

Minutes of a meeting of the Methodist Council held on 26-27 January 2021 via video conferencing

Present: The President, the Vice-President and 53 voting members as follows:
Mrs Joanne Anderton, Mrs E Jill Baker, Mr Tim Baker, the Revd Paul H Booth, the Revd Dr Adrian Burdon, Mr David Burton, the Revd Dr Joanne Cox-Darling, the Revd Mark Dunn-Wilson, Mrs Barbara Easton, Mr Carl Fairclough, the Revd Dr Andrew Fox, the Revd Ruth G S Fry, the Revd Ruth M Gee, the Revd Dr Barbara C Glasson, Mr Bala Gnanapragasam, Mr Peter Gregson, the Revd Jeremy H A Hackett, Ms Charlotte Hambly, the Revd Novette S Headley, the Revd Sonia M Hicks, the Revd Beverly Hollings, Ms Bet Holmes, the Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler, the Revd Carmel Ieraci, the Revd Ermal Kirby, Mr Joseph Lambert, Mrs Heather Lovelady, Mr Andrew Lowe, Professor Clive Marsh (from item 21.1.6), Professor David Matthews, Mrs Val Mayers, Deacon Karen McBride (until item 21.1.10), Mr Alister McClure, Professor Ken Mortimer, Dr Daleep S Mukarji, the Revd Leslie M Newton, Mr Keith Norman, Mrs Helen Norton, the Revd Michael Parker, the Revd Malcolm Peacock, Mr Michael Pryke, Mr Graham Russell, the Revd S Mark Slaney, Ms Sandie Smith, the Revd Kate Strange, the Revd O Mark Street, Mr Doug Swanney, the Revd Timothy A Swindell, the Revd Alison E Walker, Miss Margaret Webber (except items 21.1.10-21.1.14), Mr Richard Wills, the Revd Michaela A Youngson, the Revd Dr Jongikaya Zihle.

Apologies: None

Observers: Mr Ted Awty (connexional treasurer) (from item 21.1.6), Mr Alan Kershaw (chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee) (until item 21.1.5), Ms Jude Levermore (Head of Mission), Ms Jillian Moody (Director of Communications), Ms Phoebe Parkin (Youth President), Mr Peter Pay (the United Reformed Church), the Revd Dr Nicola Price-Tebbutt (Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee), Mr Matthew Tattersall (Director of Finance and Resources), the Revd D Paul Wood (interim Director of the Ministries Team).

In attendance: Ms Jane Bates (Minutes), Ms Sharon Hassanali (Events Coordinator), Ms Anna McCrum (Senior Media Officer)

Letters: The Council sent a letter of greeting and condolence to Mr John A Bell.

21.1.1 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 12-13 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

21.1.2 Report from the Strategy and Resources Committee [MC/21/1]

The chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee presented MC/21/1.

1/1. The Council received the report.

21.1.3 Consolidated accounts for the year ended 31 August 2020 [MC/21/2]

Report from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee [MC/21/3]

The Director of Finance and Resources and the lead connexional treasurer presented MC/21/2.

The chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee presented MC/21/3.

2/1. In accordance with SO 212(1), the Council adopted the consolidated accounts for the year ended 31 August 2020, and directed that a unified statement of connexional finances be presented to the Conference as required by SO 360.

3/1. The Council received the report of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

- 3/2. *The Council authorised the Chair of the Council and Lead Connexional Treasurer to sign the Letter of Representation addressed to the external auditors, and the Trustees Report and Balance Sheet within the financial statements.***
- 3/3. *The Council authorised the Chair of the Council and Lead Connexional Treasurer to make any non-material changes to the presentation of the financial statements subsequent to Council approval.***
- 3/4. *The Council noted the Committee's inability to comply with the amended Standing Order from 2020 Conference and approved the proposed amendment to Standing Order 213A(5)(ivA) to be taken to the 2021 Conference.***
- 3/5. *The Council approved the updated version of the Committee's Terms of Reference.***

In agreeing these resolutions, the Council wished to extend its thanks to the Finance team and to the Director of Finance and Resources, for the work which had been done and particularly for the speed of its responses during the audit process.

