

57. Oversight and Trusteeship

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Section A: Introduction

1. “The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God’s love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.” So begins the Our Calling statement which the Conference developed from 1996 to 2004 and reaffirmed as the strategic driver of the Church’s mission at the 2021 Conference. This report is the latest in a series of reports of work which is designed to enable the Church to be more effective in fulfilling Our Calling through the streamlining and repurposing of our governance structures.
2. Discussions about the best configuration of the Church’s oversight and trusteeship structure have occupied the Conference (and indeed the Council, the Connexional Leaders’ Forum (CLF) and the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC)) for many years, but the current series began in earnest in 2017. That year the report of the triennial Statistics for Mission acted as a catalyst for conversations about how best to use our resources and organise ourselves. The 2018 Conference received a discussion paper entitled ‘Reaffirming *Our Calling*: the future call of the Methodist Church’. In 2019, the Conference received a report which outlined developments in ‘Reaffirming *Our Calling*’ and reported that ‘The CLF and the Council have engaged in fruitful conversations around oversight and trusteeship, considering structures with the aim of providing greater support; enabling ministry, mission and broader strategic thinking; and promoting better coordination. Questions were considered including: What can most effectively be provided by Circuits, Districts or the Connexional Team? What of our structures and patterns of oversight do we need to keep or lay aside, and why?’ The report went on to promise that ‘This conversation will continue at the 2019 Conference as similar questions are asked with a view to ensuring that Methodist oversight structures are as effective and supportive as possible.’
3. The 2019 Conference therefore engaged in workshops around those questions and the fruit of those discussions was fed back to the CLF and the Council.
4. The 2020 Conference received the report, ‘Reaffirming *Our Calling*: Oversight and Trusteeship’. That report included the identification of five ‘in principle’ issues that needed to be considered (and which have been borne in mind throughout subsequent stages of the work) and three areas where change seemed most to be needed – the trusteeship of local churches, the trusteeship and governance of the Connexion, and the structure and leadership of Districts.

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5. That work was taken forward by a group which the 2020 Conference directed the Secretary to convene and which reported to the 2021 Conference. The Conference received the report, reaffirmed that Our Calling is the 'primary strategic driver for the Church's work', and directed that work be done by the Law and Polity Committee on the proposals for a Connexional Council, and by the SRC on the 'constitution, function and inter-relatedness of all connexional committees'. The Conference also directed the Council to establish a group to review the size of the Conference, resolved that more work be done in order that proposals on the reconfiguration of Districts could be brought to the Council, and resolved that the minimum size of a Local Church be raised to 12, offering models for the reorganisation of multiple worshipping communities into one society.
6. The 2022 Conference received a report on the constitution of the Conference from 2024, directing that its size be reduced from that date to 225 but referring to the Council the detail of how seats should be distributed. It also submitted a Special Resolution concerning the establishment of the Connexional Council to the Synods, agreed to the establishment of a Nominations Committee and directed the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group (OTTG) to take forward the aspects of the work that were not yet complete. It declined to receive the section of the report on reconfiguration of District boundaries.
7. As is clear from that partial summary, this has been a long and complicated piece of work with the Conference refining its intentions over the past six years. However, as has been noted many times before, the work on Oversight and Trusteeship has sought throughout to address two issues. One is the regulatory framework in which all charities are required to operate in the 21st century which has changed since the Methodist Church Act (1976) and which led to the Conference being registered as the charity trustee body in 2009. The other is the numerical decline which the Methodist Church in Britain has experienced, effectively since Union in 1932 but acutely in the last two decades and highlighted by the 2017 Statistics for Mission report. In broad terms, membership has approximately halved in number since the beginning of this century.
8. Driven as it has been by the desire to see the Church grow, the work on Oversight and Trusteeship cannot be (and was never intended to be) divorced from other significant pieces of work which the Conference has mandated in recent years. The reports on this work need to be read, therefore, in conjunction with the Evangelism and Growth strategy, particularly with regard to the arrangement in Local Churches, and with the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Strategy, particularly in relation to the work on nominations and discernment for leadership.

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9. The Oversight and Trusteeship project, then, has been an ambitious piece of work which has looked to reduce the burden of governance in all parts of the Church's life and to make the best use of increasingly limited resources, particularly of willing lay people who give their time and energy generously. Throughout, the interconnectedness of the Connexion's life has been recognised, so that the Conference, rather than being asked to receive separate reports on, say, the constitution of the Conference or the trusteeship of Local Churches, has been offered the work as a whole. Wishing to ensure the continuance of that practice, the 2022 Conference established the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group with a brief to complete three areas of work that remained unfinished from the 2021 report (the establishment of a Connexional Council, the revision of Connexional Committees, and the review of the provision for senior District roles), to review the Connexional Leaders' Forum, to consider questions of oversight in relation to Connexional Committees, and to consider the reports from those working on other resolutions to ensure comprehensive and coherent proposals. To that end, the resolutions of the 2022 Conference are set out below with, for ease of reference, an indication of where in this report or elsewhere in the Agenda the relevant report is to be found.

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10. Resolutions adopted by the 2022 Conference.

Resolution as adopted by the Conference	Action
44/1. The Conference received sections A and B of the Report.	The Council continues to use the objectives, and the Connexional Team reports to the Council under those headings.
<p>Section C – The Constitution of the Conference (pages 470-480)</p> <p>44/2. The Conference received section C of the Report.</p>	
44/3. The Conference resolved that, from the Conference of 2024, the total voting membership of the Conference shall be 225. The Conference directed the Methodist Council, in collaboration with the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee, to determine the distribution of seats and directed the Law and Polity Committee to bring draft Standing Orders to the 2023 Conference. The Conference further directed that the proportion of members of the Conference elected by the Synods shall not be less than 70%.	The Council has considered this and reports on it elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.
44/4. The Conference adopted the ways of working set out in this report, with effect from the 2024 Conference.	
44/5. WITHDRAWN	

