

37. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity (2)

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SECTION F

SPECIAL RESOLUTION 24/6 (2024): MODEL TRUST 26 MEMORANDUM OF CONSENT PROCESS

In 2023 the committee brought a proposal to the Conference to remove the memorandum of consent process in Model Trust 26, as modern-day legislation governing disposals of charity land in England and Wales means that purchasers of Model Trust property no longer need the additional assurance of a memorandum of consent to protect them.

The 2023 Conference therefore agreed (by Special Resolution 42/5) to amend Model Trust 26 by deleting the definition of 'memorandum of consent' in sub-paragraph (1) and deleting sub-paragraphs (3) and (4).

The intention was that after appropriate consultation the proposed amendments to Model Trust 26 would be brought back to the Conference for confirmation (again by Special Resolution) in 2024.

Unfortunately, the proposed amendments to Model Trust 26 were not submitted to the relevant Synods for consideration, meaning the 2024 Conference was not able to confirm the Special Resolution. The process therefore needed to begin again and the 2024 Conference duly re-adopted the Special Resolution (as Resolution 24/6) to enable the appropriate consultation to take place before being brought for confirmation or otherwise in 2025.

The appropriate consultation has now taken place with the Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Scotland and Shetland Synods as required by Standing Order 126(1)(a), and also with the Connexional Council under Standing Order 126(1)(c).

The Connexional Council welcomed the opportunity to remove the burdensome memorandum of consent process in England and Wales and voted to approve the Special Resolution.

However, during the course of the consultation the committee was advised that Scotland's charity legislation does not offer the same protection for purchasers as that of England and Wales. This means that the memorandum of consent provisions in Model Trust 26 are still relevant for sales and other disposals of Model Trust property in the Scotland and Shetland Districts.

On that basis, the Scotland and Shetland Synods were advised to reject the Special Resolution.

The Isle of Man Synod also voted to reject the Special Resolution, but the Synod is taking advice on its legal position and will report back to the committee in due course.

The outcome of the consultation with the Channel Islands Synod will be reported in the Order Paper.

As required under SO 126(1)(d) and SO 122(3), the committee now submits Special Resolution 24/6 to the Conference again with advice on how to proceed. The Conference is reminded that approval of a special resolution requires a majority of 75% of those present and voting.

However, since it has become evident during the consultation process that Scotland and Shetland still require the protection of Model Trust 26, the committee advises that the proposed amendments to Model Trust 26 should not be made and therefore invites the Conference **not** to confirm the Special Resolution, ie to vote against it.

In 2024, pending the outcome of the consultation process and on the advice of the Law and Polity sub-committee [1DR/5/7/1 at paragraph 5], the Conference also passed Resolution 24/4 to disapply the memorandum of consent process in England and Wales.

Assuming that the Conference declines to confirm Special Resolution 24/6 to amend Model Trust 26, the committee advises the Conference to re-confirm Resolution 24/4 of 2024 and direct that no memoranda of consent shall be executed in England and Wales from now on, notwithstanding the (unamended) provisions of Model Trust 26.

The Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Scotland and Shetland Synods were consulted on the proposed amendments, as required by Standing Order 126(1)(a). All four Synods voted against the amendments.

***RESOLUTIONS

37/1. The Conference received the Report.

37/2. DECLINED

37/3. The Conference, noting that the execution of a memorandum of consent under paragraph 26 of the Model Trusts no longer serves a useful purpose in England and Wales and that in practice the preparation and execution of such memoranda is burdensome and time-consuming, directed that no further such memoranda in respect of property in England and Wales shall be executed.

SECTION G

STANDING ORDERS 110 AND 110A – ELECTIONS FOR THE PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE

The Conference of 2024 adopted a revised policy for electing the President and Vice President and directed the committee to prepare new Standing Orders to give effect to this. Details of the revisions to the current process are contained in Section H of the Methodist Council's report to the 2024 Conference,² for which the committee proposes the following amendments to Standing Orders:

110 President and Vice-President.

...

(4) They shall work in conjunction with the Secretary of the Conference and support ~~his or her~~ **the Secretary's** ministry of strategic management and the development of the Church's vision. Through their membership of the Connexional Leaders' Forum they shall offer support and encouragement to its members in the exercise of their responsibilities and contribute to its discussions concerning the well-being and calling of the Church.

