

62. Memorials to the Conference

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Notes for the guidance of members of the Conference

1. Introduction to memorials

Memorials are messages from Circuit Meetings and District Synods to the Conference. They suggest that the Conference takes action or makes a statement on an issue. The memorials received since the last Conference are listed in this report. These memorials may help members of the Conference to judge the main concerns currently felt in the Connexion, and the strength of opinion they represent.

Each year a Memorials Committee is appointed under Standing Order 138 to aid the Conference in replying to each memorial. The replies to these memorials have been drafted by members of the Connexional Team and officers of other relevant bodies. They have been scrutinised by the Memorials Committee and amended where the committee felt it was appropriate.

The committee recommends to the Conference the replies printed in the Agenda under each memorial. The Conference binds itself to agree each reply, to amend it, or to agree an alternative reply (see Standing Order 133(4), printed in the Rules of Procedure on page xii of the Agenda).

In some of its responses, the committee makes no comment on the substance of a memorial, but indicates that the reply of the Conference is given in other resolutions of the Conference. This kind of response does not mean that the committee has not taken seriously the points made in the memorial. It means that another report deals with the issue more fully. Debate on that report gives the Conference an opportunity to discuss the issues raised by the memorial and the Conference will have opportunity to consider its reply to the memorial in the context of its debate on that report.

Similarly, the Conference is sometimes invited to adopt the same reply to more than one memorial. This does not imply that the Memorials Committee has not considered each memorial carefully, but merely that the memorials ask the same or very similar things of the Conference.

2. Consideration of the memorials by the Conference

Any member of the Conference has the right to move an amendment to the reply recommended by the committee, or to propose that it is substituted by a different reply. Amendments to replies should be submitted in the form of a notice of motion, the deadlines for which can be found in the First Report of the Conference Business Committee on page 8-12 of the Agenda. However, members are urged to give notice of their intention to move an amendment as early as possible and not to wait until the deadline.

If the Conference rejects a reply, an acceptable alternative must, then or later, be put to and agreed by the Conference. In addition, any two members of the Conference may, by notice of motion submitted on the first day of the relevant session, propose that, instead of dealing with the committee's recommended replies in the ordinary course of business, the Conference shall debate a resolution based on one or more of the memorials.

This year, the Memorials Committee has recommended to the Conference Business Committee that the replies to any memorials which relate to other items of business in the Agenda be taken at the same time as that business. The committee recommended that the remaining replies should be placed in the *en bloc* business of the Conference, unless the Business Committee feels that they should be debated. Any recommended reply to a memorial which is the subject of an amending notice of motion will automatically be removed from *en bloc* business (see Standing Order 134A(1)(c), Agenda page xiii).

Members of the Conference with questions on any matter affecting memorials and the procedures described above should consult the Chair of the Memorials Committee, the Revd Kenneth Howcroft. For example, if any member wishes to change the recommended reply of the committee, the Chair of the Memorials Committee would be happy to advise on how and when to propose either an amendment or the substitution of a different reply.

The Memorials Committee will notify each Synod and Circuit of the reply the Conference has made to its memorial.

MEMORIALS AND OTHER WAYS OF ENGAGING WITH THE CONFERENCE AND THE WIDER CONNEXION

Reports to the Conference in recent years and consequential amendments to *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church* have led to far-reaching changes in the ways in which oversight and trusteeship are exercised throughout the Connexion. One consequence has been a reduction in the ways that Circuits and Districts may participate directly in the governance of the Church and influence its agenda. For example, the Connexional Council does not have the same role and responsibilities as the former Methodist Council, nor does its membership include a representative of each District on it as the Methodist Council's did.

All this leads to an increased emphasis on Memorials to the Conference and Notices of Motion at the Conference as means by which Circuits and Districts may participate in and contribute to the oversight and trusteeship of the whole Church proactively (and not just reactively to agendas set by others). Yet the shorter length of the Conference and the lack of opportunity for properly researched consideration of the topics that are raised in this way, often at the last minute, puts pressure on the ways in which Notices of Motion are handled.

Similarly, memorials are sometimes somewhat unclear about precisely what they are requesting and why, and the fact that they are often received late in the connexional year leaves little time for these things to be clarified or for detailed work and consideration in the production of draft replies.

Moreover, the requests raised in memorials are sometimes such that if appropriate they could be enacted immediately and reported afterwards to the Conference. Some may not even need to become a formal memorial or Notice of Motion. The Conference Office and other members of the Connexional Team always welcome people raising issues with them before they reach that stage, and are ready and able to offer advice about how they may best be addressed.

Possible ways of addressing some of these issues could include creating a triage system by which potential memorials, Notices of Motion and District Resolutions could be considered, appropriate advice offered, and the most suitable way of taking the particular proposals forward suggested. The Memorials Committee takes the view that an examination of these issues and the offering of proposals for improvements to the Conference of 2026 would be very helpful.

By way of illustration only, such a system of 'triage' might look as follows.

1. People in Districts and, in particular, Circuits would be encouraged to submit their suggestions, proposals, potential Notices of Motion or actual memorials as early in the connexional year as possible (where possible, before Christmas). There would be cut-off dates as at present for what can be brought to the Conference as a memorial or Notice of Motion and a further cut-off date for what can be otherwise reported in any particular year to the Conference.
2. The material submitted shall then be assessed as they come in by a 'triage' group consisting of the Chair of the Memorials Committee; two members of the Memorials Committee nominated by the stationing regions under Standing Order 138(2)(viii), at least one of whom must be lay; the Secretary or Assistant Secretary of the Conference; and the Connexional Secretary. The group shall take advice from others, such as the Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice, as required.
3. The 'triage' group shall decide that one or more of the following actions be taken about each matter submitted.

- a. Where necessary, clarification can be sought by or on behalf of the triage group as to what exactly is being requested by the people making the submission, and advice offered as how best to phrase and direct the request.
 - b. If it can be formally established that what is proposed is already within the policies of the Church and the Conference's guidelines for "Speaking on Behalf of the Methodist Church", and within current workplans and budgets, then it would be possible for the proposal to be enacted immediately by the appropriate officers and bodies in the Church and the outcome reported to the Conference.
 - c. The proposal can be referred to the Connexional Council or one of the Committees in Part 2 or Part 3 of Book III of Standing Orders for detailed consideration or enactment, as appropriate, with the outcome reported to the Conference.
 - d. A recommendation can be made that the proposal be taken to the relevant Circuit Meeting or District Synod for approval as set out in the current Standing Orders as a formal Memorial or District Resolution. Any resulting Memorial would, as previously, be taken to the Memorials Committee which would consider draft replies prepared by the relevant officers and present them as recommendations to the Conference for adoption or amendment. Any resulting District Resolution would be taken to the Conference Business Committee for inclusion in the business of the Conference.
 - e. A recommendation can be made that the proposal may best be dealt with by being submitted to the Conference as a properly researched and argued Notice of Motion.
4. In all cases the decisions of the 'triage' group shall be reported to the Conference through Memorials Committee. In cases which are complicated or contentious or where there is doubt, the decisions shall first be approved by that Committee.
 5. The people and bodies who have raised issues or made proposals shall still be able to submit them as memorials or Notices of Motion if they so choose, even if the 'triage' group has recommended other ways of dealing with the matter.

