

VOLUMES
1, 2 and 3



Agenda

The Conference 2024

Presbyteral and Representative Sessions

By direction of the Conference, this Agenda has been sent by post
to each member of the Representative Session.

The President and Vice-President confidently appeal to all representatives
to join, as far as they possibly can, in all the devotions of the Conference.

Chaplains will be available throughout the Conference.

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Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| Conference Rules of Procedure | vii |
| Introduction to the Agenda of the 2024 Methodist Conference | 1 |
| 1. Election and Induction of the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference | 3 |
| 2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee | 7 |
| 3. Methodist Council, part 1 | 16 |
| Section A: General Report | 16 |
| Section B: Memorials M4, M5 (2017): Candidating for Ministers Seeking to Move From Presbyterian to Deacon or Vice Versa | 18 |
| Section C: Composition and Modified Constitutions of Districts | 21 |
| Section D: Candidates in the Welsh Language Work | 28 |
| 4. Report of the Presbyterian Session Business Committee | 30 |
| 5. Conference Arrangements | 32 |
| 6. The Trustees for the Bailiwick of Guernsey Methodist Church Purposes | 35 |
| 7. The Trustees for Jersey Methodist Church Purposes | 36 |
| 8. Faith and Order Committee | 37 |
| 9. All We Can | 43 |
| 10. John Wesley's New Room | 49 |
| 11. Methodist Forces Board | 54 |
| 12. Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland | 57 |
| 13. Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) – Revision to Articles of Association | 60 |
| 14. 3Generate – The voice of children and young people of the Methodist Church in Britain 2023 | 63 |
| 15. Methodist Schools Appointments | 74 |
| 16. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances | 79 |
| 17. Singleness | 92 |
| 18. Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues | 101 |
| 19. Connexional Allowances Committee | 115 |
| 20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032) | 127 |
| 21. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) | 184 |
| 22. Methodist Council, part 2 | 195 |
| Section E: General Report (2) | 195 |
| Section F: Connexional Funds Treasurers | 196 |
| Section G: Mission Committee | 198 |
| Section H: Electing the President and Vice-President of the Conference | 211 |
| Section I: Minutes of the Conference and Directory of the Methodist Church | 213 |
| Section J: Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee | 217 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Section K: Ministries Committee | 221 |
| Section L: Selection Criteria | 242 |
| Section M: Discernment Process for Senior Posts | 245 |
| Section N: Methodist Schools Committee | 250 |
| Section O: Methodist Forces Board Standing Order | 263 |
| Section P: District Safeguarding Officers | 265 |
| Section Q: Guidance for Breakdown of Marriage | 276 |
| Section R: Connexional Treasurer | 280 |
| Section S: Medical Committee | 280 |
| Section T: Conference Scrutiny Committee | 284 |
| 23. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes | 289 |
| 24. Special Resolutions | 300 |
| 25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25 | 303 |
| 26. Online Church and Online Communion | 318 |
| 27. Methodist Homes (MHA) | 331 |
| 28. The Role of a District Chair | 334 |
| 29. Safeguarding Committee | 352 |
| 30. Stationing Committee | 375 |
| 31. Referred Memorials and Notices of Motion | 390 |
| 32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders | 391 |
| 33. Managing Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall Westminster | 434 |
| 34. Methodist Ministers' Housing Society (MMHS) | 439 |
| 35. Pension Schemes | 443 |
| 36. Second Report of the Conference Business Committee | 453 |
| 37. Permission to Serve | 454 |
| 38. Presbyteral Transfers and Reinstatements | 455 |
| 39. Ecumenical Report | 458 |
| 40. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church | 462 |
| 41. Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee | 476 |
| 42. Authorisations Committee | 483 |
| 43. Designations for Appointment of District Chairs | 495 |
| 44. Presbyters and Deacons Becoming Supernumerary or Returning to the Active Work | 501 |
| 45. Report to the Conference of the Nominations Committee | 504 |
| 46. Committee Appointments | 508 |
| 47. Presbyters and Deacons from other Churches | 521 |
| 48. Appreciations | 524 |
| 49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity | 526 |
| 50. Oversight and Trusteeship | 561 |
| 51. District Amalgamations | 656 |
| 52. Briefing for conferring on the Justice Priority: Poverty in the UK | 661 |
| 53. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report | 665 |

Contents

| | | |
|-----|--|------------|
| 54. | Report to the Representative Session of Business Conducted by the Conference Diaconal Committee | 671 |
| 55. | Circuit Amalgamations | 677 |
| 56. | Trustees for Manx Methodist Church Purposes | 703 |
| 57. | Memorials to the Conference | 704 |
| | Membership of the Conference | 737 |
| | Presbyters attending under their own arrangements | 743 |
| | Index to Volumes One, Two and Three | C |

Conference Rules of Procedure

The rules governing the procedures of the Conference are set out in the following Standing Orders.

130 Introductory.

The rules of debate comprising the clauses of Standing Order 131 shall regulate the proceedings of the Conference, except that since much of the business of the Conference may be conducted in the form of conversations clauses (3) and (9) to (14) shall apply only when a formal resolution is under consideration.

131 Rules of Debate.

(1) In this Standing Order 'the President' means the person presiding for the time being over the Conference in accordance with the provisions of clause 28 of the Deed of Union.

(1A) Any member who wishes to speak shall catch the President's eye but shall not proceed further until called upon by the President.

(2) Every speaker shall address the President.

(3) No member may speak more than once on the same question without leave of the Conference, except in the exercise of a right of reply under clause (18) below. For this purpose an amendment or procedural motion raises a fresh question.

(4) (a) Subject to sub-clause (b) below every resolution or amendment shall be circulated beforehand in writing in the Agenda, or by other form of official report, or by notice of motion.

(b) Sub-clause (a) does not apply:

(i) to procedural motions under clause (11) below or resolutions to extend sittings of the Conference beyond the time already determined;

(ii) to resolutions submitted by the Law and Polity Sub-committee under clause (25) below;

(iii) to business taken in closed session;

(iv) to further amendments moved after a resolution has already been amended;

(v) where the Conference has dispensed with circulation under clause (19)(a)(ii) below or Standing Order 129(4)(b) or 129A or otherwise;

(vi) if the President judges it necessary for the effective conclusion of a debate to admit a resolution or amendment without prior notice.

(c) Where sub-clause (b) applies, except by virtue of head (i), the resolution or amendment shall be produced in writing when proposed, and immediately handed to the Secretary.

(5) Every resolution or amendment, except a resolution moved on behalf of a body authorised to report to the Conference, requires to be seconded in order to be submitted to the Conference. With the same exception, all movers and seconders of resolutions or amendments must be members of the Conference.

Conference Rules of Procedure

- (6) Persons presenting reports may speak to the resolutions in them and may give information on any development of major importance which has arisen since publication. Otherwise reports circulated in the Agenda or otherwise shall be presented without introductory speeches.
- (7) When a resolution or amendment has been duly submitted it may not be withdrawn without the leave of the Conference.
- (8) The seconder of a resolution or amendment may reserve the right to speak.
- (9) (a) Any amendment of the terms of a resolution may be proposed if it is relevant to the subject-matter of the resolution, unless the same result could be achieved by the rejection of the resolution.
- (b) If an amendment is carried the resolution as amended becomes the substantive motion, and as such may itself be amended under this clause.
- (c) When an amendment has been duly submitted no other amendment may be moved until it has been disposed of, but any member may give notice of a proposed amendment and may state whether it is to be moved in any event or if not in what circumstances.
- (10) A resolution may be disposed of by adoption (with or without amendment), rejection or withdrawal. Until it has been so disposed of no other resolution may be submitted except a procedural motion.
- (11) The following are procedural motions, which may be adopted by the Conference at any time:
- (i) that the vote be now taken;
 - (ii) that the question be not put;
 - (iii) that the question be referred to the Methodist Council or a committee;
 - (iv) that the debate be adjourned;
 - (v) that the Conference adjourn.
- (12) If a resolution and amendment are before the Conference:
- (i) a motion that the vote be now taken relates only to the amendment;
 - (ii) a motion that the question be referred or that the debate be adjourned relates to both;
 - (iii) a person moving that the question be not put must state whether that motion relates to both or only to the amendment.
- (13) A motion that the vote be now taken requires a majority of two thirds and shall be voted upon without discussion, but the President shall not be bound to put it to the vote if of the opinion that there has not been adequate opportunity for necessary debate.
- (14) A motion that the question be not put may be discussed concurrently with the question to which it relates.
- (15) A motion that the debate be adjourned may specify the time of resumption or be a motion for adjournment to a time to be resolved upon later.
- (16) A motion for the adjournment of the Conference shall specify the time of resumption.

(17) (a) Subject to any Standing Order relating specifically to particular forms of report a report contained in the Agenda or in a document supplemental to the Agenda shall be dealt with as a whole or as to each part by a resolution in one of the following forms:

- (i) that it be referred back to the reporting body or referred to the Methodist Council or a committee;
- (ii) that it be received;
- (iii) that it be adopted.

(b) A resolution in any of these forms may contain or be accompanied by directions as to the publication or study of or any other action in relation to the report or (where appropriate) that no action be taken.

(c) Except as provided in (d) below or expressed in the resolution itself, no such resolution imports any endorsement by the Conference of any statement, opinion or recommendation in the report.

(d) By adopting a report the Conference endorses its recommendations or conclusions but not (without so stating) any reasons given for them.

(e) The Conference may qualify or limit any such adoption but shall not alter the text of any report except:

- (i) to rectify any manifest factual error; or
- (ii) to amend the terms of any passage which it is asked to endorse (whether expressly or by the operation of (d) above).

(f) The Conference may on a single motion deal en bloc with more than one resolution attached to a report, or with the resolutions to more than one report, but whenever:

- (i) an amendment is proposed to any such resolution; or
- (ii) there is a procedural motion under clause (11) above which in its original form or by a proposed amendment relates to less than all the matters before the Conference;

any matters which require to be put separately shall be so put.

(18) (a) When a vote falls to be taken, whether or not by the adoption of a motion under clause (11)(i) above, the following persons have a right to speak, and if more than one in the following order:

- (i) the seconder of the resolution or amendment to be put, if he or she has reserved the right to speak and has not already exercised that right;
- (ii) the mover of the substantive resolution, unless the question to be put is an amendment to which he or she has already spoken;
- (iii) if the question to be put is an amendment, the mover of the amendment.

(b) The person entitled to speak last under sub-clause (a) above may deal only with questions or arguments put during the debate.

(c) Before putting the question the President shall call the Conference to order and read the resolution or amendment to be put. Except on a point of order no member shall speak after the question has been put until the vote has been taken.

Conference Rules of Procedure

(19) (a) Subject to sub-clause (b) below, no decision of the current meeting of the Conference may be rescinded except by substantive resolution, and no such resolution shall be adopted unless either:

(i) it is submitted on behalf of the Law and Polity Sub-Committee under clause (25) below; or

(ii) it is moved upon notice in writing previously given and officially circulated (unless by a majority of two thirds the Conference has dispensed with notice) and obtains a majority of two thirds.

For the purposes of this sub-clause a resolution rescinds a previous resolution if, and only if, it is expressed to do so, or it directly reverses the previous resolution, or the President rules that in substance it is inconsistent with the intention of the Conference in adopting the previous resolution.

(b) Any resolution which, on the advice of the financial committee given in accordance with Standing Order 136A, would result in amendment of the provisions of the connexional budget for the Methodist Church Fund proposed under Standing Order 212(2) shall, if moved after the budget has been adopted, require a majority of two thirds, and, if carried, shall have the effect of amending the Conference's resolution on the budget without the operation of sub-clause (a) above.

(20) A resolution to suspend a rule of debate or other provision within the Conference rules of procedure, as contained in Standing Orders 122, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134(3) and (4), 134A, 136(2C) and 136A(3) requires a majority of two thirds.

(21) The President shall call to order any speaker who departs from the question or violates the courtesies of debate.

(22) Any member may raise a point of order on the ground that the rules of debate or regulations of the Conference have been violated. The speaker then addressing the Conference shall give way until the point of order has been decided. The President decides all questions of order.

(23) (a) The following interventions in the ordinary course of business may occur, but only for substantial cause and by leave of the President:

(i) a member who thinks himself or herself misrepresented may interrupt the speaker to correct the misrepresentation;

(ii) a member may interrupt the speaker or intervene at the end of a speech to ask of the speaker a question of fact immediately connected with what is being or has been said;

(iii) brief information on uncontested matters of fact germane to the business of the Conference may be given between speeches or between items of business.

(b) A member permitted to intervene under this clause must not enter into argument nor speak to the merits of the question.

(24) Questions which relate to the rights and privileges of the Conference or of individual members, or to the order of business, have precedence.

(25) The Conference may at any time entertain without notice any resolution moved on behalf of the Conference Sub-Committee of the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity which arises out of an earlier resolution of the current meeting of the Conference, in that or an earlier session, and which seeks:

- (i) to make consequential provisions; or
- (ii) to amend the earlier resolution for the purpose only of – clarification, or reconciliation with the requirements of the law or of Methodist polity, or the avoidance of unintended results, or the better achievement of the intention of the Conference, or the correction of factual error, or any other purpose considered by the Conference to be within the scope of the functions of the Law and Polity Committee; or
- (iii) to rescind the earlier resolution on the ground of illegality, irregularity or impossibility or any other ground considered by the Conference to be within the scope of the above functions.

(25A) The Conference may also entertain any resolution contained in the report of the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity which arises out of a resolution of an earlier Conference and which seeks:

- (i) to amend the earlier resolution for a purpose within head (ii) of clause (25) above; or
- (ii) to rescind the earlier resolution on a ground within head (iii) of clause (25) above.

(26) The response of the Conference shall not normally be conveyed by clapping.

132 Notices of Motion.

(1) Subject to Standing Order 131(4) any two members may upon notice of motion complying with this Standing Order bring before the Conference any lawful resolution within the competence of the Conference.

(1A) Every notice of motion shall be handed to the Secretary in written form and signed by the following persons:

- (i) where the proposal is to amend a resolution and those responsible for presenting that business to the Conference are prepared to accept it, the proposer and seconder of the motion;
- (ii) where such a proposal to amend is not accepted by those responsible, the proposer and seconder and four other persons;
- (iii) in all other cases, the proposer and seconder and eight other persons.

(2) Only on matters of urgency, so judged by the President after consultation with the Vice-President, shall notices of motion in the Representative Session be accepted after 4:30pm on the third day of the session, except that a notice of motion proposing to amend a resolution circulated or materially altered on or after the first day of the session shall be accepted if lodged before the close of business on the day before the resolution is to be dealt with.

Conference Rules of Procedure

133 Memorials.

- (1) The Conference may adopt, with or without amendment, or reject any reply proposed by the Memorials Committee or (if Standing Order 134(4) applies) by its convener.
- (2) In relation to any one or more memorials to which replies have been proposed by the committee any two members of the Conference may, on notice of motion submitted on the first day of the relevant session, move that instead of dealing with the committee's proposed reply in the ordinary course of business the Conference shall debate a resolution based on the relevant memorials, and if such a motion is carried the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Conference shall make arrangements accordingly.
- (3) If there is a debate pursuant to Standing Order 138(5) or clause (2) above any resolution or amended resolution then adopted by the Conference is its reply to the relevant memorials.
- (4) Subject to clause (5) below the Conference shall reply to every memorial, although it is open to the Conference as its interim reply to refer the memorial to the Methodist Council or a committee for consideration and report. Rejection of a proposal that a memorial be declined is not itself a reply. It is the responsibility of the convener of the committee to ensure that if the Conference rejects the proposed reply of the committee under clause (1) above or fails to adopt any resolution under clause (3) above consideration of the matter is not closed until a reply has been adopted.
- (5) The committee may recommend that the Conference instead of replying to a memorial refer the questions raised to Synods and/or to Circuit Meetings for consideration or action without itself expressing a judgment on the substance of the issue. In such a case, the committee shall recommend whether Synods and Circuit Meetings are to report their conclusions to the Conference and, if so, a timetable for such report.

134 District Resolutions.

- (1) Resolutions and reports submitted under Standing Order 419(2) in due time shall be printed in the Agenda. If a report is included the cost of printing shall be a charge on the District.
- (2) [revoked]
- (3) Such resolutions shall be moved and seconded in the Conference by representatives of the District and shall, subject to any recommendation from the Business Committee, be debated.
- (4) If it appears likely to the Business Committee that the Conference will not, in the time available, be able to debate all such resolutions adequately, it may recommend to the Conference that one or more of such resolutions be dealt with instead as memorials. If the Conference adopts such a recommendation, the convener of the Memorials Committee shall, after such consultation as he or she thinks appropriate, frame a proposed reply, which shall be printed for the Conference in an order paper.

134A En Bloc Business.

(1)(a) The Business Committee shall consider, taking into account the recommendations of the Memorials Committee made under Standing Order 138(5A), which resolutions to which sub-clause (b) of this Standing Order applies are unlikely to become provisional resolutions or to give rise to opposition or debate or to require amendment other than within sub-clause (e) below. It shall, no later than the opening of the Representative Session, table a list of such resolutions with notice of its intention to invite the Conference in due course to adopt all such resolutions en bloc.

(b) This clause applies to all resolutions in the Agenda or otherwise circulated before the opening of the Conference except those for the confirmation of provisional resolutions, or for the adoption or confirmation of special resolutions under Standing Order 126, and except resolutions relating to Conference Statements under Standing Order 129.

(c) Subject to sub-clause (e) below any resolution, including any recommended reply to a memorial, which becomes the subject of an amending notice of motion shall be removed from the list. In addition, by giving notice to the Secretary of the Conference in writing before the close of business on the third day of the Representative Session, any six members of the Conference may, without proposing an amendment, require any item or items, except a recommended reply to a memorial, to be removed from the list. The Business Committee itself shall be free at any time before the resolutions are moved to remove any item or items from the list.

(d) The resolutions remaining in the list shall not earlier than the fourth day of the Representative Session be moved en bloc and voted upon without discussion.

(e) A need to make minor corrections to the text of any resolution on the list shall not necessitate its removal, and it may be moved under sub-clause (d) above as corrected. The Business Committee shall decide all questions as to the application of this sub-clause.

(2) The Business Committee may also advise, in the exercise of its functions under Standing Order 136(2A)(c), that such resolutions based upon the recommendations of reference groups as it considers appropriate for such procedure should also be moved en bloc and voted upon without discussion. Sub-clause (1) c) shall apply to the removal of any resolution from that procedure, provided the notice is duly given before the close of business on the day upon which such advice is circulated to the Conference.

135 Closed Sessions.

(1) The Conference may at any time meet in closed session and shall do so when hearing any appeal arising out of any charge within Part II.

(2) [revoked]

(3) During any closed session other than one for the hearing of an appeal within Part II no one may be present except members of the Conference entitled to vote on the business under consideration and any other persons or classes of persons whom the Conference may for the time being resolve to admit.

Conference Rules of Procedure

136 Conference Business Committee.

(1) There shall be a Business Committee for the Representative Session of the Conference, consisting of:

- (i) an ex-President or ex-Vice-President, appointed by the previous Conference upon the nomination of the Methodist Council to serve for a period of three years, who shall chair the committee and who shall, whether or not a member in any other capacity, be a member of the Conference during the period of appointment; and
- (ii) three ministerial and three lay members of the Conference elected in accordance with clause (1A) or appointed under clause (1C).

The Secretary and assistant secretary of the Conference shall be in attendance but without a vote and a connexional Treasurer and the connexional Press Officer shall attend as consultants when required.

(1A) Where there will be a vacancy in the elected membership of the committee for the next Conference, an election shall be held after nomination by members of the current Conference. Each nomination shall be signed by a proposer and seconder. It shall contain the District and Circuit in which the person being nominated is stationed or is a member, current appointment or current offices within the church, age, occupation, and any other relevant information (up to fifteen words). No member shall nominate more than one person. In electing such members, the Conference shall consider the composition of the committee with regard to age, sex and ethnic origin. The election shall be by single transferable vote and the chair of the Business Committee or his or her representative shall be the returning officer. The returning officer shall declare the persons elected to serve, together with two persons in each category as reserves in the event of any person who received a higher number of votes, or a continuing member under clause (1B), not being a member of the next Conference or not being able or willing to attend. Such reserves shall serve for the period for which the person originally elected would have served and shall not be eligible for immediate re-election.

(1B) Committee members shall be elected for three years and shall not be eligible for immediate re-election. If an elected member is not a member of or is unable to attend the next ensuing or one of the subsequent Conferences the appointment shall lapse and the vacancy shall be filled in accordance with clause (1A) or (1C).

(1C) If it becomes clear during the course of the connexional year that there will be a vacancy on the committee which cannot be filled in accordance with the above provisions, the Methodist Council shall have the power to appoint a member from amongst the members of the next Conference. Such appointment shall be for that Conference only.

(2) The committee shall meet before and during the sessions of the Conference as may be necessary and shall have the following responsibilities:

- (i) to draw up the order of business in the Conference and to allocate time to each item;

Conference Rules of Procedure

(ia) to identify the resolutions which it proposes shall be moved en bloc under Standing Order 134A;

(ii) to recommend to the Conference which notices of motion should be debated in the Conference and at what time, and which should be dealt with in some other way, and for what reason;

(iii) to review at the end of each day the business allocated to the day but not completed and to advise the Conference how it should be dealt with;

(iv) to recommend to the President and Vice-President items of business for which they might invite members of the Conference to indicate to the committee in advance a wish to speak, and to offer advice to the President and Vice-President so as to enable a representative range of views to be heard in any such debates;

(v) to identify matters which are appropriate to be dealt with through any of the processes set out in clause (2A) below and to make the necessary arrangements, including assigning the members of the Conference to such groups as may be required.

(2A) (a) The committee may arrange for matters of general concern, not being dealt with in the formal business of the Conference, to be discussed in workshops or similar groups and shall advise the Conference on the procedure by which any issues raised in those discussions may be taken forward.

(b) The committee may identify items of Conference business which, because of the detail involved or the complexity of the issues, can profitably be explored in depth in hearings or group discussion before being debated in full Conference, and may advise the Conference whether, and if so how, the results of such exploration are to be reported.

(c) The committee may advise that certain items in the business of the Conference be dealt with in reference groups, with the expectation that the recommendations of such groups will be dealt with by the Conference en bloc under Standing Order 134A(2). (2B) The committee may recommend that the Conference deal with any business by referring the questions raised to Synods and/or to Circuit Meetings for consideration or action without itself expressing a judgment on the substance of the issue. In such a case, the committee shall recommend whether Synods and Circuit Meetings are to report their conclusions to the Conference and, if so, a timetable for such reports.

(2C) The committee shall arrange for the budget for the Methodist Church Fund proposed by the Methodist Council under Standing Order 212(2) to be presented and considered not later than the fourth day of the Representative Session. The formal resolution for its adoption, and the consequent resolution as to the allocation to the respective Districts of the assessments, shall be moved on the final day of the Representative Session.

(3) All recommendations of the committee shall be reported daily to the Conference for approval or amendment. The person presiding shall have the power to limit the length of any debate on procedural questions arising from the committee's report.

Conference Rules of Procedure

136A Financial Committee.

(1) The Methodist Council, with a view to the discharge of its functions under Standing Orders 211(3)(vii) and 212(2) during the periods of the Conference, shall appoint a financial committee annually, consisting of the lead connexional Treasurer or his or her representative, the Connexional Secretary responsible for central services, three other members of the council who are also members of the Conference, together with such other members of the Connexional Team in an advisory capacity as the council may decide.

(2) The committee shall meet before and during the sessions of the Conference as necessary, shall identify all resolutions in the Agenda or otherwise circulated to the Conference which would have financial implications, other than those for which provision has already been made in the budget, and shall notify the Conference accordingly.

(3) In relation to all such resolutions which, if adopted, would result in increased costs the committee shall advise the Conference, prior to any debate or vote upon them,

(i) whether, if adopted, the costs can be accommodated within the Council's proposed budget;

(ii) if not, what additional resources are estimated to be required to carry them out, and the timescale within which the work might be started and completed;

(iii) whether the cost of the proposal, if adopted, should be substituted for some other item of expenditure, or treated as an addition, and, in the latter case, the source of the additional funds required;

(iv) if there are several such proposals before the committee, what priority should be given to each.

The committee's advice shall, except in emergencies, be conveyed to the Conference in writing.

122 Provisional Resolutions.

(1) If the Conference judges that any resolution which it has adopted is of such significance that it ought to be considered by the Synods and confirmed before coming into effect it may declare that it shall be a provisional resolution. If the resolution is being dealt with as shared business under clause 24(c) of the Deed of Union, such a declaration by the Conference in either of the sessions dealing with the business shall be effective.

(2) Notice shall be given of any motion for such a declaration either by means of a notice of motion which complies with Standing Order 132 or by the inclusion of a resolution to that effect in the report upon that business contained in the Agenda. Where notice is given before the adoption of the substantive resolution to which it relates the motion shall not be considered by the Conference until after such adoption.

(3) Provisional resolutions shall be submitted to the Synods of the home Districts and to the Law and Polity Committee, each of which may approve, disapprove or approve with amendments. Provisional resolutions shall be submitted for confirmation to the next

annual meeting of the Conference with a report of the opinions of the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee, and shall take effect only if then confirmed.

(4) The Conference may direct that the whole or some specified part of the text of any report leading to the adoption of a provisional resolution be submitted with it to the Synods. Unless it does so the Secretary of the Conference shall ensure that a brief summary of the arguments for and against the resolution and of the implications of adopting or declining it is prepared for the same purpose. The resolution and the above text or summary, as the case may be, shall be distributed by the district officers to all members of the Synod before its meeting. The district Policy Committee may arrange for such consultation within the District as it thinks fit before the Synod expresses its judgment.

(5) Provisional resolutions submitted to the Synods under clause (3) above shall be dealt with in their Representative Sessions and, if falling within one or more of the categories defined in heads (i), (ii) and (iii) of sub-clause 24(c) of the Deed of Union and dealt with under that clause, also in their Presbyteral Sessions.

(6) On receiving the reports of the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee upon a provisional resolution the Conference may confirm it unamended or may decline to confirm it, or may confirm it with amendments, and in the last event may, by the procedure of clauses (1) and (2) above, declare that the resolution as so amended shall itself be a provisional resolution.

NOTE: Throughout this Agenda, in amendments to the Deed of Union, Model Trusts and Standing Orders, matter to be deleted is usually shown ~~thus~~ and matter to be inserted **thus**. The surrounding text is printed to show the context of the proposed amendments, where this is not otherwise plain.

Introduction to the Agenda of the 2024 Methodist Conference

The Agenda of the Conference comprises the reports of a number of bodies which, with the attached resolutions, provide the substance of the debates at the Conference, the outcome of which will shape the mission of the Methodist Church in Great Britain through the next connexional year and beyond. The work of the Conference, therefore, always has some degree of historic significance.

This year, that historic significance is enhanced as 2024 is a transition year between the current way of working (in which the Conference acts as the Charity Trustee body of the Church and the Methodist Council contributes much of the substance of the Agenda) and the new (in which the Connexional Council assumes the trusteeship and inherits much of the work of the Methodist Council). The work on Oversight and Trusteeship which has been the subject of reports to the Conference over the last seven years is moving into its final stages. The Conference will be asked to adopt changes to the Standing Orders to enable the work of the Connexional Council and its main committees to begin in 2024-25 and to authorise further work to reform those bodies which exercise responsibility for the various aspects of the mission, ministries and resourcing of the Church.

This, therefore, is an appropriate moment to express gratitude to those many people who have served on the Methodist Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee over the last few years and also to those who have been part of other bodies that have handed over their responsibilities – the Property Development Committee and the Connexional Allowances Committee.

Getting our governance structure right has taken and will continue to demand a great deal of time and energy. But seen only from the perspective of organisational structure, the work of the Conference can appear to be disparate and therefore to lack strategic direction. It might therefore be helpful for the Conference to bear in mind decisions that have been made in recent years and the unity of purpose that those decisions represent.

That unity of purpose is summarised in a phrase that was included in the first *God for All* report in 2020 and which has served as a focus for the work of the Evangelism and Growth Strategy and the Connexional Team in the intervening four years. That report spoke of our commitment to being 'a growing, evangelistic, justice-seeking, inclusive Church of gospel people' (*God for All* [2020] para 30 – Agenda p 65). As members of the Conference will have noticed, that commitment is now proclaimed on the front page of the Methodist Church website. It is both an inference drawn from *Our Calling* and the lodestar that has guided the strategies of recent years.

It will guide the work of the Conference. Our worship will be a joyful celebration of what God has done in our Connexion, a celebration of the ways in which we have grown, a lament for the things that we have done which have hindered the work of the Holy Spirit

Introduction to the Agenda of the 2024 Methodist Conference

amongst us, and a commitment to embrace the life to which we are called. We note particularly this year the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women to the presbyterate in 1974, both as a celebration of an historic fact and as a renewal of our determination to be a truly inclusive Church.

The 2023 Conference adopted a recommendation that the Conference should confer annually around a theme arising from the Priorities for Justice (Agenda p190). This year, at the request of the President and Vice-President, we shall be led in Bible Studies. These will provide a period of reflection each day and an opportunity to engage with our immediate neighbours on the theme of the chosen biblical text and a daily reflective question. The focus for the Bible Studies will be the first agreed priority of the Methodist Church as we seek to be a justice seeking Church, Tackling inequality and poverty: seeking life in all its fullness.

The Bible studies will be led by Jenny Sinclair, Founder and Director of Together For the Common Good. 2024 is the 40th anniversary of the publication of the seminal book *Bias to the Poor* written by David Shepherd (Jenny's father).

The 2024 Conference comes together as a body smaller than any of its predecessors since 1932, though, it may feel, with no less business before it nor fewer difficulties to resolve and, certainly, in a world as much in need of the Good News as in any previous year. As we consider our lengthy agenda, we remind ourselves of the assertion that was made in 1932 that 'our hope for the world is not in any power that is of the world, nor in any system of human rule, nor in the readjustment of political order, in education or social culture, but in the creative power of God, the redemptive energy of Jesus Christ, and the coming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit in human lives.' (The Act of Consecration, 1932).

Jonathan R Hustler
Secretary of the Conference

1. Election and Induction of the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference

1. THE ELECTION AND DECLARATION

After a brief explanation of the procedure to be followed, the Secretary of the Conference moves the resolution for the election of the President.

***RESOLUTION

1/1. **The Conference elects the Reverend Helen Dixon Cameron to be the President of the Conference.**

A standing vote is taken.

The President says:

I declare that **the Reverend Helen Dixon Cameron** has been duly elected to be the President of the Conference.

The Conference is invited to sit.

The Secretary moves the resolution for the election of the Vice-President.

***RESOLUTION

1/2. **The Conference elects Carolyn Jayne Godfrey to be the Vice-President of the Conference.**

A standing vote is taken.

The Vice-President says:

I declare that **Carolyn Jayne Godfrey** has been duly elected to be the Vice-President of the Conference.

2. THE INDUCTION

The President and Vice-President enter together.

The Conference is invited to sit.

The Ex-President says:

Helen and Carolyn, the Conference has elected you to the offices of President and Vice-President. In its sessions you are to preside over its worship, its conferring and its taking of decisions. You will be its representatives, embodying its authority and acting on its behalf as authorised by the Deed of Union and Standing Orders.

1. Election and Induction of the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference

You are called to share with others in the oversight and leadership of the Church. You are called to a ministry of visitation in the Districts and Circuits and with partners across the world, to encourage the Methodist people in their calling and strengthen the bonds that connect them with each other. In all this you are to exercise, in collaboration, the particular gifts God has given you as a presbyter and a lay person in the Church.

In the presence of God and of this Conference we therefore ask you: do you trust that God who has called you into his service has now called you to this ministry and will give you the grace to undertake it?

The President and Vice-President respond:

I do so trust.

The Ex-Vice-President says:

Helen and Carolyn, will you endeavour to hold before the Church a vision of its calling to proclaim and respond to the grace and love of God in worship, mission and service?

They respond:

I will, God being my helper.

The Ex-President says:

Will you work with all who are in leadership of the Church in equipping God's people to fulfil their calling?

They respond:

I will, God being my helper.

The Ex-Vice-President says:

Will you work with ecumenical partners in pursuing the greater unity of Christ's Church and in the encouraging of a common witness to God's reconciling love?

They respond:

I will, God being my helper.

1. Election and Induction of the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference

The Ex-President addresses her successor:

Helen, will you be faithful in living out your calling as a presbyter in the service of this Conference and all the Methodist people?

Will you work with the Vice-President to offer a ministry that affirms and encourages the gifts of all God's people?

The President replies:

I will, God being my helper.

The Ex-Vice-President addresses her successor:

Carolyn, will you faithfully exercise the gifts God has given you in the service of this Conference and all the Methodist people?

Will you work with the President to offer a ministry that affirms and encourages the gifts of all God's people?

The Vice-President replies:

I will, God being my helper.

3. THE PRAYERS

The Ex-Vice-President says:

Let us pray.

Gracious God, in Jesus Christ you have called your Church to be a sign of and witness to your kingdom in the world, and through the gifts of the Holy Spirit you guide and inspire it.

We give you thanks for these your servants now called to the offices of President and Vice-President of the Conference. We bless you for the ways in which you have led them to this moment and for the gifts with which you have inspired them.

Send your Holy Spirit upon them that they may build up your people in love and service, to the glory of your name. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

1. Election and Induction of the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference

4. THE GIVING OF SYMBOLS

The Ex-President invests the President with the Presidential Cross and hands to her John Wesley's Bible.

The Ex-Vice-President invests the Vice-President with the Vice-Presidential Cross and hands to her a first edition copy of John and Charles Wesley's Hymns and Sacred Songs.

Each in turn then briefly expresses the thanks of the Conference to her predecessor and presents her with a replica of the Presidential/Vice-Presidential Cross.

A hymn is sung and the Conference continues its business.

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler Secretary of the Conference SoC@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

1. **Membership of the Conference Business Committee**

The Council was notified that Mr Dudley Coates had stepped down as Chair of the Conference Business Committee, and nominates the Revd Loraine Mellor to the Conference as Chair of the Conference Business Committee for the 2024 Conference. Mrs Mellor has previously served as Chair of the Conference Business Committee for the 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 Conferences and brings wide experience and understanding of the Conference, including as President in 2017/2018, and chairs meetings with wisdom, clarity and pastoral sensitivity.

The Conference Business Committee for 2024 will therefore comprise the Revd Loraine N Mellor (chair), Barbara Easton, Daniel Keen, Anna Malnutt, the Revd Andrew W Fyall, the Revd Leigh Maydew, the Revd Mmasape Thathane-Tyolweni. One of the ministerial members of the Committee elected by the 2023 Conference had to withdraw from the Committee, and the Council therefore appointed the Revd Andrew W Fyall under the terms of SO 136(1C).

2. **Meetings and reports**

- The Business Committee will meet on Saturday 29 June at the close of business, following the Scrutineers' briefing.
- The Scrutineers are asked to meet for a briefing on Saturday 29 June immediately at the close of business.
- The Business Committee will report each day in the Order Paper. It will indicate any variations to the outline schedule printed in the Agenda.

3. **Notices of Motion**

Standing Order 132 reads as follows:

132 Notices of Motion. (1) Subject to Standing Order 131(4) any two members may upon notice of motion complying with this Standing Order bring before the Conference any lawful resolution within the competence of the Conference.

(1A) Every notice of motion shall be handed to the Secretary in written form and signed by the following persons:

- (i) where the proposal is to amend a resolution and those responsible for presenting that business to the Conference are prepared to accept it, the proposer and seconder of the motion;

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

- (ii) where such a proposal to amend is not accepted by those responsible, the proposer and seconder and four other persons;
- (iii) in all other cases, the proposer and seconder and eight other persons.

(2) Only on matters of urgency, so judged by the President after consultation with the Vice-President, shall notices of motion in the Representative Session be accepted after 4.30pm on the third day of the session, except that a notice of motion proposing to amend a resolution circulated or materially altered on or after the first day of the session shall be accepted if lodged before the close of business on the day before the resolution is to be dealt with.

- 3.1 A Notice of Motion is the proper way for members of Conference to invite the Conference to take different decisions from the resolutions in the Conference Agenda. Such Notices of Motion are published in a series numbered from 100 (printed on green paper). Notices of Motion which do not relate to the business set out in the Agenda are published in a second series numbered from 200 (printed on yellow paper).
- 3.2 The 2013 Conference agreed that it should be mandatory for proposers of Notices of Motion to complete a 'Submission of a Notice of Motion' form, including information about budgetary implications. The 2021 Conference directed the Council to establish a framework to analyse the cumulative impact of all resolutions brought to the Conference and the notice of motion form has therefore been developed to take account of this and to enable the work of the new Conference Scrutiny Sub-Committee. The form is available to download from the website, and from the Conference Office (email conferenceoffice@methodistchurch.org.uk) prior to the Conference or from the Help Desk at the Conference.
- 3.3 The Committee encourages members of the Conference to adhere to the following principles when bringing Notices of Motion:
 - (a) The Notice of Motion must be brought about a matter that is urgent and could not have been brought as a memorial or district resolution;
 - (b) The Notice of Motion must be within the competence of the Conference and if it requests something of another body over which it does not have jurisdiction (eg MHA, Action for Children), it must be phrased in an appropriate way;
 - (c) The Notice of Motion must be properly researched beforehand – it is not possible for those advising the Conference (including the officers of the Conference) to undertake background work in the time available;

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

- (d) The Notice of Motion must be drafted in such a way, that if passed by the Conference, it can be implemented;
 - (e) The Notice of Motion must not require the Conference to make a policy decision without adequate background information and thought given to the consequences;
 - (f) The Notice of Motion, if passed, must not require such a level of resource that would require resources (human and financial) to be diverted from other areas of agreed work. To this extent if the Conference Financial Committee rules that the Notice of Motion cannot be accommodated within the contingency provided in the Central Services Budget, the Business Committee might need to rule that the Notice of Motion cannot be put before the Conference without further work on the part of the movers on how resources might be found.
- 3.4 In enabling Conference members to submit Notices of Motion related to business scheduled for the afternoon and evening of Saturday 29 June, the Business Committee requests that these be submitted by email to batesj@methodistchurch.org.uk to arrive not later than Friday 28 June at 2.00pm. The Committee has determined that it will only require the names (which will be printed on the Order Paper) of a proposer and a seconder to be supplied at this stage: the four further signatories, should the Notice of Motion be resisted by the proposer of the resolution (as per SO 132(1A)(ii)), may therefore be acquired after arrival at the Conference on Saturday 29 June but must be handed to the Record Office by 1.00pm on that day. Members of the Conference are encouraged to submit notices of motion electronically, however, all signatories' information will need to be verified (by use of the email address which has been submitted for the purposes of voting and other communications during the Conference). This means that any member of the Conference who agrees to be a signatory to a notice of motion must either provide a signature to the Record Office or respond to an email from the Record Office before the deadline for the submission of that notice of motion.
- 3.5 Further, for the Business Committee to prepare the business to be conducted on Monday 1 July, members of the Conference who wish to submit Notices of Motion relating to the business to be taken on Monday, or amended replies to any memorials to be taken with it, are requested to hand them to the Record Office by 5.30pm on Saturday 29 June.
- 3.6 Similarly, Notices of Motion relating to items of business to be taken on Tuesday 2 July should be submitted by 12.30pm on Monday. This, and the deadlines in the previous paragraphs, will enable the Business Committee to prepare full and informed Order Papers for the smooth transaction of business.

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

3.7 Having set out in the preceding paragraphs the proposed timings for Notices of Motion in general, the Business Committee wishes to make provision for dealing with any which impact the connexional budget and proposes a specific timetable to that end. Its purpose is to ensure that the Conference is able to take decisions about the budget when all the relevant information is to hand and to avoid the pitfall of making choices or judgements based on partial information. It is therefore recommended that:

- The budget will be presented on Saturday evening.
- Any Notices of Motion which would have the effect of amending the budget shall be submitted by 12.30pm on Monday through the usual channels.
- The Conference Financial Committee will consider the implications of the proposed amendments at the close of Monday's session and present a report in Tuesday's Order Paper.
- The Conference will then consider Notices of Motion and memorials which impact the budget on Tuesday morning and will engage in discussion of the budget at that point.
- The budget will then be formally confirmed and adopted on Wednesday afternoon.

In summary, the deadlines for submitting Notices of Motion are as follows:

| Relating to | Submit by |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Saturday's business | Friday 2.00pm |
| Monday's business | Saturday 5:30pm |
| Tuesday's business | Monday 12.30pm |
| Wednesday's business | Monday 4.30pm |
| Unrelated to business | Monday 4.30pm |

3.8 Those proposing a Notice of Motion should consult with those presenting the business to ascertain whether the Notice of Motion will be accepted or resisted. Lists of those responsible for presenting each item of business are available from the Record Office or the Chair of the Business Committee.

3.9 The Business Committee notes that, under the terms of SO 136(2)(ii), it may recommend to the Conference which Notices of Motion are debated in the Conference and which are dealt with in some other way. The Committee will keep this under review, and may propose that, in respect of Notices of Motion in the 200 series (ie those that do not relate to business in the Conference Agenda),

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

members of the Conference be invited to notify the President (by email to conferenceoffice@methodistchurch.org.uk) by a specified deadline if they wish to oppose such Notices of Motion. Where there are no requests to oppose such notices of motion, the motion would then be moved by the proposer, who will have a speech limit of two minutes, before the Conference proceeds immediately to a vote.

- 3.10 The 2011 Conference approved the principle of enabling those Notices of Motion that do not relate to business already in the Agenda to be prioritised, by means of a ballot, should time not permit all such Notices of Motion to be considered. Should such a ballot be required, it will be held on the morning of Tuesday 2 July. Any such Notices of Motion which are not considered during the Conference will be dealt with as in the next paragraph.
- 3.11 The Business Committee may recommend that a particular Notice of Motion is not considered by the Conference but is referred to the Connexional Council in the coming year. The Council is required to report back to the following Conference its judgement on that Notice of Motion.
- 3.12 In order for the Business Committee to test, on the floor of the Conference, its own judgements about which Notices of Motion to refer to the Connexional Council without debate, on the afternoon of Tuesday 2 July the Chair of the Business Committee will move that the Conference adopts the list of Notices of Motion that the Committee recommends be referred to the Council. The Conference will be able to amend the list without the need of a written Notice of Motion.

4. Use of time

- 4.1 The Conference is reminded that the decision to shorten the Conference by most of a day (at least seven hours of business time) will inevitably increase the pressure on time this year. The Business Committee will be particularly concerned this year to monitor the progress of business and may deem it necessary to bring further proposals during the Conference to ensure that the Conference is able to deal properly and expeditiously with the business before it. In particular, the Conference will need to begin work at pace from Monday morning. In addition members of the Conference are particularly encouraged to raise points of clarification personally or by email with those named as responsible for each item of business before the Conference rather than taking up time on the floor of the Conference.
- 4.2 Members of the Conference will want to ensure that their time is spent wisely and effectively. To this end, the Business Committee will endeavour to ensure

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

that as far as possible, business follows the schedule published. As well as those who visit the Conference for particular debates, increasing numbers of people watch its proceedings on the Internet, especially when the Conference debates items on specific matters of interest, and rely on the published schedule being observed. Therefore, without wishing to deny anyone the opportunity to speak or to curtail debate unhelpfully, the Business Committee strongly urges members of the Conference to maintain the discipline of keeping to its schedule. It is unfair to have to foreshorten business scheduled for later in the week because earlier items have overrun.

4.3 With this in mind, the Business Committee asks that:

- speeches are not made unnecessarily when it is evident that the outcome is clear;
- representatives refrain from making speeches or comments that have already been made and from repeating what has been said and heard; and
- the Conference focuses on reaching decisions with the minimum necessary debate that does the subject justice.

4.4 The Committee proposes the following hours of session from Monday 1 July: 9:15-11:00; 11:30-13:00; 14:15-16:15; 16:45-18:30.

The Conference will adjourn no later than 16:00 on Wednesday 3 July.

5. Addressing the Conference

When addressing the Conference, representatives are asked to begin with 'Madam President' or 'Madam Vice-President' as appropriate, and then introduce themselves with their name and the capacity in which they are a member of the Conference. The Committee asks members of the Conference to bear in mind that web streaming enables a wider audience for Conference debates; representatives are therefore asked to consider their contributions to debates in the light of that. However, speeches should be addressed to members of the Conference and not those watching either from the public gallery or via the live stream.

It is recommended that presenters of business have four minutes and speakers two minutes. The Committee proposes a speech limit of two minutes as a means of facilitating the business which this Conference has before it, and enabling the Conference to hear a range of speakers and views in debates. Depending on the timing of the business, these allocations may be increased or decreased with the approval of the President and Vice-President. Where there is a number of resolutions attached to a report, the Committee recommends that presenters are

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

allowed four minutes to introduce the report as a whole, and a further minute to introduce each subsequent resolution should that be required.

The speech limits outlined in the previous paragraph will be adapted for those speakers who have additional needs. The Committee wishes to ensure that all members of the Conference are able fully to participate, and therefore the speech limits will be applied with flexibility in those cases. It would be helpful, therefore, if those with particular needs who intend to speak could let the Business Committee know, via the Record Office,¹ what adaptations need to be made.

6. Memorials

It is anticipated that all memorials will be dealt with during the Conference, ie taken with existing business to which they relate, debated separately or the replies adopted *en bloc*, based on the recommendations of the Memorials Committee.

7. Nominations

All nominees for President-Designate and Vice-President-Designate are to be photographed and their details displayed on a screen. The arrangements for this will be notified on Saturday's Order Paper at the Conference.

Nominations for designation of **President and Vice-President of the Conference** of 2025 must be on the prescribed form and placed in ballot boxes as early as possible and at the very latest by **1:00pm on Monday 1 July**. They will be displayed as soon as possible on Monday; voting will close at 6.00pm on Tuesday; the results will be announced on Wednesday. The Secretary of the Conference will need to contact all nominees for these offices, to confirm that they are willing to serve should they be elected.

Nominations for **Conference Business Committee members**: you are asked to follow **strictly** the instructions on the nomination form. Please ensure that you seek the consent of persons nominated and complete the forms fully and clearly. The election timetable will be the same as for the President and Vice-President, as above. It should be noted the election to the Conference Business Committee does not carry a right of membership of succeeding Conferences. Members of the Business Committee are required to be members of the Conference, and therefore if they are subsequently not elected as a representative by their Synod they will not be able to take up their place on the Committee.

This year, one Business Committee member, a minister, is required to be elected and may serve for the three years 2025-2027.

¹ An announcement will be made as to how best to contact the Record Office during the Conference.

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

In summary, the deadlines for nominations and elections are as follows:

| Election | Nominations close | Voting closes |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------|
| President of the Conference | Monday 1:00pm | Tuesday 6.00pm |
| Vice-President of the Conference | Monday 1:00pm | Tuesday 6.00pm |
| Conference Business Committee: Representative Session | Monday 5.30pm | Tuesday 6.00pm |

8. **Provisional legislation**

Under Standing Order 122, any two members, by Notice of Motion, may propose that an item agreed by the Conference be referred to the Synods as a **provisional resolution** before being proposed for final adoption by the Conference next year.

9. **Letter-writing**

Any member of the Conference requesting that a letter be sent on behalf of the Conference should note the following criteria and procedure:

- a. The Conference writes automatically to those who have served in ordained ministry for 70 or more years, and those celebrating the 25th, 50th or 60th anniversaries of their ordinations; their names will be prepared in advance.
- b. The Conference will write, for a specific reason, to those who have a direct link with the Conference, or represent the World Church, or have an ecumenical relationship with the Methodist Church, or have a claim to achievements that are outstanding in the life of the Church or on its behalf.
- c. The letter-writer, with consultation as necessary, will be the appropriate person to give guidance to Conference members as to whether a proposed letter is within the criteria.
- d. Requests for letters to be sent must be submitted on a standard form, giving all the required details, to the Help Desk, who will receive them on behalf of the letter-writer. Forms are available from the Help Desk.
- e. The recipients of letters will be listed in the Daily Record for the information of the Conference.

10. **En bloc items**

All the reports before the Conference carry significance, and the decisions of the Conference upon them are important in various ways. The list of items to be taken *en bloc* is not a list of items which are less important than the rest of the Agenda, but a list of those items which the Business Committee has judged, because of the limitations on time, not to require a separate debate. This list will

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

include some memorials to the Conference, and recommendations on those are made on the advice of the Memorials Committee.

The Business Committee will publish its proposed list of items of business to be taken *en bloc* in a separate report in Volume Two of the Conference Agenda.

Under the terms of SO 134A, if Notices of Motion are received about items in the *en bloc* list those items will automatically be removed from the list. In addition, by giving notice to the Secretary of the Conference (via Jane Bates at batesj@methodistchurch.org.uk), any six members of the Conference may, without proposing an amendment, require that an item be removed from the list and debated. This provision includes any Memorials which are designated as being in the *en bloc* list. Such notice must be given before the close of business on Monday 1 July (SO 134A(1)(c)).

***RESOLUTIONS

- 2/1. **The Conference receives paragraph 1 of the Report, and appoints the Revd Loraine N Mellor as Chair of the Conference Business Committee for the 2024 Conference.**
- 2/2. **The Conference adopts the First Report of the Business Committee.**

3. Methodist Council, part 1

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Sonia M Hicks Chair of the Council chaircouncil@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

SECTION A GENERAL REPORT

The Methodist Council is charged under SO 211(2) 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 could be taken to make the work of the Church more effective, to give spiritual leadership to the Church and to report annually to the Conference, bringing to the notice of the Conference matters to which it believes the Conference ought to give urgent attention.

The full range of papers presented to the Council and the outcomes of the Council's deliberations on them are available on the Methodist Church website at www.methodist.org.uk/council

The report to the Conference is presented in two parts, this one in Volume 1 of the Agenda and part two in Volume 2 of the Agenda.

These reports contain those items considered by the Council and not reported elsewhere in the Agenda.

1.1 Governance responsibilities

In accordance with its governance responsibilities, the Council:

- appointed the Revd Stephen Ingrouille, Mr David James, the Revd Naomi Kaiga, and the Revd Andrew Fyall as members of the Council for the connexional year 2023/2024;
- appointed connexional committees, trusts and representatives for the year 2023/2024;
- received reports from a number of committees and trustee bodies;
- approved the revised list of authorisations and delegations;
- received reports from the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) of the Council at each meeting;
- received reports at each meeting from the Connexional Team on how the Team specifically supports the four headings of Our Calling;
- reviewed the risk management policy and the corporate risk register;

3. Methodist Council, part 1

- agreed to a change in the list of Global Partners invited to the 2024 Conference;
- under the terms of SO 715, adopted the Candidates Health Policy;
- agreed to recommend to the President that the Revd Steven Cooper be stationed to the Connexional Team from 29 April 2024;
- agreed to recommend to the Conference that the Revd Nigel Cowgill be stationed to the Connexional Team for an initial period of five years from 1 September 2024;
- under the terms of SO 315(2), agreed to the reinvitation of the Revd Dr Gary Hall as a Methodist Tutor at the Queen's Foundation for a further period of one year from 1 September 2024;
- under the terms of SO 315(2), agreed to the reinvitation of the Revd Dr Judith Rossall as a Methodist Tutor at the Queen's Foundation for a further period of five years from 1 September 2024;
- under the terms of SO 315(2), agreed to the reinvitation of the Revd Ashley Cooper as Principal of Cliff College for a further period of five years from 1 September 2024;
- under the terms of SO 315(2), agreed to the reinvitation of the Revd Dr Claire Potter as Ministerial Co-ordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries for a further period of two years from 1 September 2024;
- received updates on serious incident reports made to the Charity Commission;
- noted with thanks the grants provided by the Joseph Rank Trust in 2022 and 2023;
- under the terms of SO 320(2A), co-opted Mark Carrick, Paula Dawson, Simon Edwards, Richard Goldstraw, Helen Hickson, Julie Morton, Chris Sandy, Vivienne Smith, Denise Tomlinson, Eva Walker, Helen Webster and Jackie Wright to serve on the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation;
- approved the Memorandum of Understanding with the Methodist Church Nigeria;
- gave permission for the sale of a small piece of land from the Cliff College estate;
- delegated authority to the Connexional Secretary to approve the Modern Slavery Transparency Statement for 2023/2024;
- acting on behalf of the Conference, appointed the Methodist Diaconal Order Support and Advisory Group;
- received a report setting out a strategy for embedding the Justice-Seeking Church report;
- received a report informing the Council that it had been awarded with the Investors in People silver award;
- approved policy principles concerning the appointment of lay and ordained people in the Connexional Team;

3. Methodist Council, part 1

- approved an updated an update to the foundation module of safeguarding training;
- received a report concerning some connexional funds, and agreed the principles for amending their purposes to ensure that they are being used in support of *Our Calling*;
- agreed that the Guidelines for Good Practice in Confidentiality and Pastoral Care should be reviewed and that a task group should be appointed to report to the Conference no later than 2026 with recommended updates;
- appointed a group to review the *Hope in God's Future* Conference Statement.

1.2 Other business

The Council received annual reports from:

- the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee;
- the Property Development Committee;
- Southlands College.

***RESOLUTION

3/1. The Conference receives the General Report of the Council.

SECTION B

MEMORIALS M4, M5 (2017): CANDIDATING FOR MINISTERS SEEKING TO MOVE FROM PRESBYTER TO DEACON OR VICE VERSA

The following memorials were brought to the 2017 Conference:

M4 Candidating for ministers seeking to move from Presbyter to Deacon or vice versa

The Cardiff (2/9) Circuit Meeting (Present: 45; Voting: 40 for, 1 against) gives thanks for the various callings upon the lives of the people called Methodists, given by God and tested by the Church. We recognise that within the lay community it is common for people to be called to roles for a period of time and to then sense a call to a new ministry. As a Circuit, we recognise that occasionally those called and ordained as presbyters and deacons may also sense a call from God to explore another form of ministry. It is in this context that we express concerns over the various processes currently in place to discern if a deacon is called to be a presbyter, or a presbyter is called to be a deacon.

3. Methodist Council, part 1

The process whereby someone offers to change order of ministry is set out in Standing Order 718. The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC) has responsibility for determining what of the material asked of other candidates shall be required in this process. At present, the process gives no recognition that the candidate has previously undertaken a similar, if not identical process, when they originally candidated.

The Circuit Meeting believes that the current process lacks an acknowledgement of the skills and graces already seen in such a candidate and that the process can devalue the worth of a candidate who is testing a call from God to change from one form of ordained ministry to another.

The Circuit Meeting requests that the Conference directs the Connexional Team member responsible for Oversight of Ordained Ministries to review with MCPOC the current interpretation of SO 718 and to make recommendations for a new process that recognises the assessment made at the time of their original call and which seeks to test clearly the reasons for the change of call being expressed by the candidate together with any further requirements needed in relation to the new role.

The Circuit Meeting recognises that the work currently undertaken by the Faith and Order Committee on 'Ministry in the Methodist Church' will explore the relationship between the two orders, and asks that consideration be given by the working party to how a minister might appropriately explore a call to move between orders and whether SO 718 needs to be revised.

The Circuit Meeting recognises the sensitivity of this issue in particular in relation to the Diaconal Order when a member of the Order seeks to become a presbyter and asks that the Warden of the Order be fully involved in the reviews requested in this memorial.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Cardiff Circuit Meeting for its memorial which raises an important question.

The Methodist Church's understanding of diaconal and presbyteral ministry is that they are two distinct (though equal) orders in which ministers serve the Church in different ways. It has also affirmed that presbyteral or diaconal ministry is not simply about the functions which presbyters or deacons undertake as part of God's mission but about the identity of the minister and the way in which they

3. Methodist Council, part 1

inhabit their calling in and on behalf of the Church. Therefore, the parallel with the way in which a lay person might serve in one role for a period of time and then take up another is not exact. For that reason, it has been expected that the process of changing orders necessarily involves a process of discernment equivalent though not identical to that undertaken by a lay person offering for ordained ministry.

The memorial indicates that the current understanding of the need to candidate as if from the beginning has been interpreted by some as denying the significance of the earlier discernment processes that the minister undertook and the years of formation and ministerial experience that she or he has had. That is regrettable and was never the intention of those who devised the current processes. Inevitably, the Church continues to learn about and from its ministers whose vocations develop in unexpected ways and has a duty to enable a process of testing that honours both who the minister is and the theology of ministry that it proclaims. The Conference therefore accepts the memorial and directs the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee to consult with the Faith and Order Committee and to bring a fuller response to the 2019 Conference.

M5 The Wales Synod, Presbyteral Session (Present: 70; Voting: unanimous)

This memorial was received with the same text as M4. The Conference adopted the same reply.

The Council received a report indicating that the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee gave some initial thought to this memorial, but since then the Conference has adopted new candidating procedures. The 2023 Conference adopted the Standing Orders to bring those new processes into effect, including Standing Orders relating to the change of order of ministry. The Council therefore believes that consideration of the points raised in the memorial has been incorporated into the work on the new candidating procedures, and that this work can therefore be considered to be complete. The Council recommends this report to the Conference as a further reply to the memorials.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 3/2. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 3/3. The Conference adopts the report as its further reply to Memorials M4 and M5 (2017).**

SECTION C COMPOSITION AND MODIFIED CONSTITUTIONS OF DISTRICTS

Background

The Law and Polity Committee's attention has previously been brought to the overlap between Standing Order 401 and Section 48A of CPD revealed by the amalgamation of the Wales Synod and Synod Cymru that came to the Conference in 2022. In particular, there was concern as to whether it should be possible to merge Districts via the route of adopting a modified constitution under Section 48A, without the extensive consultation and related provisions provided for amalgamating Districts under SO 401. The Committee's second Report to the Conference of 2023 indicated the following at Section I (page 513 of the Conference Agenda):

3. Changes in composition of Districts

The Committee has noted some possible areas of confusion between Standing Order 401, which deals with the changes in compositions of Districts, and Section 48A, which concerns Districts with modified constitutions, but which also strays into the territory of changes in the compositions of Districts. The Committee proposes to consider this, potentially to clarify the provisions and to consult with relevant others (such as the Secretary of the Conference and the Methodist Council), to check whether there are other process or policy considerations arising from the present provisions that deserve attention, in order to enable any proposed amendments to be brought to the Conference of 2024.

The Council approved the policy changes as set out in the following paragraphs.

Overarching principles and questions

1. The working premise of these proposed amendments is that SO 401(1) should be applied to all changes in the composition of Districts, to ensure that the fuller consultation enshrined in that Standing Order takes place; this presumably reflects the Conference's existing policy intention regarding changes in district composition. Section 48A would then be reserved for the situations where an existing single District wished to adopt a modified constitution, or when two or more Districts are amalgamating and proposing that there be a modified constitution from the point when the new District comes into being (but without in itself effecting the amalgamation which would have to be agreed separately under Standing Order 401(1)). The proposed amendments below therefore seek to disentangle the two sets of provisions.

3. Methodist Council, part 1

2. Regarding SO 401, the Law and Polity Committee made the following recommendations:
 - a) The provision in 401(3) that “any Synod or Circuit Meeting involved has the right to make representations” is still needed, but should be amplified by stating that formal representations to the Conference should be made in writing in advance of the Conference.
 - b) The effect of 401(5) is that determination of any change in district composition is ultimately a decision of the Conference, and an amendment is proposed to make this clearer.
 - c) There are parallel considerations in relation to a) and b) above in respect of changing the composition of Circuits under SOs 501(5) and (7), and the relevant provisions should be amended accordingly.
3. Similarly regarding Section 48A, the opportunity may be taken to clarify or amend some of its other provisions.
 - a) The notice provision for the adoption or amendment of a modified constitution in SO 48A1(2) could safely be reduced from three to two months to allow greater pragmatic flexibility.
 - b) The Secretary of the Conference has previously expressed concern as to whether responsibility for ensuring and certifying compliance of any proposed modified constitution should lie with the Secretary. The consequent amendments below to SOs 48A1(6) and 48A3(2) give the responsibility for approval instead to the Connexional Council, but on the advice of the Secretary of the Conference (on the basis that this advice should be largely a technical check rather than a policy discernment in each case).
 - c) Again, there is a parallel consideration in respect of the adoption of a modified circuit constitution under Section 58 and specifically under SOs 581(2) and (6) and 583(2). The modified circuit constitution provisions should therefore be amended accordingly (and, regarding the certification of a modified circuit constitution, the approval should be that of the District Policy Committee on the advice of the Secretary of the Conference).
4. The Council therefore proposes the following amendments to the Standing Orders to the Conference:

401 Changes in Composition. (1) In this Standing Order any reference to a change in the composition of Districts is to a change in ~~the~~ **a particular District or Districts** in which one or more Circuits are placed. This Standing Order applies to all such changes, except ~~those effected under Section 48A, but not~~ to transfers of

3. Methodist Council, part 1

Local Churches from one District to another arising solely out of changes, within Standing Order 501(4), in the composition of Circuits which themselves remain within their respective Districts. If proposals involve both a change within this Standing Order and a change within Standing Order 501, each such change shall be dealt with under the relevant Standing Order.

(2) All proposals for the division or amalgamation of Districts or other changes in their composition shall be considered by the **Connexional** Methodist Council, which shall consult the Synods and Circuit Meetings involved, formulate a draft recommendation, obtain the resolutions of the Synods and Circuit Meetings on that draft and report those resolutions to the Conference with its own substantive recommendation.

(3) When any recommendation for change in the composition of Districts is before the Conference any Synod or Circuit Meeting involved has the right to make **formal** representations **in writing** to the Conference **in advance of the meeting of the Conference**.

(4) Upon making any change in the composition of Districts the Conference may give consequential directions, in particular as to transitional arrangements, including directions as to the making of appointments to district committees and offices.

(4A) If in addition to the proposed changes in composition of a District or Districts it is also proposed to modify the standard constitution of the District, this shall be dealt with according to the provisions of Section 48A of Standing Orders either contemporaneously or subsequently.

(5) **The determination of any change in district composition is ultimately a matter for the Conference, but if, in the judgment of the Conference, any change resolved upon by the Conference is substantially out of accord with the reported resolution of any Synod involved it shall take effect only if confirmed by the Conference of the year next following.**

Section 48A Districts with Modified Constitutions

48A0 Definitions. In this Section:

- (i) an 'adoption resolution' means a resolution for the adoption of this Section passed in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 48A1 below;
- (ii) a 'Section 48A District' means a District in respect of which an adoption resolution is in force;
- (iii) a 'modified constitution', in relation to any Section 48A District, means the constitution by which the affairs of that District are governed.

3. Methodist Council, part 1

48A1 Adoption resolutions. (1) Subject to the further provisions of this Section, a District may at any Synod pass a resolution that this Section shall apply to that District, **or to a District amalgamated under Standing Order 401 of which it will be part**, with effect from the beginning of such connexional year as the resolution may specify and that the affairs of the District shall thereafter be governed by a modified constitution in the form of a draft identified in the resolution.

(2) A resolution under clause (1) above must be brought on behalf of the district Policy Committee by two of its members and notice of the resolution must be given to all members of the Synod no later than ~~two~~ **three** months before the date of the Synod at which the resolution is to be debated. A copy of the draft modified constitution must be supplied free of charge to any member of the Synod who requests one.

(3) ~~A draft modified constitution may provide for the governance as a single District of more than one existing District.~~

(4) In the debate on a resolution under clause (1) above, no proposal for the amendment of the draft modified constitution shall be considered unless written notice of the proposed amendment has been given to the Synod secretary no later than 14 days before the date of the relevant Synod, unless the Synod otherwise agrees. **If the draft modified constitution relates to a District to be formed by amalgamation under Standing Order 401, such notice must be given to the secretaries of the relevant Synods involved no later than 14 days before the date of the relevant Synod, unless the Synods otherwise agree.**

(5) A resolution under clause (1) above is only valid if it is passed by three quarters of those present and voting at the relevant meeting of the Synod ~~or, if~~ **if** the draft modified constitution **relates to a District to be formed by amalgamation under Standing Order 401** ~~provides as set out in clause (3) above,~~ the resolution is only valid if it is passed by such a majority **three quarters** of those present and voting at the meeting of the Synod of each relevant District **involved** and the terms of the draft modified constitution identified by the resolution passed by each District are identical.

(6) A resolution under clause (1) above will only take effect according to its terms if the **Connexional Council, on the advice of the** Secretary of the Conference, confirms before the relevant 1st September that the draft modified constitution complies with the requirements of this Section. Such confirmation may be given prior to the passing of the resolution but if the draft modified constitution is passed in an amended form after confirmation has been given, a further

3. Methodist Council, part 1

confirmation must be obtained. If no such confirmation has been given before the relevant 1st September, the resolution will not take effect until 1st September next following such confirmation.

(7) If a ~~the~~ draft modified constitution **is approved, the Connexional Council shall direct at which date it shall take effect** as set out in clause (3) above, the ~~Districts which have passed the relevant adoption resolution shall form one new District from the date on which the adoption resolution takes effect and the form in which the constitution and enumeration of the Districts is set out pursuant to Standing Order 400 shall reflect that change~~ **from that date**.

48A2 Termination of effect of adoption resolutions. (1) Subject to the further provisions of this Section, the Synod of a Section 48A District may at any time pass a resolution that with effect from the beginning of such connexional year as the resolution may specify this Section shall cease to have effect in relation to that District, **after which the affairs of the former Section 48A District will be governed by the provisions of Part 4 (other than this Section) as amended from time to time**.

(2) The modified constitution of a Section 48A District must specify by which officers or members of the Synod a resolution under clause (1) above may be moved, what period of notice of such a resolution must be given and by what majority such a resolution must be passed. The modified constitution (whether as originally agreed or as amended in accordance with Standing Order 48A3 below) may specify additional requirements in relation to such a resolution.

(3) ~~Where~~ **Unless** the modified constitution of a Section 48A District **relates to a District created by an amalgamation of previous Districts** in accordance with Standing Order ~~401~~**48A1(7)** above expressly so provides, the coming into force of a resolution under clause (1) above will not reconstitute ~~the any of the~~ **any of the** Districts which existed prior to the coming into force of the adoption resolutions ~~leading to the creation of that District, and the provisions of Standing Order 401 would again need to be applied to reconstitute any of the previous Districts if desired~~ **but** the affairs of the former Section 48A District will be governed by the provisions of Part 4 (other than this Section) as amended from time to time.

(4) If the modified constitution of such a Section 48A District does provide that the coming into force of a resolution under clause (1) above will reconstitute the former Districts, the resolution must specify, by reference to an identified draft if appropriate, the arrangements by which the former Districts are to be enabled to operate again from the relevant 1st September and the reconstitution will only

3. Methodist Council, part 1

then take effect if before that date the. If no such confirmation has been given before the relevant 1st September, the reconstitution will not take effect until 1st September next following such confirmation and in the meantime the affairs of the former Section 48A District will be governed as the affairs of one District and by the provisions of Part 4 (other than this Section) as amended from time to time.

48A3 Amendment of modified constitutions. (1) The modified constitution of a Section 48A District must specify the procedure by which the modified constitution may be amended.

(2) The procedure specified under clause (1) above must include a provision that any amendment to the modified constitution will not come into force until the **Connexional Council, on the advice of the** Secretary of the Conference, has confirmed that the modified constitution in its amended form will continue to comply with this Section.

48A4 Continuing application of existing constitutional provisions. (1) Nothing in this Section affects the provisions of the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts ('the overriding legislation') and a modified constitution must conform to the requirements of the overriding legislation.

For the Methodist Church Act 1976 see Vol. 1 p. 2, for the Deed of Union Book II, Part 1 and for the Model Trusts Book II, Part 2.

(2) While an adoption resolution is in force the provisions of Part 4 (other than this Section) as amended from time to time shall continue to apply to the relevant Section 48A District except as otherwise provided by the District's modified constitution.

(3) A modified constitution may not contain provisions contrary to the following provisions:

- (i) Standing Order 400A (nature and purposes of a District);
- (ii) Standing Order 501(2) to (7) (composition of Circuits);
- (iii) Standing Order 403 (connexional affairs);
- (iv) Standing Order 404 (expenses);
- (v) Standing Order 411 (meetings of the Synod);
- (vi) Standing Order 412 (functions of the Synod);
- (vii) Standing Order 413 (procedure at the Synod);
- (viii) Standing Order 415 (minutes and records of the Synod);
- (ix) Standing Order 416 (expenses);

3. Methodist Council, part 1

- (x) Standing Order 417 (Conference representatives);
- (xi) Standing Order 417A (Children and Youth Assembly representatives);
- (xii) Standing Order 417B (lay stationing representative);
- (xiii) Standing Order 418 (connexional bodies);
- (xiv) Standing Order 419 (memorials and resolutions to the Conference);
- (xv) Section 42 (the Chair) other than Standing Order 426 (Permanent Deputies, Temporary Deputies and Assistants);
- (xvi) Standing Order 440 (city centres); and
- (xvii) Section 48 (Presbyteral Session of the Synod).

(4) A modified constitution may not contain provisions varying any other Standing Orders except as provided in Standing Order 48A5 below.

48A5 Further provisions relating to modified constitutions. (1) A modified constitution may contain provisions varying the provisions specified in clause (2) below, but if such provisions are included the modified constitution shall also include provisions to secure the effective carrying out within the Section 48A District of the areas of work covered by the Standing Orders and Sections listed, taking into account also the need to comply with any other Standing Orders applicable to such work and the need to ensure consistent and fair treatment of all people across the connexion.

(2) The provisions referred to in clause (1) above are the following:

- (i) [deleted]
- (ii) Section 43 (District Policy Committee);
- (iii) Standing Order 442 (chaplains);
- (iv) [deleted]
- (v) Standing Order 444 (formal education);
- (vi) **[deleted]**; and
- (vii) Section 47 (property).

(3) A modified constitution shall contain provisions to ensure that as respects all the functions given by the overriding legislation (as defined in Standing Order 48A4(1) above) and Standing Orders to the district Policy Committee there is an identified body responsible for the performance of each of those functions, by whatever name that body or (if more than one) those bodies may be known.

(4) A modified constitution shall contain provisions to ensure that as respects all the functions given by the overriding legislation and Standing Orders to the Synod secretary there is an identified individual responsible for the performance of each of those functions, by whatever title that individual or (if more than one) those individuals may be known.

3. Methodist Council, part 1

(5) A modified constitution shall contain provisions for the appointment of District trustees.

(6) Subject to the foregoing provisions of this Section, a modified constitution may make such provision as the Synod approves with regard to:

- (i) [deleted]
- (ii) the constitution of the Synod;
- (iii) the functions, powers, duties and membership of the committees or other bodies constituted to carry out the purposes of the Section 48A District;
- (iv) the functions, powers, duties and terms of employment (if applicable) of the officers of the District.

****RESOLUTIONS

3/4. The Conference receives the Report.

3/5. The Conference amends Standing Orders as set out in paragraph 4 of the Report.

SECTION D

CANDIDATES IN THE WELSH LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 The 2022 Conference received a report from the Council relating to the merger of Synod Cymru and the Wales Synod, to create Wales Synod Cymru. The full report is available here: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/27753/conf-22-pc-41-wales-synod-cymru.pdf>
- 2 The 2022 Conference passed a series of resolutions in connection with that report, including Resolution 41/5:
 - 41/5 The Conference suspends Standing Order 494 until the close of the 2023 Conference, and directs that during the period of suspension the matter shall be regulated according to any connexional policy or provisions generally applying to candidates for the presbyterate.
- 3 The suspension was automatically lifted at the close of the 2023 Conference and the Law and Polity Committee has queried whether the Standing Order remains relevant.

4 Standing Order 494 says this:

494 Candidates. A candidate for the presbyterate in the Welsh language work who is eligible for and desires to pursue a university course may be permitted to do so by Wales Synod Cymru if, in the opinion of the Synod, he or she possesses exceptional qualities likely to render the intended course of special advantage both to him or her and to the Welsh language work. Any cost involved shall be met by Wales Synod Cymru.

5 The Wales Synod Cymru District Policy Committee has considered the matter and believes that there is no need to enshrine provisions for training in the Welsh language work within Standing Orders. The matter can be addressed under connexional policy and the general provisions applying to candidates for the presbyterate.

6 The Council therefore recommends to the Conference that SO 494 is revoked.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

3/6. The Conference receives the Report.

3/7. The Conference revokes SO 494.

4. Report of the Presbyteral Session Business Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Michaela A Youngson Assistant Secretary of the Conference asc@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

1. The Presbyteral Session Business Committee for 2024 comprises the Revd Sonia M Hicks, the Revds Jacqueline Bellfield, Bonni-Belle Pickard, Andrew W Fyall, Leigh Maydew, Mmasape Thathane-Tyolweni.
2. The Presbyteral Session proceeds for much of its business by way of conversation. Under Clause 23(m) of the Deed of Union, the Presbyteral Session may discuss any subject in the Agenda of the Representative Session or any subject within the jurisdiction of the Conference and communicate its views thereon to the Representative Session by resolution or otherwise.
3. Members of the Presbyteral Session of the Conference may submit Notices of Motion for the Conference to consider (see below for the procedures). They may also ask that the Session be able to confer from a presbyteral perspective about particular items in the published Agenda of the Conference. All such requests will be considered by the Business Committee and time found for them where possible.
4. So far the following have been identified by the Committee:
 - Review of Part 11
 - Role of the District Chair

The Session will also discuss the ongoing work of the stationing review.

5. The Presbyteral Session of the Conference will meet in closed session at 15.15 on Friday 28 June, and this is expected to last for up to an hour. During this time the Vice-President will lead a session for those presbyters who are not voting members of the Session.
6. The Presbyteral Session defines by resolution who may normally be present at closed sessions. Attendance when it sits as a court of appeal is governed by Standing Order 1145(7).

