

3. Methodist Council, part 1

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SECTION A GENERAL REPORT

The Methodist Council is charged under SO 211(2) with responsibility to keep in constant review the life of the Methodist Church, to study its work and witness throughout the Connexion, to indicate what changes are necessary or what steps could be taken to make the work of the Church more effective, to give spiritual leadership to the Church and to report annually to the Conference, bringing to the notice of the Conference matters to which it believes the Conference ought to give urgent attention.

The full range of papers presented to the Council and the outcomes of the Council's deliberations on them are available on the Methodist Church website at www.methodist.org.uk/council

The report to the Conference is presented in two parts, this one in Volume 1 of the Agenda and part two in Volume 2 of the Agenda.

These reports contain those items considered by the Council and not reported elsewhere in the Agenda.

1.1 Governance responsibilities

In accordance with its governance responsibilities, the Council:

- appointed connexional committees, trusts and representatives for the year 2020/2021;
- received reports from a number of committees and trustee bodies;
- approved the revised list of authorisations and delegations;
- received reports from the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) of the Council at each meeting;
- agreed revised headline objectives for the Council, and received reports at each meeting from the Connexional Team on how each objective is being supported;
- adopted a risk management policy;
- adopted the corporate risk register;
- noted with thanks the grants provided by the Joseph Rank Trust in 2020;
- adopted a modern slavery transparency statement and underlined its strong commitment to pursuing the objectives of the Modern Slavery Act (2015);
- agreed that the project to build a hotel at Oxford Place, Leeds, be closed,

and that the managing trusteeship of the property should be returned to the Yorkshire West District;

- responded to resolution 53/6 of the 2020 Conference by approving a revised budget for the connexional year 2020/2021;
- in response to resolution 12/5 (2020), received an update from the Connexional Team on work being done on Mental Health First Aid, pending a report to the Conference in 2022;
- considered the governance arrangements for the Methodist International Centre (MIC) and the Wesley Hotel, amending the delegation to provide for the Strategy and Resources Committee to act as managing trustees, and appointing two Directors to the MIC Limited Board;
- asked the Wales Synod and Synod Cymru to debate possible new arrangements for the Synods to be implemented 2022-2024, and requested the two Synods to make proposals for the continuance of the Welsh language work in Wales and to report to the Council in October 2021;
- further to Regulation (5) in Part 2 of Book VI of *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*, declared the managing trusteeship of bequest monies in two cases where there was local disagreement;
- acting on behalf of the Conference, appointed the Revd Dr Calvin T Samuel as Chair of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust;
- acting on behalf of the Conference, appointed Stephen Brian Mansel Roberts as a trustee of the Aldershot Methodist Military Trust;
- acting on behalf of the Conference, appointed the Revd Julian M Pursehouse to the Stationing Committee;
- in the interests of expediency, delegated its powers regarding disbursement of The Methodist Church Fund in cases of long-term sick leave or disciplinary proceedings (as set out in SO 365(7)) to the Secretary of the Conference, or, in his absence, the Assistant Secretary of the Conference;
- adopted revised terms of reference for the Methodist Schools Committee;
- approved a process for the nomination and appointment of directors to the pension trustee bodies, and appointed a panel to undertake the selection of directors;
- approved the conversion of the Churches' Ministerial Counselling Service to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, and approved the continuing use of the Service following a review of the level of usage and costs involved;
- agreed to recommend that the Revd Dr Andrew J Stobart be stationed to Cliff College from 1 January 2021;
- agreed to recommend that the Revd Dr Jill Marsh be stationed to the Connexional Team from 1 March 2021;
- agreed to recommend the extension of the Revd Carla Quenet's appointment as Learning and Development Officer (Yorkshire Plus Region) for a period of five years from 1 September 2021;

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- received *Safeguarding Principles for the Methodist Church in Britain and International Partners* and directed that they be signed on its behalf;
- adopted the list of new ecumenical schemes and sharing agreements as required by SO 334(5);
- acting on behalf of the Conference, appointed the Revd Dr Jonathan H Pye to the trustees of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust;
- approved the transfer of the Connexional Travel Fund into the Methodist Church Fund and the establishment of a budget for travel expense grants and island travel grants;
- received the annual report from the Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee, approved a change to its terms of reference, and delegated to the Strategy and Resources Committee approval of a range of policies relating to the Collection;
- received a report of a review of the oversight of the self-accounting entities, and agreed new processes in this respect.

1.2 Other business

The Council received annual reports from:

- the Property Development Committee;
- the Connexional Grants Committee;
- the Global Relationships Committee;
- Southlands College;
- the Methodist Heritage Committee.

***RESOLUTION

3/1. The Conference receives the General Report of the Council.

SECTION B

MEMORIALS REFERRED TO THE COUNCIL

1. Memorial M6 (2020) Global Climate Emergency

Memorial M6 (2020) was referred to the Council by the 2020 Conference. The Council considered it at its meeting in January 2021, through discussion in a focus group and in plenary session. At its meeting in March 2021, the Council agreed to recommend to the Conference the reply shown below.

M6 Global Climate Emergency

The Gloucestershire (7/7) Circuit Meeting (Present 75; Voting: 74 for, 1 against), recognising that the global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation, and a fundamental injustice, and following the resolution of the Methodist Conference 2019 that there is a climate emergency:

- (a) *calls upon all parts of the Methodist Church, at local church, circuit, district and connexional level, to work to achieve measurable year-on-year reductions in emissions and urgently examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030 in order that a plan of action can be drawn up to achieve that target;*
- (b) *calls on each District to address progress toward net zero emissions every two years.*

Reply

The Conference thanks the Gloucestershire Circuit for this memorial which was referred to the Council for a full discussion. The Conference wholeheartedly agrees and affirms that ‘the global climate emergency is a crisis for God’s creation and a fundamental injustice.’

The Conference recognises this is a crucial year for international climate commitments as the COP26 climate summit is held in Glasgow from 1 to 12 November. All nations will need to make new commitments that recognise the urgency of our situation. The Conference notes that alongside our partners, the Methodist Church has called on Her Majesty’s Government to put in place plans to achieve net zero in a way that addresses social and economic inequalities.

In recognition of the Circuit’s desire to call on all parts of the Methodist Church to work towards net zero the Conference invites Methodist churches to join with others in a one-off celebration of Climate Sunday on, or before, Sunday 5 September. The Conference affirms it is the responsibility of us all, as God’s people, to respond to this emergency in all the ways that we can, and by regarding this as an integral part of our Methodist Way of Life. The Conference further affirms the call to live lightly as an integral part of our mission and as such a vital part of all our mission planning.

The Conference recognises the Circuit’s desire to encourage the Church to be methodical in measuring carbon emissions. The Conference therefore directs that the Annual Property Checklist is updated to enable some measuring of progress to be achieved. Furthermore it requests of Districts that ways that enable movement towards net zero are demonstrated in all District Mission plans and that these plans are reviewed every two years.

The Conference wishes to respond to the Circuit’s request to draw up a plan of action, but feels that a ‘one size fits all’ plan would not be beneficial. It therefore proposes the development of partnerships with others who can help us meet our target. These include:

- A Rocha, with their well-established Eco Church programme and Eco-Congregation Scotland;
- “Faith Long Term Plans” – a coalition of faith groups;
- Ecumenical partners in the Church of England, and the United Reformed Church and elsewhere;

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- The Climate Coalition – a coalition of 130 organisations across the UK that are mobilising support for action at the COP26 summit.

The Conference proposes that steps are taken to ‘green’ our processes with regard to property including:

- making representations to the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee to see eco-friendly adaptations as a priority;
- ensuring that all building schemes take seriously the need to reduce carbon emissions;
- updating the requirements of quinquennials to embrace factors that could reduce carbon emissions;
- updating SO 803 (with regard to Manses) to ensure that manses become as energy efficient as possible;
- supporting Circuits in finding ways to measure and improve their buildings’ energy efficiency.

In recognition of the urgency of this emergency, the Conference agrees an aspirational target to become a net zero Church by 2030. By setting this target we will align ourselves with the Church of England and the Church of Scotland. The Conference recognises how ambitious this target is; its achievement depends upon all parts of the Church making a significant commitment of resources. It will require substantial work to many church buildings to achieve energy use reduction. This work will rest on the decision-making of our Managing Trustees.

