

Conference Rules of Procedure

The rules governing the procedures of the Conference are set out in the following Standing Orders.

130 Introductory.

The rules of debate comprising the clauses of Standing Order 131 shall regulate the proceedings of the Conference, except that since much of the business of the Conference may be conducted in the form of conversations clauses (3) and (9) to (14) shall apply only when a formal resolution is under consideration.

131 Rules of Debate.

(1) In this Standing Order 'the President' means the person presiding for the time being over the Conference in accordance with the provisions of clause 28 of the Deed of Union.

(1A) Any member who wishes to speak shall catch the President's eye but shall not proceed further until called upon by the President.

(2) Every speaker shall address the President.

(3) No member may speak more than once on the same question without leave of the Conference, except in the exercise of a right of reply under clause (18) below. For this purpose an amendment or procedural motion raises a fresh question.

(4) (a) Subject to sub-clause (b) below every resolution or amendment shall be circulated beforehand in writing in the Agenda, or by other form of official report, or by notice of motion.

(b) Sub-clause (a) does not apply:

(i) to procedural motions under clause (11) below or resolutions to extend sittings of the Conference beyond the time already determined;

(ii) to resolutions submitted by the Law and Polity Sub-committee under clause (25) below;

(iii) to business taken in closed session;

(iv) to further amendments moved after a resolution has already been amended;

(v) where the Conference has dispensed with circulation under clause (19)(a) (ii) below or Standing Order 129(4)(b) or 129A or otherwise;

(vi) if the President judges it necessary for the effective conclusion of a debate to admit a resolution or amendment without prior notice.

(c) Where sub-clause (b) applies, except by virtue of head (i), the resolution or amendment shall be produced in writing when proposed, and immediately handed to the Secretary.

(5) Every resolution or amendment, except a resolution moved on behalf of a body authorised to report to the Conference, requires to be seconded in order to be submitted to the Conference. With the same exception, all movers and seconders of resolutions or amendments must be members of the Conference.

(6) Persons presenting reports may speak to the resolutions in them and may give information on any development of major importance which has arisen since publication. Otherwise reports circulated in the Agenda or otherwise shall be presented without

introductory speeches.

(7) When a resolution or amendment has been duly submitted it may not be withdrawn without the leave of the Conference.

(8) The seconder of a resolution or amendment may reserve the right to speak.

(9) (a) Any amendment of the terms of a resolution may be proposed if it is relevant to the subject-matter of the resolution, unless the same result could be achieved by the rejection of the resolution.

(b) If an amendment is carried the resolution as amended becomes the substantive motion, and as such may itself be amended under this clause.

(c) When an amendment has been duly submitted no other amendment may be moved until it has been disposed of, but any member may give notice of a proposed amendment and may state whether it is to be moved in any event or if not in what circumstances.

(10) A resolution may be disposed of by adoption (with or without amendment), rejection or withdrawal. Until it has been so disposed of no other resolution may be submitted except a procedural motion.

(11) The following are procedural motions, which may be adopted by the Conference at any time:

- (i) that the vote be now taken;
- (ii) that the question be not put;
- (iii) that the question be referred to the Methodist Council or a committee;
- (iv) that the debate be adjourned;
- (v) that the Conference adjourn.

(12) If a resolution and amendment are before the Conference:

- (i) a motion that the vote be now taken relates only to the amendment;
- (ii) a motion that the question be referred or that the debate be adjourned relates to both;
- (iii) a person moving that the question be not put must state whether that motion relates to both or only to the amendment.

(13) A motion that the vote be now taken requires a majority of two thirds and shall be voted upon without discussion, but the President shall not be bound to put it to the vote if of the opinion that there has not been adequate opportunity for necessary debate.

(14) A motion that the question be not put may be discussed concurrently with the question to which it relates.

(15) A motion that the debate be adjourned may specify the time of resumption or be a motion for adjournment to a time to be resolved upon later.

(16) A motion for the adjournment of the Conference shall specify the time of resumption.

(17) (a) Subject to any Standing Order relating specifically to particular forms of report a report contained in the Agenda or in a document supplemental to the Agenda shall be dealt with as a whole or as to each part by a resolution in one of the following forms:

- (i) that it be referred back to the reporting body or referred to the Methodist Council or a committee;
- (ii) that it be received;
- (iii) that it be adopted.

