real terms what it means to be God's people who are called to love and praise.

The Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler
Secretary of the Conference

Front cover: The Revd Mmasape Zihle at the Service of Reception into Full Connexion at the 2019 Conference.

Photos © Alex Baker, Ali Johnson, Getty Images and TMCP.

The **Methodist** Conference 2019: A Summary

The Methodist Conference is the governing body of the Methodist Church and meets annually.

The Conference receives reports covering all aspects of the Church's life and witness. At its meeting in Birmingham in June/July 2019, these included:

- four deacons and 22 presbyters were received into Full Connexion, along with seven presbyters by transfer and one by reinstatement;
- a report on the theology and ecclesiology underpinning the Diaconate and the Methodist Diaconal Order (MDO) was adopted emphasising that deacons are ministers of the Church, focusing and representing a ministry of witness and service. It reaffirmed that the MDO is a religious order open only to deacons in Full Connexion and all deacons must be members of the MDO. The report explored the broad ministry of proclamation as it is exercised by deacons and affirmed that preaching is part of that ministry;
- the 3Generate manifesto¹ focused on homelessness, loneliness, the environment and creativity in worship. The Conference urged churches to

engage through Church Council agendas and to respond with intentional action;

- the Conference celebrated the ways in which the reaffirmation of Our Calling had shaped the life and work of the Church during 2018/2019 and engaged in workshops focusing on reimagining structures of decision-making and a developing strategy for evangelism;
- God in Love Unites Us, the report of the Marriage and Relationships Task Group, was commended to the Connexion for study and prayerful discussion². Provisional resolutions (under SO 122) were passed on good relating, an understanding of cohabitation, celebration of civil partnerships, to allow same-sex marriages to take place in churches, and for prayers following the end of a marriage;
- Hope in God's Future was adopted as a Conference Statement (under SO 129) in 2011. It outlines a Methodist understanding of discipleship in the context of climate change. Recognising the ongoing climate emergency, the Conference called for urgent action.

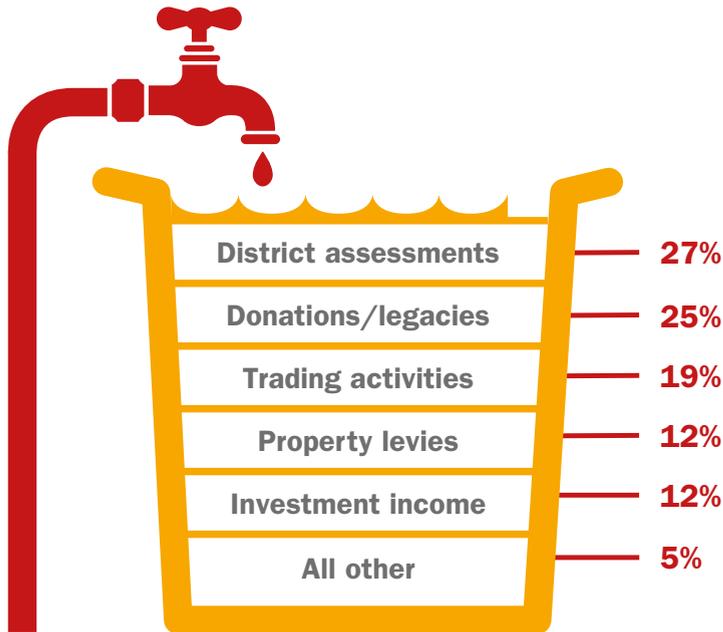
1. www.methodist.org.uk/3genmanifestos
2. Resources to facilitate discussion are available at www.methodist.org.uk/MandR19