The Memorials Committee recognises that the issues raised in this report are complex and that the illustration above is but one way of addressing them. It therefore recommends that the Conference direct that further work be undertaken to consider them in consultation with interested parties, and that detailed proposals and any appropriate amendments to Standing Orders be brought to the Conference of 2026.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 62/1. The Conference received the Report.**
- 62/2. The Conference directed that the Memorials Committee and the Conference Planning Executive in consultation with others as appropriate bring detailed proposals about the issues raised to the Conference of 2026.**

M1 The proposed cuts to the UK Aid Budget

The Wirral Circuit Meeting (present: 50; voting: 43 in favour, 2 against) notes that Baptist, Methodist, Church of Scotland and United Reformed Church leaders wrote a letter saying: "UK aid programmes protect women and girls from violence, provide cost-effective vaccines to babies and young children and support human rights defenders who work to prevent future conflict. Such programmes will be under threat if UK aid is further slashed by 40%."¹

Christian Aid says:

¹ <https://urc.org.uk/church-leaders-lament-cuts-to-international-aid-budget/>

“We must reject the false choice between defence and development... Properly used, development funding helps prevent conflict, tackles instability and builds a safer more just world. Cutting aid in this way risks exacerbating the very crisis that leads to insecurity and conflict.”²

The Just Money Movement says:

“The cuts to overseas aid announced by the Prime Minister last week will take UK aid to its lowest level in 25 years. It is not only morally wrong to drastically reduce funding to some of the most vulnerable and fragile communities on earth, but as many have been pointing out, it is also short-sighted and counterproductive to efforts to build a more secure world.”³

Global Justice Now says:

“The prime minister has announced a brutal 40% cut to the UK aid budget, in the wake of Donald Trump's calls for increased military spending. It's a wrong-headed move that represents a retreat from Britain paying its fair share towards the fight against global poverty. Keir Starmer has said the cuts are necessary. But they're a political choice, not an economic necessity.”⁴

We at the Wirral Methodist Circuit Meeting agree with the above sentiments. We believe these cuts are at odds with our Christian principles and priorities. Jesus advocated the generous sharing of resources to provide for the needs of all people. There are other, better, fairer, more progressive ways to raise money than these aid budget cuts. For example a number of organisations propose the introduction of a 2% tax on those who own assets worth more than £10 million affecting just 0.04% of the population. We recognise the complexities of this, but this could bring in billions a year according to Tax Justice UK.⁵ There is also the possible use of a Financial Transactions Tax.⁶ Either of these could be used to restore the UK Aid Budget and enable its work to continue to help the poorest and most marginalised communities in our world.

We call upon the Methodist Conference to write to the UK government asking it to reverse its decision to cut the aid budget to 0.3% of GDP, to restore it to 0.5% of GDP and aim to increase it to 0.7% of GDP, (as stated in the Labour party's manifesto).

Reply

The Conference thanks the Wirral Circuit Meeting for its memorial, and for drawing attention to the recent cut to the UK's international development budget and the harmful impact that it will have around the world.

As the memorial notes, at the time that the cut was announced, the President and Vice-President of the Conference joined leaders from the Baptist Union, and United Reformed Church and Church of Scotland in lamenting the decision. Their statement went on to state that “Our Churches have strongly encouraged and supported the UK in its commitment to international development, not only as a way of showing care to our global neighbours, but in recognition of the UK's historic and ongoing responsibilities to address the causes of global injustice, poverty, forced migration, climate change and conflict. It is a source of deep regret to see a backing away from that responsibility.”

The cut follows the decision made by the previous government in 2020 to reduce the international development budget from 0.7% to 0.5% of GDP, initially as a temporary measure. Previously, the 0.7% target had been met every year since 2013, and enshrined in law since 2015. The 0.7% target

² Chair of Christian Aid Bishop Sarah Mullaly, <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/news/what-we-do/cuts-foreign-aid-budgets-have-human-cost>

³ In an email to supporters on 06/03/2025 from Sarah Edwards, Executive Director of JustMoney Movement

⁴ https://act.globaljustice.org.uk/dont-cut-aid-tax-wealth?utm_medium=email&utm_source=mailchimp_2503AID1&utm_campaign=Aid_campaign&mc_cid=aaa150e2c3&mc_eid=520f9f8494#

⁵ <https://taxjustice.uk/blog/mps-are-demanding-a-wealth-tax-to-stop-international-aid-cuts/>

⁶ [Why the UK needs a Financial Transaction Tax | openDemocracy](#)

has its origins in an initiative of the World Council of Churches in 1958, before being adopted by the United Nations in 1970.

The memorial points out that there are many options available to the government for funding the international development budget at previous levels, and that this cut is therefore a reflection of political priorities and choices. The Conference reiterates its support⁷ for a more progressive approach to taxation, and endorses the principle that at a time of increased pressure on public finances, ways should be found to more fairly tax the UK's increasing – but inequitably distributed – wealth.

The Conference accepts the memorial, will write to the government as requested, and would encourage individual members and churches to also raise this issue with their MPs.

M2 Overseas Budget

The North Yorkshire Coast Circuit Meeting (Present: 38; Voting: unanimous)

- (i) Requests the Conference to consider the recent cuts to the British government's Overseas Aid budget.
- (ii) With the Conference's approval, requires the Conference to ask the government to commit to restoring the Overseas Aid budget to a target of 1% of GDP within the lifetime of the current parliament.
- (iii) and also ask the government to take immediate steps towards achieving the target

Reply

The Conference thanks the North Yorkshire Coast Circuit Meeting for its memorial. It notes that that the UK's international development budget has never reached 1% of GDP, but that the previous 0.7% target was set as a result of long campaigning by the Churches and others. It adopts as its reply the reply to memorial M1.

M3 Housing

The London District Synod (present: 151; voting: 150 for, 0 against) draws the attention of the Conference to the current housing crisis in the UK. A shortage of truly affordable homes is pushing more people into homelessness than ever before.

Record numbers of people are stuck for years in temporary accommodation that harms their health. This includes over 164,000 children in England who are growing up in unsafe conditions, restricting their life chances and trapping them in poverty.

People are being forced to sleep on friends' sofas, fearing they have overstayed their welcome, and thousands are left to face the danger of sleeping on the streets.

This is all having a huge impact on wellbeing, health, employment, education, community cohesion and it is happening in every part of the UK, affecting all the communities we serve, whether they are urban, rural or coastal, or in areas of affluence or deprivation.

The chronic and longstanding shortage of affordable housing is the key factor driving London's homelessness emergency that requires London boroughs to spend £4m a day on providing temporary housing for the 183,000 Londoners who are currently homeless. It should be recognised that this housing crisis harms us all and that The Methodist Church can play its part in responding to the housing need, particularly in so far as it affects the poorest and most marginalised in our communities.

⁷ [conf2011-pc-11-poverty-and-inequality-0812_fgKlh9i.doc](#).

Such a response by the Methodist Church would strengthen communities, combat poverty, reduce destitution, and increase wellbeing and flourishing. Everyone needs a safe, secure, affordable and warm home in order to live well.

However, there are currently legal limitations for churches, circuits, and districts who wish to respond by selling or leasing land or buildings to provide accommodation. An increased provision of accommodation for those affected by the shortage of genuinely affordable housing and of good quality emergency provision including modular requires more flexibility to facilitate this work.

We therefore ask that the Conference:

- (i) affirms that the provision of genuinely affordable homes and of emergency accommodation is an integral part of the mission of The Methodist Church as a sign of the gospel of Jesus Christ and as an outworking of our commitment to be a justice seeking church and is furthering the purposes of the Methodist Church;
- (ii) recognises the rich heritage of the Methodist Church and celebrates the work that Methodist churches, circuits, districts and others are engaged in to meet local housing need, including emergency accommodation. The Conference strongly encourages the Methodist people to consider what more they can do to tackle the housing and homelessness crisis in their area;
- (iii) directs the Connexional Council to consider the steps to be taken to achieve greater flexibility in order to facilitate (i) and (ii) above;
- (iv) directs Districts and Circuits to identify suitable manses, church premises, buildings, and land that could be used to meet housing need.

Reply

The Conference thanks the London District Synod for its memorial, and for highlighting the current housing situation in its areas and across the UK. The Conference is troubled by the current levels of homelessness, numbers of people in temporary accommodation and shortage of affordable housing, and notes that the housing crisis impacts individuals and communities throughout the Connexion, in both urban and rural contexts. The Conference recognises that the Church can and should play a part in addressing the systemic causes of homelessness and the housing crisis, including through advocacy and practical responses.

The Conference therefore agrees with the general intentions of the memorials. It affirms that the provision of genuinely affordable homes and of emergency accommodation can be an integral part of the mission of the Methodist Church as a sign of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and can further the purposes of the Methodist Church as an outworking of our commitment to be a justice seeking church. In living out the gospel of Jesus Christ, the provision of genuinely affordable homes and of emergency accommodation may be a powerful response to this call.

The Conference recognises the rich heritage of the Methodist Church and celebrates the work that Methodist churches, circuits, districts and others are engaged in to meet local housing need, including emergency accommodation. The Conference strongly encourages the Methodist people to consider what more they can do to tackle the housing and homelessness crisis in their area.

The Conference reminds churches, Circuits and Districts that the Property Support Team is available to support Managing Trustees in considering how they can use property and land missionally, including to address housing need and homelessness.