The final section of “Hope in God’s Future”, ‘Sending Out’, describes our response to climate change as a journey of a whole community. In setting an aspiration of net zero by 2030 we want to encourage and inspire each other as the Body of Christ to all journey together. The Conference recognises, with thanks, the voice of 3Generate for their consistent and bold lead in this area, and again thanks the Gloucestershire Circuit for this memorial.

***RESOLUTION

3/2. The Conference receives the Report.

3/3. The Conference adopts the reply shown as its further reply to Memorial M6 (2020).

2. Memorials M7-M9 (2020) Israel and Palestine

Memorials M7-M9 (2020) were referred to the Council by the 2020 Conference. The Council considered them at its meeting in January 2021, through discussion in a focus

group and in plenary session. At its meeting in March 2021, the Council agreed to recommend to the Conference the reply shown below.

M7 Israel and Palestine

The Leeds North and East (27/2) Circuit Meeting (Present: 46; Voting: 37 for, 2 against), believes in the equal Human Rights of all Palestinians and Israelis, supported by International Law and UN Resolutions. Given that the US and Israeli governments' proposed 'Peace Plan' explicitly rejects this belief, now is the time for a different approach from all those campaigning for a just settlement. We therefore call on the Conference to review and reassess its approach and specifically to request JACEI (Joint Advisory Committee on Ethical Investments) to urgently consider again disinvesting in all companies that profit from activities in illegally occupied areas, as a matter of ethical and economic justice.

M8 Israel and Palestine

The Leeds South and West (27/1) Circuit Meeting (Present 54; Voting: 40 for, 1 against), notes with concern that Methodist statements on Israel Palestine all assume that a two-state solution is the way to resolve a situation that is growing increasingly dire for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Following the US declaration that America does not consider Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be illegal under international law, and President Trump's Middle East Peace Plan, which involves the annexation and incorporation of large parts of the West Bank into the state of Israel, the Palestinians will be left with only fragments of territory, which would appear to make an independent Palestinian state virtually impossible.

In the light of this situation, we call upon the Conference to review the 2016 investment policy (prepared by the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment) as a matter of urgency, and ask that the Central Finance Board cease investment in all companies which profit from Israel's Occupation of Palestine. In view of the fact that Israel is the party with power on the ground, and has the capacity to give equal human rights to Palestinians and Israelis, we urge the Conference to give Israel every encouragement to do this.

M9 Israel Palestine

The South Worcestershire (5/16) Circuit Meeting (Present: 39; Voting: 31 for; 6 against) notes with deep concern the deteriorating situation for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, due to the Israeli Occupation. Within the last year the political situation has further reduced the chance of an independent, viable Palestinian state. Implications for Palestine include the cutting of funding to UNRWA from US, a statement that the US no longer deems West Bank settlements inconsistent with international law, and the recent Middle East Plan announced by President Trump at the end of January. The Israeli electrical company has recently reduced the supply of electricity to Palestine resulting in extensive power cuts. In addition economic prospects are looking bleak for Palestinians.

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In the light of this situation we urge the Conference to encourage Methodists to continue to pray and work for a viable, independent Palestinian state, or a single state of Israel/Palestine with equal citizenship for all communities, and in the meantime to adopt the same policy as the Quakers not to invest any funds in companies profiting from the Occupation of Palestine, therefore requesting the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) to commend this policy with all urgency to the Central Finance Board.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Circuit Meetings for these memorials, which were referred to the Methodist Council for a full consideration. At its January 2021 meeting the Council considered and discussed the report MC/21/18. This led to the request (18/2) by the Council that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) review the Central Finance Board (CFB) Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine within a manageable timeframe and propose a schedule for this work within its Annual Report to the 2021 Conference.

The Conference expresses appreciation of the work of JACEI and holds in high regard the extensive work of the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church in the field of ethical investment and corporate engagement. The Conference reiterates its concern regarding the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza where health services have been stretched further by COVID-19 and notes the deepening occupation and facto annexation of much of the West Bank.

The Conference notes the systemic challenges that come with the further integration of settlements into the legislative and economic fabric of the State of Israel. It is concerned that companies that form a part of the investment holdings of the Methodist Church and have operations in Israel are accountable with respect to their approach towards the occupied territories and exercise due diligence to ensure that their operations do not provide financial or other assistance to the occupation. The Conference endorses the recommendation considered by the Methodist Council on the exclusion from investment of companies operating in settlement areas in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Conference longs to see a just resolution to the occupation in order that all in the region may enjoy security and peace. The Conference encourages Methodists to pray for political leaders on all sides so that the current deadlock can be overcome and fundamental rights afforded to all.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

3/4. The Conference receives the Report.

3/5. The Conference adopts the reply shown as its further reply to Memorials M7-M9 (2020).

SECTION C CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOSSIL FUELS

The 2020 Conference received a report to the Conference from the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) concerning Climate Change and Fossil Fuels (which itself was a response to Memorial 32 (2017)).

A notice of motion was brought, and the Conference declined to adopt the Report as its further reply to Memorial 32 (2017), instead adopting the following resolution:

- *The Conference welcomes the analysis provided by the Central Finance Board and JACEI, and the recent decision to disinvest from BP and Total*
- *The Conference notes the recognition of the climate emergency by the 2019 Conference and the need for urgent action at all levels*
- *The Conference notes that the Notice of Motion 2017/109 passed at the 2017 Conference requested disinvestment from any oil and gas company by the 2020 Conference that “has not aligned their business investment plans with the Paris Agreement target of a global temperature rise well below 2 degrees”*
- *The Conference notes that the JACEI report for the 2020 Conference on Climate change and fossil fuels, which draws the conclusion that Repsol, ENI, Royal Dutch Shell, and Equinor “are aligned, or are close to being aligned, with the Paris Agreement”, has not fully implemented Notice of Motion 2017/109.*
- *Taking account of the findings of the Transition Pathway Initiative (TPI), a project supported by the Central Finance Board, the Conference refers to the Methodist Council a request that JACEI recommend that the Central Finance Board fully implements Notice of Motion 2017/209, and disinvests before the 2021 Conference from all oil and gas companies which are not currently aligned with the Paris Agreement target of a global temperature rise well below 2 degrees.*

Members of the Council were invited to a consultation meeting at the end of August, which explored the detail of this request, along with the response from JACEI and the Central Finance Board. The Council was provided with notes from that meeting, along with information about the financial implications from the Connexional Treasurer.

After careful consideration, the Council agreed to support the request that JACEI recommends that the Central Finance Board fully implements Notice of Motion 2017/209, and disinvests before the 2021 Conference from all oil and gas companies which are not currently aligned with the Paris Agreement target of a global temperature rise well below 2 degrees.

*****RESOLUTION**

3/6. The Conference receives the Report.

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SECTION D STRATEGIC GUIDANCE FOR THE USE OF PROPERTY IN MISSION

Following a review of the Connexional Property Strategy 2018-2020, the Council adopted the following strategic guidance notes for the use of property in mission, for use across the Connexion.

Introduction

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.

Property plays a significant role in enabling a presence within communities. A Methodist building that is welcoming, eye-catching and that acts as a focal point for community engagement can speak powerfully of God's love. Utilising a property either by redeveloping it for social purpose or incorporating a range of social uses into an existing building is as much a part of a mission plan as preaching, worship, or community evangelism.

In 2018, the Methodist Council approved a two-year connexional property strategy to encourage Trustees to see and realise these possibilities. Through the PDC'S work, churches, Circuits and Districts have been supported and encouraged where possible to use property to fulfil the Church's calling in a coherent way. Significant strides have been made with a number of good examples of mission in action and also valuable lessons to be taken forward in our future work.

Examples of successes include:

- Awards of speculative funds to a number of local churches to assess the feasibility of potential development and refurbishment projects and contributions towards the costs of planning applications,
- Innovative approaches across the Connexion in the use of property and partnerships to fulfil the Calling of the Church.
- An improved understanding by the PDC of the support required by churches, Circuits and Districts to harness and optimise property for the Church's calling, and
- An increased awareness of the importance of property in the life of the Connexion.

Equally some of the lessons learned include the need to:

- Streamline processes and reduce property-related tasks for Circuits and Districts,
- Focus on strategic partnerships particularly with regards to large or complex projects, and
- Continue providing support and training for Circuits and Districts with property matters.

Drawing on the successes and lessons learned, this guidance therefore sets out key priorities to enable effective use of property for mission across the Connexion.