The year at a glance

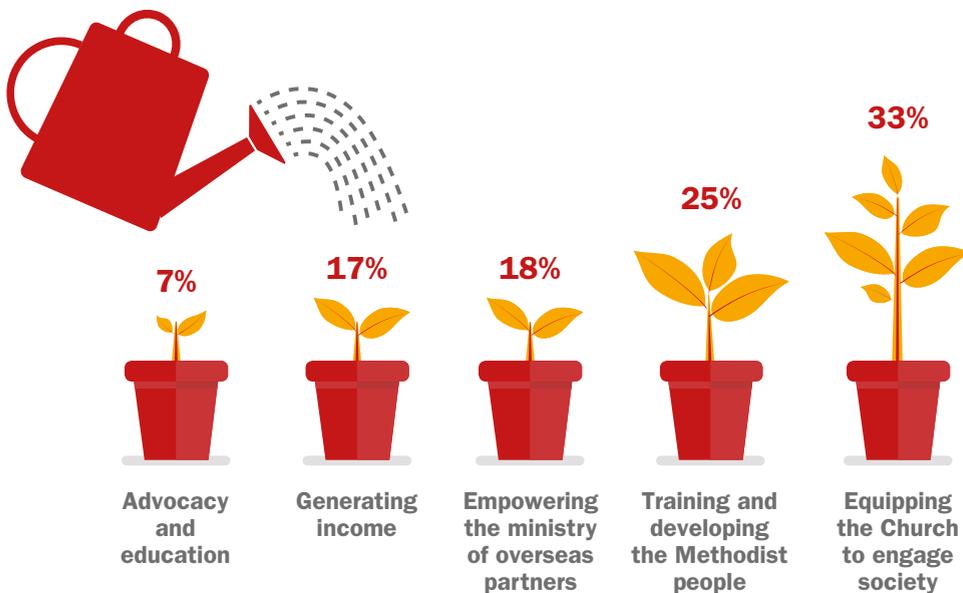
Overview of the connexional work of the Methodist Church in Britain

Our total income: £49.1m



Income increased by £5.7m due to an increase in donations and legacies and the transfer of a property being treated as a £3.5m donation

What we spent: £49.6m



£41.3m spent on direct charitable activities

Expenditure remained at the same level as last year

The figures shown include the activities of related bodies such as Cliff College, All We Can and others. For the full list, please download the Consolidated Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 August 2019 at www.methodist.org.uk/trusteesreport

474,000 people attending over **1,000** Fresh Expressions,



with **24,000** of those having had no recent involvement in Church



4,271

places of worship, with **173,000** members



24 mission partners working with **104** Partner Churches and organisations



25,000 pupils enrolled in 86 Methodist schools

Total grant payments from all funds

From Connexional Funds and All We Can



World Mission Fund
£3.4m

All We Can
£1.3m

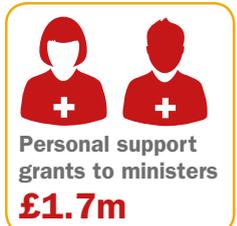
Combined Total
£4.7m



Mission and Ministry in Britain
£4.8m

Property
£1.0m

Combined Total
£5.8m



Personal support grants to ministers
£1.7m

Thank you!

Your generous giving means we can fund work that demonstrates the gospel of God's love in Christ. Here are some of our good-news stories from around the Connexion.



Homegrown

Homegrown participants said:

"For us it was the gathering together to share ideas. We come from a wide area covering rural and city parishes so to be able to come together to hear what is working elsewhere was really encouraging."

"We only livestreamed the evening and that was excellent. High production values. Streaming worked well. Great speakers. Very relaxed. World-class content. Very practical."

"The speakers were so engaging and passionate, and it was great to receive their knowledge and experience. Resources mentioned were so useful."

"The day made me more aware of the part the church family has to play. Baptism support, toddler groups, parenting courses are all part of the picture. As overall team leader the day encouraged me as I work to 'join the dots'. THANK YOU!!"

Homegrown – exploring ways to grow faith at home

This livestreamed conference welcomed groups and individuals from across the UK and beyond to a day of learning on family faith. Working together with Parenting for Faith as well as Care for the Family's initiatives *Who Let the Dads Out?* and *The Kitchen Table Project*, the conference sought to equip anyone working with families, especially parents and carers.

Alongside the live audience at Cliff College, where Homegrown was based, there were 30 venues livestreaming, including groups in Denmark and Iceland. Gemma Hunt (CBeebies presenter) hosted the event alongside Gail Adcock, officer with the Children, Youth and Family team.