The Conference also notes that for a variety of reasons, including the legal frameworks within which charities have to operate, this is not always straightforward work to pursue. For that reason, the Conference believes that a review should be undertaken to understand and clarify the legal, procedural, practical and resourcing issues involved in enabling Methodist buildings and land to be used to meet housing need.

The Conference notes that learning may be gathered from ecumenical partners around these questions, particularly from the work that has been undertaken in the Church of England following the

report of the Archbishops' Commission on Housing, Church and Community (2021), which was supported by the Methodist Church.

The Conference therefore directs the Connexional Council to undertake a review of the issues highlighted in the memorial and report to the Conference in 2026. It is recognised that this will require input from various stakeholders across the Connexion.

M4 Housing

The Yorkshire North and East District Synod (Present: 91, voting unanimous) draws the attention of the Conference to the current housing crisis in the UK. A shortage of truly affordable homes is pushing more people into homelessness than ever before.

Record numbers of people are stuck for years in temporary accommodation that harms their health. This includes over 164,000 children in England who are growing up in unsafe conditions, restricting their life chances and trapping them in poverty.

People are being forced to sleep on friends' sofas, fearing they have overstayed their welcome, and thousands are left to face the danger of sleeping on the streets.

This is all having a huge impact on wellbeing, health, employment, education, community cohesion and it is happening in every part of the UK, affecting all the communities we serve, whether they are urban, rural or coastal, or in areas of affluence or deprivation.

In March 2025, North Yorkshire Council reported that homelessness acceptances in North Yorkshire have risen 22% over the last two years, From Harrogate to Hull and Selby to Scarborough, Methodists already play a role in supporting people experiencing a crisis in their housing circumstances across the Yorkshire North and East Methodist District. One of the gaps, however, is the availability of affordable housing options that people can move on to. Market conditions right across the Yorkshire North and East Methodist District continue to pose a challenge for anyone living on low incomes trying to obtain accommodation either to buy or rent. Average house prices across North Yorkshire are around ten times average household incomes. The range of affordable options within the privately rented sector is shrinking. Crucially, the availability of accommodation that people on the lowest incomes really need – social lets – has also reduced.

It should be recognised that this housing crisis harms us all and that the Methodist Church can play its part in responding to the housing need, particularly in so far as it affects the poorest and most marginalised in our communities.

Such a response by the Methodist Church would strengthen communities, combat poverty, reduce destitution, and increase wellbeing and flourishing. Everyone needs a safe, secure, affordable and warm home in order to live well.

However, there are currently legal limitations for churches, Circuits, and Districts who wish to respond by selling or leasing land or buildings to provide accommodation. An increased provision of accommodation for those affected by the shortage of genuinely affordable housing and of good quality emergency provision including modular requires more flexibility to facilitate this work.

We therefore ask that the Conference:

- (i) affirms that the provision of genuinely affordable homes and of emergency accommodation is an integral part of the mission of The Methodist Church as a sign of the gospel of Jesus Christ and as an outworking of our commitment to be a justice seeking church and is furthering the purposes of the Methodist Church;
- (ii) recognises the rich heritage of the Methodist Church and celebrates the work that Methodist churches, circuits, districts and others are engaged in to meet local housing need, including emergency accommodation. The Conference strongly encourages the Methodist people to consider what more they can do to tackle the housing and homelessness crisis in their area;

- (iii) directs the Connexional Council to consider the steps to be taken to achieve greater flexibility in order to facilitate (i) and (ii) above;
- (iv) directs Districts and Circuits to identify suitable manses, church premises, buildings, and land that could be used to meet housing need.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Yorkshire North and East District Synod for its memorial and offers the same reply as M3.

M5 Housing

The South West Peninsula District Synod (present: 113; voting unanimous)

We ask that the Conference

- (i) affirms that the provision of genuinely affordable homes and of emergency accommodation is an integral part of the mission of The Methodist Church as a sign of the gospel of Jesus Christ and as an outworking of our commitment to be a justice seeking church and is furthering the purposes of The Methodist Church;
- (ii) recognises the rich heritage of the Methodist Church and celebrates the work that Methodist churches, circuits, districts and others are engaged in to meet local housing need, including emergency accommodation. The Conference strongly encourages the Methodist people to consider what more they can do to tackle the housing and homelessness crisis in their area;
- (iii) directs the Connexional Council to consider the steps to be taken to achieve greater flexibility in order to facilitate (i) and (ii) above;
- (iv) directs Districts and Circuits to identify suitable manses, church premises, buildings, and land that could be used to meet housing need.

Reply

The Conference thanks the South West Peninsula District Synod for its memorial and offers the same reply as M3.

M6 Housing

The Birmingham District Synod (present: 98; voting: 89 in favour, 0 against) draws the attention of the Conference to the current housing crisis in the UK. A shortage of truly affordable homes is pushing more people into homelessness than ever before.

Record numbers of people are stuck for years in temporary accommodation that harms their health. This includes over 164,000 children in England who are growing up in unsafe conditions, restricting their life chances and trapping them in poverty.

People are being forced to sleep on friends' sofas, fearing they have overstayed their welcome, and thousands are left to face the danger of sleeping on the streets.

This is all having a huge impact on wellbeing, health, employment, education, community cohesion and it is happening in every part of the UK, affecting all the communities we serve, whether they are urban, rural or coastal, or in areas of affluence or deprivation.

The West Midlands suffers from a multitude of housing issues:

1) As at December 2023, there were 12,590 homeless children living in temporary accommodation across the West Midlands⁸ and 9,405 of them were in Birmingham. By September 2024, the number in Birmingham had risen to over 11,000⁹

2) Over 600 households a week become homeless in Birmingham.

3) One in three of Birmingham City Council's homes do not meet the decent homes standard. In May 2023, it received a warning from the social housing regulator for failing to keep thousands of tenants safe.

4) 'Temporary' in Birmingham can mean 3-4 years and even longer for some.

5) There is a shortage of affordable homes.

It should be recognised that this housing crisis harms us all and that The Methodist Church can play its part in responding to the housing need, particularly in so far as it affects the poorest and most marginalised in our communities.

Such a response by the Methodist Church would strengthen communities, combat poverty, reduce destitution, and increase wellbeing and flourishing. Everyone needs a safe, secure, affordable and warm home in order to live well.

However, there are currently legal limitations for churches, Circuits, and Districts who wish to respond by selling or leasing land or buildings to provide accommodation. An increased provision of accommodation for those affected by the shortage of genuinely affordable housing and of good quality emergency provision including modular requires more flexibility to facilitate this work.

The Synod requests that the Conference:

- (i) affirms that the provision of genuinely affordable homes and of emergency accommodation is an integral part of the mission of the Methodist Church as a sign of the gospel of Jesus Christ and as an outworking of our commitment to be a justice seeking church and is furthering the purposes of the Methodist Church;
- (ii) recognises the rich heritage of the Methodist Church and celebrates the work that Methodist churches, circuits, districts and others are engaged in to meet local housing need, including emergency accommodation. The Conference strongly encourages the Methodist people to consider what more they can do to tackle the housing and homelessness crisis in their area;
- (iii) directs the Connexional Council to consider the steps to be taken to achieve greater flexibility in order to facilitate (i) and (ii) above;
- (iv) directs Districts and Circuits to identify suitable manses, church premises, buildings, and land that could be used to meet housing need.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District Synod for its memorial and offers the same reply as M3.

⁸ https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/at_least_309000_people_homeless_in_england_today

⁹ <https://householdsintemporaryaccommodation.co.uk/statistics/>

M7 Tent of Nations

The Burnley and Pendle Circuit Meeting (present: 33 voting; in favour 32, against 0) thanks the Conference of 2024 for the support expressed for the Tent of Nations. However, the situation has now deteriorated further, with 8 large containers being placed by settlers right alongside the fence of the Tent of Nations, with utilities being put to them, which threatens encroachment onto the land of the Nassar family under the guise of 'security risk.'