1. Mission and Property Development Plans

1.1 Mission plans are a critical element of community outreach and service and should be adopted and implemented across the Connexion. These plans should make clear how the sensible use of property will support and facilitate mission and ministry. Property development plans (led by Circuits and Districts) should 'sit' as a subset of mission plans and should:

- Include all existing Methodist property (churches, manses, ancillary investment properties) and demonstrate how each property will contribute to delivering agreed mission plans.
- Enable effective use of listed buildings, taking account of current policies in respect of planning legislation as well as the need to make bold decisions about the application of finite resources. This should build on the current work to advocate for, conserve and modify our Historic Places of Worship, for continued and sustainable worship and community use. Careful consideration should be given to maintenance and conservation management planning to:
 - identify future and current constraints,
 - assess significance at a local and national scale, and
 - develop proposals for change, particularly for our higher-graded chapels and churches and those with complex and complete historic interiors.

It is hoped that a national survey of our listed buildings or 'Taking Stock' exercise, can inform and provide a useful tool for Districts and Circuits as they oversee or think about alterations /or refurbishment of their listed buildings.

- Churches in rural areas should consider a variety of options in developing their mission plans. It is recognised that rural areas are highly distinctive in themselves. It is therefore advisable that rural churches engage where possible in strategic partnerships with neighbouring churches, circuits, local housing associations, ecumenical contacts and local authorities to develop missional opportunities. This may involve extra support from Districts and the Connexional Team. Reference can also be made to the National Rural Officer of the Methodist Church and the Arthur Rank Centre, who are well equipped in supporting rural churches to explore their mission and purpose, and
- Consideration of local authority development plans as set out in strategic planning policy and the neighbourhood development plans.

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- 1.2 All our buildings are potentially 'heritage' assets for mission: from historic, listed or not, to brand new, they have been built or acquired to respond to our calling, and to do so within the Methodist tradition (they have 'history') so that the Methodist story of faith can be faithfully told, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ be proclaimed. New buildings and more recent worshipping communities may have old roots, which go back several hundred years and in some cases stretch out across the globe. The deep heritage of Methodist witness needs to be identified during the mission planning process or during a property review, as a valuable opportunity to explore rootedness, authenticity and purpose.
- 1.3 Stories, as we know from the Bible, are powerful, and our churches can be effective in keeping stories alive and creating attractive and safe-spaces that inspire deep, authentic and powerful faith sharing, even when it is part of a process to let go of a building. The Heritage Committee is committed to working with the PDC to encourage the active engagement of Districts, Circuits or local churches with such stories and exploring the mission opportunities they offer and to exploit their potential to widen the church's community and draw people into encounters with God.
- 1.4 Property development plans should also include locations where a new Methodist property would be advantageous, or where partnerships with another Christian community should be explored. Work should be undertaken to ensure that decisions about property are taken in the context of the whole Circuits and Districts, reflecting where Circuits wish to prioritise Methodist presence and resources to achieve their mission plans. This work should be integrated with the 'God for All' strategy on New Places for New People and Church at the Margins, which links into Standing Order 1005 and provides for the Methodist Council to appoint a New Town or New Area Commission where an expansion scheme to house a population of 20,000 or more is planned by a local authority. The Methodist mind-set should be to provide facilities for communities rather than only a worship building for ourselves.

2. Partnerships

- 2.1 The Methodist Church will continue to embrace partnership working; in recognition that there will be times when *Our Calling* will be advanced by working in collaboration with others. Partnerships are not to be entered into lightly. True partnerships can be time consuming and unless there is an early agreement on common purpose, they can be fraught with difficulties that can endanger any or all of the partners.

- 2.2 Therefore, the Connexional Team will support Circuits and Districts to explore which potential partners are most likely to share objectives with *Our Calling*. It could be expected that many of these will have Methodist roots, but not exclusively so. These will include ecumenical partners, third sector bodies focusing on community engagement, Christian charities focusing on helping the Church to engage with society and specialist charities such as Methodist Homes (MHA). The types of projects may include, but are not limited to:
- partnering in redevelopment for social purposes,
 - imaginative experiment and ecumenical co-operation,
 - sharing a building for other social mission,
 - sharing a building for worship, and
 - partnering in redevelopment for commercial purposes.
- 2.3 Discussions should be held with such potential partners so that a broad framework for co-operative working can be agreed. This could then be used by Districts, Circuits and local churches in a proactive way, remembering that good ideas may come from our partners rather than us. The key to enabling the best partnership opportunities will be the strength of mission and property plans which will guide the location, type and size of property required to fulfil *Our Calling*.
- 2.4 Probity in procurement is important. In all cases, proper procurement rules should be applied.

3. Purchases and disposals

- 3.1 At times, selling will be the best option to further our mission. This is not failure but recognition that the world evolves and we need to respond in new ways for the time we are in. Our priority will always be to make the best use of our property.
- 3.2 When all other opportunities to use our buildings for mission have been explored and exhausted, the redundancy of one of our buildings should be embraced as the closure of a chapter of a Methodist story faithfully told, where we will ensure the memory of that story is preserved and see that the next chapter is commenced in ways that remain faithful to the story so far and to the Gospel.
- 3.3 Sales will often occur when a church society ceases to meet. If a property is no longer required for its original purpose, given the details of the Circuit and District Mission and Property Development Plans, it may well be conceivable that the property could be redeveloped (possibly in partnership with others) for an alternative local community use. Equally, Circuits and Districts should endeavour to formulate their Mission and Property Development Plans to identify areas

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where fresh mission and community outreach are possibilities and it could well be that the sale of a redundant property could help fund such developments.

- 3.4 When disposing of the property or working in partnership, we will be mindful of charity law, the model trusts and the objectives of the Methodist Church in Great Britain. Within those criteria, priority will be given to final uses that enable or are consistent with our mission. Purposes may include worship by others, social buildings such as affordable housing, social mission or pioneering expressions of church.
- 3.5 While the primary aim of any sale will normally be to secure market value, under-value sales may be allowed in accordance with the requirements of the Methodist Council, normally with covenants securing additional value achieved in any future sales.
- 3.6 The proceeds from sales will be distributed in accordance with the policies for the time for the Methodist Church in Great Britain, with priority given to the following objectives:
 - investment in sustainable programmes and projects that achieve our mission goals,
 - reinvestment in capital assets that support mission,
 - investment to provide sustainable income streams for missional work, and
 - paying off existing debt.
- 3.7 Professional property advice will enable all Trustees to maximise the value of a site, for missional and/or financial purposes. This may involve gaining planning permission prior to sale, agreeing overages and restrictive covenants etc. External professional advice should therefore be sought prior to all decisions to sell Methodist property.

4. Environmental and ethical matters

- 4.1 In all matters relating to property, serious consideration should be given to the Church's commitment to addressing a zero-carbon agenda in the context of climate change, as expressed in the Conference Statement, *Hope in God's Future*. Attention should be given to the 2010 Conference directive that Circuits should endeavour to use model trust money to put in place high standards of energy efficiency and also directed that Circuits should endeavour to provide smart meter devices in manses.
- 4.2 All developments should as far as possible be funded by ethical investors with

the principles of the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment being applied to funding packages wherever possible.

5. Role of the District Property Secretary

- 5.1 The role of District Property Secretary will continue to be crucial in facilitating effective use of property for mission. Work will therefore be undertaken to guide Districts in clarifying minimum standards for the post. These standards will attempt to set out the skills and the capacity required to enable consistency of support across the Connexion, as well as sufficient local knowledge.
- 5.2 The standards may mean that some Districts will consider paid posts to attract personnel with the right skills and experience. To minimise costs, it may sometimes be advisable for District Property Secretaries to work across Districts. This will strengthen the approach of mission and property plans and also the ability to attract the right partners. Where possible, District Property Secretaries should work with District Mission Grant Officers/District Grants Committees.

6. Property consultancies

- 6.1 Work has been undertaken to establish a panel of surveyors and other professional bodies for accessible advice on property matters. This has worked well in some areas.
- 6.2 Further work is planned to include local and medium sized firms on the panel. This will increase the choice of surveyors and enable bespoke services particularly in remote areas of the Connexion.

7. Grants

- 7.1 Through the speculative fund, the Council will continue to support a grant-making process at the initial stage of a project by part funding feasibility studies, pre-planning applications or similar. This will enable money held connexionally to support the risks associated with property projects at the feasibility stage.

*****RESOLUTION**

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SECTION E MISSION COMMITTEE

The Council adopted the principle of establishing a Mission Committee, bringing together various aspects of Mission as expressed in Part 10 of Standing Orders.

The Council approved the following terms of reference, and now presents them to the Conference.