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(b) A resolution in any of these forms may contain or be accompanied by directions as to the publication or study of or any other action in relation to the report or (where appropriate) that no action be taken.

(c) Except as provided in (d) below or expressed in the resolution itself, no such resolution imports any endorsement by the Conference of any statement, opinion or recommendation in the report.

(d) By adopting a report the Conference endorses its recommendations or conclusions but not (without so stating) any reasons given for them.

(e) The Conference may qualify or limit any such adoption but shall not alter the text of any report except:

- (i) to rectify any manifest factual error; or
- (ii) to amend the terms of any passage which it is asked to endorse (whether expressly or by the operation of (d) above).

(f) The Conference may on a single motion deal en bloc with more than one resolution attached to a report, or with the resolutions to more than one report, but whenever:

- (i) an amendment is proposed to any such resolution; or
- (ii) there is a procedural motion under clause (11) above which in its original form or by a proposed amendment relates to less than all the matters before the Conference;

any matters which require to be put separately shall be so put.

(18) (a) When a vote falls to be taken, whether or not by the adoption of a motion under clause (11)(i) above, the following persons have a right to speak, and if more than one in the following order:

- (i) the seconder of the resolution or amendment to be put, if he or she has reserved the right to speak and has not already exercised that right;
- (ii) the mover of the substantive resolution, unless the question to be put is an amendment to which he or she has already spoken;
- (iii) if the question to be put is an amendment, the mover of the amendment.

(b) The person entitled to speak last under sub-clause (a) above may deal only with questions or arguments put during the debate.

(c) Before putting the question the President shall call the Conference to order and read the resolution or amendment to be put. Except on a point of order no member shall speak after the question has been put until the vote has been taken.

(19) (a) Subject to sub-clause (b) below, no decision of the current meeting of the Conference may be rescinded except by substantive resolution, and no such resolution shall be adopted unless either:

- (i) it is submitted on behalf of the Law and Polity Sub-Committee under clause (25) below; or
- (ii) it is moved upon notice in writing previously given and officially circulated (unless by a majority of two thirds the Conference has dispensed with notice) and obtains a majority of two thirds.

For the purposes of this sub-clause a resolution rescinds a previous resolution if, and only

if, it is expressed to do so, or it directly reverses the previous resolution, or the President rules that in substance it is inconsistent with the intention of the Conference in adopting the previous resolution.

(b) Any resolution which, on the advice of the financial committee given in accordance with Standing Order 136A, would result in amendment of the provisions of the connexional budget for the Methodist Church Fund proposed under Standing Order 21.2(2) shall, if moved after the budget has been adopted, require a majority of two thirds, and, if carried, shall have the effect of amending the Conference's resolution on the budget without the operation of sub-clause (a) above.

(20) A resolution to suspend a rule of debate or other provision within the Conference rules of procedure, as contained in Standing Orders 122, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134(3) and (4), 134A, 136(2C) and 136A(3) requires a majority of two thirds.

(21) The President shall call to order any speaker who departs from the question or violates the courtesies of debate.

(22) Any member may raise a point of order on the ground that the rules of debate or regulations of the Conference have been violated. The speaker then addressing the Conference shall give way until the point of order has been decided. The President decides all questions of order.

(23) (a) The following interventions in the ordinary course of business may occur, but only for substantial cause and by leave of the President:

(i) a member who thinks himself or herself misrepresented may interrupt the speaker to correct the misrepresentation;

(ii) a member may interrupt the speaker or intervene at the end of a speech to ask of the speaker a question of fact immediately connected with what is being or has been said;

(iii) brief information on uncontested matters of fact germane to the business of the Conference may be given between speeches or between items of business.

(b) A member permitted to intervene under this clause must not enter into argument nor speak to the merits of the question.

(24) Questions which relate to the rights and privileges of the Conference or of individual members, or to the order of business, have precedence.

(25) The Conference may at any time entertain without notice any resolution moved on behalf of the Conference Sub-Committee of the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity which arises out of an earlier resolution of the current meeting of the Conference, in that or an earlier session, and which seeks:

(i) to make consequential provisions; or

(ii) to amend the earlier resolution for the purpose only of – clarification, or

reconciliation with the requirements of the law or of Methodist polity, or

the avoidance of unintended results, or

the better achievement of the intention of the Conference, or

the correction of factual error, or

any other purpose considered by the Conference to be within the scope of the functions of the Law and Polity Committee; or
(iii) to rescind the earlier resolution on the ground of illegality, irregularity or impossibility or any other ground considered by the Conference to be within the scope of the above functions.