In view of the rapidly deteriorating situation for Palestinians in the West Bank the Circuit urges the Conference to commit itself to stand in solidarity with the Nassar family as they seek to live out their Christian faith in non-violent residence to the oppression of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

The Circuit calls upon the Conference:

1. To request a meeting with the British Foreign secretary to share with him the situation of the Nassar family.
2. To arrange a meeting with the Israeli Embassy in the UK stating the Methodist awareness of the situation, our continued support for the Nassar family and requesting that the process to re-register their land is completed quickly.
3. To communicate with the British Consulate in Jerusalem, thanking them for their support and encouraging them to continue their involvement, giving whatever practical help they can in ensuring that the process of re-registration of the Tent of Nations land can be completed quickly.
4. To send a delegation from the Methodist Church to the Tent of Nations.
5. To encourage Methodists who are able to go as volunteers on the Tent of Nations Farm.
6. To continue to highlight the peace work of the Nassar family through its communications with the wider Methodist Church in the U.K.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Burnley and Pendle Circuit Meeting for its memorial and ongoing support of the Nassar family.

In the Conference report 'Justice for Palestine and Israel' 2010, the Methodist Church in Britain clearly stated that the occupation of the West Bank and settlement building by Israel is illegal. The International Court of Justice in July 2024 ruled that Israel's occupation was unlawful and that Israel should withdraw immediately and evacuate all settlements immediately.

The Methodist Conference stands with those who seek an end to this injustice through non-violent means including the Nassar family.

The World Methodist Council recognised the non-violent resistance of the Nassar family in 2017 when they received the World Methodist Peace Award. Daoud Nassar addressed the Methodist Church in Britain's Conference 2024 via a pre-recorded video and the Methodist Liaison Office, Jerusalem (MLO) is in regular contact with the family and the farm and has welcomed members of the family to contribute to various on-line prayer and advocacy opportunities. The Methodist input to Greenbelt Festival in 2024 included the presence of the family at the Festival's communion service. At this year's Cliff Festival the work of the Tent of Nations was highlighted in a workshop.

The Connexional Team, on behalf of the Conference is engaged in building relationships with elected Politicians and Government Ministers and with staff at the Israeli Embassy. The MLO is developing a relationship with the new British Consul General in Jerusalem. These relationships often offer a more effective dialogue than a one off letter or meeting request. Members of the Connexional Team will

continue to raise the issue of the Tent of Nations in meetings with the appropriate departments of government.

The President of the Conference 2025/26 has a visit to the region during their presidential year planned and the MLO will ensure that, if possible, the President visits the Tent of Nations.

The MLO, through the Global Relationships team offers volunteering opportunities for Methodists in the Holy Land and as part of this promotes opportunities at the Tent of Nations. The security situation can change quickly in the region and the Global Relationships team and the MLO must feel confident that volunteers will not find themselves in a dangerous situation; these opportunities are therefore strictly risk-assessed.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial to the extent outlined in the reply.

M8 Israel/ Palestine

The Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod (present: 67; voting: 52 for, 3 against) notes that the official position of the UK Government is that it will recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the object of peace. Against a quickly deteriorating situation in terms of Palestinian land rights, the Synod requests that the Conference write to the UK government urging it to recognise that now is that time.

In response to memorial M8 from the South Worcestershire Circuit in 2024, the Conference recognised that calls for recognition of Palestinian statehood arise from the appropriate and just pursuit of Palestinian self-determination and agreed to call on the UK Government to recognise the State of Palestine.

In the intervening twelve months the Israeli government has accelerated the seizure and annexation of Palestinian land, in violation of international law. This has implications not only for Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza who are forcibly displaced but also for any prospect of a future peace based on a two-state solution. Time is running out on this as a potential way forward.

In calling for a repeat of action that the Conference has already undertaken, the Synod is conscious of the parable of the widow and the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8) where justice results from persistent petitioning. The Synod, conscious of the biblical notion of "Kairos", also believes that it is highly appropriate time to renew this call upon the government now, when it is already reported to be in discussions with France and Saudi Arabia about recognition of Palestinian statehood, and when pressure upon it to take this decisive step is rising from many quarters in society.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod for its memorial. The Conference has expressed its support for the recognition of the state of Palestine and as the memorial says this was reiterated in response to memorial M8 at the 2024 Conference.

The situation is deteriorating in the West Bank with more land being lost to illegal settlements and Israeli Governments continuing policy to annex much of the West Bank. There is also a law progressing through the Knesset to remove any reference to the 'West Bank' in official documents and to replace it with the description 'Judea and Samaria'.

However, the Conference believes that a better response to the challenges identified in the memorial is to stand in solidarity (including theological solidarity) with Palestinian Christians. Recognising that this is a crucial time for the future of Palestinians, the Conference, therefore, accepts the memorial and will write an appropriately worded letter to the UK government.

M9 Christian Zionism

The Sheffield Circuit Meeting (voting: present 65; in favour 64, against 0) calls upon the Methodist Conference to:

- express its grave concern at the increasing influence of Christian Zionism in modern politics affecting Israel and Palestine, especially in the USA and in some Methodist congregations;
- assert in the words of *Cry for Hope*, which the Conference 2021 commended for study to the Methodist people that “support for (*Christian*) Zionism as a theology and an ideology that legitimizes the right of one people to deny the human rights of another is incompatible with the Christian faith and a grave misuse of the Bible”;
- direct the Faith and Order Committee to produce a report for the Conference of 2027, which will guide our members on how best to combat this deviant theology within our church and beyond it.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Sheffield Circuit Meeting for its memorial. The Conference continues to be gravely concerned at the ongoing violence and conflict between Israel and Palestine, not only in Gaza but also in the day-to-day oppression of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. The consequence for the people of the region is unimaginable human suffering. As it noted in 2021, the Conference has long maintained a position first outlined by the 2001 Conference, “recognising that peace and security can only be achieved when international judgements are respected and justice is done”, and that “a return to the borders of 1967 and a status for Jerusalem as a place for two nations and three faiths, with parity of esteem, is the real basis upon which trust could be built up among the different communities. The desire for a lasting peace can only be based on trust, security and freedom from fear for all people in the area.” The Conference calls on all who engage theologically and politically with the situation in Israel and Palestine to join with it in these aims.

In commending *Cry for Hope* for careful and prayerful study by the Methodist people, the Conference ‘invite[d] readers to use discernment with respect to the various aspects of the call.’ The Conference maintains that such careful discernment is still essential, especially in considering Christian Zionism. In response to the report *Justice for Palestine and Israel*, the Conference in 2010 directed the Faith and Order Committee ‘to undertake further work on the theological issues, including Christian Zionism, raised in the report that are needed to guide and support the approach of the Methodist Church to the Israeli/Palestinian situation and to bring a report to Conference.’ After careful consideration, the Faith and Order Committee reported the following to the Conference:

The Faith and Order Committee has attempted to develop a number of papers in response to this resolution over the last few years. However, the Committee has expressed concern over both the content and the process and developed the following report in response to the resolution.

*In 2010 the Conference received the report of a working group, entitled *Justice for Palestine and Israel*. The Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee “to undertake further work on the theological issues, including Christian Zionism, raised in the report that are needed to guide and support the approach of the Methodist Church to the Israeli/Palestinian situation and to bring a report to Conference” (2010 Conference Agenda, Resolution 14/5).*

*The Committee has given careful consideration to how it might best fulfil the intentions of the 2010 Conference as expressed in Resolution 14/5. *Justice for Palestine and Israel* uses the word ‘complex’ and its cognates no fewer than 11 times to describe the historical, political, religious and cultural dimensions of Israel-Palestine. The theological issues raised in the report are no less complex and rank among the most contentious aspects of interfaith relations.*

*For the Methodist Church to undertake a major piece of theological work on the subject of Israel-Palestine would duplicate work done elsewhere and would be unlikely to contribute anything fresh to the present state of debate. For example, the Anglican Communion Network for Inter Faith Concerns has recently published a relevant report, under the auspices of the Anglican Consultative Council, entitled *Land of Promise? An Anglican Exploration of Christian Attitudes to the Holy Land, with special reference to Christian Zionism* (November 2012). ‘This*

report seeks to set out an Anglican response to the phenomenon of Christian Zionism, and to do so within a wider account of Christian thinking about Israel' (p 7).

Methodists, like Anglicans, have their own particular narrative within the Christian story, and our theological tradition has certain characteristic emphases that may not be shared by others in quite the same way. Nevertheless, the theological resources available to Methodists in thinking about the issues raised by the situation of Israel-Palestine, including Christian Zionism, need not be any different to those available to Christians generally.