21.1.4 Risk Management policy [MC/21/4]

The Connexional Secretary presented MC/21/4.

- 4/1. *The Council received the report.***
- 4/2. *The Council adopted the Risk Management Policy as set out in the report.***

21.1.5 Methodist Forces Board – Strategic Vision [MC/21/6]

The Revd Chrissie Howe, Secretary of the Methodist Forces Board, was welcomed to the Council to present MC/21/6.

- 6/1. *The Council received the report.***
- 6/2. *The Council approved the strategy of the Methodist Forces Board 2020-2025.***

21.1.6 Appointment of directors to the pension trustee bodies [MC/21/5]

The Director of Finance and Resources presented MC/21/5.

- 5/1. *The Council approved the process for the nomination and appointment of directors to the pension trustee bodies as set out in the paper.***
- 5/2. *The Council appointed a panel as follows to undertake the selection of employer-nominated directors to the Methodist Ministers' Pension Trust Limited (MMPTL) and the Methodist Lay Employees' Pension Trust Limited (MLEPTL): the Connexional Secretary (Chair); the Director of Finance & Resources; 1 x MLEPTL director; 1 x MMPTL director; a nominee of the Strategy and Resources Committee.***
- 5/3. *The Council delegated authority to the selection panel to appoint the MLEPTL directors; nominate the MMPTL directors to the 2021 Conference, and agree the contract for the independent professional trustee.***

21.1.7 Report from Global Relationships Committee [MC/21/13]

The chair of the Global Relationships Committee presented MC/21/13.

- 13/1. *The Council received the report.***

21.1.8 Review of Part 11 (Complaints and Discipline) [MC/21/14]

The Secretary of the Conference presented MC/21/14 and an additional update which had been circulated following a stakeholder event.

14/1. The Council received the report.

21.1.9 Online meetings

The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice updated the Council in respect of the constitutional considerations regarding online meetings. The *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church* only envisages meetings which take place physically; the 2020 Conference agreed a suite of temporary amendments to enable the Conference to meet online and for other church meetings to be enabled to meet and to vote during the present restrictions. These temporary amendments will cease when the statutory restrictions are removed. The Law and Polity Committee has convened a working party to consider whether there should be further work to enable online meetings more generally and in what contexts. No decision has yet been made about the format of the 2021 Conference; the March meeting of the Council will receive a report from the Conference Arrangements Committee; further work may be needed to ensure that the 2021 Conference is constitutional.

The Council noted that the ability to meet online has brought some benefits, and that there may be some permanent amendments which would be helpful. This work will need to consider how prescriptive to be, for example, whether there are some meetings (such as for discernment purposes) where the default position should be a physical meeting. It also noted the accessibility issues that arise both in the case of online meetings, as well as physical meetings. Consideration should also be given to adopting different timescales for online meetings (such as shorter meetings which include breaks from the screen).

21.1.10 Oversight and Trusteeship [MC/21/7, MC/21/7A, MC/21/7B, MC/21/7C, MC/21/7D]

The Revd Dr Andrew Fox presented the report of the focus group which had considered the papers concerned with Oversight and Trusteeship.

The group had focused on three questions:

1. The proposal for an 'Executive Council' to replace the Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee and to be the Trustee Body registered with the Charity Commission.
2. The number and purpose of committees that are needed for the work of the church to be governed and managed.
3. The minimum size of a local church, the number of trustee bodies needed by a circuit, and the necessary size of a local trustee body.