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Resolution as adopted by the Conference	Action
<p>Section D The Connexional Council (pages 481 – 492)</p> <p>44/6. The Conference received section D of the report.</p> <p>(Special Resolution)</p> <p>44/7. The Conference amended paragraphs 1, 18 and 21 and adopted a new Section 9A comprising paragraphs 37A, 37B and 37C of the Deed of Union as set out in this report, and, in accordance with Standing Order 122(3) and 126(1)(d), directed that</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) consultation on this resolution shall be with the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee who may approve or disapprove; and that b) this resolution shall be submitted for confirmation at the Conference of 2023 together with a report of the opinions of the bodies consulted, and such amendments as are confirmed shall take effect from a date specified by that Conference. 	<p>This was submitted to Synods with a briefing note and is reported below.</p>
<p>Section E Connexional Committees (pages 492-502)</p> <p>44/8. The Conference received Section E of the report.</p>	
<p>44/9. The Conference directed the Secretary of the Conference to work with the co-chairs of the JDS Committee, the Chair of the SRC, the Youth President and two other persons to oversee a robust open recruitment process for an interim Nominations Committee and to bring nominations to the Council in October 2022.</p>	<p>A small group met to work on the process for this, and to establish an open recruitment process for the interim nominations committee (INC) which was appointed by the Council. Progress made by the INC is reported below.</p>

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Resolution as adopted by the Conference	Action
44/10. The Conference directed the Council to appoint an interim Nominations Committee to serve until the 2023 Conference.	See 44/9.
<p>Section F District Reviews (pages 503-514) (order paper pages 25-29,47)</p> <p>44/11. DECLINED 44/12. WITHDRAWN 44/13. WITHDRAWN 44/14. WITHDRAWN 44/11A. The Conference received the Report. [supplementary update report]</p>	There was a survey undertaken with members of the Conference, as well as Zoom sessions to consider further the debate held at the Conference. The Council and the CLF have also discussed it. The Council resolved not to bring any further general recommendations for the Connexion as a whole at this stage.
<p>Section G The Local Church (pages 514-516)</p> <p>44/15. The Conference received Section G of the Report.</p>	
44/16. The Conference directed the Faith and Order and Law and Polity committees to consider the issues involved in establishing and operating an online church, and to report to the Conference of 2023 together with any recommendations for any necessary amendments to the Deed of Union and Standing Orders.	A joint report from the Faith and Order and Law and Polity Committees is found elsewhere in the Agenda.
<p>Section H Discernment Panel (pages 516-518)</p> <p>44/17. The Conference received Section H of the Report and directed the Ministries Committee to continue its work on processes of discernment for senior roles and to report to the 2023 Conference.</p>	This is reported on in the Ministries Committee section of the Methodist Council report, elsewhere in the Agenda.
<p>Section I Conclusion (pages 518-520)</p> <p>44/18. The Conference received Section I of the report.</p>	

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Resolution as adopted by the Conference	Action
<p>44/19. The Conference delegated to the Council the appointment of an Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group to undertake the work referred to in the following resolutions, consulting and delegating as appropriate to progress the work as far as possible, including by bringing enabling or amending provisions in CPD.</p>	<p>The Council appointed the group in October 2022, and this constitutes its report to the Conference.</p>
<p>44/20. The Conference directed the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group to complete the outstanding work in connection with the following resolutions of the Conference 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) 30/6 (establishing a Connexional Council as a connexional trustee body and in replacement of the Methodist Council and Strategy and Resources Committee); b) 30/7 (revision of Connexional Committees, including in connection with the question of oversight set out in resolution 44/21 below); c) 30/10 (review of SO 426 and provisions for senior District roles, taking note of the Faith and Order Committee's work regarding the nature of a District Chair). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) This relates to resolution 44/7 above and is reported on below. b) This is reported on below. c) In the light of the 2022 Conference's decisions about Districts, the Faith and Order Committee is proposing delaying reporting on the role of a Chair until 2024.

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Resolution as adopted by the Conference	Action
<p>44/21. The Conference directed the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group, in consultation with the Faith and Order and Law and Polity committees, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) review the Connexional Leadership Forum's membership, responsibilities, and ways of working as raised in paragraphs 69 and 70 of section D of this report; <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) consider the questions of the oversight exercised by the Conference which are raised in Section E of this report, and to review further proposals relating to the committee structure in the light of their consideration. 	<p>See Section F below concerning the Connexional Leaders' Forum and comment on reporting lines in paragraph 30.</p>
<p>44/22 The Conference directed the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group to draft a constitution and terms of reference for the Nominations Committee and to work with the Law and Polity Committee to bring draft Standing Orders to the 2023 Conference.</p>	<p>The Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group has considered draft terms of reference which are reflected in the draft Standing Order that is also provided in the relevant section below.</p>
<p>44/23 The Conference directed the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group to monitor, receive and consider all the reports from those working on the resolutions passed by the Conference in connection with this report to ensure that future proposals are comprehensive and coherent, and to bring a full report with recommendations to the 2023 Conference.</p>	

11. The Council, at its October 2022 meeting, appointed the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group as follows;

The Secretary of the Conference (convener):
 The Connexional Secretary:
 Two representatives of the SRC:

The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler
 Mr Doug Swanney
 Dr Daleep Mukarji
 Mrs Anne Bolton

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Two representatives of the Law and Polity Committee:

The Revd Dr James N Tebbutt
Mrs Susan Howdle

Two representatives of the Faith and Order Committee:

The Revd Mark Rowland
The Revd Dr David M Chapman
The Revd Leslie M Newton

A District Chair:

Two lay people who are members of their DPC:

Mr David Pickles
Ms Sandie Smith

The OTTG met residentially in January 2023 (at which meeting and with the Council's permission, the Revd Rachel Parkinson attended in place of the Revd Leslie Newton). It then met online in March 2023, and undertook work outside of the meetings by electronic consultation.

***RESOLUTION

57/1. The Conference receives Section A of the Report.

Section B: District Reconfiguration

12. The 2022 Conference declined to receive the section of the Oversight and Trusteeship report which proposed the reconfiguration of Districts and their boundaries. The OTTG notes that the Methodist Council has adopted a clear line that it should not seek at present to instigate any general or connexion-wide processes under Standing Order 401(2), but that it encourages the conversations in regions to continue and, under that Standing Order, welcomes proposals for change from groups of Districts.
13. The Conference therefore will be asked to consider a recommendation from the Council for the creation of a new District in North West England.

***RESOLUTION

57/2. The Conference receives Section B of the Report.