The Committee therefore believes that it would be more useful at the present time to draw attention to a range of relevant theological resources that are presently in the public domain. Any future Methodist study of the theological issues relating to the situation of Israel-Palestine would probably draw on these and other sources, though the Faith and Order Committee recommends that any such work should be undertaken jointly with ecumenical partners.

To enable Methodists to engage with the theological issues raised by the historical, political, economic, religious and cultural situation of Israel-Palestine, the Committee has prepared a short resource list for further reading which will be placed on the Faith and Order section of the Methodist Church Website. The list is neither exhaustive nor comprehensive (the field is simply too vast even to consider such an undertaking) but it is broadly representative of the present state of theological scholarship on the subject.

It should be noted that in this much debated area neutrality is rarely possible, and there will be those who defend enthusiastically some of the resources listed on the website and those who are much more cautious about them. It is important to state, therefore, that the inclusion of specific works in the list should not be taken to indicate any kind of approval or endorsement by the Committee or by the Conference. For this reason, it is worthwhile drawing attention to the fact that published works are listed in alphabetical order, according to the author.¹⁰

The Conference believes that the reasons identified by the Faith and Order Committee still apply today, and that in particular a wide variety of theological resources is available on this subject. It therefore does not believe it appropriate to direct the preparation of a specific Methodist report on Christian Zionism and the resource list mentioned by the Faith and Order Committee remains available on the Methodist Church website. The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

M10 Expediting TMCP Procedures for local churches - Discretion at auction

The Birmingham District Synod (Present: 100; voting: 92 in favour 1 against) requests that the Conference ask the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes to allow auctioneers up to 5% discretion on the reserve price when selling former chapels, manses or other property by public auction. It believes that if TMCP makes these changes in policy and procedure big financial and reputational losses can be avoided.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District Synod for its Memorial and has consulted with the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) about the process for selling Model Trust property at auction in England and Wales. The Conference is advised that the requirements concerning auction reserve prices for charity land sales are requirements laid down by the Charity Commission (in England and Wales) rather than by TMCP or the Methodist Church.

The Charity Commission publishes guidance which highlights two strict legal requirements for disposals of charity land: (i) to obtain and consider a report from a designated adviser; and (ii) to obtain the best terms reasonably possible for the charity. For auction sales, the Commission's guidance goes on to state the following:

¹⁰ 2013 Conference Agenda, item 37, section 1.2

https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fmedia.methodist.org.uk%2Fmedia%2Fdocuments%2Fconf-2013-37-faith-and-order_IJ111o.doc&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

“Selling land at auction

You must follow the 2 legal requirements set out above before the auction and be satisfied that an auction is in the best interests of your charity. You may find it helpful to get professional advice.

You should also:

- set the reserve price at or above your designated adviser’s lowest value for the land. The reserve price is the minimum price the land is allowed to sell for at auction
- write into the conditions of the sale that if the purchaser is a connected person, the transaction will be subject to a Charity Commission order being made”¹¹

In effect, the reserve price is set by the designated adviser under charity law.

If a property does not sell at auction, TMCP will assist the Managing Trustees and recommend that they speak with their designated adviser about the next steps, including whether auction remains the best method of disposal and if the initial valuation is still appropriate. Managing Trustees should follow the advice and recommendations of their designated adviser.

The Conference sympathises with the frustration that Managing Trustees may feel about the process for selling Model Trust property at auction. However the Conference considers that the lack of discretion to accept bids below the reserve price at auction is reflective of charity law requirements to which all Managing Trustees in England and Wales are subject. The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

M11 Expediting TMCP Procedures for local churches - Proforma Leaseholder Agreement

The Birmingham District Synod (Present: 100; voting: 92 in favour, 0 against) requests that the Conference ask the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes to create a proforma Leaseholder Agreement that can easily be adapted for use where a potential outside organisation wish to use our premises for an activity where “exclusivity” is a requirement for Safeguarding reasons.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District Synod for its Memorial and appreciates that there are many situations where Local Churches and Circuits wish to grant leases and licences of Methodist property in order to produce income for furthering mission while also helping local groups and organisations.

The Conference has consulted with the Trustees for Methodist Purposes (TMCP) regarding the possibility of making proforma lease templates available for use by Managing Trustees.

TMCP’s website provides detailed guidance for Managing Trustees who are considering granting commercial leases or licences of Methodist property. There are also template heads of terms for various common types of leases and template clauses for insertion into those leases. TMCP has a template short form lease for short commercial lettings of rooms in a building and a tenancy-at-will template, both of which are available on request by the solicitors acting for Managing Trustees, to be used when appropriate in the particular circumstances. The existing template documents include provisions which account for the requirements of charity law, Methodist law and policy, and best practice.

Managing trustees should take legal advice from their solicitors when they are arranging to grant leases, and they may opt to use one of the Methodist Church’s Panel Solicitors or another firm of their choice. In either case, it is expected that any law firm dealing with leases will have their own precedent documents available and will be up to date with any changes to the law in order to produce a lease suited to the specific circumstances of each letting.

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sales-leases-transfers-or-mortgages-what-trustees-need-to-know-about-disposing-of-charity-land-cc28/sales-leases-transfers-or-mortgages-what-trustees-need-to-know-about-disposing-of-charity-land>

In addition, TMCP is about to launch a streamlining process for leases in cases where Managing Trustees instruct a firm from the Methodist Church's Panel of Solicitors. It is anticipated that the new lease streamlining process will be in place prior to the 2025 Conference.

The negotiation of commercial leases can be a lengthy and complex process, particularly where there are specific requirements on one or both sides. This is a general characteristic of commercial leases and is not unique to the Methodist Church. There are additional legal requirements when charities are involved. This means that it is impossible for there to be a "one-size-fits-all" template because any lease must be tailored to suit the specific circumstances.

The Conference considers that TMCP's approach in limiting the provision of template lease documents is correct and reminds Managing Trustees that they should be taking appropriate advice from their surveyors and legal advisers for each proposed letting. The Conference therefore declines the Memorial and reminds Managing Trustees that they should contact TMCP early in their proceedings if they need information or guidance about the suitability of types of occupational agreement, or provisions specific to particular proposed occupiers, and if they cannot find answers in the information on the TMCP website.

M12 Safeguarding

The Yorkshire North and East District Synod (Present: 91, voting 90 for 1 against) celebrates the church's commitment to safeguarding across the Connexion and is proud of work done to ground this in our mission as a church. The Synod also celebrates and commends the efforts taken to further embed a safe culture within the life of the Conference, notably ensuring the named designated safeguarding officer for the 2025 Conference being circulated prior to the opening of the Conference. However, to further enhance good practice the Synod asks that the Conference resolve that it must always have a named safeguarding officer who is independent of the membership of the Conference and easily accessible; and that they should be well publicised prior to and during the Conference.

Reply with proposed amendments

The Conference thanks the Yorkshire North and East Synod for its commitment to the very best practice in safeguarding.

The named person who acts as contact for safeguarding matters at the Conference is the Assistant Secretary of the Conference (ASC). All members of the Conference are responsible for the safeguarding of others but it is, as the Memorial suggests, important for a particular person to be a point of contact should a concern arise. The chaplains at the Conference are also points of contact to whom concerns can be expressed.

Events in churches, circuits and districts will have a designated safeguarding lead, who need not be someone 'independent' of the event. The ASC is a senior person within the life of the Conference and having the person in that role as a designated point of contact demonstrates the importance which the Conference places on the safeguarding of those who attend the event. In **terms of dealing with the substance of the issues raised** ~~terms of workload, it is likely that upon receiving a concern, the ASC would then pass the matter that to the most suitable person in the unified safeguarding network. to follow it up, which in most cases will be the District Safeguarding Officer based in the district where the Conference takes place.~~

The Conference ~~declines the memorial but~~ asks the Conference Planning Executive to ensure that clear details of who to contact regarding safeguarding concerns are available to all members of the Conference.

Notice of Motion 2025/102: Amended Reply to Memorial M12

In 2021, Conference adopted a report exploring the Theology of Safeguarding. In the introduction it affirms that: 'it is the Methodist Church's intention to value every human being as part of God's creation

and to be a place where the transformational love of God is embodied. As part of this, it seeks to be a safer place for those who are less powerful, amongst whom are children, young people and any who are vulnerable'. Section 7 reflects on the role of power within the Church, recognising that all Christians and members within the church should reflect on the power that is perceived by those that they interact with. It is inevitable that within the structure of the Methodist Conference, members of the Secretariat may be perceived to have power due to the roles they carry. Whilst negative impact of this power will not be intended by those who are in these roles, Conference can be a time of vulnerability for some, and unhelpful power dynamics have been experienced in previous Conferences as a result.