The Mission Committee will be appointed by the Conference and will usually meet three times per year; one of those meetings will be a two-day meeting.

Purpose

Its primary task will be to ensure the mission and activities of the Methodist Church in Britain are in keeping with the response to Our Calling and agreed priorities. It will enable the Church to take up various aspects of Mission as expressed in Part 10 of Standing Orders. It will explore the challenges and opportunities faced by the Church for mission, local and global, in the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-faith context that is the society today.

Membership

- 1. The Mission Committee will consist of no fewer than 12 and no more than 14 persons, including the Assistant Secretary of the Conference who shall act as convener, and a chair and a deputy chair of the committee. The members of the committee shall comprise both ordained and lay people involved in missional activities in a variety of contexts, with deep consideration given to the diversity of the committee.*
- 2. The committee may invite such other observers or consultants, from within and beyond the Connexional Team, as appropriate; for example, Global Relationships Committee (GRC), the Joint Public Issues Team Strategy and Policy Group (JPIT SPG), the Heritage Committee, the Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee (MMACMC), Fellowship Groups Sub-Committee and, the New Places for New People (NPNP) Guiding Team.*

General Responsibilities

- 3. In accordance with Standing Orders the Mission Committee shall report to the Methodist Council to enable the Church to develop and maintain a strategic vision for Mission.*

4. *The committee shall be accountable to the Conference through the Council for:*

 - *Overseeing connexional policy regarding mission to ensure the developing and supporting of mission both local and global; challenging the Circuits and Districts to learn from and keep constantly under review the place of One Mission; sharing insights and developing vision.*
 - *Setting and overseeing the process for the disbursement of any grants and/or funding as might be available for mission and missional activities, and evaluating the monitoring and learning from this disbursement.*
 - *Developing, supporting and reviewing initiatives for nourishing, equipping, resourcing and accompanying those engaged in the mission of God in the Methodist Church locally and globally.*

5. *The committee may, in consultation with the Methodist Council, report to the Conference on matters of policy or process requiring the attention of the Conference.*
6. *The committee may convene resource groups and may recommend to the Connexional Team or the Methodist Council the establishment of other relevant bodies and consultations. In particular, the committee may receive reports from groups including the Fellowships Subcommittee, the Fresh Expressions Guiding Team, the GRC, the Heritage Committee, the MMAC Management Committee and the NPNP Guiding Team.*
7. *The committee shall keep in view the use of resources that are deployed to deliver prayer, worship, advocacy and learning for mission across the Connexion and make recommendations as appropriate.*

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 3/8. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 3/9. The Conference establishes a Mission Committee to take effect from 1 September 2022 and directs that Standing Orders are brought to the 2022 Conference to give effect to this.**

SECTION F AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

The Council reported to the 2020 Conference that it had adopted revised terms of reference for the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which sought to clarify the role that the Committee plays in the area of risk management. The 2020 Conference amended Standing Orders to effect these changes. The Committee has further reviewed its terms of reference, and has determined that it is not able to undertake the new

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responsibility set out in SO 213A(5)(ivA) which reads “to ensure that appropriate assurances and processes for risk management are in operation”. The Council concurred with the Committee’s view that if it were to “ensure” that such matters were undertaken, this would remove its ability to be independent of matters relating to the Council and the Connexional Team. In the light of this, the Council has adopted revised terms of reference for the Committee and proposes an amendment to SO 213A(5)(ivA) as set out below.

***RESOLUTIONS

3/10. The Conference receives the Report.

3/11. The Conference amends SO 213A(5)(ivA) as follows:

213A Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. (1) – (4) [unchanged]

(5) The responsibilities of the committee shall be:

(i) – (iii) [unchanged]

(iv) to review **and monitor** the **appropriateness and** effectiveness of the financial and other internal control systems with regard to moneys and other assets for which the council is responsible;

(ivA) to ensure that appropriate assurances and processes for **review and monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of** risk management **processes and assurance reporting arrangements** are in operation;

(6) [unchanged]

SECTION G

CONNEXIONAL TREASURER/CHAIR OF THE FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE

Following a review of the role of Connexional Treasurer, the Council has adopted a revised role description for the Connexional Treasurer/Chair of the Finance Sub-Committee of the Strategy and Resources Committee. It agreed that it is no longer necessary to have more than one Connexional Treasurer, and expressed its gratitude to Mr Ted Awty as he completes his term of office.

The Council nominates the Revd Timothy A Swindell as Connexional Treasurer for a further period of two years from 1 September 2021.

***RESOLUTIONS

3/12. The Conference receives the Report.

3/13. The Conference appoints the Revd Timothy A Swindell as Connexional Treasurer for a further period of two years from 1 September 2021.

3/14. The Conference amends Standing Orders as follows:

102 Representatives of Connexional and Other Bodies. (1) The connexional committees, funds and institutions to be represented in the Conference pursuant to clause 14(2)(x) of the Deed of Union and the representation of each shall be as follows, any representative not otherwise identified being appointed by the body in question:

<i>Body</i>	<i>Representation</i>
(i) Methodist Council	(a) [unchanged] (b) The lead -connexional Treasurer. (c)-(g) [unchanged]

136 Conference Business Committee. (1) There shall be a Business Committee for the Representative Session of the Conference, consisting of:

- (i) [unchanged]
- (ii) [unchanged]

The Secretary and assistant secretary of the Conference shall be in attendance but without a vote and ~~a~~ **the** connexional Treasurer and the connexional Press Officer shall attend as consultants when required.

136A Financial Committee. (1) The Methodist Council, with a view to the discharge of its functions under Standing Orders 211(3)(vii) and 212(2) during the periods of the Conference, shall appoint a financial committee annually, consisting of the ~~lead~~-connexional Treasurer (**who shall chair the committee**) ~~or his or her representative~~, the Connexional Secretary responsible for central services, three other members of the council who are also members of the Conference, together with such other members of the Connexional Team in an advisory capacity as the council may decide.

210 The Methodist Council. (1) There shall be a Methodist Council appointed annually by the Conference which in addition to the ex-officio members shall consist of:

- (i) [unchanged]
- (iA) [unchanged]
- (iB) [unchanged]
- (ii) the ~~lead~~ connexional Treasurer appointed under Standing Order 311(1);
- (iii) to (x) [unchanged]

213 Strategy and Resources Committee. (1) The Conference shall each year appoint a Strategy and Resources Committee of the council consisting of:

- (i) [unchanged]
- (iA) [unchanged]
- (ii) the connexional Treasurers;

213A Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. (1) The Conference shall each year appoint, upon the nomination of the Methodist Council, a connexional Audit and Risk Assurance

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Committee, having the constitution and responsibilities specified below, in order to assist the council in its functions under Standing Order 212(1).

(2) [unchanged]

(3) [unchanged]

(4) When required to do so by the committee, ~~a~~**the** connexional Treasurer and any appropriate members of the Connexional Team shall also be in attendance at meetings.

311 Connexional Treasurers. (1) The Methodist Council shall nominate and the Conference shall appoint a ~~lead~~-connexional Treasurer and ~~one or more other connexional Treasurers~~, who shall ~~together~~ have oversight of the funds specified in Standing Orders 361 and 362 and Section 97 and shall ensure that the unified statement of connexional funds required by Standing Order 360(1) is prepared.

(2) [*revoked*]

(3) [*revoked*]

(4) Subject to Standing Order 316 ~~each~~**the** connexional Treasurer shall be appointed in the first instance for ~~six~~**two** years and may be appointed for further periods of one or more years thereafter. No person shall hold the office for more than twelve years consecutively except by a resolution of the council carried by a majority of 75% of those present and voting and reported, with a reasoned statement, to the Conference.

316 Curtailment. (1) [unchanged]

(2) The officer referred to in clause (1) above shall be:

- (i) in the case of the assistant secretary of the Conference, the Conference officer for legal and constitutional practice or a Connexional Secretary, the Secretary;
- (ii) in the case of ~~a~~**the** connexional Treasurer, the chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee of the Methodist Council;
- (iii)-(v) [unchanged]

Referring to the membership of the Property Development Committee:

992 Membership. (1) The voting members of the committee shall comprise up to fourteen persons, namely:

- (i) a chair, who shall be a member of the Methodist Church;
- (ii) ~~a connexional treasurer, chosen by the connexional treasurers;~~
- (iii) the Secretary of the Conference;
- (iv) three district Property Secretaries;
- (v) a representative of the Board of the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes;
- (vi) up to ~~seven~~**eight** others.