Section C: The Connexional Council

14. One of the proposals that has been developed and refined over the last four years has been the proposal for a Connexional Council. Whilst the detail of this proposal (and indeed the suggested name of the body) has been subject to discussion and refinement over the last few years, two points have been central

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and consistently recognised. The first is that the Conference as a gathering of 306 (or even 225) persons is too large a body to exercise charity trusteeship as that is now understood, viz. 'The general control and management of the administration of the charity.' The second is that the Methodist Council as it currently exists is not adequately constituted to exercise such 'control and management' and that were a body effectively to do that, there would no longer be a need for the Strategy and Resources Committee. The Conference of 2021 therefore agreed in principle to the establishment of the Connexional Council, recognising that this would require a change to the Deed of Union, and this was further agreed at the Conference of 2022.

15. Therefore, under the terms of Standing Orders 122(3) and 126(1)(d), the 2022 Conference agreed to submit the following Special Resolution to the Synods and to the Law and Polity Committee concerning the establishment of the Connexional Council:

44/7. The Conference amends paragraphs 1, 18 and 21 and adopts a new Section 9A comprising paragraphs 37A, 37B and 37C of the Deed of Union as set out in this report, and, in accordance with Standing Orders 122(3) and 126(1)(d), directs that

- a) consultation on this resolution shall be with the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee who may approve or disapprove; and that*
- b) this resolution shall be submitted for confirmation at the Conference of 2023 together with a report of the opinions of the bodies consulted, and such amendments as are confirmed shall take effect from a date specified by that Conference.*

The voting has been recorded as follows:

Synod	Present	For	Against
Wales Synod Cymru	100	95	2
Birmingham	116	85	22
Bolton & Rochdale	57	45	9
Bristol	69	61	4
Cumbria	54	43	5
Channel Islands	35	35	0
Chester & Stoke-on-Trent	85	82	1
Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly	85	75	5

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Synod	Present	For	Against
Darlington	70	54	11
East Anglia	109	61	46
Isle of Man	38	37	1
Lincolnshire	71	63	1
Liverpool	41	40	0
Manchester & Stockport	73	59	7
Newcastle Upon Tyne	113	68	35
Lancashire	57	36	12
Nottingham & Derby	109	78	24
Northampton	121	118	1
Plymouth & Exeter	89	70	15
Sheffield	67	56	4
Southampton	103	43	60
Yorkshire West	109	107	2
Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury	85	85	0
Yorkshire North and East	110	84	2
Scotland	44	44	0
Shetland	23	23	0
Bedfordshire, Essex & Hertfordshire	87	74	12
London District	170	136	20
South East	123	95	5
Law and Polity Committee	13	13	0

16. The procedure for considering amendments to the Deed of Union (under the Standing Orders referred to in the previous paragraph) does not require or invite comments to be made or for Synod discussions to be summarised and reported. However, the OTTG is aware of two inter-related concerns that were expressed about the effect of the proposed change to the Deed in some but not all Synods. One was that the Connexional Council might exercise its powers to the detriment of the authority of the Conference, and the other was that something of the representative nature of the Church's government will be lost when the Connexional Council comes into being as a body of only 18 to 22 persons.

17. Both issues were considered by the OTTG, its predecessors, and the Law and Polity Committee during the preparation of the draft changes to the Deed. Counsel's opinion was obtained, as reported to the 2022 Conference (Report 44, Oversight and Trusteeship, paragraph 38). The OTTG has been aware of the Faith and Order Committee's 2021 report on Oversight and Trusteeship, recognising in particular that the process of appointment to the new body will be critical in ensuring that the Connexional Council is 'representative of the life of the Church and properly equipped to fulfil its functions'. The work to create the Nominations Committee was brought to the 2022 Conference precisely to address this point. Furthermore, the OTTG would also note that the changes to the Deed have been drafted in such a way (and, again, approved by Counsel) to ensure that the government and discipline of the Methodist Church remain with the Conference as its governing body, as set out in the Deed of Union amendments, and that the Conference will clearly continue to be constituted as a body that is representative of the whole Methodist Church.
18. In the light of this, the Conference is invited to confirm the following changes to the Deed of Union:

1 Particular Expressions. In this Deed, unless the context otherwise requires

(xA) 'the Connexional Council' means the body, so named, constituted under clause 37A;
~~(xA) (xB) 'the Convocation' means the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order, as constituted by Standing Orders;~~

18 General: Responsibilities. (a) The government and discipline of the Methodist Church and the management and administration of its affairs shall be vested in the Conference, and the Conference shall have and may exercise and shall perform all the powers, authorities, rights and duties necessary or desirable in its discretion **to fulfil its functions as the governing body of the Methodist Church, but not in such a way as to prevent or inhibit the members of the Connexional Council from or in performing their duties as its trustees.** ~~for such government, discipline, management and administration; and without prejudice to and not so as to limit or restrict in any way the general powers, authorities, rights and duties conferred or imposed by this clause or any powers, authorities, rights or duties confirmed or imposed by any other clause of this Deed upon the Conference it is hereby expressly declared that until the Conference otherwise resolves the~~

(b) **Without prejudice to the generality of sub-clause (a)** the Conference shall **in particular** have **final authority over:**

- (i) **doctrine, including its powers under section 3(2) of the 1976 Act;**
- (ii) **legislation, in accordance with clause 19, provided that Standing Orders may**

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confer on the Connexional Council the power to amend, supplement or revoke the legislation of the Conference, pending the next meeting of the Conference, if and only if that becomes necessary in order to meet legal requirements or to avoid infringement of the Methodist constitution;

(iii) connexional mission and policy;

(iv) connexional polity;

(v) the formation, admission and discipline of ministers, officers and members;

(vi) the stationing of ministers and probationers, in accordance with clause 20, subject to the powers of the President under clause 29;

(vii) the connexional budget and allocation of district contributions, to the extent and in the manner determined by Standing Orders.