...

110A Designation and Election. (1) *The Connexional Council shall consider annually a role description and person specification for the offices of President and Vice-President prepared by the Business Committee and shall approve each description, with such amendments, if any, as the Business Committee may agree, no later than the last day of February in each year. After approval, the Secretary of the Conference shall ensure that the role descriptions and person specifications are available to any persons interested in being nominated to either office.*

(1A) *No later than the last day of February in each year* ~~Before the opening of the~~ **Conference** the Secretary of the Conference shall in writing invite **prospective** members **of the forthcoming meeting of the Conference** to submit nominations, on a form provided, for the designation of the President and Vice-President in accordance with clauses 26 and 27 of the

¹ <https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf-2024-daily-record-complete.pdf>

² <https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf-24-pc-22-methodist-council-2.pdf>

Deed of Union. ***The invitation shall specify the date by which nomination forms should be submitted to the Secretary, that date being no later than 15 May. Public notice shall be given that the invitation has been sent.***

(2) Each nomination shall be signed by five ministerial and five other members of the Representative Session of the Conference. No person shall sign more than one nomination for the designation of the President nor more than one nomination for the designation of the Vice-President. ***The invitation referred to in clause (1) shall specify the forms of signature which will be acceptable for the purposes of this clause.***

(3) Each nomination, in addition to specifying the name and District and Circuit in which the person nominated is stationed or is a member, shall contain a reasoned statement ***written in consultation with the nominee and with reference to the criteria in the person specification*** up to 200 words in support of the nomination.

(4) ~~Clause (3) above is directory only, and omission of or inaccuracy in any or all of the information given shall not invalidate an otherwise valid nomination.~~

(4A) The Secretary shall obtain in respect of each nominee two letters of support written by suitable persons with knowledge of the nominee's background, experience and ministry. The council shall issue guidance for the purposes of this clause, but in the case of a nomination for President at least one letter shall be from a ministerial colleague or District Chair.

(4B) Subject to clause (4C) below, after receiving the letters of support referred to in clause (4A) above, the Secretary of the Conference shall ensure that each nominee for the post of President or Vice-President is invited for a discernment conversation with the President, Vice-President or Secretary or with one of their predecessors.

(4C) A person considering nomination but in respect of whom no nomination form has yet been received may request the Secretary of the Conference to invite that person to such a discernment conversation before 1 May in the relevant year. If a discernment conversation takes place in such circumstances and the relevant person subsequently becomes a nominee, the Secretary of the Conference may decide that no further discernment conversation is required.

(4D) No nomination shall be presented to the Conference without a discernment conversation in accordance with clause (4B) or clause (4C) having taken place.

(4E) The names of those nominated and the nominators, the reasoned statements and an assurance that the discernment conversation has taken place shall be published in the printed Agenda of the Conference.

~~(5) Nomination papers shall be collected during the first three days of the Representative Session, unless the Conference otherwise determines, and shall be displayed for 24 hours before a vote is taken. Before the vote is taken, the Secretary of the Conference shall seek from each nominee an assurance of willingness to serve, if elected, and shall report the outcome to the Conference.~~

(6) Voting shall be by single transferable vote and the chair of the Business Committee or ~~his~~ ***or her the chair's*** representative shall be the returning officer.

(7) Subject to clause (8) below the Conference shall at each annual meeting vote on the resolution that the President-designate be elected President, and similarly as to the Vice-President-designate.

(8) If such a resolution is not carried, or if the President-designate or Vice-President-designate has died, or ceased to be qualified for the office, or is incapable of acting or unfit to act or unwilling to be elected, then the Conference shall by ballot elect some other qualified person to be the President or Vice-President, and clauses (1) to (6) above shall apply to that election as to a designation, with such variations in procedure as may, in the judgment of the Conference, be required by the circumstances.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

37/4. The Conference received the Report.

37/5. The Conference amended Standing Orders 110(4) and 110A as set out above.

SECTION H

DATA PROTECTION STANDING ORDERS

The committee proposes the following Standing Order amendments in relation to Data Protection matters.