SECTION H MODEL TRUST 20 POLICY

The Council adopted a revised policy in respect of Model Trust 20, to take effect from 1 September 2021. The new policy will permit sales of Model Trust property to Methodist and non-Methodist charities at less than best price in certain circumstances and subject to conditions. Policy work in relation to leases at less than best price is ongoing alongside the proposed changes to Model Trust 14(2A) which is the subject of the Deferred Special Resolution, reported on elsewhere in this Agenda.

The policy, from 1 September 2021, is as follows:

SALES

1. *The Methodist Council will only consider authorising sales under paragraph 20(1) of the Model Trusts where the disposal is for a use as defined below (“Approved Uses”) and the body purchasing is a charity (unless consent to the disposal to a non-charitable body has been given by the Charity Commission).*
2. *Any such disposal shall be upon terms that protect the interests of the Methodist Church as far as possible in all the circumstances. The managing trustees shall give consideration to and seek professional advice on the appropriate terms of the sale. All sales at less than best price will include provisions that protect the use of the property and the future interests of the Methodist Church. These provisions shall ensure that the property can only be used for the purposes for which it is being sold and that the Methodist Church obtains a financial benefit should the property or land be sold on or the use of the property changed. Professional advice shall be obtained on the appropriate provisions, these might include or be a combination of:*
 - *reverter clause*
 - *overage provisions for a limited period or in perpetuity*
 - *positive or restrictive covenant on use*
 - *legal charge*
 - *an option for a managing trustee body as defined by paragraph 2 of the Model Trusts to purchase the building back for the original sale price.*
3. *The managing trustees seeking to sell for less than best price must also seek professional advice on the market value of the building, the possibility of a sale on the open market, the likelihood of change of use being obtained and alternatives to a sale for less than best price e.g. a lease .*
4. *The final decision on whether or not the proposed terms of the sale are acceptable rests with the Council or body to whom it has delegated the responsibility for authorising sales under paragraph 20(1) of the Model Trusts.*

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5. *Prior to making a decision on authorisation, the Council or body to whom it has delegated shall be provided with the professional advice as detailed above along with a reasoned statement for making the disposal for less than best price from the managing trustees, the Circuit Meeting and District Policy Committee (unless they are the managing trustee body). Details must be provided as to how the proposed use will be advancing the purposes of the Methodist Church as set out in section 4 of the Methodist Church Act 1976. Sales at a peppercorn or significantly below market value are unlikely to be authorised other than in exceptional circumstances.*
6. *Once the Council has approved the 'in principle' decision to sell for less than best price, completion of the sale must take place within three years from that point, failing which the Council's consent will lapse and the Council's further approval will need to be sought (which may or may not be forthcoming).*

Approved Uses

- (i) *Use by another Denomination for Christian Worship*

Any sale of Model Trust premises for less than best price to another denomination for Christian worship must prohibit the preaching or expounding of God's Holy Word or performance of any act which denies or repudiates the doctrinal standards of the Methodist Church (see clause 4 of the Deed of Union). The sale is most likely to arise where there is a need to ensure a continued Christian presence in the particular location.

- (ii) *Use for a youth centre or to permit activities for children and young people*

Model Trust 13(c) makes these activities a Methodist purpose, and at a time when the number of children and young people attending church, junior church, youth groups etc. has declined very significantly, it is appropriate to encourage and support such activities if the Methodist building is to be sold and another organisation plans to support such work. The Methodist Council in January 2011 agreed this use and that such sales would be most likely to involve some measure of Christian involvement.

- (iii) *Use as a School or other educational establishment*

Model Trust 13(e) allows such activities, which are a Methodist purpose. Education has been a pillar of Methodist policy and provision for generations, and the Methodist Council in January 2011 agreed that sales for such purposes should be considered possible if on the right terms. Again, it was felt there should be some Christian involvement or oversight.

(iv) *Housing Associations*

SO 935 permits a disposition of model trust property to a Housing Association under Model Trust 20(1).

The Methodist Council must satisfy itself that the purposes of the Housing Association are wholly charitable.

LEASES

7. *The Methodist Council in January 2021 considered the possibility of granting leases at less than market rate to other charities, and agreed that this should be introduced subject to certain conditions, including:*

- (i) *the rental value in each case should be high enough to maintain the overall value of the asset; and*
- (ii) *the lease duration should be no more than three years, and granted without security of tenure under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 (or equivalent legislation), thus enabling the Church or Circuit to keep under review its missional needs and potential to take back possession of the property in the future.*

Since the Council's discussions in January 2021, it has been recognised that the Model Trust 20 policy permitting leases to be granted at less than market rate must be aligned to the revised Model Trust 14(2A) policy allowing leases to be granted to non-Methodist congregations. Further work is required to ensure this alignment. Until then, therefore, the grant of a lease of Model Trust property at less than market rate will continue to be prohibited.

The amended policy as shown above requires changes to SO 935, which are set out in the resolution below.

***RESOLUTIONS

3/15. The Conference receives the Report.

3/16. The Conference amends SO 935 as follows:

935 Housing Associations. (1) Before authorising any disposition of model trust property to a Housing Association under paragraph 20(1) of the Model Trusts the Methodist Council shall:

- (i) satisfy itself that the purposes of the Housing Association are wholly charitable and that either the Association is subsidiary or ancillary to the Church or the disposition

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~~or grant is made in furtherance of ecumenical work or activity within the purposes of the relevant church body;~~

- (ii) consider whether the money to be granted, the property to be disposed of, or any additional proceeds which might be obtained from some other disposition of such property, are likely to be required by the managing trustees for property purposes (and to that end the ~~committee~~ **council** shall be provided with any quinquennial inspection reports, district manse inspection reports and other information which it may deem requisite);
- (iii) obtain the judgment of the District in which the model trust property or fund is situated or managed and also of the District (if different) in which the housing project is to proceed as to the nature and urgency of the housing need intended to be met.

(2) A Housing Association may at any time, notwithstanding that no specific disposition or project is before the council under clause (1) above, obtain the opinion of the council as to whether the purposes of that Association are wholly charitable ~~and whether the Association is subsidiary or ancillary to the Methodist Church.~~

SECTION I REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF THE YOUTH PRESIDENT

The 2019 Conference directed the Methodist Council to appoint a task group to review of the role of Youth President, and to report and bring recommendations to the Conference no later than 2021. The October 2019 meeting of the Council appointed a task group and agreed terms of reference for the group.

The task group has undertaken research into the background and previous reviews of the role. It has consulted with children and young people, past holders of the role, and the Faith and Order Committee. The consultation and research undertaken so far has highlighted seven key areas of interest for review, namely: purpose of the role and responsibilities, title of the post, location and base, support and training, recruitment, length of service and terms and conditions, and key relationships and partnerships. Further research will be undertaken in these areas.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions associated with that have significantly impacted the work of the task group. The 3Generate gathering did not take place in 2020, and other consultations have proved difficult under the circumstances. It is also felt that there needs to be further reflection on the implications for the role of the post holder working remotely and not undertaking physical visits.

In order to complete the consultations, and to allow more time to reflect on the impact of home-working on the role, the Council proposes that the review period is extended by one year, with a final report and recommendations brought to the Conference of 2022.

***RESOLUTIONS

3/17. The Conference receives the Report.

3/18. The Conference directs the Council to report to the Conference of 2022 with recommendations concerning the role of Youth President.

SECTION J METHODIST SCHOOLS COMMITTEE

Introduction

1. The primary purposes of the Methodist Schools Committee are to ensure positive and constructive collaboration between the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust (MAST), the Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST), the Wesley Trust, and their schools, to share resources, to encourage the development of the Methodist ethos in all our schools, and to provide annually a co-ordinated report to the Conference through the Methodist Council on behalf of all Methodist Schools (Standing Order 343A).

Joint Working and Initiatives

2. The Trusts have worked together in the following ways:
 - a. Actively engaging with the Methodist Schools Committee (MSC).
 - b. Undertaking, through the MSC, the necessary processes of discussion and identification of key areas of work required to enable the MSC to submit to the Conference a Schools' educational strategy for the Church.
 - c. Through the Ethos Development Group, chaired by the Revd Peter Whittaker, sharing experience and needs across the Trusts including, for example, the new Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) framework.
 - d. The website, www.methodistschools.org.uk, launched in September 2017 has been added to with new resources for school worship, assemblies, governance and leadership, it is due for full review during the coming year.
 - e. Supporting the merger of the Acorn and Wesley Trusts to establish the new Epworth Education Trust (which was officially recognised by the Department for Education in November 2020).
 - f. MAST webinars have been available to appropriate members of MIST schools to attend.
 - g. MIST's safeguarding consultant has provided on-line training to appropriate members of MAST schools.
 - h. MIST, MAST, the Epworth Education Trust, both severally and through MSC,

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have enjoyed closer connection to the Connexional Team (especially through the Director of Learning for Ministry).