(c) *The Conference shall have and may also exercise and shall perform the particular powers, authorities, rights and duties specified in clauses 19, 20 and 21 below.*

21 Other Particular Powers. The Conference shall have power at its discretion, *but not so as to prevent or inhibit the members of the Connexional Council from or in performing their duties as the trustees of the Methodist Church:*

- (i) to continue or found or authorise the founding of connexional funds or institutions for the promulgation of the Gospel at home and abroad, for assistance to Circuits or Local Churches or for the benefit of retired and superannuated ministers or the widows, widowers or children **spouses, civil partners or dependants** of deceased ministers or for other objects and purposes of or in connection with the Methodist Church ~~and to direct the application and management thereof and to approve any scheme for the amalgamation of any such funds or institutions, whether founded before or after the date of this Deed, and whether belonging to or connected with any of the said Churches or denominations existing at the date of union or to the Methodist Church and for the transfer in connection with any such amalgamation of any of such funds from the existing trustees or other persons having the legal control thereof to the trustees of any other of such funds or institutions;~~
- (ii) ~~to continue or establish such printing or publishing offices carried on or to be carried on by or on behalf of or in connection with the Methodist Church (hereinafter referred to as 'Book Rooms') as the Conference thinks fit;~~
- (iii) ~~to manage all matters connected with the Book Rooms and publications, connexional property, missions, colleges and schools of the Methodist Church;~~
- (iv) to elect committees for the management of the various connexional institutions; provided that the election of any such committee is not in contravention of any provision of any trust deed relating to the relevant institution;

- (v) to appoint boards and committees for the despatch of connexional business or for the exercise of any of the powers or duties of the Conference during or in the interval between its sittings, in such numbers and with such terms of reference, membership, powers and duties as the Conference thinks fit;
- (vi) to appoint such treasurers, secretaries, stewards, editors and other officers of connexional committees, funds or institutions as the Conference thinks fit and to specify their powers, duties and terms of office;
- (vii) to appoint such representatives or delegates as the Conference thinks fit to act for and represent the Conference;
- (viii) to delegate to any officer of the Conference or to any board, committee, officer, representative or delegate appointed in exercise of the powers conferred by this clause all or any of the powers of the Conference including, if the Conference thinks fit, power to sub-delegate any power of the Conference so delegated.

Section 9A. The Connexional Council

37A Constitution. (a) *There shall at all times be a Connexional Council, constituted as follows:*

- (i) *the President and Vice-President of the Conference;*
- (ii) *the Secretary of the Conference;*
- (iii) *other members of the council as prescribed by Standing Orders, which shall include a chair of the council.*

(b) The members of the council under head (a)(iii) shall be members of the Methodist Church with relevant skills and experience to oversee its connexional administration and shall be appointed by the Conference. Provision shall be made by Standing Orders for their appointment, normal period of service and possible variations in that period for good cause.

37B Responsibilities. *The members of the Connexional Council shall, without derogation from the position, authority and powers of the Conference as governing body, have the general control and management of the connexional administration of the Methodist Church, and shall accordingly be its trustees.*

37C Particular Powers. (a) *The provisions of sub-clauses (b) and (c) of this clause are without prejudice to the generality of clause 37B.*

- (b) *The Connexional Council shall have exclusive authority over:*
 - (i) *the direction and management of the persons stationed, appointed or employed, whole time or part time, to carry out connexional duties as a 'team', or by some other title, under Standing Orders;*

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- (ii) *all matters relating to or arising out of the employment of persons by connexional bodies;*
- (iii) *compliance with legal requirements affecting the conduct of connexional bodies, including requirements under charity law or regulation or the law of trusts or as to data protection, safeguarding children, vulnerable adults and others, or health and safety;*
- (iv) *recommendation to the Conference of legislation or guidance affecting Districts, Circuits or Local Churches to be adopted with respect to the subject-matter of head (ii) or (iii) above.*

(c) The Connexional Council shall, except on subjects assigned for this purpose by Standing Order to other bodies, formulate and analyse connexional policy options for presentation to the Conference with the council's appraisal and recommendations.

(d) The Connexional Council shall have such further powers, responsibilities and functions as may from time to time be delegated to it by the Conference in Standing Orders or by other means.

Amendments to the Model Trusts

19. With the proposed new relationship of the Conference to the Connexional Council as the trustee body, as well as the replacement for the Methodist Council, amendments are needed to the Model Trusts. The proposed changes are being brought to the Conference this year, as they will be subject to a special resolution and will need to come back for final approval in 2024 in time for the intended start date of 1 September 2024.
20. The principles upon which the proposed amendments below are based are these:

A. The creation of the Connexional Council

21. Generally, the Model Trust provisions under which powers and responsibilities are currently given to the Methodist Council should be amended by replacing references to the Methodist Council with references to the Connexional Council. This is because these functions, which have hitherto been exercised by the Methodist Council, are (as the text proposed to be amended in the current wording of the item in '1 Interpretation' shown in paragraph 26 below) "for the despatch of connexional business in relation to .. property affairs". These functions are also precisely of the type which are now generally intended to be exercised by the Connexional Council as the new trustee body, as part of the Connexional Council's "general control and management of the connexional administration of the Methodist Church" (clause 37B of the Deed of Union, which forms part of the special resolution which the Conference is being asked to confirm this year).

Therefore, under '1 Interpretation' in paragraph 26 below, the simple replacement of 'Methodist Council' with 'Connexional Council' is required. (As the Interpretation section lists all the items in alphabetical order, it should also be understood that in editing CPD this item will be moved further up the list, but it was not thought necessary to show the relevant deletion and insertion here.)

22. The list which then follows in A in paragraph 26 below reflects the same approach, in that those functions which have been regarded until now as appropriate for the Methodist Council to exercise in its general connexional responsibilities should pass to the Connexional Council. Whilst it is accepted that many of the property-related functions of the Connexional Council will in fact need to be exercised by committees operating under the aegis of the council, particularly the Resourcing Committee, following usual practice it is preferable not to enshrine such committees by name within the Model Trusts (because of the more complex requirements in the Model Trusts for amending such titles when necessary). The provision as to delegation by the Connexional Council within the definition below (paragraph 1) should generally suffice to enable such committees to be created and function, always subject to the authority and responsibility of the Connexional Council. However, it is thought that to be absolutely clear about the breadth of the power of delegation, a slight amendment should be included in the definition of the Connexional Council (to include "*or other body of persons*", as set out below).