The Conference is reminded of a distinction made in Section G of the Law and Polity Committee report to the 2008 Conference entitled *Attendance at the Closed Session of the Ministerial Session of the Conference*. There is a difference between the Conference's conferring on general questions of policy and principle, on the one hand, and its decision-making on particular cases to do

4. Report of the Presbyteral Session Business Committee

with identifiable individuals, on the other. Because of the need for confidentiality and for other legal reasons, the latter needs to be dealt with in closed session and only those who will bear the responsibility for the decisions that are made should hear or otherwise receive the information about the cases concerned. This means that those presbyters who are not members of the Representative Session of the Conference, but are attending the Presbyteral Session of the Conference with the permission of a Presbyteral Session of a Synod and at their own expense are not able to be present in the closed sessions of the Presbyteral Session of the Conference: in other words, they do not participate in the decision-making in those closed sessions, nor do they hear the information that is shared within them.

At an appropriate point Resolution 5/3 will therefore be moved.

7. Details about candidates, probationers, those proposed for transfer and other permissions and authorisations will be made available to voting members of the Conference. Information regarding candidates is confidential to those who are present in the closed session and the booklet of details will be collected in at the end of that closed session. If there are any questions regarding particular cases, please contact the Assistant Secretary of the Conference (ASC@methodistchurch.org.uk) as soon as possible in order that any necessary information can be collated in time for this item of business.

8. **The Record**

For the sake of accuracy it is desirable that the Presbyteral Session delegates to the Representative Session the responsibility for adopting the Record of its Session, thus allowing time for members to check its details.

At an appropriate point Resolution 5/4 will therefore be moved.

9. **Notices of Motion**

The procedure for the submission of Notices of Motion is set out in SO 132, which can be found in the Rules of Procedure, printed at the beginning of Agenda Volume One. The deadline for submission of Notices of Motion is 17.15 on Thursday 27 June; however it would assist in the planning of the Session if Notices of Motion could be submitted to the Assistant Secretary by 16.00 on Wednesday 26 June.

***RESOLUTION

- 4/1. **The Conference adopts the Report.**

5. Conference Arrangements

A. Future Conferences

The Methodist Council is required to recommend to the Conference the date for the commencement of the next Conference and, provisionally, that for the Conference after next and, when known, to print annually the plan for the location and venue of future meetings of the Conference. The responsibility for determining the venue rests with the Conference Planning Executive (SO 140(3)(i)).

| | | |
|------|---------|------------------|
| 2025 | Telford | 26 June – 2 July |
| 2026 | Telford | 25 June – 1 July |

***RESOLUTION

5/1. **The Conference adopts the Report.**

B. Associate Members

***RESOLUTION

5/2. **The Conference invites the following Conferences, Churches and Christian bodies to appoint associate members of the Conference in 2025:**

The Church of England
The United Reformed Church
The Lutheran Church of Great Britain
The Society of Friends (Quakers)

Africa

Iglesia Metodista de Guinea Ecuatorial
Methodist Church Kenya
Methodist Church Sierra Leone
Eglise Methodiste du Togo

Asia and the Pacific

The Methodist Church in Sri Lanka
The Methodist Church in Malaysia
Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga

5. Conference Arrangements

Europe

Iglesia Evangelica Española
Igreja Evangelica Metodista Portuguesa
UMC Central and Southern Europe
UMC Germany

The Americas

The Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas
Iglesia Evangelica Metodista de Nicaragua
Iglesia Metodista de Chile

C. Presbyteral Session

1. The Presbyteral Session defines by resolution who may normally be present at closed sessions. Attendance when it sits as a court of appeal is governed by Standing Order 1145(7).
2. For the sake of accuracy, it is desirable that the Presbyteral Session delegates to the Representative Session the responsibility for adopting the Record of its Sessions, thus allowing time for members to check its details.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 5/3. (Presbyteral Session) **The Presbyteral Session of the Conference resolves that whenever it goes into closed session its membership, except when Standing Order 1145(7) applies, or the Conference otherwise resolves, shall be confined to presbyters who are entitled to vote on the business under consideration, with the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice in attendance as appropriate.**
- 5/4. (Presbyteral Session) **The Presbyteral Session of the Conference delegates to the Representative Session the adoption of the printed and written portions of the Daily Record for both days of its meeting.**
- 5/5. (Presbyteral Session) **The Conference directs that the total time available for the Presbyteral Session of the Conference of 2025 shall not be less than eight hours.**
- 5/6. (Presbyteral Session) **The Conference invites the Vice-President of the Conference of 2024/2025 to attend the Presbyteral Session of the 2025**

5. Conference Arrangements

Conference, apart from any closed sessions, with the right to speak but without a vote.

- 5/7. In accordance with Standing Order 105(1A) the Conference directs that the following Districts shall each elect at least one deacon to be a member of the Conference of 2025:**

North West England (three places), Wales Synod Cymru, Birmingham, South West Peninsula, Newcastle upon Tyne, Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury, Bedfordshire Essex Hertfordshire, London, South East

6. The Trustees for the Bailiwick of Guernsey Methodist Church Purposes

The following appointed Trustees, together with the Chair of the Channel Islands District (the Revd Dawn Saunders) served during the year:

Trustees: The Revd Howard Stringer, Superintendent Minister
Mr N Lewis, Mr B Rees and Mr M Dorey
Mrs E Male, Mrs C Teed, Mrs W Le Tissier

Secretary: Mrs M Lewis

- 1 No property transactions were completed this year.
- 2 Aldersgate Manse was put on the local market for sale.
- 3 The Trustees continue to exercise their responsibilities according to The Methodist Church (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law, 1987.

***RESOLUTION

- 6/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**

7. The Trustees for Jersey Methodist Church Purposes

The appointed Trustees, together with the Chair of the Channel Islands District Synod and the Superintendent of the Jersey Circuit (the Revd Dawn Saunders) are:

Mr R J L Le Maistre, Mr D Speight, Mrs L Wheeler and Miss M A Lee (Secretary).

- 1 On 14 April 2023, the Trustees sold the house called "Les Hautes Carrières", La Grande Route de St. Martin, St. Saviour.
- 2 The Trustees were pleased to note the care and maintenance of Methodist Church property in the Island and expressed their appreciation to those concerned.
- 3 The Trustees are discharging their duties under The Methodist (Jersey) Church Law, 1986.

***RESOLUTION

- 7/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**

8. Faith and Order Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr Mark Rowland Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee rowlandm@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Action required | Approval |
| Resolutions | 8/1. The Conference receives the Report. 8/2. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee, in consultation as appropriate, to revise the Criteria for the Transfer of Ministers and to report to the Conference of 2026. 8/3. The Conference resolves that the 1977 Statement on <i>The Church and The Ministry of Healing</i> shall no longer have the status of a Conference Statement. |

Summary of Content

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Subject and Aims | A general update on the work of the Faith and Order Committee. Proposals for the revision of the Criteria for the Transfer of Ministers |
| Main Points | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction• Ways of Working• Liturgy and Worship Subcommittee• Revision of the Criteria for the Transfer of Ministers• Other items of work |

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Faith and Order Committee is appointed by, and accountable to, the Methodist Conference. On behalf of the Conference it helps to ensure that what the Methodist Church in Britain says and does is true to its self-understanding, mission and purpose. It therefore seeks to encourage a deepening of theological understanding, engagement with the Methodist tradition, and shared critical reflection in order to help discern Methodist perspectives and responses in all aspects of the Church's life.
- 1.2 Under SO 330(10) the Faith and Order Committee has a specific role in scrutinising all matters directly concerning the faith and order of the Church presented to

8. Faith and Order Committee

the Conference by other bodies. Such scrutiny requires consultation with the full Committee, and often some collaborative working, and the Committee is therefore grateful for early conversations, particularly with working parties appointed by other bodies, to establish effective and constructive ways of working and reflecting as the work develops. Conversations as the group is set up and the process for developing the work is established are particularly appreciated. All reports, questions and communication to the Committee should be sent in the first instance to the Secretary of the Committee.

2 Ways of Working

- 2.1 Each year the Committee reflects on its ways of working. The Committee is always deeply grateful to the many people who volunteer their time to enable its work. In this connexional year, we have been particularly saddened by the death of the Revd Leo Osborn who was a member of the Faith and Order Committee, Faith and Order Executive and the Chair of the Liturgy and Worship Subcommittee. Leo's contribution was significant in many ways and we miss him very much.
- 2.2 The Committee has appointed Craig Price to the Faith and Order Executive. Recruitment to the Committee for this connexional year is in process at the time of writing and will include the appointment of a new Chair of the Liturgy and Worship Subcommittee (as Standing Orders require this person also to be a member of the F&O Committee itself).
- 2.3 The Committee is aware that there are various expectations of what the Committee does, what it is responsible for, and the kind of decisions it can make. The role and remit of the Faith and Order Committee is set out in Standing Order 330.
- 2.3 A common misassumption is about the role that the Committee plays in the theological life of the Church. Although it does have a responsibility to "stimulate theological reflection and study throughout the Church" (SO 330(3)), it is important to note that the Faith and Order Committee is just one part of the process of theological reflection. It does have a particular role to play in helping the Conference make decisions which have implications for the faith and order of the Church. This often involves both a broad theological understanding and particular (and often detailed) knowledge of Methodist theology, polity and the relevant theological subject areas, which is more than just academic expertise. In addition, much of the work of the Committee requires the ability to read and process significant paperwork, too often at short notice, and with a careful

8. Faith and Order Committee

attention to detail. Whilst not every member of the Committee needs to be proficient in every area, these are the gifts and knowledge needed to be able to carry out the Committee's work.

- 2.4 Given that the Committee is not, and should not be, the only place where theological thinking happens, then it does have a concern for the theological life of the Church and how theological thinking is facilitated in Local Churches, Circuits, Districts, the Connexional Team, and connexional working parties, committees and other bodies. Its own desire to play a part in stimulating theological thinking has often been thwarted by a heavy workload and immediate demands. This is likely to be mirrored in many other contexts, and continues to be an issue of concern.
- 2.5 When the Conference directs the Committee to undertake a piece of work on a specific topic then the Committee would usually work with other people; either through establishing a working group that draws on a variety of people with different experience and perspectives relevant to the subject, or through reflection days, conversations or different forms of consultation. For many of the reports it brings to the Conference, therefore, it has worked with people outside of the Committee and from many parts of the Church's life.
- 2.6 In order for the Committee to be able to fulfil its responsibilities it requires not only the skills and knowledge indicated above, but also a commitment of time and attention. As in many areas of the Methodist Church's life, Committee members are volunteers. In a context when many people are already overloaded, finding people who have the time and availability is a challenge.
- 2.7 The Committee also notes that, like many others, it undertakes much of its work under pressure in order to meet Conference, Council and other deadlines. This affects the extent and nature of any consultation (which, if done well, always takes time, attention and resourcing), the opportunity to engage in more proactive and creative thinking, and the time and ability to develop skills for faith and order work. The Committee has given thought to how it might help to develop the particular skills and expertise needed for its work and has explored and is exploring various possibilities including mentoring, creating further opportunities for involvement in its work, training or study days or sessions in particular areas and paying attention to different ways of identifying people for particular pieces of work. It has been encouraged at the response to the recent advertisements, and is keen to identify people with potential for faith and order work even if they do not have all the skills needed at present.

8. Faith and Order Committee

3 The Liturgy and Worship Subcommittee

- 3.1 The Liturgy and Worship Subcommittee now consists of 10 people, convened by the Revd Neil Stubbens. It is hoped that the name of the new Chair will be brought to this Conference. It engages in a wide range of liturgical work on behalf of the Committee and the Committee is extremely grateful for its attention and dedication to its task. In addition to the specific items of work directed to it, it provides representation for the Methodist Church to the Joint Liturgical Group, the Funerals Group and the Liturgical Commission of the Church of England.

4 Revision of the 'Criteria for the Transfer of Ministers'

- 4.1 When ministers of other churches and conferences seek to serve within the Methodist Church in Britain (whether on a permanent or temporary basis), checks are made as to whether their ordination can be recognised by the Methodist Church. Recognition of the ordination is not of itself sufficient to approve the application, but it is an essential part of the process.
- 4.2 Where there is doubt as to whether the ordination can be recognised, the advice of the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee is sought. The normal practice is that the applicant is asked for a copy of their ordination certificate and of the liturgy used for the ordination service. However, these are not always available and in many cases applicants are not able to provide the liturgy of the ordination service (for example, a copy may no longer be retained, or it may never have been a written liturgy).
- 4.3 The criteria against which recognition is judged were approved by the Conference in 1993 and are available at https://www.methodist.org.uk/documents/7996/fo-statement-criteria-for-the-transfer-of-ministers-1993_iSFu9e0.pdf. There is a number of challenges in applying these criteria, in particular that they do not provide criteria for the recognition of diaconal ordination and nor do they give any guidance as to the level of satisfaction that should be achieved on each point (and how in which direction therefore doubtful cases should be resolved).
- 4.4 The addition of diaconal recognition to the criteria will require careful consideration. There are many different patterns of ministry in our partner churches that come under the heading of deacons and diaconal, not all of them ordained. In addition, the MDO is of course a religious order as well as an order of ministry and considerations relating to this also affect the transfer processes.

8. Faith and Order Committee

- 4.5 The processes for the transfer of ministers have been on hold for a period and have recently reopened. Consequently, a high number of applications is beginning to be considered. This consideration has highlighted the questions raised above and there has been initial conversation with the Ministerial Coordinator for the Oversight of Ordained Ministries who is in agreement that it would be helpful for these questions to be examined.
- 4.6 The Faith and Order Committee had an initial conversation about this in its meeting in November. It agreed that the criteria needed updating and potentially tightening and it would be useful to link them to the selection criteria. It consulted with the Ministries Committee (which has oversight of the transfer processes); that committee is in agreement that the criteria be reviewed. Alongside this, the Methodist Council has directed the Ministries Committee to appoint a task group to review Section 73 (which governs the overall process of ministerial transfer); the committees will ensure that there is appropriate coordination between these pieces of work.

5 Other specific items of work

- 5.1 Deliverance Ministry: The 2022 Conference directed the Ministries and Faith and Order Committee to bring revised guidance for deliverance ministry to the 2024 Conference. The Connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry does not consider that any revision is required at this stage and the Faith and Order Committee therefore proposed to the Ministries Committee that they propose to the Conference that the existing guidance continue to be used. The two Committees will continue to keep the guidance under review and bring amendments when they are required.
- 5.2 Anglican-Methodist Covenant: The Methodist Council directed the Faith and Order Committee to work with the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England to explore the most suitable next steps in considering Mission and Ministry in Covenant (including, if necessary, drafting relevant legal/liturgical texts). We have been seeking a joint meeting of the Faith and Order bodies in order to take this forward, however this has not yet been possible due to the focus on work on marriage and relationships (LLF) in the Church of England and staff changes. We will continue to seek opportunities to work together on this and will report developments when possible.
- 5.3 Methodist Worship Book: The Methodist Council agreed that the Faith and Order Committee should take forward a consultation process regarding revision of the Methodist Worship Book with a view to bringing proposals to the Conference.

8. Faith and Order Committee

Pressure of other work has meant that it has not been possible to complete that in time for this year's Conference but work will continue and proposals will be brought next year.

- 5.4 Healing Ministry and Neurodiversity: This work is in response to a Notice of Motion brought to the 2022 Conference and seeks to offer some reflection on healing ministry in the context of neurodiversity, recognising that experience of both is wide and varied. Following feedback from the JDS Committee, the Faith and Order Committee resolved not to bring this report to the Conference this year and to seek to do further collaborative work with the JDS Committee. As part of this work, the Faith and Order Committee has noted that the existing Conference statement on healing ministry dates from the 1970s. Understandings of healing have developed significantly since it was produced and the Committee is of the view that it is no longer appropriate for the document to have the status of a Statement of the Conference. It is therefore proposed that that status be removed.
- 5.4 The Committee is planning to report to the Conference of 2025 on the following matters:
- Marriage and Relationships (further work)
 - Proposals for a revision of the *Methodist Worship Book*
 - Healing Ministry and Neurodiversity
- 5.5 The Committee is planning to report to the Conference of 2026 on the following matters:
- Online Church
 - Revision of the Criteria for the transfer of ministers

***RESOLUTIONS

- 8/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**
- 8/2. **The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee, in consultation as appropriate, to revise the Criteria for the Transfer of Ministers and to report to the Conference of 2026.**
- 8/3. **The Conference resolves that the 1977 Statement on *The Church and The Ministry of Healing* shall no longer have the status of a Conference Statement.**

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|--|---|
| Contact name and details | Angela Zamaere Smith, Chief Executive, All We Can Tel: 020 3758 7700 Email: info@allwecan.org.uk Web: www.allwecan.org.uk |
| Subject and aims | This report summarises the activities and achievements of All We Can since September 2022 |
| Resolution | 9/1. The Conference receives the Report |
| Main points | Since September 2022, the work of All We Can has had a transformational and measurable impact on the lives of more than 515,642 people. All We Can partnered with 28 local organisations in nine countries, including two new focus countries, namely Sierra Leone and Liberia, to facilitate a variety of long-term development programmes. |
| Background context and relevant documents | A full version of Trustees Report for the year ended 31 August 2023 is available from the All We Can website. |

All We Can continues to champion and model a locally-led approach to development that empowers communities to be the drivers of their own transformation. This approach recognises that every human being ultimately has the inherent desire for self-determination, a vision of how they want their lives to be and know most solutions to their problems. What they need from partners such as All We Can and the local organisations with whom we partner is solidarity, walking alongside communities, as enablers, catalysts and facilitators, helping cover costs they cannot afford themselves, and providing the impetus to get them on their way.

To enable this responsive approach that puts communities in the driving seat of their own development means that our funding and business models shift and share power more equitably with local actors. We are building a movement of like-minded local organisations worldwide, and we are in the forefront of advocating this approach with other international NGOs and donors. This is the lens through which all the achievements captured in this report must be seen. We are calling all stakeholders at home and abroad to join the cause.

We are grateful to God for the enablement to fulfil this divinely inspired vision and mission.

9. All We Can

1. Achievements and Performance

All We Can's work had a transformative impact on the lives of 515,642 people last year.

*[Partner Conference] ...tackled themes and issues that are not being addressed in the general discourse of NGOs. It has clearly pointed the future of NGO work and how to differentiate the future from the present' **Anonymous partner, 2022***

- 1.1 Between 1 September 2022 and 31 August 2023, over half a million lives were impacted through the work of All We Can and its local partners around the world.
- 1.2 Seven years after All We Can brought partners together in Ethiopia to celebrate our new partnership approach, All We Can held its second partner conference this year: 'Walking Together in Partnership', attended by 101 participants from 35 partner NGOs and churches from 13 countries. The conference, which took place from 16-20 October 2022, was the highlight of our year walking alongside our partners.
- 1.3 The Conference provided a platform for partners to showcase their expertise, share, learn, network and explore critical topics such as what makes organisations resilient, financial sustainability and decolonising aid. Notably this was an opportunity to share experiences of learning and un-learning how to do development differently and 43% of participants committed to embedding a community-led approach into their own programmes as one of the key actions they took away from the conference.
- 1.4 We continued supporting a total of 28 partners in nine countries, as well as four church partners across four geographical areas through the Church CAN programme. This includes eight newly established partnerships with local NGOs in Sierra Leone and Liberia who have been supported to develop Strategic Plans, monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks to support their efforts to evidence and learn from their work over the coming years; as well as seed grants. We celebrated the graduation of READ, a longtime partner of All We Can based in India. Recognising the protracted nature of the Syrian and Rohingya refugee crises, support for partners working in Jordan and Bangladesh respectively has continued, shifting from immediate humanitarian aid support to longer term development support.

2. **Agile, efficient and relational funding and grant making**

'The partnership with All We Can facilitated better engagement with diverse communities... and through improved governance, systems and processes (as a result of All We Can capacity development support) we have qualified for funding opportunities and gained recognition as reputable organization....we have a strategic plan in place now and any new donors are fitting into the journey we've charted for ourselves rather than the other way around. We've attracted funding from the EU and US Embassy; also Vibrant Village Foundation with unrestricted funding. We have enabled donors to knock on our doors to say, we would like to start doing business with you' – **midterm review focus group discussion, June 2023**

- 2.1 All We Can continued to provide flexible and unrestricted funding to partners, recognising that this is a key enabler to empowering local NGOs and their communities. Partners develop 5-year Strategic Plans, subsequently developing annual operational plans based on these Strategies. Partners are in the driver's seat as they prioritise and decide what to spend grants on in their Strategies and then report to All We Can based on these plans. Just under 96% of partners rated the level of flexibility they experienced in deciding how to spend funding from All We Can as 'very flexible' (MTR survey, 2023). Our midterm review this year has also offered us the opportunity to learn where we can improve, and in 2024, partner representatives from each country and All We Can staff will form a Working Group to refine the current annual operations and reporting processes based on the feedback we have received, as well as the information needs of both partners and All We Can – fostering greater ownership and equity in our partnerships.
- 2.2 While All We Can's grants are small compared to many other donors, the unrestricted nature of the funding, combined with capacity development support for partners' organisational development, makes for a unique combination as evidenced through partners reporting that improving their organisational capacities has helped them unlock partnerships with other donors, and access funding that they might not have had access to before.
- ### 3. **Supporting local churches to improve their effectiveness as agents of change in their local contexts**
- 3.1 All We Can, in partnership with the Global Relationships team of the Methodist Church in Britain, is supporting various Methodist churches across different

9. All We Can

regions through the Church CAN initiative. These churches include the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas (MCCA – covering multiple national churches across the region), the Church of North India (CNI), the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone (MCSL), and the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA- covering multiple national churches within the region). The support involves implementing strategic plans, establishing policies and guidelines, training pastors and staff, and investing in digital resources. The impact of the support includes improved governance structures, strengthened departments, and enhanced outreach to communities. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, All We Can continues to work with these churches to achieve their goals, liaising constantly with the Global Relationships team, who continue to hold relationships with these church partners.

- 3.2 The All We Can team is working with members of the Connexional Team at a number of events, including Cliff College Festival, Solas Festival, Flourish, Superintendents' Conferences in both the North and South of the UK. We supported the Children and Youth Team with the planning and delivery of 3 Generate. Joint events have been planned with JPIT, focusing on equipping local preachers and worship leaders to talk about justice. Several members of the Connexional Team contributed to All We Can's Lent materials which have been widely praised as a resource that helps churches wrestle with local issues of mission, as well as global justice. The team had the opportunity physically to visit over 100 churches across the UK between them, to engage in festivals, and participate in community events, thereby fostering an active and engaged regular audience

4. Informing, inspiring and engaging supporters

- 4.1 At the start of 2023, the All We Can Public Engagement Team launched the Communities in the Driving Seat campaign, focusing on the work of partner organisation Eagles in Malawi and championing the voice of Victor, the Executive Director of Eagles. This campaign marked a step up in the importance of communicating All We Can's unique approach to partnership and locally-led development, featuring the voices of partners even more prominently in communications and ensuring that misconceptions about 'aid' and 'overseas giving' were addressed head-on. The team remains committed to its anti-racist agenda and ensuring that, wherever possible, not only is the work the organisation does a part of decolonising aid, but so is the way the team communicates and fundraises.
- 4.2 During the 22/23 year, All We Can continued to appear in a number of news outlets, including several times on Trans World Radio, in the Methodist Recorder,

Preach Magazine, the Connexion Magazine, Magnet, the Methodist Church website and others. Several staff members have had the pleasure of speaking on Premier Christian Radio, at BOND and other sector events, at the Methodist Conference and at regional events across the country. All We Can has been keenly involved in the BOND network.

- 4.3 The team has continued to innovate with new ideas and resources for Partner Churches (a programme with around 130 loyal, supporter churches signed up) and developed a Partner School programme to accompany it. The Individual Relationships & Philanthropy team have continued to seamlessly integrate soft asks into regular communication, including the continued success of the biannual news publication, 'Walking Together'. Direct Mail campaigns have been meticulously reviewed and adapted to great success, reflected in robust early response rates.
- 4.4 In summary, the fiscal year 2022/23 has affirmed the indispensable role of regular giving in All We Can's overarching strategy. It has not only bolstered financial resources but has also solidified bonds with the charity's most dedicated supporters, reflecting a collective commitment to seeing every person's potential fulfilled in communities worldwide.

5. Income and Expenditure

- 5.1 83p in every pound is spent on our charitable objectives. 17p in every pound is spent on fundraising activities.

Total income decreased by £1.2m (19%) to £3,211k (2022: £4,349k)

Total expenditure increased by £24k to £4,012k (2022: £3,988k).

Expenditure on charitable activities decreased by 3% to £3,337k (2022: £3,449k). This represents 83.2% of total expenditure (2022: 86.5%), which compares very favourably with similar organisations of size and focus across the sector.

6. Reserves policy

- 6.1 As at 31 August 2023, the charity held total funds of £2,376k, £818k of these fund balances were restricted funds and the remaining £1,559k were unrestricted funds. The unrestricted funds are made up of minimum general reserves of

9. All We Can

£589k and £969k of designated funds which are unrestricted monies that the Board has designated for specific purposes, as detailed in Note 18 of the financial statements.

7. Plans for the future

- 7.1 Our midterm review this year has also offered us the opportunity to learn where we can improve, and in 2024, partner representatives from each country and All We Can staff will form a Working Group to refine the current annual operations and reporting processes based on the feedback we have received, as well as the information needs of both partners and All We Can – fostering greater ownership and equity in our partnerships. While All We Can's grants are small compared to many other donors, the unrestricted nature of the funding, combined with capacity development support for partners' organisational development, makes for a unique combination as evidenced through partners reporting that improving their organisational capacities has helped them unlock partnerships with other donors, and access funding that they might not have had access to before.
- 7.2 We also plan to introduce new innovation, particularly in the area of digital efficiency in relation to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, and create opportunities for continued learning and improvement of our own practices together with those of our partners.
- 7.3 We are deeply grateful for the ongoing support of the Methodist people and our wider Methodist family and endeavour to continue to serve as the Methodist Relief and Development Agency in all the ways we can.

***RESOLUTION

- 9/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**

10. John Wesley's New Room

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact Name and Details | Kate Rogers collections@newroombristol.org.uk |
| Resolution | 10/1. The Conference receives the Report. |

1. Introduction

- 1.1 John Wesley's New Room has taken necessary steps to reduce its financial deficit. The security of our future sustainability continues to be precarious and close monitoring of all aspects of our operation ensures we remain responsive.
- 1.2 In August 2023, the Trustees made the difficult decision to make the following roles redundant; Visitor Experience Officer, Fundraising Officer, Director of Global Relationships, and Finance Officer. The management of finances has been outsourced to an external company. Elements of the other roles have been disseminated amongst the existing staff team.
- 1.3 In December 2023, Mr John Savage resigned as Chair of Trustees having served John Wesley's New Room for five years. We express our thanks and gratitude to John for his loyal service and the wealth of business acumen which he brought to the role. Vice Chair, the Revd Dr Jonathan Pye, is currently acting as Chair of Trustees whilst we enter into a period of recruitment for a new Chair of Trustees. Trustees remain committed to supporting the organisation through this period of change and a sub-committee has been formed to assist in the recruitment process.
- 1.4 Increasing our levels of income generation is vital in our aim of becoming a thriving heritage site in the centre of Bristol. Whilst it is encouraging to see visitation steadily increasing, visitor spend is not as high as previously hoped. Profit margins are good, however, we remain confined by a limited maximum capacity and low staffing resource.
- 1.5 Co-directors Louise Wratten and Kate Rogers have led the organisation through a period of significant adjustment seeking to address the balance between prioritising commercial activity and remaining true to our vision to offer a welcoming space of community. Our vision and mission are fundamental in providing a focus and motivation when navigating through the pressures of financial uncertainty:

***Our Mission** is to be a heritage site where people come in, and go out renewed.*

10. John Wesley's New Room

***Our Vision** is to use our historic collection and other resources to bring to life the story and legacy of the Wesleys offering space for curiosity, reflection and enjoyment to all.*

2. Staff Appointments

- 2.1 In January 2024 Ho Huang joined the staff team as a part-time Marketing and Communications Officer, following the departure of Sereena Knapp. Promotion of our offer and ongoing activity is an essential tool in engaging with our existing audience and attracting new audiences.
- 2.2 In July 2023 we appointed Shehani Wijethunga as a part-time Café Assistant, and in October 2023 Donna Light joined the café team as part-time Café Assistant, both 20 hours a week. We are currently recruiting for a Catering Supervisor following the resignation of Zdenek Bidsovsky.
- 2.3 David Worthington finished in his role as Director of Global Relationships at the end of January 2024. A financial agreement is in place to cover expenditure for his March fundraising trip and speaking engagements tour of the United States. Evaluation to determine the viability of subsequent trips will be carried out following his latest trip. David will continue to maintain a relationship with John Wesley's New Room as an Ambassador on an ad-hoc, freelance basis providing group tours when staff and volunteer resource is limited.

3. Heritage Site and Property Development

- 3.1 Within the last year we have seen the refurbishment of our café interior, addressed a number of property maintenance issues and celebrated our engagement with young people through community led workshops culminating in an exhibition.
- 3.2 In the first week of January 2024, the site closed to the public in order to carry out maintenance, digital filing, and refurbishment of our café interior. Work took place to change the lighting, seating and cushions, and to add additional pictures and shelving. Responses to the new interior have been overwhelmingly positive, with visitors commenting that they felt the space was more cosy and inviting.
- 3.3 Our Property Steward, Mike Rose, has been addressing temperature, humidity and ventilation issues within our collections spaces, water ingress, and damp at Charles Street. Additional issues around heating and the visitor centre lift

10. John Wesley's New Room

breaking have impacted trade, but both have been resolved. A quinquennial inspection carried out at the end of 2023 has revealed a number of works needing to be carried out. Only a few items listed have been deemed urgent. The Operations Committee continues to meet monthly to discuss the financial implications brought about through sustaining a publicly accessible operation in grade listed historic buildings. Ongoing building maintenance issues remain which often incur high expenditure, as well as the need to assess the implications of utility bills and impact of energy prices.

- 3.4 The two-year 'Reaching In, Reaching Out' project, which received £20,000 in funding from Arts and Health South West in 2022, came to a close culminating in the delivery of a community led exhibition designed in collaboration with artists and young people. After four workshops and three dedicated days of installation, a launch event was held in January to which young people involved in the project were able to bring their families. Each young person and artist has a piece on display including a written description about an object from the museum which has inspired them. The whole exhibition is called 'Connexions', a reference to the way that John Wesley spelled the word and the 'connections' which have been made throughout the project. There is a number of funding possibilities to be followed up and Julie Matthews from our partner creativeShift is hoping that we can work together on more workshops in the future.
- 3.5 Priorities for 2024 include the recruitment and training of front of house volunteers in time for welcoming international visitors by peak tour season in April/May. As our commercial offer increases and we accommodate more evening events to include the serving of alcoholic drinks, it will be imperative that we register as a licensed premises.
- 3.6 We continue to provide a regular space for worship at our Friday Communion services organised by our Chaplains. In addition, we hold special events, such as carol services, and a special service for Wesley Day. Having registered as a place where the marriage of same-sex couples can be celebrated, we have now held two weddings and one blessing of same-sex couples as well as hosting the annual Christians at Pride service supported by the LGBTQI+ community and allies from partner churches across the ecumenical spectrum. John Wesley's New Room remains a space open to all and often engages in providing pastoral care for those seeking comfort or spiritual direction. In addition, we increasingly provide a resource for churches to hire us as a venue to inspire their congregations for worship and evangelism.

10. John Wesley's New Room

4. Changes to Policy

- 4.1 The trustees approved the updating of a new Safeguarding policy in line with the latest recommendations from the Methodist Church.

5. The staff team at John Wesley's New Room consists of the following members:

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|-----|------------------------|--|
| 5.1 | Kate Rogers | Co-Director – Collections (FT) |
| | Louise Wrattton | Co-Director – Operations (FT) |
| | Mandy Briggs | Education Officer (FT) |
| | Ho Huang | Marketing & Communications Officer (0.4 FTE) Fixed term contract |
| | Ewa Littlefield | Catering Manager (FT) |
| | <i>Position Vacant</i> | <i>Café Supervisor (FT)</i> |
| | Donna Light | Catering Assistant (0.5 FTE) |
| | Shehani Wijethunga | Catering Assistant (0.5 FTE) |
| | Michael Borrow | Charles Wesley's House Cleaner (0.15 FTE) |

6. Financial Summary

- 6.1 The statement of financial activity for the year to 31st August 2023 is appended below. The Trustees recognised that the expenditure levels reflected in 2021/22 and 22/23 were not sustainable and as noted in the first 2 paragraphs above agreed to reduce expenditure on staffing whilst also looking to develop income streams. This financial statement does not reflect the staff changes which were implemented after the year end, which have significantly reduced running costs and resulted in management accounts now showing a performance much closer to break even.
- 6.2 The deficit for 2022/23 financial year was largely attributable to a decision by the trustees to invest in improving the rental property at 5 Charles Street with the intention of significantly increasing the rental income generated. This involved a loss of rental income as well as a significant financial outlay. As the property is owned by the Conference, all the expenditure must be written off in the year it is incurred, rather than over the useful life of the asset. This inevitably results in an immediate reduction of the General Reserves.

10. John Wesley's New Room

- 6.3 The Trustees continue to believe that careful management of our activities and targeted expenditure to help generate income is the way we have to proceed but we will be constrained by the limited amount of available reserves and the pressures of maintaining historic listed buildings.

The New Room/John Wesley's Chapel

Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2023

| | Notes to the accounts | General Fund (Unrestricted) £ | Designated Funds (unrestricted) £ | Restricted Funds £ | Endowment Funds £ | Total 2022-23 £ |
|--------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Income | | | | | | |
| 1 | Donations, legacies and grants | 2 | 119,641 | - | - | 119,641 |
| 2 | Charitable activities | 3 | 36,396 | - | 10,500 | 46,896 |
| 3 | Raising funds | 4 | 201,135 | - | - | 201,135 |
| 4 | Interest and investment income | 5 | 7,193 | - | 1,263 | 3,953 |
| 5 | Other | 6 | 1,797 | - | - | 1,797 |
| 6 | Total income | | 366,162 | - | 11,763 | 3,953 |
| Expenditure | | | | | | |
| 7 | Raising funds | 7 | 338,951 | - | 115 | 434 |
| 8 | Charitable activities | 8 | 174,195 | 35,823 | 1,414 | - |
| 9 | Other | | - | - | - | - |
| 10 | Total charitable expenditure | | 513,146 | 35,823 | 1,529 | 434 |
| 11 | Gains/(losses) on monetary investments | | (557) | - | - | 3,346 |
| 12 | Net income/(expenditure) | | (147,541) | 35,823 | 10,234 | 6,865 |
| 13 | Transfers between funds | | 5,017 | - | (1,498) | (3,519) |
| 14 | Other gains/(losses) | | - | - | - | - |
| 15 | Net movement in funds | | (142,524) | (35,823) | 8,736 | 3,346 |
| 16 | Total funds brought forward | | 292,191 | 35,823 | 43,266 | 152,032 |
| 17 | Total funds carried forward | | 149,667 | - | 52,002 | 155,378 |

***RESOLUTION

- 10/1. The Conference receives the Report.

11. Methodist Forces Board

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | Mr Doug Godfrey-Swanney – Chair of the Methodist Forces Board godfrey-swanneyd@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|--|

1. Methodist Forces Chaplains continue to minister to the women and men of His Majesty's forces throughout the UK and around the world. This is a significant and enduring ministry for which the Methodist Church is held in high regard, due to the calibre of its chaplains. Further evidence of this good standing came in the King's New Year's Honours List when the Revd Dr Gary Watt received a commendation from the Chief of the General Staff for his 'outstanding work' in chaplaincy.
2. In light of concerns related to wider international issues, the Forces Board is considering what it could do to allow the Methodist Church to respond to a request from the military to provide additional chaplains at short notice, should the situation require it.

Activity

3. At the start of October 2023, the President of the Conference enjoyed a visit to the British Army on Salisbury Plain. This visit gave the President a good insight into the workings of the army, and helpfully an opportunity to see chaplains in their own context. This included accompanying chaplains on a visit to regular and reservist soldiers on a large exercise on the plain, and a memorable reception by the Fijian Fellowship in Tidworth Garrison. Each year this visit is timed to give the President a better understanding of the military prior to representing the Methodist Church at the National Act of Remembrance.
4. In time for Remembrance 2023, the Methodist Forces Board (MFB) published a revised set of resources to support church leaders with Remembrance Sunday services. A number of chaplains spoke to video about their perspective on Remembrance; these have been extremely well received by churches and it was heartening for the Board and Chaplains to see these so well used.
5. During the Tri-Service Chaplains' Conference at the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre in February 2024, the chaplains received an update on matters affecting the Connexion, and were able to engage in discussions regarding a Methodist Way of Life and becoming A Justice Seeking Church. The presence of the Secretary of the Conference in the company was most appreciated. The chaplains said a fond farewell to the Revd Tim Wilkinson. Tim has given long and distinguished service to the Royal Navy.

11. Methodist Forces Board

6. It remains a priority for the Board to identify and support those with a potential calling to Armed Forces chaplaincy. Enquiries are relatively infrequent at this stage. The Board remains keen to work with colleagues who may wish to learn more about this dynamic ministry.
7. At the request of senior commanders, and in order to support the roll out of Non-Religious Pastoral Officers to military chaplaincy, requirements for those who wish to join as Armed Forces chaplains have recently been clarified and strengthened. The Board has made good links with key figures in Humanists UK, the Endorsing Authority for future humanist chaplains to the military, in order to provide the best possible pastoral support for HM Forces personnel.
8. Forces chaplains were present at 3Generate, the Methodist children and youth assembly. Their presence and ministry was appreciated, and plans are being made for forces chaplains to be present at 3Generate 2024.
9. The Armed Forces route to achieve Worship: Leading and Preaching status continues to have good engagement. Staff Sergeant Joe Navoka was the first person to complete the Armed Forces route to become a local preacher. The Chaplain General attended Joe's service of recognition. The publicity from this achievement has been helpful in generating further interest in the scheme. The Board is extremely grateful to Cdr Mark Barton for continuing to oversee this work.
10. The Aldershot Methodist Military Trust (AMMT) continues to support the Hants-Surrey Border Circuit with its work in Aldershot Garrison and has now commenced funding one further Circuit to undertake work with the RAF.
11. The role of Secretary to the Forces Board (SFB) was advertised during the year and the outcome of that is reported elsewhere in the Agenda. Since September 2023, the Revd Dr Andrew Wood has been able to give some pastoral support to chaplains, acting as the interim SFB. We have also been well served by the Chair of the Southampton District in supporting the Chaplains and we wish him well as he moves on to a new station. We have already welcomed the incoming Chair of the Southampton District to two of our meetings to enable a handover to take place. The chaplains deeply appreciate the support that they receive from the Connexion.
12. The role of Chair of the Forces Board has also been advertised. After 16 enjoyable years and one aborted attempt to move on, the Board look forward to a new Chair and a new Secretary coming in to lead this work. Alongside this transition,

11. Methodist Forces Board

the Board will welcome the Assistant Secretary of the Conference (ASC) to their number as the ASC takes a lead from within the Secretariat for supporting this important ministry.

Future plans

13. Partnership working between the MFB and the Aldershot Methodist Military Trust (AMMT) has made good progress in moving towards the release of significant resources to those Districts and Circuits who wish to engage (further) with the Armed Forces community. Colleagues are requested to be proactive in registering an interest to access these resources by emailing SFB@methodistchurch.org.uk

Cadet Force chaplaincy

14. Cadet Force chaplains have expressed their thanks for the continued opportunities to engage with each other, facilitated by the Board. This allows them to support and encourage one another as they embark on a significant ministry; when taken together the Cadet Forces make up the largest youth organisation in the country.

Note of thanks

15. As with many areas of Church life, this last year has been one of change and transition. The Board has been expertly well served by its Development Officer, Phil Maltby, and we owe him our thanks for all that he has stepped into on our behalf.
16. As ever, the work of the MFB is capably assisted and financially supported by the Aldershot Methodist Military Trust. The Board's thanks goes to the Trust for its enduring support to maintain a strong Methodist presence in the military, ministering to serving personnel and their families, civil servants, and contractors, to the glory of God.

*****RESOLUTION**

- 11/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**

12. Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | Janet Bryer districtadmin@methodistchurchinscotland.net |
| Resolutions | 12/1. The Conference receives the Report. |

Legal

The fund is governed by a Deed of Trust registered in the books of the Lords and Council and Session at Edinburgh on 4 November 1869. The Deed narrates resolutions of the Conference of 1869 as to the raising, administration and purposes of the Fund. (See Standing Order 476 for further information.)

The purposes of the said Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland are:

- 1) The liquidation of debts yet remaining on Methodist Churches, Chapels or Manses in Scotland or debts that may yet be contracted with the sanction of the connexional property committee.
- 2) The purchase or erection of new or additional places of worship and of sites for such projects, and
- 3) The acquisition of manses or investment of money to meet house rents thus making provision for the residences of ordained ministers where at present only probationers are stationed and from time to time in other places as occasion may arise.

1. Administration

- 1.1 The means of Aid is by way of grants and/or interest free loans. No funds can be allocated unless the project is listed under the Methodist Church Property Consents Procedures for authorisation by local and circuit bodies and by the District Consents Panel and, where appropriate, the Connexional Conservation Officer. Where a grant has been made it remains refundable if the property is subsequently sold.
- 1.2 The Trustees are:

OFFICIAL: The Revd S Mark Slaney – Chair of the Scotland District; Mr Peter Mills - Treasurer of the Scotland District; the Revd Adam Stevenson – Superintendents’ Representative; Vacancy – District Grants Officer

12. Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland

NON-OFFICIAL: Dr Alan J Hayes; Mr David A Easson; Mr Edward A L Wallace;
Vacancy

Nominations to fill this vacancy will be sought at the Spring Synod on 20 April 2024 and a name brought to the Conference for appointment.

The General Committee consists of the Scotland District Policy Committee.

The Fund Treasurer and the Lay General Secretary are members of the Synod during the transaction of financial and Statistical business (*1948 Minutes p10*).

Fund Treasurer – Mrs Janet Bryer

Acting Lay General Secretary – District Administrator

2. Financial

2.1 The accounts for 2023 were presented by the fund treasurer to the Trustees and General Committee in March 2024 and these were accepted for presentation to Synod and completion of the OSCR return.

2.2 The incoming resources of the Fund for the year ended 31 December 2023 were £15,562 (2022 £49,228). The change over the previous year was due to reduced grant repayments from the proceeds of sale of grant aided properties and was despite the suspension of Circuit subscriptions under SO 476.

2.3 The net of incoming resources for the year after deducting grants paid and expenses was an increase of £14,839 (2022 £28,415) with CFB capitalised surplus funds of £155,954 (2022 £147,981) and investments valued at £265,526 (2022 £253,163).

2.4 As in previous years, The Trustees and General Committee request that Conference approves the distribution of the balance of the General Receipts income to the Grant Fund/Loan account/Surplus Funds Trust.

2.5 Balances at 31 December 2023

General Fund £10,657 (2022 £5,179)

Grant fund £99,193 (2022 £94,230), recoverable grants £350,488 (2022 £344,488)

Loan Account £58,149 (2022 £53,752), outstanding loans £5,325 (2022 £12,575)

The overall Fund value at 31 December 2023 was £415,934 (2022 £406,385)

12. Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland

3. Grants

Grants previously approved paid totalling £Nil (2022 £Nil)
Grants approved and paid out this year totalled £6,000 (2022 £20,000)
During the year one application for aid was considered and granted by the General Committee:
Kilsyth Methodist Church replacement of £6,000 loan with £6,000 grant.

4. Loans

Loan instalments are collected half-yearly in May and November. No loans were approved and paid during the year. (2022 £Nil).

5. General

The trustees and general committee recommend a further extension to the current suspension of Circuit subscriptions to the fund during the connexional year 2024/25.

6. Changes to the Fund – Future Changes.

The Trustees also report that further changes to the structure of the Fund are under consideration with a move to adoption of the Model Trusts in place of the existing Deed of Trust. This is with a view to updating governance and management procedures so as to encourage more effective use of resources.

***RESOLUTION

12/1. The Conference receives the Report.

13. Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) – Revision to Articles of Association

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | Sue Roxby, Business Director Sroxby@methodistschools.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|--|

Methodist Independent Schools Trust is proposing to revise its Articles of Association to allow for the appointment of up to 17 Trustees. This is an increase on the previous maximum number (16 Trustees). The increase comes about by the addition of two Trustee positions (a potential sixth Connexional Council Trustee, and a potential sixth Nominated Trustee) and the recategorisation of the Connexional Representative as an attendee at Trustees' meetings, but no longer as a formal Trustee. There is also a proposed reduction in the minimum proportion of Trustees who must themselves be Methodists (down from a half to a third).

These proposed amendments are intended to ensure that the Trustees possess the appropriate range of skills and experience, and to ensure that there are sufficient individuals able to fulfil (in particular) committee roles. They are also in response to an indication from the Methodist Church that it would prefer the Connexional Representative not to bear full trustee responsibility.

Additionally, as housekeeping points, the Articles are revised to take into account of the departure of two schools from the Group – namely, St Petroc's and Truro High School (Schedule 1), and the merger of Lorenden and Moorlands Schools into the main charity, such that there are no longer any schools falling under the definition "Acquired Schools".

Below are the revised sections along with text of the written resolution which will be put to the Members of MIST on receipt of approval from the Conference. A copy of the Articles, showing these amendments, is available on request.

Thereafter, the updated Articles will be filed at Companies House.

Revised Articles

- 3.2 The Trustees, when complete, consist of at least eleven and not more than 17 individuals over the age of 18, all of whom must support the Objects and of whom at least one third shall be members of the Methodist Church PROVIDED THAT at no time shall more than 50% of the Trustees be serving Governors.
- 3.4 The Trustees shall be appointed by the Conference and shall consist of the following:
 - 3.4.1 the Chair;
 - 3.4.2 three Chairs of Governors Trustees;

13. Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) – Revision to Articles of Association

- 3.4.3 no more than six Connexional Council Trustees;
- 3.4.4 no more than one Chair of District Trustee; and
- 3.4.5 no more than six Nominated Trustees
- 3.6 The Chair, the Connexional Council Trustees, the Chair of District Trustee and the Nominated Trustees may be reappointed at the expiry of their terms of offices provided that no such Trustee may serve more than three consecutive terms other than in exceptional circumstances, where a Chair of District Trustee may be reappointed for one further additional term of up to three years.
- 3.8 A Trustee's term of office as such automatically terminates if he/she:
- 3.8.7 in the case of the Chair of District Trustee ceases to be a Chair of District of the Methodist Church;
- 4.9 If appointed, the Connexional Representative shall be entitled to speak (but not vote) at meetings of the Trustees but may be required to withdraw from any such meeting at the request of the Chair.
- 4.10 The Trustees may invite any individual to attend and contribute to Trustees' (or other) meetings where that individual's skills or experience are suitable to the matter in hand. For the avoidance of doubt, any such individual will have no right to attend any meeting nor to cast any vote on matters to be decided.
- 16.2 Definitions:

Connexional Representative means an individual who is a senior staff member within the Connexional Team of the Methodist Church with responsibility or oversight of education and who, at the nomination of the Methodist Church, has been appointed by the Charity to attend meetings of the Trustees in accordance with Article 4.9.

Schedule 1 The Schools and Associated Schools

Part 1 The Schools

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Culford School | Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP28 6TX |
| Farringtons School | Chislehurst, Kent BR7 6LR |
| Kent College, Canterbury | Canterbury, Kent CT2 9DT |
| Kent College, Pembury | Nr Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 4AX |
| Moorlands School | Foxhill Drive, Leeds LS16 5PF |

13. Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) – Revision to Articles of Association

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Lorenden Preparatory School | Painter’s Forstal, Faversham ME13 0EN |
| Queen’s College, Taunton | Taunton, Somerset TA1 4QS |
| Shebbear College | Shebbear, Devon EX21 5HJ |
| Truro School | Truro, Cornwall TR1 1TH |
| Woodhouse Grove School | Apperley Bridge, West Yorkshire BD10 ODR |

Special Resolution to be proposed following Conference approval

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of Part 13 of the Companies Act 2006, the Trustees of the Company proposed the following special resolution which was passed unanimously by the Members.

SPECIAL RESOLUTION

(1) That the attached Articles of Association be adopted as the Articles of Association of the Company in substitution for, and to the exclusion of, the existing Articles of Association.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 13/1. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 13/2. The Conference approves the revisions to the Articles of Association for the Methodist Independent Schools Trust as set out in the Report.**

14. 3Generate – The voice of children and young people of the Methodist Church in Britain 2023

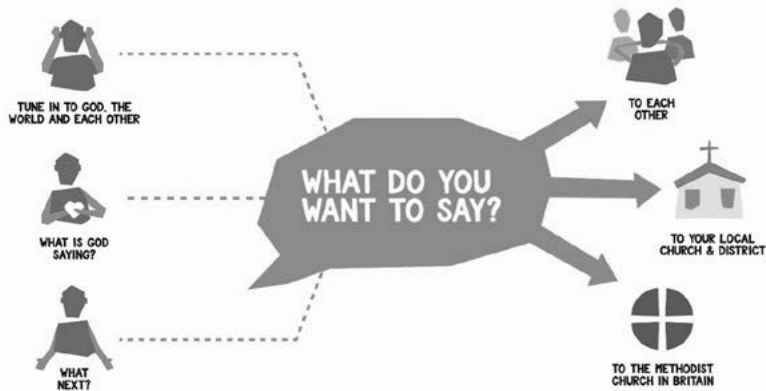
| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | Mr Thomas Hart, Methodist Youth President 2023/2024 youthpresident@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|--|

Introduction

3Generate is a space for children and young people to:

- tune into God, the world, and each other;
- listen to what God is saying to them;
- discern what actions need to be taken for themselves, their Local Church and the Connexion.

This was intentionally designed for children and young people to create impact at both the micro and macro level through their prophetic voice.



While at 3Generate, children and young people were given the opportunity to share their concerns with their local MP through the Town Hall venue. In total 56 letters were sent, and a collective letter was sent to 10 Downing Street. Responses were received to some of the 56 letters sent.

Key Themes

Throughout the 3Generate event, children and young people continually highlighted areas that concerned them, whether that be something that the Church should be changing,

14. 3Generate – The voice of children and young people of the Methodist Church in Britain 2023

investing in, or focusing on, or to highlight ways in which they have seen God working in their Local Church.

The questions posed were deliberately worded to make them accessible to children and young people and to encourage them to think about how they can create impact at a local level in their own context. For example, questions were phrased as 'What do you think Methodist churches should...?'

Throughout the event, there was no one clear concern that seemed to stand out above the others. Our children and young people are equally concerned about a range of issues. They highlighted the following key areas of concern: justice, welcome and inclusion, environment, community and fellowship, connecting with God and youth.

Justice

Children and young people are aware of the ever-increasing social injustices that are present within our society in Britain and internationally.

There is a clear trend showing that children and young people want the Methodist Church to invest financially, not only to support those at the social and economic margins, but also to eradicate the cause of their hardship.

Homelessness – children and young people are aware of the issues surrounding homelessness. It was noticeable that children and young people identified that there was an issue with the broad social experience of homelessness: those who are rough sleepers, those who are 'sofa surfers', and those who help people who are deemed as homeless. At 3Generate, it was clear that the consensus was that we should be spending money on supporting those who are rough sleepers who are on the street. Comments were made that the church should be a place of respite, providing food for the homeless (whether that be in the form of food banks/pantries or providing community meals), providing shelter for the homeless in our premises, and providing packages of essentials for those living on our streets. Comments were also made from children and young people that the church should be a place of recovery for the homeless, helping to get their lives back on track, providing practical help, support, love and a friendly welcome.

Food Poverty – food poverty is increasingly noticed by children and young people, not only with regard to the homeless, but also in recognising the effects of the ongoing cost of living crisis on many households. However, little was noted by children and young people about what we should be doing other than spending money on "food".

14. 3Generate – The voice of children and young people of the Methodist Church in Britain 2023

The Justice-seeking Church Report came to the Conference in 2023.¹ The church invests money into embedding the principles, priorities and practices for justice at a local level. It is encouraging therefore, for some children and young people to be commenting they have seen God at work through social justice projects in their local context.

The Methodist Church is a proud partner of the movement 'Let's End Poverty', which is supported by many different faith groups, community groups, businesses and organisations. The Methodist Church and Church Action on Poverty both currently provide staff to support the movement, investing deeply in their aim in making ending poverty a primary issue at the next general election. The concerns of children and young people in relation to justice and making poverty a thing of the past, are reflected in the ongoing work of the Church.

Welcome and Inclusion

The Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity states that 'The Methodist Church aims:

- to celebrate the rich diversity of people within the Methodist Church;
- to eradicate all discrimination, to treat all people justly and with dignity across the breadth of the Methodist Church;
- for a profound change in the culture, practices and attitudes of the Methodist Church so that all Methodists are able to be full participants in the Church's life'.²

It is clear that there is the strong belief at 3Generate that church should be a welcoming space and inclusive to all, supporting the principles of the strategy.

Hospitality – children and young people believe that Methodist churches should focus on being places of welcome and hospitality for all. It is clearly important for attendees at 3Generate that all are welcomed as equal, and it is important that everyone has a voice and is allowed to flourish in the life of the church at all levels. Children and young people recognise that hospitality can come in many forms, for example, physical welcome, the atmosphere of a community, and sharing of food. Critically, this hospitality must be non-judgemental and welcoming to all.

Physical Accessibility – The physical accessibility of our premises is becoming increasingly important, and we should be focusing on that as a priority. This not only

1 https://d1yuutt686hfi0.cloudfront.net/media/documents/conf-23-pc-12-walking-with-micah-project_MUPIJz3.pdf
2 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/strategy-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity/>

14. 3Generate – The voice of children and young people of the Methodist Church in Britain 2023

allows people full access to worship, but says a lot about the culture of inclusivity in our Church. The Connexional Team has been investing time and resources to create a culture where accessibility is prioritised and work is encouraged at a local level. It is therefore encouraging to see that there will be JDS Programme Coordinator in post, from the next connexional year, to help to embed these core practices into the culture of the Connexion. The work of the Connexional Team has seen the development of resources to help Local Churches to make Methodist premises physically accessible,³ notably the Methodist Church Access Audit. However, there is no connexional requirement (other than laid out in the Equality Act 2010) to assess where potential improvements could be made to the physical accessibility on all Methodist premises.

Same-Sex Marriage – there is a lack of understanding amongst some children and young people about the position of the Methodist Church on same-sex marriage. Some believe that the Methodist Church should *begin* to allow same-sex marriage on Methodist premises, whereas the church already does allow this. Resolution 59/8 of the 2021 Conference affirmed that ‘The Conference consents in principle to the marriage of same-sex couples on Methodist premises...’⁴ which is set out in Standing Orders O11A and O11B. The cause of confusion for children and young people may stem from Standing Order O11B, where the managing trustees of Methodist premises may have not approved the premises for same-sex marriage, or a minister, probationer, officer or member feels it is contrary to their conscience. It is therefore vital that we engage in conversation with our children and young people about the conviction of the Methodist Church, both at the macro and micro level.

Environment

Our children and young people believe that the Methodist Church should be making changes to become more sustainable, leading to a “healthier environment” and a “greener environment”. A collective letter was sent to 10 Downing Street from children and young people, outlining their concerns about the environment. A response was obtained from 10 Downing Street, which can be seen in Appendix 1.

Eco Church – The majority of comments made by children and young people, with regard to the environment, came under the section where they were asked what they wanted Methodist churches to make changes to. At a local level, there is a clear desire to change the perception of continual talk but no action. Children and young people are increasingly aware of the work of Eco Church and Eco-Congregation Scotland.

3 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/making-buildings-accessible/>

4 https://d1yuutt686hfi0.cloudfront.net/media/documents/conf-2021-59-marriage-and-relationships-provisional-resolutions-updated_WqJ63Qf.pdf

14. 3Generate – The voice of children and young people of the Methodist Church in Britain 2023

Action for Hope - Children and young people recognise that some of the more ambitious tasks to create a healthier environment require financial support. They are keen for the implementation of renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar energy. The 2021 Methodist Conference agreed an aspirational target to become a net zero Church by 2030 (under resolution 3/3, responding to Memorial M6),⁵ leading to the Action for Hope project.⁶ It is therefore encouraging that there is work in progress in the church to allow financial support in the form of grants across Districts, to support Districts, Circuits and the Local Church. It is heartening to see the thoughts and beliefs of children and young people being implemented into the wider work of the church regarding environmental sustainability.

Community and Fellowship

At 3Generate, it was highlighted that one of the ways that children and young people see God at work in their local context is through the community and fellowship that being part of the life of the church brings. This fellowship can be found through attending different organisations and areas of the church, such as youth groups, joining in worship (either the traditional form, or through New Places for New People/Church at the Margins), uniformed organisations, social justice projects, with each offering something different to the lives of our children and young people.

Uniformed Organisations – a number of children and young people said that their favourite thing about their local Methodist church is the uniformed organisation they attend, such as Girls' Brigade or Boys' Brigade. There was recognition from children and young people that this is also a space where they can come to know God. However, young people may not have the ability to attend such an organisation due to lack of groups in their local context. It is encouraging to see that the Children, Youth and Family Team are engaging in conversation with uniformed organisations. The Local Church can provide a haven for uniformed organisations to flourish and thrive, creating community and fellowship for children and young people who otherwise may be unaffiliated to the Church.

Connecting with God

Worship – when discussing what their favourite thing about their Local Church is, many children and young people simply said "I love God". There is a strong sense of

5 https://d1yuutt686hf0.cloudfront.net/media/documents/conf-2021-3-methodist-council-part-1_33juHd9.pdf

6 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/action/climate/action-for-hope/>

14. 3Generate – The voice of children and young people of the Methodist Church in Britain 2023

biblical engagement from children and young people, and an appreciation for varying music styles in worship. They have a desire to have varied styles of worship with more conversational services and services that include games and activities, rather than solely “a long sermon”, to “help people discuss the scripture in greater detail”.

Communal Connection – children and young people clearly have a desire for a closer connection with God, through a passion for worship. Intergenerational worship (where generations interact and worship with each other), as opposed to multigenerational worship (where different generations worship in the same service) is important for young people, as we are united in the body of Christ. There is also a desire to expand our connection with God out into the communities that we serve. Our children and young people see the values of our evangelical Wesleyan roots, in reaching out to our communities where they are, and proclaiming the love of God to them.

Youth

Youth events are increasingly recognised by children and young people as their favourite part of church, being spaces where they have most seen God at work. There is a call for further financial investment in those activities and gatherings, such as 3Generate. It is interesting to note that they did not call for money to be invested in youth generally, but in youth activities and gatherings specifically. Children and young people acknowledge (and rightfully so) that they are the church now as well as the church of the future, so they feel it is right to invest in them through these activities and gatherings.

Youth Gatherings – 3Generate is overwhelmingly appreciated by participants, as children and young people continually want to see “more 3Gen”, and there is a clear acknowledgement from them that it “sows the seeds” of their faith and discipleship. Discussions over the course of 3Generate show that there is a real desire for more localised and frequent gatherings where children and young people can meet, share in fun and fellowship, discuss issues that are important to them and have a voice. Children and young people have been passionate about this for several years, but they do recognise that this has financial implications for the differing levels of the church. Not only this, but they recognise that attending 3Generate itself requires a great level of resource, planning and commitment. Under Standing Order 250(6), Districts are required to take ‘appropriate steps...to ensure that children and young people connected with the life of the Methodist Church within that District attend the Assembly’. Work is underway to find a fair and equitable approach to aid all children and young people within the life of the Methodist Church to attend 3Generate.

14. 3Generate – The voice of children and young people of the Methodist Church in Britain 2023

Youth Representation

In accordance with clauses (10), (11) and (12) of Standing Order 250, 3Generate is required each year to elect to the Youth President, and Youth Representatives both to the Methodist Council and the Methodist Conference. However, due to wider constitutional changes to the Methodist Church in Britain (as agreed at the 2023 Conference), no Youth Representatives were elected to the Methodist Council at 3Generate 2023. This was to comply with resolution 57/3 of the 2023 Conference regarding the establishment of the new Connexional Council on 1 September 2024.

Our youth representation is:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Youth President 2024 – 2025 | Bea Hulme |
| Methodist Conference Representative | Owen Wilkins |
| Agents of Change Representatives | Ailish Dooley Alex Day Daniel Onyett Gracie Silk Hugo Hildred Jamie Nyirenda-Scott Reuben Peterson |
| Digital Representatives | Amos Rand Dominic Bevan Joseph Zaccaria |
| Global Church Representatives | Bea Beard Hope Wild |

These new representatives will join with those continuing to serve as youth reps: Eleanor Dixon (Methodist Council Representative until August 2024), Matt Hays (Methodist Council Representative until August 2024), Luca Barwick-Plant (Global Church Representative)

The Assembly gives its thanks to Verity Wild (Methodist Council Representative), Afon Harland (Agents of Change Representative), Elisha Atif (Global Church Representative), Iraj Irfan (Methodist Conference Representative) and Erin Campbell (Methodist Conference Representative) who have stepped down as Youth Representatives in 2023.

14. 3Generate – The voice of children and young people of the Methodist Church in Britain 2023

***RESOLUTIONS

- 14/1. The Conference receives the Report.
- 14/2. The Conference acknowledges the high importance of the Methodist accessibility audit and urges all managing trustees of Methodist premises to undertake a biennial accessibility audit, and implement changes accordingly.
- 14/3. The Conference encourages Local Churches to celebrate, support or establish uniformed organisations in their locality.
- 14/4. The Conference recommends that all churches develop strategic plans in which they can engage and connect with children and young people in their localities, releasing funding to enable these plans as appropriate.
- 14/5. The Conference urges all Districts to allocate money within existing budgets by September 2025, for which Local Churches, Circuits or the District can apply for youth events.

14. 3Generate – The voice of children and young people of the Methodist Church in Britain 2023

Appendix 1



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA
www.gov.uk/Number10

From the Direct Communications Unit

26 October 2023

The Children
3Generate
The Methodist Church
Methodist Church House
25 Tavistock Place
London
WC1H 9SF

Dear Children

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to thank you for your correspondence about the important matter of climate change.

It is really encouraging to see young people like yourself thinking hard about the future of our planet, the impact of climate change and the actions the UK Government is taking to tackle it. I agree climate change is an important issue. That is why the Government is determined to confront it and leave our natural environment in a better condition than we found it.

In November 2021, the UK hosted the crucial COP26 Climate Summit in Glasgow. It was at this Summit where the historic Glasgow Climate Pact was agreed by almost 200 countries. At the recent climate change conference COP27, which took place in Egypt last November, the Government wanted to build on the commitments made at COP26 last year. This included keeping global warming to a minimum and protecting the most vulnerable communities and species around our world from the worst impacts of climate change.

The Government welcome the progress made at COP27, but recognises that there is more work to do. The UK will continue to work tirelessly with countries and parties around the world to ensure momentum on climate action is not lost. At home our net zero target means that from 2050, the UK will stop contributing to climate change. I am also pleased to tell you that between 1990 and 2021 we have reduced our emissions by 48%.

For information on how we use your personal data, and your rights, please visit:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/cabinet-office/about/personal-information-charter>

14. 3Generate – The voice of children and young people of the Methodist Church in Britain 2023

- 2 -

Many people from all over the UK are already doing their bit on climate change, from the engineers working on the offshore wind farms now helping to power our homes and businesses, to local initiatives encouraging children and parents to walk to school. Thank you for doing your bit and raising awareness of climate change.

Thank you, once again, for writing to the Prime Minister on this important issue.

Yours sincerely



Correspondence Officer

14. 3Generate – The voice of children and young people of the Methodist Church in Britain 2023

Appendix 1a



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA
www.gov.uk/Number10

From the Direct Communications Unit

26 October 2023

Mr Tom Hart
3Generate
The Methodist Church
Methodist Church House
25 Tavistock Place
London
WC1H 9SF

Dear Mr Hart

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to thank you for your letter of 25 October 2023, in which you enclosed letters from the children at 3Generate.

Please find enclosed a reply for the children, sent with our very best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Correspondence Officer

To learn about how the Prime Minister's Office uses your personal data, please visit:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/cabinet-office/about/personal-information-charter>

15. Methodist Schools Appointments

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | Felicia Fasokun, Head of Finance and Company Secretary, Methodist Independent Schools Trust ffasokun@methodistschools.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

Summary of content

| | |
|--|--|
| Subject and aims | Appointment of Methodist Independent Schools Trustees and governors to three Methodist Independent Associated Schools. Appointment of Methodist Academies and Schools Trust Trustees. Appointment of Epworth Education Trust Trustees. |
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | The Conference is responsible for the appointment of Methodist Independent Schools Trustees and governors to the schools named in the resolutions. The Conference is responsible for the appointment of Methodist Academies and Schools Trustees. The Conference is responsible for the appointment of Epworth Education Trust Trustees. |

Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST)

Appointment of Trustees to MIST and Governors to Associated Schools

Trustees of Methodist Independent Schools Trust are appointed by the Conference, normally for a three-year term. Nominations are made by the Trust, Chairs of Governors and the Methodist Council.

Under the Schemes relating to the administration of Ashville College, Kingswood School and Rydal Penrhos School, the Conference is responsible for the appointment of Governors to their Governing Bodies.

Governors are nominated by the Governing Bodies and/or the Methodist Independent Schools Trust and are initially appointed for a period of three years though the service terms can differ within the Associated Schools. They may be re-appointed for a further period.

15. Methodist Schools Appointments

***RESOLUTIONS

- 15/1. The Conference adopts the re-nomination by the Methodist Council of Mr Stephen Holliday as a Trustee of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust for a period of two years concluding 31 August 2025.
- 15/2. The Conference adopts the nominations by the Trustees of Mr Simon Small and Mr Adam Proctor as Trustees of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2027.

Ashville College

- 15/3. The Conference adopts the nominations by the Governors of Mr Thomas Averre, Ms Holly Chaplin, Ms Judith Fenn, Mr Nick Hair, Mr Adrian Precious and Mr David Humphreys as Governors of Ashville College for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2027.

Rydal Penrhos School

- 15/4. The Conference adopts the nominations by the Governors of the Revd Andrew Charlesworth and Ms Judith Fenn as ex-officio Governors of Rydal Penrhos School.

Kingswood School

- 15/5. The Conference adopts the nomination by the Governors of Mrs Jessica Briggs as Governor of Kingswood School for a period of four years concluding June 2027.

Reasoned Statements - MIST

Mr Simon Small

Simon is a retired accountant, having spent most of his career in the banking and insurance industries in senior financial roles, latterly as Finance Director and then CEO of Equitable Life, a pensions mutual. An advocate of lifelong learning, he has always tried to pass on his experience and knowledge, whether through coaching or speaking at Cambridge, Sandhurst and King's College.

15. Methodist Schools Appointments

Mr Adam Proctor

Adam is currently the CFO and board member of a fast-growing global tech company, Vertical Future. Prior to that Adam spent the vast majority of his career initially at Barclays and then Citigroup, both in the UK and Singapore. His last role was as a Managing Director running the Private Banking business at Citi for Singapore, Australia and New Zealand as well as sitting on the Citi Executive Committee for Singapore. Adam also sits on the Finance Committee of Churchill College, Cambridge.

Reasoned Statements – Ashville College

Mr Thomas Averre

Thomas is the Founder and Director of a specialist public relations agency servicing the life sciences and engineering sectors. He has expertise in marketing, communications and public affairs, and was a member of the UK Government's Department for Health and Social Care Industry Communications Advisory Group during the pandemic. Thomas is a member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing and the Chartered Institute of Public Relations. Thomas was a former pupil of Ashville College.

Ms Holly Chaplin

Holly is a procurement and sustainability professional with over 18 years' experience. Specialising in the food industry and holding various Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) posts. Holly is currently the Procurement and Sustainability Director at Orkla Sweet Ingredients (subsidiary of Orkla plc). Holly is an Old Ashvillian and a parent of a current Ashville College pupil.

Ms Judith Fenn

Judith read history at Cambridge University then taught for 13 years, latterly as a Deputy Head at the Godolphin and Latymer School. She has been a Governor of a state special school and a Chair of Governors of an independent day and boarding school. She oversaw statutory teacher induction in independent schools across England for a number of years before taking up post as CEO of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust in February 2023.

Mr Nick Hair

Nick is the owner of the Harrogate office of Raymond James Investment Services, one of the largest Wealth Managers in the UK and USA. The Harrogate based business is a family run, boutique wealth management service looking after a small number of clients and their families. He has over 27 years' experience in the industry. Nick is a Chartered Fellow of the Securities and Investment Institute. Before starting his business in 2015, Nick

15. Methodist Schools Appointments

worked as a senior banker at one of the UK's leading Private Banks with a focus on high-net-worth individuals and charities. Nick is a parent of current Ashville College pupils.

Mr David Humphreys

David was previously an *ex-officio* Governor at Ashville in his role of General Secretary of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust. Following his retirement, he rejoins the Governing Body as Chair of the Education, Enrichment and Welfare Committee. David was previously the Headmaster of Woodhouse Grove School and has been chair of HMC (North East), an ISI Inspector and A Level Examiner.

Mr Adrian Precious

Adrian is a company director and has worked in public and private healthcare sectors, consulting and FMCG. Adrian is a parent of current Ashville College pupils.

Reasoned Statements – Rydal Penrhos School

The Revd Andrew Charlesworth

As the Chair for Wales Synod Cymru, Andrew assumes one of the two *ex officio* seats on the Board. Andrew brings fourteen years of ministry experience and a passion for the Gospel, alongside impressive leadership abilities and past managerial experience.

Ms Judith Fenn

As the CEO of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust, Judith assumes one of the two *ex officio* seats on the Board. Judith brings extensive educational expertise from a career spent working in and with schools, most recently as Executive Director of the Independent Schools Teacher Induction Panel (ISTIP).

Reasoned Statement – Kingswood School

Mrs Jessica Briggs

Jessica is an ex-Kingswood pupil and currently Deputy Head (Pastoral) and Designated Safeguarding Lead at Sherborne Girls' School. She is in charge of the pastoral care of 500 girls aged 11-18 and line manager of the School's DSL team and health centre as well as line managing the House Masters and Mistresses.

15. Methodist Schools Appointments

Epworth Education Trust (EET)

Appointment of Trustees to EET

***RESOLUTION

15/6. **The Conference adopts the nomination Mr James Lockwood, Mr Luke Cowell, Mrs Angela Mander as Trustees of the Epworth Education Trust for a period of four years concluding 31 August 2028.**

Reasoned Statements – Epworth Education Trust (EET)

Mr James Lockwood

James is the Headmaster of Woodhouse Grove School (since January 2016); having previously served as Headmaster of the Royal Hospital School, near Ipswich. James has over 25 years' experience in the Independent School sector, including residential/boarding settings. He sits on the British Board of Film Classification's Advisory Panel on Children's Viewing and is Chair of the British Board of Film Classification Video Appeals Committee (VAC). James is the Associate Director of Bradford City AFC.

Mr Luke Cowell

Luke has 15 years of experience as a Non-Exec Director, leading organisations in various sectors such as Education, B2B, Fintech, Market Research, and Retail Services. He has also run his own management consultancy firm. Prior to his consultancy firm, Luke worked at West Kirby School & College as a Management Consultant and later as the Charity's Operations Director, Company Secretary, and Clerk. He understands the role and responsibilities of a Trustee and is eager to contribute his operational and people expertise to the Board in order to support the Trust's purpose and charitable aims for the benefit of the young people it serves.

Mrs Angela Mander

Angela has extensive experience in senior leadership for over 27 years, in a range of settings, including some of the most challenging areas. Angela is a former headteacher (2006-2019) and a local Leader of Education, supporting other school leaders. Angela currently also sits on the Invictus Education Trust. She is a practising Christian, a member of the Methodist Church for over 35 years, and is in full sympathy with the Methodist ethos.

16. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | Matt Tattersall Executive Director of Finance & Resources tattersallm@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Resolution | 16/1. The Conference receives the Report as the Unified Statement of Connexional Finances required by SO 360. |

Summary of content

| | |
|--|--|
| Subject and aims | Summary extracts of the full consolidated accounts of the Methodist Church for 2022/2023 which were adopted by the Methodist Council are presented to the Conference as the unified statement of connexional finances required by Standing Order 360. |
| Main points | These accounts consolidate figures for a wide variety of Methodist activities and entities. |
| Background context and relevant documents | When the Methodist Church was registered with the Charity Commission it was agreed that the accounts of the registered charity would be those of the Methodist Council. The full consolidated accounts were presented to the Council and adopted by the Council under SO 212(1). They are available for scrutiny on the Methodist Church website and in printed form from the Finance and Resources Team at Methodist Church House. Under SO 360 the Council is required to present to the Conference a “unified statement of connexional finances ... so as to give an overall view of those moneys and other assets for which the council is responsible”. This Report consists of extracts from the full consolidated accounts which provide a summary of them to meet that requirement. It is submitted to the Conference as the trustee body of the registered charity. |

1. Link to the financial statements

The accounts can be viewed online at: https://d1yuutt686hf0.cloudfront.net/media/documents/MCiGB_Consolidated_Reports_and_Financial_Statements_2022-23_FINAL_-_02.02.2024_TKWkIPW.pdf

16. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

2. **Strategic objectives, aims and purposes of the Methodist Church**

The activities covered in these financial statements fall within the work of The Methodist Church in Great Britain ('The Methodist Church' or 'The Church'). The aim of The Methodist Church in Great Britain is to fulfil its calling, which is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

3. **Public benefit requirement**

The trustees of the Methodist Church had due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission in compliance with its duties under section 17 of the Charities Act 2011. This guidance sets out two key principles:

- the organisation must have an identifiable benefit.
- the benefit must be to the public or a section of the public.

The Church exists, inter alia, to:

- increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love;
- help people to learn and grow as Christians, through mutual support and care; and
- be a good neighbour to people in need and challenge injustice.