In light of this, it is not appropriate for the Safeguarding Officer for the Conference to be the Assistant Secretary of Conference as is our current practice.

In addition, the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure of the Methodist Church states that all churches and circuits are required to 'display the name of the person responsible for safeguarding and other useful contacts should be provided for those using church premises and seeking safeguarding assistance'. This is reiterated within the District Safeguarding Group standards, with standard being that 'Safeguarding contact information is on display in each church premises and on church and circuit websites'. If this is expected of our churches and circuits, it would be good for conference to be an example of good safeguarding practice which should include direct contact information of the safeguarding officer being shared with all members of the Conference.

The Conference therefore asks that the reply to memorial M12 be amended as follows:

The Conference thanks the Yorkshire North and East Synod for its commitment to the very best practice in safeguarding.

Recognising the need to be attentive and responsive to the reality and impact of power dynamics within the Conference however unintended, the Conference accepts the memorial and directs the Conference Planning Executive to ensure that in succeeding years an Independent Conference Safeguarding Officer is appointed, and that clear details of whom to contact regarding safeguarding concerns are available to all members of the Conference.

The Conference referred the proposed amended reply and Notice of Motion 2025/102 to the Safeguarding Committee for more detailed consideration

M13 Safeguarding

The London District Synod (present: 151; voting: 140 in favour, 3 against) is deeply aware that some of the operational issues relating to safeguarding (both inside our own Church and others, and also, significantly, wider society and public opinion) would benefit from thoughtful and prayerful exploration and sharing. We therefore request the Conference to encourage and affirm a symposium to explore these issues. The London District is invited to share in the hosting of such an open meeting at Methodist Central Hall Westminster before the end of 2025.

The symposium would seek to provide an inclusive and informed conversation about safeguarding and the Gospel, and also address some of the personal, pastoral and theological issues being raised by ministers and members throughout the connexion. The underlying purpose of this discussion is to build up the Body of Christ in accordance with the strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity and the Theology of Safeguarding Report. Given the broad nature of some of the issues under conversation, the open meeting would seek to ensure ecumenical participation.

M14 Delivery of Training Modules

The Bradford North Circuit Meeting (Present: 28; voting: 23 in favour, 0 against) notes and welcomes that an updated foundation module for Creating Safer Space is being rolled out. We also note that our circuit currently has no one offering to deliver this training within the Circuit. The Circuit requests that greater consideration be given as to how the delivery of this, and other, training modules may be delivered through district and connexional resources rather than relying on resources within Circuits.

It also requests that consideration be given as to how other national organisations deliver training locally and whether anything might be learnt from the way this is achieved.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Bradford North Circuit Meeting for its memorial and offers the following response to the memorial.

The delivery modes for the Foundation Module are currently through onsite or online delivery (via a Zoom meeting) facilitated by circuit trainers. In addition, the new Foundation Module will be available through self-study via the MCBX e-learning platform from August 2025. Participants new to their role who are accessing Foundation Module training for the first time should attend a facilitated course - either onsite or online, where pastoral support is available, as we are aware that for some people the content of this training may cause distress and anxiety. The e-learning mode can then be accessed for further refreshing of the training every 4 years.

The District Safeguarding Group should be made aware of any difficulties in providing training within circuits. The District Safeguarding Officer and Learning Network Officer can provide advice on how best to support this learning within circuits. Where trainer posts are vacant or trainers require initial training or upskilling as modules are refreshed, the DSO and LDO can provide relevant equipping and support.

Circuits can also share training needs with neighbouring circuits and agree on how to support this together. This could be by trainers sharing in training provision for two or more circuits. It may also mean inviting trainers to facilitate training in another circuit or offering places on scheduled courses by a neighbouring circuit.

The rationale for circuit delivery is as follows.

1. Onsite delivery options are more accessible within a smaller geographic area.
2. Online delivery options allow remote access, which enhances options for those who prefer an online mode of delivery or are limited in access to onsite provision.
3. Offering this training within the context of a circuit provides a more localised understanding of the circuit's work as well as opportunities to network with others involved in that context. The nuances of processes of which participants require knowledge and understanding are more likely to relate to the churches/circuits within which their work is carried out, and these local opportunities help in this regard.

The implications of providing Foundation Module training by District and Connexional staff would be well beyond the resource provision available and would not utilise the knowledge held by circuit trainers.

All other mandatory safeguarding training is offered, whether onsite or online, by District Safeguarding Officers in partnership with Learning Network Officers. The Connexional Safeguarding Training Group consists of officers who represent the Church of England and the United Reformed Church. Great consideration is given to learning from one another and sharing resources.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial and encourages Circuits to undertake further exploration of the range of delivery options available for engaging in the Safeguarding Foundation Module.

M15 Training Accreditation

The East Solent and Downs Circuit Meeting (Present 38; voting unanimous) recognises that the ministry and work of the Church is blessed by the dedication of a large number of volunteers that not only fulfil roles in the church but are prominent leaders within other sectors, where they are also trained in UCB, EDI and Safeguarding courses.

With consideration of the workload of ministers and the church leaders and volunteers, we request that the Methodist Conference considers the accreditation of the training offered in other organisations so that volunteers who are already trained in that way do not have to redo training within the Methodist Church.

Reply

The Conference thanks the East Solent and Downs Circuit Meeting for the memorial.

Each organisation has its own particular requirements for training in areas such as Unconscious Bias (UCB), Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Safeguarding. If an individual is part of another organisation there will be an expectation that they complete the training relevant to that organisation whatever their experience and training elsewhere. The Methodist Church in Great Britain is no different and therefore has developed specific training that links these areas of concern to the church context.

The Conference declines the memorial and affirms the completion of the UCB, EDI and safeguarding training as required, whilst also encouraging those who have completed training in UCB, EDI and safeguarding in other contexts to share their knowledge and experiences within the church setting.

M16 Safeguarding Training

The Ealing Trinity Circuit Meeting (present: 20; voting: unanimous) draws the Conference's attention to the delay in officeholders completing their Advanced Module safeguarding training due to the limited number of gathered sessions, reflecting the restrictions on those authorised to offer this training. The Ealing Trinity Circuit asks the Conference to increase the capacity for holding gathered sessions by allowing authorised Foundation Module trainers to be trained and authorised to offer Advanced Module training, subject to their capacity and willingness.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Ealing Trinity Circuit Meeting for its memorial.

The need for additional Advanced Module trainers in some Districts is appreciated. However, ways to manage this situation vary around the Connexion. In some regions, those who are authorised Foundation Module trainers are also able to become Advanced Module trainers as well, if they are recommended by the DSO, and/or relevant Learning and Development Officer. They must then also attend an Advanced Module Train the Trainer session, to ensure that they are fully prepared to deliver the course materials.

Another way that some Districts currently enable officeholders to access Advanced Module training is by sharing access to online gathered sessions with neighbouring districts. This increases the number of dates offered to individuals whilst also ensuring that online sessions have good attendance levels.

There is ongoing work, by members of the Safeguarding Training Working Group, to develop Connexional Training Standards which will harmonise safeguarding training processes around the Connexion. Details about who is permitted to deliver the different modules of training will be included in these standards.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial to the extent that it encourages conversations between the District Safeguarding Officer or (from 1 September 2025) Regional Officer for Safeguarding, the relevant Learning and Development Officer, and those trained as Foundation Module trainers, to assess their willingness and suitability to be trained and accredited in delivering the Advanced Module.

M17 Local Preacher Training

The Aire and Calder Circuit Meeting (Present: 78; Voting: 76 for, 2 against) has prayerfully reflected on our ongoing experiences of local preacher training and is deeply concerned about the high drop-out rates and discouragement among prospective local preachers.