1. Standing Order 015(3A) Archives

A small amendment to Standing Order 015(3A) is recommended to enable records of deceased persons, which are not subject to the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), to be made available earlier than the current restriction of seventy-five years in circumstances where the records do not contain sensitive material about other persons who may still be alive. The amendment is as follows:

(3A) A restriction on access of seventy five years from the date of the last entry in the relevant document shall apply to records of a confidential nature, including correspondence, papers and machine-readable records containing personal details of a sensitive nature relating to individuals **who are still alive** in respect of complaints, disciplinary procedures, interviews, invitations, stationing, pastoral matters, case-studies and assessment files, and the responsible supervisor shall inform the depositor accordingly in writing whenever such records are deposited.

2. Standing Order 054 Oversight

In consultation with the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee, the committee's Data Protection working group has undertaken a thorough review of Standing Order 054 to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR. The committee's proposed amendments to Standing Order 054 are set out below. Connexional guidance for managing trustees on the application of this Standing Order is being prepared and will be published as soon as it is available.

During the course of the review, it became apparent that Standing Orders 055 (Transfers) and 056 (Appeals) also require amendment to comply with Data Protection legislation, but this work will involve changes to policy and practice before any draft amendments can be proposed. The committee therefore asks the Conference to direct the Faith and Order Committee to consider the policy issues involved and to work with the committee to draft the Standing Order revisions that may be required.

054 Oversight – Registers and Records. (1) The names of all persons, whether children or adults, who have been baptized shall be entered into a baptism register kept for the purpose in each Local Church or Circuit.

(2) A ~~roll~~**record** of baptized children ~~shall~~**may** be kept and ~~periodically~~**if kept should be** reviewed **annually** by the Church Council of each Local Church- **for the purpose of ensuring appropriate oversight of those who have been baptized and to ensure that suitable opportunities are offered to support their** ~~The council shall satisfy itself that all possible oversight of such children is maintained and suitable instruction given, as they are able to receive it, to prepare them for Christian discipleship.~~

(3) The names of all children for whom thanks have been given in a public act of thanksgiving after their birth or adoption ~~must~~**may** be entered into a thanksgiving **record** ~~register kept for the purpose in~~ each Local Church or Circuit separately from the register of baptisms.

(4) The names of all persons who have been confirmed in a service of public worship shall be entered into a confirmation register kept for the purpose in each Local Church or Circuit.

(5) The Pastoral Committee **(or Church Council if no Pastoral Committee is appointed)** shall record ~~in a book or roll, to be kept for the purpose,~~ the names of all the members of the Methodist Church belonging to the Local Church, and shall examine the ~~roll~~**record** name by name not less than once in each year.

(6) The number of members returned for each Local Church shall be recorded in the minutes of the Church Council after each annual review.

(7) ***In addition to the record of members, the Pastoral Committee (or Church Council if a Pastoral Committee is not appointed)*** ~~The Church Council shall establish a community roll or card-index system in which the names of all~~ ***other persons*** ~~those who are within the pastoral care of the Local Church shall be recorded. This shall include baptized children (whether or not baptized), children in family church or Sunday school and adolescent or adult~~ ***young people and adherents as well as members of any age.***

(8) ~~Every effort shall be made to lead those who are not members to the commitment involved in membership and to this end the~~ ***The community*** ~~roll shall be reviewed not less than once in each year~~ ***to ensure its accuracy and so that every effort may be made to lead those who are not members to the commitment involved in membership.*** ~~A name shall be taken off the roll only when it is clear that the person has completely severed connection with the local community of the Church.~~

(9) The procedure of transfer set out in Standing Order 055 shall apply to those whose names are on the community roll as well as to members.

(10) The number on the community roll, ~~including members,~~ shall be recorded in the minutes of the Church Council after each annual review.

(11) The name of a person who has ceased to be a member pursuant to clause 10(a) or (c) of the Deed of Union shall ***not*** be retained on the community roll unless ~~he or she requests that this shall not be so~~ ***consent has been given by that person.***

(12) ***The presbyter in pastoral charge, or such other person as shall be appointed by the Church Council or the Circuit meeting, shall report in the annual return the*** ~~The numbers set out on the membership record roll and the community roll shall be reported by the Superintendent to the secretary of the Synod and by him or her to the Chair of the District.~~

(13) In all returns of membership the number of members shall exclude persons in training for membership.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

37/6. The Conference received the Report.