- i. MSC are developing an emerging map of where our Trusts interface with public policy and with other Methodist founded organisations.
- j. Sharing expertise with Southlands and Roehampton: for example, the schools group contributing to teacher training sessions on diversity within Christianity and Roehampton contributing specialist training for the webinars.
- k. Contributing their experience of green initiatives, from their different perspectives, to the Church's preparation for setting emissions targets to combat climate change.
- l. By sharing experience in the Trusts and the schools on adjusting to the pandemic crisis.

MAST

3. Facts and Figures:

- The Methodist Church is a school provider in the state sector. The Council's responsibilities for the standards and ethos of its schools are delegated to MAST under SO 342.
 - The Council currently has responsibility for 66 Methodist maintained schools, educating approximately 15,000 children.
 - 26 of our schools are solely Methodist and the rest held in ecumenical partnership trust, most commonly (though not exclusively) with the Church of England. All are in the Primary phase.
 - About a half of the Methodist state schools are in the North West of England (predominantly in the Lancashire and Bolton and Rochdale Districts), with the rest scattered across England covering, in all, 40 different Local Authorities and 18 Dioceses.
 - Currently 18% children are taught in schools which have become academies in non- Methodist groups; this requires a particular kind of MAST oversight to ensure that the academy chains are honouring the schools' Methodist Trust.
 - As there have been no statutory inspections of the schools, either Ofsted or SIAMS, since March 2020, MAST cannot give the usual update against statutory or published performance indicators.
4. The period of the pandemic has been one of mixed blessings for MAST and its schools. A significant proportion of MAST schools serve communities of complex multiple deprivation, while the rest generally serve families who are 'just about managing'. In these communities, the vulnerabilities of daily living have been exacerbated by the pandemic crisis. The schools have been on the front-line in addressing the much-reported issues of food poverty, the widening of the

educational gap and digital exclusion. While some families have had positive experiences through various lockdowns, our schools have also been responding to significantly increased issues of safeguarding, heightened domestic violence and mental ill-health. This has been the backdrop for the work of MAST over the last year.

5. All our schools have risen to the challenge of working through the varying demands of the pandemic, veering between partial and full closure, often at short notice. There have been times of great enjoyment but also of anxiety and exhaustion; adapting to frequent changes of plan has been particularly difficult, often coming during the holidays or late on a Friday night. Timetables and bubbles have been organised and reorganised; testing/track and trace come and gone; risk assessments have changed almost weekly. The move to remote learning is not straightforward – for our schools two key issues have been providing equality of opportunity where families lack internet or computers, and managing the impact on the physical, social and emotional development of the youngest children – for example, schools have been delivering little packs of crayons, paper and scissors to promote the development of fine motor skills and wrist strength.

6. Despite the unexpected circumstances, the work of MAST as an organisation over the last year has flourished. The discovery of the webinar format has enabled us to offer a strong programme of training and support to our dispersed group of schools in ways not previously possible. The webinars have ranged from formal professional development for teachers and leaders (such as excellence in teaching English, Art etc), themes for school leaders and governors (such as well-being in schools and safeguarding update) and some general sessions for staff to support each other with ideas for lockdown, re-opening and remote learning. A particularly popular session was Prof Barry Carpenter of Oxford Brookes on providing for children's mental wellbeing in the full return to school. The viewing figures for the webinars have been consistently high, and the development of the MAST YouTube presence means schools can re-use the sessions as appropriate. Since first showing, for example, the Barry Carpenter webinar has registered over 500 viewings which does not, of course, take account of the times it is shown to a whole group of staff or governors.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSe5RypzzF8&feature=youtu.be> Online working has enabled MAST to strengthen partnership working with others, especially MIST, the Children, Youth and Family Ministry Team, other appropriate school provider groups, and the School of Education at the University of Roehampton, with whom we have a developing reciprocity facilitated by its Methodist-founded College, Southlands. Our links with the International Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges and Universities have also enabled us to make our contribution to the world family of Methodist Schools.

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7. Perhaps the most significant change for MAST over the last year has been the deepening of its relationships with its schools. The webinar programme has enhanced this, but it has been the care offered to schools which has been of primary importance. A series of pastoral letters, 'Watching Over One Another in Love' has combined pastoral support and spiritual encouragement. Pressured school leaders have commented they have been unable to find such support anywhere else and this has raised the importance for them of belonging to the Methodist family. The work of our Regional Leaders in Education has strengthened relationships and the sense of fellowship at a more local level. In addition, MAST has brought together the people delivering chaplaincy in our state schools (whether lay or ordained) for regular fellowship and training; attendance at this group has been strong with chaplains expressing gratitude for the opportunity to meet and telling stories of how the group is shaping their developing practice. MAST has a developing, mutually beneficial partnership with the Centre for Chaplaincy in Education, which is developing chaplaincy training on a broader scale, to which MAST has been a significant contributor. Through this work and these partnerships, we are able to develop the creativity of ministry within the schools, the depth of worship and the opportunities for working out the God-story within the school and community.
8. Anti-racist RE resources: a singular activity of note this year has been the production of ground-breaking resources for religious education. MAST initiated the idea for these and, working with the Free Church Education Committee, sourced funding from the Westhill Foundation. The resources were developed by RE Today working with a group of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) teachers and with a further BAME reference group. These have proved hugely popular and very highly regarded. Since launch in November, there have been about 2000 hits on the two different websites, with further links from the Methodist Schools website. At the national RE teacher conference in January, a further 500 teachers attended online training, bring the total of teachers trained in the first 3 months to almost 1000. Through this, MAST has made a significant contribution to the national RE scene and, through this, to the developing anti-racist curriculum in schools everywhere in the UK.
9. SIAMS: there have not been any statutory inspections of our schools since all inspections were suspended at the beginning of the pandemic. The uncertainty of when and how inspections will restart has been an ongoing question of the year.
10. MAST has not experienced a typical full financial year of activity since its set up. The first year was not a complete twelve months and the two subsequent years have been impacted by the pandemic although we have found new ways of building our contact with schools and stakeholders. As a result, it is possible

to finance an overall six years of activity from our planned income. Our future spend is closely aligned to clear priorities of need and continued strengthening of our support to and development within the state-funded Methodist schools community.

11. Governance: Mr Steven Colledge took over as the new Chair of MAST in September.

MIST

12. Facts and Figures:

- Most Methodist Independent Schools were established by groups of local Methodist communities in the nineteenth and early twentieth century following Wesley's pioneering opening of Kingswood School in 1748.
- In 1903 many were brought together by a common Trust Deed and under the ultimate control of the Board of Management for Methodist Schools (BOM). BOM was superseded by the Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) in 2011.
- There are currently 19 independent schools linked in some way to MIST: Trust Schools (8), Acquired Schools (4), Associated Schools (3), Affiliated Schools (4) – a full list and details can be found on the website: www.methodistschools.org.uk
- MIST is directly responsible as Trustees for the 8 Trust Schools and as Sole Member of the Trusts of the 4 Acquired schools; the General Secretary of MIST is a Governor at the Associated Schools and at one of the Affiliated Schools.
- There are over 10,000 pupils on roll in Methodist Independent Schools.
- Fourteen of the schools have boarders as well as day pupils.
- Three of the schools are for children of nursery and primary age only, two have pupils from 11-18 only and the rest offer continuity of education from 3 to 18.
- All of the schools are inspected by the Independent Schools Inspection Service (ISI) which reports to OFSTED; all such inspections in the past academic year have confirmed high standards in all the schools. Copies of independent school inspection reports are published on each school's website and at www.isi.net
- Chairs of District are ex-officio Governors of any Methodist Independent Schools in their District.
- MIST schools provided £5,934,000 in means-tested bursaries to help hundreds of children to attend the schools whose family circumstances would otherwise restrict access; these bursaries are funded by a mixture of

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funds raised from using school facilities out of term or school time and from diverting a proportion of the fees paid by all to support the costs of others. In addition, the Methodist Bursary Fund made awards for Methodist families attending MIST (Trust and Acquired) schools totalling £83,752 and a further £24,365 for such families attending Associated or Affiliated schools.