We note in particular that:

1. Many are called but feel overwhelmed.
Some offering for local preacher ministry may have limited IT skills or no recent experience of academic study. Despite having a clear call and deep commitment, they find the online syllabus daunting and become discouraged.
2. Isolation and lack of group learning.
The current training presupposes a vibrant network of fellow students and readily available tutors. In reality, many trainees work alone, reliant on remote tutoring, with little chance of group discussion or mutual support.
3. Emphasis on academic content risks overshadowing spiritual calling.
While a firm grounding in theology is vital, the course can give the impression that academic achievement is valued above testing and nurturing the call, grace, and gifts that have always been central to our Methodist understanding of preaching.
4. Previous memorials on accessibility and flexibility have not led to tangible change.
Several Circuits and Districts have raised these concerns in recent years. Yet the barriers remain, and training materials still assume significant computer literacy and academic aptitude.

We therefore request the Conference to:

1. Undertake a comprehensive review of how the training is delivered to ensure trainees are not left isolated or overloaded, and to recognise that many come from non-academic backgrounds and older congregations.
2. Develop simpler, more flexible training pathways alongside the existing course, incorporating face-to-face study options or printed materials for those unable to use computers confidently.
3. Provide an introductory 'Pre-Study Module' or orientation, helping those with limited IT or academic experience to feel more confident in navigating the course.
4. Reaffirm and prioritise the spiritual and practical call to preach alongside academic study.
5. Adopt an 'apprenticeship model' of training, ensuring that mentoring, practical guidance, and discipline from experienced preachers sit at the heart of the process, rather than relying predominantly on academic material.

In 1746 the Methodist Conference identified three key questions to ask of those called to preach...

- a. Have they grace?
- b. Have they gifts as well as grace?
- c. Have they fruit?

We encourage rediscovering the Wesleyan priorities of '*grace, gifts, and fruit*,' so that the vocation itself is nurtured and fostered.

We believe adopting these measures will help retain the hearts and enthusiasm of those responding to God's call, thus strengthening the ministry of preaching across the Connexion.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Aire and Calder Circuit Meeting for its memorial related to the Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Course and wishes to thank all local preachers and worship leaders, tutors and mentors for their hugely valued contributions to the life of the Church.

The Conference notes the centrality of worship to *Our Calling* and wishes to reaffirm its importance in the life of the Church. Worship renewal is a key aim of *God for All 2025-32* and, as such, the Connexional Team are working on plans to realise this vision. A key principle of this will be the need

to work in partnership with worshipping communities in their specific contexts, to ensure that worship is a place of deep, life-giving encounter with God. Local preachers and worship leaders are a key community in the leading of such worship and, as such, appropriate high-quality training, support for discernment and development is of significant importance.

The current online Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Course (WLP) was created as a result of a direction from the Conference of 2012. Since then, much work has taken place to ensure that the course and its delivery are as inclusive and accessible as possible. Online delivery of the course has enabled participation of many students for whom a paper-based course and face-to-face tutorials would have been impractical, a fact demonstrated particularly by the progress many students were able to make during the COVID-19 pandemic. The course website is designed to be used on any electronic device and accessibility features are provided to enable screen presentation to be adapted to suit particular learning needs, together with audio transcription and instant translation facilities. The course content is continually under review in line with the requirements of the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion requirements, and support for training in Study Skills for the course is provided by the Learning Network.

The Connexional Team has progressively worked to improve the variety of material in terms of accessibility and media used. The Conference notes that, in recent years, the following changes have been made.

- here is now one project to complete for each module-section, replacing previous complex choices of options.
- Portfolios no longer have to be compiled, zipped and uploaded to a website. Each project is completed and assessed online using a simple dialogue between student and tutor.
- Students and tutors can track their progress through the portfolio using a simple traffic-light system.
- There are now no deadlines for submission of portfolios as moderation starts as soon as a portfolio is complete.
- Online Induction sessions are offered to all new students and tutors providing a basic explanation of the course and introduction to the course website.
- Online courses in Study Skills are offered, together with training for new and experienced tutors
- The course website has been comprehensively updated to make usage simpler and more intuitive on all kinds of devices. Printing of all content is straightforward if required.
- A comprehensive accessibility tool is provided, offering numerous screen adaptations such as adapted contrast, fonts, size and highlighting. This tool also offers audio transcription and instant translation facilities (text and often spoken) in dozens of languages.
- Students are encouraged to use different media for submitting their project work. Most projects can be completed using audio or video as an alternative to typing, and photos of handwritten work can also be uploaded.

The WLP course sits alongside the formation of the preacher in the context of the LP Meeting, where call, grace and gifts can be nurtured. WLP is designed to encourage the practice of theological reflection. As such, it must always have an emphasis on theological learning, which underpins high-quality worship. Additionally, it should be noted that formation of a local preacher or worship leader is primarily a process of discernment in the context of the Local Preachers' Meeting, supplemented by theological learning through the Worship: Leading & Preaching course. As such, it is expected that not all who commence training will necessarily complete it and may discern that their calling lies in a different role in the Church. This does not necessarily represent a failure of the training programme, but the outworking of the discernment process.

The Conference additionally acknowledges that group learning is central to the ethos of the course, but understands that for many students, the reality is of one-to-one work with their tutors and mentors. The Connexional Team aims to provide opportunities for group learning to supplement local provision: Explore Online provides quarterly weekend sessions on Zoom, and Explore Weekends now offer a similar format in-person.

The Conference wishes to emphasise the importance of worship to *Our Calling*, the centrality of high-quality preaching and worship leading to life-giving worship, the purposes of the WLP course and

process as both a learning and discernment, and the significant actions taken in response to previous memorials.

The Conference therefore neither accepts nor declines the memorial at this stage and refers the matter to the Ministries Committee for further consideration. It also suggests that the Ministries and Learning Team work with Districts and Circuits as appropriate to undertake a systematic exploration and review of the WLP course in the light of the wider context of worship renewal and explore the development of a 'Pre-Study' orientation module, to ensure that no one who is called by God to serve in leading worship and preaching is excluded from following their call'

M18 Training of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders

The Redruth, Camborne and Hayle Circuit Meeting (present: 38; voting: in favour 36, against 0) is committed to the appropriate and effective training of local preachers and worship leaders for proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus and making new disciples, and respectfully request that the Conference gives urgent attention to amending the present WLP 3.0 course for worship leaders and local preachers (WLP) with a revised curriculum which would be more practical and fit for purpose. Our concerns with the present course include:

- WLP 3.0 is unwieldy in its concept. It is too long and involved, time-consuming and idealistic in its approach. It includes many 'nice to have' and 'nice to do' elements but not enough of the basic essentials.
- It is impractical and almost impossible to complete in two years, particularly as most students are part-time. Many are disillusioned, as their expectations had been they could complete training in about one (WLs) or two (LPs) years.
- In consequence, prospective students are overwhelmed by the huge demands the present course makes, and many decide not to attempt it.
- There is a lack of suitable tutors, with many local preachers not willing to assume the role.
- The Cliff College Explore Weekends are too remote for students and many are unable to attend.
- It does not meet local and circuit needs.

We suggest that the revised curriculum is based on an awareness of the variety of needs of local congregations, and that the following points be considered in the modified study programme:

❖ A more concise syllabus which can be completed realistically in about one (WPs) or two years (LPs).

❖ The curriculum provides for / retains:

- a more systematic approach to Christian Doctrine and Theology, including an emphasis on the Methodist understanding of doctrine, particularly Wesley's 'Four Alls' of Salvation including the Wesleyan doctrines of Assurance and Christian Perfection,
- a more structured approach to the study of the Scriptures, including an understanding of exegesis and exposition, which provides for the use and non-use of the Common Lectionary,
- a concise approach to the fundamentals of liturgy (including informal liturgy), homiletics (including sermon construction), hymnody and the place of prayer and music, both classical/traditional and contemporary, in worship,
- the use of different resources including physical and digital resources (music, video, YouTube [pros and cons]) and how to use these effectively.
- local preachers and worship leaders are given the opportunity to study together to offer mutual support and encouragement whilst progressing through each module rather than an Explore session after the module has been completed. For this purpose, we suggest that tuition be included on the use of the Teams and Zoom apps to enable effective video conferencing and team chat.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Redruth, Camborne and Hayle Circuit Meeting for its memorial related to the Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Course and offers the same reply as M17.

M19 Local Preacher and Worship Leader Training

The Doncaster Circuit Meeting (voting: 45 present; unanimous) thanks the Conference for the work it has done/does on the local preacher/worship leader training pathway.