37/7. The Conference amended Standing Orders 015(3A) and 054 as set out above.

37/8. The Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee and the Law and Polity Committee to undertake the policy and drafting work required to bring Standing Orders 055 and 056 into line with current Data Protection legislation and to report the outcome of that work, together with any proposed Standing Order amendments, to the 2027 Conference.

SECTION I

M20 (2023) AND STANDING ORDER 650(6) - CHARITABLE GIVING BY LOCAL CHURCHES

In 2023 by way of Memorial M20 the Notting Hill Circuit Meeting asked for clarification about the ability of Church Councils to make donations to non-Methodist charities such as Christian Aid and the Fund for Human Need. They had received conflicting advice: namely that this was possible under Standing Order 650(6)(v); and that the Methodist charitable purposes in Standing Order 650(6)(i) to (iii) took precedence such that donations could not be made to non-Methodist charities under subclause (6)(v) until all possible Methodist causes had been satisfied.

In its reply, the Conference clarified that the Law and Polity Committee considered the first view to be correct, namely that a Church Council could donate to non-Methodist charities under Standing Order

650(6)(v) but should exercise responsible stewardship of its funds and give due weight to the claims of Methodist causes. It would also need to ensure that the non-Methodist charitable purposes in question were not contrary to Methodist purposes or discipline, as stated in the Standing Order.

The Conference, by way of interim reply, referred the memorial to the Methodist Council and Law and Polity Committee, for consideration and report to a later Conference. The committee has completed its consideration and now proposes a small amendment to the Standing Order to make its meaning clearer, as appears below. The committee also suggests a small amendment to include a cross-reference to subclause (iA) that had been omitted, and a deletion to remove the reference in subclause (iv) to the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust. The latter, being no longer an exclusively Methodist charity, is better included within the general provision of Standing Order 650(6)(v).

***RESOLUTIONS

37/9. The Conference received the Report.

37/10. The Conference amended Standing Order 650(6) as follows:

~~(iv) the support of the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust;~~

(v) ~~subject to~~ **having given due consideration to the charitable purposes listed in (i), (iA), (ii) and (iii) above,** the support from the general church fund of any other charitable fund or body, except in so far as such support would be contrary to any purpose of the Methodist Church or to Methodist discipline.

37/11. The Conference adopted the Report as its further reply to Memorial M20 of 2023.

SECTION J

STANDING ORDER 725 - MCPOC POWERS TO ACT

The Conference of 2024 noted³ that the committee had been asked to review the way in which the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC) is able to act, and specifically whether MCPOC should only respond when the oversight bodies (the Student Oversight Committee or the district Probationers' Committee) make recommendations.

This report explains the committee's deliberations (in consultation with MCPOC and the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee) and invites the Conference to make amendments to Standing Order 725 as a result.

Standing Order 252(10) currently gives MCPOC overall responsibility for the recruitment, training and oversight of individual student and probationer presbyters and deacons and states that MCPOC reports to the Ministries Committee as provided in Standing Order 311. Importantly, however, Standing Order 311 makes clear that MCPOC only reports to the Ministries Committee (and through it to the Conference) about matters of general policy and process. Recommendations about individual candidates are made as appropriate directly to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee by the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation (see Standing Order 714(1)). Recommendations about individual students and probationers are made as appropriate directly to the Presbyteral Session or Conference Diaconal Committee by MCPOC, as provided in Standing Orders 725(1) and (2).

Since the 2013 Conference the requirement has been that reports about diaconal probationers be submitted by the Warden of the Order to the district Probationers Committee which has in turn made its recommendations to MCPOC. The phrase "in the case of presbyteral probationers" in Standing Order 725(2), which suggests that the district committee only deals with presbyteral probationers, is therefore otiose and should be deleted.

³ Under the sub-heading of *Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee* in Section K of Part 2 of the Methodist Council Report to the 2024 Conference (Item 22 in the Agenda), at paragraph 59.

If Standing Order 252(10) gives MCPOC overall “oversight of the whole period of a person’s training from acceptance as a candidate by the Conference until reception into Full Connexion and ordination”, clause (2) of Standing Order 725 makes provision for a number of subsidiary bodies to make recommendations about individuals to MCPOC in order for MCPOC to fulfil that responsibility: in practice, the Queen’s Oversight Committee in respect of student deacons and presbyters and district Probationers Committees in respect of probationer deacons and presbyters.