The trustees consider that for these reasons the charity meets these public benefit requirements.

4. **Organisation of the work**

The Methodist Church in Great Britain, in response to its calling and in pursuit of the strategic objectives shown at the start of this report, now organises its work in the following eight key areas:

1. Building communities
2. Children, youth and families
3. Evangelism and growth
4. Global relations
5. Learning network
6. The Methodist Council and governance
7. Ministries
8. Property

5. **Financial review**

The activities covered in these consolidated financial statements are those under the oversight of the Methodist Council. The Methodist Church in Great Britain is

16. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

the registered charity and the Charity Commission has agreed that these financial statements can properly serve as the financial statements of the charity.

The net income for the year was a deficit of £4.5m (2022: £2.6m deficit), including net investment losses of £5.6m (2020: £12.0m losses).

Other recognised losses for the year were £5.0m (2022: £8.4m loss). A £1.7m loss (2022: £1.9m loss) arose from the actuarial revaluation of the Pension and Assurance Scheme for Lay Employees of The Methodist Church.

Income

The total income for the year was £53.0m (2022: £56.2m). The reduction of £3.2m was mainly due to the following:

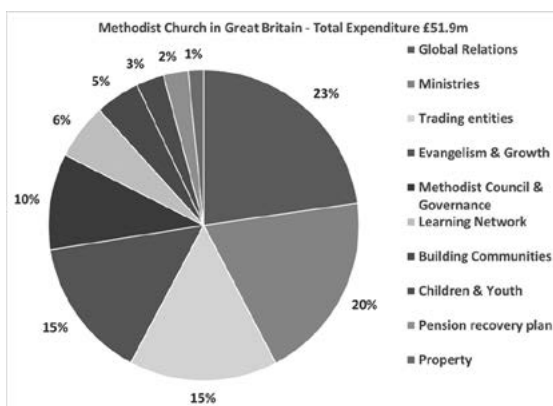
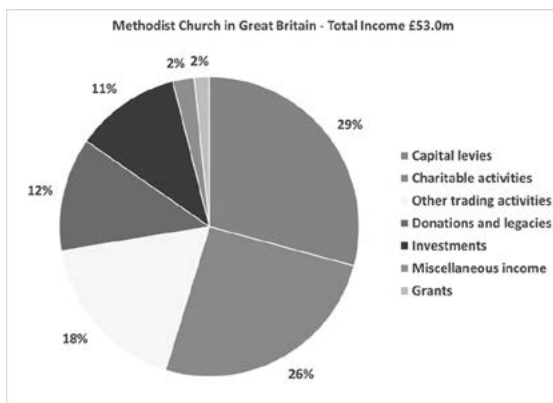
1. A £9.2m reduction in donations significantly due to: the one off appeal for the Pension Reserve Fund of £7.2m in 2021/22 and reduced donations to All We Can and Y Care International.
2. A £0.3m reduction in District Assessment income.
3. A £3.4m increase in trading income as the activities at MICL continue to recover following the pandemic and a new hotel opened in Camden.
4. A £5.4m increase in property levies as both the volume and average value of sales have increased.
5. A £1.8m reduction in gains on disposal of fixed assets.
6. A £0.4m reduction in grant income to the consolidated entities.

Expenditure

Total expenditure increased to £51.9m (2022: £46.8m). Of this, £43.9m was spent on direct charitable activities (2022: £41.2m). This was mainly due to the following:

1. A £2.4m increase in the cost of raising funds due to increased trading activity at MIC.
2. A £1.6m increase in the expenditure on Evangelism and Growth as implementation of the God For All strategy increased.
3. A £2.9m increase in Global Relations spend reflecting increased grant making as the approach to supporting capacity development of our partners continued.
4. A £2.1m increase in Ministries spend as one off cost of living payments were made to all ministers.
5. A £4.7m reduction in Property spend due to the one off loss in 2021/22.

16. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances



6. Investments

As at 31 August 2023, the Church held fixed asset investments with a fair value of £186 million (2022: £182 million). The Finance Sub-Committee is responsible for reviewing the investment portfolio and performs an annual review of the investment policy. The Church's investment objective is to seek an optimal return from income and capital combined. The Finance Sub-Committee is satisfied with the overall performance of the investment portfolio against agreed benchmarks.

7. Consolidated statement of financial activities – see over

8. Consolidated balance sheet – see over

16. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

The Methodist Church in Great Britain Consolidated statement of financial activities For the year ended 31 August 2023

| Notes | Unrestricted £000 | Restricted £000 | Endowment £000 | 2023 Total £000 | Unrestricted £000 | Restricted £000 | Endowment £000 | 2022 Total £000 |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Income and endowments from: | | | | | | | | |
| Donations and legacies | | | | | | | | |
| Charitable activities | 567 | 5,913 | - | 6,480 | 8,173 | 7,502 | - | 15,675 |
| | 13,261 | 269 | - | 13,530 | 13,532 | 335 | - | 13,867 |
| Investments | | | | | | | | |
| | 2,322 | 3,714 | - | 6,036 | 2,032 | 4,109 | - | 6,141 |
| Other trading activities | | | | | | | | |
| Other | 7,816 | 1,555 | - | 9,371 | 4,566 | 1,381 | - | 5,950 |
| Capital levies | | | | | | | | |
| Grants | 15,471 | - | - | 15,471 | 10,061 | - | - | 10,061 |
| Miscellaneous income | 2 | 864 | - | 866 | 15 | 1,282 | - | 1,297 |
| Net gains/(losses) on the disposal of tangible fixed assets | 608 | 428 | - | 1,036 | 826 | 384 | - | 1,210 |
| | 139 | 46 | - | 185 | (57) | 2,083 | - | 2,026 |
| Total income | 40,186 | 12,789 | - | 52,975 | 39,148 | 17,079 | - | 56,227 |
| Expenditure on: | | | | | | | | |
| Raising funds | 6,952 | 1,066 | 6 | 8,024 | 4,652 | 964 | 19 | 5,665 |
| Charitable activities | | | | | | | | |
| Building communities | 1,456 | 957 | - | 2,413 | 1,279 | 759 | - | 1,988 |
| Children & Youth | 1,505 | 1 | - | 1,506 | 1,520 | 33 | - | 1,553 |
| Evangelism & Growth | 7,496 | 143 | - | 7,639 | 5,510 | 512 | - | 6,022 |
| Global relations | 1,173 | 10,633 | - | 11,806 | 977 | 7,961 | - | 8,938 |
| Learning Network | 3,019 | 2 | - | 3,021 | 2,719 | 59 | - | 2,778 |
| Methodist Council & Governance | 5,168 | 19 | - | 5,187 | 4,777 | 85 | - | 4,862 |
| Ministry | 3,404 | 6,772 | - | 10,176 | 3,356 | 4,674 | - | 8,030 |
| Property | 681 | 146 | - | 827 | 655 | 4,850 | - | 5,505 |
| Others - Pensions | 1,339 | - | - | 1,339 | 1,496 | - | - | 1,496 |
| Total expenditure | 32,193 | 19,759 | 6 | 51,958 | 26,921 | 19,897 | 19 | 46,837 |
| Net gains/(losses) on investments | (2,162) | (2,829) | (579) | (5,580) | (7,304) | (1,046) | (3,603) | (11,953) |
| Net income | 5,831 | (9,789) | (885) | (4,543) | 4,923 | (3,864) | (3,622) | (2,563) |
| Transfers between funds | 1,718 | (1,985) | 267 | - | 934 | (1,305) | 371 | - |
| Net income after transfers | 7,549 | (11,774) | (318) | (4,543) | 5,857 | (5,169) | (3,251) | (2,563) |
| Other recognised gains and losses: | | | | | | | | |
| Reassessment of net defined benefit pension scheme liability | (1,813) | 94 | - | (1,719) | (2,201) | 311 | - | (1,890) |
| Gains/(losses) on realisation of charitable properties | 74 | (3,249) | - | (3,275) | - | (6,564) | - | (6,564) |
| Net movement in funds | 5,810 | (15,029) | (318) | (9,537) | 3,656 | (11,422) | (3,251) | (11,017) |
| Total funds at 1 September | 121,632 | 137,909 | 19,584 | 279,125 | 117,976 | 149,331 | 22,835 | 290,142 |
| Total funds at 31 August | 127,442 | 122,880 | 19,266 | 269,588 | 121,632 | 137,909 | 19,584 | 279,125 |

16. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

The Methodist Church in Great Britain Balance Sheets as at 31 August 2023

| | Notes | The Methodist Church in Great Britain | | The Connexional Funds | |
|---|-------|---------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | | 2023 £000 | 2022 £000 | 2023 £000 | 2022 £000 |
| Fixed assets | | | | | |
| Intangible assets | 13c | 178 | 62 | 106 | 43 |
| Tangible fixed assets | 13a&b | 66,704 | 80,051 | 56,033 | 69,228 |
| Investments | 14a&b | 186,469 | 182,267 | 173,482 | 167,766 |
| | | 253,351 | 262,380 | 229,621 | 237,037 |
| Current assets | | | | | |
| Stocks | 17 | 42 | 44 | 30 | 29 |
| Debtors | 15 | 7,138 | 5,664 | 6,401 | 4,393 |
| Short-term deposits | | 21,554 | 25,513 | 19,991 | 23,605 |
| Cash at bank and in hand | | 7,539 | 5,022 | 4,657 | 3,012 |
| Total current assets | | 36,273 | 36,243 | 31,079 | 31,039 |
| Creditors | | | | | |
| Amounts falling due within one year | 16a | (17,057) | (15,774) | (14,814) | (13,975) |
| Net current assets | | 19,216 | 20,469 | 16,265 | 17,064 |
| Total assets less current liabilities | | 272,567 | 282,849 | 245,886 | 254,101 |
| Creditors | | | | | |
| Amounts falling due after more than one year | 16b | (1,748) | (2,356) | (1,472) | (1,792) |
| Net assets excluding pension liability | | 270,819 | 280,493 | 244,414 | 252,309 |
| Defined benefit pension scheme liability | 28 | (1,231) | (1,368) | (1,231) | (1,368) |
| Net assets including pension liability | 23 | 269,588 | 279,125 | 243,183 | 250,941 |
| The funds of the charity | | | | | |
| Unrestricted funds | | | | | |
| General funds | | 55,585 | 52,706 | 51,866 | 50,531 |
| Designated funds | | 71,857 | 68,926 | 70,423 | 67,763 |
| Defined benefit pension scheme liability | 28 | - | - | - | - |
| Total unrestricted funds | 19 | 127,442 | 121,632 | 122,289 | 118,294 |
| Restricted funds | 20 | 122,880 | 137,909 | 101,628 | 113,062 |
| Endowment funds | 21 | 19,266 | 19,584 | 19,266 | 19,584 |
| Total funds | | 269,588 | 279,125 | 243,183 | 250,940 |

Total unrestricted funds include revaluation reserve of £7.3m (2022: £7.3m) for both The Methodist Church in Great Britain and the Connexional Funds. Total restricted funds include revaluation reserve of £45.2m (2022: £48.5m) for The Methodist Church in Great Britain and £39.6m (2022: £43.3m) for The Connexional Funds. (Note 24 Page 84)

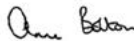
The notes on pages 47 to 95 form an integral part of these accounts.

16. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

Approved and authorised for issue by the Board of Trustees on 29th January 2024 and signed on their behalf by:



The Revd. Sonia Hicks
Chair of the Council



Anne Bolton
Connexional Treasurer

16. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

9. **Statement of trustees' responsibilities**

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and the group and of the income and expenditure of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- a) select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- b) observe the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommend Practice (SORP);
- c) make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- d) state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- e) prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the trust deed. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and the group and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Auditor

Following a competitive tender process in 2023, RSM UK Audit LLP were appointed for a further three years as auditor to the charity.

*****RESOLUTION**

- 16/1. The Conference receives the Report as the Unified Statement of Connexional Finances required by SO 360.**

16. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN GREAT BRITAIN

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of The Methodist Church in Great Britain (the 'parent charity') and its subsidiaries (the 'group') for the year ended 31 August 2023 which comprise the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities, the Connexional Funds Statement of Financial Activities, the Consolidated and Connexional Funds Balance Sheets, the Consolidated and Connexional Funds Cash Flow Statements and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and charity's affairs as at 31 August 2023 and of their incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We have been appointed as auditors under section 151 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with regulations made under section 154 of that Act.

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group and parent charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

16. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the group's or parent charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the Trustees' Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Charities Act 2011 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the Trustees' Report; or
- sufficient accounting records have not been kept by the parent charity; or
- the parent charity financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' responsibilities set out on page 37, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being

16. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the group's and parent charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the group or parent charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. The objectives of our audit are to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding compliance with laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, to perform audit procedures to help identify instances of non-compliance with other laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements, and to respond appropriately to identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations identified during the audit.

In relation to fraud, the objectives of our audit are to identify and assess the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud, to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud through designing and implementing appropriate responses and to respond appropriately to fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit.

However, it is the primary responsibility of management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, to ensure that the entity's operations are conducted in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations and for the prevention and detection of fraud.

16. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud, the group audit engagement team:

- obtained an understanding of the nature of the sector, including the legal and regulatory framework, that the group and parent charity operate in and how the group and parent charity are complying with the legal and regulatory framework;
- inquired of management, and those charged with governance, about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, including any known actual, suspected or alleged instances of fraud;
- discussed matters about non-compliance with laws and regulations and how fraud might occur including assessment of how and where the financial statements may be susceptible to fraud.

As a result of these procedures we consider the most significant laws and regulations that have a direct impact on the financial statements are FRS 102, Charities SORP (FRS 102), Charities Act 2011, the parent charity's governing document. We performed audit procedures to detect non-compliances which may have a material impact on the financial statements which included reviewing the financial statements including the Trustees' Report and remaining alert to new or unusual transactions which may not be in accordance with the governing documents.

The most significant laws and regulations that have an indirect impact on the financial statements are those in relation to General Data Protection regulations in the UK and safeguarding. We performed audit procedures to inquire of management and those charged with governance whether the group is in compliance with these laws and regulations and inspected correspondence with regulatory authorities.

The group audit engagement team identified the risk of management override of controls as the area where the financial statements were most susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. Audit procedures performed included but were not limited to testing a sample of manual journal entries and other adjustments, evaluating the business rationale in relation to significant, unusual transactions and transactions entered into outside the normal course of business, challenging judgments and estimates.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is provided on the Financial Reporting Council's website at <http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees as a body, in accordance with the Charities Act 2011. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the

16. Unified Statement of Connexional Finances

charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

RSM UK Audit LLP

RSM UK Audit LLP
Statutory Auditor
Chartered Accountants
103 Colmore Row
Birmingham
West Midlands, B3 3AG

Date: 5 February 2024

RSM UK Audit LLP is eligible to act as an auditor in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

17. Singleness

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr Mark Rowland, Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee rowlandm@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Resolutions | 17/1. The Conference receives the Report. 17/2. The Conference commends the Report for study and comment and invites responses to be sent to the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee by 1 September 2025. |

Summary of content and impact

| | |
|--|---|
| Subject and aims | To offer more reflective work on singleness, in response to Notice of Motion 2022/102. |
| Main points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Theological Resources: Biblical Insights • Theological Resources: Methodist History • Recommendations and Practical Guidance |
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | <p>A Christian Understanding of Family Life, the Single Person and Marriage (Statement 1992; Statement status removed 2022)</p> <p>God in Love Unites Us (2019)</p> <p>The response of the Faith and Order Committee to the God in Love Unites Us report (2021)</p> <p>Marriage and Relationships (2022)</p> <p>Notice of Motion 2022/102</p> |

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report from the Faith and Order Committee arose in response to a Notice of Motion adopted by the Conference in 2022. Notice of Motion 2022/102 observed that the debate on *God in Love Unites Us* brought calls for more reflective work on singleness and noted that the 1992 Statement on *A Christian Understanding of Family Life, the Single Person and Marriage* was ‘unhelpful in its assumptions and inadequate for the task’. Recognising that ‘[t]here is much still to do in welcoming, affirming, and celebrating the presence and contribution of single people in the church’s life together’, the Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee to bring a report on singleness to the Conference of 2024.

- 1.2 The Faith and Order Committee gladly endorses the first sentence of the section on *A Christian Understanding of the Single Person* in the 1992 Statement: 'Every person has infinite value before God.' The Committee recognises, however, that this is not the felt experience of all. A sampling of quantitative research supports anecdotal evidence that single people may not find church a positive place to be, and that both communal assumptions and some liturgical language may reinforce this negative experience. The Committee therefore offers this report to provide theological resources to help the Church to welcome, affirm, and celebrate the contribution of single people, and, on the basis of those resources, to suggest further action that might be taken to give effect to the intentions of Notice of Motion 2022/102.
- 1.3 Although this report was prompted by discussions in the Methodist Conference, the Faith and Order Committee is aware of conversations and concerns well beyond the life of the Methodist Church. On the one hand, the 2023 Final Report of the Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households, *Love Matters*, pays welcome attention to singleness as a significant part of contemporary society, affirming that 'single people must be valued at the heart of our society' and that 'Jesus' own singleness should ensure that the Church ... celebrates singleness ...'¹ On the other hand, the rise of the 'incel' ('involuntary celibate') subculture, with its deeply disturbing overtones of misogyny, misanthropy, and sexual violence, reinforces the need for the positive steps urged by the Notice of Motion.
- 1.4 In undertaking this work, the Faith and Order Committee realises that the terms 'single', 'family', and 'household' may be used in different ways and to denote different realities. The experience of being single may mean not married, or married and now separated, or divorced, or widowed. It may mean being in relationship with another person, and perhaps living with them. It may mean living in a one-person household, or sharing a home with others, or living in a community. There may be children. A narrow legal definition, simply reflecting marital condition, ignores the divorced and the widowed, and neglects people who are partnered or cohabiting, but not married. Whether legally or socially defined, moreover, singleness, is not synonymous with solitude, nor with celibacy, and it may include parenthood. The first step in welcoming, affirming, and celebrating the presence and contribution of single people in the Church's life, therefore, is to be careful and respectful in listening and in speaking, so that the experience of each person is honoured. The following sections, offering resources from the Bible and from Methodist history, demonstrate that diversity in practice and

1 *Love Matters. Summary Report of the Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households (2023)*, 17. See also the full version of the *Report*, 48-51. The assumption of Jesus's singleness, it should be noted, rests on an argument from silence – there is no evidence either way in the New Testament.

17. Singleness

experience is not unique to the twenty-first century and that the witnesses of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience speak against simplistic binaries.

2. Theological Resources: Biblical Insights

- 2.1 A complete survey of all the biblical material that may be relevant would be beyond the scope of this report. One overarching truth that is proclaimed in the Bible is God's all-encompassing love for all people no matter what may be their circumstances (John 3:16; Galatians 3:28). This is central to the Gospel, and to our faith.
- 2.2 There are many stories in the Old Testament that centre round the imperative of marriage for the continuance of the family line (Genesis 28:2). The narratives of barrenness underscore the social pressure to perpetuate one's family memory and kinship (Genesis 11:30; 25:21; 29:31). Remaining single under the kinship system in ancient Israel would have been seen as a social tragedy and in many ways similar to the tragedy of being barren (Judges 11:37-38) and one's name no longer being remembered (Jeremiah 11:19; 16:1-4).
- 2.3 Hosea's marriage to Gomer (Hosea chapters 1-3) has been hotly debated. It may or may not have been an acted parable to describe God's relationship with Israel. It certainly shows that marriage can lead to pain and distress. Jeremiah is forbidden from marrying (Jeremiah 16:1-9) and Ezekiel is forbidden from mourning his wife (Ezekiel 24:15-1), both indicating that the forthcoming disaster that will overtake Jerusalem will completely overshadow all other things. The traditional understanding of the marriage bond is rejected such is the new and terrible situation. It is the horror of the political and military situation that makes sense of this profound departure from what was the norm. This example of the rejection of marriage in the face of an impending catastrophic situation may be a first inkling of some views expressed in the New Testament where relationships and life are seen against a background of expecting the end of the world at any moment.
- 2.4 A different insight may be gained from Ruth. Here is a narrative that has many layers of meaning to be uncovered. It tells of the ever-present dangers of harvest failure and famine, when the plight of the childless widow was parlous in the extreme. Ruth tells, among other things, of how two widows who must fend for themselves tackled the problem of survival.
- 2.5 In the New Testament, the Gospel proclaims a radically new way of living 'in Christ'. There is an expectation of the imminent return of Christ and Acts 2:45²

2 Acts 2:44-45 (NRSV) reads 'All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.'

provides an insight into a church development that is usually understood as reflecting a very early response to this belief. Here is a way in which the physical needs of the congregation might be met whilst awaiting the eschaton. It provides for those who have rejected conventional ties in order to devote themselves wholly to the work of the Gospel. Paul may be advocating this way of living in order to serve the Lord in 1 Corinthians 7.

If it is the case that widows and unmarried women in the first century must rely on their male family members for sustenance, Paul's suggestion that it is better to remain single in order to serve the Lord requires a new sort of family to provide the necessary physical and emotional support, especially in the case where there have been rifts caused by the new faith – an inclusive family of Christian believers is needed.

- 2.6 According to Mark's Gospel in particular, at the very beginning of his ministry Jesus called Simon, Andrew, James and John to leave everything behind and follow him (Mark 1:16-20). They were all four fishermen, and Simon, at any rate was married (Mark 1:30). The break was sudden if not to say brutal. From now onwards they would follow Jesus. The social ramifications are not discussed, but a few chapters later (Mark 3:31-35) Jesus rejects the earthly family ties that were so important then as they still are now. Human families cannot match the importance of the new family, the family of those who do the will of God. 'Looking at those who sat around him, Jesus said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.'" (Mark 3:34-35). Even in New Testament times, the Gospel turns upside down traditional values and support networks. The family of Jesus is defined by loyalty to the will of God rather than human relations.
- 2.7 The Bible affords different examples of the significance of singleness and marriage. The eschatological perspective found in the New Testament radically reshapes all human relationships. The Biblical material underlines the view that we are all one in Christ Jesus, whatever our human differences of race, gender, or marital state. We all belong together, include each other, support each other, and offer our own unique service to the Gospel.

3. Theological Resources: Methodist History

- 3.1 Methodists are often tempted to step straight from the New Testament to the Evangelical Revival, overlooking the seventeen hundred years of Christian history which separate the Early Church from the Wesleys. Before focusing on insights from Methodist history, it is important to note, therefore, that church history does not offer a simple template for households and relationships. At different

17. Singleness

times the church has celebrated and affirmed the chosen solitude of hermits and anchorites, the single life lived in close community of the monastic tradition, a celibate priesthood, the ministry of widows, and the mutual responsibilities and obligations of an extended family or household.

- 3.2 The Wesleys' Methodism developed in a society where the most common household arrangement was for a house to be occupied by one married couple, with or without children. People married relatively late – couples did not generally marry until they could afford to set up home – and for in-laws or members of the wider family to live in (as Susanna Wesley did with various of her children in her widowhood after 1735) was unusual. Households were, however, likely to include domestic servants, apprentices, or lodgers.³
- 3.3 Although tradition implied a household headed by a man, in practice there was considerable variety: a sizeable number of households were headed by women – some widows, like Mary Vazeille (who later married John Wesley) and some unmarried, like Mary Bosanquet, who led a Christian community in her own house in Leytonstone from 1762 until her marriage to John Fletcher, vicar of Madeley, in 1781.⁴
- 3.4 Social historians estimate that around 10% of women in eighteenth-century England never married. Of couples marrying in the later 1730s, 24% would lose their partner within ten years and 56% in twenty-five years; only 15% would reach forty years of marriage.⁵ There were numerous examples, therefore, of widows and widowers, single-parent households, second and third marriages, and households with half- and step-siblings. Some people were able to afford a single lifestyle in their own home; other single people shared a home (like Sarah Crosby and Sarah Ryan, both separated from abusive husbands, who lived with Mary Bosanquet); some lived in other households as domestic servants or paid companions.
- 3.5 Until his marriage to the widowed Mary Vazeille in 1751, at the age of 48, John Wesley was single, but not living alone. He experienced life in the crowded Epworth Rectory, with his parents, many siblings, and servants. He also experienced the communal life of a boarding school (Charterhouse) and two Oxford colleges: Christ Church, as an undergraduate, and then, from 1726, Lincoln

3 Summary in Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 159. Compare Penelope J Corfield, *The Georgians* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2022), 73-6.

4 Mary Bosanquet Fletcher continued to head the household at Madeley after John Fletcher's death in 1785.

5 Michael Anderson, 'The Social Implications of Demographic Change', in F M L Thompson (ed), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, ii (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), 29.

College, where Wesley was one of a small group of single, celibate, resident male Fellows.⁶ For much of his adult life, before and after his marriage, Wesley sustained close relationships with significant women; his marriage, on the other hand, declined into *de facto* separation long before Mary's death in 1781. Meanwhile Charles Wesley found a successful and happy partnership with Sarah Gwynne: they married in 1749, whereupon Charles ceased the life of an itinerant preacher and settled first in Bristol and then in London.

- 3.6 The structure of the Wesleys' Methodism offered groups and activities for all ages and stages of life. In the early Band Societies, men and women, married and single people, met separately.⁷ Society meetings were mixed, but Wesley strongly advocated segregated seating.⁸ The exemplary lives depicted in the *Arminian Magazine* included the single,⁹ the married,¹⁰ the widowed, the old and the young. The Wesleys did not promote a constraining template of social organisation, but rather an aspiration of holiness for all.
- 3.7 The years of British Methodism's greatest numerical expansion – and division into half-a-dozen competing denominations – between 1790 and 1860 coincided with a new cult of domesticity, characterised by the idealisation of motherhood.¹¹ Social historians have used Coventry Patmore's poem *The Angel in the House* (1854) to express and debate this image, which meshed with an emphasis on gentility or respectability in social relationships. Middle-class norms of 'family' affected working-class households as well, through example, education, and legislation. It is important to note, however, that lifestyles and household patterns remained diverse. Live-in apprenticeships declined through the nineteenth century, and census records show fewer 'farm servants' living with their employers. Growing numbers of single young people migrated to the cities to work in shops and offices, sometimes with supervised communal accommodation provided.¹² Conversely, many lower middle-class households could afford to employ one live-in domestic servant, almost invariably a young, single woman.

6 The college statutes, in common with other Oxbridge colleges, required Fellows to be unmarried; Wesley had to relinquish his Fellowship on his marriage.

7 John Lawson, 'The People called Methodists: Our Discipline', in Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (eds), *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, i (London: Epworth Press, 1965), 191.

8 Wesley to John Valton, 9 April 1781, in John Telford (ed.), *The Letters of John Wesley*, (London: Epworth Press, 1931), vii, 57.

9 For example, John Moon, 'An Account of the Death of Jane Nancarrow', *Arminian Magazine* xiii, April and May 1790, 185-93 and 240-6.

10 D Jackson, 'An Account of Mrs Elizabeth Mather', *Arminian Magazine* xiii, December 1790, 646-50.

11 Leonore Davidoff, 'The family in Britain', in Thompson, *Cambridge Social History of Britain*, ii, 84.

12 For example, the Oxford drapers Charles Badcock and Co provided onsite accommodation for single shop assistants.

17. Singleness

- 3.8 Methodism shared in the Victorian idealisation of 'home'.¹³ Like other Christians, however, Methodists were concerned for the welfare of single young people, supporting and emulating the work of the YMCA and YWCA in providing safe places for social and educational activities. The Wesley Guild, launched in 1896, was intended to reach younger, single people; other branches of Methodism used the inter-denominational Christian Endeavour movement for the same purpose.¹⁴ These concerns and structures continued into the twentieth century. Gender-specific groups like Sisterhoods and Brotherhoods offered opportunities for single and married people to meet and socialise, while the burgeoning Sunday School movement relied heavily on women – many young and single – as teachers.¹⁵ An increase in the number of candidates for the ministry enabled the different Connexions to insist on a rule of singleness for initial training and probation, but the financial implications of inviting a married minister with a family inclined some circuits to prefer a mixed staff team, including a single minister, often living in lodgings.¹⁶ The deaconess movement modelled and celebrated the ministry of single women, weaving this work into the heroic narrative of Methodist urban mission.¹⁷
- 3.9 Twentieth-century social developments defy easy summary, but it may be observed that, while households in fact remained diverse – the family allowance campaigner Eleanor Rathbone pointed out that a quarter of households were people living alone and another quarter married couples with adult children – public discourse and public policy tended to focus on the nuclear family: for example, means tested benefits did not take account of wider kin ties in assessing need.¹⁸ Churches may have echoed or reinforced this by developing an emphasis on 'family church' and 'family services' in the decades after 1945 and with the shift from afternoon Sunday Schools to Sunday morning Junior

13 For the use of domestic and family tropes in evangelism, see John Kent, *Holding the Fort. Studies in Victorian Revivalism* (London: Epworth Press, 1978), 224-9.

14 The full title of Christian Endeavour was 'The Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour'.

15 See, for example, Charles Cashdollar, *A Spiritual Home. Life in British and American Reformed Congregations, 1830-1915* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State UP, 2000), 129.

16 In this period there was a standard minimum stipend for all ministers, with additional allowances for spouse and each child.

17 The standard history of the Wesley Deaconess Order is E Dorothy Graham, *Saved to Serve. The Story of the Wesley Deaconess Order, 1890-1978* (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House, 2002). See also Ellen Ross, 'St Francis in Soho: Emmeline Pethick, Mary Neal, the West London Wesleyan Mission, and the Allure of "Simple Living" in the 1890s', *Church History* 83.4 (December 2014), 843-83.

18 Davidoff, 'The family in Britain', 126-7. For Rathbone and the 1945 Family Allowances Act, see Susan Pedersen, *Eleanor Rathbone and the Politics of Conscience* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2004), 362-8.

Church from the 1960s.¹⁹ At a time of steep numerical decline in membership and congregations, it is, sadly, far too common to hear calls for 'young families' to rescue the church.

- 3.10 At the risk of simplifying a complicated picture, an overview of the history of singleness in British society and in Methodism since the time of the Wesleys might be that the experience and reality of relationships has been much more diverse and more nuanced than has often been assumed by policymakers and commentators in State and Church. Single people, whether single by choice or circumstance, for one or more stages of life, or lifelong, have been integral to the total community of the Church, even when this has not been fully recognised.

4. Recommendations and Practical Guidance

- 4.1 The Committee invites the Conference to explore the synergy between welcoming, affirming, and celebrating the presence and contribution of single people in the church's life and the theological foundations and emphases of the Strategy for Justice, Dignity, and Solidarity, adopted by the Conference in 2021. The Committee believes that the experience of single people offers a test case for the commitment of the JDS strategy to implement 'transformational change' on the basis that 'all people' are treated 'justly and with dignity across the breadth of the Methodist Church.'²⁰
- 4.2 The Committee believes that any revisions to the *Revised Common Lectionary* or to the *Methodist Worship Book* should pay careful attention to the affirmation and celebration of singleness in the selection of texts and the language of liturgy.
- 4.3 The Committee suggests that Local Churches might:
- a) Reflect on who is single within congregations:
 - Think about different forms of singleness and differing needs (never married, divorced, widowed, separated, those for whom singleness is vocational etc).
 - Each person will have their own needs and experience of singleness. As always, we need to be looking at the whole person, loved and valued children of God.

19 See, for instance, Ian Jones, *The Local Church and Generational Change in Birmingham, 1945-2000* (Woodbridge: Boydell, for the Royal Historical Society, 2012), 73-96. On Sunday Schools, see Philip B Cliff, *The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement in England, 1780-1980* (Redhill: NCEC, 1986).

20 *Strategy for Justice, Dignity, and Solidarity*, Conference Agenda 2021, 753-4.

17. Singleness

- Always seek to avoid unhelpful assumptions about the circumstances and experiences of others.
- b) Reflect on inclusion:
 - How are those who are single welcomed into your congregation?
 - Are single people included in the social life of the Church?
 - What does it mean to move beyond welcoming single people to their full belonging and participation?
- c) Reflect on language:
 - What messages are we giving out in our publications, through our social and other media, through posters on our walls, our newsletters, and other communications?
 - How is the word 'family' used within the church?
 - What messages about relationships are preached upon?
 - Are there sometimes unhelpful assumptions made of a 'normative' position in our language? How might these be countered?
- d) Reflect on leadership:
 - How is the demographic of your congregation reflected in your leadership?
 - How might everyone be encouraged to identify their gifts and serve God in the church?
- e) Be attentive to events that may be more difficult for those who are single:
 - Mothering Sunday;
 - Father's Day;
 - 'Family services';
 - Parenting or Marriage courses.

***RESOLUTIONS

17/1. The Conference receives the Report.

17/2. The Conference commends the Report for study and comment and invites responses to be sent to the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee by 1 September 2025.

18. Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr Mark Rowland, Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee rowlandm@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Resolution | 18/1. The Conference receives the Report. |

Summary of content and impact

| | |
|--|---|
| Subject and aims | To explore remaining issues identified in <i>Methodist Membership in the 21st Century</i> |
| Main points | Space and Place Membership and Connexionalism Membership and Governance Membership and Accountability Multiple Membership |
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | Called to Love and Praise Our Calling God for All Methodist Membership in the 21st Century |

1. Introduction

1.1. The Methodist Conference of 2022 received the report *Methodist Membership in the 21st century*,¹ which identified some further matters relating to the Methodist understanding and practice of membership. The report notes:

3.11. Three particular contexts in which challenges to membership have arisen are local ecumenical partnerships, new places for new people or fresh expression or pioneer communities, and online communities. These raise some specific questions, not least questions about how such communities relate to Methodist polity. There are particular questions about understandings of 'local' and the importance of geographical place, and about how the particular community relates to the wider church (who makes decisions about admission to membership if there is no church council, for example). As expressions of ecclesial life develop still further it will be important to find ways of expressing the essence of belonging in

¹ https://www.methodist.org.uk/documents/11832/conf-22-pc-29-membership_T1gZ2mc.pdf

18. Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues

Methodism. Some of these questions are long standing whilst others have emerged more recently, but they all merit further attention.

- 1.2. The Methodist Conference of 2022 directed that the Faith and Order Committee undertake further work in relation to paragraph 5.3; resolution 29/3 of the report:

...that the Faith and Order Committee consider some of the questions requiring attention, including those questions around ecclesial identity and the extent to which membership is essential to Methodist identity, especially in relation to ecumenical, online and New Places for New People contexts as identified in 3.11 above; and how different understandings of membership in Methodist Churches around the world impact on those who also wish to belong to the Methodist Church in Britain, for example through the Fellowship Groups.

- 1.3. The committee has gathered information and perspectives from the groups identified in the report and reflected on common issues emerging within these areas of the Methodist Church's ministry. The committee also consulted the [then] assistant Ecumenical Officer in the Connexional Team, members of the Evangelism and Growth team, and representatives from the Cultural and Linguistic Fellowship groups.²

2. Considering space and place

- 2.1. *Methodist Membership in the 21st Century* sought to offer a Methodist understanding of membership, both theologically and practically. However, the contemporary lived experience of Methodist people, particularly surrounding differing understanding of ecclesial identity, within the Methodist Church of Great Britain (MCB) and ecumenically, presents some complications. To offer a way of interrogating these perspectives further, an understanding of space and place is offered.
- 2.2. The influence of the Fresh Expressions (FX) movement and New Places for New People (NPNP) over the last twenty years has expanded the ways that Methodists understand church and the formation of sacred space in which churches gather. Methodist church communities may gather in traditional church buildings, a variety of rented accommodation, and online. This is a significant departure from much of our recent history which has been focused on churches as those groups who meet for worship and engage in mission with a dedicated church building which often bears their name. Those who were part of the Methodist movement

2 This is the language used connexionally for such groups.

18. Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues

in its early years would undoubtedly have a different perspective on space and place from those who experience the contemporary Methodist Church. Lester Ruth notes that the basic building blocks of early Methodism were the class meeting and the band meeting.³ Class and band meetings were often private and could take place in a variety of spaces, including homes. The life of “the community was the message”⁴ of the movement, and as such it did not rely on particular spaces to embody that message, as later may have become the case. The early Methodist understanding of sacred space may, therefore, have been shaped by these practices which lead to a wider appreciation of ‘place’ as a way of sustaining identity and spiritual formation.

- 2.3. FX and NPMP, while not the only influences, have caused Methodists to ask questions about how they nurture growth in holiness, how members support one another’s discipleship and how membership fits into these patterns. Specifically, how does a church create a place in which membership is a vital and dynamic expression of faith?
- 2.4. It is important to note that space and place are not the same. Space may be understood as a location in which people interact, which Cresswell calls “the basic coordinates for human life”⁵ - in the context of church, the basic coordinates in which community is formed. Place, however, is not necessarily physical or visible but “become[s] vividly real through dramatization,⁶ it allows a way of “seeing and knowing the world”⁷ through community, which is created though experience within a particular space or spaces.
- 2.5. For many churches the fabric of their building is important, but Katie Day⁸ points out “bricks and mortar, doors and windows, steeples and altars are not neutral or random elements of a shelter for a worshipping people. Rather all these elements are dynamically related to the religious identity of the faith community”. Therefore, the fabric, or space, of a building is not enough alone to create a sense of place. A church community may consider certain spaces as sacred because of the nature of the experience there, rather than simply its fabric. The designating of spaces as sacred can happen unconsciously as community life and faith is lived in context.

3 Ruth, L (2005). *Early Methodist Life and Spirituality*. Abingdon Press.

4 Richey, R in: Ruth, L (2005). *Early Methodist Life and Spirituality*. Abingdon Press. p.259

5 Cresswell, T (2015). *Place: An Introduction*. Wiley Blackwell. p.16

6 Tuan, Y-F (1977). *Space and Place*. University of Minnesota Press. p.178

7 Cresswell, T (2015). *Place: An Introduction*. Wiley Blackwell. P.18

8 Day, K (2014). *Faith on the Avenue*. Oxford University Press. p.41

18. Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues

2.6. The importance of place to faith communities is explored by John Inge,⁹ who suggests that western intellectual tradition has sought to downgrade the importance of place in recent history, through the processes of colonialisation and empire, which has often dehumanised people whose place is destroyed or desecrated. Inge calls for a reimagining of the importance of place in the Christian tradition and claims that a sacramental experience of faith can explain how church spaces are perceived to be “special”. He argues that the place in which an individual has a sacramental encounter holds a significance for them.¹⁰ A space becomes holy when an individual’s experience or their perception of it, moves them to name it as a place where an encounter with the ‘other’ could take place. Space that is understood as ‘special’ may be thus considered holy. However, the spaces that may be considered special or holy, are not limited to traditional church buildings, and indeed the online space may be considered as a place in which faith is experienced sacramentally. It is the encounter with God that for Inge makes all the difference in moving from space to place, the unique interaction in a context of people, space and God allows the visible signs of grace to communicate the invisible grace in a sacramental way. In the Methodist Church in Britain, there is a diverse appreciation of sacred place, and what it means to belong to a community who find their home there, which naturally leads to different understanding of where membership should properly be vested.

2.7. Reflecting on a biblical understanding of place, Walter Brueggemann notes:

Place is a space which has historical meanings, where some things have happened that are now remembered and which provide continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken that have established identity, defined vocation, and envisioned destiny. Place is a space in which vows have been exchanged, promises have been made, and demands have been issued. Place is indeed a protest against the uncompromising pursuit of space. It is a declaration that our humanness cannot be found in escape, detachment, absence of commitment and undefined freedom.¹¹

2.8. Brueggemann recognises that people form connections both consciously and subconsciously, and the value they give to certain events and experiences play a

9 Inge, J (2003). *A Christian Theology of Place*. Ashgate.

10 Inge, J (2003) pp. 89 - 90

11 Brueggemann, W (1977). *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise and Challenge in Biblical Faith*. Fortress Press. pp. 4 - 5

18. Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues

part in forming a sense of place, as Inge¹² notes “human experience is shaped by place”.

- 2.9. This leads to the understanding that a sense of place helps people understand the world in which they live. “There is no pure seeing” comments Hjalmarson,¹³ because “seeing” is grounded on experience and the interpretation of it, which is always done in and through place. A sense of place allows individuals and communities to know themselves better, to have a greater clarity on the nature and purpose of the community itself.
- 2.10. The experience of faith in community is more than words, or certain liturgical practices in a particular space; it is revealed in the lived experience of that community. The ecclesial spaces in which people live and worship are a complex synthesis of social relationships, physical realities, and sacramental experience from which place is created as sacred.
- 2.11. The current context of the Methodist Church in Britain means that we live with different expressions of Methodism and church life, all of which interpret space in different ways. It is not enough to suggest that only a church building can be a sacred place for individuals or communities rather it is necessary to understand the way sacred places are created and sustained in community. This allows us to consider how membership may be properly expressed and celebrated as a sign and symbol of faith and growth in holiness, both as part of a local emplaced community (for instance NPNP or Cultural and Linguistic Fellowship groups) and the wider Methodist Community.

3. Membership and Connexionalism

- 3.1. Membership in the Methodist Church of Great Britain is an expression of faith and discipleship. To be a member is to live as Christ’s disciples in all aspects of life; membership in the Methodist Church is therefore a key part of Methodist identity. The *Deed of Union* expressed membership as a covenantal relationship which is entered freely into by God’s grace which does not create a contract or other legal relations.¹⁴
- 3.2. To be a member has been reaffirmed in a number of previous reports including *Methodist Membership in the 21st century*¹⁵ which outlines the importance

12 Inge, J (2003) p. ix

13 Hjalmarson, L (2015). *No Home Like Place*. Urban Loft Publishers. p.132

14 *Deed of Union*, Clause 9 (b)

15 https://www.methodist.org.uk/documents/11832/conf-22-pc-29-membership_T1gZ2mc.pdf

18. Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues

of membership. This is highlighted in the purpose of membership which is expressed as a group of people meeting to 'pray together, receive a word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love'.¹⁶ To pray, worship and be accountable for one's faith are key elements of Methodist membership.

- 3.3. In thinking about these *Rules of the Society* today, we recognise that the area that has less emphasis now than in the earliest days of Methodism is regarding 'watching over one another in love.' To embody *Our Calling*¹⁷ is to live out the principles of membership in the whole of life.
- 3.4. Part of Methodist identity is expressed through the connexional principle of belonging, mutuality, and inter-dependence. The Conference report, *The Gift of Connexionalism*¹⁸ is a reminder that connexionalism is fundamental to the way Methodists understand Church. Membership should therefore be considered an expression of connexionalism.
- 3.5. A sense of belonging may vary between New Places for New People (NPNP) contexts and that of 'traditional' Local Church as each expression of NPNP is individual and its articulation of belonging may also vary. As many NPNP are in their infancy, any consideration of how each group relates to wider Methodism may not yet be fully defined. There may be more of an emphasis on attendance which may then have an impact on membership in the future. The understanding of membership as people meeting together to 'work out their salvation'¹⁹ remains important although it is recognised that, for some, there is little interest in articulating a sense of belonging to the wider Methodist Church.²⁰ This can be addressed through the local leadership promoting membership as an expression of faith and discipleship and encouraging a culture of membership within each group. There may be issues around polity which arise at the early stage of NPNP which are beyond the scope of this report.
- 3.6. We acknowledge that Cultural and Linguistic Fellowships often have a strong sense of belonging within their groupings. For most, the expectation is that their Methodist membership would be held within one of the churches of the local Circuit, with the Fellowship acting as an additional space for worship and

16 *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of The Methodist Church*, Volume 1, (2014) p.66

17 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/our-calling/>

18 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-2017-37-The-Gift-of-Connexionalism-in-the-21st-Century.pdf>

19 *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of The Methodist Church*, Volume 1, (2014) p.66

20 *Methodist Membership in the 21st Century*, 2022, par. 3.5

18. Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues

discipleship. Connexionalism is expressed through the 'multiple belongings' of each group.

- 3.7. When being received into membership, the liturgy of the *Methodist Worship Book* emphasises that people are being welcomed into membership 'of the Methodist Church, and of the church in this place.'²¹ This places a dual emphasis on a relationship of belonging with the wider church of the Methodist Church in Britain as well as the local congregation. The promotion of membership as an expression of discipleship and spiritual growth within a broader context of the connexional church is essential. Where new ecclesial communities are being established consideration should be given as to how they are embedded within, and relate to, the Circuit, District and Connexion, and therefore how connexionalism is lived and experienced within those communities.
- 3.8. Where a person is received into membership who has not previously been baptised, then this sacrament is administered. For some, a barrier to membership can be that they feel they have already been welcomed into the catholic Church through baptism, and therefore do not feel the need for another rite of initiation in the Methodist Church. This perhaps highlights a misunderstanding that exists concerning membership in the Methodist Church, which, while connected to Christian initiation, is an expression of discipleship and commitment to the Methodist Church and the church in a particular place. Consideration in conversations with people regarding membership may, in certain situations, need additional emphasis on the distinctive nature of membership in a Methodist context, while maintaining a strong emphasis baptism as a mark of the church catholic.
- 3.9. The articulation of membership in a (predominantly) online church raises some questions, primarily in relation to issues of governance within such communities who would seek to function as a church under Methodist Standing Orders, these issues are explored in more detail in the next section of this report. The articulation of membership in a (predominantly) online church will need reflection as part of the ongoing work in that area, including the way membership is expressed as being both 'local' and connexional.

4. Membership and Governance

- 4.1. In this report, we understand governance as referring to the framework as set out in the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church for

21 *Methodist Worship Book*, 1999, Service of Confirmation and Reception, p.100

18. Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues

managing the institution of the church, in this report specifically at a local church level. The governance model the church operates under identifies how decisions are made, and by whom. The Methodist understanding of representative selection²² offers a theological rationale for how such decisions are made and enacted. Membership in the Methodist Church allows people the opportunity to participate in the responsibility of being church, both connexionally and locally, in their place, serving the church in this way is an expression of spiritual commitment. Those who are members of a Local Church have responsibilities in the governance of that church. The Church Council 'has authority and oversight over the whole area of the ministry of the church'.²³ In small churches, all members willing and able to serve form the Church Council. In larger churches members elect most members of the Church Council in the General Church Meeting.²⁴

- 4.2. The number of members within a church is one of the key measures used, including the need to record the number of members in each church and Circuit, on stationing profiles. Ensuring a consistently accurate number of members for each church is therefore important in supporting ministerial stationing within our current stationing procedures. If this understanding is followed, then it may also be important to know the number of members in NPNP and Cultural and Linguistic Fellowship Groups to help understand the effective deployment of resources (including ordained ministers). Promoting membership within new ecclesial communities is important in ensuring that these churches are nurtured within the life of the Circuit and that proper provision is made for them within stationing profiles. Continuing to explore the place of these groups in the Methodist Church in Britain will assist in enabling this.
- 4.3. *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church* is clear that in setting the circuit assessment, the Circuit Meeting 'should take into account the needs and ability to pay of each Local Church and not merely their respective membership figures'.²⁵ The implicit link here, however, is that membership figures would play a part in the setting of the assessment, while other factors should also be considered. Each circuit context will differ but encouraging Circuits to share their approach with one another could be beneficial in considering how the

22 *Deed of Union*, Clause 4: The Methodist Church holds the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and consequently believes that no priesthood exists which belongs exclusively to a particular order or class of persons but in the exercise of its corporate life and worship special qualifications for the discharge of special duties are required and thus the principle of representative selection is recognised.

23 SO 603

24 SOs 610 and 632.

25 SO 515(3)

18. Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues

assessment is set. For NPNP, Fellowship groups and potentially predominantly online churches, consideration needs to be given as to how this is expressed and what is appropriate within the context of a circuit assessment. However, as a range of factors should be considered, this should act as an encouragement to churches to welcome people into membership as an expression of faith and discipleship, and not primarily as a way of understanding financial commitment and capacity.

- 4.4. The 'locally resident' requirements for Methodist membership of SO 605/605A do deserve some consideration in the current context of the Methodist Church in Britain's life. Part of this might require that a Methodist understanding of 'local' should be reviewed in the online context, and in relation to a range of church and community groupings. The nature of 'my local church' is challenged by online ecclesial groups and the question of how and where we hold this in our practice and doctrine. Consideration of these and related questions is part of the ongoing online church work.
- 4.5. When considering the current landscape of the church, we recognise that many of the questions relating to our understanding of membership can only be properly addressed when some of the online issues are resolved, therefore, this will likely shape the direction of travel.

5. Multiple Memberships

- 5.1. Many Methodists are members of several organisations as well as churches but there does not appear to be any readily available data on how many people are members of more than one Church. The membership model which we have inherited implies that Christians will normally be members of just one local congregation. A Local Church may 'transfer' members when people move home including when they move to or from another denomination, when this receiving denomination has a similar concept of membership. Otherwise, we would 'commend' them to their new church community. The question of transfer is still perhaps somewhat unclear. SO 052(1) provides for 'members in good standing of any recognised Christian communion' to be 'received as members in accordance with clause 8(b)²⁶ of the Deed of Union', how this is worked out in practice may vary from context to context.

26 *Deed of Union 8(b)*: a candidate for membership requires to be approved by the Church Council in accordance with Standing Orders and shall then at the earliest opportunity be publicly received as a member of the Methodist Church and (if not already confirmed) confirmed at a service conducted by a presbyter in the presence of the Local Church and including the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

18. Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues

- 5.2. Those away from home studying were expected to maintain membership of their 'home' church rather than transferring. However, it is not clear if this is still the case. Until quite recently it was expected that members of other (overseas) Methodist Churches and Connexions would transfer their membership when they move to Britain; irrespective of whether that move is envisaged as temporary or permanent. Today, we recognise that such people often wish to maintain a clear link with their 'home' church and have for several years accepted that such practice is acceptable. This is the context in which the Deed of Union understands dual membership.²⁷
- 5.3. In Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) and other situations of ecumenical cooperation, people may be made members of all the participating denominations. What is less well documented is those who choose to be members of more than one local congregation. Examples of this may include retired ministers of other denominations who have settled in a Methodist congregation after retirement and those who, perhaps after a church closure, settle in a congregation of a different tradition but retain Methodist membership. Membership of a Church of England (CofE) electoral roll is not equivalent to what most non-conformist Christians consider to be 'membership', but it does confer similar constitutional rights and is treated as equivalent in the model LEP constitution. The CofE neither requires nor expects those applying for membership of the electoral roll to renounce any other allegiance, indeed the wording on the relevant form²⁸ allows for multiple membership.

6. Membership and Accountability

- 6.1. The concept of mutual accountability among the people of God, or its associated issues is not unique to Methodism. Members of early Christian communities engaged in a variety of gatherings and the epistles, especially those to Corinth, encourage followers to understand ecclesiology of their church community in terms of relationship between God, self, and others. The Johannine writings indicate a move from this practice of mutual sharing and accountability to one of suspicion and isolation in less than one hundred years.
- 6.2. While membership of the Society of the 'People Called Methodists' depended on a desire to be saved, ongoing evidence of growth in faith and holiness was

²⁷ *Deed of Union* 8e(ii)

²⁸ The declaration reads: 'I am a member in good standing of a Church (not in communion with the Church of England) which subscribes to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and also declare myself to be a member of the Church of England and I have habitually attended public worship in the parish during the period of six months prior to enrolment.'

18. Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues

required to retain it. Wesley's rigour in declaring those who did not show the required commitment as having 'ceased to meet' might mean a person was cast adrift from that particular small community, it did not, however, impact their ability to attend and participate in worship at the Parish Church.

- 6.3. As early as 1889, a Wesleyan Conference report instructed ministers not to use non-attendance at class meetings as a sole reason to remove an individual from membership if they retained their sincere desire to be saved.²⁹ This implies a shift in attitude away from small group fellowship and towards an expression of church that was more recognisable as such in that societal context.
- 6.4. In 1938 reports submitted to the Methodist Conference state that, in many cases, 'membership has become a haphazard and all but meaningless practice',³⁰ and that the previous two generations have seen a marked decline in the methods used by the early Methodists to learn about their faith; namely: family religion, scriptural familiarity, fellowship at Class Meetings and sharing of the Word. It states that the spiritual loss as a result has been 'incalculable'.³¹ The 1938 Report on Junior Membership bemoaned a 'distressing ignorance' amongst young people and mature adult members alike as to the basic premises of their faith and requested that people were offered better preparation for membership.³²
- 6.5. *Our Calling* is clear that Methodists are called to live out their discipleship through worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism. Those received into membership commit to worship (including attendance at Holy Communion) and service, daily discipleship, and Christian witness. In practice however, it is not clear if each of these aspects considered equally important, notions of 'commitment' among both members and adherents within the Methodist Church in Britain are plainly subjective. The Deed of Union is clear that any person who is absent from the fellowship for a prolonged period should be removed from the membership roll and cease to be a member of the Methodist Church. It does not, however, imply that disregarding any other area of *Our Calling* should be considered grounds for the removal of a person from membership. The Methodist focus on 'good order' has been key to the nurturing and development of faith, with disciplined discipleship being an important theological emphasis.

29 *Called to Love and Praise*, 4.3.5

30 *Agenda of the Methodist Conference*, 1938 p 359

31 *The Report of the Special Committee Appointed to Consider the Conditions of Membership in the Methodist Church*, Methodist Conference 1938.

32 *Report on Junior Membership: The Minutes of Conference*, 1938, pp 367-368

18. Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues

- 6.6. Prior to 1992 a discrepancy existed between the liturgy of the Membership Service and the Deed of Union. The issues concerned the question of on whose authority did someone become a member: the congregation, following the approval of the Church Council (MSB) or solely Church Council (DoU)?³³ The resolution led to an amendment of the DoU which indicates an emphasis on relationship rather than process. While such commitment is reaffirmed during the Covenant Service,³⁴ during which we hold ourselves accountable to God in the presence of one another, these services are attended by members and adherents alike.
- 6.7. Methodist structures allow for, and encourage emphases and activities which are, albeit not exclusively, seen in by newer, growing churches, namely pastoral networking, and small groups. While these structures were widely responsible for growth in the Methodist movement, they can appear to be under-valued and largely forgotten in contemporary times. Methodism, however, remains a network of interconnected churches supporting, challenging, and working alongside one another for the good of God's Kingdom. The re-creation of house groups or class meetings is, it might be said, merely an extension of connexionalism and an ideal environment for members to learn and grow in faith and in the expression of 'our calling'.
- 6.8. While contemporary Methodism maintains that becoming a member should be open to all, irrespective of their personal history there is an expectation that certain standards of behaviour are maintained as a member. It is important to consider what resources we offer for those who want to explore what it means to be a member in terms of the ongoing commitment, not simply to the point of decision. Research suggests that although some people leave church before the age of twenty due to a failure to understand church process and teaching, nearly twice as many did so because it was unchallenging and simplified.³⁵ It is perhaps the case that we may tend to underestimate the interest that those who are either outside or on the fringes of the church have in exploring commitment.
- 6.9. *Called to Love and Praise* reminds us that the once familiar patterns of family life have altered drastically, with life for many becoming uncertain and fragmented. Substantial changes in the economy and a growth in social mobility have led to people becoming too reluctant to define themselves by the company they work

33 Membership: Recognition, Reception and Confirmation (1992), Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order: Volume Two 1984-2000: Part One: p 115 - 116

34 *The Methodist Worship Book*, Methodist Publishing House: Peterborough pp 287-290

35 Richter, P, and Francis, L, (1998) *Gone but not Forgotten: Church Leaving and Returning*, Darton, Longman and Todd: London p. 62-64

18. Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues

for or the job that they do. Assisting people to balance the commitments of work, life, family, and church is a key task of any church. Perhaps what was once perceived as 'commitment' was the result of church-going being an expectation.

- 6.10. Membership is essential to our understanding and practice of connexionalism, as the global outworking of faith in a local context. However, misunderstandings of the connexional nature of the Methodist Church in Britain have perhaps led to membership being mistreated, and linked strongly to a functional ecclesiology rather than an expression of devotion. The 2023 Conference approved *A Methodist Way of Life* (MWOL) in accordance with the following understanding:
- (1) within the primary framework of *Our Calling and Called to Love and Praise*, an expression of our mission together as a Church: to be a movement of disciples who praise the triune God and respond to the Gospel through living out a common way of life in the world;
 - (2) a foundation for discipleship journeys and a creative pattern open to all people – Methodist members and spiritual explorers alike – to recognise and express the grace of God at work in their lives, and to hear God's challenge to them and to the entire world to be transformed by God's grace; and
 - (3) an effective framework through which to connect the diverse work of the Church in the world and to communicate it clearly to the world.³⁶
- 6.11. This shows that MWOL is intended to be a broader expression of discipleship which will include but not be limited to Methodist members. The Faith and Order Committee explored some of the issues recently and agreed that the commitments of MWOL are different than those made in reception into membership. The committee further recognised the way the *God for All* strategy seeks to embed MWOL in the life of the church which allows for helpful reflections on that which is shared in MWOL and Membership and that which differs.
- 6.12. The questions around Methodist membership and accountability present some significant issues for the church in terms of NPNP, Cultural and Linguistic Fellowship groups, and other new ecclesial communities. If the relationship to a church council is not clear – in terms of presence or representation, or a new community understands itself as a church with its own governance and direction, there may questions as to the creation of models which allow us to maintain

36 <https://d1yuutt686hf0i.cloudfront.net/media/documents/conf-23-pc-22-methodist-council-part-2.pdf>
p312

18. Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues

the expectations of our polity. It is not clear whether our current models of accountability expressly related to decisions about who may be a member can work appropriately in our current context. It may be that further work is needed to enable this accountability to be more clearly expressed. The Methodist Church should continue to reflect on how new ecclesial communities help us to shape and develop our understanding, rather than simply holding to an expectation that these new groups will conform to the current polity of the Methodist Church in Britain and its existing requirements of Local Church Councils and their work.

7. Concluding Considerations

- 7.1. The Faith and Order Committee recognises that in the current life of the Methodist Church we are often working with diverse understandings of 'church' which the Methodist Church has not previously encountered. The ecclesiology of emerging churches may challenge the way the Methodist Church has expressed itself to this point. Equally we recognise that each time the Conference has been asked to consider membership it has affirmed its significance and place in the theology and practice of the church. The context in which the church currently lives is asking for complicated questions to be resolved, as churches operate in a variety of models and modes, both online and offline. We have attempted to explore the further issues identified by the report *Methodist Membership in the 21st Century* here. As the life of the Methodist Church continues to develop and we continue to see new ecclesial communities challenge and inspire our practice and theology, we will need to continue to consider how to articulate our understanding of membership for new and changing contexts and to ensure that those exploring membership in these contexts are appropriately resourced.

***RESOLUTION

- 18/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**

19. Connexional Allowances Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | Ruby Beech, Chair of the Connexional Allowances Committee beechr@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Resolutions | 19/1. The Conference receives the Report. 19/2. The Conference adopts the Report and the recommendations in sections 1, 2 and 3. |

Summary of Content

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Subject and aims | The report covers the Committee's established portfolio of matters related to stipends, allowances and other financial provisions, grants made and its other activities. |
| Main points | Section 1 covers stipends, allowances above stipend and other allowances, fees, rates and expenses for 2024/2025. Section 2 reports on the funds and trusts managed by the Committee. Section 3 summarises other work and activities in which the Committee has been and will be involved. |

Summary of Impact

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Financial | Paragraphs 1.11 and 1.12, on stipends and allowances above stipend, impact Circuits and other employing bodies, though the figures have been published in advance for budget purposes. Paragraphs 1.25 and 1.26 on sabbaticals and computers in ministry impact Circuits and other employing bodies and again the figures have already been published. Paragraph 1.33 on the living wage impacts any body within the Church which employs lay people. |
|------------------|---|

The Connexional Allowances Committee's report to the 2024 Conference covers the customary update on stipends and allowances, includes progress reports on other work and activities in which the Committee has engaged, and is presented with the approval of the Methodist Council.

19. Connexional Allowances Committee

The report is divided into three sections, as follows.

1. Recommendations for stipends and allowances 2024/2025.
2. Report on Funds and Trusts within the Committee's remit.
3. Other matters of report from the Committee.

The Committee's new recommendations this year are **highlighted** in the text.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STIPENDS AND ALLOWANCES 2024/2025

- 1.1 The Committee makes the following recommendations, taking into account past resolutions of the Conference on Stipends and Allowances and data available from HM Government.

Standard stipend

- 1.2 The resolutions of the 2012 Conference fixed the stipend increase formula for the period until 31 August 2015 and were renewed for periods of three further years by the Conferences of 2015, 2018 and 2021. The formula is therefore due for review this year.
- 1.3 The 2015 report to the Conference noted that "The combination of the CPI and AWEI ensures that stipends keep pace with the cost of living over a period of time and that Circuits experience gradual, rather than sudden, increases in assessments. The Committee is aware that there is an inevitable time lag between the measures when agreed and at the time of implementation, but the benefit is that circuits and the wider Church can budget accurately, and in the long run, so long as the same formula is retained, stipends do keep pace with inflation."
- 1.4 The report went on to comment that "If there is a dramatic change in the UK economy before 2018, the Committee will review the position."
- 1.5 Those comments from 2015 remain very relevant today. There is no suggestion that moving away from an inflation based uplift for stipends is desired. Given this, the formula that is used is clear, simple, relatively well accepted and understood, and there has been no request for an alternative mechanism.
- 1.6 However, there has been unprecedented economic turmoil in recent years largely driven by the pandemic, Brexit, the invasion of Ukraine and government decisions. This has resulted in a significant rise in inflation and a cost of living crisis. Whilst ministers are not directly impacted by rising mortgage rates, inflation is a very real problem.

19. Connexional Allowances Committee

- 1.7 The lag between inflation occurring and it being reflected in the stipend is approximately 12 months. As a consequence, in 2022 a one-off cost of living payment of £1000 per minister was made and funded from the FSPD. This arguably closed the gap between the inflation present at that time and the uplift of 7.83% payable from September 2023.
- 1.8 The question then arises about how this situation would be handled in the future. The FSPD does not have unlimited funds and it is unlikely that a blanket cost of living payment could be afforded in future. Similarly, many circuit budgets are already being supported from non-recurrent sources of funding so unexpected increases in stipends may simply be unaffordable.
- 1.9 It is worth re-stating the current position:
- a. Ministers in financial difficulty are able to apply for support from the FSPD.
 - b. Individual Circuits are not permitted to implement cost of living payments to their ministers without sign off from the CAC (in order to maintain the connexional principle and in line with Standing Order 801).
- 1.10 Regardless of how cost of living crises may be handled in future, it is not clear that making a general change to the formula for stipend uplifts is required or desirable. Therefore, it is recommended that the current formula is retained and reviewed again in 2026/27.
- 1.11 Using the index numbers published in October 2023, the Consumer Price Index movement for the period September 2022 to September 2023 was +6.7% and the Average Weekly Earnings Index movement for the period August 2022 to August 2023 was +6.92%; the average of these is 6.81%. **In line with the stipend formula, the annual standard stipend for the year beginning 1 September 2024 is therefore increased by 6.81% to £31,020 (rounding up to the next highest figure divisible by 12, to give a monthly stipend of exactly £2,585).**

Additional allowances

- 1.12 **The following allowances are applied for ministers for 2024-25, in the light of the decisions taken by the 2021 Conference. Whilst it is anticipated that the percentages will apply for the foreseeable future, the amounts are for 2024-25, based on the standard stipend in paragraph 1.11.**

19. Connexional Allowances Committee

| Role, post or office held | % | £ |
|---|-------------|-----------------|
| The President of the Conference | 30 | 9306 |
| The Secretary of the Conference | 30 | 9306 |
| Connexional Secretary (see paragraph 1.13) | 25 | 7755 |
| Separated District Chair | 25 | 7755 |
| Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order | 25 | 7755 |
| Superintendent | 10 | 3102 |
| Principal of Training Institution | 25 | 7755 |
| All other ministers in appointments as defined in paragraph 1.15 of the annual report | 0, 10 or 20 | 0, 3102 or 6204 |

- 1.13 The “Connexional Secretary” category includes the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and, when the posts are held by ministers, the Connexional Secretary and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice.
- 1.14 “All other ministers” category includes ministers serving in the Connexional Team or stationed to appointments within the control of the Methodist Council, staff members of Training Institutions, and the Deputy Warden of the MDO. As per the decision of the 2018 Conference, these allowances will be allocated by the Remunerations Committee, having regard to the lay salary structure for such (or comparable) posts.
- 1.15 In addition to the above allowances related to roles, the Committee affirms that the allowances and other financial provisions agreed by the 2016 Conference based on location continue to apply. Following a review (see section 3 of this report) the additional allowance of 16% of stipend for all ministers stationed in the Shetland Islands, the Scilly Isles, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands has been increased to 22%.
- 1.16 The Committee advises that the Malta and Rome appointments continue to receive an uplift to reflect the devaluation of the pound sterling against the euro that occurred following the Brexit referendum. These situations will continue to be kept under review.
- 1.17 The Committee reminds Circuits that in line with Standing Order 801(1)(a) no discretionary local allowance can be paid without the prior authorisation of

19. Connexional Allowances Committee

the Committee. The Committee proposes that the Standing Order is amended to clarify that it also encompasses local allowances payable to ministers stationed in district appointments. Where there are special circumstances requiring the payment of a local allowance, these should be submitted to the Committee for consideration as a request with a reasoned statement. Payment of local allowances should not form part of stationing conversations unless the Committee has already approved the allowances in question. Where a departing minister is paid a local allowance, it should not be assumed that the incoming minister is automatically eligible for that same allowance; a new approval is required from the Committee. There remains a number of historic local allowances being paid and these will continue until the end of the minister's current appointment. Requests for new local allowances from September should be made by the end of the preceding April.

Relocation allowance

- 1.18 The Committee recommends that the maximum allowance payable by the receiving Circuit (or other responsible body) to ministers upon moving manse remains at £600. In the case of two ministers sharing the same manse, it is one payment of £800. It is clarified that this payment is in addition to the full cost of travel and removals, as defined in SO 528. Receipts must be provided – otherwise this is a taxable benefit. This amount will be reviewed in 2024/25.
- 1.19 The Committee affirms the decision of the 2015 Conference, through Notice of Motion 103, to the effect that this relocation allowance shall also apply to ministers (in appointments in the control of the Church) upon becoming supernumeraries. The costs shall be met from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons (FSPD), as are their removal costs. It is affirmed that this provision may be invoked once only, in situations (increasingly) where supernumerary ministers move and continue in active work before final retirement.
- 1.20 The Committee affirms that this provision applies to the widows or widowers of ministers who die in service upon their removal to their new home, in addition to the payment of their removal costs.

Travel allowances

- 1.21 The Committee continues to recommend that the maximum rates as prescribed by HMRC's 'approved mileage allowance payment scheme' (AMAP) be observed (or its equivalent in the relevant jurisdictions). If alternative mileage rates exceeding those allowed by the appropriate tax authority are paid locally then it is necessary for this income to be declared to the tax authority and it will give rise to a tax liability on the individual concerned. It is emphasised that this should be

19. Connexional Allowances Committee

regarded as a personal liability – involving the individual and the tax authority – and not require handling by the Church's officers, centrally or locally. Any changes to the approved rates will be considered by the Committee and presented to the Conference for approval before implementation, so as to avoid unexpected cost increases mid-year.

- 1.22 The Committee continues to remind the Methodist Church of our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint, and wishes to encourage people to use public transport and share cars wherever possible and use online meetings where appropriate.
- 1.23 The following travel expense rates will apply to ministers, supernumeraries, lay employees in churches, Circuits and Districts and lay volunteers (the non-UK jurisdictions are encouraged to use the rates published by their relevant institutions, where available):

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Car: up to 10,000 miles | 45p per mile |
| over 10,000 miles | 25p per mile |
| Motorcycle | 24p per mile |
| Bicycle | 20p per mile |
| Additional passenger rate | 5p per mile |

- 1.24 The Committee recommends that the travel grant (taxable) which can be claimed by ministers during a time of sickness remains at £350 for each complete period of three months. It is further clarified that this grant applies during periods of recuperation from ill health for up to one year.

Sabbatical expenses and levy

- 1.25 The Committee recommends that the sabbaticals annual levy is maintained at £100 and the maximum expense level retained at £1000.

Computers in Ministry scheme

- 1.26 Following the adoption by the 2017 Conference of a revised Computers in Ministry scheme offering financial support to ministers, **the Committee recommends that the allowance be increased to £207 for the year 2024/2025, ie by the same CPI % used in the stipend adjustment.**
- 1.27 Student ministers beginning training, or, if they choose to wait, probationer ministers at the start of their first appointment receive an additional allowance of four times the annual amount. The first annual payment (as per paragraph 1.26) is made in the month of October at the start of ministry.

19. Connexional Allowances Committee

Initial grants and loans to ministers

- 1.28 In accordance with SO 804(2) in respect of loans and grants to ministers appointed “for the first time to a station in the home work” the Committee continues to offer loans up to a maximum value of £10,000, interest-free, repayable over a maximum of 5 years (ie £167 per month).
- 1.29 The 2015 Conference agreed to the Committee’s recommendation that, as from September 2016, a maximum flat-rate means-tested initial grant be set at the level of £3,000, and this now applies irrespective of the age of the minister. This is instead of, and not additional to, the relocation allowance which applies to subsequent moves (as per paragraph 1.18). Therefore, receiving Circuits do not pay the relocation allowance to ministers in their initial appointment (though they do pay the travel and removal costs as per SO 528(2)). This will be reviewed again in 2024/25.
- 1.30 During their active ministry, loans may be made to ministers but only in the most extreme and exceptional personal and financial circumstances. There can be tax implications from granting loans.

Preaching fees and expenses for supernumerary ministers

- 1.31 Circuits are reminded that it is their responsibility to pay preaching fees and expenses, even if and when churches assist with the preaching plan preparation: the church is only responsible for payment when the supernumerary minister preaches at the church by specific invitation, typically for a special occasion.
- 1.32 The 2023 Conference agreed to increase the preaching fee to £30 with the next review scheduled for 2028.

Lay employees recommended hourly rates

- 1.33 The Committee advises that the latest Living Wage rates, published in September 2023 by the Living Wage Foundation (LWF), are **£13.15 per hour for London and £12.00 for all other regions**. The LWF figures, applicable to employees aged 18 years and over, will always be adopted as the Methodist Church’s recommendations. Methodist employing bodies are reminded of the resolutions of the 2010 Conference regarding the mandatory implementation of these rates. The Committee notes that non-UK jurisdictions may have different rates for the living wage and would expect these to be implemented accordingly.

19. Connexional Allowances Committee

- 1.34 The Committee reminds the whole Church of the resolution of the 2015 Conference that the implementation of the LWF Living Wage is now mandatory in all but the most extreme and exceptional circumstances, and that all outstanding exceptions must continue to be reviewed by the appropriate District Policy Committee.
- 1.35 Further updated figures, expected to be announced by LWF in the autumn of 2024, will be published on the Methodist Church website, and can also be accessed on the LWF website which gives further relevant details. Methodist employing bodies are reminded that the LWF rates published in the autumn are to be implemented by the following April. However, in light of the cost of living crisis the Committee encourages the adoption of the updated rates at the earliest possible opportunity.

Loss of Earnings

- 1.36 The Committee reviewed the maximum loss of earnings rate that is applied under Standing Order 202 for members of the Conference, Methodist Council and other relevant Connexional committees as agreed by the Council. Using the London Living Wage of £13.15 per hour, equates to £92.05. **Therefore, it is proposed that the maximum amount of loss of earnings is increased from £85 to £95 per day from 1 September 2024.**

2. REPORT ON FUNDS AND TRUSTS WITHIN THE COMMITTEE'S REMIT

- 2.1 The Committee acts as the Trustees for five funds or trusts which are available to ministers and which may, in some cases, be used to give financial assistance to dependent close family members as well as themselves. The funds and trusts are:
 - The Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons (FSPD), previously known as the Auxiliary Fund (of the Ministers' Retirement Fund)
 - The Methodist Ministers' Children's Fund (MMCF, otherwise known as the Trinity Hall Trust – THT)
 - The Methodist Medical Benevolent Fund (MMBF)
 - The Aspinall Robinson Trust (ART)
 - The Auxiliary (Special Purposes) Fund (ASPF)

Analysis of grants from funds and trusts

- 2.2 The Committee gives summary information on the pattern of grant-making in its report to the Conference each year. Any differences between the grant expenditure totals given in this report and the audited accounts of the funds arise from the exceptional cases when grants are refunded or reallocated to different funds.

19. Connexional Allowances Committee

Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons

- 2.3 The Church continues to be immensely grateful for the generosity of donations to the FSPD. Whilst the funds remain at a healthy level, donations remain vital in allowing the CAC to respond positively to the increasing demands being placed on the funds.
- 2.4 The FSPD is by far the largest of the funds and receives substantial income from donations and legacies as well as investments. It is used in a wide variety of ways in pursuit of its objects and in 2022/2023 made grants amounting to £3,066,373. In summary, these were distributed as follows:

| Nature of grants | Total amount (£) |
|--|------------------|
| Grants to enable ministers to continue in ministry and manse adaptations | 102,008 |
| Grants to ministers for acute financial emergencies | 81,492 |
| Grants for retired ministers' health needs, nursing and residential care | 38,597 |
| Removal costs and relocation grants on retirement | 177,192 |
| Other miscellaneous grants | 34,286 |
| Gardening grants | 33,450 |
| Property adaptations for supernumeraries and grants to MMHS ¹ | 77,640 |
| Recuperative Years - stipends | 229,339 |
| Grants to ministers on first stationing and students | 82,349 |
| Reimbursement to circuits for ministerial sickness | 110,793 |
| One off cost of living payment | 2,059,624 |
| Total | 3,066,373 |

- 2.5 Christmas gifts amounting to £38,885 were made to widows and widowers, and the Committee is grateful to TMCP for directly funding this.

1 This amount includes expenditure on properties owned by the FSPD and occupied by retired ministers and their dependants which the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society manages on the Committee's behalf. It was paid in 2023/24 but related to 2022/23.

