

Marriage and Relationships

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Status of Paper	Final
Resolution	88/1. The Council receives the report.

Decisions of the 2018 Conference and Process for the Conferences of 2019 and 2020

1. The Conference adopted Resolution 27/1, to receive the Interim Report of the Marriage and Relationships Task Group (Item 27 of the Agenda of the 2018 Conference - see <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/8031/conf-2018-27-marriage-and-relationships-250518.pdf>) [Daily Record 7/17/1]. But Resolution 27/2 in that report about a proposed way of proceeding to future Conferences was withdrawn and replaced with what follows below [Daily Record 7/17/5].
2. The Conference adopted Resolution 27A/1 to receive the Additional Report from the Marriage and Relationships Task Group (Item 27A of the Agenda as printed in the Order Paper and in the Daily Record – see <https://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-2018-27-Marriage-and-Relationships.pdf> pages 9-10) [Daily Record 7/17/2 and 7/17/3].
3. The Conference adopted as Resolution 27A/2 the way of proceeding set out in paragraph 5 of the Additional Report [Daily Record 7/17/4]. That paragraph states that

Of the matters referred to the Task Group the most pressing issues concern the Church's understanding of relationships and marriage. Such matters could be dealt with by a report to the Conference that sets out a number of theological arguments. A report would not be as detailed as a Conference Statement, but would enable the Conference to reach a view on how the church defines marriage and for that view to be the subject of connexion wide consultation. The same report could include any changes to standing orders were the definition of marriage to change. Such a report would be treated as provisional resolution under SO 122. It would be submitted to the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee for approval, disapproval, or approval with amendments. This would take place during the year 2019-2020. The Conference of 2020 would then be in a position to make a final decision with any provisions implemented with immediate effect. None of this prevents a Statement of the Conference being presented at a later stage.
4. The Conference also adopted Notice of Motion 203 [Daily Record 7/17/8 as amended at 8/53/1-2] which directed the Task Group to ensure that the recommendations to be brought to the Conference include options for “a way forward that is consistent with the existing commitment to live with contradictory convictions” and enable, amongst other things, “those who feel called by God to solemnise same sex marriages to do so” and “protection for ministers, probationers, members and churches prevented by conscience from participation in such services”.
5. The procedure under Standing Order 122 means that the report submitted by the Task Group to the 2019 Conference will contain a number of recommendations or proposed changes to Standing Orders which will each be the subject of a specific resolution which would be submitted to the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee (as indicated above).

6. As paragraph 6 of the Additional Report goes on to say, *“Nothing would prevent Local Churches, Circuits and individual members of the Methodist Church feeding in opinions through their Synods”*. The 2019 Conference will be asked to encourage them to do so. The Connexional Team will work with the Task Group to provide resources to support that process. Those resources will be available in the summer of 2019, following the Conference.
7. It is therefore important that Local Churches, Circuits and others plan now, in the light of the date of their Synod at which the voting on the provisional resolutions will take place, for any meetings or consultations that they wish to hold.
8. Informed conversation and engagement with some of the underlying issues in this debate, and of their potential implications, can also begin during this coming connexional year leading up to the 2019 Conference. In the light of the positive response to the Workshops at the 2018 Conference, the Task Group has worked with the Connexional Team to provide resources to support this, including a 20 minute video presentation leading to some questions for discussion [see <https://www.methodist.org.uk/MandR>].

Timetable

9. The Task Group met on 7 August 2018, and will meet again on 15 October 2018.
10. August 2018: The Connexional Team worked with the Task Group to provide resources for information/consultation on particular issues.
11. August 2018: Synod Secretaries were informed of the process set out in this paper, for them to inform Synod members, and also to start planning in the District for the consultation process in 2019-20.
12. 15-16 October 2018: Methodist Council to be informed of the process set out in this paper and any updates; and advised that text of the report to the 2019 Conference will not be brought to the Council.
13. August – December 2018: The Task Group works to produce first draft of report to 2019 Conference.
14. December 2018: Faith and Order Committee
15. January – March 2019: The Task Group will revise and rewrite the report to produce the final version.
16. January to March 2019: the Connexional Secretary, the Assistant Secretary of the Conference, and the Chair of the Task Group will oversee collaboration between the Task Group, the Connexional Team and the Secretariat in order to produce presentational material to accompany the report when it is published, and resources for the consultation period following the 2019 Conference.
17. End of March 2019: the final version of report will be submitted for printing in Volume 1 of the Conference Agenda
18. May 2019: the Report will be published in Volume 1 of the Conference Agenda
19. End of June – beginning of July 2019: Methodist Conference
20. July – August 2019: production of resources to support the consultation process

21. September 2019: Presentation of the report at Synods with explanation of consultation process
22. September 2019– Spring 2020: Consultation period
23. Autumn 2019: Law and Polity Committee will consider any amendments to standing orders.
24. March/April/May 2020: votes in Synods
25. May – June 2020: production of a report to the 2020 Conference on the results of the voting etc
26. July 2020: Methodist Conference – final decision.

*****RESOLUTION**

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