B. The continuing powers of the Conference in relation to the Model Trusts

23. There are then the provisions in the Model Trusts under which the Conference itself has powers and functions. Generally speaking, these deal with matters which, under the principles reflected in the Deed of Union provisions being brought for confirmation to this Conference, are ones over which the Conference has final authority, in particular as to the formulation of connexional mission, policy and polity. Therefore, in the proposals below, the references to the Conference remain unaltered, with one exception. If it appears in due course that it will be more convenient or appropriate for certain of these functions to be exercised by the Connexional Council, this can and should be achieved by explicit delegation by the Conference.
24. The exception where a change is proposed relates to the category of Conference property. (This is a small group of properties, such as The New Room, Bristol and Westminster Central Hall, as opposed to 'connexional property' which would include, for instance, all manses occupied by ministers in the Connexional Team.) Currently, the managing trustees of Conference property are appointed directly by the Conference. It is proposed that, as for connexional property, the Connexional Council shall be the managing trustees of Conference property.

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Property Division and Property Secretary in the Model Trusts

25. One final minor point: a close reading of the Model Trusts shows that there are still outdated references to the Property Division, and the Property Secretary. This is because the Model Trusts operate under the Methodist Church Act 1976 (indeed are technically a Schedule to the Act), and the Act, which the Conference does not have power to amend, uses that terminology. Therefore, the language in the Model Trusts remains intact, but then Standing Orders spell out how it is 'translated' into current arrangements.
26. The proposed amendments, based upon the principles above, are set out below. The proposed changes from 'Methodist Council' to 'Connexional Council' are listed in A below, and the changes in relation to Conference property in B.

A Connexional Council

1 Interpretation In this Schedule [*i.e. the Model Trusts*], unless the subject or context otherwise requires –

'~~Methodist Council~~' **Connexional Council** means the body of persons of that name for the time being constituted by the Conference under the Deed of Union and Standing Orders for the despatch of connexional business in relation to (inter alia) property affairs or other the body of persons constituted for the time being under Standing Orders to discharge the responsibilities of the Property Division, and includes, where appropriate, any person or persons **or other body of persons** to whom any functions of such body under any provision of this Schedule may have been delegated by such body in accordance with any Standing Order made pursuant to paragraph 11 of this Schedule, and 'board of the Property Division' has the same meaning;

Replace "Methodist Council" by "Connexional Council" in the following instances:

3(2)(a)

3(3)

4(1)

5(2)

6(1)

6(2)

8(3)

11 (title and text)

11A

18(1)

19(2)

19(3)

21A(c)
26(1)

B Connexional and Conference property

1. Interpretation

'Conference trustees' means, in relation to any Conference property or any part of such property, **the Connexional Council** the persons or body of persons, being members of the Church, annually appointed by the Conference to be the managing trustees of such property or part property;

'Connexional Trustees' means, in relation to any Connexional property or any part of such property, **the Connexional Council** the person or persons for the time being constituting, in accordance with Standing Orders, the Connexional Trustees for that property or part property;

2. (1) [specifying who are the managing trustees]

- (d) Connexional property: the Connexional **Council** Trustees;
- (dA) Conference property: the **Connexional Council** Conference Trustees;

The Connexional Council: its constitution and terms of reference.

27. If the Conference agrees that the changes to the Deed of Union take effect from 1 September 2024, nominations for membership of the Connexional Council will be presented to the 2024 Conference. In order for that to happen, the Conference is asked now to agree on how the Connexional Council is to be constituted. The Conference is therefore asked to adopt the proposed Standing Order as set out below.

(1) (a) The Connexional Council constituted by clause 37A of the Deed of Union shall be appointed annually by the Conference and shall consist of:

- (i) the President and Vice-President of the Conference as required by clause 37A;**
- (ii) the Secretary of the Conference as similarly required;**
- (iii) the chair of the council appointed in accordance with clause (2)(a) below;**
- (iv) the chair or deputy chair of the Mission Committee;**
- (v) the chair or deputy chair of the Ministries Committee;**
- (vi) the chair or deputy chair of the Resourcing Committee;**
- (vii) up to fifteen other persons appointed in accordance with clause (2)(b) below.**

(b) The membership of the council shall comprise 18 to 22 persons in total.

(c) The members of the council shall all be members of the Methodist Church.

(d) In addition, the Assistant Secretary of the Conference, the Connexional Secretary and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice shall attend and have the right to speak but not vote. From time to time, in order to assist the council in dealing

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effectively with its business, other persons whose attendance is appropriate may also be invited to be present and speak but not to vote, in accordance with such terms of reference as the Conference may approve for the Connexional Council.

(2) (a) The chair of the council shall be appointed upon nomination by the Nominations Committee normally to serve, subject to the final sentence of this clause, for a period of four years and may be appointed for a further period of up to two years. The Nominations Committee shall also nominate for appointment by the Conference, from the members appointed under head (1)(vii) above, a deputy chair, who may hold office during the period of appointment under sub-clause (b) below. The provisions of Standing Order 316 shall apply to these appointments, with the officer referred to in clause (2) of that Standing Order being the Secretary of the Conference.

(b) The persons appointed under head (1)(vii) above shall be nominated by the Nominations Committee for their experience, expertise and representative roles, each person having the appropriate skills to serve on a trustee body. They shall normally serve for a period of four years and may be appointed for a further period of up to two years.

(3) The Secretary of the Conference shall be the secretary of the council and shall be responsible for preparing the agendas of the meeting, for the publication and implementation of its decisions, and for ensuring that it reports annually to the Conference and submits such other reports as are necessary to comply with legal requirements.

(4) The council shall normally meet at least six times a year, at appropriate times to enable the full participation of all those appointed to serve. Some, but not all, of these meetings may be held on-line or in hybrid form. Where urgent business requires it, the council shall have the power to make decisions electronically (by email or similar communication) between meetings.

(5) (a) If a person appointed to the council under clause (1) (iv), (v), (vi) or (vii) above resigns or ceases to be a member of the Methodist Church, the council shall have authority to appoint to its membership with immediate effect until the end of the next Conference an eligible replacement for that person.

(b) Any appointments made under this provision shall be reported by the council to the Conference.

28. Draft terms of reference for the Connexional Council

Responsibilities:

- a) The Connexional Council will be the Trustee Body of the Methodist Church in Great Britain as a charity, that is to say, the Council's members will hold the responsibilities as Trustees for the connexional work of the Methodist Church. The Church, of course, comprises Districts, Circuits, Local Churches and numerous other bodies which are and will continue to be separate charities, whether or not they are excepted from registration with the Charity Commission.