19. Connexional Allowances Committee

Methodist Ministers' Children's Fund (Trinity Hall Trust)

- 2.6 In 2022/23, £32,165 was paid in grants to ministers to help fund costs of educational activities for their children, including the provision of equipment for online educational activities.

Methodist Medical Benevolent Fund (MMBF)

- 2.7 In 2022/2023, the MMBF made grants of varying amounts totalling £81,167. This fund provides support from within its income, derived mainly from investment, and it is used wherever the need is related to physical and mental health conditions. The Committee continues to highlight to the Conference the sustained level of expenditure on counselling and related support for ministers, including while they are students and probationers.

Aspinall Robinson Trust

- 2.8 In 2022/23, 29 grants were made to deacons amounting to £54,485. These covered health related needs, initial grants, gardening and retirement grants.

Auxiliary (Special Purposes) Fund

- 2.9 In 2022/23 there were four grants made from this fund. This fund typically provides for up to 50% of annual stipend to be paid to the spouse when a minister's marriage breaks down or for specific expenditure to be reimbursed if the part-stipend is not requested. The Fund is well endowed to cater for all probable needs.

Methodist Ministers' Children's Relief Association (MMCRA)

- 2.10 The Committee is grateful for all the contributions to this fund over many years. However, as all the reserves have been spent, the decision was taken in 2022 to close the fund with the MMBF providing grants previously funded from the MMCRA. Therefore, any donations for Children's relief should be made to the MMBF.

3. OTHER MATTERS OF REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE

- 3.1 The Committee continues to engage in reviews of several topics for which it has responsibility and is grateful for the support of the Connexional Team staff, especially in the Finance, Human Resources, Mission, and Ministries Teams, and in the Conference Office, in all that they do.

19. Connexional Allowances Committee

- 3.2 During the year the Chair of the Committee continued to engage with the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group concerning how the work of the CAC will be taken forward in light of the proposals on Oversight and Trusteeship. A meeting was held with the Chair of the Resourcing Committee to facilitate the smooth transition of responsibilities in the lead up to September 2024.
- 3.3 The Committee keeps a record, for its own guidance and purposes, setting out the policies and precedents for dealing with the wide variety of these special requests for financial assistance. This enables the Committee always to be consistent and fair in the application of criteria for assessing need. In preparation for the establishment of the Resourcing Committee in 2024, the Committee continued to review its policies and precedents to support the smooth handover of responsibilities.
- 3.4 The Committee reviewed the housing allowance policy in relation to ministers living in their own homes. It concluded that given the requirement for itinerant ministry and the provision of manses as housing, it was right not to support the introduction of an allowance for ministers living in their own property.
- 3.5 The Committee continues to liaise closely with the President's Governance Adviser concerning Recuperative Years. The Committee confirms that ministers will only be eligible for a standard stipend during a recuperative year as they will not be fulfilling any of the roles (eg superintendent, Chair) that attract an additional allowance. The Committee noted there were ten Recuperative Years agreed from September 2023 which is a significant increase on the previous average of three to four per annum. This increase will need to be monitored.
- 3.6 The Committee reviewed the position in relation to the payment of local allowances (see section 1.17). It was noted that a number of allowances were in payment that should have been phased out following the decisions of the 2016 Conference. The Committee reviewed the approach adopted in 2016, confirmed no changes were required, and sought assurance from the Stipends team that the policy was now being followed.
- 3.7 Supernumeraries are by definition not in the active work. They can undertake some duties with a letter of understanding as outlined in SO 792(2). Where a supernumerary agrees to take pastoral charge in a circuit under SO 792(3) they would no longer be a supernumerary and would need to apply to return to the active work. The Committee reiterated that in these circumstances an additional allowance to cover housing costs would not be payable, regardless of whether a manse is available or not. It is the Circuit's responsibility to agree the terms under which the work is undertaken, including how any expenses are

19. Connexional Allowances Committee

reimbursed. However, the approval of any local allowances remains as outlined in section 1.17.

- 3.8 The Committee also undertook a review of the allowance paid in the Island Districts. Evidence was requested from the affected districts and research was undertaken in to the different costs of living in different parts of the Connexion. As in previous reviews, the situation in different jurisdictions gives rise to a variety of issues that are too complex to be fully addressed in the payment of a stipend uplift. However, having assessed all the information presented, the Committee concluded that the Island District allowance uplift should be increased to 22% from September 2024.
- 3.9 This will be the last report of the Connexional Allowances Committee as its responsibilities transfer to the new Resourcing Committee from September 2024. The members of the Committee have been privileged to serve the Conference and its ministers, and in particular to help people at especially difficult points in their lives. The Chair of the Committee wishes to record their immense gratitude to its members, past and present, who have given unfailing support and attention to the Committee's work at all times. They have brought a rich variety of experience and expertise as well as representing different constituencies within the Church.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 19/1. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 19/2. The Conference adopts the Report and the recommendations in sections 1, 2 and 3.**

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | Trey Hall (Director of Evangelism & Growth) hallt@methodistchurch.org.uk Jude Levermore (Head of Mission) levermorej@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Action required | For discussion and approval |
| Resolutions | 20/1. The Conference receives the Report and commends it to the Methodist Church for continuing prayerful discernment and missional action throughout the Connexion. 20/2. The Conference directs the Mission Committee and the Connexional Council to monitor progress, evaluate learning on an annual basis, and identify next steps, with particular reference to the structural questions noted in paragraph 58 and the missional markers in paragraph 62 of the Report. |

Summary of content

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|--|--|
| Subject and aims | Following the 'God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth' report received by the Conference of 2020, this update report will offer further clarification of the ways in which the 'God For All' strategy is shaping the life, understanding, mission, and witness of the Methodist Church and its people, especially in the areas of evangelism, pioneering and planting, discipleship, and missional growth and leadership. It calls on the Conference to re-affirm the strategy for the next season of its life, from 2025 towards 2032, the centenary of the Deed of Union. |
| Main points | Section A Introduction Section B Celebrations, Learnings, and Testimonies Section C Ongoing Commitments to Support God's People in Mission and Ministry Section D Budgets Section E Resolutions |
| Background context and relevant documents | MC/20/38 God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth |
| Consultations | See paragraphs 10 and 17. |

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

Summary of impact

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Financial | See Section D. |
| Wider connexional | <i>God For All</i> embraces the imperative to evangelism that is enshrined in Our Calling as the Methodist Church; furthermore, it links bold evangelism crucially to the Church's missional priorities of justice (economic, racial, environmental, etc), ministry in economically-marginalised communities, and worship renewal. These diverse-and-inseparable elements form a critical and compelling expression of our Methodist Christian faith in the 21st century. <i>God For All</i> celebrates the harmony of connexional shared missional priorities that cross all contexts and local expressions of service that are enfolded in contextual wisdom. These commitments will usually mean doing things differently rather than doing more things. Ultimately it is for each Methodist member, community and church, Circuit and District to discern with the Holy Spirit how this renewal of our movement should be embodied in relevant ways. |
| External, including ecumenical | Ever since the Conference agreed <i>God For All</i> in 2020, lay and ordained leaders across the Church have sought to facilitate and nurture its outworking in Districts, Circuits, and Local Churches – and beyond the Methodist Church in Britain with diverse partners. These partners include other Churches and parachurch organisations within Britain and across the world through our global relationships, and 'people of peace' who are religiously unaffiliated (see paragraphs 13, 28, 54, and 64). |
| Risk | The year-long <i>God For All</i> listening campaign in 2023 provided diverse examples of celebration, learning, and challenge (see Section B). One of the major throughlines in the thousands of responses within that campaign is the call for the Church to remain steadfast in its Gospel commitments to growth, inclusion, evangelism, and justice. To stop pressing towards this vision or to career abruptly towards another initiative would put at significant risk the hoped-for fruit of our prayer and labour, by God's grace: new people becoming disciples of Jesus Christ; faith deepening all Methodist members and friends; and diverse communities and churches experiencing transformation. |

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

Section A – Introduction

“What may we reasonably believe to be God’s design in raising up the Preachers called Methodists? To reform the nation and, in particular, the Church; to spread scriptural holiness over the land.”

– John Wesley in the ‘Large’ Minutes of 1753

“Go home, lock yourself in your room. Kneel down in the middle of the floor, and with a piece of chalk, draw a circle around yourself. There, on your knees, pray fervently that God would start a revival within that chalk circle.”

–Rodney ‘Gipsy’ Smith, Methodist evangelist (1860-1947)

“[This is our] commitment to be a growing, evangelistic, justice-seeking, inclusive Church of gospel people who speak of, listen for, and live out the goodness of God – so that new people become disciples of Jesus Christ and committed Methodists experience a deepening of faith. This is long-term, life-long work. This strategy is not built on any quick fixes, magic resources, or short initiatives: it signals a direction of travel for deep gospel transformation not only for the next three to five years, but also for the long-term future of our mission and whole life together. This expansive strategy will require much soul-searching, courageous decision-making, and significant structural change in the years ahead. Left to our own power, this work will be exhausting and impossible. Dependent on the power of God, it might just be life and joy for the Church and the world alike.”

–The ‘God For All’ Report,
received and agreed by the Conference of 2020

“Over the course of my Presidential year, some of my deepest spiritual experiences were being with New Places for New People/Church at the Margins communities. In almost every district I visited, when I sat with people in these places – all of which are so fresh and green – I felt the presence of God. People are really craving these kinds of spaces! Some leaders say they’re pioneers, others say they’re definitely not pioneers, but it doesn’t really matter what we call ourselves as long as we are all trying new ways to tell people how much they are loved by God!”

–The Revd Sonia Hicks,
Past President of the Methodist Conference

“We are all impoverished when we marginalise those who live with deep poverty, and our work is patronising when those who live with poverty are seen as objects of mission rather than those who are agents of the mission of God, icons of the face of Christ – who uncover good news, most clearly reveal to us where God is present, and challenge us all to live for the fullness of life for all. In the end we

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

measure all our work – evangelism and justice together – with Jesus’ own words: ‘By their fruits you shall know them’.”

–The Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal OBE,
Past President of the Methodist Conference

“We follow Jesus Christ, who breaks exclusive barriers and shows us what God is like. It is so important that, as the Methodist Church, we proclaim the gospel of Christ – in our commitments to evangelism, social justice, fairness, and inclusivity. ‘God For All’ challenges us to be bolder disciples of Jesus by breaking barriers and finding new, inventive ways of connecting not only with others, but ourselves, to our almighty and loving God. As a young leader, I believe that God’s love is all inclusive, regardless of wealth, race, gender, sexuality or any category. We must continue to explore new ways, with new people, of demonstrating God’s love for all.”

–Thomas Hart, Methodist Youth President

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1. The Conference of 2020 received the report *God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth* (hereafter *God For All*) and agreed the programme plans, strategic directions, missional vision, and resourcing proposals it outlined. In doing so, it embraced the imperative to evangelism enshrined in the *Our Calling* vision of the Methodist Church as a critical expression of our Methodist Christian faith in today’s world. As God’s people, loved beyond measure and called to embody that boundless, indiscriminate love and proclaim it to the world, we have good news to share and good news to receive. Our beautiful and broken world, of which we are a part, is as much in need of hearing about that divine love, seeing it lived and shared, and being healed and transformed by it, as ever before. Thus, this update report comes to offer encouragement about the ways in which *God For All* is shaping and inspiring the witness and mission of Methodist people and communities across the Connexion. It also comes to urge that, having ‘set our hand to the plough’ of a renewed commitment to evangelism,¹ the Conference agrees to press forward in faith and hope and with a rekindled passion for receiving and offering Christ, reflecting God’s love for all creation. We pray and live for God’s kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.

1 For Methodists, the terms ‘evangelism’, ‘evangelistic’, and ‘evangelical’ do not represent only one theological perspective or example of missional action. They refer to diverse expressions across the broad theological and ecclesiological spectrum. We value creating a tapestry of healthy evangelism understandings and evangelistic approaches rather than pitting them against each other. *God For All* (2020-2025), Appendix: Description of Terms.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

2. This update report will offer further clarification of the ways in which the *God For All* strategy is shaping the life, understanding, mission, and witness of the Methodist Church and its people, especially in the areas of evangelism, pioneering and planting, discipleship, and missional growth and leadership. It offers brief snapshots of some of the ways in which the Conference's embrace of *God For All* has offered encouragement, inspired change, and celebrated missional actions in Local Churches and communities; and of some of the things we are learning, and still hope to learn, along the exciting journey which we have begun together. In conclusion it asks the Conference to re-affirm the strategy for the next season of its life, from 2025 towards 2032.
3. 2032 is a significant year: it marks the 100th anniversary of the Uniting Conference that formally joined together several major denominations within the British Methodist movement. The structures, doctrines, and mission of the new Methodist Church were – and are – expressed and given life through the Deed of Union, which still holds before Methodists John Wesley's animating passion for the movement he founded. In the words of the Deed itself, the Methodist Church "...ever remembers that in the providence of God Methodism was raised up to spread scriptural holiness through the land by the proclamation of the evangelical faith and declares its unfaltering resolve to be true to its divinely appointed mission."² As the Methodist Church approaches such a significant moment for remembrance and renewal, through the work begun in the *God For All (2020-2025)* strategy it is hoped it may find a sense of continuity with the past, and hope for its future.
4. The *God For All (2020-2025)* report expressly articulated the intertwined nature of *Our Calling* as Methodists. In offering a vision of our being 'a growing, evangelistic, justice-seeking, inclusive Church of gospel people', it described the holistic nature of God's love, which seeks the flourishing of every aspect of our life as God's children. In the years since *God For All* was adopted, the Conference has adopted or re-emphasised four other major commitments for the Church's mission and ministry, all of which proclaim the beauty and challenge of the gospel:
 - a. In 2022, the Conference adopted the report *Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity*,³ which aims to celebrate human diversity and eradicate systemic discrimination within the Church. It calls for profound cultural, attitudinal, and practical changes rooted in the gospel of God's love in Jesus Christ,

2 CPD, Vol. II, p.213, para. 4 of the Deed of Union

3 Conference Report, 'Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity'

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

so that all Methodists are able to be full participants in the Church's life.⁴ The important resources, training materials, and support⁵ offered through this strategy are not stand-alone programmes, but transformative tools for ongoing learning and preparation for faithful mission and ministry and give opportunities to offer and receive testimonies that witness to the reality of life and faith.

- b. In 2022, the Conference received the *Action for Hope Plan* which encourages the Church towards its aspirational target of becoming a net zero carbon emissions Church by 2030. While this has practical considerations, it is also an inherently missional goal because we seek to care for God's creation and challenge the injustice created and perpetuated by climate change. As *Hope in God's Future*⁶ outlines, "closing our ears to the voices of those most vulnerable to climate change would be nothing less than giving up our claim to be disciples of Christ". Seeking to build engagement in three key areas – wisdom, assets, and lifestyle – this will have an impact across all areas of the life of the Church, in gathered community and everyday discipleship.
- c. In 2023, the Conference adopted the report *A Justice-Seeking Church: the report of the Walking with Micah project*, and directed the Methodist Council to oversee its implementation. In doing so, it also reaffirmed its prior commitment in *God For All*, that "evangelism and justice are intertwined – a God whose character is just will shape the nature of the good news that we proclaim."⁷
- d. The Conference continues to affirm the Methodist Church's safeguarding policy of promoting safe environments where children, young people, and vulnerable adults are protected.⁸ Wherever people meet and connect – whether in an established church community, in a 'Church on the Margins' or a 'New Place for New People' community, or at a festival or an event – safeguarding and the promotion of well-being are everyone's responsibility. All safeguarding measures will be carried out in accordance with the Church's safeguarding policy, procedures, and guidance. This includes: taking proactive measures to prevent abuse by safely recruiting those with any responsibility for vulnerable members, worshippers, and users of our services; minimising risk and putting safety measures in place; responding promptly and appropriately to every safeguarding concern or allegation;

4 Ibid, Appendix 5

5 JDS resources: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/>

6 Statement of the Conference 'Hope in God's Future' [hope-in-gods-future-1120.pdf](https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/hope-in-gods-future-1120.pdf) (methodist.org.uk)

7 Conference Report, 'A Justice-seeking Church: the report of the Walking with Micah Project', paragraph 8.

8 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/>

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

caring pastorally for victims and survivors of abuse and other people who have been affected; ensuring that survivors of abuse or trauma will find a warm welcome within the Methodist Church and will feel accepted and understood; and working safely with those who are the subject of convictions, concerns, or allegations of abuse.

5. Together with these major strategies and associated commitments to action, *God For All* is helping the Methodist Church reclaim our founding traditions and re-orient apostolically for the future in a way that is harmonious with *Our Calling*. We can demonstrate that our work towards inclusion, growth, justice-seeking, and evangelism as a Church is becoming widely rooted within our culture and has serious prophetic intent. This is not a cause for complacency, but for deep gratitude, renewed hope, genuine humility, and continued effort. This larger vision continues to be an essential commitment that we share as Methodist people today.
6. What follows in the main body of the report (Sections B and C) is a survey of the *God For All (2020–2025)* strategy.⁹ It seeks to offer encouragement about the ways in which the vision the Conference adopted in 2020 is shaping, informing, changing, and inspiring the mission of the Church. As a response to that, it asks the Conference to continue to encourage and enable the development of this work from 2025, along the lines set out by the original strategy. There is much to celebrate! Consequently, we are encouraged to continue boldly in the same direction.
7. Allied to those celebrations, Section B of the report also offers glimpses of ways in which, as *God For All* has been implemented and lived out across the Connexion, we have been able to listen, learn, and ask important questions as we discern the movement of God's Spirit. This has been a much richer experience than merely 'seeing what works'. Rather, it is a collaborative, collective exercise in taking appropriate risks, discerning where God might be summoning the Methodist people in mission, and evaluating carefully what God is, or might be, saying. We often discern God's message through the voices of those among us, or of those we meet on the edges and margins of the work itself, or in the life of the Church and society. The report articulates some of the challenges and questions which arise from the holy experimentation and prophetic engagement that flow from the outworkings of *God For All*.

9 See 'Next Steps in Evangelism and Growth: Resources for individuals, churches and circuits 2021/22'

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

8. Finally, in Section C, the report outlines the Church's deepening commitments and actions, and presents a rationale for developments that are key for the continuing integration of *God For All* in the Church's life and mission. This is in no way a new strategy, or indeed even a radically new interpretation of it; rather, it is a set of integrated, joined-up commitments for how we might continue to embed the renewed priority for evangelism in our common life as the Methodist Church in Britain – a life that is faithful to our calling and history, engaged with God's world and its people, and committed to the course the Conference has chosen.
9. Within the Conference's overall strategic vision, it is for each Methodist member, community and church to discern, with the Holy Spirit, how this renewal of the 'evangelical faith' of our movement should be expressed and embodied in relevant contextual ways. *God For All* asks some big questions to and of the entire Church, but its substance and fruit are being grown from the grassroots up, led by local leaders, and enfolded in contextual wisdom.
10. This report is grounded in deep, intentional, prayerful and careful listening and consultation. Ever since the Conference agreed *God For All* in 2020, lay and ordained leaders across the Church have sought to facilitate and nurture its outworking in Districts, Circuits and Local Churches. They have also been paying close attention to the emerging stories to which it is giving rise, from committed Methodists and from religiously unaffiliated people.¹⁰ These are overwhelmingly testimonies to the way in which God's surprising, prevenient grace is already at work in the lives of all kinds of people, and the joy and purpose unleashed when churches take that seriously and engage with their communities with open, expectant, generous hearts. They are also stories affirming the vision of the Church and its need to be 'growing, evangelistic, justice-seeking and inclusive'. These stories, along with extensive feedback, were gathered through thousands of interactions, including: individual conversations; formal consultations; hundreds of visits to Circuits, churches and Synods; creative presence and workshops at the Conference; feedback from the Hope and Anchor podcast and participation with unaffiliated people in events such as the Edinburgh Fringe, Eurovision, Cliff College Festival, and Greenbelt Festival – to name but a few. The celebrations, learnings, questions, and next steps offered here are, therefore, the result of a deep culture of participative, consultative, reflective listening and learning. That in itself is an expression of the kind of Church which *God For All*, alongside other major recent projects already referenced, asks us to be, by God's grace.

¹⁰ 'Religiously unaffiliated' is a broad description for people who are not connected to religious traditions or communities. However, it is not a monolithic group: unaffiliated people may be secular, spiritual-but-not-religious, agnostic, atheist, or 'nothing in particular'.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

11. In all that follows, bear in mind that while such an update cannot be exhaustive, it does offer a snapshot of work and witness across the Connexion which is gloriously varied and rooted in diverse and multi-faceted contexts. The range of approaches to evangelism, pioneering and planting, discipleship, and missional growth and leadership inspired and enabled by *God For All*, and by the resources, prayer, and energy the Methodist Church has committed to it, is in itself something to be celebrated. We draw inspiration from this for its ongoing outworking. Methodists are living and serving in urban, suburban, rural, coastal and new-build communities; alongside young and old; in chaplaincies in a plethora of situations; among people new to Christianity and in existing congregations in need of revitalising; and with those living on the margins. In all these contexts we are discovering and rediscovering the integrity of mission and evangelism rooted faithfully in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which speaks 'love and power and peace'¹¹ to each according to their need and in an accent they can understand.
12. A diversity of concerns and passions is evident in the communities and projects which *God For All* has enabled, and in the approaches taken to them. Some have focused on the imperative to empower rising generations of younger people and learn from them. Some have had a renewed focus on seeking repentance and repair from histories of racism and colonialism. Others have grappled with prophetic clarity with the reality of climate change and developed eco-theologies and sought environmental justice. Still others have found fresh insights and renewed energy for tackling the challenges of our Church in the 21st century and its future shape and form, and offer hopeful, Spirit-led glimpses of who we might become.
13. *God For All* is also reaffirming our partnerships with other Methodist Churches and organisations and with ecumenical siblings across the globe and within Britain. We are part of the world Church: the Methodist Church in Britain "claims and cherishes its place in the Holy Catholic Church which is the Body of Christ".¹² This living unity-in-diversity expands our openness to receive gifts and wisdom from other traditions, celebrates the mutual learning in the relationships we already have, and refreshes the distinctive contribution to the Body which is still ours to make. With our partners in the global Church we long for increasingly collaborative and shared mission to flow from our mutual learning.
14. Drawing on and informed by contextual missional wisdom and connexional strategies such as those mentioned above, *God For All* is thus a profound stimulus for Methodist renewal. It is not a compulsive tick-list that every

11 Singing the Faith, 520, *Give to me, Lord, a thankful heart*, v.2

12 CPD, Vol. II, p.213, para. 4 of the Deed of Union

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

individual, church, and Circuit must work through and complete immediately, but a set of invitations to help individuals in diverse contexts make reflective decisions about their calling and how to steward their time, energy, and resources for the most life-giving and community-building activities. As such, *God For All* is also a stimulus for the renewal of our mission, for the times we live in. It is enabling this renewal, not in a 'one size fits all' manner, but in a way that is deeply embedded in and faithful to the communities to which we belong and serve. It is thus at once utterly faithful to our forebears and an expression of our unique missional DNA for the future. The theological foundations of the *God For All* strategy were articulated in the 2020 Conference report and remain the same. They call us back to three fundamental principles:

- The abundant, creative, restorative grace and love of God go before all that we can do or offer in response (1 John 4:19: "We love because [God] first loved us").
- The Church's hope and future lie not in a strategy, but in the living presence of the risen Jesus Christ, who sends the Holy Spirit to reconcile all things to God in resurrection power.
- As we encounter God's love in Christ, we are caught up in the extraordinary mission of God,¹³ which challenges and transforms us, even as it drives us out in mission towards all God's creation.

In these, and in the commitments to prayer, we find a renewed connexionalism which *ought* to be the lifeblood of any Methodist approach to evangelism, and an increasing confidence in the gifts God has given us to offer – which are enough, by God's grace. This update stands firmly on the same ground laid out in *God For All*.

15. Our praise of God involves celebrating God's faithfulness and the consequent hope of the Methodist people, but our praise of God also includes lament and honestly naming the challenging and sometimes traumatising effects of a number of seismic cultural changes over the past five years – for example, Covid-19, the cost of living crisis, growing political instability and polarisation, war in the Middle East and across Europe – which have induced anxiety, fear, and fatigue, albeit unevenly across varying parts of the Church and world. We acknowledge the faithful ways in which people in diverse settings have responded, and we pray for continued

13 Though the 'Missio Dei' or 'mission of God' is a term that has become important in 20th- and 21st-century missiological and theological discourse, especially to distinguish the mission of God from the mission of the Church, it is necessary to ask with a degree of theological humility whether we truly know what God's mission is, beyond the broad purpose of the salvation of the world. We note the more recent World Council of Churches reflection in *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, which speaks of the 'Mission of the Spirit' blowing where the Holy Spirit wills.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

patience, compassion, steadfastness, and hope as we look to the future. We reaffirm our commitment to prayer, discernment, and receptivity to the Holy Spirit named explicitly in *God For All* (2020-2032): offering “ourselves to intentional, unceasing prayer, so that our commitments ... flow from a deep, contemplative orientation to God’s grace, movement, and will for us and the world. One of the particular gifts of Methodism to the Church of Jesus Christ is an insistence that prayer and evangelism, contemplation and justice, should never be separated: they are inherent dimensions of the Gospel.”

16. In Mark’s account of the Gospel, a person afflicted dreadfully by demonic possession and exclusion from his own society, upon meeting Jesus cries out “What have you to do with me, Jesus, son of the Most High God?”¹⁴ It is a cry repeated in Scripture, and one all too often heard today. As Christians, it is a question we must ask Jesus and then listen for his answer, as we consider and shape our missional response so we can make known something of the love and grace of God, who has called us “out of darkness into God’s marvellous light”.¹⁵ This report seeks to illustrate the ways in which the Methodist people are encountering afresh the immeasurable beauty of the gospel, which offers the goodness, healing, grace, and transformation that individuals and communities are crying out for. It offers some reflections about what we are learning and discovering as we undertake the challenging yet exciting work of evangelism in new ways; and it maps out some of the ways in which we might continue to build on the firm foundations laid through the Conference’s decision to adopt *God For All* in 2020.¹⁶ In all of it, where we have reached new communities, where we have engaged in mission in new ways, where we have witnessed growth of all kinds, where we have experienced renewal personally and corporately, where we have rediscovered our bias towards the marginalised and excluded and our passion for justice, as well as where we have learned from our failures, the best of all is that God has been – and is, always – with us.

Section B – Celebrations, Learnings, and Testimonies

17. The celebrations, learnings, and testimonies that follow have been gathered over the past four years and include the results of a year-long listening campaign in 2023 which through face-to-face and online discussions has allowed the Church to reflect on its commitments to evangelism, pioneering, discipleship, and growth.

14 Mark 5:7

15 1 Peter 2:9

16 These foundations did not begin with *God For All*; they have been affirmed and clarified in many major Conference reports and statements, eg *Called to Love and Praise* (1999).

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

The listening campaign included an online survey; 30 focus group conversations with lay and ordained leaders and practitioners; workshops and feedback sessions at the Diaconal Order Convocation, Superintendents' Conferences, 3Generate, and the Methodist Conference; and more than 100 conversations (either one-to-one or in a group) with members of connexional committees, District Synods, District Chairs, district and circuit teams, leaders and chaplains of the Culture and Language Diverse Fellowships and Congregations (CLDFC), and the Connexional Team. Following on from this listening campaign, a multi-year research project on fruitfulness in New Places for New People and Church at the Margins communities has recently been set up to expand and embed what we have learned, and to share the wisdom of local people in mission and ministry across diverse contexts.

18. The celebrations, learnings, and testimonies that follow are organised in Section B under the same core area headings that appeared in *God For All (2020-2025)*.¹⁷

Centred in God

19. We celebrate the joy that churches and people speak of – even when facing difficult decisions – when they know themselves centred in the love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ, and the challenging power of the Holy Spirit. When we claim our inheritance as beloved children of God, as recipients of grace, and participants in the good news, we experience and live from a spiritual assurance that leads to missional courage and humility. We celebrate the amazing testimonies of the way God is moving – loving, holding, forgiving, refining, restoring, transforming – in people, communities, and churches.
20. We are learning that churches experience increased purpose and joy when their discernment about mission and ministry commitments and their stewarding of resources are rooted in prayer, open-hearted exploration, and intentional conversations with their communities. Churches are energised when, trusting God's nearness, they trade rushed box-ticking and form-filling for a steadfast attentiveness to what God might be asking of them, and when they identify the most important next steps and let go of trying to do everything. We celebrate that churches and leaders know they are not asked by God (or the Church) to try to do everything and are increasingly reflecting on what to lay down so they might focus on missional commitments, so they can do the most important things with focus and joy.

17 For the sake of simplicity and clarity, in Section C they are proposed to be consolidated into four major areas.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

21. We are learning that worship with depth and life brings us into an encounter with God's love that casts out fear and with God's truth that sets us free. It helps us face the grief of the world and our own need for transformation, and feeds and expands our capacity for loving and serving others. It improves the health of existing and new Christian communities and their passion for mission.
22. We celebrate that 'A Methodist Way of Life' (MWOL) is proving to be a basis of unity and a shared identity for many Methodist people and communities who differ in other ways. People across the theological and ecclesiological spectrum can agree on MWOL as shared ground. The foundational MWOL resources have been welcomed warmly across generations and settings, not as extra add-ons but as creative guides for what discipleship entails and who we in the Church have been called to be.
23. We are learning that MWOL resources are being used in small groups, worship services, vision days, leader retreats, youth groups and more – and that local practitioners value being able to adapt the MWOL resources to suit their purposes. Over the past four years, more than 470,000 MWOL resources have been requested by churches, Circuits, and Districts. They range from commitment cards in thirteen different languages to prayer card packs, badges, floor mats, pocket guides, and more. Flexibility will always be important in the continuing development of MWOL so that different communities can engage in meaningful ways; leaders can celebrate what their communities are already doing; and more people and churches can notice God already at work in their lives.
24. We are learning that MWOL is attractive to religiously unaffiliated people and spiritual seekers, as well as to committed Methodists, and it may be a foundation for emerging spiritual practice as well as deeper faith enquiry and exploration.
25. We are learning that our mission and ministry would benefit from a more consistent commitment to theological reflection as disciples together, and as the Church together. Theological reflection may be neglected by communities of disciples and seekers because it is often understood (and communicated) to be a specifically academic endeavour. The consequent hesitancy over whether everyone is able to participate in theological reflection might be addressed through reframing theological reflection with an inclusive focus on 'story': how our stories – and others' stories and our story together – relate to God's story, as revealed in scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. This accessible starting point, which could build on the Church's recent exploration of testimony, could create interest and excitement in further reflection and learning.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

Testimony: Churches and circuits are engaging with MWOL in a number of different ways. The Revd Rachel Borgars, Superintendent of the Kennet and Test Valley Circuit, said: "I say at church meetings, 'A Methodist Way of Life' should be seriously informing our mission discernment and planning." Another Circuit had trouble seeing beyond the immediate problems of repairing the building and addressing numerical decline. Their district mission enabler introduced the steering group to 'A Methodist Way of Life' as a discipleship framework, and the minister used this activity with the whole congregation in Sunday worship. Seeing each other's answers excited the congregation and discussions about discipleship came alive.

Testimony: Angela Brydon, Discipleship Enabler in the Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire District, said: "I recently had an encouraging time with a very small rural chapel helping them think about their *future* story. They were so excited about the new MWOL pocket guides and coasters, and how they could use them moving forward! I had approached our time together aware that because of their context they were facing challenges. By the time I left I was also aware that God through the Holy Spirit was at work in that community amidst their challenges."

Testimony: Helle Sewell from the Darlington District said: "We kick-started the MWOL discipleship pathway in our circuit with a 'Reimagining Discipleship' day. The feedback told us that there was hunger for more exploration of the twelve different practices that help us encounter God, represented by the 'train stations'.¹⁸ So our circuit's Transformational Leadership Team decided to build on the weakest stations but also offer some exploration on other stations too. We also ran a day course on how to welcome people, called 'First Impressions Count.' This helped the Circuit see how God is working among people and their experiences to bring a framework alive."

18 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/>

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

Testimony: A member of Weardale Methodist Church said: “It was a very wet day at the Wolsingham Show. However, we had some lovely conversations. The people who were familiar with the church related to the MWOL ‘stations’ but others struggled until we explained that people actually do quite a lot in their lives already. It is interesting to see what people are scared of. One comment was this was a good framework for living and bringing up children. We believe it is a completely new way of sharing the church other than the traditional Christmas services and harvest.”

Testimony: The Revd Grace Cauldwell from the South Lakes Methodist Circuit said: “Hawkshead Chapel had a visit of Year 3 and 4 children for an RE lesson. The minister placed caches of MWOL badges at appropriate locations. The children discovered what was unique about Methodism by exploring our core practices rather than the furniture in the chapel. They all took home the badge that most resonated with them. It was brilliant!”

Testimony: Lula Brown, a young person attending 3Generate, said: “In the worship space, I felt like God was speaking to me through the music, the lyrics and the specific songs we were singing. I could absolutely 100% feel God’s presence in the room and in me. The atmosphere made me feel really free and confident, and that’s not how I usually feel.”

Testimony: The Revd Kim Shorley said: “Within the Northampton District and as NPNP pilots, two ‘Friends Exploring And Sharing Together’ (FEAST) groups began with a Methodist Way of Life’s ‘Notice’ as their ‘home’ station. In one group, crafters looked for God as they created fabric collages in response to hearing a Bible reading, while the other group looked for good news as they watched and discussed movies. Feedback highlighted many transformative experiences. We heard stories of broadened horizons through listening to other people’s lived experiences, and their new-found confidence in sharing faith within the workplace, especially when conversations turned to talk about the latest blockbuster. As I reflect on the time shared during these pilots I find it humbling as well as a joy to watch people discover for themselves that God is with them and for them.”

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

Everyone an Evangelist

26. We celebrate that the evangelism equipping and training offered by the Church is increasingly sought out, and a theologically- and contextually wide diversity of Methodist people engage with it. We celebrate the increased positive attention for evangelism in theological and ministerial training. We celebrate that evangelism is increasingly happening in creative, experimental, and authentic ways among the Methodist people and that new people are coming to faith and a sense of belonging in the community of faith. From church and circuit experiments in local contexts to district and ecumenical collaborations at events such as Eurovision and the Edinburgh Fringe, there is a growing willingness to step out in evangelistic humility and courage.
27. We celebrate that 240 ordained and lay leaders have been trained as confident evangelists committed to cultivating an evangelistic local church culture; that orders for 430 copies of the 'Everyone an Evangelist' group course have been made; that 'Conversations Against Mundanity' (a creative game that encourages conversation about faith and life) sold out at its launch and has since sold nearly 300 copies in its first three months. We celebrate the expansion of the Church's evangelistic presence at major national festivals: from four festivals in 2022 to ten in 2024.¹⁹
28. We are learning that evangelism is still not widely claimed as a vital part of our discipleship: it is not yet a missional 'norm' for the Methodist people. While there is an emerging positive shift towards evangelism in the Church, there is still an anti-evangelistic barrier to cross. This barrier stems from experiences and theologies of evangelism that have been unhelpful or wounding; and from disempowering cultures of leadership and teaching that suggest that evangelism isn't necessary, or that it can be left to the 'experts', or that discipleship and justice do not require speaking about God and faith.

Testimony: The Edinburgh Festivals during August attract around five million visitors to the city, offering a unique opportunity for evangelistic engagement. In 2022, the City of Edinburgh Methodist Church (CEMC) and the Scotland District, in partnership with a team from across the Connexion resourced by the Evangelism and Growth team, undertook a missional listening exercise – hearing from visitors, performers, locals, and ecumenical colleagues as they discerned the missional

¹⁹ Impact at festivals and major events is measured by the number of meaningful conversations intentionally facilitated, eg at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2023 the team had 239 conversations.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

need that Methodism might meet. In 2023, the same team brought 'Lost in Wonder' to Edinburgh for a week in August, an evangelistic initiative that made space for conversation and moments of reflection for passers-by. Over six days, the team, which included members of CEMC, had hundreds of conversations, 239 of which were meaningful or significant, including many with people experiencing complex challenges in their lives. The conversations were mutually healing and hope-giving. One team member said: "Most of the conversations I had involved talking naturally about faith and spirituality.... I would say it was one of the most profound weeks I have experienced in a long while." The project is an example of connexionalism at its best, as well as demonstrating a holistic and creative kind of evangelism for the 21st century.

Testimony: The Revd Dr Benjamin Aldous, Principal Officer for Mission and Evangelism, Churches Together in England, said: "The Churches Together in England's Group for Evangelisation brings together denominational leaders across confessional divides. The commitment of leaders in evangelism and evangelisation to pilgrimage together fills me with much joy, and I'm very grateful for the Methodist Church's excellent leadership in helping to renew and reframe the Group's dedication to decolonising mission and evangelism, which is vital for the ecumenical landscape. We sense the Holy Spirit helping us build neighbourly relationships across great diversity and inviting us more deeply into liberative learning and action."

Digital Presence

29. We celebrate that the Church is embracing creative experimentation with digital evangelism and mission, and that digital spaces, which were previously understood as peripheral or merely emerging, are now being integrated as normal contexts for mission and ministry.
30. We celebrate the success of seasonal Methodist Church digital evangelism campaigns which local churches can engage with and adapt to support their local mission. For example, the headline statistics from the 'There is Room' 2022 Advent and Christmas campaign showed MCB social media content reached more than 575,500 people; all social content reached around 1.4 million people; video content was viewed more than 250,400 times; more than 181,600 free printed resources were distributed by Methodist Publishing for local church use;

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

and video drove more than 5,660 clicks through to our websites. In the 'Out of the Ordinary' 2023 Advent and Christmas campaign, MCB social media content reached more than 584,700 people on Facebook and Instagram (in addition to the numbers reached on X/Twitter, which cannot be tracked); impressions totalled more than 1.82 million as we sought to engage a more unaffiliated audience through our social media advertising. Different versions of our Christmas short film were seen more than 327,000 times across social media and we saw a huge increase in sign-ups for our seasonal digital reflection email list.

31. We are learning that barriers to digital accessibility are real, especially in economically marginalised and rural areas. Our interfaith commitment to ending poverty must acknowledge the dimension of digital poverty and include calling for financial resources to enable access to digital technologies. We also need to call for improved connectivity in rural and low-income communities, and support improving digital literacy and skills. We are learning that our major digital campaigns can still utilise physical elements such as print materials to ensure that no groups are excluded from participation.
32. We are learning the importance of an integrated core online experience hosted by the Church, so that there is a consistency of experience and response, and so that if someone engages with us online, we can connect them to their local Christian community if that is what they request.

Testimony: The Revd Wayne Grewcock reflected on his church's experience of launching a digital pioneering community: "Shoreline has grown from a paper-based worship solution at the start of the pandemic to an online ministry that is prayer-centred, non-geographical, and inclusive. We have discovered that many people feel more willing to engage from the safety of their homes than they would in a church building. By being a Zoom- and Facebook-based community we have eliminated many barriers to access and continue to work hard to be fully inclusive. The inclusive nature of not being restricted to a physical space allows deeper participation at every level. We are open to wider encounters with individuals, other churches and communities around the world. The ongoing connexional discernment to describe a renewed understanding of what it means to be a church continues to challenge us, and the Spirit is leading us in new ways of noticing and engaging in Christian practice. We gather online in worship, prayer and study so that we can each reflect the love of God by serving the communities where we live."

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

New Places for New People

33. We celebrate the launch of New Places for New People (NPNP) communities in eighteen Districts and the diligent process of planning and preparation taking place in an additional eight districts. We celebrate the coordination between Circuits within and across Districts in order to steward energy and work in collaborative ways. The relational planning approach – which brings together teams of district, circuit, church, and connexional leaders for regular conversation, prayer, co-creation of projects and guidance, and collaborative action research – has been transformative in the following ways: it has started or expanded cultures of pioneering and planting as major priorities in districts' mission policies; built trust in the mutual exchange of wisdom and perspective between circuit, district, and connexional teams; and developed a design process that is not rushed but depends on deep engagement, discernment, prayer, and planning.
34. We celebrate the growth of the Methodist Pioneering Pathways (MPP) whose membership has increased by more than 100% since 2018/2019. Seventy-five new people have joined the MPP in the past three and a half years, with a simultaneous increase in both the number of people who have come forward from NPNP communities into ministry discernment and the number of ordained people interested in starting and serving NPNP communities.
35. We celebrate and give thanks for the ministry of Culture and Language Diverse Fellowships and Congregations (CLDFC). In the past five years, the existing CLDFCs have grown and have also formed language-diverse congregations and Methodist Societies across the Connexion, often in disused chapels. We are learning through the CLDFCs and others of the passion for mission and evangelism that many Methodists with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds have. The new emerging communities formed by the CLDFCs have demonstrated that a growing Church is a Church that is more culturally and linguistically diverse. Open and honest conversations and transparent communication have enabled significant shifts in supporting the ministry of the CLDFCs and their leaders, affirming the distinctive sharing they have in the mission and ministry of the Methodist Church in Britain. We must continue to respond to God's call to be an increasingly multilingual, multi-ethnic, and anti-racist Church.
36. We are learning that the core struggle in the initial stages of emerging NPNP communities is often less about the challenges of financial support and more about making space and time for discovering a shared vision that people feel passionately committed to and around which ministry teams develop and community engagement is prioritised. That said, we are learning that NPNP communities and

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

leadership teams must still be attentive earlier than generally assumed to questions of medium-to-long-term financial and leadership sustainability.

37. We are learning that the organisational and ecclesial structures that support existing churches often struggle to support NPNP communities long-term. Increasingly agile structures and responsive processes must be developed for sustainability and growth in environments that frequently change.
38. We are learning that the fruitfulness markers created for NPNP communities to develop their mission²⁰ are a rich model of reflection and contextual assessment which might be used more generally across the Church's mission and ministry.²¹

Testimony: 'Caleb' is the Manchester and Stockport District's NPNP project. Caleb pays particular attention to encouraging and supporting new faith communities on the margins of society. Caleb creates the possibility for 'new wine' to flow and reach people who have not felt able to access more traditional forms of church community. For example, 'Bitesize Church' has recently launched, featuring tasty brunches as well as plenty of food for thought. It also has 'Your Space', which is a digital community, providing a safe environment for people to explore faith. The group is passionate about improving well-being and tackling loneliness. The Revd Anthony Clowes, Church Planting Officer in the Manchester and Stockport District, said: "Through Caleb, God is calling and equipping God's children to start new ministries to share the good news about Jesus."

Testimony: On a new housing estate at Overstone in the Northampton District, Melvina Brown, a pioneer community chaplain, works in collaboration with ecumenical partners to develop a community by building caring relationships and sharing the love of Jesus. In Peckwood, an ancient woodland in the Birmingham District, pioneer minister Ruth Wilson with the Bromsgrove and Redditch Circuit has started a NPNP. It uses the wood as a focus of mission – and features matters of creation, the natural world, biodiversity, ecology and climate concerns, well-being, retreat, sabbatical, story-telling, walking and wondering. But most of all Ruth's focus is leading people to know Jesus and have a personal relationship with him and forming a church beyond the walls of a building.

20 New Places for New People, Starting New Christian communities: A practical guide, chapter 12.

21 See paragraph 62 of this report for a proposal for how these fruitfulness markers may be used in future reports to the Council and the Conference.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

Testimony: The Revd David Goodall, District Mission Enabler in the Yorkshire West Methodist District, said: “We’ve witnessed the Holy Spirit opening hearts and minds to New Places for New People: an openness to their place within the life of the Methodist Church; an openness to give it a try and see what happens; an openness to where God might be showing us opportunities to explore where NPNPs might emerge. Our NPNP work is a priority in our District Strategy 2022-2027. As part of that commitment, the District Policy Committee has agreed to commit £450,000 over the next three years, in hope that circuits will commit an additional £280,000 of funding to match the connexional funding. This means that we will potentially allocate more than £1million to NPNP over the next three years. We believe the openness to NPNP and the resources being made available are exciting and with the continued guidance of God’s Spirit we will see new communities emerging across Yorkshire West and the entire Church where people meet God and begin to live as disciples.”

Church at the Margins

39. We celebrate that with its foundational commitment to Church at the Margins and New Places for New People, *God For All* is offering a possibly unique approach to mission and ministry among Churches in Britain, which we should continue to build upon.
40. We celebrate that Methodists share a deep desire for mission and ministry with and within communities at economic margins. We celebrate that there is an emerging awareness that justice and evangelism should be gospel partners in every context, but absolutely must be held together in mission and ministry contexts at the economic margins.
41. We are learning that our desire for mission and ministry at the economic margins, in communities experiencing poverty, is still generally more aspirational than taking place in practice. Moreover, when we are present in economically marginalised communities, often our default mission practice is to respond to ‘perceived need’ rather than to build community. We need to nurture new relationships in economically marginalised communities and embed actions that demonstrate ‘we are with people, not for them’. Alongside starting new Church at the Margins communities, we must find ways to support existing Church at the Margins communities, which are in danger of closing in the current economic climate.²²

22 A timely resonance is noted between the reports of the Mission Committee and Ministries Committee in calling for the Methodist Church to address more urgently what the Christian and Methodist

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

42. We celebrate that in the past two years, more than 240 individual leaders have been trained on robust courses such as 'Beginning a Church at the Margins', 'Faith Rooted Community Organising', and 'Church Planting Intensive'; with an additional 300 or more individuals attending Church at the Margins events or taster webinars.

Testimony: Street Banquet, an NPNP community in Birmingham, is rooted in Jesus' parable of the great feast as recorded in Luke 14:15-24. The Revd Dr Neil Johnson, pioneer minister, said: "Here is a vision of a table where the most marginalised and disempowered people are welcomed as honoured guests. The parable challenges social norms, breaks down barriers and turns conventional roles upside-down. Street Banquet is a place where hosts become guests and guests become hosts – a sign of the new world of God."

Testimony: Derbyshire North East Methodist Circuit launched in 2020 and brought together two smaller circuits, modelling a transformative consultation and discernment process between members of those circuits. The decision has resulted in a deeper commitment and expanded missional capacity to remain present and reach out in new ways in the context of a post-industrial village and a group of interconnected estates – 'left behind places' where residents face economic deprivation and isolation. The Circuit's community pioneer is prayerfully engaging with and serving communities that have very few amenities. Through an unexpected meeting during a prayer walk, God revealed a venue for youth and children's work that is now thriving.

Testimony: Deacon Michelle Legumi, of The Beacon Church and Christian Centre in Dover, said: "Six years ago I inherited a weekly lunch with a traditional 'God slot' and prayer. We now look completely different! Our Friendly Friday community includes many who for different reasons find themselves on the edges of society. God has brought us together and continues to create a community of belonging where together we learn how to be the people and community that God calls us to be."

traditions of relational economic justice ask of us practically for such a time as this. This may include a proposal for a process to enable the Conference to confer deliberately on a way forward in order: to fund ministry and mission where the need is greatest, where the reserves are depleted, where the "income" is comparatively less due to poverty and economic marginalisation; to practise the connexional principle enshrined in our theology and polity; and to respond to the Principle for Justice that "God consistently shows a bias to people experiencing poverty and those who are excluded."

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

Every Church a Growing Church

43. We celebrate the churches across the Connexion who are faithful to *Our Calling* and are responding to the gospel of God's love in Christ in diverse and life-giving ways. Particularly we celebrate the faithfulness of many smaller or rural churches who are discerning the way forward in especially challenging conditions, innovating and partnering together for the sake of mission.
44. We celebrate that 150 Circuits – more than 40% of Circuits in the MCB – have hosted a Circuit Meeting or circuit leadership team meeting in partnership with the Connexional Evangelism and Growth team specifically to explore *God for All* and their churches' process of discernment in order to have more focused mission and evangelism. We celebrate that 1042 individual leaders have participated in online or in-person mission engagement events for smaller and/or rural churches and contexts. We also celebrate that the Rural Hope Hub, which supports national and regional rural leaders, has been led by the Methodist Church to grow in number and scope: from 11 Methodist members in 2021 to 55 Methodist and ecumenical members in 2024.
45. We celebrate that intentional mission planning – when approached with attentiveness and prayer, community engagement, and a trust in God's presence and calling – can help move churches and leaders beyond reactive crisis management. It can be liberating, leading to a clearer sense of purpose and increased energy for mission and ministry.
46. We are learning that the membership of the Methodist Church is currently getting smaller. *God For All* (2020-2025) was clear-eyed about the impossibility of changing this trend immediately or through merely "fine-tuning our current reality and 'just working harder'". Amidst this general trend, we celebrate that some churches are experiencing growth and that many churches have committed to missional discernment. We are learning that churches are discovering that some current commitments may need to be pruned or stopped to discover what is most important for their future. We continue to envisage in the words of *God For All*: "in both existing churches and new churches, the stewarding of mixed ecology cultures so that over the long-term, growth does occur in the numbers of new disciples of Jesus Christ, the numbers of missional risks taken and new churches started, the numbers of people who offer themselves for ordained and lay leadership... and the numbers of lives and communities transformed."²³

23 *God For All* (2020-2025), paragraph 26.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

47. We are learning that rural churches are often very deeply connected with their local communities and have increased potential (proportionately when considering population size) to reach more people, especially when working ecumenically. Rural churches are able to stage mission events that engage significant percentages of the entire village population, eg a Messy Church in a village where half the families with children participate.
48. We are learning that property is a crucial tool for mission, whether buildings are creatively repurposed, renewed, or sold after careful discernment in order to fund something new.

Testimony: The Revd Ruth Gilson-Webb from the Yorkshire North and East District said: “[There were] two sets of predominantly elderly congregations and very little energy for anything other than coming together on a Sunday. And so, one of the Councils was brave enough to write to the other Council to say ‘We’re going to think about our future. Shall we think about it together?’ ...I think there was a God thing happening, to be honest... I was saying, “Perhaps if we’re called now to be together, it’s because God *is* doing something new. And what is it that we could be opening ourselves up toward?” In September 2022, the two churches formally merged to become one Methodist Church on two sites, which enabled a deeper sharing of resources, a reduction in the amount of administration, and more time for mission.

Testimony: In Devon, the Horrabridge Love Your Neighbour Church Project works in partnership with the whole community, running ten community groups where countless faith conversations take place. The pioneer faith community project, Dinner Church, has recently become an established church, bringing a brand-new Christian community to the circuit. Project lead, lay pioneer Ali Mansfield, said: “We have all witnessed the Holy Spirit at work in our village and are excited to see where this leads in the future.”

Testimony: Townend Methodist Church in Chapel-en-le-Frith wanted to stay alive and thrive in its rural context, so it pushed its mission outward and with the help of the local community turned a paddock at the rear of the church into a thriving community garden. All are welcome in this nurturing space, where various groups

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

meet throughout the week. The garden also hosts larger events and services. Project lead Mary Craner said: “It has been very rewarding and heartwarming to see the garden project blossom over the past four years, both in what we grow and in the people we have worked alongside. I feel a real sense that God has led me to use my life experience and gardening skills to make life better for the people of Chapel-en-le-Frith.”

Testimony: Keswick Methodist Church in Cumbria underwent a significant remodelling and refurbishment project in 2018. In the final stage some of the church land was sold to address the need for more local affordable housing. It was sold to Keswick Community Housing Trust at a below market price to support the charitable aim, the local need and the church's overall mission. The proceeds contributed to the church redevelopment and enabled the building of four town houses for rent. ‘Southey Court’ opened in July 2021 with four tenants in place from a long list of local people looking for such properties. The project has significantly strengthened the relationships between the church and its community, transforming local views of how the two are so interconnected. One leader said: “Throughout the development of the project, God’s presence became increasingly evident in the positive impact of the teamwork, the overwhelming support and encouragement from the community and our user groups, and also in the number of successful grant applications awarded.”

Transformational Leadership

49. We are learning that positive engagement with mission planning and transformational action increases in the presence of the following factors:

- Not feeling rushed. There needs to be planning time and open space to discern and experiment
- Not feeling in competition with other churches, circuits, and districts
- Having a guiding leader or facilitator that keeps the process moving
- Having lay and ordained leadership that builds teams around prayer, reflection on the gospel purpose (the ‘why?’ of mission and ministry), and bold missional experimentation
- Knowing that we become more missional and evangelistic by actually doing mission and evangelism; and trusting that we don’t have to do everything, we can do a few things well with purpose

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

50. We celebrate that teams from more than thirty Circuits have spent a year participating in the Transformational Learning Community since 2020, with some staying in for up to the three years.
51. We celebrate the transformation that happens when we discover and embrace shared leadership: lay and ordained people working as a team.
52. We are learning that there is sometimes confusion about who has the influence or authority to advocate for healthy changes in churches. Some superintendents and ministers might claim that it is not their responsibility, that change should be led by the Circuit Meeting. On the other hand, circuit and church members sometimes expect the ordained to take the lead. This can set up a cycle of uncertainty and conflict avoidance. We long to see lay and ordained leaders with influence and responsibility stewarding their power faithfully by creating robust teams that share decision-making and enjoy saying 'yes' and who build stable missional cultures that enable, equip, and release more people to discern and follow God's call on their lives.
53. We are learning that when there is a conscious commitment to a 'mixed/blended ecology'²⁴ or 'dual transformation' in Districts, Circuits, and churches, there are often signs of hope and even flourishing for both existing churches and New Places for New People.
54. We celebrate the ecumenical relationships that are growing across the Connexion and the focus on working together in mission (in addition to continuing the dialogue and mutual exchange of wisdom that have been the centrepiece of relationships since the ecumenical renewal of the 1960s). We particularly celebrate how our strategic New Places for New People/Church at the Margins commitment is leading to shared work in the ecumenical pioneering and planting movement in Britain and continental Europe. We applaud how different denominational teams have come together for increased capacity and joy in evangelism projects spearheaded by the Methodist Church, such as at the Eurovision festival in Liverpool in 2023, how our commitment to rural mission and ministry has led to increasing ecumenical attention on pioneering and replanting in rural contexts, and how Methodism is leading alongside other denominations

24 "The *blended ecology* refers to [New Places for New People] in symbiotic relationship with [existing] forms of church in such a way that the combining of these missional and attractional modes blend to create a nascent form. ... The blended ecology is not healthy if both [existing] and emerging forms do not have some influence on the other. As both grow and influence each other, the whole church is strengthened" (Michael Beck in *Deep Roots, Wild Branches: Revitalizing the Church in the Blended Ecology*, 2019, p. 10).

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

in ecumenical work in digital evangelism (eg through the Christian Enquiry Agency) and new decolonised models of evangelism and evangelisation (eg through the Churches Together in England's Churches Group for Evangelisation).

Testimony: Deacon Dawn Canham of the Wimbledon Circuit, London District, said: Through the provision of coaching I have been enabled to journey alongside a community who wanted to try something different from a traditional model of church: to develop their relationship with an arts centre to explore evangelism through the arts. This has helped us transform the language and format of our Sunday gatherings, which now include food, music and discussions in a relaxed 'come as you are' setting in the auditorium of our theatre church. We can now truly say we are working towards a fully inclusive community where all are welcome. We have seen God's Spirit moving more people who may have only attended Art Centre events to join with us on a Sunday morning; several have remarked they "didn't think church could be like this."

Structural/Cultural Challenges and Future Hope²⁵

55. We are learning that there remains a sense of 'initiative overload and fatigue' among some in the Connexion and that many are working with significant levels of stress and fatigue. We are learning that staff teams and churches alike can feel that they are failing when they can't see how to create space for deeper missional discernment that includes well-being or how to approach decisions about shifting contexts and commitments.
56. We recognise and celebrate the importance of the connexional principle,²⁶ which is about integrating commitments and empowering different areas of the Church to work harmoniously and strategically together. We are at our best when we build learning and trust through shared mission priorities with local expressions of service.
57. We celebrate that healthy, committed relationships among people in mission and ministry often have the most significant influence in moving us forward

²⁵ cf. Section 4.7.11 in *Called to Love and Praise*

²⁶ The connexional principle is "a vital truth about the nature of the Church ... which witnesses to a mutuality and interdependence ..., a complementarity of connexionalism and local autonomy" *Called to Love and Praise*, 4.6.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

into transformative change. We celebrate the growing call to more significantly resource people and places with passion, capacity, and potential for local transformation. We want to ‘overinvest’ in groups and areas of particular strategic focus, for example young people, economically marginalised communities, and churches that are particularly serious about community engagement and growth, etc.

58. We are learning that there is widespread desire for continuing organisational/ ecclesial alignment to serve the Connexion’s bold commitments to mission and ministry. For example, questions were raised consistently during the year-long consultation process asking for increased attention to: the complexities of ministerial stationing and potential barriers to missional and pioneering appointments; systemic challenges in terms of structural issues, governance, and compliance that may unintentionally inhibit innovation and change at the local church, circuit, and district levels; the limits of the traditional implementation of the preaching plan for encouraging rooted mission, helping the worshipping community grow in depth and number, and including rising generations of unaffiliated people; the desire for every church to have a ‘pastor’ (ordained or lay) who spends the great majority of their time with that church’s community and missional leadership. The consultation process also heard questions about relevant pathways into the distinctiveness of Methodist membership and how exploration of our core doctrines and faith beliefs might link creatively and mutually to the faith practices of ‘A Methodist Way of Life’, and about the potentially unequitable resource sharing across the Connexion that may put communities experiencing poverty at a stark disadvantage. We believe that the Church must continue to unpack these questions and explore them further. At the same time, we wonder if focusing our primary energies on seeking *permanent* new structures might mistakenly distract us from having flexible structures that work ‘for now’. This is an important dynamic for the entire Church and is particularly relevant for Church at the Margins and New Places for New People communities.
59. We celebrate the Conference’s recent, ongoing, and/or upcoming work²⁷ to address the structural changes that *God For All (2020-2025)*, among many other Conference reports, looks for.²⁸ We celebrate the growing awareness that if the Church wants to be different, we must do things differently.

27 For example: *Changing Patterns of Ministry, Reflective Supervision, Stationing Review, Oversight and Trusteeship*.

28 *God For All (2020-2025)*, paragraph 27.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

The Importance of Stopping and Transitioning

60. We are learning that focusing our mission and ministry in the most life-giving and community-building ways requires us to review and change our current commitments – sometimes to transition them towards a different approach and sometimes to stop them altogether. Churches, Circuits, and Districts acknowledge that this is necessary work, and the same applies to connexional commitments. In engaging and reviewing *God For All (2020-2025)*, we have learned that some of its plans and ideas didn't work, needed significant revision, or didn't bear the fruit envisaged. For example, the following programmes have been stopped or realigned:

- The 'Transformational Leadership Learning Community' (TLLC) was engaging scores of lay and ordained leaders, with the focus shifting from regular residentials to monthly online check-ins and coaching during the pandemic. However, making space for two monthly meetings proved difficult for participants' diaries, and take-up for the annual residential was low. Transitioning the learning model has helped focus on the most transformational element of the process – team and individual coaching online – and aligned with the Church's commitment to net zero. It also freed up energy to host a larger missional residential conference ('Whole Hearted') that gathered more than 200 diverse leaders from across the Connexion.
- The 'Mission Hubs' pilot revealed that though there was interest from a few circuits to serve as centres of pilgrimage for learning and training, the challenges of the pandemic and the subsequent strains on general circuit life meant that the programme would not be consistently viable. Likewise, the learning partnerships with Fresh Expressions and Leading Your Church into Growth have been reframed and realigned to reduce complexity and to free funding to our increased commitment to Church at the Margins communities.
- The commitment to start a movement of young evangelists is still a priority, but it has become clear that the most strategic way to do that is by integrating it into a less fragmented, more joined-up offering for young people and young adults to explore vocation and develop leadership, and also to reach unaffiliated members of the rising generations.
- Instead of sponsoring three major *God For All* in-person conferences during 2020-2025 as previously planned, we have built key evangelism content into existing gatherings and celebrations such as 3Generate, the Superintendents' Conferences and Methodist Diaconal Order Convocations, and existing synod and circuit gatherings. This has reduced travel, saved money, and allowed for more bespoke content to be delivered in contextually appropriate ways.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

Testimony: Participants at the 'Whole Hearted' evangelism conference said: "This gathering felt to me like heaven coming down to earth: artists, prophets, storytellers, inclusive evangelists and justice-seekers, pioneers and planters and pastors ordained and lay, people right across the theological spectrum who care about theological depth and missional growth, diverse but together as we breathe in the Spirit and follow Jesus where he points us." "It emptied me and filled me at the same time." "I leave the conference feeling freer than I have in a long time but also with a great sense of holy burden and invitation."

Section C – Ongoing Commitments to Support God's People in Mission and Ministry

61. *God For All (2020-2025)* originally set out eight areas of commitment which, for the sake of simplicity and accessible communications, have now been aligned into the following four core areas:

- New Places for New People/Church at the Margins
- Evangelism
- Missional Growth and Leadership
- Discipleship/Methodist Way of Life

Under each of these four core areas in the following sections, there is:

- a brief re-introduction of the core area
- a table showing the ongoing outworking of commitments agreed and trajectories set by the Conference in *God For All (2020-2025)*, as well as key partners across the Connexion and wider Church
- some rationale statements for key collaborative continuing development work

62. In the following commitments, we seek to be attentive to the fruitfulness to which God calls the Church. This attentiveness includes recognising, celebrating, and building on the things that are essential for the flourishing of Local Churches (including New Places for New People), Circuits, and Districts. Measuring this fruitfulness flows from our faithfulness to God and wise stewardship of the time, energy, and resources we have to offer. A breadth and depth of reflection on fruitfulness includes measuring three types of missional markers:²⁹ *quantifiable*

29 This fruitfulness orientation to measurement is result of consultations with ministers, lay people and pioneers across the Connexion, and is rooted in tried-and-tested best practice that works in all contexts. For more information, see *New Places for New People, Starting New Christian communities: A practical guide*, chapter 12.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

aspects (such as the number of NPNPs started in a district and how many reflect our commitment to marginalised communities, the number of one-to-one community conversations as part of an evangelism/justice project, and the amount in a circuit budget for missional purposes); *qualitative aspects* (eg emerging themes and practices, descriptions of experience such as how spiritually alive a community feels); and *narrative aspects* (eg stories and testimonies of God’s movement or challenge, including signs of joy, conflict, and lament). Stabilising this threefold attentiveness to fruitfulness, while also anticipating unexpected insights and discoveries along the way, will support the embedding of shared missional priorities across the diverse contexts of the Connexion in the next decade of important change, but also well beyond 2032.

New Places for New People/Church at the Margins

63. New Places for New People (NPNP) are new Christian communities among religiously unaffiliated people. Church at the Margins (CAM) communities are NPNPs started and nurtured among economically marginalised people, which requires prioritising the lived experience of people experiencing poverty so that they become co-partners in designing, creating and leading new Christian communities. NPNP/CAM communities have been created across the Connexion in diverse contexts with different models. They are among the most effective means of connecting new people to spiritual exploration and Christian community. In addition, they often identify and strengthen emerging leaders, offer missional learning to existing churches, and help the whole Church reflect on and examine its calling. CAM communities in particular challenge the whole Church to receive the gifts and ministry of people at the economic margins in order to be more fully transformed by the gospel.

| The Methodist Church’s mission towards 2032: New Places for New People/Church at the Margins | | |
|---|---|--|
| Our deepening commitments to... | We will do this by... | Our work is shared through partnerships with... |
| Beginning new and sustaining existing NPNP/CAM communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding and resourcing Circuits and Districts to begin and sustain increasing numbers of NPNP/ CAM communities • Funding existing district and circuit CAM communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District and circuit teams • Learning Network • Culture and Language Diverse Fellowships and Congregations (CLDFC) |

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

| The Methodist Church's mission towards 2032: <i>New Places for New People/Church at the Margins</i> | | |
|---|--|--|
| Our deepening commitments to... | We will do this by... | Our work is shared through partnerships with... |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Culture and Language Diverse Fellowships and Congregations (CLDFC) to form emerging Methodist societies and new Christian communities • Funding chaplaincies to explore NPNP/CAM community formation • Funding half-time district NPNP leads | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministries Committee and Team |
| Embedding a culture of Faith Rooted Community Organising that joins justice and evangelism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding half-time district faith rooted community organisers and a connexional faith rooted community organising officer • Supporting the growing 'Let's End Poverty' movement with a local commitment to justice and community engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice-Seeking Church • Joint Public Issues Team • Methodist Diaconal Order and Convocation • Ministries Committee and Team • Queen's Foundation • Learning Network • Citizens UK • Urban Life |
| Training, equipping, learning for pioneering and planting development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding and diversifying the Methodist Pioneering Pathways • Engaging current and future NPNPs in a long-term research project in order to learn and communicate findings • Resourcing ministerial formation and training for pioneering ministry contexts • Pioneering online Christian communities and digital discipleship networks • Expanding safeguarding policy and practice for NPNP/CAM communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queen's Foundation • Cliff College • Ministries Committee and Team • Fresh Expressions movement • Church Mission Society • Safeguarding • Digital Team • Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee • Culture and Language Diverse Fellowships and Congregations (CLDFC) • NPNP Guiding Team |

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

Rationale for key developments:

- **District/circuit funding for increasing New Places for New People/Church at the Margins communities:** At a time of limited financial and human resources for new work, supporting NPNP communities to emerge in every District and Circuit remains a priority. This involves building on collaborative ways of working and the signs of new life across Districts/Circuits. Matched funding remains available to support the increase of new CAM/NPNP communities.
- **District/circuit funding for sustaining existing Church at the Margins communities:** One in five people lives in poverty in the UK, with four million people experiencing destitution. Poverty is increasing and deepening with a devastating impact on people's lives, especially children. Methodism (like many other denominations) has been more likely to close churches in low-income communities. Long term commitment is vital to develop and sustain new communities in low-income areas. As part of our commitment to be a justice-seeking Church, sustainability funding is now available to provide support for existing connexionally funded Church at the Margins communities.
- **Funding for emerging Christian communities with Culture and Language Diverse Fellowships and Congregations (CLDFC):** In the last five years, there has been significant and continuing growth among CLDFC in the Methodist Church. In addition to ongoing conversations in order to support and nurture emerging Methodist societies, focused funding is available for the networks of CLDFC to help discern vision and enable more communities to begin.
- **Funding for New Places for New People/Church at the Margins communities related to chaplaincies:** Many chaplaincy settings are rich contexts for starting New Places for New People. Focused funding is available to enable chaplains, particularly those in business and commerce contexts including workplace chaplaincy, to explore building new Christian communities (with an emphasis on low-income contexts and ministry with economically marginalised people) as part of their chaplaincy work.
- **District funding for New Places for New People district leads:** In conversations with district NPNP teams we are increasingly aware that 'grass roots change needs grass roots accompaniment'. Developing new communities requires focused attention and dedicated and sustained local support. We have seen the benefit of district mission enablers and others accompanying missional change and want to enable this dedicated support to be available in every district. To 'normalise' new communities emerging in every District, we will fund a dedicated half-time NPNP lead/coordinator (0.5 post in each District) to accompany the development of a vision, and provide the vital support needed in the early stages of a new community forming. The district NPNP lead will work in partnership with the district NPNP team and connexional NPNP team to support new communities as they begin.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

- **A broad commitment to Faith Rooted Community Organising (FRCO):** If we want things to be different, we have to do things differently. Faith Rooted Community Organising is a series of practices, informed and guided by our faith, that draw people together to listen, connect, and build collective power to bring about change. FRCO builds on and works alongside other expressions of community organising.³⁰ It will be co-developed to support the underlying cultural and leadership changes needed to action our vision to become an inclusive, justice-seeking, evangelistic, growing Church. This involves three distinct aims of implementing organising practices:
 - to embed the principles and practices of *A Justice-Seeking Church* report
 - to transform existing churches
 - to begin New Places for New People.The practices of community organising will enable the flourishing of relationships with God, ourselves, and others, which are at the heart of the gospel and fundamental to *God For All; Justice, Dignity and Solidarity; Action for Hope; Positive Working Together*; and the implementation of our commitment to being a *Justice-Seeking Church*.
- **Funding to support a connexional Faith Rooted Community Organising officer:** To accompany deep cultural change, a connexional FRCO officer (provisionally located on the Justice-Seeking Church Team with deep connection to the work of the Ministry: Worship & Vocation and Learning & Development Team, the Evangelism & Growth Team, and the Joint Public Issues Team) will develop the existing strands of work on FRCO theological and ecclesiological foundations and core values, in collaboration with the district FRCO leads and others. The priorities of the Justice-Seeking Church report will be integrated with bespoke materials developed for the Rural Ministry Course and Church at the Margins FRCO weekends and learnings from the 'Let's End Poverty' movement, the work of the Queen's Foundation with Citizens UK, and the *West Midlands Community Organising* pilot. The FRCO officer will lead on developing and implementing a connexional FRCO training and support strategy, including developing FRCO communities of practice across the Connexion, liaising with other FRCO officers and leading on developing external partner relationships in collaboration with other key voices in the anti-poverty movement.
- **District funding for Faith Rooted Community Organising (FRCO) district leads:** Local and focused FRCO resources are needed to support cultures of vision-into-action in every District by working with key district colleagues including the district leadership team, the district NPNP team, superintendents, mission enablers, Methodist Pioneering Pathways and social justice leads. To seed and 'normalise'

³⁰ For example, Broad-Based Community Organising is practised by diverse organisations including Citizens UK, which has Methodist member institutions (including churches, circuits, or districts) in 11 of its 17 UK chapters.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

an organising culture in every District, we will fund a dedicated half-time FRCO district lead, who will provide bespoke support to embed Faith Rooted Community Organising practices aiming to develop teams and effective leaders of change in those congregations and communities. The role will be key to supporting existing churches and new Christian communities (NPNPs) to make connections as part of their discipleship and core mission to be justice-seeking.

- **Expanding safeguarding policy and practice for NPNP/CAM communities:** The Safeguarding Training Working Group is reflecting on specific resources and training needed to support sensitivities that may arise in pioneering contexts, with particular attention to Church at the Margins communities who may be experiencing poverty, seeking asylum, or have other factors that potentially could make them vulnerable.
- **Resourcing ministerial formation and training for those who have candidated with the specific context of pioneering ministry** – We invite the Ministries Committee, in consultation with The Queen’s Foundation and the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC), to reflect on any further resources (beyond the standard initial training) needed in initial training and formation for ordained ministry to equip candidates who have candidated for the specific context of pioneering ministry. This is alongside continuing to resource all student ministers in training to develop confident skills and missional capacity to develop and/or offer supportive, permissive oversight for New Places for New People.

Evangelism

64. Evangelism is good news for others, our local communities, our world, and us. Ultimately it is “the good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ ... in the power of the Holy Spirit.”³¹ Every single disciple is called to listen for, speak of, and live out the good news – however young or old we are, whether we live in an urban or rural or suburban area, or whether we communicate digitally or in person. Evangelism is not about having the ‘right answers’, nor is it about doing ‘to’ others, but it is about stepping out of our comfort zones, forming meaningful connections with diverse people, and trusting God as we intentionally listen, speak, live, and pray. We continue to deepen our commitment to this part of ‘A Methodist Way of Life’ (MWOL) as we seek to be confident and authentic evangelists, present missionally in our local communities, together identifying our gifts and opportunities for faith sharing.

31 *Called to Love and Praise*, 3.2.2

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

| The Methodist Church's mission towards 2032: <i>Evangelism</i> | | |
|---|--|---|
| Our deepening commitments to... | We will do this by... | Our work is shared through partnerships with... |
| Training, equipping, learning for evangelism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing supportive capacity for diverse Methodists engaging the core suite of evangelism resources • Annual focused resourcing of a specific connexional evangelistic call to action • Facilitating cross-pollinated learning across diverse ministry contexts with particular attention to the global Church, chaplaincy and pioneering (within Britain) • Funding the Tutor in Evangelism and Leadership post in ministerial training at Queen's Foundation • Increasing integration with the Children, Young People, and Young Adult programmes to equip Methodist people under the age of thirty for evangelism • Expanding the Methodist Community of Evangelists • Continued and increased resourcing to embed a culture of testimony in the Church, integrated within existing and developing programmes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Network • Children, Youth and Family Ministry • Ministries Committee and Team • Cliff College • Global Relationships Committee • CLDFC • Queen's Foundation • Churches Together in England (CTE) Churches' Group for Evangelisation • World Methodist Council • Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee • Methodist Heritage Committee |
| Expanding our evangelistic presence at festivals and major events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategically resourcing an increased number of flagship national events • Supporting Circuits with planning for significant local events • Increasing opportunities for creative evangelism in schools and through heritage and art | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement Team • Learning Network • Children, Youth and Family Ministry • Young Adult Network • District and circuit teams |

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

| The Methodist Church's mission towards 2032: <i>Evangelism</i> | | |
|---|--|--|
| Our deepening commitments to... | We will do this by... | Our work is shared through partnerships with... |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodist Heritage Committee • Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee |
| Developing tools for exploring faith online | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital campaigns for evangelism and discipleship that combine connexional production and adaptable local resources • Launching a unified content hub to engage people as they discover or deepen their faith through digital facilitation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Team • Christian Enquiry Agency |
| Resourcing the Church digitally and for digital mission and ministry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building confidence in utilising digital as a mission field • Providing a digital suite of resources including a church finder platform, innovative digital training, and hosted websites for any Methodist church or community • Resourcing integrated digital technology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Team |

Rationale for key developments:

- **Expanding our evangelistic presence at festivals and major events:** In the words of *God For All*: “we want to be known ... as a Church that proclaims the saving good news of a God for all and a Church for all ... that builds a national evangelistic witness at major events and festivals.” This work has proved to offer significant missional opportunities, working most effectively when Local Churches, Circuits and Districts collaborate with a connexionally supported team. This is the work of seed planting, watering, and nurturing, as the Church turns up in surprising places, creating space for deeply meaningful spiritual connection and conversation. It is also the work of equipping Methodist people across the Connexion to be confident,

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

authentic evangelists – many of whom are surprised by the formational experiences they have while witnessing in this way. In order to increase capacity to support more local places and events, and to develop and model good evangelistic and discipleship pathways for people we engage with, this work requires significant expansion in 2025–2032. Event and festival spaces, as well as increased evangelistic focus at our heritage sites and museums, offer us ideal contexts to practise Methodism’s inclusive evangelism for the 21st century in ways that are healing, holistic, justice-seeking, and creative.