There were 800 unique visitors to the Homegrown web page on the day, with 200 people watching the Facebook livestream. Another 7,300 people have watched it since then. It was also shared 65 times on Facebook with 173 comments made, and Twitter had 127 uses of #homegrown19. This shows high levels of engagement within the Methodist Church and more ecumenically.



God for All

Following over 100 collaborative events and thousands of one-to-one conversations across the Connexion in 2018/2019, 250 diverse leaders gathered on 19 October 2019 in Westminster for the God for All Evangelism and Growth Consultation.

Participants – many of them young people or those

stepping into leadership for the first time – spent the day actively listening for the voice of God, trusting God to speak into their dreaming and planning. They sang and worshipped, heard testimonies from disciples of Jesus across the theological spectrum, prayed in focused ways, and engaged in a series of facilitated conversations about the emerging Evangelism and Growth strategy that will go to the 2020 Conference.

It was a day of many moving parts, deep listening, audacious truth-telling and questioning, and – through it all – encounter with the Living God. One participant remarked how exciting it was to feel the Holy Spirit palpably moving among people who were not the same but were all passionate about the good news and a Church reshaped by God. She





said she was going back home to create local spaces where people in her church and community could experience the action and movement of God in the world.

At the end of the day, there was still plenty of work to do. Not every question had been answered. Barriers to the work that had been identified still existed. But together participants affirmed a common purpose – for the Methodist Church in Britain to be a growing, evangelistic, radically inclusive Church of gospel people who speak of, listen for, and live out the goodness of a God for all – and a prayerful willingness to be part of that movement.

Who is Your Neighbour?

Who is Your Neighbour? is one of the many ventures that received Connexional grant funding in 2019. The Sheffield-based project aims to help people have conversations about things that are difficult to talk about: ethnicity, cultural differences, fear of those differences and of change.

In early 2019, Who is Your Neighbour? ran a session for councillors from across England, exploring with them how to respond to difficult conversations. One councillor visited someone in her ward shortly after that session. As the councillor was about to leave, her constituent said she was also

going out and called a taxi but then made some racist comments about some of the drivers. The councillor’s instinct was to either ignore the comments or to tell the constituent she couldn’t say those things. This had previously been her response to such situations but, having been in the session, she decided to open up a conversation.

She asked her constituent, an elderly lady, to say more about the comments. The lady spoke about her feelings and those of other people she knew with regard to events that had gone on in her locality. She said she found it reassuring that someone in authority was listening to her and that she was able to talk about this. The councillor asked her about her personal experience of taxi drivers from this particular ethnic group and the lady spoke about taxi drivers from the firm she used who were always helpful, carrying her shopping for her and making sure she was all right.

The elderly lady had been able to speak about her fears and feelings without being shut down and had spoken about a real and positive connection with people from the group she might have been prevented from talking about.

The councillor said, “It was a lightbulb moment. I’m now doing things differently.”



The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

Our Calling

Future plans: Responding to the gospel of God's love in Christ

Worship

- Support both lay and ordained ministries by continuing to refine the Worship: Leading and Preaching course, encouraging young preachers, offering resources for Local Preacher Continuing Development, training superintendents and seeking to address issues around their well-being in ministry.
- Increase the number of opportunities for vocational discernment and increase the diversity of those engaging.
- Identify diverse future senior leaders (for the Church's future) and journey with them to enable them to flourish.

Learning and Caring

- Continue with the growth of 3Generate as a significant engagement in the discipleship journey of children and young people, paying particular attention to those places where young people are most excluded. This will include encouragement of the Year of Testimony initiative.

- Encourage churches, Circuits and Districts to engage with the Marriage and Relationships Consultation process.

Service

- Commit to a key number of issues where we want to act as a prophetic voice.
- Ensure our grants processes enable work in the hardest to reach places.

Evangelism

- Resource and support Districts, Circuits and local churches in mission planning.
- Create hundreds of New Places for New People: starting, building and reproducing new Christian communities amongst unaffiliated people. This includes focusing on those led by God's people in the most marginalised communities.
- Identify the links that will be nurtured and led by each District around the world with particular focus on Europe.

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