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- b) The Council will be appointed and will exercise its powers and responsibilities in accordance with the Deed of Union and Standing Orders as adopted by the Conference, and with its Terms of Reference as approved by the Conference.
- c) The Council will be accountable to the Conference which is the governing body of the Methodist Church, but the Conference shall not act in such a way as to prevent or inhibit the members of the Council from or in performing their duties as the trustees of the Methodist Church.
- d) Between the closing of any Conference and the opening of the next succeeding Conference, the expectation is that the Council will be empowered to act on behalf of the Conference in particular ways (which will be delineated in the Standing Orders), provided that such actions are not contrary to the Deed of Union or Standing Orders or any specific resolution of the Conference (cf SO 211(1)).
- e) The Council will be charged with responsibility to keep in constant review the life of the Methodist Church, to study its work and witness throughout the Connexion, to indicate what changes are necessary or what steps should be taken to make the work of the Church more effective, and, in partnership with others, to give spiritual leadership to the Church.
- f) The Connexional Council will exercise its responsibilities under the authority of the Conference which will remain the governing body of the Methodist Church. Accordingly, the Connexional Council will report annually to the Conference. The Council will generally report on all areas of its responsibilities, but in particular will bring to the notice of the Conference matters to which it believes the Conference ought to give urgent attention.
- g) The Connexional Council will implement the vision, strategies, decisions and directions set by the Conference. All this will be done to enable the Methodist Church to fulfil its calling as a Church to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission, and thus to fulfil its charitable objectives.
- h) The Connexional Council will consult and receive advice from other appropriate bodies.

Functions:

- i) The Connexional Council will exercise the general control and management of the connexional administration of the Methodist Church and report annually to the Charity Commission on the fulfilment of the Methodist Church's charitable objectives.

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- j) The Connexional Council will ensure that its activities and those of the Methodist Church in its connexional activities are subject to appropriate risk assessment and audit.
- k) The Connexional Council will be the managing trustee body of all connexional property (subject to any existing restrictions for connexional properties not presently held on the model trusts and pending the amendment of such arrangements where possible to enable the Connexional Council to become the relevant trustee body).
- l) The Connexional Council will be the trustee body of all connexional funds and have responsibility for the consolidated accounts.
- m) The Connexional Council will be responsible for the scrutiny and presentation for approval to the Conference of the financial statements and the budget for the central services of the Connexion together with the proposed allocation of district contributions.
- n) The Connexional Council will be the employing body for lay people in the Connexional Team and will make recommendations and nominations to the Conference for ministers to serve in the Connexional Team.
- o) The Connexional Council will have responsibility for the direction of the work of the Connexional Team and ensure that there is adequate supervision in place for the Secretary of the Conference and other senior members of the Team. The Council will receive regular reports from the Connexional Secretary on the work of the Team and monitor the Team's effectiveness in working towards the Conference's and the Council's objectives.
- p) Where appropriate the Connexional Council will scrutinise in detail and offer comment on reports from those bodies that are expected to report to the Conference.
- q) The Connexional Council will be responsible for ensuring the connexional work of the Methodist Church is compliant with legal requirements.
- r) The Connexional Council will formulate and analyse for impact and implications connexional policy options for presentation to the Conference.
- s) The Connexional Council will have responsibility for and receive and consider reports from the Mission, Ministries and Resourcing committees and will hold them to account, with the chairs or deputy chairs of each committee being members of the Connexional Council.

Constitution and ways of working:

- t) The Council will be constituted and work in the manner prescribed in relevant Standing Orders.

Further provisions about who may be invited periodically to attend the Council with a right to speak but not vote, will be brought to the Conference of 2024.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 57/3. The Conference receives Section C of the Report.**

Special Resolution, requiring 75% majority

- 57/4. The Conference confirms the amendments to the Deed of Union as set out in paragraph 18 and directs that they shall come into effect from 1 September 2024.**

Special Resolution, requiring 75% majority

- 57/5. The Conference amends the Model Trusts as set out in paragraph 26.**

- 57/6. The Conference adopts the Standing Order as set out in paragraph 27 to come into effect (subject to any changes adopted by the Conference of 2024) on 1 September 2024.**

- 57/7. The Conference approves the Terms of Reference for the Connexional Council as set out in paragraph 28 above.**

Section D: Connexional Committees

29. The 2022 Conference received a report indicating that further review of the connexional committees, subgroups and working groups would follow the Conference's decision in respect of the Connexional Council and that a timetable for the reorganisation of the committees would then be developed to ensure that the changes are timely and carefully managed. The OTTG has been aware of the complexity of this work and the danger of important areas of the Church's life being neglected or overlooked in the drive to streamline processes. However, it is clear that the time is ripe for a simplification of the committee structure of the Church.
30. The OTTG offers a revised plan indicating the way in which it now proposes that work on behalf of the Conference or the Council be organised. In doing so, it wishes to be clear that the relationship between committees can only partially be

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understood in terms of reporting lines. The diagram now before the Conference in the Appendix to this report aims to make clear the areas of work which will fall under the remit of the three major committees which will primarily report to the Connexional Council; it does not necessarily preclude any of those or any other committees from time to time reporting directly to the Council nor even, when justified, to the Conference. Neither is it intended to imply that an area of work necessarily requires a permanent committee to be part of the structure.

