

## Notice of Motion 2018/112: Marriage and Relationships

The Conference expresses its thanks to the Marriage and Relationships Task Group for the care they have taken to reach this point. It is deeply disappointing that a draft statement could not be brought to the Conference this year as directed. The Conference recognises that the emerging theology of marriage and relationships does need full and careful consideration but that such consideration will not, in itself, address the specific question of whether some Methodist Churches could be venues for solemnising same-sex marriages and whether any Methodist ministers, members or probationers could officiate at such services.

The Conference believes that the missional imperative of this question, and the need to give a clear message of continued affirmation and love to LGBT+ members of the Methodist Church, require that this question be clearly answered before 2020 or 2021. It is already five years since legislation to allow Same-Sex Marriages was passed in England and Wales and legislation in Scotland was passed the following year. The Conference is aware that there are some ministers, members and probationers and churches who would gladly participate in the solemnisation of same-sex marriages as well as those who would not feel able in conscience to do so. The Conference believes we must try to honour the consciences of all in this area. This could be done by allowing those ministers and churches who feel so called by God to solemnise same-sex marriages, whilst protecting the right of those who do not wish to do so to refrain.

In the report “27. Marriage and relationships task group: Interim report” therefore:

Renumber existing resolution 27/2 as resolution 27/7

Add new resolutions as follows:

- 27/2. The Conference resolves that the solemnisation of same-sex marriages may occur on Methodist premises and may be conducted by Methodist ministers, probationers or members authorised to conduct marriages. Accordingly, as the relevant governing authority of the Methodist Church, the Conference gives consent for the purposes of the Marriage Act 1949 as amended by the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 and authorises the managing trustees or other relevant trustee body of Methodist premises to register those premises for the solemnisation of same-sex marriages or to take such other steps (if any) as may legally be required to enable the solemnisation of such marriages to take place on those premises.**
- 27/3. The Conference resolves, for the purposes of the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 as amended by the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014, that Methodist ministers, probationers or members may be nominated by the Methodist Church in Scotland to the Registrar General in Scotland to be registered to solemnise same sex marriage.**

**27/4. The Conference resolves, as the relevant governing authority of the Methodist Church, that Methodist managing trustees of premises shared with other denominations may consent to the registration of such premises for the solemnisation of same-sex marriage.**

**27/5. The Conference amends Standing Order O11A as follows:**

**O11A Marriage.** (1) The Methodist Church believes that marriage is a gift of God and that it is God's intention that a marriage should be a life-long union in body, mind and

spirit of one man and one woman. The Methodist Church welcomes everyone, whether or not a member, who enquires about an intended marriage in any of its places of worship.

***(1A) Some Methodists believe that God also gives the gift of marriage to same-sex couples, intending their marriage to be a life-long union in body, mind and spirit.***

(2) Divorce does not of itself prevent a person being married in any Methodist place of worship.

***(2A) Subject to the provisions of clause (2B) below, a minister, probationer or member who is authorised to conduct marriages may officiate at a same-sex marriage.***

***(2B) A same-sex marriage may only be solemnised on Methodist premises if the managing trustees so permit (where applicable) and all other relevant legal requirements have been satisfied.***

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

(4) A minister, probationer or member who is authorised to conduct marriages but who for reasons of conscience will never officiate at the marriages of couples in particular circumstances shall refer such couples to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented, ***except that, whilst all couples seeking marriage should expect a respectful and welcoming response, there is no obligation to make a referral in the case of same-sex couples.***

**27/6. The Conference directs that Resolutions 27/2, 27/3, 27/4 and 27/5 be treated as provisional legislation under Standing Order 122.**

Proposed: The Revd Mark Rowland

Seconded: The Revd Delyth A Liddell

(Signed by 4 other members of the Conference)

1. The Revd Julia Skitt
2. The Revd Dr Helen E Jenkins
3. Mr Matt Collins
4. Mrs Anna Malnutt