The implicit assumption seems to be that all recommendations will come through the subsidiary bodies to MCPOC and thence to the Conference, although in cases of discontinuance of student presbyters and deacons that has not always been the practice. That implicit assumption would however uphold both the principle that oversight is holistic (not least in holding together pastoral care and rigorous assessment) and also the principle of connexional subsidiarity (namely that those closest to a situation that will be affected by a decision should play at least a part in the making of that decision). An amendment to Standing Order 030 to make this clear in all cases of discontinuance is offered in the report on Appeals Processes elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.

At present, Standing Orders 030(1) and (2) make provision for when “either of the oversight committees concerned recommends discontinuance (that is to say that a student cease training or that a probationer be not continued on trial or be not recommended for ordination)”. Standing Order 030(3) makes it plain that for presbyteral and diaconal students the two committees concerned are MCPOC and the local oversight committee; and for presbyteral and diaconal probationers MCPOC and the district Probationers Committee.

That means that in cases of discontinuance MCPOC can vary recommendations it has received from a local oversight committee or district Probationers Committee. Yet if it can do that in the extremely serious matter of discontinuance, it follows that it can also do so in less serious matters. Sometimes MCPOC will do so to moderate the judgements of the subsidiary committees and to ensure connexional consistency. At other times, though, it will be because information has come to connexional officers and to MCPOC about matters such as a student’s or probationer’s physical or mental health and well-being, personal and family relationships, vocational development, or grievances about institutions and processes in the wider connexion. These may not immediately affect a student’s or probationer’s progress, and there may be good reason for not immediately disclosing them in that local situation either on grounds of confidentiality or because premature disclosure might adversely affect that situation.

In these latter situations it ought to be clear that MCPOC cannot just be reactive to recommendations from a subsidiary student oversight committee or district Probationers Committee but may also initiate action. This might involve such things as referring the student or probationer for occupational health assessments, or to the Stationing Advisory Committee, or to an investigative panel of its own or some other legitimate process.

At the same time, if MCPOC does initiate action, the principles of holistic oversight and connexional subsidiarity referred to above suggest that the Chair and officers of the relevant local or district oversight panel should at least be informed in confidence that this is happening or, where appropriate, they or representatives of their committee should be involved in any panel of meeting of MCPOC that is making a decision.

The following amendments to Standing Order 725 are proposed to effect the above. The proposed new clause (2A) cross-refers to Standing Order 251(3) which does not currently exist but is proposed to be introduced via the Standing Order amendments relating to Appeals Processes presented elsewhere in the Conference Agenda. If the Conference declines to approve the new Standing Order 251(3), the committee’s Conference Sub-committee will advise the Conference as to alternative wording for the new Standing Order 725(2A).

725 ... (2) Such oversight shall include elements of both pastoral support and assessment. To this end, the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall coordinate and guide the work of student oversight committees appointed for training institutions and theological colleges and, ~~in the case of presbyteral probationers,~~ district Probationers Committees. In particular they shall formulate guidelines for practice and connexional criteria for assessment.

(2A) If at any point concerns are raised about a student or probationer, including in the case of a diaconal student or probationer matters raised by the Warden and relevant bodies of the Methodist Diaconal Order, the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee may institute such procedures as it sees fit under the provisions of Section 03, Part 11 and this Section of Standing Orders and in accordance with the principles and procedures agreed by the Ministries Committee under Standing Order 251(3), always ensuring that the officers of relevant student oversight committee or district Probationers Committee are informed or consulted in the process.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

37/12. The Conference received the Report.

37/13. The Conference amended Standing Order 725 as set out above.

SECTION K

STANDING ORDER 410(1)(VIII) - CHILDREN AND YOUTH ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATION AT SYNOD

Under Standing Order 410:

“(1) Subject to Standing Orders 785(8) and clause (6) below the Representative Session of the district Synod shall consist of:

...

(viii) two persons appointed by the last preceding meeting of the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly from the young people connected with the life of the Methodist Church in the District who attended that Assembly and who are members of the Methodist Church;

...”