31. Whilst the OTTG suggests that every connexional committee should be subject to review, it recognises that until that work (which will take some time) is complete, for the sake of continuity some committees will need to remain in existence for a transitional period. It also recognizes that there are necessarily some committees which have a direct relationship with the Conference. The OTTG therefore recommends that the Faith & Order, Law & Polity and Safeguarding Committees report directly to the Conference along with those committees that are connected with the business of the Conference (eg, the Memorials Committee). The Nominations Committee will report to the Council and Conference as necessary. All other committees will report directly to the Connexional Council or else via one of the three major committees. At present, the assumption is that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee will report directly to the Council. In making these proposals, the OTTG is aware that further change might prove necessary and that the Conference and Connexional Council will want to keep the ways of working of the committee structure under review.
32. The work of Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) is of central importance to the life of the Church. As such, it needs both to be integrated into the missional work of the Church and to be something for which the Conference takes direct responsibility. For these reasons, the OTTG proposes that the JDS Committee report to the Council through the Mission Committee but that the Scrutiny Group report to the Conference.
33. Questions remain to be answered about the appointment of the various committees. Further work, therefore, is underway to differentiate which committees should properly be appointed by the Conference and which may be appointed by the Council, and this will be reported upon and reflected in the amended Standing Orders that will be presented to the Conference of 2024.
34. If the recommendations of this report are adopted, a number of connexional committees (and therefore several posts such as chair, secretary or convener of the associated committee) will become redundant. The OTTG is mindful that transitions need to be handled carefully and that it would not be helpful for everything to change on 1 September 2024. It therefore proposes that the SRC

bring proposals (via the continuing OTTG) to the Conference of 2024 for provision for those committees or other bodies that will be necessary for the Resourcing Committee to do its work and for other necessary functions currently undertaken by the SRC. The Mission Committee and Ministries Committee should during 2023-24 review in consultation with the OTTG what bodies are necessary for their work and bring proposals for the continuance, phasing out or adaptation of committees and subgroups to the Conferences of 2024 and/or 2025 with timelines for implementation.

35. The OTTG recognises that with these changes some longstanding and significant ministries will come to an end. Whilst there is no doubt that those who are called to serve the Church will not struggle to find opportunities to do so, it urges the Secretary of the Conference and others to ensure that all transitions are handled sensitively and that those who lay down responsibility do so knowing that they have the gratitude of the Church for all that they have done.

***RESOLUTION

57/8. The Conference receives Section D of the Report.

Section E: Nominations Committee

36. The 2022 Conference directed the establishment of a Nominations Committee, mindful of three concerns. One, in line with the JDS strategy adopted in 2021, was that the diversity of the Methodist Church should appropriately be represented in appointments, recognising that this might demand different methods of recruitment and discernment. The second, following the Faith and Order Committee's report to the 2021 Conference, was the recognition that the processes have to be rigorous and transparent for the Methodist people to have trust in the Connexional Council and other bodies. Finally, in line with the guidance from the Charity Commission included in the 2022 report on Oversight and Trusteeship, the Conference seeks assurance that those on the council have the appropriate skills.
37. Pending establishment of the Nominations Committee, including a Standing Order for it for approval by the 2023 Conference as set out below, the 2022 Conference directed that an Interim Nominations Committee ("INC") be established to bring nominations for its successor to the 2023 Conference, and established a process for the appointment of that interim committee. The OTTG regrets that the process to appoint the INC took far longer than had been hoped and is grateful to those who have served on that body for the work that has been done in a brief compass.

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38. The INC began its work following the Methodist Council in March 2023 and will bring, via the Order Paper, nominations to the Conference for its successor body (the Nominations Committee) and for the Chair of the Resourcing Committee. At this stage, it is not possible for further nominations to be brought to the 2023 Conference; if, as is proposed elsewhere in the report, the Conference determines that the Connexional Council should be brought into being from 1 September 2024, nominations would need to be brought to the 2024 Conference for immediate appointment. The OTTG therefore asks the Conference to agree that nominations for the Connexional Council be brought through the Methodist Council and that those whose names are presented to the Council in October 2023 or January 2024 be inducted and permitted to shadow the work of the Council for the remainder of that connexional year.
39. The experience of the INC in making its first nominations suggests that it would be helpful for there to be greater clarity about the process and responsibility of the Nominations Committee. It is therefore proposed that the responsible committee (through its chair) draft the necessary documentation (including a role description and person specification) and submit this to the Nominations Committee for its approval. The Nominations Committee will be responsible for authorising the recruitment process, including the members of the interview panel, which may include a member of the Nominations Committee. Following advertisement, shortlisting and interview, the chair of the interview panel will forward the name of the nominee together with a reasoned statement to the Nominations Committee for approval. The Nominations Committee will present the nomination to the Conference (or Connexional Council) as may be relevant in each case with an assurance that the process has been open, transparent and inclusive. If the Nominations Committee is concerned about any aspect of the nomination process, it will seek clarification as necessary from the interview panel.
40. The OTTG offers the following Standing Order for the Nominations Committee.

Nominations Committee

(1) The Conference shall appoint annually a Nominations Committee with the responsibility and functions set out in this Standing Order, and such other functions as from time to time the Conference shall specify.

(2) The committee shall consist of a chair and up to six other members. The members shall (subject to the need to ensure appropriate continuity and turnover) normally be appointed to serve for a maximum period of four years. The Secretary of the Conference shall act as its convener.

(3) It shall be the responsibility of the committee, acting in accordance with such terms of reference as are approved by the Conference from time to time, to ensure that the nominations which are made to the Conference or, as the case may

be, the Connexional Council for appointment to the bodies referred to below are brought as a result of processes which conform to the requirements for the body concerned (as defined in Standing Orders, its terms of reference or elsewhere) and are in accordance with the church's principles for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity as laid down in SO 336(1).

(4) The bodies referred to in clause (3) are:

- the Connexional Council*
- the Ministries Committee*
- the Mission Committee*
- the Resourcing Committee*
- the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee*

together with any other bodies for whose nominations the Conference may from time to time require the committee to take responsibility.

(5) In fulfilling its responsibilities, and acting in accordance with current best practice for recruitment to such appointments, the committee shall:

- (i) monitor and offer appropriate advice and recommendations to those responsible for the processes of approval of role descriptions for relevant appointments and of recruitment to those appointments;*
 - (ii) bring to the Conference or Connexional Council, as required, the resulting nominations for appointment;*
 - (iii) work with the chairs of the bodies concerned on a periodic review of those appointed to such bodies in order to ensure that the body continues to function appropriately;*
 - (iv) advise the Connexional Council on matters concerned with training and self-evaluation of all those appointed to such bodies.*
- (6) The committee shall report annually to the Conference on its work.*

*****RESOLUTIONS**

57/9. The Conference receives Section E of the Report.