- **Annual focused resourcing for a specific connexional evangelistic call to action:** We know there continue to be many barriers to Methodist people engaging in evangelism. Leaders still say that the parts of a ‘Methodist Way of Life’ their churches find most difficult to engage with are the three evangelistic commitments. We know that the most effective way to increase our evangelistic confidence as a Church is by practising evangelism. By taking appropriate risks and stepping out of our comfort zones, we meet with God as we meet with others and talk about faith and spirituality. Good evangelism evangelises the evangelist. Often, individuals and church communities need a ‘gateway’ experience of evangelism to show them this – in other words, an experience that invites them into evangelism which does not seem too demanding of their time or too risky. Resourcing the entire Connexion to mobilise annually around an evangelistic call to action will help evangelistic practice move from ‘early adopters’ into the majority. This would integrate with existing frameworks and priorities within the Church, and would support local churches with significant communications focus, resources, training, guidance, and storytelling.
- **Facilitating cross-pollinated learning across diverse ministry contexts with particular attention to partnerships across the global Church, and chaplaincy and pioneering within Britain:** Too often in the past (and still sometimes in the present) our evangelism within Britain has been shaped by theologies and practices that are racist, colonial, and harmful. Even when well-meaning, some efforts at evangelism have been seen as something we do ‘to’ others, a colonisation of spaces instead of a mutual, relational orientation. It is vital, as we develop new practices for our time and cultures, that we resist these damaging models of evangelism. In order to grow as a Church in Britain that is inclusive, justice-seeking, and evangelistic, cross-pollinated learning across diverse contexts will be essential – in particular with partners from the global South and the majority world,³² and with increased

32 The Methodist Church in Britain is in an ongoing process of decolonisation in its global practice. There has been a move over the last century and this century from control and paternalistic benevolence – through charity, advocacy, relationship and mutuality – towards deep solidarity. This is not to say that instances of inappropriate engagement with the Global Church cannot sometimes occur. It is vital that this process of decolonisation continues, to repair the harm from the past, and examine, learn and renew our practices into the future. That process requires change in Britain, and within our relationships and thinking here, just as it has required change and continues to require examination in our practice and relationship with partners around the world.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

connectivity across British Methodist networks including chaplains and pioneers.

By seeking expertise on the way we decolonise and renew our practices when the Church is a guest or a partner, and recognising insights we gain both from partnerships with churches and institutions beyond Britain, and from members from elsewhere in the world who become part of our church life in Britain, we will enable greater reflection on, and improvement of, our own evangelistic practice.

- **Digitally led campaigns:** Our seasonal and year-round campaigns celebrate the values and distinctiveness of the Methodist Church, providing key touch points at moments when people are either more open to a religious message, or where we can confidently speak into a relevant context nationally. These campaigns will primarily be digitally led, but we must endeavour to provide routes in for those who do not have access to a computer or other digital device, as well as resource Local Churches to join in and contribute. At Advent/Christmas, we must speak prophetically and promote with confidence the message we have to share, in an arena that becomes diluted with confusing and 'me-first' messaging. Our annual flagship Christmas campaign will be increasingly taken up by the Church in all areas, bringing people together and providing a consistent experience (as much as that is possible) from our social media to our churches to our community partners.
- **Launching a unified content hub to engage people as they discover or deepen faith through digital facilitation:** On average in the UK, an adult spends around six hours a day using their mobile device. As a Church, we need the ability to engage people on different journeys with Methodist-shaped Christian content that enables to them to discover or deepen faith through digital facilitation. We are committed to learning from and adapting to their digital habits rather than anticipating frequent visits to our own digital platforms. A content hub will allow us to develop journeys and pathways for external users to discover what being a Christian and a Methodist is about, as well as developing discipleship and engaging in Methodist communities. Internally, the Church will fully assess and analyse digital interaction across our different platforms and understand user journeys to maximise our engagement opportunities. This will help transform the way we practise digital evangelism and integrate with on-site evangelism through connection and follow-up methods. This work will enhance our confidence in engaging individuals and deriving insights from their interactions with us. The main aim of this resource should be to connect people with the Local Church in their community. This will also give us the opportunity to anticipate how people will respond to particular 'next steps' and provide them with ones they are more likely to engage with on a recurrent basis.
- **Resourcing the Church digitally and for digital mission and ministry:** The current state of the Church's online presence is highly variable. Although most Methodist Circuits do have websites, they differ greatly in quality and usability. Individuals in

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

the Church have diverse experiences of digital mission, with some bringing vast expertise, and others having very little understanding of technology at all. Though there is a church-mapping tool on the Methodist Church's website, currently it does not satisfactorily connect new people with Methodist communities. If we are going to embrace effectively the digital world as our parish, we must invest significant resources in our Church's digital life. Methodist churches and communities need to feel able to develop their own digital mission in local contexts, and it needs to be easier and more accessible for new people to find a Methodist community relevant to them, with up-to-date information about those communities. We will build this work for the whole Connexion, resourcing the Local Church and all other structures within it to provide a unified experience for both the Church and those interacting with the Church. Integrated management of technology, platforms and data allows for a more coherent digital strategy and engagement experience and ultimately more simply facilitates the connection of spiritual explorers to the most helpful places to continue their faith journey.

- **Resourcing integrated technology:** Providing technological and digital hardware and coordinated software resource directly to ministers and key lay leaders across the Connexion will be a transformative way to equip the Methodist people, increase creativity and communication, and free up capacity for mission and ministry. We are ambitious and aspirational in our desire to see the Methodist Church realise its full potential for the digital world. We will consider how AI could ethically free up capacity in all areas of the Church, especially for those burdened with administrative tasks that block them from mission and ministry within their communities.

Missional Growth and Leadership

65. This is about churches, New Places for New People, Circuits and Districts putting the mission of God first. It requires transformational leadership which means lay and ordained people experiencing transformation and then working together to transform churches and Circuits for the sake of transformation in the world God loves. It is about putting mission first in all we do: when planning church activities; in church and circuit meetings; through the way we use our finances; when allocating ministerial and other staff time. It is about growing relationships; growing in love for our communities; growing in community engagement; growing in confidence in evangelism and, by God's grace, growing numerically too. Having prioritised mission, leaders plan for it, take action, reflect on their practice and act again. A continuous cycle of action and reflection ensures that mission happens and that it is continually evolving according to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

| The Methodist Church's mission towards 2032: <i>Missional Growth and Leadership</i> | | |
|--|---|--|
| Our deepening commitments to... | We will do this by... | Our work is shared through partnerships with... |
| <p>Training, equipping, learning for missional growth and leadership</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing supportive capacity for church and circuit teams to reflect on their mission planning and practice with a bias for outward-focused action and transformational encounters/relationships with unaffiliated people • Providing resources, training, and coaching intervention that encourage every church, circuit, and district to have an active and sustainable mission plan that prioritises outward-focused action • Facilitating learning about the principles and practices of growing healthy, differently sized churches, with particular attention to youth/children, smaller churches, rural churches, and Culture and Language Diverse Fellowships and Congregations (CLDFC)³³ • Supporting churches to build relationships and ministry in their local schools, with uniformed organisations, and with other ecumenical or parachurch partners • Supporting the development of a learning pathway for foundational faith formation and ministry with children, youth, young adults, and families | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Network • Children, Youth and Family Ministry • District Missioner Community • Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee • Action for Hope • Global Relationships • Culture and Language Diverse Fellowships and Congregations (CLDFC) • Ministries Team and Committee • Place for Hope |

33 Note the expected Culture and Language Diverse Fellowships and Congregations (CLDFC) strategic development is currently in process towards a report to Conference in 2025.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

| The Methodist Church's mission towards 2032: <i>Missional Growth and Leadership</i> | | |
|---|---|--|
| Our deepening commitments to... | We will do this by... | Our work is shared through partnerships with... |
| Expanding provision for coaching | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building the community of Methodist coaches • Matching coaches to circuit/church teams that are prioritising mission • Matching coaches to pioneering/missional lay and ordained leaders • Matching coaches to children, youth, young adult, family and intergenerational leaders and teams to start or reboot related ministries in churches, circuits, schools and communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Network • Children, Youth and Family Ministries |
| Strengthening a Christian presence in rural communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting existing rural churches in sharing examples of stability and innovation for the future • Encouraging pioneering of rural New Places for New People, micro-communities and replanted discipleship classes, with or without ownership of a building • Extending training and networks that prepare people for leading, ministering, and pioneering in rural communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Network • District/circuit missionaries • Cliff College • Queen's Foundation • Fresh Expressions movement • Arthur Rank Centre |
| Encouraging the strategic use of property for mission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led by the Property Support Team, working together across the Connexion to develop a consistent response system, enabling clear, accessible routes, guidance, and networks for churches needing support in the missional use of property | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property Development Committee / Resourcing Committee • Property Support Team |

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

| The Methodist Church's mission towards 2032: <i>Missional Growth and Leadership</i> | | |
|--|--|--|
| Our deepening commitments to... | We will do this by... | Our work is shared through partnerships with... |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging Local Churches to partner with the wider community in re-imagining and re-developing church property to be thriving spiritual hubs for the whole community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) • Methodist Heritage Committee • Action for Hope • Justice-Seeking Church |

Rationale for key developments:

- **Mission planning consistency:** Mission planning is about freeing churches from the burden of doing every good thing it is possible to do in their communities, so that they can focus on the one (or very few) good thing(s) God is asking them to do. At circuit and district level, it's about allocating support and resources to churches and circuits that are committed to doing that one thing to share Jesus's love with their communities. Through deep listening with their communities as part of mission planning, churches will be better able to notice where marginalisation and injustice exist, and to make real the Methodist commitment to being a justice-seeking Church, including seeking climate justice and caring for the whole of creation.
- **Expanding provision for coaching:** Mission in 21st century UK is challenging and the Church is learning and adapting. Helping leaders and churches to discern their part in the mission of God is life-giving yet challenging, sometimes without obvious solutions and always inviting experimentation. Coaching equips pioneers and missional leaders, both lay and ordained, for this complex work by helping them achieve new insights. It is a future- and action-focused process that helps individuals and teams think clearly in order to go further and deeper with those they lead than they would otherwise, being transformed and transforming the world God loves. Coaching is complementary to supervision, which is the Church's ongoing commitment to enable ministers to reflect on the whole of their ministry and to seek the additional support they need for mission. Coaching is open to all Methodist lay leaders as well as to the ordained; it is entirely voluntary; and it is focused entirely on development with a view to positive, mission-focused action. For many leaders coaching may be the main external support they have; for others it can complement other sources of valuable support they have.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

- **Strengthening a Christian presence in rural communities:** In the UK nearly ten million people are categorised as ‘rural’ (20% of the total population of the UK) with an increasingly ageing demographic compared to urban areas. Within the Methodist Church in Britain (MCB), 1,345 of the total 3,628 active societies are ‘village rural’ (37% of total MCB societies). Since September 2022, 67 village rural societies have closed (out of total 117 closed societies); of these 33 village rural societies merged (total 93 across MCB), 13 became classes of another society (total 17 across MCB) and 21 ceased to meet (total 45 across MCB). We recognise the additional challenges faced by rural communities and are working across *God For All* to ensure the small is valued and blessed, with rural-specific support aimed at ensuring an ongoing Christian presence in as many rural settings as possible. The expansion of the rural mission and ministry role within the updated *God For All* strategy articulates our ongoing commitment to investment in and support of rural communities. Expanding work alongside Heritage and Property Services will offer further specific support for small and rural churches, with focused guidance for merging churches including pastoral support, legal considerations, and testimonies and case studies of churches who experienced fruit in these processes. This guidance goes beyond just rural contexts, but its focus on the experiences of small churches means that it serves the needs of rural churches well.
- **Encouraging the strategic use of property for mission:** Property is potentially a huge asset for mission, but can equally be a distraction from it. The strategic use of property for mission is about allowing property to be shaped by the needs of the church/Circuit’s mission rather than the other way around. Where discernments are being made about improving, developing, or selling a property to release resources, these need to be shaped by the way in which the property will be used to serve and enhance the mission of the local church and circuit, including a consideration of the Church’s commitment to becoming a net zero carbon emissions Church. These discernments should be made with the property portfolio of the whole circuit in mind – enabling a more strategic approach to be taken to property in the wider missional context. Methodist Church property is there to serve the needs of the whole community as well as of the congregations that use it for worship.
- **Supporting churches to develop relationships with schools and young people:** Schools are a crucial part of our communities. They are hubs in supporting families, particularly those in most need, and often have a real passion for transforming the community around them. God’s Spirit is present, working for good and transforming lives, and each Methodist church can join in and be part of that work for good. Churches without any children and young people, including the very smallest churches, can sometimes feel as if children’s and youth work is beyond them. But every church can build a positive relationship with their local school, whether that

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

means praying for the school and hearing children read, or more demanding support such as helping with school trips and running homework clubs. We will offer specific support for churches starting ministries with young people in their communities.

Discipleship

66. Discipleship is at the heart of *Our Calling*,³⁴ a response to God’s love. We are all disciples on a journey with God, with other travellers in our community alongside us, as we try to live our lives following Jesus. And we all have a sacred responsibility to be disciple-makers: both helping new people start their own journeys and encouraging seasoned travellers to keep on moving. ‘A Methodist Way of Life’ is becoming a shared framework that provides a map to the journey. It gives an extra level of detail and clarity as to what life as a Methodist disciple looks like, and where we are inviting people to travel with us. But it isn’t a list of things to do for the sake of it; the twelve practices are means of grace, ‘thin places’ where we encounter God, and ask the Holy Spirit to sanctify us. A Church of disciples, having transformative encounters with God, being willing to share our stories, and traveling alongside new people, will be a vibrant, healthy, restorative, and growing Church.

| The Methodist Church’s mission towards 2032: <i>Discipleship / A Methodist Way of Life</i> | | |
|---|--|---|
| Our deepening commitments to... | We will do this by... | Our work is shared through partnerships with... |
| Embedding ‘A Methodist Way of Life’ across the Connexion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing support for diverse Methodists engaging the suite of A Methodist Way of Life (MWOL) materials and tools • Developing the accessibility of MWOL to aid and accompany unaffiliated people in spiritual exploration on their discipleship journeys • Supporting churches, pioneer communities, and circuits in using the MWOL framework to form vibrant personal and communal pathways of discipleship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Network • Children, Youth and Family Ministry |

34 “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” (emphasis added).

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

| The Methodist Church’s mission towards 2032: <i>Discipleship / A Methodist Way of Life</i> | | |
|--|--|--|
| Our deepening commitments to... | We will do this by... | Our work is shared through partnerships with... |
| Strategically communicating the Church’s mission and ministry related to <i>God For All</i> and MWOL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitated by the Connexional Communications Team, increasing communications strategy development, focused planning, and ongoing coordination to ensure consistent communications to circuits and churches. Also, ensuring maximum ease of local accessibility to, and engagement with key news, resources, and guidance for mission and ministry related to <i>God For All</i> Using MWOL as an internal and external communications framework to describe and inspire diverse activities and to share good news stories across the churches, circuits, communities, and teams across the Connexion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connexional Communications Team |
| Exploring the renewal of worship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting local churches, ordained and lay preachers, worship leaders, and the whole gathered community of Christ in our common hunger for a renewal of worship and preaching life that facilitates deep encounters with God; is transcendent and hospitable; is rooted in tradition and accessible and compelling for new generations; seeks the transformation of the human person, the Church, the world and entire cosmos; and supports the extension of the liturgy into personal and community life. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministries Committee and Team Faith and Order Committee Justice-Seeking Church |

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

| The Methodist Church's mission towards 2032: <i>Discipleship / A Methodist Way of Life</i> | | |
|---|--|--|
| Our deepening commitments to... | We will do this by... | Our work is shared through partnerships with... |
| Training, equipping, and learning for discipleship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting churches, pioneer communities, and Circuits in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Theology for All</i> – helping Methodists develop and sustain rhythms of interpreting scripture and tradition, including the intersection with cherishing and telling stories of encounter with God in real life. ◦ <i>Prayer</i> – offering a variety of modes and methods of prayer and spiritual attentiveness that help committed Methodists and spiritual seekers discover, root, and deepen their personal and communal relationship with God in prayer and contemplation. ◦ <i>Vocations</i> – helping Methodists reflect, as part of their discipleship, on how they are called to serve God and others, whether through a particular kind of ministry in or on behalf of the Church, or through faithfulness in everyday life, relationships, and/or work. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministries Committee and Team • Faith and Order Committee • Cliff College • Queen's Foundation • Digital Team • The Conference Office |
| Enabling a movement of young adults through initiatives and programmes that support the development of a culture of flourishing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for vocational exploration through missional placements (eg chaplaincy, NPNP, youth work) and volunteering along the lines of the One Programme currently being reviewed. • Leadership development through courses, coaching and resources, empowering young adults to thrive in the Church and the world. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young Adult Network • Children, Youth and Family Ministry • Cliff College • Global Relationships Committee and Team |

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

| The Methodist Church's mission towards 2032: <i>Discipleship / A Methodist Way of Life</i> | | |
|---|--|---|
| Our deepening commitments to... | We will do this by... | Our work is shared through partnerships with... |
| discipleship, evangelism, justice-seeking and vocational exploration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evangelism experiences (eg at festivals) to encourage young adults to live out and share their faith. • Build young adult networks around different interests (eg social justice, activism, evangelism) for support and experiential training. • Supporting churches and church leaders to engage with and develop young adults in their localities (whether one person or one hundred). Places of encounter include local churches, Further and Higher Education institutions, New Places for New People, Church at the Margins, digital pioneering, and church planting. | |

Rationale for key developments:

- **Embedding 'A Methodist Way of Life' across the Connexion:** 'A Methodist Way of Life' will continue to embed as a common framework for what Methodist discipleship could look like. Additionally, there is currently a gap for a course to introduce newcomers to the Christian faith that is suitably inclusive and open to theological diversity. A new course based around the commitments of MWOL, with a focus on practice, experience and reflection, will provide this. It will also be of value to existing Methodists who wish to refresh their faith, and offer a safe way for people who have deconstructed their faith to rebuild. It will be important to connect this work in a complementary way to the Church's work on Methodist membership in the 21st century.
- **Strategically and consistently communicating well:** MWOL is proving to be a comprehensive and flexible integrated framework for communications, for instance in the *Methodist Prayer Handbook* and the weekly Methodist news. Strong clear, consistent messaging of our identity allows Methodists and unaffiliated people alike to understand how our activities are borne out of our discipleship, and to share their God stories. The Methodist Church becomes a visible player across the nation as it utilises common good topics to engage people, and unaffiliated people are inspired

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

by the stories shared to engage with the Methodist Church. Local churches, circuits, and districts will be resourced strategically and consistently by the Communications Team to share in the use of this language as a way to express all that they do.

- **Exploring the renewal of worship:** In addition to praising the living God, Methodist worship has always had a vital *missional* function: worship involves a regular pattern of the public gatherings of God’s people encountering the living God, being open to transformation, and being sent to seek God in our ordinary lives and the life of the world. As this changes us, we desire to invite others to experience the riches of God’s presence and grace, too. Many churches and leaders hunger for an exploration of diverse elements that might aid (or distract) us in our desire for a richer, fuller participation in the worship of God. Remembering that worship renewal is a gift of the Holy Spirit and something that cannot be engineered but only prayed for, the Methodist Church means to help churches prayerfully reflect on their understanding and pattern of worship. And then we must seek and actively create space for an increasingly faithful offering of worship which leads people into encounters with God; mines the fullness of scripture and the joy of the gospel; involves every sense of the mind, spirit, soul, and body – our learning, our wondering, our engaging of diverse expressions of art, music, and media; draws people into the presence of Christ in the sacraments; flows from the active participation of diverse people including lifelong Christians and new explorers; and as a long-term result helps Methodists to increasingly know that all of life can be an act of continuous worship and prayer.
- **Enabling a movement of young adults:** There are 10.5 million 18-30 year olds³⁵ who are at a transitional time in their lives: 2.75 million are in HE (higher education) institutions; 2.8 million are FE (further education) students; and 10,000 leave the care system every year. Their self-identity is a fluid spectrum from evolving young person to confident adult; this can vary from person to person, moment to moment and situation to situation. Alongside other transitional life events in this age bracket, this impacts how they engage and disengage with church life in intergenerational and peer settings. We are losing young adults from our denomination and yet they are open to the spiritual. Therefore, we need to develop young adults to deepen and share their active faith, within and beyond the Church at all levels. Church leaders and communities must be welcoming, enabling and inclusive of the contribution, gifts, and participation of young adults (both committed Christians and unaffiliated people), empowering and releasing young adults to be leaders and blessings within the Church and within life. This includes financial support for young adult participation and accessible meeting and event times to fit in with young adult lifestyles.

35 As of October 2023.

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

Section D – Budgets Overall Summary

| | 2025-2026 | 2026-2027 | 2027-2028 | 2028-2029 | 2029-2030 | 2030-2031 | 2031-2032 | Total |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| New Places for New People Church at the Margins | £2,518,669 | £3,037,466 | £3,258,912 | £3,318,470 | £3,339,215 | £3,400,088 | £3,422,177 | £22,294,996 |
| Evangelism Digital Evangelism | £1,164,190 | £1,103,862 | £984,774 | £961,935 | £869,349 | £897,024 | £854,966 | £6,836,100 |
| Missional Growth and Leadership | £317,890 | £323,343 | £328,925 | £334,640 | £340,490 | £346,480 | £352,615 | £2,344,383 |
| Discipleship Methodist Way of Life | £693,190 | £698,532 | £704,000 | £709,599 | £715,332 | £721,202 | £727,214 | £4,969,070 |
| Ongoing support for salaries across the Connexional Team | £475,663 | £489,733 | £504,223 | £519,146 | £534,514 | £550,341 | £566,641 | £3,640,261 |
| Partnership co-development across MCB and Ecumenical movement | £72,500 | £47,500 | £42,500 | £42,500 | £42,500 | £42,500 | £42,500 | £314,500 |
| Total | £5,242,102 | £5,700,436 | £5,823,334 | £5,886,290 | £5,841,400 | £5,957,635 | £5,966,113 | £40,417,310 |

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

New Places for New People | Church at the Margins

| | 2025-2026 | 2026-2027 | 2027-2028 | 2028-2029 | 2029-2030 | 2030-2031 | 2031-2032 |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Funding NPNP/ CAM communities including new circuit starts, ongoing CAMs, CLDFC new Methodist societies, and chaplaincy NPNPs | £1,466,408 | £1,669,388 | £1,872,429 | £1,872,429 | £1,872,429 | £1,872,429 | £1,872,429 |
| Funding NPNP/ CAM district leads | £536,500 | £552,595 | £569,173 | £586,248 | £603,835 | £621,951 | £640,609 |
| Funding Faith Rooted Community Organiser district leads | £277,500 | £552,595 | £569,173 | £586,248 | £603,835 | £621,951 | £640,609 |
| Pioneering and Planting: pathways expansion, learning, development | £102,070 | £122,926 | £104,293 | £125,704 | £107,159 | £127,564 | £107,974 |
| Related programmes, training, and staff support | £136,190 | £139,962 | £143,844 | £147,842 | £151,957 | £156,194 | £160,556 |
| Total | £2,518,669 | £3,037,466 | £3,258,912 | £3,318,470 | £3,339,215 | £3,400,088 | £3,422,177 |
| | | | | | | | £22,294,996 |

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

Evangelism | Digital Evangelism

| | 2025-2026 | 2026-2027 | 2027-2028 | 2028-2029 | 2029-2030 | 2030-2031 | 2031-2032 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Training, resourcing and equipping for evangelism | £58,000 | £63,000 | £59,000 | £76,000 | £73,000 | £90,000 | £87,000 |
| Expanding our evangelistic presence at festivals and major events | £275,000 | £301,200 | £277,436 | £303,709 | £280,020 | £306,371 | £282,762 |
| Digital campaigns for evangelism and discipleship | £100,000 | £102,000 | £104,040 | £106,121 | £108,243 | £110,408 | £112,616 |
| Developing tools for exploring faith online | £105,000 | £105,900 | £106,818 | £107,754 | £108,709 | £109,684 | £110,677 |
| Resourcing the Church digitally and for digital mission and ministry | £90,000 | £91,800 | £93,636 | £95,509 | £97,419 | £99,367 | £101,355 |
| Resourcing digital integrated technology | £400,000 | £300,000 | £200,000 | £125,000 | £50,000 | £25,000 | |
| Related programmes, training, and staff support | £136,190 | £139,962 | £143,844 | £147,842 | £151,957 | £156,194 | £160,556 |
| Totals | £1,164,190 | £1,103,862 | £984,774 | £961,935 | £869,349 | £897,024 | £854,966 |
| | | | | | | | £6,836,100 |

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

Missional Growth and Leadership

| | 2025-2026 | 2026-2027 | 2027-2028 | 2028-2029 | 2029-2030 | 2030-2031 | 2031-2032 | |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Training, resourcing and equipping for mission planning, growth & leadership | £32,300 | £32,610 | £32,923 | £33,239 | £33,559 | £33,881 | £34,207 | |
| Strengthening a Christian presence in rural communities | £19,400 | £19,514 | £19,629 | £19,745 | £19,863 | £19,982 | £20,101 | |
| Encouraging the strategic use of property for mission | £10,250 | £10,383 | £10,517 | £10,654 | £10,794 | £10,935 | £11,079 | |
| Expanding provision for coaching | £119,750 | £120,875 | £122,011 | £123,159 | £124,318 | £125,489 | £126,671 | |
| Related programmes, training, and staff support | £136,190 | £139,962 | £143,844 | £147,842 | £151,957 | £156,194 | £160,556 | |
| Totals | £317,890 | £323,343 | £328,925 | £334,640 | £340,490 | £346,480 | £352,615 | £2,344,383 |

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

Discipleship | Methodist Way of Life

| | 2025-2026 | 2026-2027 | 2027-2028 | 2028-2029 | 2029-2030 | 2030-2031 | 2031-2032 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Embedding 'A Methodist Way of Life' across the Connexion | £95,000 | £95,950 | £96,910 | £97,879 | £98,857 | £99,846 | £100,844 |
| Enabling a movement of young adults | £452,000 | £452,520 | £453,045 | £453,576 | £454,111 | £454,653 | £455,199 |
| Vocations work support | £10,000 | £10,100 | £10,201 | £10,303 | £10,406 | £10,510 | £10,615 |
| Related programmes, training, and staff support | £136,190 | £139,962 | £143,844 | £147,842 | £151,957 | £156,194 | £160,556 |
| Totals | £693,190 | £698,532 | £704,000 | £709,599 | £715,332 | £721,202 | £727,214 |
| | | | | | | | £4,969,070 |

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

Ongoing support for salaries across the Connexional Team

| | 2025-2026 | 2026-2027 | 2027-2028 | 2028-2029 | 2029-2030 | 2030-2031 | 2031-2032 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Communications/Digital Team: Digital Communications Training Officer | £64,578 | £66,515 | £68,511 | £70,566 | £72,683 | £74,864 | £77,110 |
| Communications/Digital Team: Director of Digital Engagement | £85,190 | £87,746 | £90,378 | £93,090 | £95,882 | £98,759 | £101,722 |
| Communications/Digital Team: Digital Content Producer | £53,727 | £55,339 | £56,999 | £58,709 | £60,470 | £62,285 | £64,153 |
| Communications/Digital Team: Building the Communications Team strategy through the MWOL framework, including district training events | £10,000 | £10,100 | £10,201 | £10,303 | £10,406 | £10,510 | £10,615 |
| Ministries Team/Queen's Foundation: Officer & Tutor in Evangelism & Leadership | £60,000 | £61,800 | £63,654 | £65,564 | £67,531 | £69,556 | £71,643 |
| Mission Team: Mission Funding Officer | £75,668 | £77,938 | £80,276 | £82,684 | £85,165 | £87,720 | £90,351 |
| Cliff College: Support for two Mission/Evangelism-related officers | £76,500 | £78,795 | £81,159 | £83,594 | £86,101 | £88,684 | £91,345 |
| Justice-Seeking Church/ Mission Team: Connexional Faith Rooted Community Organiser | £50,000 | £51,500 | £53,045 | £54,636 | £56,275 | £57,964 | £59,703 |
| Totals | £475,663 | £489,733 | £504,223 | £519,146 | £534,514 | £550,341 | £566,641 |
| | | | | | | | £3,640,261 |

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

Partnership co-development across MCB and Ecumenical movement

| | 2025-2026 | 2026-2027 | 2027-2028 | 2028-2029 | 2029-2030 | 2030-2031 | 2031-2032 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| MCB: Spiritual formation support | £5,000 | £5,000 | £5,000 | £5,000 | £5,000 | £5,000 | £5,000 |
| MCB: Methodist City Centre Network support | £2,500 | £2,500 | £2,500 | £2,500 | £2,500 | £2,500 | £2,500 |
| Ecumenical: NPNP/CAM resourcing eg FX Ltd, CMS, Crucible, Urban Life | £50,000 | £25,000 | £20,000 | £20,000 | £20,000 | £20,000 | £20,000 |
| Ecumenical: Digital resourcing eg Christian Enquiry Agency | £10,000 | £10,000 | £10,000 | £10,000 | £10,000 | £10,000 | £10,000 |
| Ecumenical: Evangelism resourcing eg Hope Together, Arthur Rank Centre | £5,000 | £5,000 | £5,000 | £5,000 | £5,000 | £5,000 | £5,000 |
| Totals | £72,500 | £47,500 | £42,500 | £42,500 | £42,500 | £42,500 | £42,500 |
| | | | | | | | £332,500 |

20. God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 20/1. The Conference receives the Report and commends it to the Methodist Church for continuing prayerful discernment and missional action throughout the Connexion.**

- 20/2. The Conference directs the Mission Committee and the Connexional Council to monitor progress, evaluate learning on an annual basis, and identify next steps, with particular reference to the structural questions noted in paragraph 58 and the missional markers in paragraph 62 of the Report.**

21. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Rachel Parkinson Chair of the Committee jaceichair@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|--|

Chair's Foreword

1. I became Chair of JACEI in the autumn of 2023, half way through the period which this report covers. I am still getting to grips with both the privilege and responsibility this role entails.
2. The privilege arises through the part I am able to play, through JACEI, in helping the Methodist people put into practice our reaffirmed commitment to being a justice-seeking Church. I felt somewhat vulnerable taking up the Chair without expertise in finance and investment. However, the primary focus of JACEI is not money. JACEI's focus is God's creation, of which the human family is a part. Our goal is to increase the state of health and well-being within the whole of creation. Money comes into the equation as a source of power through which that goal may be achieved. The work of JACEI is to discern advice which will help the CFB (Central Finance Board) and its subsidiary, Epworth Investment Management Ltd (Epworth), to use that power wisely and justly on the Church's behalf through ethical and responsible investment.
3. As I have discovered, the just and wise use of the power bound up in our financial resources entails far more than making investment decisions. My enthusiasm for joining in the work of JACEI was inspired by an address which Andrew Harper, Chief Responsibility Officer for the CFB, gave to the Presbyterian Synod of the District I serve. Andrew gave specific examples of how the CFB had used its status as shareholder to engage with companies through conversation, negotiation and education. This led to changes in company policy which had helped transform the lives of disadvantaged communities. I remember Andrew saying that a better question than "how do we change the world?" is "whose world can we change?". I like this quote because it roots the work covered in this report back into the effects it can have on the wellbeing of God's creation.
4. Within this report you will find a number of positive examples of engagement with companies and industry sectors. These cover a broad range of issues, guided by the seven ethical pillars which continue to provide a theological underpinning to the CFB's approach. Much of this work has been undertaken in collaboration with members of the Church Investors Group or other interested parties. The power of joint action is illustrated by the progress made in engaging with banking giants HSBC and Barclays over their approaches to financing oil and gas projects.

21. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

The global nature of our Methodist family can also provide unique collaborative opportunities when it comes to raising ethical concerns. This year JACEI has sought to respond to allegations of sexual violence on tea plantations by encouraging the CFB to open dialogue with companies in that market. In this area of work we have found a willing partner in the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka which we hope will add weight to our advocacy on behalf of vulnerable employees.

5. Alongside the privilege of chairing JACEI comes the responsibility. I personally feel the weight of this in the complexity of the work which JACEI undertakes on behalf of the Church. Matters are rarely straightforward and an eye always needs to be kept out for the unintended consequences of decisions made. In order to be useful, the policies JACEI approves need to be relatively succinct whilst also speaking into the broad range of circumstance in which they will be applied. A major piece of work for JACEI this year has been the approval of a new Conflict policy for the CFB. An important basis for its formulation was the extensive work previously done on policy in relation to Israel and Palestine, with specific checks being made to ensure that the adoption of a global policy would not diminish the rigour of approach in this particular arena. Since the policy was approved, we have witnessed the horrendous events of 7 October and its aftermath, together with Russia's continued war on Ukraine and countless other conflicts around the globe which do not make our headlines. These all underline how vital the Conflict policy will be in helping the Methodist Church to seek justice through the pursuit of peace.
6. Having cited my own lack of experience in the area of investment, it has been a joy of these early months to find myself working alongside people in JACEI and in the CFB/Epworth who bring a wide range of skills and expertise to the table. I want to pay tribute to the time, energy and commitment they bring to the work we do together.
7. I also want to commend this report to you. As you read it, and bearing in mind everything that God has created, you may wish to ponder: "whose world could this change?"

**The Revd Rachel Parkinson,
Chair of JACEI**

Executive Summary

8. Ethical Pillars

JACEI is pleased to report the CFB has taken steps to further integrate theological principles into its operations by updating certain key policies better to reflect its ethical pillars. These enhancements demonstrate the CFB's ongoing dedication

21. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

to fulfilling God's call for stewardship over the planet and concern for its peoples. Inspired by the Methodist values of justice, equality, personal integrity, and communal support, these policy updates are also in line with the Methodist Church's mission to become a Justice-Seeking Church. Details of these Pillars can be found on the Epworth website.

9. **Climate emergency**

JACEI continued to follow the work of the CFB on the climate emergency during the year. The CFB is a co-lead on engagement with Anglo American as part of Climate Action 100+ collaboration group. Anglo American is a large, multinational diversified mining company specialising in the production of platinum, diamonds, copper, nickel and iron ore. The collaborative group is now focusing its attention on Anglo's methane emissions from the mining of coking coal. The mining of coking coal is a major source of methane emissions globally. Methane emissions represent the largest component of Anglo American's Scope 1 emissions. As such, the CFB and the CA100+ co-leads, Robeco & Church of England Pensions Board have asked Anglo to set methane-specific reduction targets.

10. **Banks**

JACEI was pleased to hear about the recent work undertaken by the CFB on the banking sector in relation to the Climate Emergency. Continuing the engagement work on HSBC done by the CFB, Andrew Harper, Chief Responsibility Officer for the CFB, was recently interviewed by ITV after an investigation by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism revealed that HSBC, despite its climate pledges, is continuing to support expansionist oil and gas projects. As a result of increased attention, HSBC has agreed to start publishing its off-balance sheet emissions from where it advises on capital raising for oil and gas companies.

CFB has continued its engagement focus within the banking sector, and alongside other institutional investors co-ordinated by ShareAction, co-filed a shareholder resolution against Barclays Plc. This has been done with the intention of improving and refining the company's policies surrounding the financing of oil and gas extractives which will in turn lead to a more robust foundation to hold the bank more accountable in its pledges. As a result of this engagement, Barclays has released a new policy covering its oil and gas business. Although there is space for the company to go further with its commitments, this new policy is a positive step in the right direction.

11. **Biodiversity**

Biodiversity has become a focus for investors, with the launch of Nature Action 100 in December 2022, and prior to that the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) in July 2021. CFB is a signatory to the Nature Action 100 with

21. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

three focus companies and will engage with the purpose to reduce the impact of their operations on nature by 2030, through setting specific targets and disclosing annually against them.

12. Tax Justice

The CFB is continuing its engagement with investee companies on the topic of tax justice, promoting the right payment of tax in the right jurisdiction at the right time. The CFB engaged with six new UK companies during the year, as well as following up with two non-responding companies. CFB has begun an engagement programme with its European holdings on the topic of tax transparency. As the Fair Tax Mark has broadened its offering to apply to global companies, the CFB has followed suit and written to seven European headquartered companies. JACEI looks forward to an update in due course.

13. Conflict Policy

During the year under review, JACEI approved a new Conflict policy for the CFB. Given the continuing rise in armed conflict across the world, the CFB and JACEI felt that a broader policy was needed. This new policy supersedes the Israel/Palestine policy, allowing for the rigour of that policy to be applied to multiple areas of conflict, including Israel/Palestine. The new policy aims to encapsulate the different forms of conflict, including occupied territories, that occur across all geographies, as well as being succinct enough to provide CFB fund managers guidance to speak with investee companies.

14. JACEI continues to hear from CFB on the stances of companies with involvement in Russia. In the past year, it was reported to JACEI that CFB has no direct exposure to Russia, whether through Russian equities or their banks.

15. Health, wellbeing and farm animal welfare

Nestlé has a wide range of products that it sells to consumers. The CFB brought to JACEI's attention a resolution at the company that institutional investors are co-filing to gain greater clarity around the targets that the company is setting with regard to healthy food sales. The CFB has pre declared its intention to support this vote at the AGM and will be engaging with the company in order to press them on this issue.

16. Tea Plantations

JACEI was shocked at the recent allegations of sexual violence in tea plantations in Kenya which Unilever previously owned. Given Unilever still has operations in India with tea plantations, JACEI encouraged the CFB to engage with the company, to which they have had no response to date. It was noted that this issue

21. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

is prevalent in Sri Lanka also, and members of the Committee suggested reaching out to the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka to discuss this with them and dialogue has now been established which will continue in the coming year.

17. **Media policy**

During the year under review, JACEI began discussions around updating its media policy. JACEI began to discuss what we mean by media, outlining who benefits and who is most at risk from media. JACEI is particularly concerned with the harm media can and has caused to many vulnerable people- particularly children. This conversation is ongoing and will result in an updated policy in the near term.

18. **Voting and executive remuneration**

The CFB is part of the Church Investors Group proxy voting coalition, which has a progressive voting policy integrating diversity and the climate emergency among other issues into its voting decisions. The CFB's quarterly voting summaries are reviewed at JACEI meetings. The summary reports are available on the CFB website, with the full voting report available on request.

19. **The UK Stewardship Code**

The CFB remains committed to attaining approval of its UK Stewardship Report. The CFB are in the process of submitting the 2023 report, and JACEI looks forward to hearing the outcome of this. The 2023 submission builds upon two years of successful applications after the 2020 Stewardship Code refresh.

20. **The Church Investors' Group (CIG)**

The CFB is part of the ecumenical Church Investors' Group, which works to encourage responsible business practice through engagement with company managements and promote ethical investment based upon Christian ethical principles.

21. **Communication**

All the CFB publications including quarterly responsible investment reviews and voting summaries, are available on the CFB and Epworth websites (<https://www.epworthinvestment.co.uk> and <https://www.cfbmethodistchurch.org.uk>) in keeping with a strong tradition of full transparency.

22. **The CFB ethical review**

JACEI's responsibility to the Conference includes a resolution that the CFB Funds are managed in support of an ethical stance *which is in accordance with the aims of the Methodist Church*. It regularly reviews the CFB performance in this regard across a range of reports and reviews.

21. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

Governance

23. Role, function and membership of the Committee

The Committee has continued with the process agreed for appointing new members. The current membership and the Standing Order are set out in the Governance section.

Conclusion

24. Based on the information available, the Committee judges that the CFB has managed the funds under its control in support of an ethical stance which is in accordance with the aims of the Methodist Church. This includes the holdings in its wholly owned subsidiary, Epworth Investment Management Ltd.

25. In arriving at this conclusion, the Committee scrutinised compliance with the CFB ethical policies through the:

- voting record of the CFB;
- ethically excluded lists of UK and global companies;
- ethics meeting minutes of the CFB;
- company engagement record of the CFB;
- Independently verified review of the CFB UK portfolio carbon footprint;
- The CFB participation in **the Church Investors' Group (CIG)**;
- The CFB participation in the **Institutional Investors' Group on Climate Change (IIGCC)**; **CDP** (formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project); **TPI** (Transition Pathway Initiative); **Climate Action 100+**; **Access to Medicines Index (ATMI)**; **Access to Nutrition Index (ATNI)**; **Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare (BBFAW)**; **Farm Animal Investment Risk & Return (FAIRR)**; the **Powering Past Coal Alliance**; the **Plastic Solutions Investor Alliance**.

***RESOLUTION

21/1. The Conference receives the Report of the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment for the year to 31 March 2024.

For more detail on the issues contained within this Summary Report, and other matters considered by JACEI, we recommend referring to the full 2024 Report which can be found on the CFB website www.cfbmethodistchurch.org.uk

21. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

Governance: Role, Function and Membership of the Committee

The Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) was established in 1983 by a Resolution of the Methodist Conference to provide a mechanism for the Methodist Church to tackle ethical dilemmas associated with investment and to report annually to the Conference.

Terms of reference

The Joint Advisory Committee of the Ethics of Investment shall have a Chair appointed by the Methodist Council who should be able to represent Methodism at a senior ecumenical level. This position has to date always been filled by a District Chair.

The Committee shall have five members appointed by the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church (CFB) and five members appointed by the Methodist Council. The function of the Committee shall be:

- *To advise the CFB of ethical considerations relating to investment, it being accepted that the CFB legally has responsibility for making the final decision on the purchase or disposal of any investment;*
- *To act as an advocate, where appropriate, in respect of any ethical policy of the CFB, any investment decision taken on ethical grounds, and any other advice the Committee may provide on ethical matters relating to investment;*
- *To report to the Methodist Conference on the workings of the Committee and in particular to comment on the performance of the CFB in managing the funds under its control according to an ethical stance which is in accordance with the aims of the Methodist Church;*
- *JACEI may comprise both executive and non-executive members, with the expectation that the CFB and Methodist Council may each nominate one executive officer to be a Member of JACEI;*
- *Each non-executive member appointed by either the CFB or by Methodist Council shall be eligible to stand for membership for up to two successive terms of three years, up to a maximum of six years in total;*
- *Members, on the completion of each three year term, may stand down, be asked to stand down, or be asked to give their assent to continue to serve up to the normal maximum of six years. Their re-appointment shall be recorded in the Minutes; executive members of JACEI representing the CFB and Methodist Council shall have no upper limit to their terms;*
- *The Committee, may agree to a non-executive member, including the Chair, serving for an additional period of up to three years at the completion of any six year term, to facilitate continuity of the Committee's business;*

21. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

- *A Minute shall be taken of any meeting of the Committee, approved by JACEI members, and signed as a true and fair record of proceedings by the Chair;*
- *The Committee shall appoint a Secretary to act on its behalf.*

Standing Order

The following Standing Order relating to JACEI was approved by Methodist Conference (2019).

- (1) *There shall be a Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment, appointed annually in accordance with clause (2) below.*
- (2) *The Committee shall consist of eleven persons and shall comprise:-*
 - (i) *a Chair appointed by the Methodist Council;*
 - (ii) *five other persons appointed by the Methodist Council;*
 - (iii) *five persons appointed by the Central Finance Board;*
- (3) *The Committee shall meet as frequently as need be, but in any event at least once a year.*
- (4) *The Committee shall be responsible for advising the Central Finance Board on ethical aspects of investments, and proposed investments, and shall report annually to Conference.*

JACEI procedures

The Committee has agreed it should:

- Hold at least four meetings a year;
- Have its own identity with a postal and electronic address located within the Connexional Team at Methodist Church House;
- Advise the CFB and its subsidiary Epworth Investment Management Ltd. in relation to Methodist Church policy in respect of ethical and responsible investment;
- Examine all aspects of a company's operations rather than focus on one particular issue;
- To act as an advocate, where appropriate, in respect of any ethical policy of the CFB, any investment decision taken on ethical grounds, and any other advice the Committee may provide on ethical matters relating to investment;
- Seek ways to make the advice provided by the Committee available to the wider Methodist Church.

21. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

Observers

Observers, particularly those representing other church denominations and/or organisations may attend meetings of JACEI at the invitation and agreement of the Chair and Committee.

The Methodist Church in Ireland has permanent observer status to attend meetings of JACEI.

Observers may be invited to speak and participate in discussion, but may not vote.

Quorum

For the purpose of conducting meetings of JACEI, a quorum shall be deemed as being four members including the Chair. At least three members of any quorum including the chair should be non-executive representatives.

Conduct of business

JACEI business may be conducted electronically before, between and following meetings. Any decisions arising from remote and electronic communication shall be noted by the Secretary and made available to all members.

JACEI agendas

JACEI receives at each meeting:

- the work-plan
- one or two major items for debate, usually Position Papers and Policy Statements either previously agreed by the Committee or requested by the CFB;
- other significant matters for discussion (including the climate emergency and extractives industries as standing items);
- CFB engagement, including company notes and briefings;
- a CFB ethical performance review including voting summary reports, ethical exclusions and a note of any disinvestment on ethical grounds;
- a note of any significant collaborative engagement work.

21. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

The Committee confirms it:

- ✓ held four meetings; in 2023/24 four meetings took place in June 2023, September 2023, December 2023, and March 2024;
- ✓ has its own identity with an address located at Methodist Church House;
- ✓ advised the CFB in relation to current Methodist Church policy;
- ✓ examined all aspects of a company's operations rather than simply focus on one particular issue;
- ✓ took responsibility, where appropriate, for making public any ethical policy of the CFB and in particular any investment decision taken on ethical grounds, and;
- ✓ sought ways to make the advice provided by the Committee available to the wider Methodist Church.

The Committee receives and reviews the CFB workplan at every meeting, which sets medium-term policy priorities.

Committee membership

The Revd Rachel Parkinson is the Chair of the Committee. She assumed this position in October 2023. The Revd Dr Stephen Wigley stepped down during the year after eight years as the Chair of the Committee.

The JACEI Chair is independent, usually nominated from among the membership of the District Chairs, and appointed by the Methodist Council.

Members appointed by the Methodist Council are:

- The Revd Dr Sheryl Anderson
- Mr Jonathan Cape
- The Revd Dr Vincent Jambawo
- Ms Rachel Lampard
- The Revd Dr Michael Long

Members appointed by the Central Finance Board (CFB) are:

- The Revd Julian Blakemore
- The Revd Anne Ellis
- Mr Bala Gnanapragasam
- The Revd Dr Andrew Harper
- Ms Morwenna Williams

21. Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)

Mr David Hopley attends as a representative of the Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland, which has Permanent Observer status on JACEI.

Mr Richard Nunn, board member and past Chair of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd attends JACEI as an observer.

In attendance from time to time to facilitate the workings of the Committee were: Mr David Palmer, Mr Matthew Jones, Mr Callum Hughes, Ms Roz Amos and Mr Steve Hucklesby.

Mrs Sophie Forrest, the JACEI Secretary, was on maternity leave for some of the year. The Secretariat position was covered by the CFB.

The Committee has a reciprocal arrangement with the Church of England Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) whereby representatives of JACEI and the EIAG attend as observers of each other's meetings and exchange Minutes.

Enquiries about the Committee's work are encouraged, with letters to be addressed to the Committee's Chair c/o 25 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9SF or by email to: jaceichair@methodistchurch.org.uk.

The CFB may be contacted through the Revd Dr Andrew Harper at 9 Bonhill Street, London EC2A 4PE. Telephone: 020 7496 3630 or email a.harper@epworthim.com

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| Contact name and details | The Revd Sonia M Hicks Chair of the Council chaircouncil@methodistchurch.org.uk |
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SECTION E GENERAL REPORT (2)

1.1 Governance responsibilities

In accordance with its governance responsibilities, the Council:

- made appointments and nominations to various bodies and committees;
- noted the work undertaken so far within the Connexional Team in response to Memorial M22 (2021) concerning the Transatlantic Slave Trade and referred this to the Mission Committee for consideration, to report on progress to the Connexional Council in the next connexional year;
- received an update report on Action for Hope, and agreed to add the Methodist Diaconal Order Convocation to Aim three of the Faith Plan;
- received a report on the work of the Stationing Review Group, and directed the group to undertake further consultations before bringing recommendations to the 2025 Conference;
- received the nomination of the Revd Sonia M Hicks as Chair of the Connexional Council from 1 September 2024, and directed that induction into the role should begin;
- appointed Doug Godfrey-Swanney, Tom Hart, the Revd Dr Jennifer H Smith and the Revd Sonia M Hicks as the delegates from the Methodist Church in Britain to the United Methodist Church General Conference;
- agreed to nominate the Revd Dr Andrew D Wood to the Conference as Secretary of the Forces Board for a period of five years from 1 September 2024;
- agreed to recommend to the Conference that Deacon Michelle Legumi is appointed as Deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order for a period of five years from 1 September 2024;
- received a report on independence in safeguarding, which is presented to the Conference through the report of the Safeguarding Committee;
- received a report that the Strategy and Resources Committee proposed a review of the provision of learning for ministry and referred it to the Ministries Committee for action.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

1.2 Other business

The Council, in the context of Sunday worship, heard reflections from the President and Vice-President on their year of office.

Should members of the Conference wish to view them, Council papers and minutes are available on the website at www.methodist.org.uk/council

***RESOLUTION

22/1. The Conference receives the General Report of the Council.

SECTION F CONNEXIONAL FUNDS TREASURERS

- 1 The Council received a report which explained the work involved in producing circuit income reports, which detail the donations that circuits have made into the seven main connexional funds.
- 2 These reports support the work of the Connexional Funds' Treasurers. Under SO 505, Circuit Meetings are expected to "appoint a connexional funds treasurer, who shall receive from the Local Churches and private subscribers collections and gifts for those connexional funds for which no treasurer with specific responsibility is appointed." Furthermore, "A report on each connexional fund, by way of audited accounts, shall be presented to the Circuit Meeting by the treasurer specifically responsible for that fund, or if there is none then by the connexional funds treasurer."
- 3 It is understood that these arrangements vary across the Connexion. Some Circuits have a treasurer for each connexional fund; others have one treasurer for all connexional funds; in others, the circuit treasurer covers the responsibility, and in some circuits the role is vacant. Like so many other roles in the Church, it is increasingly difficult to find volunteers.
- 4 Circuits pay in cheques and cash donations for the connexional funds using pay-in books that are individually numbered (this allows the Finance Team to allocate each donation to the relevant circuit). Other Circuits and churches transfer donations to the fund accounts when they do online banking and they add their circuit reference or names in the narrative – again this allows the allocation of such donations to Circuits.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

- 5 Traditionally, churches were asked to send donations to their connexional fund treasurers for them to use numbered pay-in books, to ensure that all donations are attributed to Circuits. However, some churches bank these donations directly into connexional accounts using generic pay-in slips. The information on the bank statements does not indicate the church name and therefore these cannot be allocated to circuits. Circuits typically expect the Finance Team to investigate all church donations and allocate accordingly for their circuit income report. This often involves asking HSBC for archived copies of pay-in slips and then looking up information in the connexional database. This process is very time consuming and does not add any value other than allowing connexional fund treasurers to meet the Standing Order concerning the requirement for audited accounts.
- 6 A further problem with the current system is the closure of local banks and the difficulty in banking cash and cheques. Whilst many treasurers will still need/want to work with cash and cheques, it is inevitable that more and more will be done online in future.
- 7 Nevertheless, one of the benefits of the current system is that where connexional funds treasurers exist, there is a local advocate for the connexional funds. Donations from across the Connexion remain a crucial (though declining) source of income. Donations from churches and Circuits for each fund in 2022/23 can be seen in the table below:

| Fund | Circuits £ '000 | Others £ '000 | Total £'000 |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| The World Mission Fund | 563 | 217 | 780 |
| The Mission in Britain Fund | 187 | 42 | 228 |
| The Property Fund | 162 | 14 | 176 |
| The FSPD | 92 | 7 | 99 |
| The Methodist Church Fund | 59 | 16 | 74 |
| The Training Fund | 24 | 4 | 28 |
| The Diaconal Order | - | 11 | 11 |
| Total | 1,086 | 311 | 1,397 |

- 8 Of the £1.1m from Circuits, £278k or 26% were cheques received in the post from Circuits. This represented 1374 cheques during the year or 27 cheques a week. These all require allocation to Circuits and thank you letters and these generate most of the work. £819k or 74% are donations either electronically banked by

22. Methodist Council, part 2

Circuits into connexional bank accounts or cheques deposited by Circuits. The majority (£255k) of the 'other' donations are from churches sending donations through electronic banking or via their Central Finance Board accounts. It is not our practice to acknowledge these donations with a thank you letter.

- 9 Given the challenges with the process, a discussion was had at the District Treasurers' Forum. The general view was that the current system was designed for a different age and that modernisation was overdue. Phasing out the role of connexional funds treasurers was supported.
- 10 Subsequently, the issue was raised in the Finance newsletter that is issued to all church and circuit treasurers (albeit not all connexional fund treasurers). Whilst no proposals were made, observations on the current process were invited, and only three responses were received.
- 11 Following further reflection at the Finance Sub-Committee and discussion at the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Council, the Council recommends that the requirement for a report to the Circuit Meeting by way of audited accounts is removed from the Standing Orders. Donations to the funds will continue to be encouraged, with a preference for the use of electronic banking, but still with the capability to donate with cash and cheques. This may lead to a small increase in workload for church and circuit treasurers, but donations are only typically sent once per year so it should not prove too onerous. The role of connexional funds treasurer will be retained so as not to disrupt arrangements that are currently working well. The role will also be a useful advocate for connexional funds. As part of these changes materials will be produced explaining the current use of the funds and the mechanisms by which donations can be sent.
- 12 Standing Order changes to effect this will follow.

***RESOLUTIONS

22/2. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION G MISSION COMMITTEE

- 1 The Mission Committee is appointed by the Methodist Conference and is accountable to the Conference through the Methodist Council.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

- 2 This report outlines the ways in which the Mission Committee has sought to enable the Church to develop and maintain a strategic vision for mission, in accordance with Standing Order 1000A1. The Mission Committee, in all the work and relationships reported here, is seeking to discern what God asks of British Methodism in the twenty-first century. The Committee does this through its model of mission, in its ways of relating to global partners, through commitments to and relationships with external bodies, and through ensuring the work of the Connexional Team can support churches, Circuits and Districts to fulfil their calling to join in with the mission of God. The Mission Committee is committed to being a learning community, working generously, iteratively and reflectively as policy and strategy are both discerned and held accountable. The Committee resists the narrative of decline and rejoices that God has called us to be growing, evangelistic, justice seeking and inclusive. Both online and in-person meetings have been places of challenge and wisdom-seeking, laced with joy and laughter, along with appropriate moments of shared lament. The largest piece of work it has undertaken this year has been the development of the *God For All* – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032) report. The Committee has taken intentional decisions to embed the Justice-Seeking Church work alongside this significant missional strategy.
- 3 The committee welcomed the Oversight and Trusteeship work and considered how the future of the committee's work will fit into the new processes and structure when the new Connexional Council is formed. It spent time reflecting on its place as vision-setters and co-creators, and committed itself to noticing connections through all the mission work of the church, enabling the whole church to notice and respond to opportunities to join with the Spirit in Her work of transformation. It has made requests of all the sub-committees that currently report to it to review their terms of reference, membership and ways of working and will be considering these over the next connexional year.
- 4 The Mission Committee has oversight of the missional work of the Church, including the work of the Heritage Committee, the Fellowships Sub-Committee, the Global Relationships Committee, the Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee and the New Places for New People Guiding Team. The Mission Committee has received reports from all these groups, as well as others including the Joint Public Issues Team, Justice-seeking Church, Children, Youth and Families and from lead staff of the Mission Team. This report presents selected items to provide an overview of the work.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

Global Relationships Committee

- 5 The committee received a report from the Global Relationships Committee (GRC) on the breadth of ongoing Global Relationships work and how it was taking forward the missional work of the Church, particularly engaging through A Methodist Way of Life, whilst being particularly conscious of inter-cultural relationships.
- 6 The committee noted the GRC had reflected and acted on the recommendations in the Notice of Motion 2023/104: Mission Partner Programme adopted by the Conference. The proposal to consider remunerating ordained mission partners at local rates has been abandoned as the GRC considered the complexities were too numerous and the differences in contexts too extreme to produce a fair system.
- 7 The committee noted that the Framework of Commitment with All We Can needs reviewing and updating. Allowing for the fact that the SRC recommended to the Council and the Council agreed to un-consolidate the accounts of All We Can, the Committee has deferred this work until the legal and governance arrangements between the parties are clear and looks forward to working with a new CEO early in the next year.
- 8 The committee received verbal updates at each of its meetings regarding the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (IOPT). It heard of the Methodist Liaison Officer evacuation following 7 October, and offered reflections on the ongoing work of support and advocacy undertaken in partnership with General Board of Global Ministries and World Methodist Council. The Committee was particularly keen to support the latest fundraising partnership to support those in IOPT. <https://www.methodist.org.uk/faith/prayer/israel-palestine/gaza-appeal/>
- 9 The Committee received the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Methodist Church in Britain (MCB) and Christian Aid. The MCB was a founding member church of the British Council of Churches (1942) and the creation of the Council's Inter-Church Aid and Refugee Service (1949), renamed Christian Aid (1956). Over the past decades, MCB has played a significant role in shaping, supporting and strengthening Christian Aid through its support at local, district and connexional levels. From the beginning of Methodism, the Church has worked for social justice and been involved in social action in many ways, including in the international arena. Christian Aid, along with All We Can, is one of the two primary agencies through which MCB expresses its commitment to International Relief and Development. The MoU sets out to reaffirm our longstanding relationship with Christian Aid and formally agrees the principles and priorities of our work together as we seek to meet the challenges that face us

today. The Committee was thankful for the careful and thoughtful way in which the MoU was developed with staff and committees from both organisations, and the Council approved the Memorandum of Understanding.

New Places for New People (NPNP)

10 The committee approved two circuit funding models, which have been developed by the Connexional NPNP team with input from District NPNP colleagues. These models are a response to the Committee's request for streamlining of the submission and funding process for circuit NPNP projects. For more information on NPNP, please visit <https://www.methodist.org.uk/NPNP>

11 The committee received district and circuit NPNP funding submissions, which it approved. To date, the Committee has approved 27 submissions from 18 districts, as follows:

- 18 District NPNP submissions
- 5 Circuit-based NPNP submissions
- 4 District oversight processes for funding circuit-based NPNPs

12 The table below shows the total amounts awarded in each connexional year since NPNP funding began subsequent to the Conference approving the initial *God For All* report.

| Connexional Year | Funding awarded |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 2021-22 | 1,447,389 |
| 2022-23 | 499,009 |
| 2023-24 | 378,948 |
| Total | 2,325,346 |

The total budget is c£9m. This planned uneven distribution is due to the necessity for Districts to complete their design process and build NPNP/CaM priorities into their mission policy before Circuits can access additional funding. With 18 Districts having now submitted and 8 others in active preparation, the rate of Circuits applying for funding allocation is beginning to increase. It is forecast that by the end of 2025/26, £8m or more of the entire budgeted amount will have been distributed.

13 There is a ring-fenced amount of £200,000 (included in the overall NPNP budget) for the Culture and Language Diverse Fellowships. The Fellowships

22. Methodist Council, part 2

Sub-Committee has formed a scrutiny group to provide oversight and sign-off for individual fellowships to make submissions for exploratory funding. To date, three submissions (for £10,000 each) have been approved. Authority to approve exploratory funding submissions has been given to the Project Funding Officer.

- 14 The committee received a report from the Director of Evangelism and Growth, with detailed proposals on the purpose and priorities for District Mission Plans and suggested structural considerations. This was in response to the Council's recommendation that the Standing Order be amended so that the Development Masterplan, required by the current SO 962, forms a part of the District Mission Plan, and is updated annually and that the District Mission Plan is included in the information that Synod Secretaries submit annually to the Conference Office.¹ The Council agreed that all Districts should have a District Mission Plan, and directed the Law and Polity Committee to draft amendments to relevant Standing Orders for recommendation to the 2025 Conference.

Justice-seeking Church and Let's End Poverty

- 15 The committee has engaged with embedding the Justice-seeking Church strategy over the course of the year. The new book, *We Have Voices: praying together for peace, justice and change*, has been produced as a way of supporting and resourcing preachers and leaders of worship in their prayers for justice. An integrated Methodist engagement and communications strategy has been developed around the General Election, co-created with Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) and Let's End Poverty. The Church continues to learn with Citizens UK in the development of faith based and broad-based community organising, so that both 'traditions' might be honoured and utilised in mission.
- 16 The committee received a report from the officer leading on the Let's End Poverty Movement, which is intentionally working to create a social movement of people in the UK united behind a vision of a UK free from poverty. The committee supported the need for a cultural and social shift by creating a social movement, using the approach of movement building and community organising, where politicians recognise and respond to public pressure to tackle poverty in the UK strategically and holistically, with the ultimate view to eradicating UK poverty for good. It was also in agreement with the shared aims of participants in the Let's End Poverty movement. It was encouraged by the support and engagement so far, in particular the role of the Methodist Church in Britain, as a founding leader, in shaping the movement and upcoming milestones for the work.

¹ <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/21756/conf-2021-30-oversight-and-trusteeship.pdf>

- 17 The committee received a report from the newly appointed JPIT Team Leader on the work achieved over the last year, their current work plan and priorities for the future. They were pleased to note the synergy between JPIT and the Justice-seeking Church report. The committee commended the work of JPIT, alongside other partners, to support churches in their engagement in the election through an integrated strategy whilst continuing to equip, support and resource our churches and members to think and act on issues of justice and peace, as an integral part of Christian discipleship. The committee noted, and highlights to the Council that the Church will not be engaging in any regulated campaigning activity in the regulated period before the election so will not be registering with the Electoral Commission. Legal advice had been sought on this, and guidance is being provided to manage the dynamic risks and ensure compliance.
- 18 The committee received a report on the Methodists for Ukraine project and noted the decision to wind down the project. All cases in the system have been supported through the moving-in process and the scheme is now closed to new applications to host. As the Church develops its work with Global Communities, several lessons were learnt from this short-term post. For example: the need for deep consultation with Chairs of District in programme development in response to emergency provision; the need for ecumenical working where possible; the need for data sharing agreements and the importance and blessing of a post holder with deep knowledge of the workings of the civil service.

Global Communities (formerly known as Fellowship Groups)

- 19 The committee received a discussion paper from the Fellowships and Cultural and Language Diverse Sub-Committee in regards to current and future mission within the many diverse and vibrant language and culturally distinct groupings to be found around our Connexion. The committee noted the need for clarity of language about these groups, commended the research that has been commissioned, and engaged in deep listening and dialogue as the joyful challenges and complexities of this work were described. The committee noted that this work would return to its workplan next year in preparation for some recommendations to be made to the Council in 2025. As part of its reflections on Oversight and Trusteeship, the committee asked the current members of the sub-committee to return to a future meeting with proposals for how a future sub-committee to oversee and encourage this work might be constituted and what its Terms of Reference might be.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

Methodist Heritage Committee

- 20 The committee received a report from the Methodist Heritage Committee outlining its work, in particular the work achieved since October 2022, towards delivering the strategic priorities agreed by the Council in April 2019, and work planned for 2024/2025. In line with its reflections on Oversight and Trusteeship, the committee approved the proposed change in the Methodist Heritage Committee's ways of working to include setting up working groups and occasionally co-opting additional volunteers to them for fixed periods as the work demands.
- 21 The committee gave its support to the nomination of new members to the Methodist Heritage Committee and new site representatives for the connexionally-funded museums, and recommends them to the Council for appointment.

Children Youth and Families

- 22 The committee received a report from the Youth President appraising the 2023 3Generate event against the purposes it agreed last year. It was pleased to see how the objectives agreed last year were embedded into an ever-evolving programme, in particular, the Committee noted the prominence of a Methodist Way of Life across the event. Feedback from group leaders on the impact of 3Generate was presented and the Committee heard how this feedback would be used to improve the event for 2024. The pilot of the 4-7s event was commended and will continue for 2024. The 3Generate video from 2023 can be found here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsiYMhXqlo8>
- 23 The committee approved the CYF plan for 2022-2027, which highlighted some substantial changes to the purpose and operation of 3Generate, this was later reaffirmed by the Council and then the 2023 Conference. Notice of Motion 2019/201 also highlighted a review into the Youth President role, and the findings of the task group were brought to the January 2022 Council² and subsequently presented to the 2022 Conference. Consequently, SO 250 needed reviewing due to resolutions that had been passed through the Conference. The proposed revised Standing Order (now numbered 240) is shown in the resolutions below.

2 MC/22/18: https://d1yuutt686hf10.cloudfront.net/media/documents/counc_jan_22-mc22-18-youth-president-role-review-jb_jrh.pdf

24 The committee carefully interrogated a plan regarding Young Adult Ministry. This report outlined current and potential work building upon the Young Adult Ministry section in the Children, Youth and Family Ministry plan agreed in 2023. The committee affirmed the 3 areas of work:

- Growing faith and deepening discipleship
- Supporting life stage transitions
- Vocational exploration

It noted that young adults develop and grow in faith through experiences and debated the need for a variety of these opportunities - long and short term, overseas and local. It rejoiced that the Youth Rep programme has been a key transitional piece of work for over 10 years, and has successfully engaged and retained young people within the life of the Methodist Church. Whilst this programme needs to continue to develop in line with other changes to 3Generate, it will be important to retain the transitional element for those in their early 20s.

The committee approved the need to re-shape the One Programme and gave feedback to the officer on ways in which the essence of the One Programme can continue in new, creative ways, whilst supporting additional work designed to grow the breadth and depth of Young Adult ministry. Links with the *God For All* report and provisions for work in this area in the budget were noted and affirmed. The committee has requested an update on the thinking behind this work and asked to see proposals that are more concrete at its spring 2025 meeting.

Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee

25 The committee received a report from the Methodist Modern Art Collection (MMAC) Management Committee and approved proposed priorities for 2023/2024. The committee commended the work of the Management Committee, in particular the considerable successes achieved in terms of exhibitions, with one to more than 20 works from MMAC being shown across the Connexion, and the exciting immersive digital art experience at 3Generate 2023 based on Eularia Clarke's painting, *The Five Thousand*.

26 The committee noted that following a MMAC exhibition in Dublin in 2018, the exhibition organising committee subsequently proposed that a new work for the MMAC by an Irish artist should be purchased from the surplus from fundraising for that exhibition. After much discussion, a very beautiful stained-glass panel, *Preaching*, by George Walsh, has been offered as a gift to the Methodist Church in Britain for the Collection. The Council welcomed this gift, and accepted it on

22. Methodist Council, part 2

behalf of the Methodist Church in Britain, to be used as a permanent part of the Methodist Modern Art Collection to be used for mission.

- 27 As a result of our experience with the acquisition of the Walsh piece, the committee has been impressed with the work that the MMAC has put into proposing an acquisitions policy.

In 2018, a moratorium was called on adding artworks to the MMAC or records to its archive, while reviews of the governance and operation of the Collection were undertaken and the recommendations implemented. Prior to the review, the MMAC Management Committee made unilateral decisions about acquisitions. There were no collection development criteria and no formal agreement of the process by which to acquire or decline new artworks or archive items or how to use financial donations to purchase artworks.

Given the increased professionalism in the management of the collection and its use for mission as a result of the reviews, and in response to a number of recent offers of artworks or funds to develop the MMAC the MMAC Management Committee has proposed lifting the moratorium and presented a proposal for the process of acquisition to the Mission Committee. Criteria for acquisition were included in the Collection Development Policy³ reviewed by the SRC and approved by the Methodist Council in 2021. However, in determining the missional potential of a new artwork, the MMAC Management Committee is proposing to commit to considering the other strategies recently adopted by the Methodist Conference alongside that policy, until it is reviewed in 2025 and the implications of those strategies can be incorporated into the policy.

The Council should be clear that this is not a proposal to begin active collecting nor for significant investment in new artworks. The MMAC Management Committee has expressed an interest in seeking to add a relatively low cost 'born digital' artwork to the Collection, but otherwise this is a proposal aimed at providing a process to deal with recent offers of donations such as the glass panel by George Walsh or two works by John Reilly. Reilly is an artist already represented by two works in the Collection. In this case, the Church has been offered the works following the death of a supporter of the collection and, with the agreement of their family, the MMAC Management Committee wish to add one to the collection (an abstract) and sell the other (a figurative painting of St Joan facing her accusers). The sale of the latter should cover the acquisition

3 MMAC Collection Development Policy: <https://d1yuutt686hf0.cloudfront.net/media/documents/mmac-collection-development-policy-vmarch2021.pdf>

costs and allow the MMAC to tour the former as a new work in the collection. If the Council were to approve this new process, an acquisition such as these Reillys would fall within the proposed financial threshold for the MMAC Management Committee to make a decision and simply report the addition of the work to the Mission Committee. The Council therefore agreed to lift the moratorium on acquisitions to the touring works in the Methodist Modern Art Collection and its archive, approved the proposals for acquisition criteria, and approved the process of acquiring, recommending and approving the acquisition of archive records and artworks, and the financial thresholds for approvals and reporting, where necessary.

Membership of the Mission Committee

- 28 Following the resignation of the Revd Dr Calvin Samuel with effect from June 2024, a nominations process was conducted resulting in the Committee agreeing to nominate Mr Tim Baker and the Revd Ian Rutherford, for appointment as deputy chairs to the Committee. The Council agreed to their appointment.

Other Matters

- 29 Over the course of its meetings this year, the committee has undertaken a process of noticing and reflection in order to discern what God might be asking of us that is broader than the individual reports it receives. The Council heard that the committee has perceived a need in the area of economic justice across the life of the Church. Two significant pieces of its current work – The Justice-seeking Church Strategy, and God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth - Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032) - alongside work regarding the Let's End Poverty movement and JPIT, in addition to consideration of work with young adults and attendance at 3Generate, have all indicated a need for the Church to attend to issues of economic justice across the Church. The committee noted our nature as a connexional Church and our calling to privilege contexts marked by economic marginalisation – but also acknowledged the reality that our structures do not fully facilitate economic justice within the Church.

Therefore, and noticing the timely resonance between reports from the Mission and Ministries Committee, the Council adopted a resolution in the Ministries Committee to ask the 2024 Conference to set up a Connexional Economic Justice Working Group (CEJWG) to enable the Conference to confer deliberately on a way forward. [See the resolution presented below in the report of the Ministries Committee.]

22. Methodist Council, part 2

***RESOLUTIONS

22/3. The Conference receives the Report.

22/4. The Conference amends Standing Orders as follows:

240 Methodist Children and Youth Assembly.

(1) There shall be an annual Assembly of children and young Methodists known as the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly which shall constitute the Methodist Youth Assembly for the purposes of clause 14(2)(xA) of the Deed of Union.

~~(2) The Assembly exists to provide an opportunity within the Methodist Church to hear from and be informed by children and young people:~~

~~(3) The Assembly shall be open to children and young people between the age of 8-23 years old and the Assembly shall meet in sessions according to age. The age range of each session shall be determined annually by the Youth President's Advisory Group: **within the age range determined from time to time by the Mission Committee.**~~

(4) Any child or young person involved in the life of the Methodist Church within the relevant age range is eligible to be a member of **attend** the Assembly.

~~(5) The membership of the Assembly shall consist of those children and young people who, whether encouraged by a District under clause (6) or by some other body or of their own accord, have registered to attend the Assembly.~~

(6) Each District shall take appropriate steps, including financial help where possible, to ensure that children and young people connected with the life of the Methodist Church within that District attend the Assembly, and in so doing shall have regard for the composition of eligible members as a whole with regard to gender, ethnic origin and membership of the Methodist Church **the principles of the Methodist Church's Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity.**

~~(7) Subject to Standing Orders and other provisions for presenting business agreed with the Business Committee of the Representative Session of the Conference and approved by the Conference, the Assembly may submit reports and resolutions on any connexional subject to the Conference from any of the sessions of the Assembly.~~

(8) There shall be a Youth President elected in accordance with clause (10) of this Standing Order who shall be a member of the Conference and the Connexional

Leaders' Forum as a representative of the Assembly and shall more widely act as an encourager and representative of children and young people in the life of the Church **and shall thereby be enabled to give effect to the two core purposes of advocacy and involvement in decision-making on behalf of all children and young people in the life of the Methodist Church. The Youth President shall also have such wider strategic role as may be determined from time to time by the Mission Committee.**

(8A) The Youth President shall additionally:

- (i) attend meetings of the Connexional Council, the Mission Committee and the Ministries Committee as appropriate in furtherance of the purpose of advocacy;**
- (ii) meet regularly with those on youth representative programmes established from time to time by the Methodist Church in order to enable greater participation of children and young people generally;**
- (iii) have power, subject to compliance with Standing Orders and the procedures of the Conference as applicable from time to time, to submit to the Conference reports and resolutions on any connexional matter if the Youth President considers it appropriate to do so in the representation of children and young people.**

(9) There shall be a Youth President's Advisory Group consisting of the Youth President designate, the ex-Youth President and those elected by the Children and Youth Assembly to be representatives to the Methodist Conference and nominated by it to be appointed by the Conference as members of the Methodist Council. The Group shall give support to the Youth President and the representatives to the Conference and the Council in reflecting the mind and concerns of the Assembly and in presenting business to the Methodist Council and the Conference. It shall also advise the Assembly on how the various sessions of the Assembly may best work and interact.