13. All the schools have had to adjust to new ways of working during the pandemic but, to date, have weathered the considerable financial impacts of the pandemic to date - with the single exception of a small Acquired school in Bude (St Petroc's).
14. New Heads have been appointed at Farringtons School (David Jackson) and Truro School (Andy Johnson). Kingswood (an Associated school) also has a new Head (the former Head at Truro School – Andrew Gordon-Brown). There are new Chairs at Truro School (Richard Thomas) and at The Leys Foundation (an Affiliated school – Tom Buchanan). New Chaplains have taken up their positions at Shebbear College (the Revd Donna Leigh) and The Leys Foundation (the Revd Simon Coleman). Ashville College (an Associated school) has an Acting Head (Elspeth Fisher); Richard Marshall was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer in the summer and tragically passed away at the end of November 2020.
15. We have welcomed new Trustees: the Revd Dr Jonathan Pye, Chair of the Bristol District and Governor at Kingswood School; Lady Fiona Mynors, a former Headteacher, Reporting Inspector and known to many in MIST for her work in safeguarding visits to the schools and the SSRA project; John Weaving, former Director of Finance at MIST and formerly a Governor at a MIST school. Newly in attendance at Trustee meetings, at our invitation, as a senior representative of the Connexional Team, is the Revd Dr Jonathan Dean. We also welcomed the Revd Dr Calvin Samuel as Chair of MIST following several years' excellent service provided by the Revd Dr John Barrett.
16. All MIST meetings since late March 2020 have been held electronically and we anticipate this continuing, probably until Easter, not least because the main meeting rooms at Methodist Church House remain closed. Our usual September Away Days in 2020 had to be cancelled, so too the Annual Schools Conference in April 2020 and 2021. In the meantime, there have been regular group meetings by Zoom for Heads, Junior School Heads, Designated Safeguarding Leads, Chairs and Trustees.
17. MIST and the schools are reviewing the steps that may need to be taken to ensure strong recovery after the pandemic. Some impacts are immediate (such as revised meeting arrangements), others are more speculative and long term

(revised business model/plans in light of longer-term impacts of the pandemic on the economy, on demand for places at our schools, on income and cost lines etc). All this is set in the context of our new Group Plan for 2020-25 in which we remain committed to *developing a culture that encourages and enables collaboration, communication and co-operation between the schools and MIST*. The plan seeks to deliver a financially sustainable, inclusive education that is focused strongly on both the individual and the community experience, shaped by Christian values.

18. At the start of the lockdown, there was a concern about the general availability of food - particularly for shielding individuals. Senior schools within the Group decided that – with their kitchens no longer deployed to feed their whole school community – they could feed the wider locality, offering their facilities and employees to this cause. For example, Truro School in Cornwall partnered up with a charity, *The Hive*, to produce up to 4000 meals per week for people suffering from food insecurity. Truro High School also turned over two car parks, from April onwards, to NHS staff employed at the nearby *Health Park* to accommodate their longer shift patterns.
19. With the lockdown came waves of loneliness, our elderly relatives being unable to receive visitors in care homes feeling it particularly sharply. In response to this, Kent College Canterbury students made cards for residents at *Bradbury Grange MHA*.
20. Methodist Schools recognise that we are families within a wider community of families, and all schools give of themselves and their time. Ashville College in Harrogate, for example, supported a ‘Busy Bees’ team making and distributing PPE to local care homes. They have also made and delivered story-time activities and materials to the children’s ward at *Harrogate Hospital*. PPE was also made and distributed by Kent College Canterbury, Rydal Penrhos, Queens College Taunton, Woodhouse Grove, Truro School and Truro High School. In the latest lockdown, Methodist Schools have supported local schools with access to laptops and provided pastoral support to families affected by the pandemic illness and where, sadly, schools have suffered losses among their families and staff.
21. Methodist Independent Schools are determined to continue to provide an all-round education infused with a strong Christian ethos informed by their Methodist foundation in an era of political, economic and social scepticism, uncertainty and change. Methodist Independent Schools are committed to doing everything within their power to increase the number of bursaries available to enable the offer of places to as wide a cross section of the community as possible, though several schools are currently working within the constraints of deficit budgets.

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The likelihood of business rates relief being withdrawn, and the possibility of VAT being applied to school fees threaten to make them less, rather than more, affordable. In the meantime, the pandemic has put some schools under considerable pressure, especially those with significant numbers of (especially) overseas boarders.

The Wesley Trust (now Epworth Education Trust)

22. Facts and Figures:

- There are currently 6 schools within the Epworth Education Trust (EET) all of which are primary schools.
- 3 schools have nursery provision, 2 of which provide education for 2 year olds alongside provision for 3 year olds and 4 year olds.
- The schools are all Methodist Schools based in the North West of England.
- There are approximately 1600 pupils on roll in the schools.
- There are 227 staff across the Trust.
- EET are commissioned to lead the Westleigh Start Well Family Centre in Wigan. Managing the support for the most vulnerable families and providing some of the safeguarding offer for approximately 25% of the 0-5s in Wigan.
- The Trust sponsored its first school this year following the school being categorised as requiring special measures by Ofsted.
- Within the Trust, with the exception of the sponsored school, all schools are at least good. 2 have the highest grading of outstanding.
- All schools are subject to a SIAMS and are all judged good or better. 4 of the schools have the highest grading of Outstanding/ Excellent.

23. The last year has witnessed significant change for the Epworth Education Trust, not solely due to the challenges of the pandemic but also related to the significant organisational changes it has undergone. 12 months ago, the Wesley Trust was serving three Methodist Schools in the North West. Following a period of due diligence, it was agreed to merge the Wesley Trust and the Acorn Trust (a well-established, successful Trust with two Methodist schools) in order to establish a stronger Trust utilising the strengths within each Trust. The Epworth Education Trust was approved by the DfE in August 2020 and all schools moved into the Trust on 1st November 2020.

24. The new Trust Board has an excellent set of trustees that have significant experience across a range of sectors such as education, legal, business management, and finance with many being members of the Methodist Church. They offer strong oversight of the management of the Trust. The Trust is funded through receiving a percentage of the government funding to schools, whilst the

budget is extremely tight, they manage it effectively.

25. The Trust has worked with key stakeholders to establish six core principles which will shape their work. The first states: 'We will build a family of schools with shared Methodist values, who can support their individual communities in their own unique way'. These values are present in everything we do.
26. Summerseat Methodist Primary School received a judgement of special measures during its inspection in March 2019 due to its curriculum not being effective enough. The government department responsible for academies, the Regional School Commissioner (RSC) identified the Trust to sponsor the school. Sponsorship is only awarded to Trusts that are well established and able to support rapid improvement in schools. We have supported the improvement of the school since June 2020 and the school officially joined Epworth Education Trust in December 2020. We are pleased that this support has already had a substantial impact on the improvement of the school despite the challenges of the pandemic.
27. Reflecting the national picture, the pandemic has provided major challenges to the Trust and its schools over the last year, but they have risen to the challenge of this. The commitment to collaboration within our family of schools and the Trust has proved to be an enormous strength during this period. The Trust has provided significant support in managing COVID-19 within schools such as writing risk assessments, providing summaries of government guidance or providing strategies for reopening schools which has enabled the schools and their leaders to focus on the educational and pastoral offer of the school, so it was as strong as possible. The Headteachers within our schools recognise the strength of this model in their successful delivery of education in this period.
28. Many of our schools are situated in economically deprived communities, which has created additional challenges during lockdown. As many families did not have access to appropriate technology or have adequate Wi-Fi provision, the schools have had to adapt their provision to cater for their communities. School staff have created a mixed media strategy to providing education during both lockdowns. They have continued to deliver recorded lessons and uploading them onto the learning platform whilst also have creating paper-based work packs that have been hand delivered to families. Our schools have been relentless in their pursuit of ensuring all children have the opportunity to continue to have a good education. During lockdown, Nutgrove School received the Inclusion Quality Mark for the work they undertake with children with special educational needs and vulnerable children.
29. In September 2020, as pupils returned to school full time, our schools delivered a

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recovery curriculum focused upon delivering mental health and wellbeing support alongside the wider curriculum. We had done extensive work towards the end of the summertime to plan for the return, preparing to deliver a curriculum that catered for the gaps that would have arisen during the first lockdown whilst also addressing any emotional needs that would be evident. The return of all pupils was a joyous moment for our schools as the school family were together again and pupils were keen to return to the routine of school and engaged well with learning. The gaps in learning for some pupils was huge and the schools quickly established a plan to overcome this and the impact could be seen by the end of the first term as this gap had started to narrow.

