

35. Deferred Special Resolution

Contact Name and Details	The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler, Secretary of the Conference SoC@methodistchurch.org.uk
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1. In Section I of the Methodist Council report to the 2019 Conference was the work on the Model Trust 14(2A) Use of church buildings by other Christian denominations.

In light of what was reported the Conference amended Model Trust 14(2A) to remove the limitation of 12 months and proviso (i) and therefore amended the Model Trust 14(2A) as follows:

(2A) Notwithstanding that any of the members of any church or congregation hereinafter mentioned may not subscribe to the doctrinal standards, the managing trustees may with the consent of such person or persons as the Conference may by Standing Order prescribe permit the use of a place of worship or any other premises comprised in the property by members of one or more Christian churches or congregations, either for particular occasions or for a period which shall not in any case exceed twelve months **determined by the managing trustees by way of a licence or a lease**, provided that (i) such permission shall be given only upon terms that it is revocable by the managing trustees and (ii) such consent as aforesaid shall be given only in cases where to grant such permission would not (having regard to all the circumstances) offend the doctrinal standards.

2. All 30 Synods voted in favour of the amendment to the Model Trust 14(2A). 293 circuit meetings voted on the amendment, of which 292 voted in favour. The Faith and Order Committee has reported its approval of the Resolution (section 6 of Report 37).
3. The Conference is also asked to adopt this report as its further reply to Memorial M32 (2016), shown in Appendix 1, which requested that Model Trust 14(2A) be amended.

***RESOLUTIONS

35/1. The Conference receives the Report.

35/2. The Conference confirms the amendments to the Model Trusts as set out above.

35/3. The Conference adopts the report as its further reply to Memorial M32 (2016).

Voting figures received

Synod Cymru

Synod For: 21 Against: 1
 1 circuit meeting voted in favour

Wales Synod

Synod For: 114 Against: 1
 13 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

Birmingham

Synod For: 118 Against: 2
 9 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

Bolton and Rochdale

Synod For: 73 Against: 1
 5 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

Bristol

Synod For: 84 Against: 3
 9 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

Cumbria

Synod For: 85 Against: 0
 10 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

Channel Islands

Synod For: 30 Against: 2
 2 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

Chester and Stoke-on-Trent

Synod For: 114 Against: 0
 10 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

Synod For: 103 Against: 2
 8 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

Darlington

Synod For: 82 Against: 2
 6 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

35. Deferred Special Resolution

East Anglia

Synod
15 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 128 Against: 4

Isle of Man

Synod
1 circuit meeting voted in favour

For: 57 Against: 57

Lincolnshire

Synod
10 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 79 Against: 3

Liverpool

Synod
8 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 65 Against: 1

Manchester and Stockport

Synod
12 circuit meetings voted, 11 in favour, 1 vote was tied

For: 102 Against: 0

Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Synod
11 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 138 Against: 0

Lancashire

Synod
11 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 95 Against: 2

Nottingham and Derby

Synod
10 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 122 Against: 0

Northampton

Synod
18 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 157 Against: 0

Plymouth and Exeter

Synod
16 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 94 Against: 1

Sheffield

Synod
7 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 94 Against: 0

Southampton

Synod

11 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 128 Against: 0

Yorkshire West

Synod

13 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 157 Against: 1

Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury

Synod

7 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 127 Against: 4

Yorkshire North and East

Synod

15 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 122 Against: 0

Scotland

Synod

5 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 51 Against: 0

Shetland

Synod

For: 12 Against: 0

Bedfordshire, Essex, Hertfordshire

Synod

7 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 128 Against: 0

London

Synod

29 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 184 Against: 4

South East

Synod

14 circuit meetings voted, all in favour

For: 114 Against: 0

35. Deferred Special Resolution

Appendix 1

M32 Use of church buildings by other churches

The Coventry and Nuneaton (5/10) Circuit Meeting (Present: 55; Voting: unanimous) rejoices in the vibrant diversity of the Christian Church in Britain today. Across the area covered by the Circuit, it is aware of Christians engaged in worship and mission in a variety of styles and coming from a variety of cultures, languages and traditions. As the people called Methodist, we seek to be the 'friends of all and the enemies of none'.

At the same time, the Circuit is engaged in reviewing its resources that they may best be used for mission and the work of the kingdom in our 21st century world. In some places, this has meant sale of buildings, but in other places more creative and collaborative approaches, together with our sisters and brothers of other traditions, are appropriate. This is particularly the case when dealing with more modern buildings where a multiplicity of different uses – some clearly Christian and others more general – of the same set of premises can be contemplated.

The Circuit Meeting is concerned that, at present, Clause 14(2A) of Part 2 of the Model Trusts prevents Managing Trustees from making arrangements to allow Christians of other churches or congregations to use Methodist premises, or parts of them, for worship for periods exceeding 12 months. It is aware that informally a variety of methods have been used to allow such use for longer periods. However, in the rich and varied context of Britain today, the Circuit Meeting believes that being able to conclude formal longer term leases and licences with fellow Christians of other traditions may be part of the best way of serving the work of the kingdom in a particular area. It believes this should be possible whether or not the Methodist people of the area have current need of a particular building for worship.

The Circuit Meeting therefore requests the Conference to amend Clause 14(2A) to allow longer term arrangements. It suggests that a revised version might be:

(2A) Notwithstanding that any of the members of any church or congregation hereinafter mentioned may not subscribe to the doctrinal standards, the managing trustees may with the consent of such person or persons as the Conference may by Standing Order prescribe permit the use of a place of worship or any other premises comprised in the property by members of one or more Christian churches or congregations, either for particular occasions or for a period which shall not in any case exceed twelve months, provided that (i) such permission shall be given only upon terms that it is revocable by the managing trustees and (ii) such consent as aforesaid shall be given only in cases where to grant such permission would not (having regard to all the circumstances) offend the doctrinal standards.

The person or persons prescribed by the Conference shall however on written application by the managing trustees have authority to allow the granting of a more permanent occupancy to a body referred to above including the letting, renting or leasing of the property, or part of the property, in the manner authorised in paragraph 16(e) where local circumstances require it.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Coventry and Nuneaton Circuit Meeting for its memorial. The Conference appreciates that the requirements of Model Trust 14(2A) mean that no security of tenure can at present be offered to another Christian church or congregation unless such a church is able and willing to enter into a Sharing Agreement under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969.

The intention of Model Trust 14(2A) was to enable other Christian churches and congregations who did not wish to commit to a long-term agreement to use Methodist premises and to ensure that managing trustees know that no person, service or meeting for religious worship denies or repudiates the doctrinal standards as required by Model Trust 14(3).

The Conference recognises that there are ongoing questions around the application of Model Trust 14(2A), particularly in respect of what is required in terms of a continuing local Methodist church when a licence is granted. The Conference also recognises that there are cases where worship by other Christian churches or congregations in part of a set of Methodist premises need not in any way impinge on Methodist worship in or other use of the remainder. Therefore, whilst declining the proposal to amend Model Trust 14(2A) at present in the form suggested, the Conference directs the Methodist Council, in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee, to provide guidance on the application and use of Model Trust 14(2A) both in terms of its flexibility and limitations. The Conference also directs the Council, in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee, to consider whether it is desirable to make any amendments to Model Trust 14(2A) and to bring any recommendations to the 2018 Conference.