(10) There **shall be elected annually** sessions of the Assembly shall through procedures agreed by all the sessions jointly elect the a Youth President designate, who will become the Youth President from the start of the next connexional year. To be eligible to be elected a person shall:

- (i) be a member of the Assembly;
- (ii) if not already a member of the Methodist Church, have signified the intention of seeking to become a member; and
- (iii) be aged 18 years or over but under 24 at the date of taking office as Youth President.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

If the Youth President-designate has not become a member of the Methodist Church by the date of taking office as Youth President ~~she or he~~ **that person** shall be disqualified from holding office ~~and the Children and Youth Assembly shall determine its own procedures for filling the vacancy.~~

(11) ~~There shall be elected annually~~ sessions of the Assembly shall through procedures agreed by all the sessions jointly elect the three representatives ~~the representative of the Assembly~~ to the next Conference required under Standing Order 102(5). To be eligible to be elected, a person shall:

- (i) ~~be a member of the Assembly at which the election takes place; and~~
- (ii) ~~if not already a member of the Methodist Church, have signified the intention of seeking to become a member.~~

~~The Youth President, after consulting any available former Conference representatives still under 23, shall appoint an eligible person as a substitute for any appointee who cannot take his or her place in the Conference by reason of not being~~ **If the person elected has not become** a member of the Methodist Church **by the opening of the Conference and so cannot take that place, the Youth President shall determine in consultation with the Conference Office the steps to be taken to appoint a substitute.**

(11A) Those eligible to vote in elections under clauses 10 and 11 above shall be children and young people within the life of the Methodist Church, and do not need to be in attendance at the Assembly at which the relevant election takes place. The Mission Committee in consultation with children and young people shall from time to time determine:

- (i) criteria as to age and involvement in the church required for eligibility to vote;**
- (ii) the voting procedure for the elections; and**
- (iii) as regards Clause 10, if the Youth President-designate has not become a member of the Methodist Church by the date of taking office as Youth President, appropriate procedures for filling the vacancy arising as a result of the disqualification provided for by clause (10).**

(12) ~~The Assembly shall through procedures agreed by all the sessions nominate two representatives to be appointed by the Conference as members of the Methodist Council for the next connexional year. To be eligible to be nominated a person shall~~

- (i) ~~be a member of the Assembly; and~~
- (ii) ~~if not already a member of the Methodist Church, have signified the intention of seeking to become a member.~~

All such persons shall be nominated to serve for a period of two years:

~~The Youth President, after consulting any former Council representatives still under 23, shall appoint an eligible person as a substitute for any nominee who at the time for first appointment by the Conference is ineligible by reason of not being a member of the Methodist Church.~~

~~(13) Subject to Standing Orders, each session of the Assembly shall have the power to regulate its own procedures:~~

~~(14) The Connexional Team is responsible for assisting in the arrangements for the meetings of the **Assembly** Assemblies and ensuring that the work of the Assemblies is grounded in such proposals for a curriculum for children and young people as are from time to time approved by the Methodist Council.~~

SECTION H

ELECTING THE PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE

Following a request from the Safeguarding Committee, the Council directed the Secretary of the Conference to prepare a policy regarding the processes for the election of the President and Vice-President of the Conference, and this was considered at the April 2024 meeting of the Council. The Council was reminded that part of our Safeguarding policy is to ensure that all recruitment follows a safer recruitment process. The Council therefore had before it a series of proposals which were shaped by the safer recruitment process. <https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/safer-recruitment/safer-recruitment-policy-and-practice-guidance/>

In contrast to a recruitment process, which requires a role description, advertisement, the scrutiny of applications, shortlisting, interviews, and the taking up of references, the current process for the election of the President and Vice-President invites members of the Conference to nominate candidates on the basis of a 200 word statement. Whilst a full recruitment process for the Presidency would not be appropriate, the proposals which the Council commends to the Conference would bring the method of election closer to safer recruitment (and would therefore command greater confidence).

These proposals are designed to allow more time for better informed discernment for both potential candidates and the Conference without compromising the privilege of members of the Conference proposing and electing whom they will to be their President and Vice-President.

Proposal 1: That there be a role description and person specification which are approved annually by the Business Committee and the Connexional Council.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

Proposal 2: From February an advertisement should be placed on the Methodist Church website inviting nominations for both roles.

Proposal 3: That the designate handbook be updated, details that are only for designates removed, and the handbook then made available on the website.

Proposal 4: The nomination form should be revised to invite the proposer to set out the reasons for the proposal against the main points of the person specification. Nominations should still be supported by 10 members of the Conference.

Proposal 5: Each nominee should be asked to provide two letters of support for their candidature. In the case of a nomination for President, one should be from a senior lay person with close knowledge of their work (eg, senior circuit steward, Synod Secretary) and the other from a ministerial colleague or District Chair. In the case of a diaconal nominee for Vice-President, one should be from a senior lay person with close knowledge of their work (eg, senior circuit steward) and the other from a ministerial colleague or the Warden. In the case of a lay nominee for Vice-President, one should be from a minister in the circuit where the nominee's membership is held and the other from an employer/line manager or other suitable person if the nominee is not employed. The latter should also indicate that the employing body, if relevant, is aware of the nomination and is willing to support the nominee if elected (with, eg, flexibility with time off work).

Proposal 6: No name should be included on the ballot without a discernment conversation having taken place. (This would be with the Secretary and/or the President and Vice-President (or possibly the ex-President and Vice-President).) The conversation would ensure that all specific questions designed to gain required information about each candidate's suitability are asked, including those needed to address any gaps in information supplied on the application form.

Proposal 7: The names and supporting statements for each candidate should be submitted to the Conference Office by the second week of May and included in the Agenda.

Proposal 8: That as now the Secretary informs candidates of the outcome of the election which is announced to the Conference by the Chair of the Business Committee.

Next Steps

The Council agreed to the proposals outlined above and presents them to the Conference as policy. If the Conference agrees to the policy, Standing Orders will be prepared and brought to a future Conference.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

The timetable (in 2026 and subsequent years) would be:⁴

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| January | The Conference Office revises the paperwork. |
| February | Business Committee/ Connexional Council approves the role description and there is a notice on the Methodist Church website that nominations are open. |
| March-May | Discernment/vocational conversations |
| Up to early May | Submission of nominations |
| June/ July | The Conference |

***RESOLUTIONS

22/5. The Conference receives the Report.

22/6. The Conference adopts the revised policy for electing the President and Vice-President of the Conference as set out in the Report and directs the Law and Polity Committee to prepare new Standing Orders to give effect to it.

SECTION I

MINUTES OF THE CONFERENCE AND DIRECTORY OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

- 1 The 2023 Conference adopted Resolution 22/5 [DR 7/17/2] approving the proposal to separate the Minutes of the Conference from the Directory of the Methodist Church, and directed the Law and Polity Committee, in consultation with the Methodist Council, to bring the necessary Standing Order amendments to the 2024 Conference.
- 2 These Standing Order amendments have now been drafted by the Law and Polity Committee and the Council now presents them to the Conference.
- 3 **Standing Order 124**
124 Publication of Proceedings. (1) Subject to clause (9) below the general resolutions and other proceedings of the Conference required by clause 37 of the Deed of Union to be printed and published shall be issued as a book under

4 This assumes that Standing Orders can be brought to the 2025 Conference. The Law and Polity Committee has indicated that its workload might mean that the change can only be implemented after the 2026 Conference.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

the title of *The Minutes of the Annual Conference and Directory of the Methodist Church* and the year of the Conference concerned. *The book shall be printed and published in two volumes. The Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, apart from the Directory, shall be contained within volume one of the book. The Directory shall be contained in volume two of the book.*

For cl. 37 of the Deed see Book II, Part I.

(2) It shall be prepared for publication by the Secretary of the Conference.

(3) *[deleted]*

(4) Persons whose names and addresses are listed in the Minutes of Conference shall be entitled to have printed any degrees, distinctions or professional qualifications, held by them, of which they have given particulars to the Secretary of the Conference. In the case of degrees, the name of the awarding body shall be stated and the prefix 'Hon' shall be added to all honorary degrees.

(5) Every minister in the active work and every probationer shall possess a copy of *the book*, the cost of which shall be an expense recoverable, in the case of persons in appointments within the control of the Church, from the Circuits or other bodies responsible for provision of their stipends.

(6) A copy of *the book* shall be presented to every supernumerary, the cost being defrayed by the Methodist Church Fund.

~~(6)~~(7) *The following persons additionally are entitled to receive a copy of volume two of the book:*

- a) *All ministers without appointment;*
- b) *All ministers authorised to serve and listed in the Directory*
- c) *the Vice-President, and other officers of the Conference not otherwise included;*
- d) *Secretaries of the Synods not otherwise included;*
- e) *connexional and district archivists;*
- f) *members of the Connexional Council;*
- g) *Connexional Committee chairs;*
- h) *past Presidents and past Vice-Presidents.*

(8) *In addition to those listed in clause (7), the Secretary of the Conference, when satisfied that a proposed recipient requires volume two of the book in order to*

discharge their duties, may direct that a copy of volume two of the book shall be provided to any such person.

(9) The expense of providing a copy of volume two of the book to the persons set out in clauses (7) and (8) above shall be met by the Methodist Church Fund.

~~(7)~~**(10)** A copy of the memorial service which incorporates that section of the Minutes of Conference containing the obituary notices of those ministers and probationers who have died shall be presented to the nearest relative of every such person whose obituary is printed in the issue of that year, the cost being defrayed by the Methodist Church Fund.

~~(8)~~**(11)** A copy of ***volume one of the book*** shall be presented to the spouse or civil partner of any deceased ministers who makes application, the cost being defrayed by the Methodist Church Fund.

For committee lists to be included in the Conference Agenda and Minutes of Conference see S.O. 204.

For inclusion of names of ministers now in United Churches or autonomous conferences see S.O. 736.

As to obituaries see S.O. 153 and 182.

~~(9)~~**(12)** Those general resolutions of the Conference embodied in Standing Orders shall be published with the Deed of Union, the Model Trusts and other appropriate texts under the title ***The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church***. Amendments or an amended edition shall be published annually and prepared for publication by the officer for legal and constitutional practice. Every minister in the active work and every probationer shall possess a copy and receive annually the amendments or amended edition, the cost of which shall be an expense recoverable, in the case of persons in appointments within the control of the Church, from the Circuits or other bodies responsible for provision of their stipends.

~~(10)~~**(13)** Ministers without appointment shall each be entitled, if they obtain the publication specified as *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church* in clause ~~(9)~~**(12)** above, to recover the cost of one copy of each per annum from the respective Circuits in which they reside.

~~(11)~~**(14)** A brief summary of the transactions of the Conference shall be published annually for wide circulation in the Church. This summary shall

22. Methodist Council, part 2

highlight possible action points for individuals and Local Churches or questions that could be addressed at local level. The cost of publication shall be a charge on the Methodist Church Fund and arrangements for it shall be made by the Methodist Council. Responsibility for the content of the summary shall lie with the person or persons appointed to edit it, who shall be responsible for taking the following action:

- (i) consulting the Secretary of the Conference on the factual content; and
- (ii) ensuring that the master copy reaches Methodist Publishing so that it can be distributed by the end of August.

The Conference of 1999 directed that the following note be inserted here:

In 1999 the Conference, after debate, adopted a motion directing that reports and publications referred for consultation in the Districts and Circuits should be published by 30th September following the Conference where the business is to come back to the following Conference, and by 30th November in any other case. In giving this direction, the Conference acted on the basis that the responsibility for meeting the deadline lay both with those preparing the material for publication and with the Methodist Publishing House [now Methodist Publishing], and that there might be circumstances in which, despite the best endeavours of all concerned, the deadline could not practically be achieved.

For Methodist Publishing, see the details at the beginning of this volume.

~~(12)~~**(15)** Any member of the Conference reporting the public proceedings of the Conference for the news media shall be personally responsible for the information given.

***RESOLUTIONS

22/7. The Conference receives the Report.

22/8. The Conference adopts the amendments to SO 124 as set out in the Report.

SECTION J JUSTICE, DIGNITY AND SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

The Council received the following report from the JDS Committee:

Milestones in brief

- Solidarity Circles for Disability, LGBT+, Racial Justice and Women have met several times throughout this period and have engaged with members of the Connexional Team in regard to a number of strategic issues.

We are in the process of recruiting for new members of each solidarity circle group for the start of the new connexional year, in September 2024. The recruitment process will run from April to July 2024. An additional Solidarity Circle will be created for carers.

- District EDI Officers have been established for each District and to ensure knowledge and awareness of connexional strategies and procedures, a number of awareness events have been scheduled throughout the connexional year for the group.

This year is being treated as a year of consolidation and capacity building to ensure effective support and embedding of officers within each District. As a result a series of seminars has been offered.

These sessions are also open to all Solidarity Circle members.

- Susanna Wesley Foundation longitudinal study into the impact of the strategy across the Connexion: A one day workshop took place in early January 2024 for members of the JDS Committee, Connexional Team Senior Management Group, representatives from Solidarity Circles, Connexional Team (including Learning Network) and District EDI Officers, to engage with the authors of the report to gain an understanding of the report and its findings and consider next steps.

Following the publication of the report and the response from the JDS committee, a small working group has been convened to produce worship material for Circuits and Local Churches underpinning the principles of the JDS strategy and the Justice Seeking Church.

During the January residential meeting, the JDS Committee suggested another exercise to ascertain the reach and impact of the JDS strategy. As a result, the

22. Methodist Council, part 2

shape of that exercise will be scoped out during the coming months in discussion with the Director for Inclusion and JDS Committee. It is anticipated that it will involve a variety of methods, including questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, with a larger number and wider range of respondents than in the first phase but with some attempt also to follow up with those previously interviewed in order to identify specific changes in awareness, perceptions and practice. Consideration will also be given to a third phase which would concentrate on circuits and will take the form of action research. This may achieve the additional objective of helping people to observe and articulate their experiences, with a view to extending those practices which are helping to change the culture of the Methodist Church. It might also create opportunities for people to be involved in imagining a new future for the Church.

- The Discrimination and Abuse Response Service (DARS):
In preparation for live implementation across the Connexion in 2024/25, the DARS team is developing the following:
 - I. Staffing profile and plan
 - II. Exploring the integration of DARS records onto the safeguarding case management system
 - III. Developing training needs and development plan
 - IV. Exploring a single point of contact for complaints, safeguarding, DARS cases which will operate a triage system to direct individuals to the appropriate service

The DARS team has been supporting and accompanying people through issues surrounding discrimination and abuse over the last 18 months. DARS was first piloted within two districts, and then latterly has been opened up to a further ten districts with a view to being available across the Connexion from September 2024. The DARS team has responded to 16 cases in the 18 months that DARS has been piloted; some of these cases were quickly and easily resolved, others are still ongoing.

DARS underwent a review which was reported to the Council in January 2024. Since then, the Director for Inclusion has been working with colleagues in Safeguarding and the area of Complaints and Discipline regarding the Part 11 review and the joining up of the three procedures. The team are working on the action points that came out of the review, which include recruiting further team members since the DARS team is currently only three people (Bevan Powell (who undertakes DARS work alongside his role as Director for Inclusion), Kate Little (who undertakes DARS work alongside her casework for Safeguarding) and Delyth Liddell (a presbyter who volunteers her time alongside her ministry). The team is supported by Donna Ely, Complaints Worker, who assists on a consultation basis.

- JDS Committee - engagement with the 'Justice Seeking Church' and 'God for All' strategies: The JDS Committee has actively engaged with the Director of Social Justice and Social Action and the Director of Evangelism and Growth to emphasise the complementary nature and need for support and collaboration between JDS, the 'Justice-Seeking Church' and God for All' strategies.

Members of the JDS committee continue to meet with colleagues from the Mission Team to identify areas of collaboration, intersection and opportunities and to re-state that these initiatives are complementary to each other and contribute to discipleship and mission.

- JDS Committee supporting the wider work of the church: As the Church starts to embed the JDS strategy across all aspects of church life, JDS Committee members have given support to various connexional initiatives. These include engaging and supporting various connexional work and with connexional committees working on Part 11 of CPD, the Stationing Review Group and Nominations Committee etc.

Substantive items

a. EDI Induction for EDI staff and volunteers:

A generic EDI Induction programme is being developed in collaboration with colleagues in the learning network. This will provide training in addition to the mandatory requirements. This training will support district EDI Officers, Solidarity Circle members, JDS Committee members and any volunteer or members who have been appointed to an EDI role at connexional or district level.

b. Mandatory EDI training:

The Connexional Team has achieved near 100% completion rate. The co-Chair of the JDS Committee, the Revd Charity Nzegwu, has written to each District Chair to ascertain the completion rate for Circuits and district members and staff. Data for online delivery suggest at least 5000 people have undertaken the training; however, this figure may be far higher as many Circuits have undertaken the training in groups, using only one online account.

c. Solidarity Circles

Solidarity Circles have been established for Disability, LGBT+, Racial Justice and Women, each group now have a full complement of volunteer members, however, the Solidarity Circle for Racial Justice is seeking additional members.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

Recruitment to the Solidarity Circles is currently taking place.

d. Truth and Reconciliation Process (TRP) Update

The JDS Committee recognised that the Council had expected a fully costed plan for the Truth and Reconciliation Process (TRP). However, this aspect has been further delayed until there is a clear understanding of process which is safe for the individual which attracts trust and confidence from the wider Connexion and is repeatable. It is envisaged that a costed plan will be in place by September 2024, ready for the next budget cycle.

e. Evaluation of Leadership Models - JDS Committee

Since its inception in 2021, the JDS Committee has explored two different leadership models to enhance collaboration and ensure efficient decision-making. The two models tested were: the co-chairs model and the chair and deputy chair model.

1. Co-Chairs Model:

The co-chairs model involved two individuals sharing equal leadership responsibilities. This model aimed to distribute the workload and provide a balanced perspective. However, after thorough evaluation, it was observed that this model lacked clear decision-making authority. The absence of a designated leader often led to delays in decision-making and hindered the committee's progress.

2. Chair and Deputy Chair Model:

The chair and deputy chair model, on the other hand, has been piloted in the last year. Under this model, a single chair leads the Committee, supported by a deputy who assists in fulfilling leadership duties. The evaluation of this model revealed several benefits. The clear authority and designated roles allowed for streamlined decision-making and improved efficiency. The chair's leadership and accountability ensured timely progress and effective coordination among committee members.

In conclusion, the evaluation of different leadership models implemented by the JDS Committee highlights the advantages of the chair and deputy chair model. This model provides a clear authority, accountability, and streamlined decision-making, ultimately leading to improved committee performance. It is recommended that the committee continues with this model to ensure effective leadership and successful execution of its objectives. The Council therefore recommends to the Conference that the Standing Order is amended to reflect this and the Standing Order amendments are brought via the Oversight and Trusteeship report and the wider review of committee matters.

*****RESOLUTION**

22/9. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION K MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

- 1 The Ministries Committee is charged with responsibility to keep in constant review the life of the Methodist Church as it relates to Ministries, to indicate what changes are necessary or what steps should be taken to make the work of the Church more effective, to review the formational and support needs of those who exercise ministry on behalf of the Church, and to report annually to the Methodist Council. Many of the pieces of work currently being undertaken are interdependent with each other and with previous decisions of the Church, for example the 2020 Conference Report *Changing Patterns of Ministry* continues to shape the work being undertaken on future candidating processes and on the review of how we station ministers. The Ministries Committee pays particular attention to the contexts in which ministry takes place, and has spent time and care considering how global factors have impacted upon ministers in terms of their well-being and the nature of their work.
- 2 The Ministries Committee is accountable through the Methodist Council to the Conference for:
 - (i) developing and supporting the processes relating to the oversight, accountability and professional development of those engaged in the ministries and offices of the Church;
 - (ii) developing and supporting programmes for nourishing, equipping and resourcing those engaged in the ministries and offices of the Church;
 - (iii) developing and supporting the Church's structures and resources for learning, training, scholarship, research and development;
 - (iv) in collaboration with other bodies, supporting the development of structures that enable the use of various forms of ministry as resources for mission within Circuits and Districts;
 - (v) overseeing connexional policy regarding its ordained ministries, including that relating to the processes for offering as a candidate, the oversight of students and probationers, and stationing, but without adjudicating on individual cases, which shall remain the task of the bodies appointed to fulfil that responsibility. (SO 32A1(2))

22. Methodist Council, part 2

THE LEARNING INSTITUTIONS AND CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT IN MINISTRY

- 3 The Committee received annual reports from the Queen's Foundation and Cliff College. Both institutions continue to work intentionally to incorporate the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) strategy.
- 4 In its partnership with the Methodist Church in Britain, **the Queen's Foundation** continues to receive all those candidates accepted by the Methodist Conference for initial ministerial training. In September 2022 Queen's had a total of 51 student ministers. Of these, 32 were full-time and 19 part-time; 7 were student deacons and 44 student presbyters. Among the full-time students were 6 students who were on the Circuit-based Learning Pathway (CBLP). The new cohort for 2023-24 comprised 12 student ministers, six student deacons and six student presbyters; six women and six men; three of Global Majority or UK Minority Ethnic Heritage. It has been exciting to hear the news of the number of people engaging with the Discerning Ordained Vocation process, which could lead to a considerable increase in the number of candidates during 2023-24. It is especially gratifying to hear that students of very different theological persuasions, spiritual traditions and worship practices can 'find a home' and expand their grasp of their own tradition and learn from others who are very different.
- 5 There are three basic training pathways, between which there is considerable flexibility to respond to the needs of student ministers and the Church. On the full-time pathway, student ministers may move to Birmingham or commute regularly. The part-time pathway, the Queen's Connexional Course (QCC), enables student ministers to engage with initial ministerial training through short periods of residence and online/distance learning. The third pathway is the Circuit-based Learning Pathway (CBLP) which involves student ministers in intensive learning both in the context of Queen's and in a Circuit chosen for this purpose.
- 6 Most student ministers are studying on accredited programmes from Durham University's Common Awards suite, as part of their overall formational programme. At the beginning of the academic year 2022-23, 32 were working at CertHE or DipHE level in Theology, Ministry and Mission; one was working towards the BA; three were on (or moving towards) a Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma programme; 13 were studying for Masters degrees; two were working at doctoral level. During 2022-23, 10 students were being supported with particular learning needs, or physical health needs, many of them through public DSA (Disabled Students' Allowance) provision. The DSA support for students is one of the main benefits of the Foundation's registration with the Office for Students.

- 7 The current programme of probation studies at Queen's takes advantage of the larger, gathered cohort of probationers who have trained at Queen's and seeks to build coherently on their initial ministerial training. This includes enabling those who choose and are given permission to do so to continue to completion of a BA or MA with the Common Awards programme (or in a small number of cases a Newman University MA programme). In 2022-23, Queen's worked with 46 probationers on the programme of probation studies designed to build on their pre-ordination training. The provision that Queen's makes for probation studies has been valued by the vast majority of probationers, and the District Probationers' Committees also have confidence that the most helpful route for at least some of the study programme is through Queen's, thereby releasing Districts from a responsibility which some had increasingly struggled to fulfil. In September 2022, an additional 17 former probationers were working on their studies post-ordination. Queen's continues to provide additional support for those writing dissertations or completing other modules beyond probation studies, to help them complete their programme.
- 8 Queen's welcomed two new full-time academic staff at the end of the academic year 2022-2023, the Director of Research and the Director of the Centre for Discipleship and Theology. The current Principal, Clive Marsh, has indicated that 2023-24 will be his final year in the role and Bishop Anne Hollinghurst has been appointed as his successor.
- 9 Queen's continues to work under the provisions of the Partnership Agreement with the Methodist Church and has had regular contact with the Director of Learning for Ministry who continues to attend and contribute to meetings of the Governors at the Queen's Foundation. The Chair of Governors is actively seeking to fill 'skills gaps' within the Governing body as a whole, and efforts to make the Governors a more diverse group are at the fore.
- 10 Focal points for the work of Queen's have been the development of online and Distance Learning work within the expansion of open learning and opportunities for lay theological education and the development of the work of the Centre for Black Theology. There continues to be a number of challenges for the Centre, and for Queen's in having the Centre located as part of the Foundation's work not least (i) how to forge formal partnerships with Black Majority (usually Pentecostal) churches when the nature of these links may be quite different from those with the Church of England and the Methodist Church, and (ii) doing justice to the wide range of UKME/Global Majority heritage experience represented amongst the staff and students.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

- 11 The Foundation was able to welcome four Rwandan students and one Sri Lankan student for extended stays as part of its Methodist Church-funded Partnership in Theological Education (PiTE) work. One of the remaining students (also from Sri Lanka) on the SALT programme was able to be present at the same time as the PiTE group. All together this added a scale of international interaction in the life of Queen's. In addition to this, a further SALT student from Myanmar completed his doctorate through the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in extraordinary circumstances, undertaking the public defence of his thesis online from a hotel room in Bangkok, whilst being examined by scholars in Myanmar, South Korea, UK, USA, and the Netherlands.
- 12 The Queen's Foundation was again able to arrange overseas experiences through the MEET (Mutual Exchange and Encounter for Transformation) programme. Linking with the two PiTE partner institutions, it was able to send groups of students and staff both to Rwanda and Sri Lanka. Because the groups were received by people known to Queen's (including, in both places, by current Queen's students) the richness and mutuality of the experience of encounter and exchange was very evident.
- 13 At **Cliff College**, the major milestone achieved over the past year has been the launch of the new dual delivery undergraduate programme, the BA Theology and Mission, which replaces the previous two programmes (BA Mission and Ministry and BA Theology and Ministry) which were running simultaneously. After successfully navigating the validation process with the University of Manchester, the new BATM degree was launched in September 2023. Recruitment for the programme was strong, especially in comparison to recent years, and we enrolled 23 students in total (7 FT and 16 PT). Students can study either onsite at Cliff (via the full-time residential programme which also involves them in the College's Methodist Way of Life rhythm, or by residence during teaching weeks) or fully online. Cliff has welcomed its first fully online international student, who is currently training for ministry in the Methodist Church in Uganda and is undertaking his studies in fulfilment of the Church's requirements. In the part-time cohort, the College also welcomed seven students from the Methodist Church in Ireland, at various stages of their journey in formation and pre-ordination training. Alongside other Methodist students from the UK, this means that the undergraduate body has a strong Methodist presence this year, which is encouraging, for both the College, and the wider Methodist family.
- 14 During this year most of the necessary work has been completed to retire the existing MA in Mission programme and replace it with a new MA Theology and Mission programme, which, like the new undergraduate degree, will be dual delivery (online and onsite). The new programme provides a suite of units that

build on the College's heritage and emphasis on mission, as well as serving the priorities of the Methodist Church, given that many of the MA students come to the programme as part of their ongoing learning and development within ministry roles. Alongside core units of Missional Theology and Missional Theology in Practice, students can choose from a selection of options, which include: Bible, Gender and Mission, Majority World Perspectives and Mission, Justice and Mission, Pioneer Ecclesiology and Mission, Methodist and Wesleyan Identity and Mission, and Chaplaincy and Mission. These units are being developed to serve both the priorities of the Methodist Church in Britain, but also to coordinate with the training needs of other churches in the Methodist family. The College has a particular relationship with the European Methodist eAcademy of the UMC, and is working to ensure that English-language students from Europe can complete their studies via the eAcademy using the new online units, thus enriching the experience for all.

- 15 The doctoral programmes continue to include Methodist students who are researching areas of theology and practice related to mission in the Methodist Church. This year, the College is delighted to have had three successful PhD completions, including a recent one by a Methodist superintendent, who researched the role of Methodist circuits in missional practice and church growth. Ongoing students include research topics such as cross-cultural ministry in the Methodist Church in Britain, and (from the Methodist Church in Ireland) the practice of Methodist pastoral care in the context of historic trauma. The College is about to launch a new doctoral scholarship programme, to enable students to participate in the empirical research the College is undertaking among New Places for New People/Church at the Margins projects. It is hoped that this will support the development of both a body of research into Methodist missional practice, and a cohort of scholars who can resource the thinking of the Church for the future.
- 16 This year has also been the second year of the Mission and Ministry Development Units, which were specifically designed to serve the needs of local lay-pastors, but are also broadly suitable for preachers, lay workers, and others who are involved in the life and ministry of the Church. Over the past year, units have been delivered in 'Ministry in the Methodist Tradition', 'Pastoral Practice', 'Christian Spirituality', 'Growing in Leadership', and 'Christian Theology in Outline'. This is a key moment in the College's academic delivery, as the 'teach-out' programmes reach their end, and the new programmes, with their new hybrid delivery style, are embedded. While this is an enormous amount of work, for both administration and faculty, the end result of this intense period will be a much more streamlined and fit-for-purpose suite of programmes that serve the Church's needs, as well as demonstrating innovation and quality in the Higher Education sector. The

22. Methodist Council, part 2

College will undergo its Institutional and Periodic Review with the University of Manchester, in June 2024.

- 17 The College continues to invest in the development of its research culture. This has included the development of a regular hybrid research seminar, as a context for faculty, research students and guest scholars to share learning and discuss new developments in knowledge and practice. The addition of a Research Fellow in New Places for New People this year has contributed greatly to the development of this culture at the College, and, as noted above, plans are in place for further development of the postgraduate research community, with a relaunch of a PhD Missiology cohort in September 2024.
- 18 Whilst not a formal centre of research, the College's key activity in research over this period has been the development of the New Places for New People/Church at the Margins project research. This has been facilitated by the appointment of a new Research Fellow, who is working with the College and the NPNP/CaM steering team in order to ensure that the research is carried out in a timely and effective manner. The College looks forward to the fruit of this research becoming available for the Church, as well as the academy.
- 19 This year has seen the launch of MCBX, as the Methodist Church's own instance of the TheologyX platform. Courses previously hosted on TheologyX (such as Safeguarding and EDI), have been moved to MCBX. The College has continued to develop the use of TheologyX in the charity and church sector, and we are pleased to have welcomed a number of new partners to the site in the past year, including from the United Methodist Church, as well as the Children's Ministry Network of Churches Together in England (for their Children's and Family Ministry Essentials Training). This is building the community of practitioners who are using the TheologyX platform, and the College is providing a valuable, cost-effective facility for such bodies to develop and delivery online training.
- 20 Globally, the College's main work with TheologyX over the past year has been supporting the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone in its development of new pathways for local preacher and ordination training. Working closely with the Methodist Church's mission partners in Sierra Leone, a new instance of TheologyX for MCSL has been developed, and good practice and curriculum insights have been shared. This aspect of the College's innovation work offers great potential in our commitment to decolonising our own theological curriculum and platforming diverse voices in our own classrooms.
- 21 Cliff College continues to support a significant number of partner churches including Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Sierra Leone and to develop work in Argentina

with an exciting partnership that will have benefit for our validated students as well as the wider College and Connexion.

22 The College is again grateful for the annual grant it receives from the Methodist Church, which not only supports the ongoing work of the College, but also enables us to support the work of the Connexional Team in many ways. We will continue to work alongside, and strengthen our relationships within the Connexional Team including the Learning Network, to develop a range of opportunities that support the learning needs of the Church in this rapidly changing landscape. The College has sought to be nimble in its response to the needs of the church and will continue to do all it can to enable quality theological education at every level of church life.

23 The College continues to work with the wider Church as much of our work intersects with the work of the Church and the Connexional Team. The key intersection points are as follows:

- Hosting Methodist committees, conferences and training events, and facilitating in-person and hybrid spaces.
- Running an annual Festival that connects families and young people with the priorities and charisms of the Methodist Church. The theme for 2023 was 'Eden Restored' – working closely with partners to explore issues around creation, redemption and what it means to 'Build the Kingdom here'.
- Resourcing the Methodist Church's online learning platform, MCBX, and providing consultancy and training to enable Methodist educators to make effective use of the digital learning space
- Supporting the Global Relationships team in delivering the Methodist Church's commitment to capacity development in theological education globally with our partner churches and institutions, and training those who participate in the Encounter programmes.
- Providing a Methodist environment for Higher Education where students can undertake an undergraduate degree in theology and mission while living a Methodist way of life.
- Providing opportunities for further learning for Methodist presbyters, deacons and lay leaders, through our MA in Theology and Mission programme, and doctoral studies.
- Undertaking research and scholarship into the practices of mission in Methodism in the UK today, through the New Places for New People research project.
- Delivering the authorised training for the Local Lay-Pastor scheme.
- Hosting the Worship: Leading and Preaching in a year training (as required by the church), and providing library and copyright resources for all local preachers and worship leaders in training.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

- Developing scholarship, research and training that explores the priorities that energise our church, like justice, intergenerational ministry, young adult formation, transformational leadership, God at the margins, and evangelism.
 - And in all of this, being available for the conversations that the Church is having in various areas of mission and ministry, putting our expertise to work in service of the people called Methodist.
- 24 The Committee oversees the HE Awards which are given to Methodists, lay and ordained, seeking to pursue higher degrees in a theological or missiological subject. The disbursement of this annual fund is overseen by a HE Awards Panel, working with the Directors of Learning for Ministry, and Research and Scholarship. The Committee was encouraged and excited by the range of subjects being studied, the passion for thinking and learning theologically and how it might impact the life of the Methodist Church.
- 25 The Methodist Church currently supports more than 40 Methodists studying on courses for a research degree or taught Masters through the HE Awards. Amongst the students being supported there is a diversity of theological interest, for example Christian leadership, chaplaincy, closing churches, dying well, the inter-testamental period, happiness in Wesley's theology and soteriology, aspects of deliverance ministry, pedagogies for developing theological literacy amongst lay people, a queer theology of holiness, and a re-examination of the trinity situated in science, faith and apologetics. It is always encouraging to speak with the students about their studies and theological interests. Most of them are highly committed and enthusiastic, studying alongside full time work and ministry. There is a deep appreciation for the grants that the Methodist Church gives, and for the support offered through the Director of Research and Scholarship and Director of Learning for Ministry roles.
- 26 Experience of administering the Awards has highlighted where the criteria and requirements could benefit from some revision. The Ministries Committee agreed to some minor changes in the criteria for the HE Awards and the guidance as set out in a report submitted to the February meeting. The committee will consider whether any guidance can be offered where there is currently discretion. It also noted that there are broader questions about the purpose and breadth of these Awards that merit further reflection.
- 27 The Director of Learning for Ministry has continued to work intentionally with Methodist-related institutions to ensure that the Connexional Team is nurturing and promoting their research programmes and encouraging HE Awards applicants wherever possible at least to consider pursuing their study through one of them.

LAY MINISTRY

Local Preachers and Worship Leaders (LPWL)

- 28 The 2019 Conference (Memorial 25) agreed that the Ministries Committee will receive an annual report on the work of worship leaders and local preachers, and in particular their initial training and ongoing development, which will then be included in the report of the Ministries Committee to the Council, and thus to the Conference.
- 29 The Ministries Committee received the LPWL Annual Report at its February meeting. The committee encourages and supports local preachers and worship leaders, who have a vital role to play in the regeneration of the life and mission of the Church. The following statistics have been prepared in response to Memorial M25 to the 2019 Conference. As of January 2023 there were 5,145 active local preachers recorded on the connexional database, a decline of 6% from 5,477 the previous year. Of those in training, 280 had a Note to Preach (2022: 375), and there were 456 persons On Trial (2022: 483) as local preachers.
- 30 Taken alone, these numbers are broadly as expected, and align with the decline in membership and attendance, together with the assumed demographic profile of the local preacher / worship leader population.
- 31 The number of local preachers who died and were included in the Remembrance Book in 2022 was 255. The list for 2023 is in preparation and will be presented at the 2024 Conference.
- 32 Sixty-eight portfolios were successfully completed on the Worship: Leading & Preaching course in 2023, compared with 140 the previous year. Of these, seven were from worship leaders (2022: 16), who have successfully completed modules 1-4. Thirty-four were Portfolio LPA (2022: 63) and twenty-eight were Portfolio LPB (2022: 61), indicating completion of LP training. There will be a robust investigation into the decline in the number of portfolios submitted.
- 33 During the year, 70 new students enrolled for WLP (2022: 54) as worship leaders and 123 (2022: 152) as local preachers. The number of new local preachers admitted during 2023 was 33. This compares with 83 in 2022.
- 34 The number of new LP admissions varies considerably from year to year, but that for 2023 is around a third of the annual average for the last 10 years and compares with a high of 202 in 2021. Work is required to identify and address any systemic factors affecting this number.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

- 35 The number of new enrolments remains encouraging. In circuits with recent experience of WLP, there is a positive attitude, especially as students work through and complete WLP3 and their contribution to the creativity and consistency of worship is recognised. Our focus in 2024 on building the community of Local Preachers' Secretaries should allow us to communicate good stories from those who have enjoyed learning with WLP.
- 36 The number of new worship leaders is particularly encouraging. This may reflect the opportunity presented by Local Arrangements for new people to be involved in leading worship. Where the local church provides encouragement, this is often accompanied by a desire to learn. The training and equipping of people to lead worship with creative vision and consistent quality is central to the ethos of WLP.
- 37 Review and rewriting of training materials taking account of insights and emphases from the Justice, Diversity and Solidarity (JDS) strategy and Equality Diversity Inclusion, Justice-seeking Church and Action for Hope continues.
- 38 Work has proceeded to provide more course materials in Welsh, in accordance with Conference commitments with the publication of Worship: Foundations in Welsh. Although there are currently no students studying in Welsh, the creation of Wales Synod Cymru may provide an opportunity for Welsh-speakers to study in their heart language and encourage mission in Welsh-speaking communities.
- 39 Work on provision of training materials in Cantonese to support the growing Cantonese fellowships and the significant numbers coming forward as leaders and preachers is currently on hold. Progress was halted pending provision of a new connexional policy on translations. This is now a critical issue as maintenance of the previous Faith & Worship course, a Chinese translation of which is still in use by Conference permission, is now unsustainable. No Connexional Assessors are now available, and the material is outdated. Work has begun on developing an approach for translation of the Worship Foundations material in Cantonese as a test project as part of the wider connexional policy development. Once the policy has been finalised, consideration of further translation can be assessed.
- 40 Feedback from students studying with Worship: Leading & Preaching continues to be positive. The following was received from a local preacher who recently completed the course:

... I am delighted that my second portfolio has been accepted. I have enjoyed the course and gained a lot from it. I didn't do too well with exams at school so this type of modular learning, applying theory to practice and plenty of opportunity for research, has suited me very well.

- 41 We were delighted to report that the first "graduate" of the Armed Forces pathway completed their training during the year and was recognised as a local preacher in December.
- 42 Comprehensive training for WLP students, tutors and mentors continues. This is largely delivered online, and includes Online Inductions, Study Skills, Introductions for Tutors and Mentors, Further Skills for Tutors and Explore Online (discussion groups for students).
- 43 A proposal to reimagine the Local Preachers' Meeting as a learning community for all those involved in leading worship is currently under consideration with the Faith and Order Committee. This will include an overhaul of related Standing Orders which hopefully will be brought to Conference in 2025.
- 44 The Ongoing Learning Hub, which provides a range of resources to promote continuing learning is now available for anyone with a WLP account. A self-registration portal to allow anyone to access the resources was made available during 2024.
- 45 The 2023 Conference received a report concerning the Necessitous Local Preachers' Fund. The Conference directed the new trustees of the fund to propose amendments to modernise and clarify the terms and powers of the Trust Deed. It also directed the Ministries Committee, in consultation with the Fund trustees and the Law and Polity Committee, to devise new rules for the administration of grants from the Fund and to bring these rules to the Conference. Work has begun on this but it has not been possible to complete it prior to the 2024 Conference. The work will continue and will be brought to the 2025 Conference.

Local Lay-Pastors

- 46 Following the adoption of the role of local lay-pastor by the 2022 Conference, the Ministries team with colleagues in the wider team has worked hard to provide guidance to circuits on the Methodist Church Website. The committee will be discussing the impact of the local lay-pastor training pathway being supported or encouraged in their contexts.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

VOCATIONS

Developing Vocations

- 47 Following the identification, in 2019-20, of developing vocations as an urgent and important priority for the Methodist Church, a number of pieces of work were undertaken by the member of staff appointed to the Ministries Team, on a fixed term secondment, to lead this area. These included research into barriers around candidating and the subsequent review of candidating, a focus on ministerial wellbeing, The *Love This Calling* campaign, and the development of resources to equip the Methodist people in celebrating vocations and discernment.
- 48 Over the past year, ongoing work relating to vocations has taken place, including:
- The first complete cycle of the new candidating process, which includes the vocational discernment element, Explore, open to anybody exploring their calling.
 - Exploring Ordained Ministry/ Inhabiting Diaconal Ministry Days which are for those who feel that they have a calling to ordained ministry.
 - Meetings of the Vocations Community of Practice. These underpin the key approach of embedding a cohesion to developing vocations across the Connexional Team, by ensuring that colleagues who have areas related to vocations in their workplans meet together.
 - Completion of the Line Managers' handbook which has a substantial emphasis on vocation.
 - Delivery of the following programmes in addition to Explore:
 - Encounter Programme, a 10-month online course for those seeking to explore their vocations, completed by 21 people in 2023.
 - A ten-session Youthscape Essentials course for volunteer youth workers
 - Vocations Sunday materials and promotion
 - In addition, work is being developed to develop the role of District Vocational Champions as well as a programme for young adults, which will have a strong vocational element.
- 49 Much of this work is now embedded; this, the planned renewed focus on vocations in the God For All 2025-32 update, subject to Conference approval, and the appointment of the new Director of Ministry Development, who will co-ordinate vocations work, means that it is an appropriate time to review all of the extensive work undertaken on vocations in the past few years. Particular elements to be reviewed from the past year include the Explore programme and the outcomes from the work on the Church's response to the low numbers of British people of global majority heritage offering for ordained and lay ministries, and how this work should be taken forward.

- 50 Following this review, we will renew and re-develop our connexional vocations strategy to align with both the planned timeframes and overarching aims of the God For All update 2025-32, to continue to develop the vital work of enabling the vocations of the Methodist people, both lay and ordained.

Committee on Discernment of Ordained Vocation (previously the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee)

- 51 The Ministries Committee notes the huge amount of time, patience and commitment that has been given by many people in implementing and developing the new candidating process through its first cycle. The new members of the committee have brought new skills and broadened the diversity and the number of new candidates exceeded all expectations. The candidating scheme had been designed around an assumed number of 32 candidates. The much higher actual number meant that an additional 48 hour meeting of the Connexional DOV2 Committee had to be set up. 23 candidates attended from 2-4 February, and a further 16 attended from 5-7 February.
- 52 The Ministries Committee resolved to appoint a researcher (consulting as necessary) to establish and operate a review process of the candidating scheme. This is to assess if it has achieved the original objectives. This research to take place September 2025– July 2026. This researcher will bring a report to the Ministries Committee in September 2026. Oversight for this research will be provided by the Head of Ministries and Learning.

Implications of the New Candidating Process on Probation

- 53 Following consultations with MCPOC, the Ministries Committee and the Stationing Committee, it had been agreed that further work will be done on adapting profiles for probationer presbyter appointments and diaconal appointments in order to take note of the fact that not all probationers will have previous experience of preaching, proclaiming and worship leading. An Implementation Group was being set up comprising members of these three committees and members of the Stationing Review Group, to meet after the 2024 Conference.

Candidating Numbers

- 54 The Ministries Team is keeping these numbers under regular review. Numbers have shown an increase this year which may be in response to the new candidating scheme.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

MATTERS RELATING TO ORDAINED MINISTRY

Candidates and Occupational Health Policy and Assessment Reports

- 55 As previously reported, all recommended candidates from 2024 onwards will have an Occupational Health assessment and a policy was agreed by members of the Well-being team, the Law and Polity Committee and MCPOC that clearly identifies which adjustments are reasonable for a candidate for ordained ministry to be able to study and to minister. In May 2023 the committee approved the policy, noting that it was the culmination of a long process involving robust work with advice sought from many professionals. Where any adjustments are needed for a candidate, these would be outlined in the assessment. The Ministries Committee approved the processes submitted by MCPOC and directed it to set up a standing sub-committee to apply the policy commencing 2023-2024. Members of that standing sub-committee have since met twice to review the Candidates' Occupational Health Assessment Reports and it has nothing controversial to report.

Flourishing / Wellbeing in Ordained Ministry

- 56 The committee is pleased to see how much had been implemented by the team on behalf of the Church. In addition to the work outlined below around Voices of Identity and Supervision, the Ministries Team continues to offer courses, as mandated by the Conference, for ministers who are shortly to become supernumerary. As well as this, there is a wider suite of residential reflection spaces for those who are making their first moves in ministry, for those who have been in ministry for 10-12 years (Re-Charge), and for those who have travelled 25+ years in ministry. However, the Ministries Committee is aware that there is more work to do on ministerial wellbeing and the Ministries Team will be working with others across the Connexion to review provision for ministerial wellbeing, to ensure that it meets the needs of ordained ministers in the current Church landscape.

Voices of Identity

- 57 The committee noted that this work is not a requirement of the Conference but is an additional piece of work and is self-driven by the group involved, with the aim to prevent isolation among ministers. It has gathered the voices of ministers in specific contexts and situations and learning for the Church. The committee valued and supported this work and agreed that the learning found by the group should be shared more widely. The Committee will continue to be attentive to the places of crossover and intersection with other aspects of its work, in particular

that of ministerial wellbeing and the current review of the stationing process. It directed that teams or reviews that operate beyond Ministries: Worship and Vocations be directed to take note of the findings of this work so that the learning is not lost. It also directed the Stationing Review Group to be attentive to the issues raised by the different groups of ministers involved to date in this project.

Changing Order of Ministry

- 58 The committee directed that Standing Order 718 be updated in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee to create a standard but flexible process to create opportunities for people to change order at three different stages. The purpose is that they do not have to go back to square one or re-candidate but instead use the existing oversight bodies to use discernment in their particular case, with a focus on why they wish to change.

Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC)

- 59 The committee noted that the majority of students and probationer ministers are demonstrating a joy and fulfilment in their formation and ministry. They have shown astonishing flexibility as the Church continues to adapt following the pandemic and as Circuits often find themselves in fragile situations. There are some who have challenges as they travel through these years of formation. MCPOC endeavours to walk with them with a combination of pastoral care and robust oversight, both to support them and to support the Church as a whole. There are challenges when probationers identify issues from their own experience which do not appear to impact the way they carry out their ministry and therefore do not appear on the reports from the District Probationers' Committee. The Law and Polity Committee has been asked to review the way in which MCPOC is able to act, and specifically whether it should only respond when the oversight bodies (the Student Oversight Committee or the District Probationers' Committee) make recommendations.
- 60 In May 2023 the committee received a paper on Initial Stationing Appointments and Local Specific Contexts about those students who had previously candidated under limited deployability, as the process is transitioning to local and specific contexts. The committee approved the action points as set out in the report. At its February 2024 meeting the Ministries Committee directed that a local or specific context appointment is advocated by a District at the point of candidating but is not guaranteed. If that context is not available, the probationer will be expected to serve in another appointment. It directed that a local appointment is endorsed by a District rather than a local Circuit. It also directed that a second appointment in a local or specific context is not guaranteed.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

- 61 The Committee adopted a definition of a District Chair's 'endorsement' of a local or specific context application. The Committee directed that the language is adopted of 'local or specific context for itinerant ministry' and 'itinerant ministry in a broad range of contexts' as outlined in the paper.
- 62 The Committee requested that a review of SO 723(3) is carried out by the Ministerial Coordinator and a member of MCPOC in conjunction with the Ministry Development Officer (lay ministries) and the Pioneering and Church Plant officer, consulting as necessary. This is to take account of the changing contexts of ministry and the requirements of the oversight of probation. This review group would be asked to report back to the Ministries Committee in February 2025.
- 63 The committee noted the work of a small group of MCPOC which had met to review the workload of District Probationers' Secretaries and look at reducing the number of reports required. The group has tried to simplify the process although this may create more work for MCPOC itself. The Council directed that the Ministries Committee undertake a wider consultation, including with the Faith and Order Committee and the Chairs and Secretaries of District Probationers Committees, on the ecclesiological and practical implications of the proposals for assessing probation set out in the committee's report to the Council, and to report regarding the consultation together with any revised proposals to the Connexional Council not before April 2025.
- 64 Members of the Law and Polity Committee had very helpfully assisted with the redrafting of a revised C2 candidating context form which was approved by the Ministries Committee and was subsequently uploaded to the website with the other DOV2 application forms.
- 65 There has been a high number of issues for MCPOC to address concerning candidates, students and probationers. Issues have included changes in personal circumstances, changes in training pathway or probation studies, changes to supervision arrangements, concerns around the impact of itinerancy, length of probation for those in part time appointments, inhabiting the particular order of ministry, challenges in appointments, changes within probation appointments, eligibility issues for candidates, and applications for local context appointments for candidates.
- 66 In February 2024 MCPOC presented a list of appointments to various groups, some of which were already existing and others that have come into being with the candidating scheme. The Ministries Committee approved the appointments relating to the new candidating scheme, which were noted by the Council.

Ministers of Other Conferences and Churches (MOCCs)

- 67 The committee noted that the MOCCs have formed a supportive cohort together and frequently seek each other's counsel. Circuits are enjoying their fresh and varied approaches to their ministries. In May 2023 the committee received a report on the MOCCs covering three areas: discernment, stationing and induction. A message had been sent to Chairs of District and Lay Stationing Representatives to make sure they are aware that the MOCC processes have been partially opened up this year, so that circuits can be encouraged to submit a profile for a MOCC.
- 68 An induction day was held on zoom for two members each of the circuit leadership teams of those circuits receiving MOCCs. They were encouraged to use the material from that day to help the churches in their circuits to prepare well for the arrival of their new minister. The ministers will each be given a paper copy of the MOCC induction handbook in August. It has been made available electronically to each circuit and to the ministers and is also available on the website. Each year this handbook is developed in the light of the experiences of ministers and circuits.
- 69 The committee directed that a question on health be added to the home church report on MOCC applicants from 2024-2025 onwards. It directed that no occupational health assessments should be carried out for MOCC applicants applying for Recognised and Regarded status. It approved a process for all MOCCs who are appointed to non-circuit roles (and not subject to stationing). It approved a process for all MOCCs who are directly recruited to specific roles in the British Methodist Church. The specific roles in Circuit are likely to be Fellowship or Language Groups chaplains which have traditionally been identified by the home church.
- 70 In February 2024, the Ministries Committee approved that the transfer panels in November 2024 may be held online rather than in person. It affirmed the Faith and Order Committee in the work it is suggesting regarding establishing clearer eligibility criteria (regarding ordination) of ministers wishing to transfer. The Ministries Committee expressed a wish that in future ministers may apply to transfer to serve in the British Methodist Church from overseas only if they are listed as a church with whom the British Methodist Church is in partnership. Where ministers apply from British Churches of other denominations, their eligibility will continue to be assessed by the Ecumenical Officer.
- 71 The Council delegated to the Ministries Committee the responsibility for appointing a task group to carry out a full review of the ministerial transfer

22. Methodist Council, part 2

scheme (including a review of Section 73 of the Standing Orders) to start work in the 2024-2025 connexional year and report to the 2026 Conference.

Ministerial Status of Ministers of Other Churches

- 72 In September 2003 the committee received an outline policy regarding the Ministerial Status of Ministers of Other Churches. The numbers of those recognised and regarded, authorised or associate each year bears witness to the debt that is owed by the connexion. Sometimes, however, our different understandings and expectations can create complex questions. Problems have arisen concerning ministers ordained in other churches or traditions who are working for or serving in some sort of appointment in the Methodist Church but who are not recognised and regarded, authorised to serve, or granted the status of associate presbyter or deacon. Work will continue with representatives of the Faith and Order Committee to explore further the issues involved in this policy.

Supervision

- 73 At its May meeting the committee noted that, after a careful recruitment process, the Supervision Reference Group had approved the appointment of the Revd Dr Nicola Price-Tebbutt in readiness for the scoping work to begin on supervision research. Her specialism is in research methodology and she has strong experience of quantitative and qualitative impact analysis. The research will seek to give a clear picture of where the Methodist Church now stands in terms of offering reflective supervision to those involved in ordained and lay ministry, offering both quantitative and qualitative evidence, before the revised Supervision policy is presented to the 2026 Conference.
- 74 The committee also received an update on group supervision and accepted an amendment to the proposed timeline suggested in the 2021-26 policy to take a more measured and practical approach in light of our ongoing knowledge and budgetary constraints. A larger pool of people is now available to deliver Group Supervision training.

Deliverance Ministry

- 75 In May 2023 the committee received a year one update on Deliverance Ministry from the Revd Kate Strange (Chair of the Connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry). In February 2024 the committee received a report from the Faith and Order Committee and agreed to recommend to the Conference that the existing guidance on Deliverance Ministry continues to be used.

M15 and M16 (2023) Discretionary Payments to Circuits during a Minister's Suspension

- 76 Memorials M15 and M16 (2023) asked that Circuits be reimbursed for the cost of a minister's stipend when a minister is suspended during a disciplinary matter, in the same way that they would be if the minister were on long-term sick leave (ie stipend refunded after six months' absence). This request was declined, but the Conference reply noted that it is possible for a Circuit to apply under Standing Order 365(7) for a discretionary payment from the Methodist Church Fund, and that the de facto policy is that this can cover the costs of supplying ministry in the stead of a suspended minister. The reply to the Memorial also noted that this might helpfully be clarified in Standing Orders. The Conference therefore directed the Ministries Committee, in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee, to review and amend the text of SO 365(7) in line with the current de facto policy.
- 77 The Council concurred with the recommendation of the Ministries Committee that these changes to be made in Standing Orders 013(11) and 1105(10) and then to include an additional cross-reference in Standing Order 365(7).
- 78 SO 365(7) states that discretionary payments can be made in a number of circumstances, including "where an application is made under Standing Order 013(11)". SO 013(11) states that, where a minister is suspended under that Standing Order, the Circuit continues to be responsible to pay his or her stipend, provide a manse etc. It then adds that the Circuit may apply for a discretionary payment under Standing Order 365(7).
- 79 SO 1105(10) contains a similar provision, although SO 365(7) does not cross-refer to it. SO 1105(9) provides that, in a suspension on complaints and discipline grounds, the Circuit continues to be responsible for providing a stipend and manse until the end of the quarter during which the initial hearing of any charge takes place. Clause 10 provides that the disciplinary committee must direct what stipend and accommodation is to be provided during any continuation of the suspension after that, and the costs will be met from the Methodist Church Fund. Clause 10 then adds that a Circuit may apply for a discretionary payment under Standing Order 365(7), relating to either or both periods.
- 80 The following amendments to Standing Orders are therefore recommended for clarification. A footnote under SO 365(7) is also advised. In addition, Circuits should be informed about their rights when a suspension begins.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

013 Suspension...

(11) When a minister or probationer is suspended under this Standing Order the Circuit or other body responsible shall continue to provide his or her stipend and shall also reimburse the minister or probationer for all expenses within Standing Order 801(2) which continue during suspension, until the suspension ceases, and he or she shall for the same period be entitled to continue residing in the manse or other accommodation provided. Any Circuit or other body making any payment or providing any accommodation under this clause may apply for a discretionary payment under Standing Order 365(7), ***including for reimbursement of the costs of supplying ministry in place of the suspended minister or probationer.***

365 Reimbursements and other Special Payments ...

(7) Payment may also be made out of the fund at the discretion of the council or of any committee or officer to which the council may delegate this discretion:

- (i) to reimburse any person or body ... where an application is made under Standing Order 013(11) ***or Standing Order 1105(10)***; or
 - i. ...

1105 Suspension...

(9) When a person within the scope of Standing Order 801(1) is suspended under clause (1) or (3) above, the Circuit or other body responsible for provision of the stipend must continue to provide that stipend and pay all expense allowances which are of a continuing nature (except those for expenses which cease during suspension) until:

- (i) the suspension ceases; or
- (ii) the expiration of the quarter during which the initial hearing of any charge occurs; or
- (iii) the expiration of the quarter during which a complaints team decides not to bring a charge whichever is the earlier. The person suspended is entitled to continue residing in the manse for the same period.

(10) When such a person is or may be suspended and a charge has been brought by a complaints team, the discipline committee conducting the initial hearing must direct what payment, if any, by way of stipend or allowances is to be made, and what accommodation, if any, is to be provided, during any period of suspension which may occur after the period covered by clause (9) above. All payments so directed are to be made out of the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order 365(6), and any Circuit or other body making or providing for any

payment or providing any accommodation under clause (9) above or this clause may also apply for a discretionary payment from the fund under Standing Order 365(7), **including for reimbursement of the costs of supplying ministry in place of the suspended minister or probationer.**

OTHER MATTERS

- 81 The committee noted that there is a need to update the guidelines around confidentiality as set out in *With Integrity and Skill* (adopted by the Conference in 2008). The work will be taken forward in conjunction with the Law and Polity Committee.
- 82 The committee noted that three significant pieces of current work – The Justice-Seeking Church Strategy, God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth Update and Renewal (2025-2032), and the Stationing Review – all independently call for the Church to address more urgently what the Church’s tradition of economic justice asks of us practically for such a time as this. These reports identify our nature as a connexional church and our calling to privilege contexts marked by economic marginalisation – but also acknowledge the reality that our structures do not fully facilitate economic justice within the Church. For example, research indicates that church closures over the past decade have been concentrated in the lowest income areas, and that ministers now disproportionately live and work in the least marginalised areas of the country. Stationing decisions are currently largely driven by the health of circuit finances.⁵ The Council therefore proposes to the Conference that a Connexional Economic Justice Working Group be established, which will be a joint piece of work across the Mission and Ministries Committees, with the Ministries Committee taking the lead in terms of convening and ensuring appropriate reporting.
- 83 The Council approved some revised terms of reference for the committee.

***RESOLUTIONS

22/10. The Conference receives the Report.

22/11. The Conference directs that the existing guidance on Deliverance Ministry continues to be used.

5 Church Action on Poverty (2023) “Church on the Margins”; Braithwaite (2020) “Struggling, Closed and Closing Churches” Church of England, Church Buildings Council; Hirst (2021) “Being Good Neighbours: Placing Methodist Manses for Ministry” *Theology and Ministry* 7: 55–74

22. Methodist Council, part 2

22/12. The Conference amends Standing Orders 013(11), 365(7) and 1105(10) as set out in the Report.

22/13. The Conference establishes a Connexional Economic Justice Working Group as set out in the Report.

SECTION L SELECTION CRITERIA

Following work undertaken in the Ministries Committee, and in consultation with others, the Council presents revised discernment criteria to be applied in considering offers by candidates for training as presbyters or deacons under the terms of SOs 32A1(4) and 710(5).

| | Criteria for the Selection of Candidates (Standing Order 710(5)) |
|---|--|
| 1 Vocation (call and commitment) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An inner sense of call that is: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. confirmed by others; ii. obedient, based on an understanding of the demands of ordained ministry in terms of training, deployment and sacrifice and the candidate's capacity to be a servant in a community of servants; iii. realistic in terms of the candidate's capacity to meet the expected competencies for reception into Full Connexion and ordination after a period of training and probation; iv. informed by a clear understanding of the representative nature of ordained ministry and the discipline of the Methodist Church; v. transformative, in that the candidate is being changed by this sense of call and is willing to continue to be changed; vi. persistent rather than passing. 2. Ability to articulate clearly this sense of call to a particular order of ministry and its development: for presbyters, consonant with the <i>Ordination of Presbyters</i> (MWB p. 298) and <i>What is a Presbyter?</i>; for deacons, consonant with the <i>Ordination of Deacons</i> (MWB p. 313) and <i>The Theology and Ecclesiology of the Diaconate</i>. 3. Ability to narrate their Christian experience and growth within it. 4. For diaconal candidates only: Commitment to membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order as a religious order. |

| | Criteria for the Selection of Candidates (Standing Order 710(5)) |
|---|---|
| 2 Vocation (ministry in the Methodist Church in Britain) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fidelity to the Methodist doctrinal standards Deed of Union, Clause 4. 2. Be a member in good standing of the Methodist Church in Britain for at least one year. 3. Knowledge and understanding of the Methodist Church in Britain. 4. Demonstrable and enthusiastic commitment to and desire to serve the Methodist Church in Britain. 5. Understanding of ministry within the Methodist Church in Britain including the distinctiveness of the two orders of ministry and commitment to, and understanding of, lay vocations and ministries. 6. For diaconal candidates: Knowledge and understanding of the diaconate as an order of ministry and religious order. 7. Willingness to work with diversity within the Methodist Church in Britain. |
| 3. Relationship with God | <p>A relationship with God that is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child-like and mature with the capacity to grow. 2. Grounded in an understanding of God's loving acceptance and a personal commitment to Christ. 3. Nourished by a commitment to individual and corporate prayer and worship and engagement with the means of grace. 4. A means of sustenance and encouragement in the candidate's daily life and in his or her relationships with others and the wider world. 5. Seeking to grow and develop through appropriate means, for example, 'A Methodist Way of Life'. 6. For diaconal candidates: knowledge of and a willingness to live by the Methodist Diaconal Order Rule of Life. |
| 4. Personality and character | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-awareness and self-acceptance grounded in God's loving acceptance. 2. Emotional stability. 3. Maturity, honesty and integrity. 4. Appropriate self-confidence and humility including awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses. 5. An awareness of boundaries and also of the need for self-discipline in vocation/life balance. 6. Stamina, robustness and resilience. 7. Potential for self-development and growth. 8. Can demonstrate the capacity for a public representative role, in order to promote the glory of God. |

22. Methodist Council, part 2

| | Criteria for the Selection of Candidates (Standing Order 710(5)) |
|--|--|
| 5. Being in relationship with others | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ability to see God in others and recognise the equality of all people before God. 2. Ability to relate respectfully to a variety of people with an awareness of their own unconscious bias. 3. Capacity and willingness to develop open and healthy personal, professional and pastoral relationships across all diversities. 4. Capacity to relate to the same people in a number of different roles without confusion and with generosity. 5. Potential to exercise effective pastoral care. 6. Evidence of an ability to work collaboratively. 7. Acceptance of the discipline of the Church and respect for the diversity of views within Methodism. 8. Commitment to the Methodist Church's strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity. |
| 6. The Church's ministry in God's world | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An ability to articulate an understanding of 'Our Calling' and the Priorities of the Methodist Church. 2. Knowledge and understanding of mission and evangelism, including the variety of approaches within the Methodist Church. 3. Personal commitment to mission and evangelism and the Methodist Church as its vehicle. 4. Out of engagement with the world of work and contemporary culture in a multicultural society, the ability to make connections imaginatively between today's world and the gospel. 5. Ability to work for change, with particular attention to the marginalised. 6. Potential to engage with mission-based practices including listening for mission, outreach, and apologetics. 7. Commitment to and compliance with the Church's safeguarding requirements. 8. A desire to nurture, encourage and build community. |
| 7. Leadership and collaboration | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability or potential for leading God's people in worship. 2. Ability to exercise appropriate leadership in the Church community and beyond. 3. Capacity to offer an example of faith, discipleship and humble service. 4. Ability to inspire, enable and empower others. 5. Potential for creative leadership. 6. Willingness and ability to work collaboratively and capacity to exercise appropriate authority. 7. Willingness to receive supervision. 8. Organisational and administrative skills or the ability to develop them. 9. Flexibility, adaptability and willingness to take risks. |

| | Criteria for the Selection of Candidates (Standing Order 710(5)) |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 8. Learning and understanding | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An expressed desire to grow in understanding of the Christian faith. 2. Ability to learn and to benefit from theological study. 3. Enthusiasm for lifelong learning and formation. 4. Curiosity and flexibility of mind. 5. Capacity to use a range of ways of thinking and models of reflection and to select the most appropriate for each situation. 6. Openness to receive and reflect on feedback. 7. Appreciation of the significance of theology to the Church. 8. Commitment to ongoing and appropriate training in safeguarding. |
| 9. Communication | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to express faith naturally and effectively in ways that are appropriate, accessible and sensitive to the situation, using biblical and theological understanding. 2. Ability to select and use the most appropriate media and approach for the context. 3. Careful and appropriate use of language. 4. Understanding and appropriate use of symbols, gestures and space. 5. Effective communication skills for mission and evangelism. |

*****RESOLUTIONS**

22/14. The Conference receives the Report.

22/15. The Conference adopts the discernment criteria to be applied in considering offers by candidates for training as presbyters and deacons as set out in the Report.

**SECTION M
DISCERNMENT PROCESS FOR SENIOR POSTS**

Background to the work

1. The 2022 Conference directed the Ministries Committee to continue its work on discernment for senior roles and to report to the 2023 Conference, to consider how vocations for leadership in the Church can be appropriately identified, fostered, and coordinated with processes of appointment. The committee appointed a group to take this forward.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

2. It was felt important that some description of “senior posts” was attempted and they are identified as leadership roles in *Districts* (Chairs, Deputy / Assistant Chairs, Synod secretaries / senior lay roles in District leadership teams) and the *Connexion* (Chairs / Deputy Chairs of Committees, Secretariat of the Conference, senior leadership roles in the Connexional Team).
3. The discernment required in our current context of uncertainty and complexity (what some writers call “liminality”: the times between something ended and something not yet ready to begin) is no longer best served by being based simply on competencies but rather attention needs to be given to individuals’ strengths. The group defined strengths as a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of thinking, feeling or behaving that is authentic and energising. Such key strengths might include:
 - mental, people and change agility
 - thriving in situations of complexity, uncertainty and expanding horizons of knowledge and wisdom
 - those who relish working with others, and have a proven record as team builders
 - those who are effective at learning from experience
4. It is critical that the diversity and experience of persons identified in ordained and lay roles should be given greater attention. Success in any process supporting discernment will lead to a Church with a diverse senior leadership.
5. The group felt strongly that the discernment and support of those called to these roles, as indeed to any leadership within the Church, is a long-term commitment. It is a process that stretches for the ordained from initial formation in ministry, through training, probation and continued development and, for lay persons, an ongoing review of those identified say as circuit stewards and synod officers. The question was asked as to whether the Explore programme being developed for the new candidating process might be a good model but the group acknowledges that there is little capacity to develop this currently.

Research process and conversations

6. In January/February 2024, the sub-group carried out interviews with twenty-five senior leaders from across the Connexion including a number of District Chairs, members of the Senior Management Group, Chairs of the main Connexional Committees and representatives from Justice, Dignity and Solidarity. These were mostly one-to-one interviews with the exception of a group meeting with some District Chairs. The conversations covered thoughts on:

- the life of role-holders in senior posts, their lived experience, needs, challenges and ideas.
- when it goes wrong, what happened and what can we learn?
- the context of these times – what the leaders of tomorrow are being prepared for.

Characteristics of those who thrive in senior roles

9. The sub-group considers a potential Senior Leader as a person, lay or ordained, who has accepted the call to serve the Church in a particular way and a particular place and in this time of change and transition, which is recognised to be a liminal time. What differentiates a senior leader position will include the basics of knowledge, skill and experience, plus the differentiating spiritual maturity, natural strengths and consciousness, which enable a person to thrive, as a role-holder and as a Church. Some of the identified qualities of senior leaders who thrive in senior roles include:

a. Spirituality

- A well-developed life of prayer that enables the individual to hold responsibility before God. They will be recognisable as a disciple of Christ and will demonstrate the ability to inspire others in discipleship and service.
- Evidence of a mature and robust spirituality \ expression of faith which can be sustained in times of difficulty and relative isolation. Comfortable with uncertainty and a non-anxious presence for others.

b. Self-Awareness

- A demonstration of honest awareness and articulation of their own strengths and weaknesses, and those of others. Evidence of the ability to learn from experience and the experience of others.
- A developed understanding of confidentiality and its appropriate limits.
- A robustness and resilience and an awareness of vulnerability. The resilience to cope with criticism without being so resilient as to ignore legitimate challenge.

c. Working with others/ leading teams

- A proven ability (from their current context and previous work and life experience) to live out a call to leadership that is attentive to the voice of others.
- A proven ability to inspire and encourage others. A proven capacity to enable others to flourish through their use of gifts and skills. A proven

22. Methodist Council, part 2

ability in and enthusiasm for shared work, in teams and with groups both within Methodism and ecumenically.

- A proven capacity for truth telling and truth bearing and the building up of truthful communities.
- d. Leadership models and awareness of diversity**
- A proven ability to enjoy and to relish learning from and celebrating difference and diversity, and a desire to encourage diversity in leadership.
 - A proven rejection of “solitary and heroic” leadership patterns and the proven ability to build teams in every context. A proven ability to use power and privilege appropriately. A proven ability to work in close proximity with others in mutually supportive ways and to relish sharing work and tasks.
 - A desire to improve in their practice and discipleship, and proven ability to learn from their experience particularly from situations of crisis and failure.
 - Demonstrable skills in and experience of change management.
- e. Strategy/Connexional ways of working**
- Ability to bear significant responsibility within their context, to deal with situations of conflict, to carry sensitive and confidential information, to manage difficult processes.
 - An understanding of the nature of the oversight of the Conference and a proven ability to work with officers of the Conference, and other senior leaders.
 - A proven clarity around the management of boundaries and processes of justice and reconciliation.

Discernment Process leading to recommendations for the 2025 Conference

10. The group continues to reflect on current discernment processes and recognises that further work is required before defined proposals can be presented to the Ministries Committee and the Council. This work will include paying attention to the qualities and characteristics of people in senior leader positions who thrive and how this work can then be best reflected in the processes for appointing senior leaders.
11. The wider work on discernment also needs further work recognising that we need to define the process of discernment in some way regardless of the role and the process of selection. Whilst identifying the desire for a clearly identified process, the group would want to ensure that there is freedom and flexibility within the

process so that attention can be paid to the character traits of senior leaders that we have identified.

12. Within this further work there are a number of defined selection processes that will need to be reviewed with proposals on any suggested changes as part of that work.
13. The additional work on discernment and selection processes will also take into account the work of the God For All strategy, the Justice-Seeking Church strategy, the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy, paying attention to the contexts that senior leaders operate in, and our desire to enable a truly diverse and inclusive senior leadership within the Church.
14. This piece of work also relates to the work that the Faith and Order Committee is overseeing on the Role of a District Chair, and it will therefore be helpful to have some conversation about their interrelation at the appropriate time.
15. The group will also undertake a review of the relevant Standing Orders relating to the discernment and selection of those in senior roles following on from this process.
16. Taking into account the importance of drawing all of the various strands of this work together and a desire to ensure that any recommendations appropriately meet the contextual needs of this liminal time, the group propose that further work is undertaken during 2024-2025. The intention will be to bring additional proposals on the discernment and selection processes for senior roles to the 2025 Conference.

Pilot Support Programme Development – proposed pilot for District Chairs starting from September 2024

17. One of the significant areas of feedback from the individual and group conversations was around the nature of support that is needed for those appointed to senior roles. The complexities, ambiguities and risks associated with a senior role are significant. Therefore, the support that is offered needs to enable those within senior roles to be prepared for these and appropriately supported through them. The offer of a suitable senior leadership support programme was warmly welcomed by all those who were involved in the research conversations. The group has therefore proposed to the Ministries Committee an initial support programme pilot starting September 2024 with new and incoming District Chairs.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

***RESOLUTION

22/16. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION N METHODIST SCHOOLS COMMITTEE

Introduction

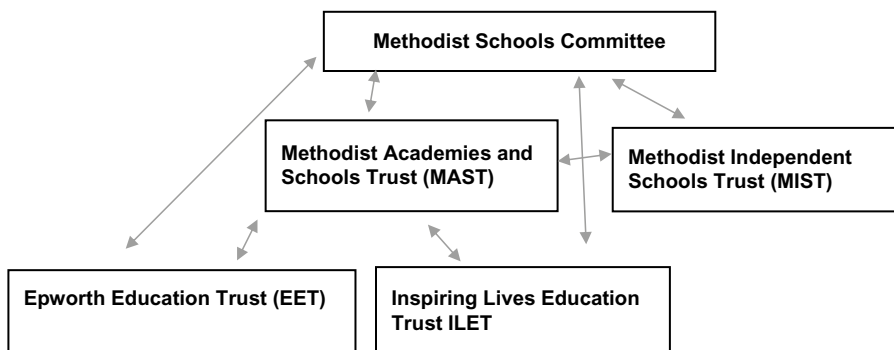
This year the report to the Conference appears in a different format. It reflects the commitments of Transforming Lives, the strategy adopted by the Conference in 2021. The first of those strategic commitments is to encourage and support Methodists to engage with schools in their locality. Much of the responsibility lies with churches and Circuits and there are some excellent stories of positive and fruitful engagement. One exciting development, since the 2021 report, is the development of *Flourish Schools*. This is a place for prayer, practical advice and resources for those who want to connect with their local school. If you have not visited the site already, go to <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/education/flourish-schools/what-is-flourish-schools/>

The other five strategic directions of development are specifically for Methodist schools and the Trusts that support them. They are:

- *growing schools,*
- *offering excellent education,*
- *with a confident Methodist ethos,*
- *working together, and*
- *prioritising areas of need.*

Each of the component groups that make up Methodist Schools, therefore, reports its work under these headings. In year 3 of the strategy's expected 10-year life, we report significant progress, in the context of changing government education policy and practice.

For the sake of readers, the diagram below sets out an outline of the four trusts reporting through the Methodist Schools Committee. The double-headed arrows indicate the close and mutual working relationships between trusts. All the trusts seek to implement the strategy vision of *Transforming Lives* and to work with the other to achieve these objectives.