30. The pandemic has placed a torchlight upon the incredible work our schools undertake in offering pastoral care and support, not only to our pupils but also our families. They see this as living out their Methodist ethos within their communities. Providing love and care has been a priority. This has been demonstrated in a wide range of ways such as food deliveries, housing support and helping them to apply for required benefits. Our pastoral teams have offered strong pastoral support for those requiring it during the pandemic, sometimes being a listening ear but at other times proactively providing additional support. Our smallest school only has 90 pupils and is a close community. At the end of 2020, they experienced two bereavements in their community – a parent of a pupil and a long standing member of staff. The Headteacher and school staff provided incredible bereavement support to all the children and family to ensure that as a school family they worked through it together. They went the extra mile to support the community during this time, for example meeting the bereaved family every morning, for the first few months, in the school car park at 7.30am so they did not have to interact with other families whilst their emotions were so raw.
31. The Trust has also continued to provide the support to our staff during this challenging time. As staff, our two key drivers in managing the pandemic have been safety and wellbeing, they have shaped our decision making and ensured we continue to view the situation from different perspectives to ensure the right support. As a result, all of our schools have offered support to staff during this period, adjusting working patterns or places of work. Some schools have delivered wellbeing packages to staff, others regular wellbeing calls and a small group of staff have set up a mindfulness wellbeing private group on social media, available to all staff across the Trust, that offers regular insights and ideas to support well-being, even delivering online yoga lessons. Bedford Hall and Westleigh School received the Teach Well school gold award for exceptional care of the physical and emotional health of the staff during the pandemic.

32. During feedback both informally and within questionnaires, the staff and parents have spoken highly of the approach the Trust and its schools have taken during the last 12 months. They have recognised that they have chosen to live out their Methodist ethos by serving their communities and meeting them at the place of need to overcome barriers. Responses included statements such as ‘it was good to know you were always available to support us’, ‘I don’t know what I would have done without school at the moment’, ‘my school enable me to manage my workload whilst providing home schooling for my own children’. Being a lighthouse of hope within this period continues to be a priority as we know showing love, care and compassion enables us to deliver a strong education to all. The schools continue to be the church in action, as many of our school community only experience the Christian faith and the Methodist Church through the life of school.
33. Worship has continued to play a pivotal role in the life of our schools. Whilst unable to meet together, in person as a family, the schools have found strategies for ensuring this remains central to their work. They have recorded worship for pupils to watch within their classrooms or delivered live online. The schools have prayer spaces to support the pupils’ ability to explore their faith and communicate with God on key aspects of life. Pupils find worship a strong root that guides them in managing many of the situations they experience, the exploration and demonstration of the Christian faith helps them in grounding their own belief systems and faith. Chaplains continue to play a pivotal role in this work providing a strong link and joined up working between our schools and the church. Prior to the pandemic, this work was about bringing the church into the school in a variety of different ways, for example delivering ‘messy church’ in school, enabling our children and families to experience faith and church in an accessible way. These types of activities attract a broad attendance, and the families engage well with our chaplains.

Our Calling is lived out and reflected in the life and work of the Trusts and the Schools:

34. Each of the schools’ groups gives serious thought to its Christian character and the living out of what it means to be a Methodist school operating in each particular context. The joint Ethos Development Group oversees this, giving an opportunity for each sector to grow together by reflecting on practice, sharing, challenging and being challenged. As the Methodist Church seeks to deepen its own commitment to a ‘Methodist Way of Life’, our school communities are also modelling important aspects of this pattern for our living and believing¹.

1 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/life-and-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/>

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35. Our schools are denominational but not confessional. Although they are not the setting for Evangelism in its narrow sense, they offer a clear witness to the faith which undergirds our educational commitments, giving children and their families the opportunity to experience Christian values and practices, and encounter with a Christian way of living and learning together. With a community of around 25,000 children and 5,000 adults, the outreach of the Christian message through the schools is estimated at about 100,000 people, week in, week out. Through international boarding, the influence of this 'church' spreads more widely than might be imagined. Families are often initially attracted by the school's Christian foundation and the deliberate focus on values and rounded human development. However, through their encounter with explicitly Christian life and teaching, many families come to say, 'For us, you are our church'. The schools are not just part of the mission of the church, they are themselves profoundly and explicitly missional. As the Methodist Church embraces a new strategy for Evangelism and Growth, God For All, our schools will play their part in proclaiming the good news of God's love in Christ, in all the ways outlined above². In that we will reflect Methodism's generous optimism about God's grace³, at work in every human life, and our deep commitments to serving God in one another. We also hope that our schools can continue to be active partners in offering hospitality for new Christian communities in their neighbourhoods, creating 'New Places for New People', and contribute their wisdom and current experience as the Church develops its priorities, expressed in the strategy, in marginalised communities.
36. Striving to uphold the Methodist Church's vision to "increase awareness of God's presence and celebrate God's love", our schools offer creative and grounded opportunities for our students to be assured of their own worth and value, to explore what it means to live a life of worship which seeks to acknowledge and respond to God's image in all people, and to know the reality of love and grace at work in their own lives and in the world. Our schools offer frequent, moving and creative opportunities for children to worship in formal and informal settings; even during lockdown, the Pastoral Visitor and school Chaplains have provided thoughts for the day, prayers and acts of worship. Such staff have also provided support for staff children and families who have suffered all sorts of challenges through the pandemic. Our work with the chaplains has strengthened their fellowship and the confidence with which they have approached the challenges of working in our schools through the changing circumstances of the year.
37. The fellowship of community, and the possibility of being a Christian community,

2 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/>

3 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/what-is-distinctive-about-methodism/>

is an important hallmark. Our schools are committed to the search for social holiness. Community, and strong pastoral care, provides the context for our learning and caring. All our schools offer a liberal broad and balanced curriculum and all pride themselves on the extent to which they emphasise opportunities for rounded human development by expanding children's horizons through co-curricular experiences. We encourage our schools to enable children to live with contradictory convictions in many areas of life and notably, this year, some of have contributed their views to the God in Love Unites us discussions. In terms of religious education, which is under threat in many state schools, we aim for our schools to be beacons of good practice and have a growing suite of resources on our website, including for teaching about Methodism with every age group. This year we have initiated the development of anti-racism resources for use in RE classes and other contexts, reflecting the Church's commitments to be inclusive, justice-seeking and invested deeply in questions of equality and diversity⁴. These are freely available nationally to any teacher who wants them, and uptake has been rapid. Additionally, we have resources for world citizenship education, particular links with *All We Can*⁵, and opportunities for teachers to share ideas across the full curriculum. The website is also home to a range of bespoke worship resources and helpful links. Both MIST and MAST offer a fellowship for all those involved in the leadership of Methodist Schools. MAST has brought together Chaplains from MIST and MAST schools through digital coffee mornings and opportunities to support each other and learn together about new initiatives. In classrooms, extra-curricular activities and beyond the school premises, we strive to enable our students to consider what it means for them to embody the Church's commitment to others, including in questions of interfaith relationships, community engagement and self-giving compassion, through which we believe meet Christ in our neighbour, and are nurtured in our own growth and understanding.

38. Service is a strength of all our schools and one which is widely valued, regardless of individual faith conviction. Our schools have strong relationships with local charities as well as creating a global perspective through links with *All We Can*, *Edukid*, *JPIT* and *Christian Aid* particularly. Within MIST, G2L AIMS ('Global to Local' Action in Methodist Schools) continues the work of World AIMS and gives schools opportunity to maximise local contacts and staff special interests as a recognised part of their service and outreach. In the reports from each of the Trusts you will read of the outreach and service opportunities that have arisen during the pandemic. Our schools also reflect and echo the Methodist Church's

4 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/>

5 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-worldwide/all-we-can/>

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commitments to urgent current challenges, including climate change, the refugee crisis, and the misery of global poverty⁶. Students are encouraged to 'live on a large map', to engage sensitively and thoughtfully with the world they inhabit, and to cultivate habits of mind and heart which will equip them to take their place in it as wise stewards of creation and generous neighbours to all. These are reinforced by inclusion in our church school inspection framework.

*****RESOLUTION**

3/19. The Conference receives the Report.

6 See for example: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/public-issues/environment-and-climate-change/>; <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-worldwide/the-refugee-crisis/>; <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/public-issues/social-justice/>