The Conference of 2024 made substantial amendments to what had been Standing Order 250 (now Standing Order 240), relating to the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly, to give effect to previously approved changes in the way in which the Methodist Church carries out its work with children and young people. Those changes included the removal of arrangements under which, in respect of each District, two persons were (or ought to have been) appointed by the Assembly as members of the Representative Session of their district Synod.

It was appreciated at the time that those changes had the effect that Standing Order 410(1)(viii) could not be effective and there was anecdotal evidence that it was often honoured in the breach rather than the observance. By the time the Conference met, however, it had not been possible to establish whether those responsible for work with children and young people, and children and young people themselves, wished to include an alternative provision to facilitate the engagement of children and young people with their District or whether the existing provision should simply be deleted, enabling more flexible and informal arrangements to be made. The committee is grateful to the 2023-24 Youth President who took this point forward after the Conference and proposed to the committee that Standing Order 410(1)(viii) should be deleted, leaving the way clear for the development of the involvement of children and young people with the District in relevant ways in the light of modern models of participation.

The Committee therefore invites the Conference to delete Standing Order 410(1)(viii).

*****RESOLUTIONS**

37/14. The Conference received the Report.

37/15. The Conference amended Standing Orders by deleting Standing Order 410(1)(viii).

SECTION L

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

As usual, the committee submits a list of corrections to Standing Orders, consequent upon decisions already taken by the Conference, or to remedy minor errors or omissions.

1. Minor and consequential amendments for ratification

In the preparation of the 2024 edition of Volume 2 of CPD, a number of minor editorial or consequential corrections were made to give effect to the Conference's decisions and to ensure coherence within Standing Orders. These corrections are additional to the amendments which were made under Resolutions 50/7 and 50/8 (2024) to give effect to the extensive cross-referencing work required as a result of the Oversight and Trusteeship implementation (reported in Section B of the committee's first report in Volume 1 of the 2025 Conference Agenda).

The amendments listed below were approved by the committee at its April 2025 meeting and are now submitted to the Conference for formal ratification. Details of the rationale for each amendment are available on request.

- Standing Order 004(ix): "... ~~a the~~ Connexional Secretary ..."
- Standing Order 102(1): "... ~~subclauses items (v)-(vii)~~ ..."
- Standing Order 114(1D): "... the Connexional ~~Secretaries~~ **Secretary** ..."
- Standing Order 200(1)(c): "... Methodist Church. **No person shall be a member of the council who is stationed (other than as President, Vice-President or Secretary of the Conference) to serve in or is employed in the Connexional Team (other than as President, Vice-President or Secretary of the Conference).**
- Standing Order 200 (4)(a)(i): "... Methodist Church, **or becomes stationed (other than as President, Vice-President or Secretary of the Conference) to serve in or becomes employed in the Connexional Team (other than as President, Vice-President or Secretary of the Conference).**
- Standing Order 235(4)(vi) : "... any of Standing Orders ~~731(7A)-714A~~, ..."
- Title to Part 3 of Standing Orders: **CONNEXIONAL COUNCIL-APPOINTED COMMITTEES AND AREAS OF WORK**
- 362(3): "... the budget for ~~from the connexional funds~~
- Standing Order 373(2)(b): "... the policy adopted by the Connexional Council ~~council~~ ..."
- Standing Order 377 (title): **Accounts: date for closure**
- Standing Order 384: "... between the **Connexional Council** and the ..."
- Standing Order 388(1): "... as further required in clause ~~(3)~~ (4) below."
- Standing Order 402(6) "... or (in the case of forces chaplains ~~and chaplains' assistants~~) ..."
- Standing Order 48A4(3): delete item (xiii)
- Standing Order 502(4)(a): "... subject to paragraph ~~sub-clause (b)~~ below
- Standing Order 565B, item (iii): "...required by the council ~~committee~~."
- Standing Order 581(1): "... **to be formed by amalgamation under Section Standing Order 501** ..."
- Standing Order 770(3): "... only (i) by ~~election~~ **appointment** as a representative ..."
- Standing Order 770(4)(c): "... and advise the Council ~~committee~~ ..."
- Standing Order 803(1)(d): "Such permission shall only be granted if the committee ~~of council~~ (or other body) ..."
- Standing Order 806(4)(viii)(e): "in the case of ~~a the~~ Connexional Secretary ..."
- Standing Order 913A(2): "In cases in which other ~~trustees~~ **trustee** bodies ..."
- Standing Order 983A(3) "... Methodist **Connexional** Council ..."
- Book VI, Part 1. In the heading for the list of offices in paragraph 2 at the end of Section 1 (Qualification for Appointment): **Representational Governance**
- Book VII.A, Part 5 paragraph 2(b) "... **Occupational Health assessment as specified in Standing Order 715(2) shall be undertaken by each applicant person concerned** ..."