57/10. The Conference:

- a)** adopts the above Standing Order to come into effect (subject to any changes adopted by the Conference of 2024) on 1 September 2024;
- b)** resolves that a Nominations Committee constituted in accordance with its provisions shall meanwhile be appointed to exercise the committee's intended functions during the forthcoming connexional year; **c)** appoints the members of the Nominations Committee as follows: *[names to follow on the Order Paper]*

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- 57/11. The Conference directs the Nominations Committee to bring nominations for the persons to be appointed to the Connexional Council under clause (1)(a) (vii) (paragraph 27 above) to the Conference of 2024.**

Section F: The Connexional Leaders' Forum

41. The OTTG has endeavoured, in its work on the Connexional Council and committee structure, never to lose sight of the particular status of the Church in law as a charity. It recognises the importance of informed theological reflection in the life of the leadership of the Church and therefore the importance of spaces where those with responsibility can confer in a manner that enables them to listen to the Holy Spirit.
42. The Connexional Leaders' Forum as it exists under SO 230 was designed to serve that purpose. The OTTG has consulted with the CLF (in January and March 2023) to ascertain the views of the current members as to whether the present arrangement serves the needs of the Church as well as it might and whether it should be changed once the Connexional Council comes into being.
43. The CLF conversations indicated that what the current body has offered has been valued but that there has been some lack of clarity about its purpose and about who should determine its agenda. The conversations also noted the considerable overlap with the Meeting of the District Chairs and Warden of the MDO both in membership (Chairs currently constitute more than half the membership of the CLF) and agenda.
44. The CLF is not the only body that might take, or even that is charged with, responsibility for providing theological reflection in the life of the Church. For example, the President has hosted a gathering of past Presidents and Vice-Presidents; this happens occasionally and provides opportunities for the current presidency and senior members of the Connexional Team to reflect with those who have held the highest office in the Church.
45. The OTTG is therefore aware that other configurations of 'Connexional Leaders' and other ways of working might be developed to serve the Church in the future. Having considered the discussions of the CLF itself, the OTTG therefore proposes that the life of the CLF be paused with the Standing Order suspended, and that current members of the CLF be invited to a day of reflection in the 2023-24 connexional year to explore further models of enabling those with significant responsibility in the Connexion to confer and discern (without needing to make decisions) on matters relating to the calling of the Church in the present age.

***RESOLUTIONS

57/12. The Conference receives Section F of the Report.

57/13. The Conference adopts the proposal set out in paragraph 45 of the Report and accordingly suspends Standing Order 230.

Any proposals for consequential suspensions will appear on the Order Paper.

Section G: Conclusion

46. It is clear throughout this report that, whilst substantial progress has been made, a considerable amount of implementation work remains, which will not least involve significant amendments to Parts 2 and 3 of Standing Orders. The OTTG therefore recommends that it continue in being for what is expected to be one final year to bring to the Conference the outstanding work indicated in Sections D and F above.

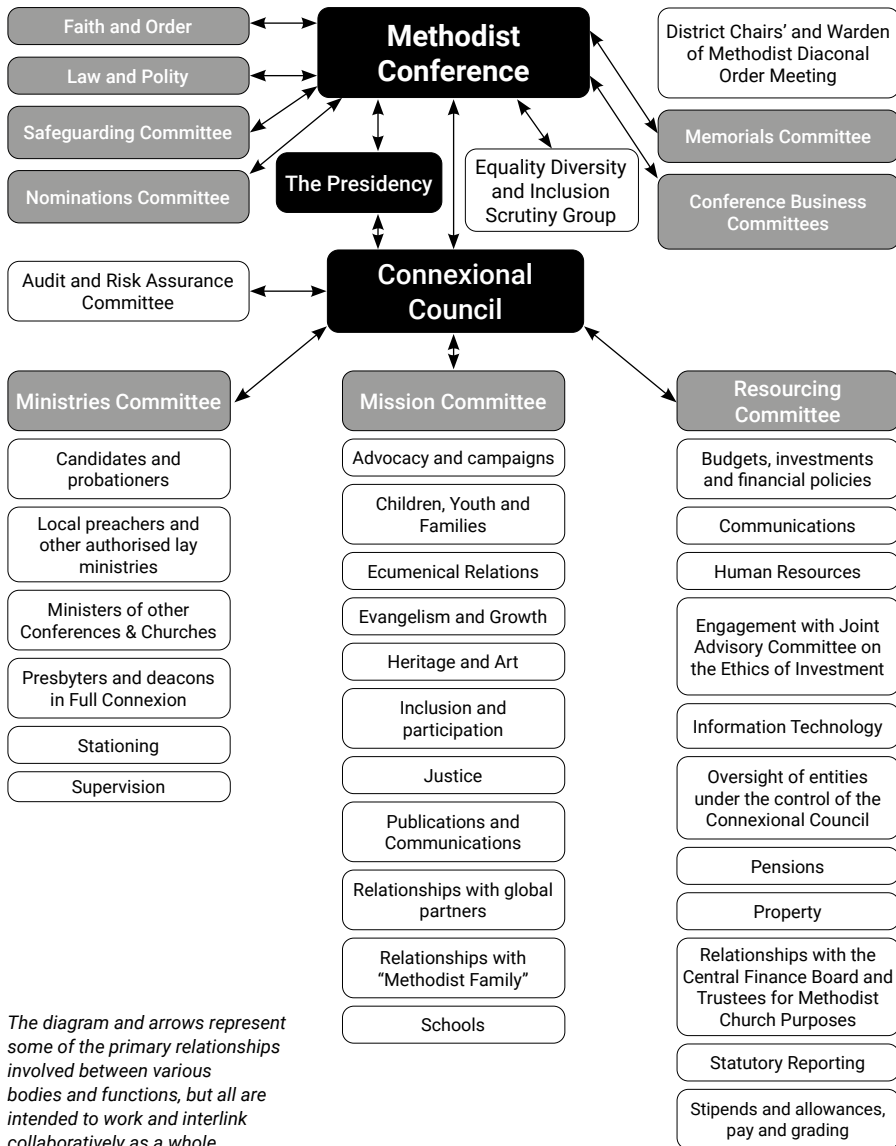
***RESOLUTIONS

57/14. The Conference receives section G of the Report.

57/15. The Conference appoints the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group (*names to be provided on the Order Paper*) to serve until the Conference of 2024 and directs it to report to the Conference of 2024 with proposals on the completion of the work detailed in Sections D and F above.

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APPENDIX



The diagram and arrows represent some of the primary relationships involved between various bodies and functions, but all are intended to work and interlink collaboratively as a whole.