Executive Summary and Highlights

Against the backdrop of changing government policy, the continuing issues with school buildings, OFSTED and the cost-of-living crisis, our schools maintain their commitment to supporting local communities and delivering high quality learning and development. We celebrate:

- Five more schools joining Epworth Education Trust (EET) in 2024.
- Several non-Methodist Schools, including secondary state schools preparing to join the Methodist Schools family through the Inspiring Lives Trust when it is launched.
- OFSTED inspections consistently recognising the quality of our schools and our ability to help schools facing difficulties.
- The provision of high quality Professional Development for all school staff across all our schools.
- The launch of 'Epworth Worship Together' - an opportunity for children across the Trust to participate in collective worship together. The children create and deliver the worship through a video shared across the Trust. This has brought about a sense of community and the children find the worship guides them in their decision making and shapes their own spirituality.
- The development of a year-long course for Headteachers and Senior Leaders on 'Leadership in a Methodist School', focusing upon developing a strong Methodist ethos and foundation.
- Going partnerships between our independent schools and local state schools in their area.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

We report a number of changes in personnel:

- Barbara Easton, the current Head of Service for MAST, will retire in August 2024 after many years of outstanding service to schools. Barbara's passion and tireless energy has created within our network of schools a great sense of belonging together and a belief that our engagement in schools is key part of our sharing in God's mission. The church owes her a great debt.
- The Revd Dr Calvin Samuel, Chair of Trustees at MIST, will be stepping down in the summer as he pursues an overseas posting. We thank him for his service and wish him well for this new chapter.
- Epworth Education Trust has a new Chair of Trustees, the Revd Stuart Ellis, who has brought his wealth of experience across a number of sectors to the role.
- At the end of last academic year MIST said farewell with great gratitude to two MIST Trustees, Barbara Easton and Lorna Cocking MBE, and to John Ingram (Chair of Governors at Kent College Pembury). This year we welcomed new Chairs at Kent College Pembury and Culford School (Jane Day and Mark Donougher) and appointed Claire Bentley to be the new Head at Culford. New Chaplains at Truro School (Helen Byrne), Queen's College, Taunton (Richard Kelly) and Kent College Pembury (Katie Osweiler) have joined us and have settled in very well.

The Conference should note:

In 2025/26, MAST will be close to the end of its funding, generously gifted by Southlands Methodist Trust and Westminster College, Oxford Trust. While supported by the connexional budget, MAST must urgently seek additional sources of funding in order to continue to exercise its responsibilities as Religious Provider for 66 schools on behalf of the Methodist Church.

Methodist Academies and Schools Trust (MAST)

Growing new schools and extending the Methodist influence in education is largely being pursued through the growth of Academy Trusts. (See below). The work of MAST has been to support the Academy Trusts, by working on new articles, being engaged in discussion with the Department for Education (DfE), regional directors and ecumenical partners.

Offering excellent education

Methodist Schools in the state sector continue to offer a high-quality education to children across the country. MAST knows its schools well and supports them closely through a national network of experienced school leaders acting as RLEs (Regional

Leaders in Education). The RLE acts as a school visitor, offering general support to the individual school and developing local networks to strengthen Methodist 'belonging'. The RLE takes on a particular role if the school is going through change, difficulty or expecting inspection. The benchmark for quality is independent inspection by Ofsted. Within this, Methodist and joint Methodist/Anglican schools perform very well, with a disproportionately high number of schools in the 'Good' and 'Outstanding' categories. With the demise of Local Education Authorities, schools buy in much of their educational support from local private providers. One gap which MAST is able to fill quite well is for governor training. Even in the world of academies, governors and trustees continue to play a critical role. There are significant opportunities here for Methodists from all sorts of backgrounds who have skills and interests which could serve schools and young people.

A Confident Methodist Ethos

Methodist schools in the state sector must have their religious ethos inspected by the Religious Provider. This is a legal requirement of Section 48 of the Education Act (2005). For Methodist and ecumenical school inspections, the Methodist Church works in a highly effective partnership with the Church of England. From September 2023, a new inspection framework was introduced, following extensive work, consultation and training. Within this, inspectors look at the application of the school's Christian vision in learning, the internal and outward-facing aspects of education, worship and religious education. The decision was taken to step away from expressing the judgement as a one-word grade, placing greater emphasis on the narrative report. At the top of the report, inspectors draw out the schools 'strengths' and 'areas for development'. The intention is that inspection should be much more contextual, judging what it means to be a church school, inspired by a theologically-rooted Christian vision, in each particular setting. Schools are generally positive about the change, saying that the new system allows the inspection to get to the heart of who they are and what they are trying to do. The 'downside' is that many regret the loss of the one-word judgement – within the world of SIAMS, Methodist and joint Methodist/Anglican schools were disproportionately 'Outstanding' and never less than 'Good'. Many heads prized an 'Outstanding' SIAMS judgement more than what Ofsted had to say because they felt this was their real purpose. In challenging areas, where it is difficult to get an 'Outstanding' Ofsted judgement, the positive SIAMS badging was particularly appreciated. MAST's strengths also lie in its ethos and standards which is a part of its devolved statutory duties. The profile for Methodist Schools is strong; 95% of Methodist schools are judged OFSTED 'Good' or better. Since the introduction of the new framework in September 2023, our schools continue to shine through their SIAMS inspections. 100% are judged at least Good/J1; 55% of these are Outstanding/Excellent demonstrating their strong ethos and the flourishing of all.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

One of MAST's main contributions to our schools is through training, particularly through our ongoing popular webinars. Core to these is the training to support our schools in their faith identity. The focus of training in 22/23 was Religious Education, a subject in difficulties nationally but flourishing in church schools because of the support it receives. In the school year 23/24 the focus is spirituality, and, in the following year, we plan an emphasis on worship. Schools are generally able to source curriculum training from other providers, but MAST does offer further training which meets our priorities as church schools – for example, in Christian leadership and some support for wellbeing, mental health and special educational needs.

In several communities, where the churches struggle or have closed, it is the Methodist school which is offering a spiritual hub to the community.

Working together

MAST continues to work closely with all the schools in the other Trusts, with the Connexional Team and with ecumenical partners. At the moment, for example, it is engaged with the Methodist Independent Schools Trust and the Academy Trust to develop a course on Christian leadership in schools.

Prioritising areas of need

The support MAST gives for wellbeing, mental health and SEND is noted above. Our academy Trusts are focused on geographical areas of need – where of course many of our schools are located.

Epworth Education Trust (EET - Multi-Academy Trust)

Growing new schools

EET had its growth strategy approved by the DfE in October 2022, shortly afterwards the government decided not to move forward with the Schools Bill which worked towards all schools moving in to an academy trust by 2030, schools slowed in their response to academisation as a result.

However, schools continue to be impressed with the work of EET and a number have shown interest in joining the Trust, including five who have formally voted to join the Trust (Bakewell, Leyland Infants, Leyland Juniors, Wheatley Lane and Hey with Zion).

All schools will join the Trust in Spring 2024 but are already participating within the life of the Trust.

The Trust will follow its growth plan for strategic growth which sees a group of schools joining the Trust together followed by a time of consolidation before the next group of schools join. This will enable the organisation to remain strong and evolve as required for each stage of growth.

The Trust applied for a grant from the DfE and was successful. The grant will enable the Trust to implement some staffing and organisational changes prior to the new schools joining.

During times of growth, the DfE assess a Trust's health and capacity using the 'Trust Quality Descriptors', it is good to know that EET measures up to these descriptors and provides a strong offer to schools.

Offering excellent education

Ensuring an excellent educational offer remains the priority for the Trust and much of our time is spent delivering this. Since December 2022 four of the schools in Epworth (Bedford Hall, Wesley, Rosehill and Summerseat) have been inspected by Ofsted and they are all categorised as a 'Good' school. Summerseat was previously categorised as 'Inadequate' (Special Measures) by Ofsted, and they are now 'Good' (with 'Outstanding' for Personal Development) demonstrating a significant uplift in the quality of education offered. The Ofsted judgements provide external verification of the work of the Trust.

Delivering a strong Continuing Professional Development (CPD) remains a strength of the Trust and we continue to provide bespoke training to staff often created and delivered by Trust staff. A highlight of the CPD offered this year has been the pedagogy CPD that has been delivered to all staff across the Trust to support our commitment for every child to be taught by an excellent teacher.

Our annual conference complements this work and is an opportunity for staff across the Trust to come together and receive training from leading trainers from the educational community. This year the conference built upon the training received in the Methodist Schools International Conference with a focus upon equality and diversity, children's spirituality and sustainability.

The Trust has been innovative in designing its own models for teaching and learning and senior leadership. These models have supported the codifying of the skills required and

22. Methodist Council, part 2

delivering of bespoke coaching and development to schools, teachers and leaders in their pursuit of an excellent education for all.

In Spring 2024 the Trust will deliver the government flagship qualifications to staff within the Trust and wider Methodist schools. These are known as National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) and will be delivered to Headteachers and middle leaders over the next 18 months.

A confident Methodist ethos

During the summer of 2023 the Trust embarked upon a review of its mission, vision and values. As a result, it launched a new vision statement 'To be a family of schools working together so all within our communities flourish and succeed' which is built upon our core Bible verse of Jeremiah 17:7-8 '*But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. They will be like a Tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit*'. This is lived out through the Trust's core values of Aspiration, Collaboration, Generosity, Inclusivity, Integrity and Wisdom.

Building upon this the Trust has developed its theological reasoning for its vision and values which is rooted within its Methodist foundation and builds upon the Methodist 10-year education strategy 'Transforming Lives'.

During the academic year, two schools have received SIAMS inspections of their Christian distinctiveness, and both received the highest grading of 'Excellent' demonstrating the Trust's commitment to ensuring a strong Methodist ethos within its schools. The pastoral care to children, their families and the wider community remains a strength as the schools live out their Methodist ethos and 'go where they are needed most'.

In September 2023 'Epworth Worship Together' was launched as an opportunity for children across the Trust to participate in collective worship together. The children create and deliver the worship through a video shared across the Trust. This has brought about a sense of community and the children find the worship guides them in their decision making and shapes their own spirituality.

Working together

EET recognises the importance of belonging to a wider family of Methodist educational establishments and firmly commits to partnership working where possible. It continues

to play a key role in MAST supporting school improvement and pastoral care to schools in the North leading the work of the RLEs in this area. It supports the CPD offer of MAST through the shaping of and delivery of webinars.

The International Methodist conference took place in April 2023 and the Trust played an active role in the planning for the conference and supporting the delivery during the conference.

The Trust is further consolidating partnerships with MIST undertaking visits to schools to see how meaningful collaboration and sharing of best practice could be developed.

Through the work of the Methodist Schools Committee a number of collaborative opportunities are being developed including the development of a year-long course for Headteachers and Senior Leaders on 'Leadership in a Methodist School' focusing upon developing a strong Methodist ethos and foundation.

Prioritising areas of need

The Trust continues to be a flagship organisation for inclusivity and ensuring that all schools are open and welcoming to all. One of the key focuses of this continues to be our commitment to pupils with special educational needs. The numbers in our schools continues to be higher than nationally and this is often recognised as a strength within inspections. The Trust also has specialist provision within one school and is currently in the process of approval for establishment of a second.

As the nation embarked upon the cost of living crisis early in 2023 the Trust developed many initiatives to support families struggling at this time. These included the introduction of preloved uniform shops, cookery lessons to support cooking healthily on a budget (which was televised on the BBC news), and the sourcing of Christmas presents and hamper for those in most need. Parents really valued the commitment of the Trust and schools in overcoming some of the barriers for them.

The Trust has developed a Green Strategy to focus its work on sustainability and align with the Church's commitment in this area. As part of the strategy, the schools undertook a project in June 2023 to see how they could reduce their energy consumption and the results were high, leading to schools focussing on what strategies could be implemented as long term changes. The schools are currently reflecting on ways they can incorporate sustainability into the curriculum into a meaningful way that bring about lifestyle changes within the school and beyond to shape pupil's attitude to the sustaining our world for the long term.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

Inspiring Lives Education Trust (ILET – Multi-Academy Trust)

The launching of ILET has been delayed by changing Government policies and DfE patterns of working. However, we are hopeful that it will be up and running by the time this report is read by Conference members. Most of what follows here are the plans and intentions of this Methodist Academy trust.

Growing schools

ILET, the second of our Methodist founded multi-academy Trusts, is being set up to cover the Midlands and South of England. The Trust is being established with majority articles and aspires to provide a home for solely Methodist schools, joint Methodist/Anglican schools and community schools. ILET is an inclusive Trust, welcoming schools of all faiths or none that are prepared to subscribe to our ethos and vision. Given our capacity and expertise in driving school improvement, the Trust aspires to sponsor primary and secondary schools, as well as special schools and alternative provision schools.

As ILET grows in size and in consideration of its large geographical area, the Trust will operate through a regional 'Hub' model. This enables groups of primary, secondary and potentially special schools to strengthen their education offer for pupils through a flexible and high performing work culture. This will promote collaboration, aspiration and support, anchored by a governance structure which seeks to act in the interests of the community.

The Trust's mission statement underpins the vision for the culture of ILET; transforming lives through excellent education rooted in love. With a strong record of school improvement across both primary and secondary education, particularly within disadvantaged communities, the Trust will drive high quality and inclusive education through a culture of continuous improvement that is motivating and ambitious for all and helps all pupils fulfil their potential.

ILET intends to *Offer excellent education* through a comprehensive and well-developed system of school improvement which will align with the DfE's regional schools' structure and be delivered through a hub model, quality assured by ILET's central school improvement team. Our existing network of Methodist Schools Regional Leaders in Education, co-ordinated by MAST and operating nationally, will continue to play a key role in supporting our school improvement strategies. The improvement strategy is built upon research-based and successful pedagogy. It will develop and share expertise across the schools to ensure every pupil fulfils their potential educationally, spiritually, culturally and socially. Our outcomes will aim to align with the government's levelling up mission, that by 2030 90% of pupils will leave primary school having achieved the expected standard

in reading, writing and maths. For secondary pupils, they will achieve at least grade 5 in both English, Maths, and other key subjects.

The Trust is working closely with MAST and the other trusts to continue a strong and confident Methodist ethos throughout all its schools. It is participating in the creation of the Leadership in Christian Schools course (see above) and it will from the beginning be working in areas of high need in the Birmingham area. This will remain one of its key priorities.

Methodist Independent Schools (MIST)

Growing schools

Schools within MIST schools continue to share best practice in teaching and learning, in pastoral care and in safeguarding. MIST seeks to support and develop our Heads with a cycle of external appraisal and internal reviews and with a paid sabbatical after six years in role.

We continue with our sustainability and carbon neutral goals and indeed, a case study used in the Methodist Schools Committee Newsletter *Transforming Lives 2023* details one school's journey towards net zero. With our colleagues in the wider family of Methodist Independent Schools (educating more than 10,000 children and young adults), we hold training and support days for Safeguarding Leads and HR Managers. Chairs of Governors, Heads and Bursar groups all meet termly to share ideas and best practice.

Staff wellbeing is a top priority throughout all Methodist Independent Schools. We grow schools and staff in tandem, working together to promote the whole school community.

Initiatives are led locally as every school operates within its own context. One school promotes *Wellbeing Wednesday* and staff receive a weekly email from the Head on themes such as Stoicism, Sleep, Hydration, Exercise and Diet (SHED), reading for wellbeing development. All these ideas and creative promotions are complimented by leadership development and careers pathways programmes for staff.

At local level schools have variously implemented schemes such as a Wellbeing Room, a Wellbeing Team, and Ask a Buddy Team; they have worked with the diversity promotion charity, No Outsiders.

Methodist Independent Schools provide an excellent all-round education infused with a strong Christian ethos informed by their Methodist foundation. We do this in politically, socially and economically uncertain times, fully aware that the headwinds we face in the next few years will be challenging.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

Offering excellent education

Public Examination results in Summer 2023 marked a return to the pre-Covid assessment systems and yielded outcomes in line with those of 2019. Year 13 leavers were able to take up offers from their universities of choice (in the main).

MIST schools continue to provide an education tailored to the needs and aspirations of each pupil: schools reported strong value added scores at Key Stages 3 and 4 and strong results in assessments at Prep levels. Special educational needs remain a key area of focus as our schools review their practice and revise policies to meet the changing needs of our pupils.

Boarding: 8 of the 10 MIST schools offer boarding and a review of that provision was commissioned in 2023 to look at the overall picture of boarding in the UK and the individual offer of Methodist Independent Schools. One school was a finalist in the Boarding Schools' Association 2022/23 Boarding awards.

Governance at School and Trust level is pivotal to the leadership of our schools and continues to be a priority for MIST. Training of new governors, new Chairs and new Trustees is developing and an external review of governance (for Trustees; in the schools) will be commissioned to run from summer term 2024 to spring 2025. It will also form one of our key strands in a refocused MIST Strategic Plan.

Wider School Life has returned with gusto after Covid interruption and the last academic year saw a plethora of activities, community engagement, educational visits and charitable outreach across all MIST schools. One school's enrichment programme was a National Finalist in the 'Best Experiential Learning' category of the Best Schools Muddy Stiletos Awards.

A confident Methodist ethos

As MIST moves toward a refocused Strategic Plan, with 'a confident Methodist ethos' as a main strand, we will be holding a training day for our Chairs and Heads in February where we will devote a main session to this exact topic, led by Karen Stefanyszyn of Waverley Learning. MIST understands that whatever the local circumstance and context of the school, the main and sustaining thread that runs throughout the group is our Methodist Ethos. We must be confident and proud of our foundation.

Last year saw the introduction of two SERVE (Spiritual, Ethos, Relationships & Values Education) pilots, based on the SIAMS inspections. These went extremely well and to

date two more visits have been undertaken with two more planned later in the year. The visits were extremely positive, and SERVE visitors reported of one:

'Love permeates the actions of those leading the school, which is then reflected in the interactions between staff and pupils. This strong servant leadership creates a community, where pupils and staff successfully care for one another. This culture of care is embedded and secure. In discussions, the school's values were strongly and succinctly summarised by staff as: "Kindness, Community and Respect". Pupils live these values through their interactions with staff and peers giving a very real impression of Methodism in action.'

Methodist Independent Schools Annual Chaplains' Conference took place in October on the theme of pilgrimage. Based in Charney Manor, Oxfordshire, the three days offered retreat and reflection as well as a walking pilgrimage to Wesleyan sites in Oxford. In December, an online session on 'vision' was led by the Pastoral Visitor, the Rev'd Aubin de Gruchy.

The MIST Teachers of RE Group goes from strength to strength and will hold a one-day conference in summer for teachers of the subject. Lat Blaylock of RE Today will be a speaker. Possible topics for the day include further developing spiritual, philosophical, and ethical strategies within the curriculum (linking to the MIST SERVE review) and opportunities outside the classroom.

The Away Days and Annual Service of Thanksgiving at the Royal Foundation of St Katharine brought Methodist Schools together in a collective act of worship where we welcomed the President of the Conference, the Revd Gill Newton as our preacher.

Working together

The Transforming Lives Conference in April 2023 saw the coming together of more than 250 Methodist educators from across the globe. The 3 days in Bristol and Bath focused on schools with sessions including Wesley's Vision and Mission through Education, Equality and Diversity, Looking After Our World, and The Vision and Future for Methodist Schools. We also celebrated the 275th anniversary of the founding of Kingswood School in Bath.

Delegates from Methodist Schools UK joined those from all continents (with the notable exception of Antarctica) to share, to talk, to pray and to worship at John Wesley's New Rooms and at Kingswood Schools. Our overseas partner in the event, IAMSCU, welcomed us to their own service on the Sunday morning and provided us with the speakers and experiences that made the event truly global. The Spring 2023 Transforming Lives Newsletter is conference-themed and can be accessed here: <https://www.methodistschools.org.uk/downloads/leaflets/-mist14566---transforming-lives-newsletter---issue-2---v4.1-repro-web.pdf>

22. Methodist Council, part 2

The role of the Pastoral Visitor was expanded this year and now operates across MIST and MAST schools; links with Southlands College have begun to germinate the seeds of broader education events and initiatives; Wesley House and The Leys are exploring the possibility of a course for school leavers in pursuing a faith-based vocation.

A Methodist Schools Away Day in Summer 2023 produced common areas for development such as peer review for the executives of the Trusts, a course in Christian Leadership for school leaders and growing local partnerships in the South East and Yorkshire.

Prioritising areas of need

Methodist Independent Schools are committed to increasing the number of bursaries available, with a strong ambition that these account for 10% of all pupils on roll.

One school working with The Royal National Children's Springboard Foundation (<https://www.royalspringboard.org.uk>) supported their first springboarder this year. Several schools offer refugee support (through bursaries) to children from Syria and Ukraine.

One school - long partnered with a local state school to provide full bursaries for sixth formers and to share best practice, resources and facilities - has grown this partnership still further by enabling their partner school term time access to facilities thus providing it with a permanent home to deliver a PE Curriculum and to provide its pupils with enrichment opportunities.

Global Education has long been a feature within all Methodist Independent Schools. Pupils are encouraged to perceive themselves as being global citizens and to advocate where the need is greatest.

Work through Edukid (<https://www.edukid.org.uk>) a Global Education charity) in Uganda continues at one school; at another, a school-grown project in Malawi (and a 14-year-long relationship) has led to the building of a new school.

Finally, MIST will embark upon a refocused strategic plan from the next academic year, focusing on three keys strands: our Methodist ethos; our group financial and business strength; and our governance.

*****RESOLUTION**

22/17. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION O METHODIST FORCES BOARD STANDING ORDER

The Council noted that the Methodist Forces Board had reviewed the Standing Order which governs its constitution and brings the amendments to the Conference.

1007286 The Forces. (1) The Methodist Council **Conference** shall annually appoint a Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force Board, ('the Forces Board') through which it shall exercise general oversight of:

- (i) the work of all ministers who are set apart to serve under the direction of the council as **both Regular and Reserve** Chaplains to the forces;
- (ii) **missional activity which engages with the church's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, working closely with the Aldershot Methodist Military Trust and other partners as appropriate.**~~the work of all deacons serving in support of chaplains;~~
- (iii) ~~all lay workers employed by the council to serve in support of chaplains;~~
- (iv) ~~declared Methodists in the forces.~~

(1A2) The Forces Board shall also **support, encourage and promote** ~~exercise a general oversight of the work of ministers appointed to serve as Reserve Chaplains, Officiating Chaplains and Cadet Force Chaplains.~~

(1B3) The Forces Board shall consist of a chair and:

- (i) the secretary of the Forces Board, who shall be appointed in accordance with Standing Order ~~313 or 314~~ **385 or 386**, and be a member of the Connexional Team;
- (ii) the Secretary of the Conference or a senior member of the Connexional Team to represent them;
- (iii) the principal chaplains appointed and serving under clause (34);
- (iv) two chaplains, other than a principal chaplain, appointed and serving under clause (34), one of whom shall be serving as a chaplain to the cadet force;
- (v) a District Chair, who shall have responsibility for chaplains in stationing;
- (vi) two or more lay persons, one of whom shall oversee the provision in the forces of the training programmes prescribed by the ~~Methodist Council~~ **Ministries Committee** under Standing Orders 565 and 680(1)(ii).

(2) ~~The board shall through its secretary make such arrangements with the government authorities as may be necessary for the well-being of Methodist members of the forces and their families.~~

(3) (4) (a) The secretary of the board shall be responsible for recommending both to the government department concerned and to the Stationing Committee the

22. Methodist Council, part 2

name of any person to be appointed as a chaplain to the forces, subject to any policy as to overall numbers of such chaplains agreed by the committee.

(b) Chaplains shall be regarded as ministers in the home work. ~~Deacons serving in support of chaplains shall be similarly regarded. In either case~~ **T**hey shall be members of the Synod of the District specified for that purpose in the stations and, in the case of presbyters, subject to its discipline, but each shall, nevertheless, attend the Synod of the District in which ~~he~~ **the presbyter** or ~~she~~ **deacon** is serving and shall be eligible for election by that Synod as a representative to the Conference.

~~(4)~~**(5)** Such chaplains are not appointed to the Circuits in which they are for the time being located, and their services may be utilised for Circuit purposes only so far as is consistent with the discharge of their proper duties. In order that opportunities of fellowship and service may be offered to them, the secretary of the board shall notify the Superintendents and Chairs involved of any change in the Circuit or District in which they are located.

~~(4)~~ Such chaplains, deacons and lay workers are not appointed to the Circuits in which they are for the time being located, and their services may be utilised for circuit purposes only so far as is consistent with the discharge of their proper duties. In order that opportunities of fellowship and service may be offered to them, the secretary of the board shall notify the Superintendents and Chairs involved of any change in the Circuit or District in which they are located.

~~(5)~~ The financial support of the work of forces chaplains is provided from government payments.

~~(6)~~ *[revoked]*

~~(7)~~ The secretary of the board shall be responsible for maintaining the Forces Membership Roll and for making the annual return of members held on it.

***RESOLUTIONS

22/18. **The Conference receives the Report.**

22/19. **The Conference amends Standing Orders as set out in the Report.**

SECTION P DISTRICT SAFEGUARDING OFFICERS

1. **The memorial (Conference 2022)**

The Plymouth and Exeter District Synod (Present: 77; Voting 68 for, 0 against) draws the attention of the Conference to the current arrangements for the employment of District Safeguarding Officers. Each one is employed/deployed by the District they serve with all the usual requirements for good employment practices in place. However, each District Safeguarding Officer is also assigned a Connexional Casework Supervisor and is required to work to a reporting timetable set by the Connexional Safeguarding Team. In addition, a District Safeguarding Officer can be required to undertake responsibilities beyond the remit of the District. There are occasions when the work of a District Safeguarding Officer is determined without reference to the employer. There are also occasions when a District Safeguarding Officer is placed in a difficult position because of these arrangements.

We believe that the time has come for all District Safeguarding Officers to become employees of the Methodist Council so that there is clarity in the arrangements and consistency of practice across the Connexion.

The Plymouth and Exeter District Synod asks the Conference to direct the Methodist Council to consider this matter and bring proposals to the Conference of 2023.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Plymouth and Exeter District for its memorial.

The role of the Connexional Safeguarding Casework Supervisor was created in 2018 and was designed to ensure that there was sufficient support for the development of policy and procedures, adequate provision of training, work with survivors and DBS management, whilst at the same time ensuring that Districts were able to manage their own Safeguarding. It has been clear that the implementation of the scheme has met with mixed responses and the Conference welcomes the District's suggestion that the current arrangement be reviewed.

The Conference has before it the Oversight and Trusteeship proposals which, if adopted by the Conference, will result in a reconfigured Districts structure. Those who prepared that report were aware that the ways in which District work regionally are different for stationing from those of the Learning Network and that neither corresponds to the Safeguarding quadrants. For these reasons, resolution 44/14

22. Methodist Council, part 2

requests 'a plan for a single support structure for the new Districts incorporating stationing, safeguarding and learning with a corresponding alignment of the dispersed members of the Connexional Team.'

The Conference therefore refers this memorial to the Council, directing that it be considered as part of the work required by 44/14 if adopted or in its own right if not.

The 2022 Conference did not adopt resolution 44/14 and the issues raised in this memorial have therefore been considered in their own right.

2. Introduction

The work of safeguarding in the church has always been one of continual learning and development and we are now at a crossroads in terms of further professionalising our approach in order to ensure that the church is able to fulfil its core mission of love and service to the whole community. Key principles of how we ensure that a 'church for all' is a safe and nurturing church have already been adopted in the 2022 Conference Theology of Safeguarding report.

The 2022 Conference referred to the Council a Memorial from the Plymouth and Exeter district, asking that the case for making all District Safeguarding Officers connexional employees be evaluated. In order to address this fully, the opportunity has been taken to set this in the context of a wider review of effective connexional and district safeguarding structures.

Whilst the thrust of this report addresses safeguarding across the Connexion, it needs to be recognised that in some places, such as the Isle of Man, the arrangements for safeguarding provision can be different (the Isle of Man has an ecumenically employed DSO) and such differences will need to be taken fully into account if and when any changes are agreed.

It is also recognised that, with the development in some areas of new district boundaries, there may be some sequencing in terms of implementation that may be required as and when changes to safeguarding structures are introduced.

3. Background

The 2015 report, *Courage, Cost and Hope* (the Past Cases Review) demonstrated the Church's commitment to learn from the past and it has responded to the England and Wales report into child sexual abuse (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse) by reviewing the safeguarding procedures and training currently being offered. The next logical step is to look at the structure of staffing and accountability. Learning from investigations into senior leaders within the church has further provided lessons in new measures that need to be taken in order to

ensure that our structures and procedures are as fit for purpose as we can make them. The rolling programme of District Safeguarding audits being undertaken by the Safeguarding Committee has also highlighted areas of best practice as well as shortcomings in the current structures and implementation of existing policy.

All Districts have a District Safeguarding Officer (DSO) who is employed to offer advice, guidance and support to churches in their areas. (In a small number of Districts, DSO services are shared, including one ecumenical model.) This includes following up blemished DBS checks, undertaking district risk assessments, and leading training. In most cases the DSO is line managed by the district chair who holds ultimate responsibility for safeguarding policy in the district. The District Safeguarding Group (DSG) acts as a critical friend to oversee safeguarding and support the DSO in their work and DSGs now have agreed minimum standards.

In 2018 the Conference adopted a model to support safeguarding across the Connexion better with the creation of a new connexional safeguarding team. This involved the establishment of casework supervisors to offer professional supervision to each DSO and support to districts. This essentially created a twin track approach to supporting DSO work with line management/ employment at district level and professional case work supervision functions offered from the Connexional Team. The Conference memorial essentially asks that this model be revised to create a single line management/ case work supervision approach which would bring all DSOs into connexional employment.

This is also an opportune time to review the connexional safeguarding arrangements more generally as the current model of casework supervision is over five years old. During this time, the profile of safeguarding work in the church has continued to grow and the workload has expanded. When the current model was devised the church was in a very different place. The government's independent inquiry into child sexual abuse (IICSA) had only just begun. It has revealed widespread and shocking accounts of child abuse across all sectors in statutory and voluntary services. Because of the numbers of victims and survivors reporting to the Truth Commission who had experienced abuse within a faith setting the inquiry added a further investigation into a wider group of religious organisations (including the Methodist Church) in addition to the inquiries it had already undertaken into the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. Whilst the Methodist Church was able to evidence the extent of work that has been undertaken to look at our own history (eg the Past Cases Review 2015) it has become apparent that with the growing pace of expectation within society of greater transparency in relation to abuse claims and challenging behaviours related to areas including misogyny, racism,

22. Methodist Council, part 2

discrimination and bullying, the church cannot stand still. The Methodist Church has been a leader in developing awareness and practice, seeking to embed a safeguarding approach in all of its work. This is not the end of the journey and we have to be continually reviewing and assessing how our approach needs development. As we embed cultural change, become more responsible to survivors and develop our theological approach to safeguarding, the demands on connexional safeguarding resources become greater and we need to be able to respond to these.

Most recently the Church of England has received recommendations from the Jay Review into its provision, operation and scrutiny of safeguarding services with firm recommendations that safeguarding work should be provided by a new body completely independently of the Church. The Methodist Safeguarding Committee has been looking at how to make governance more effective and ensure there is some independent scrutiny of safeguarding work in the Methodist church (as reported to the Council in MC/24/53) but maintains that in order to continue to change the culture within the church (as identified in Courage, Cost and Hope) the Church should continue to operate its safeguarding work with staff employed within the Church. This report therefore addresses how this can be best delivered in light of current requirements and expectations to be a safer church for everyone.

4. **Work undertaken**

Such a potentially significant change to the church's safeguarding structures should not be undertaken lightly and so extending the study period has given good opportunity to consult widely and gather the necessary personnel and finance information from which to undertake future modelling.

An interim report was presented to the 2023 Conference detailing consultations undertaken with plans to bring a final report to the 2024 Conference.

The following actions have been undertaken:

- 1) Consultation with DSOs – DSOs have shared in conversations at the connexional DSO meetings and annual SG conferences about how future proposals might work and gathering their perspectives. Updates have been shared via the DSO monthly Bulletin and by casework supervisors in case work supervision and quadrant meetings with fellow DSOs.
- 2) Consultation with line managers – the Director of Safeguarding has engaged in one-to-one meetings with 25 District Chairs to discuss the effectiveness of current connexional safeguarding arrangements to ascertain their views

(and those within their districts) about possible future changes. There have also been meetings with the District Chairs' group and the District Chairs' safeguarding group.

- 3) Collation of current district data – all districts were asked for details of their DSO job descriptions and work arrangements along with current budgets. Various parts of the Connexional Team have begun to analyse appropriate information to help develop the thinking around both roles/structure and costs.
- 4) Monitoring of current connexional safeguarding team ways of working – addressing this memorial has enabled a review of current workloads in the safeguarding team and what changes would be necessitated by adopting different employment arrangements for DSOs. During the last five years many districts have increased the number of hours DSOs are working (or employed additional staff) in order to respond to the increasing safeguarding workload. This, in turn, has increased the workload for the connexional safeguarding team. At the same time, the team has taken on a more extensive portfolio of safeguarding development to support the church including expanding the training programme, introducing a webinar series, reviewing and developing policy guidance, supporting the Global Relationships team and establishment of a Mission Partner with a dedicated safeguarding post, and, embedding a more responsive service to victims and survivors.
- 5) The wider context of safeguarding within the Church – there are a number of related developments within the church which have a direct, or related, impact on future church safeguarding structures. The review of the complaints and discipline procedures, proposed changes to the structure of the Safeguarding Committee, and the roll out of study materials related to the theology of safeguarding will all affect any changes that the Conference decides to make to safeguarding structures moving forward.

Drawing on all of these data and discussions enabled a number of possible future models and ways of working to be assessed and have led to the proposed new Connexional Safeguarding Service outlined below.

5. **The business case for change**

The Council meeting of October 2023 further directed the Strategy and Resources Committee, in consultation with the Safeguarding Committee, to produce a draft scheme to replace the current model of DSO employment with a unified Connexional Safeguarding function as part of the Connexional Team and to report to the Council in April 2024 with firm proposals.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

From discussion with all parties there is clear agreement about the overall objective for the church's safeguarding work. There is a wish for:

- agreed standards
- consistency in practice
- transparency in decision making
- a clear accountability structure
- confidence in how our procedures operate
- effective integration with the complaints and discipline process
- an assurance that victims and survivors can be better supported throughout the church
- common terms and conditions of employment for DSOs (including provision of IT equipment etc)
- a standardised approach to ongoing training and professional development for DSOs

Currently across approximately 30 different employing arrangements (ie Districts) these things are not happening consistently. However, this does not mean that all Chairs and DSOs see the answer being the creation of one cohesive structure. In some districts they would argue that they have worked hard and consistently in achieving clear and high standards of practice by adopting a team work approach with other district officers. They see no need to change this as it is contextually relevant and 'owned' by the district. In other districts this is not the case and the view is that it will not be possible to achieve consistency without a single shared connexional system. They believe that it is possible to reflect local contexts with DSOs continuing to be based in districts with the advantage of a larger connexional team that can offer wider support and input as and when required.

The key question is how well achieving our objectives will be served by centralising line management and supervision with a revised connexional safeguarding team and creation of a single service?

Mindful of the more recent changes in the Learning Network and of the close cooperation in many areas between LN colleagues and DSOs, particularly in the delivery of safeguarding training, a unified connexional structure could sit alongside other dispersed staff offering flexibility across groups of districts whilst maintaining (unless local circumstances suggest another approach) the clear identification of a named safeguarding officer within each district or groups of districts. The creation of one connexional safeguarding service and structure will improve consistency in implementation of policy and procedures, ensure common employment practice and demonstrate the Church's commitment to

continuing to learn and respond to review and feedback on striving for the highest standards with our safeguarding work.

This has advantages in removing a level of management for safeguarding decision-making where line managers don't feel suitably qualified or confident. It will offer increased flexibility by employing DSOs in one team so that resources can be deployed more effectively and cover for holiday and sickness or periods when more input is required in certain localities - 'centrally employed, locally deployed' as one Chair put it. One employing structure will be a more efficient and manageable approach than requiring each district to undertake this separately.

Under these proposals the DSOs would be home based and therefore likely to continue to be located in districts; therefore the new model can build in an ongoing requirement to maintain the current level of contact and coordination with district chair and colleagues to maintain this. The interaction with the District Safeguarding Group will remain central to this.

A single accountable safeguarding service will enable the church to demonstrate to outside agencies and government that it is seeking to strengthen its management and governance of a key area of work following on from the criticisms of inquiries such as the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) which found critical failings in many religious organisations. DSO/District chair relationships can be too close, making legitimate challenge harder to ensure. Line management from outside the district will give more scope for DSOs to scrutinise district practice.

The Methodist Church has been a leader in the way it has sought to develop its approach to good safeguarding practice from the Past Cases Review, to the introduction of pastoral supervision of ministers and the Theology of Safeguarding report. We need to maintain this momentum in order to respond fully to Our Calling. Likewise it is felt by many safeguarding practitioners that credibility with statutory professionals and agencies will be enhanced by a clearer relationship with one safeguarding church service and structure which can be easily referenced.

Therefore it is proposed that a single church safeguarding service and structure is created which will offer a unified *Connexional Safeguarding function* as part of the Connexional Team. This will operate in regionally based teams which will align with the Learning Network areas and which also closely follow the stationing areas.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

6. **Safeguarding Service structure proposals**

The current 'hybrid' management model of safeguarding work in the church (line management of DSOs as district employees and professional case work supervision and support from the connexional safeguarding team) has served the church well for the past five years as the church has moved towards all DSOs being employed and a clearer set of safeguarding policies and updated training requirements.

With the increase in safeguarding work from all quarters, increasing expectations from within wider society and the learning of lessons from listening to victims and survivors about what needs to further improve, we now need a comprehensive and integrated service that can respond to both increasing workloads and expectations. Consistency and capacity are key to achieving this which is why we are proposing one single accountable structure for safeguarding across the church.

It is proposed to create four regional safeguarding teams which will serve a number of districts together and be able to maximise a skills' mix of safeguarding officers who can support one another and offer more effective cover to those districts. Members of each team will link with the districts in each region to ensure that local knowledge and working relationships with district chairs, DSGs and other key district/ circuit personnel are maintained.

Within each regional team the safeguarding officers will share lead areas for work with survivors, training and quality assurance. These lead areas will all relate to the lead officers in the safeguarding management team.

The new *Regional Safeguarding Officer* posts will operate under the line management of a *Regional Safeguarding Manager* with a *team administrator*.

The Regional Safeguarding Manager will be part of the safeguarding management team.

It is anticipated that, with current DSOs reporting being at capacity with workloads, the new regional teams will reflect at least the same number of hours currently being worked across the district areas the region will cover from DSOs, Assistant and Deputy DSOs. Once the new teams are embedded and working to a similar set of service standards it will be possible better to assess capacity and future service planning.

Regional Safeguarding Officers (RSO)

A new RSO job description has been created having reviewed all current DSO job responsibilities. The new role includes clear responsibility for assessing DBS blemishes, undertaking local risk assessments, quality assurance of church/circuit compliance and leading training.

The new Regional Safeguarding Officer role has a lot of similarities with most existing DSO jobs. This process will be subject to standard employment law processes with negotiations between the connexional HR team and district employers.

In order to undertake the process of reviewing existing employment arrangements with each district and their safeguarding staff and to lead on setting up the new regional teams, a fixed term project management post with specialised human resources experience is proposed for six months. This will be followed by a fixed term project lead for the first twelve months of the new structure's operation whilst workloads and workflows are clarified so that after its first year of operation the new integrated service structure can be reviewed to ensure it is sufficiently resourced or whether it needs to be re-focused to meet the church's needs.

Safeguarding management team

1. A new post of Regional Safeguarding Manager will be created for each of the four Regional Safeguarding Teams and they will line manage the Regional Safeguarding Officers and an Administrator in each of the four regional areas. This post will replace the current Casework Supervisor roles and reflect the new responsibilities that line management will bring.
2. The existing Policy Manager post will have added responsibilities in relation to ensuring minimum standards are being achieved and so this post will become a Policy and Quality Assurance Manager. This post will line manage the admin posts in the team.
3. There will be two new posts (0.5) to lead on the areas of Survivor Support and Advocacy and Training and Development work. Currently these are undertaken by existing members of the safeguarding team and demand more dedicated time.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

4. The existing Admin staff (1.5 posts) will be increased to 3 fte posts to cover:

- DBS blemish work
- Supporting safeguarding panels
- Admin support to RSMs and maintaining the casework management and recording system
- Admin support to Director, Project Implementation Manager and Policy/ QA manager

7. **Regional areas**

The current Learning Network areas have been split into six and we wish to align the Regional Safeguarding teams to fit into this structure as closely as possible.

The current SG areas are split into four (Quadrants) and it is proposed to maintain this split with Scotland, Wales, and the Isle of Man each added into one of the four regional areas.

It is important to be clear that within this split, the specific differences between legislatures in England, Scotland, Wales, the Isle of Man, Channel Islands, Malta and Gibraltar need to be reflected.

In the case of the Isle of Man there will be a service level agreement setting out the specific safeguarding relationship due to the ecumenical nature of the safeguarding work and the different employment arrangements that currently exist.

North East, Scotland and Shetland

- Scotland
- Shetland
- Newcastle
- Darlington
- Sheffield
- Yorkshire North and East
- Yorkshire West

North West

- North West England
- Chester and Stoke
- Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury
- Birmingham
- Isle of Man

South East

- London
- Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire
- East Anglia
- Lincolnshire
- Northampton
- Nottingham and Derby
- South East

South West and Cymru Wales

- Wales Synod Cymru
- South West Peninsula
- Bristol
- Southampton
- Channel Islands

8. Implementation timetable

June

Report to the Conference

September – December

Further consultation with District Chairs and DSOs

Appointment of HR specialist to project manage and plan recruitment to new structure.

January- September 2025

Part one – establishment of new safeguarding management team

Part two – establishment of regional teams

*****RESOLUTIONS**

22/20. The Conference receives the Report.

22/21. The Conference agrees to adopt a unified safeguarding structure as proposed in the Report.

22/22. The Conference adopts the Report as its further reply to M21(2022).

22. Methodist Council, part 2

SECTION Q GUIDANCE FOR BREAKDOWN OF MARRIAGE

The 2023 Conference agreed to revoke SO 111(3) with effect from the 2024 Conference, noting that guidance would be produced in its place. The draft guidance below is therefore recommended to the Conference by the Council.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance is in relation to a breakdown of a recognised marriage or civil partnership that involves legal commitments between the parties. This guidance relates to the marriages/ civil partnership of any minister (including probationers).
- 1.2 It is important to remember that all cases of a breakdown of a marriage will differ and the response will therefore need to be tailored to each situation.
- 1.3 All ministers have the benefit of reflective supervision as a place where risk and vulnerability can be discussed. The minister's relationships will contribute to the effective exercise of ministry and to the minister's own wellbeing, so it is advisable for ministers to be open with their supervisors if reference to this guidance is likely.
- 1.4 When a minister's marriage or civil partnership seems to be in difficulties, the minister is advised to discuss the situation with the District Chair in the case of a presbyter, or the Warden in the case of a deacon. The Chair and/or Warden will be able to advise on sources of counselling and other help.
- 1.5 The Chair must be informed whenever it appears to a minister that the breakdown of the marriage/civil partnership is irrevocable, as must the Warden if either party is a deacon. When a minister informs the District Chair or Warden that the breakdown of the marriage appears to be irrevocable, the District Chair or Warden shall inform the Conference Office and indicate to the parties involved what support is available. All support is offered to both parties. In all cases the Secretary of the Conference, via the Conference Office, will appoint a Connexional Support Officer for each party.
- 1.6 There will be a panel of Council-appointed Connexional Support Officers to support ministers and spouses in these circumstances.

2. Connexional Support Officers

- 2.1 The role of the Connexional Support Officer (CSO) is to ensure and check the correct level of support has been provided. CSOs will assist both parties to identify any needs they may have, for instance: pastoral, housing, spiritual,

independent financial advice, therapeutic etc. The CSOs will, if necessary, signpost them to appropriately qualified persons (or services).

- 2.2 The Conference Office shall maintain a list of CSOs. Where possible, ministers, spouses and civil partners will be allocated a CSO within an accessible geographical area.
- 2.3 The Connexional Team shall be responsible for ensuring that the CSO officers receive appropriate training, supervision and support to carry out their role on behalf of the Church.
- 2.4 The Connexional Support Officer shall report any safeguarding concerns to the District Safeguarding Officer and the Secretary of the Conference as soon as they have been made aware of them.
- 2.5 A role description for the Connexional Support Officer should be agreed by the Ministries Committee and held by the Conference Office, to be obtained on request.

3. Practical Support

- 3.1 Practical support should be available for the minister(s), spouse, civil partners and any children. The Connexional Support Officer shall outline to the minister, spouse or civil partner concerned the support available. In cases where children are involved appropriate support will be highlighted.
- 3.2 The Connexional Support Officer should enquire if urgent alternative accommodation is needed for either the minister or the spouse or civil partner. If such accommodation is needed, the CSO should work with the District Chair to identify suitable options.
- 3.3 If a minister is leaving the manse (temporarily whilst the spouse or civil partner finds alternative accommodation or as part of a partnership in which both are ministers), the Connexional Support Officer should work with the circuit or other body to ensure that their ministry can continue safely and provisions are put in place to support their work outside of the manse.
- 3.4 As far as possible, provision should be made for the children whose home is the manse to continue their education and other activities with minimal disruption.
- 3.5 It is recommended that compassionate leave is offered to all ministers involved in the breakdown of the marriage. The length of time required shall be determined by the District Chair in consultation with Connexional Support Officer in each situation and with the Warden where one of the partners is a deacon.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

3.6 The CSO should discuss with the spouse or civil partner any wish to continue to attend public worship. It should be recognised that, following a marital breakup, the non-clergy spouse or civil partner may struggle to identify a new supportive community in which to worship and may need assistance to be able to do so. Support should be given to ensure both parties are able to find suitable places to worship. The District Chair and/or the Superintendent should be alerted to the couple's intentions in this regard in order to provide appropriate guidance to local churches involved.

4. Pastoral Support

4.1 There should always be an identifiable line of pastoral support available. For a presbyter, spouse and civil partner, whether ordained or not, this will be the Chair of District or another person appointed by the District Chair. Where a Deacon is one of the parties, the Warden of the order will work with the District Chair. It is not appropriate for the same person to offer pastoral support to both parties.

4.2 If both parties are ministers it is appropriate for the District Chair to appoint alternate pastoral supporters to both parties.

4.3 Within the appropriate limits of necessary confidentiality, those offering pastoral support should be made aware of any discipline cases or concerns that may have an effect on the situation.

4.4 Counselling is available for both parties including support for children. The cost of six sessions and (if necessary) up to twelve sessions is covered by the Methodist Church Fund. This does not have to be used in the immediate term but will be made available until the parties are legally separated. The Connexional Support Officer shall have discretion to authorise additional counselling.

5. Financial Support

5.1 The Church recognises the obligation it has to ministers, spouses and civil partners, in particular when the manse is the family home. The Connexional Support Officer should therefore discuss with the minister or partner what additional costs they anticipate incurring.

5.2 Where the spouse or civil partner is not a minister, total payments of up to half a stipend may be made available to assist them financially. The grant should be paid in full to the spouse or civil partner and the minister advised to declare it on their tax return.

5.3 The Resourcing Committee should have discretion to authorise additional benevolent funding to either party where appropriate.

6. Communication to the Local Church and Circuit

- 6.1 When it has been agreed that the breakdown of the marriage is irrevocable and one or more of the parties is leaving the manse, a communication should be made to the Circuit or places of worship where the minister(s) has/have pastoral responsibility. The information will include details about the covering of pastoral responsibilities. The form of words used and the time the information is shared needs to be agreed, as far as possible, with both parties. This may be different in each case but needs to be clear, timely and in consultation with the Superintendent, District Chair and Circuit Stewards.
- 6.2 The Superintendent (or in the case of a Superintendent's marriage breaking down, the Chair) should ensure that pastoral care is offered to the affected Local Churches and Circuit.
- 6.3 If required, the District Chair should find suitable cover for the minister's work. Financial support for this cover, if required, should be made available from the Methodist Church Fund.
- 6.4 In each case, the District Chair should explore with the minister(s) and the Circuit Stewards (or equivalent) the wisdom of the minister continuing in ministry in the current appointment and whether there is a need for the invitation or deemed invitation to be curtailed.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 At the appropriate time, usually after six months, and by agreement between the parties and their CSOs, the CSO should cease to offer support. The CSO should report to the District Chair and, where appropriate, the Warden that their support has now come to an end. The Chair and/or Warden should arrange for any continuing support to be offered in the District as necessary.
- 7.2 The Connexional Support Officer should then notify the Conference Office that the support has come to an end. Any records that have been kept should be sent to the Conference Office for correct disposal, in line with Data Protection principles.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

22/23. The Conference receives the Report.

22/24. The Conference approves the draft guidance in relation to a breakdown of a minister's marriage or civil partnership and directs that it should be included in the guidance section of CPD.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

SECTION R CONNEXIONAL TREASURER

Following ongoing work in the light of the Oversight and Trusteeship decisions, the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Council have agreed that the role of Connexional Treasurer should cease from 1 September 2024. This will enable the Resourcing Committee, working with the Executive Director of Finance and Resources, to undertake its responsibilities in the new structure. The necessary amendments to Standing Orders are contained within the Oversight and Trusteeship report elsewhere in the Agenda.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

22/25. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION S MEDICAL COMMITTEE

- 1 In the past, medical assessments for Methodist ministers and ministerial candidates have been carried out by the Medical Committee appointed by the Methodist Council under Standing Order 212(5).
- 2 However, the Medical Committee's role has changed over time with changes to legislation such as the Equalities Act 2010.
- 3 In 2021 it was recognised that the Medical Committee's main purpose of conducting medicals for prospective presbyteral and diaconal candidates and ministers transferring from other churches needed to be reviewed in light of such legislation. This review was incorporated into the review of the candidating process as a whole, and legal advice was obtained.
- 4 The 2022 Conference approved the new candidating process, and Standing Orders were amended in 2023, such that the Medical Committee's role in assessing the health of prospective candidates and ministers transferring from other churches has now been taken over by an independent occupational health firm. The involvement of an independent health assessor means that the church's candidating and transfer process is accountable and compliant with current occupational health and equalities legislation.
- 5 Similarly the Medical Committee's role in advising on the wellbeing of presbyters and deacons, ill-health retirement and pensions has now been taken over by

an independent occupational health firm. In addition, the Committee's role acting in an advisory capacity to the connexional Wellbeing team has also been replaced by independent occupational health advice. The SO changes approved in 2023 changes did not cover the involvement of the previous medical committee in the procedures dealing with applications of former ministers to be reinstated; applications to become supernumerary on health grounds; and applications by supernumeraries to return to the active work. Amendments to the relevant Standing Orders are presented below. They mirror the provisions for the discernment of ordained vocation, with modifications to suit the particular circumstances of the three types of application. A minor consequential amendment relating to the reinstatement of local preachers is also included.

- 6 Having served the church for many years, the Medical Committee now considers that its role is no longer required and therefore requested that it be disbanded.
- 7 Now that the new candidating process has been put in place and approved by the Conference with new Standing Orders, and in light of the proposed changes to the connexional committee structure taking place in 2024, the Council believes that this is the right time for the Medical Committee to be disbanded. It is therefore anticipated that the current SO 212(5) which provides for the appointment of the committee will be revoked by virtue of the general revocation of Part 2 of Standing Orders (see the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group report), with no provision for a replacement in the new version.
- 8 The Council thanked the Medical Committee for the time, commitment and expertise that it has provided to the Methodist Church over the years.

***RESOLUTIONS

22/26. The Conference receives the Report.

22/27. The Conference amends Standing Orders as follows:

761 Reinstatement as a Presbyterian, Deacon...

(3) The convener of the interviewing committee shall be the Secretary of the Conference who shall

~~(i) require the applicant to complete and return the medical questionnaire provided for that purpose, for consideration and report by a doctor specified by the Secretary in consultation with the medical committee appointed by the~~

22. Methodist Council, part 2

Methodist Council; **ensure that an Occupational Health assessment as specified in Standing Order 715(2) is undertaken by each applicant and that the Health Policy adopted for candidates under Standing Order 715(1) is applied, subject to making any necessary modifications including, in particular, substituting 'applicant' for 'candidate' and 'interviewing committee' for 'Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee' throughout;**

...

(14) A former presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion, probationer or student who ... is a member but not a local preacher and who, having formerly been a local preacher, wishes to be reinstated as such shall apply to the President and the application shall be considered and determined as set out in clauses (1) to (11) or (12), as the case may be, of this Standing Order ... but so that no ~~medical examination~~ **Occupational Health assessment** shall be required...

...

790 Application to become Supernumerary

(2) (a) Any minister seeking to become a supernumerary on the grounds of ill health who is not within the scope of clause (1) above shall, after giving notice to his or her **the relevant** Chair (and, in the case of a deacon, also to the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order), apply to the relevant member of the Connexional Team who shall **ensure that, whenever appropriate, an Occupational Health assessment as specified in Standing Order 715(2) is undertaken by each applicant and that the Health Policy adopted for candidates under Standing Order 715(1) is applied with any necessary modifications.** ~~refer the application to the chair of the medical committee of the Methodist Council. The chair of the medical committee shall arrange for a medical report, and, where the committee judges it appropriate, for the applicant to be referred to an independent occupational health physician for assessment. All expenses in connection with such an medical report and assessment shall be borne by connexional budgets.~~ ~~the medical committee.~~

(b) In cases of prolonged or repeated absence through ill health, the relevant Chair or the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order or the Secretary of the Conference may require a minister to ~~undergo~~ **take an Occupational Health assessment by a medical adviser or independent occupational health physician** and may specify that the assessment should include an assessment of whether the minister concerned should be invited to seek permission to become

supernumerary on the grounds of ill health. All expenses in connection with such an assessment shall be borne by **connexional budgets**. ~~the medical committee:~~

(c) If following an assessment under sub-clause (b) it is reported by the person making the assessment or it appears to the Secretary of the Conference or the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order that the minister concerned should be invited to seek permission to become a supernumerary on the grounds of ill health but **the minister** ~~he or she~~ declines to do so, the Secretary or, in the case of a deacon, the Warden may require that ~~he or she~~ **the person concerned** be treated as having made such an application, but without prejudice to the rights given by sub-clause (e) below.

(d) All records, reports and assessments received pursuant to sub-clauses (a) and (b) above shall be held in connexional files that are confidential ~~to the members of the medical committee,~~ to the Secretary of the Conference and **the Secretary's** ~~his or her~~ delegated representatives and to the Trustee of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme when early retirement on grounds of ill health in the case of a particular minister is being discussed.

(e) Unless sub-clause (f) below applies **those considering the case under sub-clause (c) above** ~~the medical committee~~ shall recommend to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may require, whether the person concerned should be permitted to become a supernumerary on medical grounds and shall inform **the person concerned** ~~him or her~~ in writing of its **that** recommendation. The person concerned may **give** by notice in writing to the Secretary of the Conference ~~given~~ within fourteen days after ~~he or she is~~ **having been** informed of the ~~medical committee's~~ recommendation, or such longer period as the Secretary of the Conference may allow, **requiring** that a further independent medical opinion **assessment** be sought and that the matter be considered afresh by people who have not been involved in the making of the previous recommendation. The second recommendation shall, if the person concerned so requires, be presented to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may require, together with the first recommendation.

(f) If **on consideration of an assessment or in any case where no assessment is required the Secretary of the Conference or the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order** ~~the medical committee~~ considers **recommends** that the person concerned should as a matter of urgency be permitted to become a supernumerary before the next meeting of the Conference, and **the minister** ~~he or she~~ so desires, ~~they~~ ~~committee shall so recommend and~~ the President or the Vice-President on **the President's** ~~his or her~~ behalf shall grant permission.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

(g) Where the person concerned desires to receive an enhanced pension from the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme **any relevant Occupational Health assessment** a report shall be made available by the medical committee to the Trustee of the scheme.

793 Return to the Active Work. (1) Subject to clause (2) below any application by a supernumerary presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion for permission to return to the active work shall be made to the Stationing Advisory Committee. The **convenor of that committee** application shall be referred to the chair of the medical committee of the Methodist Council who shall arrange for an **Occupational Health assessment as specified in Standing Order 715(2) to be undertaken by the applicant. The assessment shall be considered in accordance with the Health Policy adopted for candidates under Standing Order 715(1) with any necessary modifications and reported** medical report and make a recommendation to the Advisory Committee and, where application has been made to become a member of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme, to the Trustee of the scheme. The Advisory Committee shall consult the Chair and Superintendent of the supernumerary concerned, and, where the supernumerary is a deacon, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, and make a recommendation to the Stationing Committee, which shall in turn make a recommendation to the Conference. In the case of urgent stationing needs or other emergency the President or the Vice-President on the President's behalf may consider the recommendation from the Advisory Committee, grant immediate permission and report to the Conference.

SECTION T CONFERENCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Introduction

- 1 In adopting Notice of Motion 112, the 2021 Conference directed the Council to establish a framework to analyse the cumulative impact of all resolutions brought to the Conference with regard to resources, time and potential benefits. The Conference also appealed to the Council to recognise the reduced capacity in all parts of the life of the Connexion and therefore to apply the existing mandate the Council has to evaluate the number and cumulative time impact of resolutions presented to all future Conferences.
- 2 The 2022 Conference agreed to establish a Conference Scrutiny Sub-Committee (CSS) in place of the Conference Financial Committee (CFC) with a broader remit

to consider the 'impact' of resolutions. The Conference directed the Methodist Council to carry out further work to determine the details of the CSS (including its membership and its relationship with the Business Committee) and, following collaboration and consultation with the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee and the Law and Polity Committee, to bring Standing Orders for the establishment of the CSS to the Conference of 2023. The Conference further directed that, pending the establishment of the CSS, the CFC should scrutinise the material coming before it to determine as far as may be its impact on the whole connexion in terms of resources of finance, personnel and workload.

- 3 In response to this, the Council agreed that the Conference of 2023 would be a transitional year in which new questions would be asked of those proposing notices of motion and the learning from this process reported back to the Council alongside recommendations for the new scrutiny group and its Terms of Reference.

Conference 2023

- 4 A revised Notice of Motion (NoM) form was adopted for the 2023 Conference to allow the CFC better to assess the wider impact of the proposal being made. Only six NoMs were received (the average number from 2019-2022 was eighteen) and only four of these put to the Conference.
- 5 The impact of each of the six NOMs received was relatively minimal. Three concerned the composition of the Conference, two were amending Memorial responses, and one asked for specific issues to be considered as the lay mission partner programme was wound down. None were asking for churches and circuits to undertake further work.
- 6 The purpose of the new form was to get proposers to think more deeply about what they were asking the Church to commit to and how such commitments would be fulfilled. Whilst the number of NoMs was reduced compared with previous years and the scope of the NoMs was more limited, it is not possible to conclude that the introduction of the new form was the cause of this.
- 7 The CFC did note that some NoM proposers had taken the opportunity to seek the support offered on the form (such as discussion with the Connexional Secretary) and others had not. Also, some had been more successful than others in articulating the impact of their proposals. Nevertheless, the CFC were as content as they could be with the process this year.

22. Methodist Council, part 2

Proposals

- 8 It is proposed that the Conference Scrutiny Sub-committee is established in line with the outline proposals put forward last year. Membership should be from those most affected by notices of motion, such as Connexional Secretary, Synod Secretary, treasurer, superintendent, church steward as well as a member of either the Resourcing Committee or Connexional Council to ensure the link to the budgeting process. However, in light of a reduced Conference size (and therefore a reduced pool of available people in those roles) it would be unwise to be too prescriptive about membership; therefore it is suggested that the committee is made up of the Connexional Secretary (Chair), a member of either the Connexional Council or Resourcing Committee and three other members of the Conference. The sub-committee will be supported by the Executive Director of Finance and Resources.
- 9 On the recommendation of the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) Committee the JDS impact assessment (<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/the-inclusive-methodist-church/resources-events-and-support/resources/equality-impact-assessment/>) will be incorporated alongside the Notice of Motion form to ensure issues related to discrimination can be actively considered and prevented.
- 10 The Terms of Reference of the sub-committee are proposed as follows:
 - 10.1 The Connexional Council, with a view to the discharge of its functions during the periods of the Conference, shall appoint a scrutiny sub-committee annually, consisting of the Connexional Secretary (who shall Chair the committee), a member of either the Connexional Council or the Resourcing Committee and three other members of the Conference, together with such other members of the Connexional Team in an advisory capacity as the council may decide.
 - 10.2 The committee shall meet before and during the sessions of the Conference as necessary, shall scrutinise all material coming before the Conference that has not already been subject to an impact assessment, to determine, as far as may be, its impact on the whole connexion in terms of resources, finance, personnel, workload, equality and culture and to advise the Conference of its conclusions.
 - 10.3 In relation to all such resolutions which, if adopted, would result in increased resource implications the committee shall advise the Conference, prior to any debate or vote upon them,
 - (i) whether, if adopted, the impact of the resolution has been fully articulated in the proposal;

- (ii) whether the financial costs can be accommodated within the council's proposed budget;
- (iii) if not, how those additional costs should be funded, and
- (iv) if there are several such proposals before the committee, what priority should be given to each.

10.4 The committee's advice shall, except in emergencies, be conveyed to the Conference in writing.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

22/28. The Conference receives the Report.

22/29. The Conference amends Standing Orders as follows:

136A Financial Committee Conference Scrutiny Sub-committee

- (1) The Methodist **Connexional** Council, with a view to the discharge of its functions **generally and in particular its functions** under Standing Orders ~~211(3)(vii) and 212(2)~~ **203(2) and (3), 204(1) and (2) and 205(3)** during the periods of the Conference, shall appoint a financial committee **Conference Scrutiny Sub-committee** annually, consisting of the Connexional Treasurer ~~(who shall chair the committee), the Connexional Secretary responsible for central services~~ **(who shall chair the sub-committee), a member of the Connexional Council or the Resourcing Committee and** three other members of the council who are also members of the Conference, together with such other members of the Connexional Team in an advisory capacity as the council may decide.
(1A) In appointing the three other members of the Conference referred to in clause (1) above, the council shall seek to ensure appropriate representation of those most affected by notices of motion which make or might make additional demands on the resources of districts, circuits and local churches, such as members of the Conference who hold office as synod secretaries, treasurers, superintendents and church stewards.
- (2) The **sub-committee** shall meet before and during the sessions of the Conference as necessary, shall identify all resolutions in the Agenda or otherwise circulated to **scrutinise all material coming before** the Conference which would have financial implications, other than those for which provision has already been made in the budget, and shall notify the Conference accordingly **has not already been the subject of an impact assessment in order to determine, as far as possible, the impact on the whole connexion of**

22. Methodist Council, part 2

any proposals for action contained in such material in terms of resources, finance, personnel, workload, equality and culture and shall report its conclusions to the Conference.

- (3) In relation to all such resolutions **coming before the Conference** which, if adopted, would result in **have** increased costs **resource implications** the **sub**-committee shall advise the Conference, prior to any debate or vote upon them,
- ~~(i) whether, if adopted, the costs can be accommodated within the council's proposed budget;~~
 - ~~(ii) if not, what additional resources are estimated to be required to carry them out, and the timescale within which the work might be started and completed;~~
 - ~~(iii) whether the cost of the proposal, if adopted, should be substituted for some other item of expenditure, or treated as an addition, and, in the latter case, the source of the additional funds required;~~
 - (i) whether the impact of the resolution, if adopted, has been fully articulated in the proposal and, if not, what the additional impact would be;**
 - (ii) whether the financial costs can be accommodated within the council's proposed budget;**
 - (iii) if not, how those additional costs should be funded**
 - (iv) if there are several such proposals before the **sub**-committee, what priority should be given to each.
- The **sub**-committee's advice shall, except in emergencies, be conveyed to the Conference in writing.
- (4) **For the purposes of this Standing Order, an "impact assessment" is an assessment of the impact on the connexion as a whole of any proposal contained in material coming before the Conference of the impact of the proposal in accordance with the provisions of clause (2) above.**

23. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

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| Contact name and details | Mr Ian White Chair of the Board ian.alsager@gmail.com Anne Goodman Chief Executive anne.goodman@tmcp.org.uk |
| Subject and aims | This report provides a brief overview of the service and work undertaken by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) in its role as Custodian Trustee and in support of Managing Trustees across the Connexion. |
| Background context and relevant documents | To be read in conjunction with this Report please see TMCP's website: www.tmcp.org.uk/about/publications for a full copy of the Trustees Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2023. |

SECTION A: GENERAL REPORT

1. Mission Statement, Governance and Key Roles

1.1 Mission Statement and Governance

The purpose of the Board (TMCP) is to serve the Methodist Church in the advancement of the Christian faith in accordance with its doctrinal standards and discipline, and any charitable purpose of the Methodist Church or Church organisation.

1.2 Our mission is to serve the Methodist Church

Our mission is to support and strengthen the Methodist Church, both by providing practical support to Managing Trustees and by working closely and effectively with our colleagues in the Connexional Team.

We aim at all times to:

- work within an ethical and Christian framework;
- perform our role to the highest standard;
- act with integrity and patience;
- listen carefully and communicate effectively;
- value and nurture the talents of those within the organisation;
- work efficiently and effectively within the confines of available resources.

23. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

1.3 Our Vision and Goals:

Our Vision is:

- to continue to fulfil our principal duty to act as Custodian Trustee of all properties held on model trusts of the Methodist Church Act 1976, to better help the Methodist Church to achieve its mission;
- to provide a comprehensive role as the corporate body of the Church;
- to continue with our specific areas of specialism such as sharing agreements, trusts and data protection (GDPR);
- to ensure that the TMCP team is utilised in the most effective and efficient way, while still maintaining clarity about TMCP's particular role within the Connexion.

Our Goals are:

- to streamline all processes through collaboration with our colleagues across the Connexion and their advisers;
- to fulfil our responsibility to Managing Trustees through ongoing guidance and training;
- to provide appropriate and adequate assistance to the Methodist Connexion;
- to ensure that resources match the need now and on an ongoing basis;
- to support our staff in their ongoing training and development.

In partnership we seek to help and support Managing Trustees across the Connexion to build a sustainable mission-led future.

1.4 Structure

The Board is a corporate body and was incorporated by the Methodist Church Act 1939. Our governing documents are the 1939 Act, our Trust Deed of 1939 and the Methodist Church Act 1976. The Board is served by four sub-committees: the Executive, Audit and Risk Committee, Grants Committee and Investment Committee.

1.5 Board members

Our Board members are members of the Methodist Church, appointed by the Conference on the nomination of the Board. As far as possible the Board comprises equal lay and ministerial members. Nominations are assessed in terms of experience, skills and expertise. A skills audit is performed annually by the Chair in consultation with all Board members. Board members represent a cross-section of Church Officers and Church members. A list of current Board members is available from TMCP's website: <https://www.tmcg.org.uk/meet-the-team> and can also be found in Section B of this report.

23. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

1.6 Working together with Managing Trustees

There are a number of different aspects to our work at TMCP, but a key part is guiding the Managing Trustees through the potential pitfalls of Charity Law, Methodist Law and other legislation. We also have oversight of the General Data Processing Regulations (GDPR) across the Connexion.

One of our primary aims is to guide and assist local churches so that they can engage more fully, and safely, in resourcing mission and ministry.

TMCP are the custodian trustees for all property held on the Model Trusts of the Methodist Church Act 1976 (except for that in the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man which are held by their own boards of trustees) and this includes nearly all of the property held by over 3,700 Local Churches, 333 Circuits and 29 Districts.

The Board is also custodian of the funds held in 5,410 trusts, a small number of which are under the direct management of the Board. Discretionary grants are given from these in accordance with the terms of the trusts.

It is important to distinguish our role as custodian trustees from that of Managing Trustees:

TMCP as Custodian Trustee:

- We hold legal title.
- We have a duty to ensure Managing Trustees do not act in breach of trust.
- We do not get involved in the day-to-day management.

Role of Managing Trustees:

- Managing Trustees are responsible for the day to day management of the property.
- Managing Trustees exercise power or discretion in respect of the property in accordance with charity and Methodist law.

The activities of the Board include, but are not limited to:

- Effecting all sales, purchases and leases of property by Church bodies, checking legal documents before signature by Managing Trustees.
- Investing funds received from sales or bequests and transmitting funds for purchases or to meet the cost of projects as instructed by Managing Trustees.
- Fulfilling any other duties or responsibilities required of, or appropriate for, the corporate body acting on behalf of the Methodist Church.

Partnership working remains at the heart of what TMCP does.

23. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

1.7 Working together with the Methodist Council

Under SO 931(3) the Methodist Council has delegated to TMCP the role of inspecting and approving contracts. In addition, the Methodist Council may instruct TMCP to undertake additional work.

The Service Level Partnership Agreement, originally finalised and signed by the Methodist Council and the TMCP Board in July 2020, continues to underpin and maintain transparency and accountability in respect of the services TMCP provides across the Connexion.

The Agreement guides the relationship between the Board and the Methodist Council, outlining the protocols and parameters within which both will work. The intention is to promote collaboration and maintain efficient and effective working relationships. The Agreement helps optimise the support offered to Managing Trustees, ensuring a high quality of service which is outcome-focused.

The Secretary of the Conference and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice (COLCP) together with the Chair and Chief Executive of TMCP continue to hold half-yearly meetings, primarily to complete the necessary periodic review and monitoring.

1.8 TMCP as a Corporate Body

TMCP has corporate status, and it has been found to be useful as a vehicle beyond trusteeship as such, where certain legal functions need to be vested in a corporate person, rather than a group of individuals. Examples of where TMCP's corporate role has been of benefit to the Methodist Church include holding shares in Methodist controlled trading subsidiaries, entering into the framework agreement and management of the Panel of Solicitors on behalf of the Methodist Church.

1.9 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

TMCP continues to act as the Data Controller for all Local Churches, Circuits and Districts (who are deemed to be the "Data Processors" ie the people who deal with data/ information on behalf of the Methodist Church).

Under a separate registration the Connexional Team is responsible for all data protection matters concerning safeguarding, complaints and discipline issues for the whole Methodist Church.

TMCP and the Connexional Team work together to provide data protection resources to the wider Connexion, including precedent documents, policies, practical guidance and frequently asked questions. TMCP continue to hold

23. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

regular online forums with District Data Champions to bring them up to speed on current developments in Data Protection and to provide support and guidance as needed.

As Data Controller, TMCP and its auditors require assurance from the Local Churches, Circuits and Districts that all necessary GDPR processes are being adhered to. In order to obtain such assurances, and on the recommendation of its Internal Auditors, TMCP introduced an Annual Checklist. This is completed by local Managing Trustees each year, with a deadline for submission being 31 May. The Annual Checklist is reported back via the Circuit and District who collate the returns to confirm that the Managing Trustees are fulfilling their responsibilities with regard to Data Protection legislation.

1.10 Working Together with the Methodist Church and Partners

TMCP puts Managing Trustees at the centre of all it does and it has close working relationships with many parts of the Methodist Church and its partners to achieve this aim.

Key stakeholders include:

- Managing Trustees, including the Methodist Council;
- District Chairs;
- District Property Secretaries;
- Circuit Superintendents;
- District, Circuit and Church Treasurers;
- Connexional Conference Office, Property Team and the Property Development Committee;
- Panel Solicitors;
- External Solicitors and Surveyors;
- Central Finance Board (CFB);
- Other Methodist Church related organisations such as MIC Ltd.

1.11 News Hub Articles

Articles are regularly published on the TMCP website 'News Hub', providing information to Managing Trustees and their professional advisers on updates to the website, guidance on changes in legislation, training events, availability of trust statements and other relevant information. During the year there have been 15 articles published, providing guidance on topics such as Charity Commission updates, Church mergers and amalgamations, replacement projects, bequests, litigation, and data protection updates. Managing Trustees are encouraged to sign up for the News Hub emails to be kept informed of current developments. The number of subscribers is currently in excess of 1,000.

23. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

1.12 Grants

TMCP continues to encourage grant applications to be made in respect of the discretionary funds for which the Board has responsibility. The protocols and details of how to apply are on the website.

The Board is pleased that, due to increased publicity across the Connexion and through the Property Development Committee, it paid grants totalling £569,762 for property and other projects from these trusts during the last financial year.

As well as overseeing the discretionary trusts as full trustee, the Board are currently liaising with specialist legal advisers with a view to setting up several all-encompassing trusts with general charitable purposes aligned with those of the Methodist Church to encourage the making of bequests into these trusts to streamline the grant-making function at TMCP.

1.13 Monitoring of Panel of Solicitors

The previous framework Agreement for the Panel of Solicitors came to an end in 2023 and TMCP with the Connexional Team went to a full re-tendering process. The result of that tendering process meant that the three existing firms on the Panel – Anthony Collins, Sintons and Blake Morgan – were reappointed. We were also pleased to appoint a new firm to the Panel – Harrison Clarke Rickerbys (HCR). HCR have 10 offices based across England and Wales and will be a great addition to the Panel.

The renewed Framework Agreement between TMCP and the Panel firms has now been signed and sets out the overarching principles for the performance and management of the Panel. In its capacity as the Church's corporate body TMCP is party to the Framework Agreement meaning it has responsibility for ensuring the terms of the Framework Agreement are complied with.

A formal relaunch of the Panel is taking place in spring 2024 in order to promote the Panel and its use across the Methodist Connexion, emphasising the benefits that instructing the Panel can bring to Managing Trustee bodies. The relaunch will also coincide with the introduction by TMCP of streamlining for purchases and leases, which should ensure a much more timely and efficient use of resources whilst making sure that those transactions complete more quickly when the time critical stage is reached. The process will be very similar to streamlining for sales which has proved to be highly successful for those Managing Trustees who instruct a firm on the Panel.

TMCP continue to send feedback questionnaires at the end of every legal transaction to all Managing Trustees who use the Panel. Feedback is an

23. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

important part of the monitoring process which aims to ensure that Managing Trustees are receiving a high and consistent level of service and advice. TMCP are summarising statistics relating to use of the Panel for monitoring, reporting, management and addressing any feedback and complaints.

TMCP will also continue to hold quarterly face to face monitoring meetings with each firm on the Panel and a new programme of training events aimed at Managing Trustees will commence.

2. Outcomes and achievements

2.1 The Finance Team

The Team supports the Board's role by planning and performing all financial operations relating to the receipts and payments of Model Trust monies as well as the investment of funds on behalf of Managing Trustees.