- Book VII.A, Title of new Part 5A Guidance for Breakdown of Marriage **or Civil Partnership**

2. Minor and consequential amendments arising from the 2024 CPD editing process

The committee invites the Conference to approve the following minor amendments to Standing Orders:

(a) **Standing Order 240(11)**: amend “the Conference Office” to “the Secretary of the Conference”, ie:

- (11) There shall be elected annually the representative of the Assembly to the next Conference required under Standing Order 102(1)(viii). To be eligible to be elected, a person shall:
- (i) ~~[deleted]~~
 - (ii) if not already a member of the Methodist Church, have signified the intention of seeking to become a member.

If the person elected has not become a member of the Methodist Church by the opening of the Conference and so cannot take that place, the Youth President shall determine in consultation with the **Secretary of the** Conference ~~Office~~ the steps to be taken to appoint a substitute.

(b) **Standing Order 730(8)**: insert “and” between (i) and (ii), to clarify this is not an “either/or” scenario, i.e.:

- (8) The committee shall not recommend that an application be granted unless:
- (i) the applicant has given the signed assurance required in clause (4)(iv) above and has satisfied the committee of adherence to Methodist doctrines and discipline and, if offering for the diaconate, of commitment to the life of the Methodist Diaconal Order; **and**
 - (ii) the Stationing Committee has approved outline provisions for the stationing of the minister including proposals about the minister’s exercise of ministry and terms and conditions of service, and the Transfer Committee is satisfied that the applicant is willing and able to fulfil them.

(c) **Standing Order 761(7)**: when deleting text from the penultimate line of this Standing Order in 2024, the non-inclusive language in the first line should have been amended too, i.e.:

- (7) **If the applicant wishes to do so, the** ~~The applicant, if he or she wishes,~~ may remain in the vicinity of the committee room after being interviewed and, in that event, shall be informed orally by the chair or some other person appointed by the committee of the interviewing committee’s recommendation as soon as the meeting is over. In any event, the interviewing committee’s recommendation shall forthwith be communicated to the President of the Conference who shall, in writing, officially inform the applicant, and, where the applicant is a former deacon, the Warden of the Order.

3. Standing Order 754(2A) - Methodist Diaconal Order Support and Advisory Group

In 2023 Standing Order 755 was amended to replace the Methodist Diaconal Order “Leadership Group” with the Methodist Diaconal Order “Support and Advisory Group”.

Standing Order 754(2A) should have been similarly amended, i.e.:

(2A) The deputy Warden shall assist the Warden of the Order in fulfilling the Warden’s functions and responsibilities. Subject to clause (5) below the Warden shall delegate to the deputy Warden the discharge of such of those functions and responsibilities as the Warden, with the agreement of the Methodist Diaconal Order ~~Leadership~~ **Support and Advisory** Group, thinks fit.

4. Standing Order 252(6) – MCPOC deputy chair

Standing Order 252(6) states that the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers' Oversight Committee (MCPOC) shall appoint two deputy chairs. The committee understands that MCPOC works well with one chair and one deputy chair and wishes to continue operating in that way. The Conference is therefore asked to amend Standing Order 252(6) as follows:

(6) The member appointed under head (iv) of clause (1) above shall chair the committee. The committee shall appoint ~~two~~**one** deputy chairs from among its members who shall serve for an initial period of three years, which may be extended.

5. Standing Order 728 - Reception into Full Connexion and Ordination: Presbyters

Standing Orders 728(2)(c) and 728(5)(a) both contain an incorrect reference to the "Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Committee".

The Conference is asked to amend these references to the "Ministerial Candidates and Probationers **Oversight** Committee".

*****RESOLUTIONS**

37/16. The Conference received the Report.

37/17. The Conference ratified the Standing Order amendments listed in paragraph 1 of the Report.

37/18. The Conference amended Standing Orders as set out in paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Report.