(25A) The Conference may also entertain any resolution contained in the report of the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity which arises out of a resolution of an earlier Conference and which seeks:

- (i) to amend the earlier resolution for a purpose within head (ii) of clause (25) above; or
- (ii) to rescind the earlier resolution on a ground within head (iii) of clause (25) above.

(26) The response of the Conference shall not normally be conveyed by clapping.

132 Notices of Motion.

(1) Subject to Standing Order 131(4) any two members may upon notice of motion complying with this Standing Order bring before the Conference any lawful resolution within the competence of the Conference.

(1A) Every notice of motion shall be handed to the Secretary in written form and signed by the following persons:

- (i) where the proposal is to amend a resolution and those responsible for presenting that business to the Conference are prepared to accept it, the proposer and seconder of the motion;
- (ii) where such a proposal to amend is not accepted by those responsible, the proposer and seconder and four other persons;
- (iii) in all other cases, the proposer and seconder and eight other persons.

(2) Only on matters of urgency, so judged by the President after consultation with the Vice-President, shall notices of motion in the Representative Session be accepted after 4:30pm on the third day of the session, except that a notice of motion proposing to amend a resolution circulated or materially altered on or after the first day of the session shall be accepted if lodged before the close of business on the day before the resolution is to be dealt with.

133 Memorials.

(1) The Conference may adopt, with or without amendment, or reject any reply proposed by the Memorials Committee or (if Standing Order 134(4) applies) by its convener.

(2) In relation to any one or more memorials to which replies have been proposed by the committee any two members of the Conference may, on notice of motion submitted on the first day of the relevant session, move that instead of dealing with the committee's proposed reply in the ordinary course of business the Conference shall debate a resolution based on the relevant memorials, and if such a motion is carried the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Conference shall make arrangements accordingly.

(3) If there is a debate pursuant to Standing Order 138(5) or clause (2) above any resolution or amended resolution then adopted by the Conference is its reply to the relevant memorials.

(4) Subject to clause (5) below the Conference shall reply to every memorial, although it is open to the Conference as its interim reply to refer the memorial to the Methodist Council or a committee for consideration and report. Rejection of a proposal that a memorial be declined is not itself a reply. It is the responsibility of the convener of the committee to ensure that if the Conference rejects the proposed reply of the committee under clause (1) above or fails to adopt any resolution under clause (3) above consideration of the matter is not closed until a reply has been adopted.

(5) The committee may recommend that the Conference instead of replying to a memorial refer the questions raised to Synods and/or to Circuit Meetings for consideration or action without itself expressing a judgment on the substance of the issue. In such a case, the committee shall recommend whether Synods and Circuit Meetings are to report their conclusions to the Conference and, if so, a timetable for such report.

134 District Resolutions.

(1) Resolutions and reports submitted under Standing Order 419(2) in due time shall be printed in the Agenda. If a report is included the cost of printing shall be a charge on the District.

(2) [revoked]

(3) Such resolutions shall be moved and seconded in the Conference by representatives of the District and shall, subject to any recommendation from the Business Committee, be debated.

(4) If it appears likely to the Business Committee that the Conference will not, in the time available, be able to debate all such resolutions adequately, it may recommend to the Conference that one or more of such resolutions be dealt with instead as memorials. If the Conference adopts such a recommendation, the convener of the Memorials Committee shall, after such consultation as he or she thinks appropriate, frame a proposed reply, which shall be printed for the Conference in an order paper.

134A En Bloc Business.

(1)(a) The Business Committee shall consider, taking into account the recommendations of the Memorials Committee made under Standing Order 138(5A), which resolutions to which sub-clause (b) of this Standing Order applies are unlikely to become provisional resolutions or to give rise to opposition or debate or to require amendment other than within sub-clause (e) below. It shall, no later than the opening of the Representative Session, table a list of such resolutions with notice of its intention to invite the Conference in due course to adopt all such resolutions en bloc.

(b) This clause applies to all resolutions in the Agenda or otherwise circulated before the opening of the Conference except those for the confirmation of provisional resolutions, or for the adoption or confirmation of special resolutions under Standing Order 126, and except resolutions relating to Conference Statements under Standing Order 129.