However, it requests that the Conference revisit the Local Preacher/Worship training pathway, to make it more inclusive and diverse.

We assert that the existing mode of study pathway is putting off some of those who are considering becoming local preachers/worship leaders.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Doncaster Circuit Meeting for its memorial related to the Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Course and offers the same reply as M17.

M20 Ministerial Development Review Process

The South East District Synod (Present 109; voting: 104 for, 1 against) is aware that the delivery of the Ministerial Development Review process across the Connexion is uneven in spite of the direction from the Conference that it shall take place annually. The reality is that some ministers who would appreciate it are not offered it, whilst others find the regularity exhausting, with congregants becoming frustrated when it comes round almost before it has achieved completion the year before, and certainly before learning can be effected. In addition, in years where there has been a re-invitation process it becomes very difficult to keep the two processes separate and in smaller churches, the same people often end up being asked to contribute to both.

The superintendent minister may be involved in the MDR for several members of circuit staff as their ordained contributor, and also for several members of other circuit staff as the Supervisor, adding significantly to the administrative load.

In bringing this memorial, we recognise that the Stationing Review Group is due to report to Conference this year and that it is looking not only at the stationing process but also considering other matters including the possibility of an annual vocational conversation.

The question arises as to whether MDR should continue in the current desired form, become optional or become part of a bigger process that includes Stationing, Supervision and anything else that is under review by the Stationing Review Group. In any event, if MDR is to continue it needs to be done well, intentionally and uniformly across the Connexion and care should be taken to ensure that it fits neatly into the new structure.

Whilst recognising that the length of Stationing appointments vary, where the period of appointment is five years our view is that holding a MDR in years two and five would seem to provide the best results for all involved in this valuable process, although where necessary the frequency could be adjusted to suit the local circumstances. This memorial therefore asks Conference to direct the Ministries Committee to implement a change in MDR frequency to a minimum of twice in a five-year period, and to institute systems whereby implementation of this is eventually mandated within the structure to be presented to Conference this year by the Stationing Review Group. We would ask Conference to direct the Ministries Committee to report back on this Memorial at the Conference of 2026.

Reply

The Conference thanks the South East District Synod for the memorial and their reflections on the delivery of the Ministerial Development Review (MDR) process. The Conference recognises the

discrepancies that the memorial highlights and the desire for enabling a consistent approach to MDR across the connexion.

The Stationing Review Report, if the proposals are approved by the Conference, offers some clarity in the way that Supervision, MDR and the proposed Vocational Conversation are intended to operate and how they complement one another moving forward.

Whilst the Conference acknowledges that a review of the MDR processes would be beneficial it feels that the current wording of the memorial may limit such a review. The Conference therefore declines the memorial in its current form but directs the Ministries Committee to undertake a review of the MDR processes, in consultation with Districts, in light of the proposed changes to the Stationing processes and report back to the Conference of 2027.

M21 Resourcing Administration

The Isle of Man District Synod (Present: 32 voting: in favour 32, against 0) notes that in reply to Memorial M3 at the 2024 Conference it was acknowledged that:

“It will be helpful to ask Local Churches and communities to prioritise their commitment to vibrant, healthy evangelism – including starting New Places for New People and Church at the Margins communities – in the years ahead.”

Whilst we applaud the work of the Evangelism and Growth Team and the provision of Connexional funding to support additional paid roles in each District under the God For All initiative, we seek to draw Conference’s attention to the difficulty many Local Churches and Circuits face in prioritising this vital work due to increasing administrative demands related to finance and property management.

We believe that:

1. Administration is a vital enabler of mission – ensuring that evangelism and discipleship remain the focus of lay and ordained leaders.
2. Resourcing Circuit administration would empower local mission – freeing ministers, lay workers, and volunteers from excessive administrative tasks.

We therefore request that the Conference explore releasing additional funds to support the employment of skilled property and/or financial administrators within each Circuit, recognising administration as a Spirit-given gift that enables the Church’s mission and ministry.

We believe that this will release others, both lay and ordained, to more fully exercise their gifts in mission and ministry at a local level, including the prioritisation of “vibrant healthy evangelism”.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Isle of Man District Synod for its memorial highlighting the importance of administration in enabling the mission and ministry of the Church.

In supporting the next phase of the God for All (GFA) strategy, the Conference of 2024 effectively committed over £40m of Connexional Funds over the next seven years to this vital initiative. In so doing, it has committed substantial balances from the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF) that will mean other initiatives cannot be prioritised. It also relies upon the assumption that income to the CPF from the property levy will continue at the current rate (a reasonable assumption to make, but not something that is known with certainty). As such, there are not additional connexional funds readily available to be released to meet this request for support with administration.

In addition, there are substantial financial resources across the Connexion in district, circuit and church accounts that could be deployed to support administration. However, it is noted that these

resources are not always in the places of greatest need. This subject is already part of the work of the Connexional Economic Justice Working Group established by the Conference in 2024.

Therefore, the Conference declines the memorial, but refers the broader issues raised to the Connexional Council for further consideration.

M22 “Don’t Buy Into” Report

The Darlington District Synod (Present; 48 voting; 34 in favour, 14 against) requests the Conference to note the ‘Don’t Buy into Occupation’ Report of November 2024, which shows that HSBC and Barclays are second and third in the table of international banks providing loans and underwriting services to companies operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. They each provided a total of over \$18m to 58 key companies active in the illegal settlement enterprise between January 2021 and September 2024.

The Conference is therefore urged to ask JACEI and the CFB to put these findings directly to the two banks, in which the Board holds shares, to point out that they are directly complicit in breaking international law and that therefore indirectly are all their investors, and to consider actively the possibility of disinvestment if the responses are unsatisfactory. In the meantime, the Methodist people are encouraged to boycott these two banks (for this reason and also their involvement in funding fossil fuel development).

It further requests the Conference to raise with JACEI and the CFB the strong possibility that the large companies engaged in developing sophisticated technology and artificial intelligence are exploring further methods of technological warfare, including drones and guided weaponry. Conference is encouraged to note the JPIT recent ‘Future of Arms’ Report, which states ‘Technology is... helping to reshape the battlespace of tomorrow to such an extent that it is changing the way that we think about war. There are suggestions that Gaza and indeed the West Bank have become testing grounds for these forms of ‘sophisticated’ warfare. The CFB and JACEI are encouraged to explore this deeply worrying development in their dialogue with both the Banks and the large tech companies, and for JACEI to report back on both the above issues to the Conference of 2026.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Darlington District Synod for its memorial and for drawing attention to the November 2024 *Don’t Buy Into Occupation* report, which raises significant concerns about the financial relationships between international banks, including HSBC and Barclays, and companies operating in the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The Conference reaffirms the Methodist Church’s longstanding commitment to peace, justice, the upholding of international law, and the protection of human dignity. It also recognises the responsibility of investors to ensure that the capital they steward is used in ways that are consistent with these values.

The Conference notes that the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church (CFB), together with its subsidiary Epworth Investment Management, maintains an active programme of ethical engagement with major banks. This includes dialogue on human rights, climate risk, fossil fuel financing, and corporate accountability. The CFB’s public advocacy, particularly in relation to bank financing of new fossil fuel projects, has been widely reported in the national and financial press, and has contributed to meaningful scrutiny of bank lending practices. These efforts reflect the Methodist Church’s commitment to using its influence as a shareholder to promote responsible corporate behaviour.

The Conference accordingly refers the issues raised in the memorial to the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) and to the CFB, requesting that they engage HSBC and Barclays directly in relation to the concerns raised in the *Don’t Buy Into Occupation* report. The Conference also encourages JACEI and the CFB to consider the ethical implications of technological developments in modern warfare, as highlighted in the Joint Public Issues Team’s 2024 report *The*

Future of Arms, and to incorporate these concerns in their broader programme of engagement with banks and major technology firms.

The Conference notes that the CFB prioritises constructive engagement as the principal means by which it seeks to influence corporate behaviour. While divestment remains an available tool where dialogue fails, it is not the current position of the Church to pursue or to advocate for divestment from HSBC or Barclays. Rather, the Church affirms its trust in the CFB and JACEI to continue applying the Church's ethical investment policy with integrity, transparency and rigour.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial in so far as this reply indicates and requests that JACEI report to the 2026 Conference on progress made in its engagement on these matters.