SECTION M ONGOING WORK

The committee wishes to highlight to the Conference the following items on the committee's workplan which it believes will be of interest to Conference members and managing trustees around the Connexion:

1. Producing guidance for managing trustees on a suite of topical Local Church issues including modified constitutions (in response to M21 and M22 from the 2024 Conference), online church (working in conjunction with the Faith and Order Committee), trustee responsibilities and delegation of trusteeship, and using different charitable vehicles (such as CIOs) for Local Church projects. Guidance on church mergers has already been produced and is available on the Methodist Church website.⁴
2. Producing updated guidance and template resolutions for managing trustees in respect of Circuit mergers and amalgamations under Standing Order 501.
3. In consultation with the Ministries Committee, advising on a gifts policy to deal with church members or congregations giving gifts to their ministers above an appropriate threshold in terms of monetary value.
4. Representation on the Task Group reviewing the *Guidelines for Good Practice in Confidentiality and Pastoral Care*, and continuing to work on the alignment of Standing Order 1104 with the Church's data retention schedules in the light of the recommendations of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) as to the holding of records relating to safeguarding matters.
5. Continuing to review CPD for non-inclusive language and to review and consolidate CPD as a whole.

⁴ <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/governance/guidance-on-church-mergers-and-amalgamations/>

*****RESOLUTION**

37/19. The Conference received the Report.

SECTION N

ADVICE REGARDING PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE PROBATION ASSESSMENT PROCESS

At its April 2025 meeting the committee was asked by the Connexional Council to advise on changes proposed by the Ministries Committee to the way in which probationers are assessed. The proposals are presented in the Ministries Committee's section of the Connexional Council report elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.

The committee expressed concern about the constitutional implications of the proposals and wanted more time to consider them before advising the Conference. The committee believes that the proposals require application of the Deed of Union, including how they are handled at the Conference and whether consultation with the Synods is also required; or, alternatively, that the proposals require a clarification of, or possible changes to, the Deed of Union, which – if required – will involve a Special Resolution process. The committee's Conference Sub-committee will advise the Conference as to what resolutions might be appropriate when the business is presented.

*****RESOLUTION**

37/20. The Conference received the Report.

SECTION O

STANDING ORDERS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING MATTERS

By Resolution 22/21, the Conference of 2024 approved the principles of a proposed unified safeguarding structure to be implemented by 1 September 2025 and directed the Safeguarding Committee, in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee, to bring the necessary Standing Order amendments to the Conference of 2025. The amendments form part of a wider piece of work to consolidate and clarify all Standing Orders and CPD guidance relating to safeguarding matters, including separating out the functions of the Safeguarding Committee and its safeguarding panels (as mentioned in the Safeguarding Committee's report to the Conference of 2024).

The committee will bring the Standing Order amendments relating to the unified safeguarding structure through its Conference Sub-committee in the Order Paper, and expects to bring a suite of other safeguarding-related amendments to the Conference of 2026.

*****RESOLUTION**

37/21. The Conference received the Report.

SECTION P

ADVICE REGARDING THE STATIONING REVIEW PROPOSALS

In relation to the proposals in Report 18: Stationing Review Group (published on pages 142-198 of Volume 1 of the Agenda), the committee has considered whether the proposals risk undermining the Supreme Court's decision in *The President of the Methodist Conference v Preston [2013] UKSC 29* that Methodist ministers are not employees. The committee formed the provisional view that that would not be the case and sought an informal external legal opinion, which confirmed that view.

The committee therefore advises that the proposed changes to the processes relating to the stationing of Methodist ministers are not sufficient to alter the status of Methodist ministers to that of employee, and that the Church's overall stationing framework and fundamental principles of connexional deployment remain unchanged.

*****RESOLUTION**

37/22. The Conference received the Report.

SECTION Q
ADVICE ON THE PATTERN OF ORDINATION SERVICES

The committee considered this issue at its meeting in December 2024 and, as reported on page 114 of the Agenda (paragraph 4.2 of Report 15: Faith and Order Committee) concluded that there were no legal or constitutional issues around holding ordination services in the Conference venue. The committee agreed to await the Ministries Committee's further consideration and then to consider again any final proposals if appropriate.

*****RESOLUTION**

37/23. The Conference received the Report.