(c) Subject to sub-clause (e) below any resolution, including any recommended reply to a memorial, which becomes the subject of an amending notice of motion shall be removed from the list. In addition, by giving notice to the Secretary of the Conference in writing before the close of business on the third day of the Representative Session, any six members of the Conference may, without proposing an amendment, require any item or items, except a recommended reply to a memorial, to be removed from the list. The Business Committee itself shall be free at any time before the resolutions are moved to remove any item or items from the list.

(d) The resolutions remaining in the list shall not earlier than the fourth day of the Representative Session be moved en bloc and voted upon without discussion.

(e) A need to make minor corrections to the text of any resolution on the list shall not necessitate its removal, and it may be moved under sub-clause (d) above as corrected. The Business Committee shall decide all questions as to the application of this sub-clause.

(2) The Business Committee may also advise, in the exercise of its functions under Standing Order 136(2A)(c), that such resolutions based upon the recommendations of reference groups as it considers appropriate for such procedure should also be moved en bloc and voted upon without discussion. Sub-clause (1) c) shall apply to the removal of any resolution from that procedure, provided the notice is duly given before the close of business on the day upon which such advice is circulated to the Conference.

135 Closed Sessions.

(1) The Conference may at any time meet in closed session and shall do so when hearing any appeal arising out of any charge within Part II.

(2) [revoked]

(3) During any closed session other than one for the hearing of an appeal within Part II no one may be present except members of the Conference entitled to vote on the business under consideration and any other persons or classes of persons whom the Conference may for the time being resolve to admit.

136 Conference Business Committee.

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

- (i) an ex-President or ex-Vice-President, appointed by the previous Conference upon the nomination of the Methodist Council to serve for a period of three years, who shall chair the committee and who shall, whether or not a member in any other capacity, be a member of the Conference during the period of appointment; and
- (ii) three ministerial and three lay members of the Conference elected in accordance with clause (1A) or appointed under clause (1C).

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

(1A) Where there will be a vacancy in the elected membership of the committee for the

next Conference, an election shall be held after nomination by members of the current Conference. Each nomination shall be signed by a proposer and seconder. It shall contain the District and Circuit in which the person being nominated is stationed or is a member, current appointment or current offices within the church, age, occupation, and any other relevant information (up to fifteen words). No member shall nominate more than one person. In electing such members, the Conference shall consider the composition of the committee with regard to age, sex and ethnic origin. The election shall be by single transferable vote and the chair of the Business Committee or his or her representative shall be the returning officer. The returning officer shall declare the persons elected to serve, together with two persons in each category as reserves in the event of any person who received a higher number of votes, or a continuing member under clause (1B), not being a member of the next Conference or not being able or willing to attend. Such reserves shall serve for the period for which the person originally elected would have served and shall not be eligible for immediate re-election. (1B) Committee members shall be elected for three years and shall not be eligible for immediate re-election. If an elected member is not a member of or is unable to attend the next ensuing or one of the subsequent Conferences the appointment shall lapse and the vacancy shall be filled in accordance with clause (1A) or (1C). (1C) If it becomes clear during the course of the connexional year that there will be a vacancy on the committee which cannot be filled in accordance with the above provisions, the Methodist Council shall have the power to appoint a member from amongst the members of the next Conference. Such appointment shall be for that Conference only. (2) The committee shall meet before and during the sessions of the Conference as may be necessary and shall have the following responsibilities:

- (i) to draw up the order of business in the Conference and to allocate time to each item;
- (ia) to identify the resolutions which it proposes shall be moved en bloc under Standing Order 134A;
- (ii) to recommend to the Conference which notices of motion should be debated in the Conference and at what time, and which should be dealt with in some other way, and for what reason;
- (iii) to review at the end of each day the business allocated to the day but not completed and to advise the Conference how it should be dealt with;
- (iv) to recommend to the President and Vice-President items of business for which they might invite members of the Conference to indicate to the committee in advance a wish to speak, and to offer advice to the President and Vice-President so as to enable a representative range of views to be heard in any such debates;
- (v) to identify matters which are appropriate to be dealt with through any of the processes set out in clause (2A) below and to make the necessary arrangements, including assigning the members of the Conference to such groups as may be required.

(2A) (a) The committee may arrange for matters of general concern, not being dealt with in the formal business of the Conference, to be discussed in workshops or similar groups and

shall advise the Conference on the procedure by which any issues raised in those discussions may be taken forward.