The group wished to emphasise the importance of recognising the principles of participation, representation and conferring in any new structure. In particular, it was concerned that new ways of working and of empowering different voices to be heard should be at the centre of this work. It felt that the role of the presidency needed further consideration in the ongoing work so that it could be a valued part of the new Executive Council. It made some specific comments as to the placement of some committees in the evolving structure, and this will be taken back to the subgroup of the Strategy and Resources Committee which is looking at it. The group did not come to a firm view as to the preferred minimum size of a local church.

7A/1. The Council received the report.

7B/1. The Council received the report.

7D/1. The Council received the report.

21.1.11 Memorial M6, Global Climate Emergency [MC/21/8]

The Revd Leslie Newton presented the report of the focus group which had considered the Council's response to Memorial M6, which had been referred to the Council.

The group asked the Council to consider whether, given the urgency of this matter, there could be some additional resourcing for this work. The Council considered what sort of resourcing might be required, and emphasised that the resourcing of managing trustees in order to make good decisions in this area is critical, with the links to the property work being undertaken. The wider question of resourcing will form part of the usual budgeting process, however, it was noted that if the Council wishes to explore some personnel resourcing then there will be implications for other pieces of work.

8/1. The Council received the report.

21.1.12 Context of establishing the Connexional Central Services Budget for three years commencing with 2021/2022 [MC/21/9]

Mr Tim Baker presented the report from the focus group.

Following a recommendation from Lord Griffiths of Burry Port that in light of the pandemic the Connexion should pay all ministerial stipends for one year from September 2021, representations were made to the Secretary of the Conference for this recommendation to be put in place. The cost would be approximately £44m to connexional funds. The group discussed the balance sheet (Methodist Church in Great Britain funds) and agreed that the request was not possible as the funds consist of:

- consolidated bodies with funds that the Council cannot easily access;
- properties that provide income and could not be sold in the short term;
- endowment funds where only the income is accessible;
- restricted funds whose purposes are not the 'paying of stipends';
- designated funds already allocated to the *God For All* strategy; and
- a remainder of £2m in reserve to meet the peaks and troughs of the connexional budget.

9/1. The Council directed that the draft budget for the three years commencing 1 September 2021 be compiled based on the parameters outlined within the paper including proper use of reserves where necessary, with the exception that a small reduction is made to the District Assessment instead of the 1% increase referred to in paragraph 6.1.

9/2. The Council noted that the current budget assumption is a 1% average salary increase from 1 September 2021 and that the actual salary uplift will be proposed by the Pay and Remuneration Sub-committee and reflected in the final budget.

9/3. The Council directed that the reserve levels of funds be set as follows: Methodist Church Fund £7.5m (unchanged); Connexional Priority Fund £1.5m; Epworth Fund £1m; World Mission Fund £3.5m (unchanged), and that the reserve levels for the Mission in Britain Fund and Fund for Property are removed.

9/4. The Council directed that the balance above reserve on the Epworth Fund be used to support the God For All strategy.

21.1.13 Strategic Guidance for the Use of Property in Mission [MC/21/10]

Stewardship of Property for Mission [MC/21/11]

The Revd Beverly Hollings presented the report from the focus group.

10/1. The Council received the report.

10/2. The Council adopted the strategic guidance notes for the use of property in mission, as set out in the report with the amendments noted below, for use across the Connexion:

- **4.1 changed to 'serious consideration';**

- **2.2 changed to 'The types of projects may include, but not limited to...'**

The Council received the report from the focus group in relation to the discussion paper MC/21/11, and noted that work would continue, taking into account the points which had been raised.

21.1.14 Schools' Educational Strategy [MC/21/12]

The Revd Novette Headley presented the report of the focus group.

The Council received the report from the group, and also noted the potential resource implications of the strategy.

12/1. The Council offered the response of the group to the consultation and encourages wider engagement with the draft strategy.

21.1.15 Connexional Team update [MC/21/15]

The Connexional Secretary presented MC/21/15.

15/1. The Council received the report.

21.1.16 Matters Arising [MC/21/20]

Noting an amendment to the first entry in the list,

20/1. The Council received the report.