(b) The committee may identify items of Conference business which, because of the detail involved or the complexity of the issues, can profitably be explored in depth in hearings or group discussion before being debated in full Conference, and may advise the Conference whether, and if so how, the results of such exploration are to be reported.

(c) The committee may advise that certain items in the business of the Conference be dealt with in reference groups, with the expectation that the recommendations of such groups will be dealt with by the Conference en bloc under Standing Order 134A(2).

(2B) The committee may recommend that the Conference deal with any business by referring the questions raised to Synods and/or to Circuit Meetings for consideration or action without itself expressing a judgment on the substance of the issue. In such a case, the committee shall recommend whether Synods and Circuit Meetings are to report their conclusions to the Conference and, if so, a timetable for such reports.

(2C) The committee shall arrange for the budget for the Methodist Church Fund proposed by the Methodist Council under Standing Order 212(2) to be presented and considered not later than the fourth day of the Representative Session. The formal resolution for its adoption, and the consequent resolution as to the allocation to the respective Districts of the assessments, shall be moved on the final day of the Representative Session.

(3) All recommendations of the committee shall be reported daily to the Conference for approval or amendment. The person presiding shall have the power to limit the length of any debate on procedural questions arising from the committee's report.

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 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.

(2) The committee shall meet before and during the sessions of the Conference as necessary, shall identify all resolutions in the Agenda or otherwise circulated to the Conference which would have financial implications, other than those for which provision has already been made in the budget, and shall notify the Conference accordingly.

(3) In relation to all such resolutions which, if adopted, would result in increased costs the committee shall advise the Conference, prior to any debate or vote upon them,

(i) whether, if adopted, the costs can be accommodated within the Council's proposed budget;

(ii) if not, what additional resources are estimated to be required to carry them out, and the timescale within which the work might be started and completed;

(iii) whether the cost of the proposal, if adopted, should be substituted for some other item of expenditure, or treated as an addition, and, in the latter case, the

source of the additional funds required;

(iv) if there are several such proposals before the committee, what priority should be given to each.

The committee's advice shall, except in emergencies, be conveyed to the Conference in writing.

122 Provisional Resolutions.

(1) If the Conference judges that any resolution which it has adopted is of such significance that it ought to be considered by the Synods and confirmed before coming into effect it may declare that it shall be a provisional resolution. If the resolution is being dealt with as shared business under clause 24(c) of the Deed of Union, such a declaration by the Conference in either of the sessions dealing with the business shall be effective.

(2) Notice shall be given of any motion for such a declaration either by means of a notice of motion which complies with Standing Order 132 or by the inclusion of a resolution to that effect in the report upon that business contained in the Agenda. Where notice is given before the adoption of the substantive resolution to which it relates the motion shall not be considered by the Conference until after such adoption.

(3) Provisional resolutions shall be submitted to the Synods of the home Districts and to the Law and Polity Committee, each of which may approve, disapprove or approve with amendments. Provisional resolutions shall be submitted for confirmation to the next annual meeting of the Conference with a report of the opinions of the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee, and shall take effect only if then confirmed.

(4) The Conference may direct that the whole or some specified part of the text of any report leading to the adoption of a provisional resolution be submitted with it to the Synods. Unless it does so the Secretary of the Conference shall ensure that a brief summary of the arguments for and against the resolution and of the implications of adopting or declining it is prepared for the same purpose. The resolution and the above text or summary, as the case may be, shall be distributed by the district officers to all members of the Synod before its meeting. The district Policy Committee may arrange for such consultation within the District as it thinks fit before the Synod expresses its judgment.

(5) Provisional resolutions submitted to the Synods under clause (3) above shall be dealt with in their Representative Sessions and, if falling within one or more of the categories defined in heads (i), (ii) and (iii) of sub-clause 24(c) of the Deed of Union and dealt with under that clause, also in their Presbyteral Sessions.

(6) On receiving the reports of the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee upon a provisional resolution the Conference may confirm it unamended or may decline to confirm it, or may confirm it with amendments, and in the last event may, by the procedure of clauses (1) and (2) above, declare that the resolution as so amended shall itself be a provisional resolution.

NOTE: Throughout this Agenda, in amendments to the Deed of Union, Model Trusts and Standing Orders, matter to be deleted is usually shown ~~thus~~ and matter to be inserted **thus**. The surrounding text is printed to show the context of the proposed amendments, where this is not otherwise plain.