21.1.17 Decisions made by the Council since its last meeting [MC/21/21]

21/1. The Council received the report.

21.1.18 The Epworth Educational Trust [MC/21/22]

22/1. The Council received the report.

21.1.19 Southlands College [MC/21/23]

Noting a correction to the list of those appointed to the Southlands Liaison Group,

23/1. The Council received the report.

23/2. The Council appointed the Revd Geoffrey Farrar to the Southlands Methodist Trust and the Southlands Liaison Group.

21.1.20 Global Safeguarding Principles [MC/21/24]

24/1. The Council received the report.

24/2. The Council directed that the Safeguarding Principles for the Methodist Church in Britain and International Partners be signed on its behalf.

21.1.21 Joseph Rank Trust grants to the Methodist Church [MC/21/25]

25/1. The Council noted with thanks the grants provided by the Joseph Rank Trust in 2020 as detailed in the report.

21.1.26 Ecumenical Partnerships, Sharing Agreements and Ecumenical Areas [MC/21/26]

26/1. The Council adopted the report.

26/2. The Council adopted the report.

21.1.27 Appointments [MC/21/27, MC/21/27A]

27/1. The Council appointed Deacon Myrtle Poxon to the Ministerial Candidates Appeal Committee under SO 326A, with immediate effect.

27/2. The Council appointed Deacon Flip Den Uil to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee under SO 321(1)(viii), with immediate effect.

27/3. The Council appointed the Methodist Schools Committee.

- 27/4.** *Acting on behalf of the Conference, the Council appointed the Revd Dr Jonathan H Pye to the Trustees of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust under Standing Order 244 with immediate effect, for the remainder of the connexional year 2020/2021 and for two further years.*
- 27/5.** *The Council appointed Verity Smith to the Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee.*
- 27/6.** *Pursuant to SO 140, the Council appointed the Conference Arrangements Committee.*
- 27A/1.** *The Council appointed the pre-Shadow Mission Committee.*

21.1.28 EDI data for the Council [MC/21/28]

- 28/1.** *The Council received the report.*

21.1.29 Adoption of Modern Slavery Transparency Statement for 2020/2021 [MC/21/29]

- 29/1.** *The Council adopted the modern slavery transparency statement for 2021/2021, as set out in the report.*

21.1.30 Domestic Abuse policy [MC/21/16]

Mr Tim Carter, Director of Safeguarding, presented MC/21/16.

- 16/1.** *The Council received the report.*
- 16/2.** *The Council appointed a scrutiny group as follows to undertake the detailed scrutiny of the Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedures, and delegated authority to that group to approve the text on its behalf: Mrs Jill Baker (chair), the Revd Dr Andrew Fox, Mrs Heather Lovelady, with the Revd Dr Nicola Price-Tebbutt as consultant.*

21.1.31 Connexional Allowances Committee [MC/21/17]

Ms Ruby Beech, chair of the Connexional Allowances Committee, presented MC/21/17.

The Council noted an amendment at paragraph 1.2, line 4:
for 'employing bodies' read 'circuits and other bodies responsible for payment of stipends'

- 17/1.** *The Council received the Report.*
- 17/2.** *The Council adopted the Report and the recommendations in sections 1, 2 and 3.*
- 17/3.** *The Council appointed Rachel Charter as a member of the Connexional Allowances Committee.*

21.1.32 Memorials M7-M9 (2020) on Israel Palestine [MC/21/18]

The Head of Mission presented MC/21/18.

- 18/1.** *The Council received the report.*
- 18/2.** *The Council requested that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) review the Central Finance Board Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine within a manageable timeframe and propose a schedule for this work within its Annual Report to the 2021 Methodist Conference.*

21.1.33 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE

21.1.34 Looking to the future

The Secretary of the Conference led the Council with a presentation which addressed the present context and invited discussion in five areas. The conversations will continue with the Connexional Leaders' Forum and other bodies. Members of the Council were invited to contribute further reflections.