The Trust Information System (TIS) provides online access to trust statements, balances and other information. There were 3,142 users of the TIS at the end of 2022/23.

Key achievements 2022/23 and ongoing strategies include:

- The average number of payments requested per month is 218 including consents payments;
- The average total value of payments is £ £5.6m per month;
- Payments are actioned within three working days of receiving the application (provided the application has been completed correctly);
- The average instructions outstanding at the end of each working month equate to 9% of all instructions received - these are primarily instructions received in the final two days of the month or items that are ongoing due to scheduled requested future payments;
- The relationship between TMCP Finance, Central Finance Board and Methodist Church House continues to flourish and we work collaboratively wherever appropriate to improve the overall service delivered to the wider Methodist Church;
- A review is scheduled to consider alternative finance systems, and a plan for replacement software in due course.

2.2 The Legal Team

During the connexional year 2022/23 Managing Trustees were assisted with guidance on new major redevelopment projects, property sales and purchases of new property as well as trust matters, bequests, ecumenical issues and other

23. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

queries. The Team continues to enable Managing Trustees across the Connexion to secure income from their property to fund mission including granting non-residential leases, residential tenancies, entering into licences and one-off booking forms.

Key achievements in 2022/23 and since include:

- The Matter Management System (MMS) has been implemented and the migration of files to the new digital platform completed;
- The MMS integrates agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for timescales and performance;
- Each matter received from Managing Trustees is given a unique reference number which, when used, ensures that correspondence reaches the correct legal officer and can be dealt with effectively and efficiently;
- A TMCP website 'front door' contact form for new enquiries is reaching the final stage of development and will be rolled out in 2024. This will ensure that new enquiries and transactions are triaged appropriately and responses sent out quickly;
- A live connection between the connexional database and TMCP's new MMS is being configured. The timeline is dependent upon the work the Connexional Team is undertaking to the connexional database but will mean that in due course TMCP will have instant access to the database and subsequently the Consents system.

3. Key Strategies

- 3.1 Key strategies continue to be implemented. Delivery of these strategies has resulted in the streamlining of all internal processes and continues to lead to efficiencies which will positively impact performance. The current status of these strategies is outlined below:

IT Strategy (Delivered)

- Configuration and implementation of the Matter Management System;
- Implementation of new telephone systems using 365 Platform;
- Procurement and implementation of a new Managed Service Provider for on-going IT Support.

IT Strategy (In Progress),

- Migration of files to new digital platform and integrating agreed KPIs;
- Review alternative Finance Systems, and plan for replacement software.

23. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

Legal Strategy

- Introduction and increased use of KPIs in certain areas in line with the Service Level Partnership Agreement;
- Streamlining – This is being extended across more types of legal work including development projects
- Improved ways of communication with Managing Trustees;
- More guidance and training for Managing Trustees – for example ecumenical website pages, more precedent documents and continued training for data champions;
- Implementing further integrated ways of working with connexional colleagues and Districts, including District Property Secretaries.

Finance Strategy

- There is a continued review of processes. Streamlining and automating processes are being considered and will be implemented where appropriate. In the meantime, the team is maintaining high levels of performance;
- Introduction of KPI's ensuring continued high levels of service delivery;
- There are regular meetings with connexional partners to develop new ways of working.

Workforce Strategy

- A progressive team review is being undertaken which reflects the fact that processes are currently being streamlined and new systems implemented;
- This review will ensure that the team is fit for purpose moving forward and that resources are appropriately matched to needs, which will allow senior management adequate time for strategic work.

4. Moving Forward

4.1 Development of a sustainable model providing support to the Connexion in future years

During 2023, the Board reviewed its current funding model which is based on a charge, calculated as a percentage of the assets TMCP holds under its management. The review had concluded that a more sustainable and appropriate model is needed, separating the charge made in respect of the management of funds from the funding of all the other duties performed by the Board.

The Board decided on a preferred option and after initial discussions with the Connexional Team held at operational level, the Board will be seeking strategic

23. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

high-level discussions to ensure that a new funding model, which will sustain the work of TMCP for the next decade, is agreed upon.

4.2 Board Recruitment

We are currently recruiting new Board members to supplement the skills and experience of our Board. We are seeking both lay and ordained members who can bring an enthusiasm to support the calling and mission of the Methodist church, helping to share more widely with Managing Trustees the role of TMCP and the positive impact it can have on the ability of Managing Trustees to engage with mission.

Recruitment commenced in February 2024 and we are looking to bring nominations to the 2024 Conference.

SECTION B

Membership of the Board

The Board is required to report to the Conference if any members have resigned, died, become bankrupt or made an assignment with their creditors, resided outside the United Kingdom for more than twelve months, refused or become unfit to act or ceased to be members of the Methodist Church so that new appointments can be made by the Conference on the nomination of the remaining members of the Board.

Changes in Office

1. Resignations

Ms Alethea Siow resigned from the Board with effect from 31st December 2023. Mr Gerry Davis has indicated his intention to retire from the Board with effect from Conference 2024.

The Board recognises and appreciates their contributions to the Board and its sub-committees.

2. Board Membership as at 28 February 2024

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| The Revd Rosemarie E G Clarke | Mr Gerry Davis OBE |
| The Revd Paul Davis (Vice Chair) | Mr David James |
| The Revd Rodney Hill | Mr John Jefferson |
| The Revd Gill Newton | Mr Ian White (Chair) |
| The Revd Philip Wagstaff | |

23. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

SECTION C

Declarations under the Methodist Church Trust Deed 1939

From time to time property is bequeathed to the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes where no express or special trusts are declared by the legatee or where those terms are uncertain or are wishes only. In such cases clause 2 of the Trust Deed of 1939 adopted by the Conference further to section 11 of the Methodist Church Act 1939 empowers the Conference to declare the trusts upon which the Board is to hold the property. One such case is as follows:

Doreen Bright Deceased

Doreen Bright, by her Will, bequeathed "*as to one part for the Methodist Church for Church Purposes of the Legal Department of Central Buildings Oldham Street Manchester M1 1 JQ (Registered Charity Number 1132208) absolutely*". The amount bequeathed was £1,032.06.

First, because no trusts have been declared this is a case where it falls to the Conference to declare the trusts further to the Deed of 1939.

Second, it has always been policy to reflect, as far as possible, the wish of the legatee in any Directions which the Conference gives to the Board. In this case, following enquiries, the Board has ascertained from the solicitors who administered the estate and the Managing Trustees of the Crowland Methodist Church in the Peterborough Circuit that Doreen Bright was an active member of Crowland Methodist Church prior to her death.

The Board therefore proposes the Resolution shown below for adoption by the Conference.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 23/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**
- 23/2. **The Conference hereby directs that the bequest of Doreen Bright shall be held by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes on the Model Trusts for the benefit of the Managing Trustees of the Crowland Methodist Church.**

24. Special Resolutions

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | Joanne Anderton, Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

Introduction

- 1 Under Standing Order 126, special resolutions of the Conference are required to be confirmed the following year after appropriate consultation before they can become effective. For the purpose of consultation, they are either referred to the Methodist Council (unless moved on the Council's behalf, in which case they are referred to the Law and Polity Committee – see Standing Order 126(1)(c)) or dealt with as provisional legislation under Standing Order 122 and submitted to the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee. The bodies consulted may approve or disapprove the special resolution but may not amend it.
- 2 Amendments to the Model Trusts require a special resolution and the 2023 Conference referred two such resolutions to the Methodist Council for consultation.
- 3 The proposed Model Trust amendments were also submitted to the Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Scotland and Shetland Synods for consideration, as required by Standing Order 126(1)(a).
- 4 Amendments to the Deed of Union also require a special resolution, and the 2023 Conference referred one such resolution (35/7, proposing amendments to the Deed of Union in relation to the membership of the Conference) to the Council for consultation, despite the resolution having been moved on the Council's behalf. The Council therefore noted that the consultation was with the Law and Polity Committee and the outcome of that is reported elsewhere in the Agenda.

Special Resolution 42/5 to amend Model Trust 26

- 5 Model Trust 26 is designed to protect a purchaser for value of a legal interest in Model Trust property – usually a sale or lease – and permits a Memorandum of Consent to be signed by the connexional Property Secretary or other person so authorised by the Methodist Council for every transaction, thereby providing assurance to purchasers of Model Trust property that the managing trustees have the power to enter into the transaction.

- 6 Modern-day legislation governing disposals of charity land means there is no longer any need for the additional assurance of a Memorandum of Consent. In practice, preparing and signing a Memorandum of Consent for every sale, lease, etc of Model Trust property is burdensome and time-consuming, amounting to the production of several hundred documents each year.
- 7 By Special Resolution 42/5, the 2023 Conference agreed to amend Model Trust 26 by deleting the definition of 'memorandum of consent' in sub-paragraph (1) and deleting sub-paragraphs (3) and (4).

Special Resolution 57/5 to amend the Model Trusts in relation to the Connexional Council

- 8 With the proposed new relationship of the Conference to the Connexional Council as the trustee body with effect from 1 September 2024, as well as the replacement for the Methodist Council, amendments are needed to the Model Trusts to deal with: (A) the creation of the Connexional Council; and (B) the continuing powers of the Conference in relation to the Model Trusts, with particular reference to Conference and Connexional Property. A full explanation is set out in Section C of Conference Report 57 (2023): Oversight and Trusteeship.
- 9 By Special Resolution 57/5, the 2023 Conference agreed to amend the Model Trusts as set out in sections (A) and (B) below.

Proposed Model Trust amendments:

(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;

24. Special Resolutions

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 persons or body of persons, being members of the Church, annually appointed by the ~~Conference~~ **Connexional Council** 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;~~

10 The Council approved the Resolutions.

***RESOLUTION

24/1. **The Conference confirms the amendments to the Model Trusts as set out in the Report.**

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | Matt Tattersall – Executive Director of Finance and Resources tattersallm@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Action required | Decision |
| Resolutions | <p>25/1. The Conference receives the Report.</p> <p>25/2. The Conference adopts the revised Reserves Policy.</p> <p>25/3. The Conference approves the budget for 2024/2025.</p> <p>25/4. The Conference approves the district allocations of the assessment to the Methodist Church Fund set out in the report.</p> |

Summary of content

| | |
|--|---|
| Subject of aims | The paper provides the Conference with the opportunity to review and discuss the budget proposal. |
| Main points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitional funding is required whilst the Connexional Team is transformed to match the requirements of the Church within the resources available. • There is no flexibility available in the budget to cover any new priorities that the Conference might wish to support. • A new reserve level is proposed. |
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | MC/24/16 Financial Planning |
| Consultations | <p>The allocation of the MCF District Assessment was agreed at a meeting of the District Treasurers in November 2023.</p> <p>The draft budget was approved by the Methodist Council in April 2024, on the recommendation of the Strategy and Resources Committee.</p> |

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25

Summary of impact

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Financial | All parts of the Connexion are affected by the use of Connexional Funds. |
| Wider connexional | Ongoing reduction in the District Assessment means there is less funding for the Connexional Team and therefore a reduction in the work that the team can undertake. |
| Risk | Budget assumptions contain inherent risk which is mitigated by taking a balanced approach to setting of both income and expenditure budgets. The overall level of reserve in the key funds protects the Church against unexpected financial shocks. |

Background

- 1 The context for the 2024/25 budget is a continuation of the strategy set by the Conference in 2023. The plan responds to the growing affordability challenge with the District Assessment and the need to 'right size' the Connexional Team in the light of the available resources. Another key component is the release of resources from the Connexional Priority Fund following the reduction in risks associated with the pension schemes.

Scenario Planning

- 2 Over the last two years, the Senior Management Group has developed a number of scenarios for the future of the Church and Connexional Team in the medium term. These scenarios will continue to be refined each year and the Strategy and Resources Committee approved the current 'most likely' scenario set of assumptions at its September 2023 meeting.
- 3 In line with previous budgets, the longer term objective is to ensure that the core work of the Connexional Team can be appropriately funded through the District Assessment. Additional strategies and initiatives would need to be funded from other sources such as the Mission in Britain Fund and the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF).
- 4 With the improvement in the funding of the pension schemes there is less need to put aside further resources in the Pension Reserve Fund. In turn, this allows

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25

funding to be directed to more productive missional spending. However, over recent months the financial legacy of the Covid pandemic has started to affect a number of key partners in the Methodist family and there has been a number of requests for support from Connexional Funds. This is a reminder of our interconnectedness as a Connexion.

Reserves Policy

- 5 Having undertaken a detailed analysis of the Methodist Church Fund reserve policy in 2023, no changes are proposed in 2024. However, there are also reserve levels set in relation to the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF), Epworth Fund and the World Mission Fund.
- 6 No changes are proposed in relation to the CPF or Epworth Fund reserve balances (£1.5m and £1m respectively) as they allow for one year of recurrent commitments to be funded whilst arrangements are made to cease funding.
- 7 In relation to the World Mission Fund, the long-term plan to reduce the Fund balance is reaching its final stages. Consequently, the absolute level of investment risk is reduced (because there is a much smaller amount of money invested) and the underlying recurrent commitments from the Fund are significantly reduced. Therefore, it is prudent to reduce the reserve level to the range £0.5m to £1m. This reduction will largely be offset by a revaluation of a property that is held within the fund. Should the sale of this property generate a higher return than anticipated, this would be available to the Global Relationships Committee for spending.

District Assessment

- 8 The District Assessment continues to fall in real terms by 3% each year. This is to respond to the affordability issues experienced by many Local Churches and Circuits. With CPI inflation at 6.3% at the time the budget parameters were set, this means the net uplift to the Assessment has been set at 3.3%.
- 9 The District Assessment is apportioned among the Districts using stationing and staffing numbers (with presbyters/deacons equivalent to 1.5 times that of a lay worker), with the annual change per District being restricted to a maximum increase of 3% above and 4% below the average uplift. The provisional figures based on an overall increase of 3.3% were agreed by the District Treasurers in November 2023.

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25

Table 1 2024/25 MCF Assessment by District

| | District | £ | | District | £ | £ |
|----|----------------------|---------|--|-----------------------------|---------|-------------------|
| 2 | Wales | 529,342 | 26 | Southampton | | 633,487 |
| 5 | Birmingham | 589,699 | 27 | Yorkshire West | | 775,364 |
| 7 | Bristol | 634,708 | 28 | Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury | | 583,645 |
| 10 | Channel Islands | 113,489 | 29 | Yorkshire North & East | | 617,305 |
| 11 | Chester and Stoke | 516,805 | 31 | Scotland | | 167,237 |
| 12 | Cornwall | 399,121 | 32 | Shetland | | 20,227 |
| 13 | Darlington | 363,991 | 34 | Bedfordshire, Essex & Herts | | 558,945 |
| 14 | East Anglia | 553,943 | 35 | London | | 1,494,881 |
| 15 | Isle of Man | 70,739 | 36 | South East | | 791,158 |
| 17 | Lincolnshire | 289,242 | North West England (proposed merged districts) | | | |
| 20 | Newcastle | 582,464 | | Bolton and Rochdale | 321,384 | |
| 22 | Nottingham and Derby | 659,370 | | Manchester and Stockport | 518,526 | |
| 23 | Northampton | 816,401 | | Cumbria | 229,160 | |
| 24 | Plymouth and Exeter | 510,816 | | Liverpool | 362,067 | |
| 25 | Sheffield | 504,951 | | Lancashire | 445,263 | 1,876,400 |
| 26 | Southampton | 633,487 | | TOTAL | | 14,653,730 |

Pension Reserve Fund (PRF)

10 Payment into the PRF has been suspended due to the improved funding position of both schemes. The existing fund balance will be used:

- to fund an insurance buy-in and potential buy-out of the PASLEMC,
- to provide security to the pension trustees,
- to fund future deficit recovery plans if required, and
- subject to the satisfactory outcome of the 2023 Valuation, to repay the voluntary donations that were made in 2021.

Financial Balance

11 It is necessary for the Methodist Church Fund (MCF) budget to achieve financial balance in the medium term. The use of reserves will support the budget position over the next four years. Significant expenditure reductions will have to have been implemented prior to the start of 2028/29.

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25

- 12 Funding for a transformation programme was approved as part of agreeing the budget last year. This will seek to establish which core functions can be best provided connexionally, what functions will need to be provided elsewhere, and which functions will need to cease.

Methodist Church House (MCH)

- 13 Planning delays led to a significant extension to the timetable for the completion of the redevelopment of the new MCH. However, the cost of these delays has been contained within the contingency budget. It remains the assumption that the full cost of the temporary relocation of the Connexional Team and the redevelopment of the new building will be contained within the proceeds from the sale of Marylebone Road.

Inflation

- 14 The general inflation to be used in the 2024/25 budget is based on the figures published in October 2023. With actual pay rates back in line with current inflation as at September 2023, it is proposed to continue setting the pay budget using similar principles to the setting of the stipend uplift – 50% of the uplift based on changes in average earnings and 50% based on inflation. However, instead of using CPI inflation (as is the case for stipends), the CPIH measure will be used (as this includes housing costs). As the stipend uplift is calculated based on September CPI, the relevant figures are as follows:

- Pay inflation: $(50\% \times \text{Average earnings } 6.9\%) + (50\% \times \text{CPIH } 6.3\%) = 6.6\%$
- Stipend inflation: $(50\% \times \text{Average earnings } 6.9\%) + (50\% \times \text{CPI } 6.7\%) = 6.8\%$

- 15 It is assumed that the remainder of the budget will need to increase by 5% in 2024/25 and 2% from 2025/26.

God For All (GFA) Phase 2

- 16 The original God For All strategy was funded from a range of funds including Mission in Britain, Epworth, CPF and MCF, as historic balances were used to support this work. As these funds have been gradually depleted, it is only the Connexional Priority Fund that has the level of funding available to be able to support the next phase of God For All. The proposed budget is included at Appendix 1, though the first year of the next phase is not until 2025/26.

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25

Action For Hope

- 17 In relation to Action for Hope, during 2024 the Methodist Council has allocated £3m for Districts to provide grants to Circuits and Local Churches. This was funded from the additional property levies received in 2022/23. The wider Church meeting its aspiration to achieve net-zero carbon by 2030 will require the release of significant resources currently held by churches and circuits in their TMCP and CFB accounts. However, in order to help support this process a further £1m per annum is proposed to be allocated from the Connexional Priority Fund.

Connexional Priority Fund (CPF)

- 18 Funding for the CPF is largely from the receipt of property levies. It is now assumed that the higher level of property levy received in recent years will continue for the next few years. Therefore, some of the Conference's previous priorities that were unfunded can now start to be addressed.
- 19 The 2023 Conference agreed that the key priorities for the CPF would be as follows:
- to support the Church's ambition to achieve net zero carbon by 2030;
 - to support the ongoing real terms reduction in the District Assessment;
 - to offset the savings lost because of the decision on district reorganisation;
 - to fund the additional resources needed for the Church effectively to divest itself of surplus buildings;
 - to fund the costs associated with developing a transformation plan eg, project management; and,
 - to fund the consequences of any such plan (eg, redundancies).
- 20 It is now proposed that these priorities be extended further to include:
- evangelism and growth (to support the next phase of the God For All strategy), and
 - developing a digitally enabled Church (the scope of this requiring further work, but recognising that 'digital' will become a more significant tool for delivering Our Calling in the years ahead).

Mission in Britain (MiB) Fund

- 21 It is assumed that the MiB Fund will continue to fund the remainder of the first phase of God For All (GFA); Methodist Action on Poverty & Justice; Heritage; Justice Dignity and Solidarity, and contribute to the Church's commitment to zero carbon by 2030. In addition, an allocation has been made to the Mission budget of £100k to £150k to support the instigation of an anti-poverty movement, aiming to put the moral case to end UK poverty at the heart of the public debate.

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25

World Mission Fund (WMF)

- 22 The Global Relationships Committee continues to spend down to reserve levels and future ongoing expenditure will be restricted to the level of ongoing income. Once the sale of WMF properties is complete, there may be some additional funds to be allocated.

Epworth Fund

- 23 The Epworth Fund has been used to provide support to key Methodist institutions faced with restructuring costs following the impact of the pandemic. However, it still has a sufficient balance to meet the cost of One Programme Participants (OPPs) and it is proposed that it continues to fund the costs of the Connexional IT strategy.

Summary of Parameters

- 24 The overall planning assumptions can be summarised as follows:

Table 2 Connexional Central Services Budget: planning parameters

| | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Pay inflation | 6.6% | 3% | 2% |
| Other inflation | 5% | 2% | 2% |
| Estimated inflation | 6.3% | 2.5% | 2% |
| Assessment reduction | (3.0%) | (3.0%) | (3.0%) |
| Net increase/(decrease) in Assessment | 3.3% | (0.5%) | (1.0%) |
| Budget for transformation | £0.5m | £0.5m | £0.5m |
| Contribution to MCF from CPF | £2.5m | £2.5m | £2.5m |
| MCF Income | £20.1m | £20.0m | £19.9m |
| MCF Expenditure | £20.6m | £21.0m | £21.3m |
| MCF Deficit | £0.5m | £1.0m | £1.4m |

NB The inflation figures for 2025/26 onwards are indicative and will be updated each year. This will then alter the District Assessment figure each year, though the overall impact will always be to achieve a three percentage point real terms reduction.

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25

Budget Proposal

25 The total budget can be seen in the table below:

Table 3 Connexional Central Services Budget: overall income and expenditure

| Activity | 2023/24 Forecast £'000 | 2024/25 Budget £'000 | 2025/26 Budget £'000 | 2026/27 Budget £'000 |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Central Income | 29,800 | 30,157 | 30,273 | 30,240 |
| Income Generating Centre | 2,253 | 2,661 | 2,951 | 2,951 |
| Global relations | 1,941 | 1,762 | 1,647 | 1,541 |
| Evangelism & Growth | 1,113 | 1,350 | 1,279 | 1,220 |
| Others - Pensions | 261 | 1,181 | 1,063 | 956 |
| Ministries | 979 | 833 | 812 | 797 |
| Central Functions | 1,163 | 795 | 779 | 728 |
| Property | 513 | 529 | 524 | 519 |
| Children & Youth | 150 | 164 | 170 | 170 |
| Methodist Council & Governance | 143 | 146 | 147 | 148 |
| Learning Network | 3 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Total | 38,319 | 39,583 | 39,649 | 39,274 |
| Expenditure | | | | |
| Central Functions | 14,634 | 8,825 | 9,441 | 9,474 |
| Evangelism & Growth | 10,855 | 11,174 | 16,331 | 13,007 |
| Ministries | 6,112 | 6,029 | 6,129 | 6,243 |
| Methodist Council & Governance | 4,440 | 4,773 | 4,804 | 4,874 |
| Others - Pensions | 2,555 | 2,626 | 2,626 | 2,626 |
| Learning Network | 2,499 | 2,515 | 2,586 | 2,622 |
| Global relations | 4,976 | 2,426 | 2,320 | 2,126 |
| Children & Youth | 1,522 | 2,158 | 2,301 | 2,309 |
| Building communities | 1,356 | 1,590 | 1,586 | 1,539 |
| Property | 850 | 985 | 996 | 1,009 |
| Total | 49,799 | 43,101 | 49,120 | 45,829 |
| Net deficit | (11,480) | (3,518) | (9,471) | (6,555) |

NB The definitions for the 'activities' above can be found at appendix 2

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25

- 26** The increase in income in 2024/25 reflects the inflationary uplift to the Assessment, additional capital levies and improvement in the performance of the trading entities.
- 27** The increases in expenditure in 2024/25 is largely attributable to the impact of inflation, additional allocations funded by capital levies, partly offset by a slowing in World Mission spend as it nears its reserve level.
- 28** The deficit in each year largely reflects the decision of previous Conferences to reduce the reserve levels of the main Connexional Funds and also the expenditure from the Pension Reserve Fund into the pension schemes.
- 29** The Methodist Church Fund (MCF) budget can be seen in the table below:

Table 4 Methodist Church Fund Budget: income and expenditure

| Activity | 2023/24 Forecast £'000 | 2024/25 Budget £'000 | 2025/26 Budget £'000 | 2026/27 Budget £'000 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Central Income | 19,000 | 18,941 | 18,863 | 18,817 |
| Central Functions | 966 | 682 | 667 | 618 |
| Children & Youth | 150 | 164 | 170 | 170 |
| Property | 168 | 185 | 182 | 180 |
| Methodist Council & Governance | 143 | 146 | 147 | 148 |
| Ministries | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Evangelism & Growth | 1 | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 20,430 | 20,126 | 20,033 | 19,935 |

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25

| Activity | 2023/24 Forecast £'000 | 2024/25 Budget £'000 | 2025/26 Budget £'000 | 2026/27 Budget £'000 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Central Functions | 6,408 | 6,065 | 6,204 | 6,300 |
| Methodist Council & Governance | 4,235 | 4,553 | 4,579 | 4,644 |
| Learning Network | 2,499 | 2,515 | 2,586 | 2,622 |
| Children & Youth | 1,473 | 1,993 | 2,135 | 2,143 |
| Ministries | 1,810 | 1,732 | 1,775 | 1,836 |
| Evangelism & Growth | 1,264 | 1,360 | 1,358 | 1,375 |
| Building communities | 1,014 | 1,239 | 1,199 | 1,213 |
| Property | 644 | 697 | 723 | 744 |
| Global relations | 409 | 492 | 450 | 457 |
| Total | 19,756 | 20,646 | 21,009 | 21,334 |
| Net surplus /(deficit) | 674 | (520) | (976) | (1,399) |

30 The growing deficit from 2024/25 is largely consequent of the transitional support provided from the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF) being insufficient to cover fully the impact of inflation. This allows the fund to be reduced to its reserve level ahead of 2028/29 when significant expenditure reductions will be required.

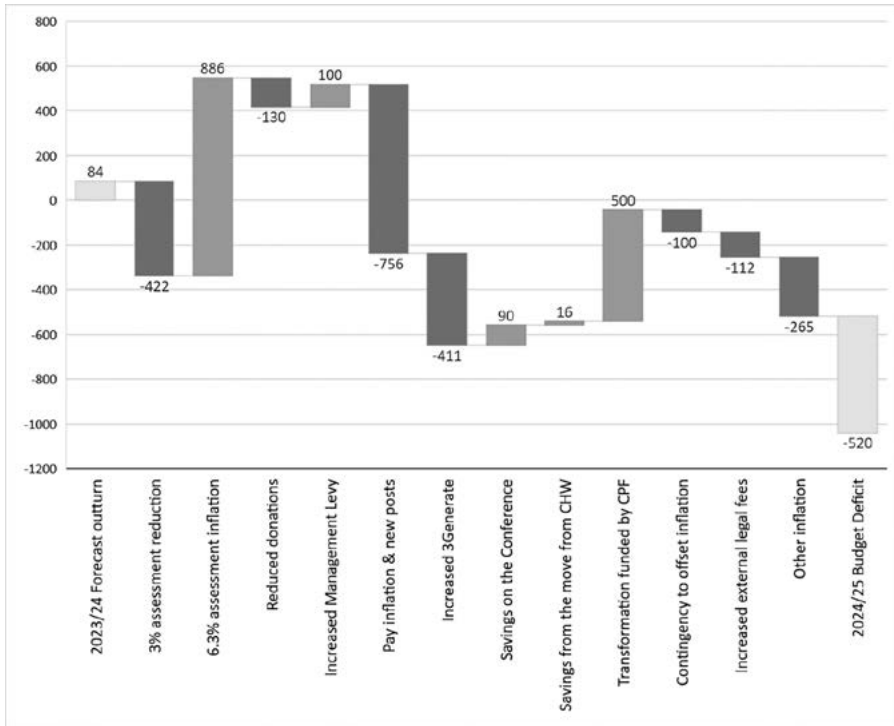
31 The main movements in the budgeted MCF from 2023/24 to 2024/25 can be seen in the waterfall chart below:

Funds

32 The budgeted fund balances can be found at appendix 3. It remains the aim to reduce balances in restricted funds where possible before allocating budgets against unrestricted funds. Progress has been made across a number of restricted funds to clarify their purposes and it is expected that expenditure plans will now be brought forward to use some historic balances.

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25

Chart 1: Change in the MCF Budgeted Deficit from 2023/24 to 2024/25



***RESOLUTIONS

- 25/1. The Conference receives the Report.
- 25/2. The Conference adopts the revised Reserves Policy.
- 25/3. The Conference approves the budget for 2024/2025.
- 25/4. The Conference approves the district allocations of the assessment to the Methodist Church Fund set out in the report.

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25

Appendix 1: God For All Phase 2: Budget proposal

| | 2025- 2026 | 2026- 2027 | 2027- 2028 | 2028- 2029 | 2029- 2030 | 2030- 31 | 2031- 32 | TOTAL |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| 1. New Places for New People Church at the Margins | 2,436 | 2,952 | 3,171 | 3,228 | 3,245 | 3,303 | 3,322 | 21,657 |
| 2. Evangelism Digital Mission | 1,028 | 964 | 841 | 814 | 717 | 741 | 694 | 5,800 |
| 3. Missional Growth and Leadership | 65 | 65 | 66 | 66 | 67 | 68 | 68 | 465 |
| 4. Discipleship Methodist Way of Life | 557 | 559 | 560 | 562 | 563 | 565 | 567 | 3,933 |
| 5. Ongoing support for salaries across the Connexional Team | 476 | 490 | 504 | 519 | 535 | 550 | 567 | 3,640 |
| 6. Partnership co-development across Church and Ecumenical move | 73 | 48 | 43 | 43 | 43 | 43 | 25 | 315 |
| 7. E&G Team ongoing staff budget | 545 | 560 | 575 | 591 | 608 | 625 | 642 | 4,146 |
| Funding | 5,179 | 5,637 | 5,760 | 5,823 | 5,778 | 5,894 | 5,885 | 39,955 |
| Methodist Church Fund | 545 | 560 | 575 | 591 | 608 | 625 | 642 | 4,146 |
| Connexional Priority Fund | 4,634 | 5,077 | 5,185 | 5,231 | 5,170 | 5,269 | 5,242 | 35,809 |
| | 5,179 | 5,637 | 5,760 | 5,823 | 5,778 | 5,894 | 5,885 | 39,955 |

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25

Appendix 2: Resource Activities

| Activity | Areas covered |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Building communities | Ecumenical, Interfaith, Joint Public Issues Team, Forces Board, Communications |
| Children, youth and families | Children, youth, families, education, 3Generate |
| Evangelism and Growth | Evangelism and Growth, Heritage, Action for Hope |
| Global relations | World Church, World Meth Council; Mission Partners |
| Learning Network | The work of the Learning Network regions across the Connexion |
| The Conference, Council & Governance | The Conference, Presidency, Secretary of Conference, Council, Faith & Order, District Chairs, Law & Polity, Legal, Safeguarding, Justice, Dignity and Solidarity |
| Ministries | Initial ministerial training, ministerial development, ministerial oversight, ministerial grants, Diaconal order |
| Central Functions | Finance; IT; Procurement; Human Resources; Facilities/Front of House; Corporate; Connexional Secretary |
| Property | Property team, Connexional manses, property projects, property grants |

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25

Appendix 3: Fund Balances

| Fund | Opening Balance | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 | Closing Balance |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | Sep 2023 £'000 | Forecast £'000 | Budget £'000 | Budget £'000 | Budget £'000 | Aug 2027 £'000 |
| MCF General | 28,562 | 674 | (518) | (977) | (1,398) | 26,344 |
| Auxiliary Special Purposes | 545 | (43) | (40) | (41) | (42) | 378 |
| Trinity Hall Trust | 999 | (13) | (6) | (8) | (10) | 962 |
| Lefroy Yorke Trust - Endowment Fund | 1,009 | 45 | (1) | (1) | (1) | 1,050 |
| Barratt Memorial | 1,229 | (1) | (5) | (5) | (5) | 1,214 |
| Rank - Endowment Fund | 7,947 | 321 | (8) | (8) | (8) | 8,243 |
| Marshall Scholarship - Endowment Fund | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Necessitous Local Preachers - Endowment Fund | 210 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 210 |
| Strawson Gift - Endowment Fund | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| William Leech Charities -EF | 9,546 | 207 | 210 | 210 | 210 | 10,383 |
| Aspinall Robinson Trust (MDO Holiday Fund) | 658 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 683 |
| MDO Surplus Funds | 574 | (9) | 3 | (0) | (3) | 565 |
| Archives Revenue Fund | 18 | (10) | (9) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Connexional Priority Fund | 12,731 | (3,662) | 1,452 | (4,260) | (1,574) | 4,687 |
| Epworth Fund | 6,238 | (1,644) | (994) | (983) | (579) | 2,039 |
| Pension Reserves Fund | 51,478 | (2,382) | (1,508) | (1,625) | (1,730) | 44,233 |
| Beckley Trust | 4 | (0) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Necessitous Local Preachers - Income | 9 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 25 |
| Southdown Project Fund (Tolpuddle) | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 17 |
| Borries Bequest - Endowment | 28 | 0 | (0) | (0) | (0) | 27 |

25. Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25

| Fund | Opening Balance | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 | Closing Balance |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | Sep 2023 £'000 | Forecast £'000 | Budget £'000 | Budget £'000 | Budget £'000 | Aug 2027 £'000 |
| Modern Christian Art-Development | 30 | (3) | (10) | (2) | (2) | 14 |
| Forces Chaplaincy Revenue | 496 | (125) | (188) | (121) | (62) | 0 |
| Methodist Heritage | 8 | (5) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Mission in Britain Fund | 6,858 | (1,177) | (1,054) | (1,017) | (775) | 2,834 |
| Mission in Business Industries and Commerce | 443 | 4 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 471 |
| Lay Mission Superannuation | 370 | 21 | (22) | (26) | (30) | 314 |
| Sabbatical Fund | 55 | 11 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 73 |
| Fund for the Support of Presbyters & Deacons(FSPD) | 6,176 | (700) | (785) | (803) | (811) | 3,076 |
| Medical Benevolent Fund | 2,308 | (4) | 8 | 4 | 0 | 2,317 |
| Ministers Children's Relief Association | 3 | (3) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Listed Buildings | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 |
| Fund for Property | 1,083 | 114 | 630 | 640 | 647 | 3,114 |
| Special Extension Fund | 2,309 | 65 | 78 | 74 | 70 | 2,596 |
| Fund for Training | 2,510 | 120 | (77) | (86) | (85) | 2,381 |
| Long Term Renewal Fund | 420 | 9 | 112 | 110 | 109 | 761 |
| Overseas Student Work | 327 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 348 |
| Centenary Hall Trust | 27,721 | 109 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 27,831 |
| World Mission Fund | 10,986 | (3,420) | (830) | (858) | (740) | 5,138 |
| Benevolent Fund | 390 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 414 |
| MIC Trust | 22,109 | (0) | 3 | 276 | 236 | 22,624 |
| Oxford Institute | 112 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 112 |
| Designated Training Fund | 43 | (0) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 43 |
| Langley House Trust | 91 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 97 |
| Total | 206,682 | (11,479) | (3,517) | (9,471) | (6,554) | 175,662 |

26. Online Church and Online Communion

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr Mark Rowland Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee rowlandm@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Resolutions | <p>26/1. The Conference receives the Report.</p> <p>26/2. The Conference extends the period of discernment on online celebrations of Holy Communion adopted by the Conference of 2021 until 31 August 2026.</p> <p>26/3. The Conference agrees to establish a task group to consider the recommendations of this report and to bring appropriate proposals to the Conference of 2026.</p> |

Summary of content and impact

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Subject and aims | Work to be done to make provision for predominantly online churches |
| Main points | <p>Introduction and background</p> <p>Online celebrations of Holy Communion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The significance of a lasting decision • Proposal to extend the period of discernment <p>Mission and predominantly online churches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to support mutual learning and development for online mission • Considering issues of inclusion and exclusion for predominantly online churches <p>Ministry and predominantly online churches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What office holders would a predominantly online church need? • What are the training needs? • What are good approaches to pastoral care online? <p>Safeguarding and predominantly online churches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding training for online contexts • Policy review, including safer recruitment |

26. Online Church and Online Communion

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>Faith and Order and predominantly Online Churches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecumenical matters • The ways in which predominantly online churches embody the marks of the Church <p>Making provision for predominantly online churches</p> |
| Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function) | <p>Holy Communion and Online Worship (2021) Online Church (2023)</p> |
| Consultations | <p>Open consultation throughout the Connexion Formal conversations with the Mission, Ministries and Safeguarding Committees</p> |
| Impact | <p>High – significant amounts of work are needed to produce and implement provisions for predominantly online churches</p> |

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The 2023 Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee, in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee, to consider what work would be needed in order to enable predominantly online churches to be recognised in our polity and to propose appropriate resolutions to the 2024 Conference. To enable this, it also requested all connexional and district committees and other relevant entities to consider the implications for them if such provision were made and to submit observations and comments to the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee. We are grateful to the Ministries Committee and the Mission Committee for making time in their meetings for a discussion on this topic and to the Safeguarding Committee for the paper they prepared. We are also grateful to those who have offered individual responses.
- 1.2 At the same time, the period of discernment on Online Celebrations of Holy Communion initiated by the Conference of 2021 is nearing its end. The Faith and Order Committee is mindful of that Conference's direction to report to the 2024 Conference with further recommendations. In response to the Online Church report of 2023, the Conference noted that the questions of online celebrations of Holy Communion and predominantly online churches were closely related. The Faith and Order Committee is therefore addressing these questions together in this report.

26. Online Church and Online Communion

1.3 Throughout this work, we have generally sought to use the terms 'onsite' and 'online'. These are chosen to attempt to be descriptive and to avoid implying any value judgment between the contexts in which events and activities take place. To speak of holding activities 'onsite' is not intended to imply that a predominantly online church has a particular site. A predominantly online church may use a variety of sites for any onsite occasions. In theological terms, we recognise that we are still physical and embodied persons when we engage online and therefore we aim to avoid the language of 'in person' or 'physically'. However, there are occasions when such terms are needed for legal purposes. Language in this area will undoubtedly continue to develop and attention to terminology will continue to be needed as this work progresses.

2.0 Online celebrations of Holy Communion

2.1 The report *Holy Communion and Online Worship* which introduced the period of discernment was written against the background of the global Covid pandemic and recognised that this had 'brought into focus in a new way questions which were already being asked about what it means to be the Church and what it means to worship, particularly to worship online.'¹ The *Online Church* report noted that the Covid lockdown accelerated the Church's engagement with online work and made the resulting questions much more prominent. While this continues to underline the importance of the questions relating to online celebrations of Holy Communion, and online church more broadly, it does not answer them.

2.2 The Faith and Order Committee is grateful to all who have engaged with the period of discernment and is thankful for the responses that have been submitted, although notes that it is a relatively small number (around 20, including some more recently) in the context of the Connexion. These demonstrate a range of perspectives and experience: from those who had struggled with not having provision for online celebrations during lockdown and now feel themselves blessed by it to others who cannot see an online celebration as being Holy Communion in the same sense as an in-person gathering. In the course of conversations in response to the implication of predominantly online churches, it is clear that some consider 'the genie is out of the bottle' and we are not effectively in a period of discernment any more.

2.3 The nature of Holy Communion is of serious significance for the Church. In celebrating Holy Communion, the Church is seeking to be faithful to the command of Jesus to do this in remembrance of him. The *Methodist Worship*

1 *Holy Communion and Online Worship*, p. 551

26. Online Church and Online Communion

Book affirms that Holy Communion is the 'central act of Christian worship'.² The *Deed of Union* declares that it is the 'duty and privilege of members of the Methodist Church to avail themselves'³ of Holy Communion. Although there are challenges relating to the mutual recognition of celebrations of Holy Communion between different churches, the affirmation that this sacrament is duly celebrated in the Methodist Church is an important building block of many of our ecumenical relations. To make a lasting decision about this matter is therefore an issue of some weight. It is, as *Holy Communion and Online Worship* identified, a decision which 'is likely to have some implications for Church unity both within the Methodist Church and with ecumenical partners'.⁴ The Methodist Church is able to make its own decisions, but where we do take a different path to our ecumenical partners we should do that confidently and for clear and well-considered reasons.

- 2.4 In this context, the Faith and Order Committee has reflected on the period of discernment and on the responses received and does not consider there is yet sufficient basis of discernment to enable it to make a recommendation to the Conference regarding a lasting decision with regard to celebrations of Holy Communion online. At the same time, it is conscious that the questions of predominantly online churches put the significance of the issue into an even greater context.
- 2.5 The Faith and Order Committee therefore proposes that the current period of discernment be extended for a further two years and that a piece of research be conducted to gather quantitative and qualitative data regarding the practice of online celebrations of Holy Communion across the Connexion, the range of understandings of the nature of such celebrations and their relation to onsite celebrations.

3.0 Mission and predominantly online churches

- 3.1 As the *Online Church* report noted, there are many ways in which Methodists are already engaged in mission in the online space. Within this, as part of the *God for All* strategy (see elsewhere in the Agenda), digital presence is one key aspect. Predominantly online churches are not the only way in which such presence can be developed but they may be right for some contexts. Insofar as online is 'where people are', there will be a missional imperative for online engagement.

2 *Methodist Worship Book*, p. 114

3 *Deed of Union*, clause 4

4 *Holy Communion and Online Worship*, p. 555

26. Online Church and Online Communion

- 3.2 Mission in online contexts raises a variety of questions on which we will need to continue to reflect. At one level, this is no different from mission in onsite contexts and we should always aspire to be reflective practitioners, attentive to the effects of our work and constantly seeking improvement. The Methodist Church has recognised that to be an 'inclusive church' is part of its mission and to that end has adopted the strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity. Predominantly online churches, like onsite churches, will raise questions of inclusion. We may speak of digital poverty and note that not all of our society has equal access to online engagement: they may not be able to afford the equipment, they may lack the necessary skills, or they may not have access to an adequate internet connection. As noted in *Online Church*, there may be a temptation to think online provision will suffice when onsite has had to close and this may be correlated with marginalisation in other forms, including economic deprivation and the challenges faced by rural communities. There may also be particular questions relating to the participation of children and young people, particularly children and young people whose family do not participate in the church. Further work would be needed about effectively resourcing predominantly online churches to facilitate the involvement of children and young people. Attention is drawn to the Equality Impact Assessment tool which may assist in reflection on all these challenges.
- 3.3 At the same time, predominantly online churches can enable the participation of those for whom participation in onsite gatherings is difficult or impossible, including disabled people and those who are housebound, those for whom large gatherings are problematic and those who may be unable to travel to an onsite gathering.
- 3.3 Across the Connexion, there is a number of people engaging with mission online in a whole variety of ways and there is already some working together for mutual support and to share learning and best practice. It would be highly beneficial for this to continue and to be developed further. As online work develops, it would be helpful to engage in further reflection on what it is not simply to do church online but to be church online, as an expression of the whole Church.
- 3.4 It should be recognised that although they may present in a different form, these questions are not fundamentally different from those that arise for mission onsite. The principle that *Holy Communion and Online Worship* set out that barriers should not be raised for online work that are not applied to onsite work should continue to be borne in mind.
- 3.5 The ecumenical question is also of significance in a mission context. The Methodist Church may determine that it is willing to take this step as a

26. Online Church and Online Communion

development of its mission. But mission may equally imply participating as fully as possible in the wholeness of the Church catholic. To introduce predominantly online churches will create some opportunities but may also raise challenges.

- 3.6 It is recommended that appropriate means be sought of encouraging mutual support and the sharing of learning for online work and in collaboration with the JDS Committee, to explore and seek appropriate responses to the questions of inclusion and exclusion that arise for online contexts.

4.0 Ministry and predominantly online churches

- 4.1 If provision for predominantly online churches is made by the Conference, there is a range of implications for ministry. Some of these will need immediate attention, others will need to be kept under review as the implementation of those provisions develops. In some areas, basic initial provision will need in time to be replaced by more thorough structures, depending how prevalent predominantly online churches become in our Connexion. These areas include stationing and itinerancy, oversight, and accountability. Alongside this are questions around appropriate resourcing of predominantly online churches, including how they are funded.
- 4.2 Ministry in the online context already involves a need for particular skills and aptitudes, only some of which overlap with those for more traditional contexts. Work is already taking place to support theological reflection and practical experience and to resource those ministering in these areas. This will need to continue to be provided and to be developed further as time goes on.
- 4.3 Often online communities within the Methodist Church begin as projects or NPNP initiatives within a Circuit or District. For many this may be a helpful structure which enables their work. This work is concerned with the next step, when such communities seek to become churches in the formal sense. Within our polity, a predominantly online church, like any other church, will need to belong to a Circuit and to have a presbyter in pastoral charge. It will, by those means, relate to a superintendent minister and to a District Chair and be part of the Connexion in the same way as any other church. Some Districts are experimenting with non-geographical Circuits, and these may provide a suitable context for predominantly online churches to belong. In other situations, at least in the short term, predominantly online churches would need to be part of a geographical circuit. Where the online work has arisen out of work in a geographical Circuit, this may in any event be a natural relationship.

26. Online Church and Online Communion

- 4.4 It will be necessary to give attention to how such appointments can be included within stationing profiles. In the longer term, there will be questions around how best to enable 'moving on' from predominantly online churches and the relation within a particular minister's station of predominantly online and onsite aspects.
- 4.5 As predominantly online churches develop, further work will be needed in relation to how they relate to the broader structures of the Connexion. Broader use of non-geographical Circuits may be a helpful way forward. In time, it may be necessary to consider similar questions in relation to Districts. On the other hand, the view could be taken that such approaches would tend to separate onsite and online work in unhelpful ways and to create unnecessary division and barriers within the Connexion. Careful thought and reflection will be needed to create the most appropriate structures.
- 4.6 A predominantly online church, will need office holders. Some roles will clearly be needed as for onsite churches, for example church stewards and a safeguarding officer. Others may not be necessary, for example communion stewards. The way in which pastoral care is exercised may a different approach than the formal appointment of pastoral visitors and class leaders will be needed. Further consideration will be necessary to determine what is most appropriate.
- 4.7 Financial resourcing of a predominantly online church will also be a question. While some may initially benefit from support as NPNP projects or under other missional criteria, in time they will need to be able to support themselves and to pay a circuit assessment in the same way as other churches. Consideration will need to be given to ways in which this can be facilitated, including through financial giving from their members.
- 4.8 The *Online Church* report noted that different models are available for pastoral care online. However, further reflection about the nature of appropriate pastoral care online as part of the ministry of the church would be beneficial together with guidance as to good practice.
- 4.9 While worship online is no longer new to many Methodists, predominantly online churches would raise questions in relation occasional offices. There may, in the future, be provision for online weddings and it may be appropriate for some aspects of funerals or memorial services to be held online. At the same time, this is where predominantly online church may be helpful and creative models of hybrid approaches to such services can be developed.

26. Online Church and Online Communion

4.10 In the short term, it is recommended that the attention be given to what office holders a predominantly online church would need. The provision of appropriate training and support for online work should continue and be further developed. Particular attention to the nature of online pastoral care and appropriate good practice is also needed. Work will be needed in the longer term as to the relation of predominantly online churches and stationing.

5.0 Safeguarding and predominantly online churches

5.1 In common with onsite church, online church services or events can never be risk free but they do raise a range of questions to be considered. At the same time, it is imperative that any guidance, policies and procedures are not unduly risk averse, thus hindering the flourishing of any potential online churches. In addition, it is important to note that any relevant safeguarding guidance, policies or procedures that are introduced will need to be evolving due to the rapid development of technology and emerging new online communities.

5.2 Online work in the name of the Methodist Church – whether or not constituted as a predominantly online church – needs to have clear lines of accountability and appropriate consideration of safeguarding questions. Risk assessments and equality impact assessments should be undertaken as part of the planning process.

5.3 Appropriate protocols need to be in place relating to the holding of official accounts on behalf of the church. The Safeguarding Committee has produced a draft set of considerations:

Managing and Monitoring Online Church

1. A decision would need to be made in relation to who should 'hold' the church social media account(s), for instance would it need to be an office holder and/or include the minister or a church member etc. The account holder should be 18 years of age or older.
2. The account should be specifically for public online worship and/or other church related activities and not from a personal account. Church staff should have a separate professional/work device particularly when storing data and/or capturing images of under 18s.
3. The church Wi-Fi service should be filtered and monitored to block harmful content and prevent access to certain websites while on the church network. Settings should be checked to ensure they are appropriate.
4. Ratios of those joining online to those who monitor the services should be considered to ensure effective monitoring and management.

26. Online Church and Online Communion

5. Participants should be required to register prior to the event and a password should be set and a waiting room enabled. There should be clear instructions prior to people joining informing them of the following:
 - Expectations during the online event which should include expected standards of behaviour or a code of conduct.
 - Consequences of this if not adhered to, eg removal from the event and being prohibited from future events.
 - A note to advise parents or carers of those under 18 years of age that they are responsible for their child or young person's welfare during the online event.
6. The above instructions should include an area for consent to be given to allow photographs or film footage to be taken. If someone does not consent, steps need to be put in place to ensure their wishes are respected. There should be a mechanism in place for people to later withdraw consent and this should also be made clear beforehand. Clarity would be needed in relation to where the recording would be used, distributed and how long it would be kept. However, it may be that the decision is made so that participants can only see and hear the speakers or presenters which would eliminate the need for consent.
7. Facilities such as screen sharing for participants should be disabled and people muted on entry. There should be 'virtual stewards' and a safeguarding contact who could then decide whether these restrictions were lifted and if the chat function could be used etc. There are different types of online church communities and chat via video or on the chat function can be important to many participants to help build and strengthen their church communities.
8. Consideration should be given to how the virtual steward/safeguarding contact would stop/remove someone when needed and at what point they should intervene. There should be a clear protocol in relation to how they respond if there were immediate safeguarding concerns that should be in line with Methodist safeguarding policies and procedures.
9. Decisions would need to be made around whether the account holder and/or those who facilitate online services should be DBS checked. The requirements should meet the same standards as for face-to-face events.
10. The training needs for those involved in facilitating online events would need to be contemplated. At a minimum, they would need to complete foundation module training and perhaps also the advanced module level.
11. Thought needs to be given as to whether people join online services from any geographical area and how this could be monitored and sustained. For example, those who wish to join online services could complete a simple

26. Online Church and Online Communion

pro-forma to include their address and/or postcode prior to being sent the link. Clearly however, this would not ensure that geographical boundaries were adhered to and consideration would need to be given to those who may want to join from another geographical area for genuine reasons, for instance, if they moved to another location and wanted to keep links with their old church community.

12. A brief log should be made of each service with any issues noted and action taken or 'none identified' stated if this is the case.
13. The District Safeguarding Officer (DSO) should be consulted as soon as possible if there were any issues around safeguarding.

- 5.4 In connection with pastoral care of participants (see also paragraph 4.6 above), the Safeguarding Committee offers the following guidance:

Wellbeing of Participants

1. Pastoral care and/or a chaplain should be available for online participants during and after the service. This should be the case via the minister during a face to face church service and should be replicated online whenever possible. However, it might be difficult for the minister to be the sole person who provides this. Therefore, consideration should be given to other suitable persons who might fulfil this role.
2. Basic rules should be stipulated that participants would understand eg ensure your background is appropriate, be respectful to others, do not share any content etc. This could be contained in the expected standards of behaviour or code of conduct as described above in number 5. However, a reminder shortly before joining the online event would be recommended.
3. Participants would need to be informed how and who to contact if they had any safeguarding concerns or felt they need support. This should also include contacts/support specifically for children and young people.
4. Consideration around who would deal with more urgent safeguarding situations would be needed. This should be the role of the safeguarding contact who was monitoring the service. However, there might need to be a more senior safeguarding person on duty who was available for advice and support. The provision of specific people or a service to accommodate this might be more appropriate in the longer term.
5. A decision around whether children of a certain age could join on their own (without their parents/carers) would need to be made, and if so what the minimum age would be and who would monitor their welfare and deal with the consent issues. There could, for instance, be a children or youth worker to fulfil this function who liaised with parents or carers and looked after their welfare when online.

26. Online Church and Online Communion

6. If participants were allowed to interact with each other away from the main group, including using the chat function this should be closely monitored by the safeguarding contact and virtual steward, otherwise these functions should be turned off.
7. If needed children and young people could be put into break out rooms with trusted adults for group work/worship or chat utilising the features of the relevant app.
8. Those on safeguarding contracts should have clear guidance written into their safeguarding contract which covered any restrictions with online worship or events. This should be reviewed as needed with the Monitoring and Support Group (MSG). Consideration should be given as to who might need to be informed of their presence online eg those monitoring the online event.

5.5 Safeguarding policies and procedures need to be reviewed and amended to reflect the changes needed for predominantly online churches. However, it may be more appropriate for a standalone online safeguarding document to be produced, rather than adding to and amending the existing policy since some of this will not be relevant to predominantly online churches. Any such policy should be reviewed annually in line with the existing safeguarding policies and procedures.

In addition, a review of Safeguarding Standing Orders should take place if needed to ensure that these are reflective of the new and/or amended policies and procedures.

- 5.6 It is important that all, in particular victims and survivors, feel confident and safe during worship online. In addition, there may be those who may not identify as a victim or survivor, but have suffered online abuse and/or bullying or be in an abusive relationship. It is vital that the aforementioned are consulted and their views are sought and considered to help inform the implementation of safeguarding during online church events. It would be helpful to establish what would make them feel safe and secure during online events and what would need to occur to ensure this happened.
- 5.7 Wider consultation needs to take place, which should include victims and survivors to ensure that any online safeguarding guidance and policies are rigorous, not too restrictive and fit for purpose.
- 5.8 It is recommended that the production of an additional training module relating to safeguarding practice in online contexts be considered, and that safeguarding policies and procedures be reviewed for any changes needed for predominantly

26. Online Church and Online Communion

online churches (including safer recruitment for roles in online communities). Further work, in collaboration with others, is also needed on safe practice in online pastoral care.

6.0 Faith and order and predominantly online churches

- 6.1 While many of the faith and order questions were identified in the *Online Church* report, there remains further theological exploration in connection with Online Church in addition to the work on online celebrations of Holy Communion discussed in section 2 above.
- 6.2 It would be appropriate to give further attention to the ecumenical questions and implications of making provision for predominantly online churches in our discipline, including reflection on the experience of ecumenical partners who have such provision, those who do not have it and those who may be considering it. Consideration should be given to consulting ecumenical partners formally as to their response to any decision by the Conference to make provision of this kind.
- 6.3 In connection with online celebrations of Holy Communion and with online worship more generally, further reflection could be beneficial regarding synchronous and asynchronous (ie at the same time and at different times) interaction and the relation of that to the formation of Christian community. How can interaction outside of the time of formal services and meetings contribute most fully to the development of Christian fellowship?
- 6.4 As this work proceeds, the way in which predominantly online churches grow fully into the marks of the church should be a topic of continual reflection.

7.0 Making provision for predominantly online churches

- 7.1 The recommendations outlined above give a range of work which could be done in the short-term to enable predominantly online churches to be part of our discipline and function appropriately. Alongside this, a new Standing Order should be drafted to provide for the functioning of predominantly online churches. This would define which roles were required, and make provision for the application of existing local church Standing Orders in such cases. Such a Standing Order would rely on the provision in Deed of Union 1(xv) to create an exception to the requirement for a 'Local Church' to be connected with a particular place of worship.
- 7.2 In the longer term, more thorough provision will be required giving more detailed attention to the questions of Circuits (including non-geographical Circuits) in

26. Online Church and Online Communion

which predominantly online churches might be placed and to more detailed policy provision relating to stationing, ministry, safeguarding, pastoral care and the whole area of the church's ministry. This provision should be developed reflectively as predominantly online churches develop within the Connexion.

- 7.3 If the Conference is in agreement, we recommend that a task group, able to draw on the wisdom of the various committees of the Church, be created to give attention to the matters raised here over the course of the next two years and that a report be brought to the Conference of 2026 enabling provision to be made for predominantly online churches within our discipline. Following that ongoing reflective work would be needed to shape and embed that provision as a normal part of the life of the Connexion.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 26/1. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 26/2. The Conference extends the period of discernment on online celebrations of Holy Communion adopted by the Conference of 2021 until 31 August 2026.**
- 26/3. The Conference agrees to establish a task group to consider the recommendations of this report and to bring appropriate proposals to the Conference of 2026.**

27. Methodist Homes (MHA)

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | Sam Monaghan Chief Executive Officer sam.monaghan@mha.org.uk |
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Thank you for the continuing generosity of our Methodist family. Your dedication to Methodist Homes (MHA) and your overwhelming support of our mission, vision and values has again supported our vital work in helping people to live later life well.

1. General Report

- 1.1 Methodist Homes marked its 80th year in 2023 culminating with its 80th anniversary service held at Wesley Church, Harrogate on 23 September. It was wonderful to be joined by so many friends from the Methodist Church. The President of the Conference, the Revd Gill Newton, preached an inspiring sermon, encouraging us to look back with thanksgiving, and to continue forwards in confidence, knowing that God is good, loving and faithful. Our patron, Pam Rhodes (television and radio presenter) also joined us and participated in the service.
- 1.2 In August 2023, we were greatly saddened by the unexpected death of the Revd Crispian Acher, who had recently taken up the interim post of Director of Chaplaincy and Spirituality, stepping up from his substantive role of Head of Chaplaincy South. Crispian was a much loved and respected chaplain and is greatly missed.
- 1.3 In January 2024, the Revd James Francis joined us as the new Director of Chaplaincy and Spirituality. Unfortunately, however, due to personal circumstances, he recently left MHA, and we are therefore recruiting again to this crucial role, and we will seek to appoint as soon as practically possible. In the interim, Sam Monaghan (MHA CEO), will lead the Chaplaincy and Spirituality Directorate, ably supported by the Revd Sam Cowling-Green, our new Head of Chaplaincy, who started on 29 April, and Abby Ogier, Area Support Chaplain, who will continue acting up as our other Head of Chaplaincy, which is the role she has been filling for the past year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Revd Kate Le Sueur, Head of Chaplaincy North, for her dedication and commitment to MHA over the past five years. Kate leaves MHA on 10 May to enjoy a well-earned retirement.
- 1.4 Over the past year MHA has continued to deliver high quality care and support to 19,000 people: 4,800 in our care homes; 2,700 in our retirement living settings and 11,500 members of our MHA Communities schemes. 91% of our homes and

27. Methodist Homes (MHA)

schemes are rated as Good or Outstanding by the Care Quality Commission and we remain a Real Living Wage Employer. This year has also seen us further embracing technology through the roll out of digital care plans across our care homes and the development of our MHA Active App, offering a range of activities and interests, now accessed by over 2,000 regular users.

2. Challenging Operating Environment

- 2.1 2023 was another challenging year with the cost-of-living crisis, inflation, massive increases in energy costs and a shortage of workers across the care sector. As a result, following a strategic review of its services, MHA announced a number of measures to address these challenges.
- 2.2 These included a decision to sell ten care homes around the UK, place Auchlochan Garden Village in Scotland and its two associated care homes into administration, and sell the charity's three remaining retirement living schemes in Scotland.
- 2.3 Since the announcement, Hafan y Waun in Aberystwyth has transferred to the local authority and another eight homes are in the process of being sold as going concerns. Sadly, the buyer for Cedar Lawn in Stratford upon Avon withdrew, so, in January, MHA had to make the difficult decision to close the home.
- 2.4 In the longer term, by making changes now, Methodist Homes will better withstand the financial challenges facing the care sector, whilst continuing to be able to offer its exceptional care in its care homes, retirement living schemes and community schemes, in the steps of its founder, the Revd Walter Hall, who wanted to provide people with care and support to live later life well.

3. Accounts and Governance

- 3.1 The latest audited annual report and accounts are available on our website or on request from Epworth House.
- 3.2 During the year Janet Haugh and Denise Sanderson-Estcourt stepped down from the Trustees; Ian Ailles retired having served the full term, and we welcomed Jessica White as a new member of the Board.
- 3.3 Ruth Gee will be stepping down as the Methodist Conference nominee on MHA's Board at this year's conference. We extend to Ruth our sincere gratitude for all her contributions as our Trustee and for her assistance in sustaining MHA's positive relationship with the Methodist Church. We are looking forward to welcoming and working with her successor once appointed, and with them further developing our Methodist links.

27. Methodist Homes (MHA)

- 3.4 Our Trustees, who oversee the work of the Charity, continue to offer excellent advice and guidance, sharing between them considerable expertise across the range of MHA's activities. The focus of MHA's holistic approach to care is at the root of their willingness to serve as Board members, and they bring a range of spiritual and belief commitments to the role.

4. Other Notable Events in the Year

- 4.1 On 29 February 2024 we were delighted to welcome the President of the Conference – the Revd Gill Newton – to our Hall Grange care home in Shirley, near Croydon, where we launched the children's book, "Finding Nana", which was developed in recognition that it can be daunting for children when a loved one moves into a care home. It seeks to address the anxieties that such young people may have when preparing to visit a friend or relative for the first time. The story has been written by author Jenni Bacon following visits to an MHA home and is illustrated by Sophie Parmenter. It has been published in partnership with Methodist Publishing and BRF.
- 4.2 MHA Sunday 2024 will be themed around Mark 4:30-32, the parable of the mustard seed, as we reflect on how the seemingly small act of making a regular telephone call has a big impact in our telephone befriending service. This year's video features Dot and Grace, who were 'matched' through MHA's befriending service, and shows them meeting face to face for the first time. MHA Sunday is on 9 June 2024, but churches are welcome to hold it on any date that fits with their calendar of activities.
- 4.3 Our dedicated web page has free downloadable resources including an order of service (available in English and Welsh), the video, sermon notes and a fully worked sermon. Gift Aid envelopes are also available, visit mha.org.uk/Sunday.
- 4.4 All within MHA are very grateful and value greatly the continuing prayers, volunteering, engagement and financial support received from Methodists locally and nationally.

Thank you for all your support. In faith and kindness, we are stronger together.

***RESOLUTION

- 27/1. The Conference receives the Report.**

28. The Role of a District Chair

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| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr Mark Rowland Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee rowlandm@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Resolution | 28/1. The Conference receives the Report. |

Summary of content and impact

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| Subject and aims | To reflect on the role of a District Chair in the light of changing patterns of oversight, trusteeship and governance. |
| Main points | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflection on the current situation• Understandings of oversight• The role of District Chairs in Oversight• Evolving roles and teams for shared oversight• Deputising for and assisting the Chair• The Chair beyond their District• Recommendations |
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | What is a District Chair? (2006), Ministry in the Methodist Church (2021), Oversight and Trusteeship (2022), Oversight, Trusteeship and Leadership (2022) |

Section A – Introduction

1. The current situation

- 1.1 The 2022 Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee, in consultation with the Ministries Committee, to bring a report on the role of the District Chair to the 2023 Conference. This direction arose from the wider work being undertaken regarding Oversight and Trusteeship and which (at that time) also included proposals for a connexional process to reduce the number of Districts. While those proposals were not accepted, the changing landscape of the Connexion indicates that work on the role of a District Chair is still needed and the Faith and Order Committee offers this report.
- 1.2 At Methodist Union in 1932 there were some 60 Districts none of which had 'separated' (full time) Chairmen, as they then were. Much of the present pattern

28. The Role of a District Chair

of Districts derives from decisions implemented in 1957 to introduce separated Chairs and reduce the number of mainland Districts to 28 (together with Welsh speaking and island Districts which retained non-separated Chairs). Since then, further changes have included the creation in 2006 of the London District (with most of the rest of the previous four London Districts forming new South East and Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire Districts) and the more recent creation of Wales Synod Cymru in 2022 encompassing English and Welsh speaking work.

- 1.3 Following the decisions of the 2022 Conference, there is no connexional process for the reorganisation of Districts. One consequence of this is that, in the short to medium term, there is likely to be a very mixed pattern of Districts: some will form large regional Districts (eg the proposed North West England District), others will merge with perhaps one neighbouring District (eg the proposed merger of the Birmingham District with the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District) while others will continue as they are today. Most Districts have separated Chairs (ie they do not have other duties besides being the Chair) but some (eg Isle of Man and Channel Islands) do not. It is not the function of this report to debate the merits of different models of District but, acknowledging that a diversity of arrangements will be a reality for the Methodist Church for the foreseeable future, to explore the implications of this diversity for the role of District Chair.
- 1.4 Unsurprisingly, most recent job descriptions for Chairs of District (and two for Deputy Chairs – for Shetland and Lincolnshire) followed a similar pattern but also reflect an unsurprising diversity of factors given the different contexts and sizes of District across the Connexion. All but one job description focused only on the role of the Chair in the District rather than on any connexional role. The exception is one of the newly proposed larger Districts, the North West England District, which is ‘conceived to operate in a different way to the established Districts across the Connexion’ with the Chair expected to offer leadership within the District but with a clear connexional focus. This diversity is expected to increase as more mergers take place and as structures develop.

2. Oversight

- 2.1 In order to enable our reflection on the role of a District Chair, some fundamental concepts need to be considered at the outset. One of these is the concept of ‘oversight’. It is no coincidence that this work has arisen as part of the broader work on ‘Oversight and Trusteeship’ and consequently no surprise that oversight is a key concept for this report.

28. The Role of a District Chair

- 2.2 Building on the ecumenical consensus report *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM),¹ the Conference statement *Ministry in the Methodist Church*² stated that 'Churches affirm that the ministry of oversight, as all ministry in the Church, needs to be exercised in personal, collegial and communal ways' and went on to note that 'an important aspect of the Methodist understanding of oversight is that it is corporate in the first instance (residing in the Conference) and then secondarily focused in specific individuals and groups (lay and ordained).'
- 2.3 These affirmations highlight different senses in which oversight needs to be considered: the communal, the collegial and the personal following BEM and the corporate as holding a particular significance for us as Methodists. We therefore seek at the outset to clarify what each of these signifies and its place in our Methodist understanding.
- 2.4 *Communal* oversight is oversight which is shared more generally between different forms of ministry. It will include both lay and ordained and may be more formal or informal: including but not limited to formal corporate bodies such as Synods, Circuit Meetings and Church Councils. Communal oversight may also operate through wider informal networks and relationships which enable the good functioning of the formal bodies, for example a circuit staff team working together to facilitate the oversight of a Circuit.
- 2.5 *Collegial* oversight is the oversight shared between the same form of ministry. Key examples would include the mutual oversight exercised by the local preachers in a Circuit, presbyters together in a District or deacons within the Order. Like communal oversight it may have more formal or informal expressions. In certain cases it will be related to corporate oversight through such bodies as the Presbyteral Session of the Synod and the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order.
- 2.6 *Personal* oversight is the oversight exercised by an individual because of the ministry entrusted to them. As *Ministry in the Methodist Church*³ put it:

Individuals are appointed to a variety of offices in order to exercise particular kinds of oversight, for example in Circuits ministers and local preachers build up the Church through preaching and teaching, ministers and circuit stewards provide leadership, and Superintendents have oversight of all the ministers and probationers stationed in the Circuit. [...]

1 World Council of Churches, 1982, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, M26

2 https://www.methodist.org.uk/documents/6543/conf-2021-8-ministry-in-the-methodist-church_SQOejwG.pdf, paras 6.4 and 6.5

3 Para 6.5

28. The Role of a District Chair

In Methodist understanding, oversight is shared, even when exercised by individuals as they would usually collaborate with, be accountable to and be appointed by others, deriving their authority from the Conference.

- 2.7 Methodists lay particular emphasis on *corporate* forms of oversight, that is oversight exercised through the courts of the Church. As *Ministry in the Methodist Church* affirmed, this is primary for Methodism and the Conference represents our supreme expression of oversight. Both communal and collegial forms of oversight may be exercised by corporate bodies: for example, the Representative Session of the Conference (communal) and the Presbyteral Session of the Conference (collegial). This should not be seen as a fourth form of oversight alongside BEM's three but as a way in which such oversight may be exercised, the critical point being that the oversight belongs to the corporate body as such. Communal and collegial oversight may also be exercised in less formal ways.
- 2.8 These forms of oversight are not separate but inter-related. While, for Methodists, the corporate oversight of the Conference always remains primary, communal, collegial and personal oversight each need the other in order to achieve its purpose: for example, the decisions of the courts of the church require the faithfulness of those appointed to particular ministries to carry them into effect. Individuals in their ministry need the support and encouragement of the wider people of God to be able to serve as God has called them.

Section B – The Ministry of District Chairs

The District Chair and Oversight

- 3.1 The role of the District Chair is defined by Standing Orders and reflected upon at length in the *What is a District Chair* report (2006). These descriptions remain the basis upon which the Methodist Church understands the role of the District Chair.

Standing Order 424 describes the role of the District Chair in this way:

(1) The prime duty of a Chair is to further the work of God in the District; to this end he or she will use all the gifts and graces he or she has received, being especially diligent to be a pastor to the ministers and probationers and to lead all the people of the District in the work of preaching and worship, evangelism, pastoral care, teaching and administration.

(2) The Chair, in conjunction with the members of the Synod in its respective sessions, shall be responsible to the Conference for the observance within the District of Methodist order and discipline.

28. The Role of a District Chair

(3) It is the duty of the Chair to exercise oversight of the character and fidelity of the presbyters and presbyteral probationers in the District.

- 3.2 The *What is a District Chair* report (2006) explains the way that the Chair might 'further the work of God in the District' by using the term oversight, which is expressed through three main kinds of activity:

To fulfil its purpose, the District requires *oversight* in the broadest sense of that term, and in particular (but not exclusively) through theologically informed *governance*, theologically informed *management* and theologically informed *leadership*.⁴

Using the terms in section 2 (above), the Chair takes part in communal, collegial, personal and corporate oversight to exercise governance, management and leadership in the District.

- 3.3 Standing Order 400 provides that the primary function of a District is to advance the mission of the Church in a region, in broad terms by enabling Circuits (and the churches that make them up) to cooperate and to share resources and by discharging those functions which the Circuits cannot do alone. Their role is one way by which the Conference itself oversees and promotes the Church's mission. One way of understanding this is to suggest that the representative role which is laid on all ministers has particular weight in the context of the Chair's role with its particular emphasis on the mission of the church and the discipline of the Conference.
- 3.4 As described above in section 2, oversight in the Methodist Church is communal, collegial and personal with particular emphasis being laid upon the corporate exercise of oversight. The Chair shares in this oversight with the presbyters, deacons, lay officers, committees and other structures of the District. Much of this will be exercised through the corporate bodies of the District, especially the Synod and the District Policy Committee as well as in broader collegial and communal expressions. However, there are some particular tasks and situations in which the Chair exercises personal oversight within the District in a defined way.
- 3.5 The Chair exercises personal oversight by being 'responsible to the Conference for the observance within the District of Methodist order and discipline.'⁵ Though

4 *What is a District Chair* sect.17

5 SO 424(1)

28. The Role of a District Chair

SO 424 (2) states that this is 'in conjunction with the members of the Synod in its respective sessions', there are situations in which it would be appropriate for the Chair to take representative personal responsibility. These might include the bearing of representative accountability for failures regarding management, governance or leadership in the district.

- 3.6 The Chair exercises personal 'oversight of the character and fidelity of the ministers and probationers in the District.'⁶ There are elements of this role which can be shared, but there are personal relationships required which the Chair has the responsibility to develop.
- 3.7 The Chair exercises personal oversight as part of the complaints process, for example, when acting as the responsible person with power of suspension 'in the case of a complaint which might form the subject matter of a ministerial charge.'⁷ As with all personal oversight in the Methodist Church, this is also shared and can only be exercised when following the procedures of SO 1130.
- 3.8 The other forms of oversight are expressed in multiple ways through the life of the District, and in these the Chair has a leading role, though always shared with others. What follows are only primary examples.
 - The Chair takes a leading role in the governance structures of the District which exercise corporate oversight, primarily the Representative Session of the Synod and the District Policy Committee.
 - The Chair takes a leading role in *Communal* oversight by encouraging mutual support and encouragement in all contexts throughout the District.
 - The Chair takes a leading role in *Collegial* oversight through the Presbyteral Session of Synod.
- 3.9 The Chair, with the Lay Stationing Rep, has a pastoral, strategic, discerning, and missional role to play in the stationing of presbyters, and in the service of Circuits. Together they are called to serve the Connexion in the stationing process, and to hold with care those who are affected by stationing. The Chairs represent the presbyters and Circuits of the Connexion through their knowledge of them and discern with others how to resource the Church with the ordained ministry God is providing.
- 3.10 As far as sharing the work of stationing presbyters is concerned, there is a need attentively to listen to the shaping of a presbyter's call as they consider

6 SO 424 (3)

7 SO 1105 (2) (i)

28. The Role of a District Chair

re-invitation or entering stationing. There is a responsibility to assist the presbyter in reflecting on how God has graced them for service, and what shape that service might take, and to discern with the presbyter appointments in which God will use them. There is also a need to consider pastorally the impact of stationing on the presbyter, and on members of the presbyter's household and discern what are the prevailing factors that will direct or affect the decision to seek to remain in an appointment or explore a new one. There is also an increasing need to be particularly mindful of the needs of the whole household, rather than isolate them from the presbyter in the process, or worse to disregard them.

- 3.11 Alongside the Warden of the Order, Chairs have a role in attentive listening to and support for deacons in their District as they explore the development of their call and questions of re-invitation and stationing. Similar questions as to impact and household are raised.
- 3.12 In respect of the Circuits, Chairs, with lay stationing reps, listen to deepen their understanding of opportunity, need and context, that they might properly interpret those for the stationing process and seek to serve the pastoral, missional, and strategic direction of the Circuits under their oversight.
- 3.13 While at one level, Chairs, like other presbyters, are stationed to exercise pastoral ministry over a particular area, for Chairs the role is always explicitly connexional and includes a focus on both their particular area and the Connexion more widely. It is the ministry of the Chair to hold these concerns together and to be among the people of their District as those who hold this vision together: near enough to know people, communities, churches and Circuits; distant enough to see the big picture and to hold the concerns of vision and direction. In this Chairs exercise a key ministry of oversight which is connexional and yet rooted in the local.

4. Evolving roles and teams for shared oversight

- 4.1 The changing size and nature of Districts entail changes in the way these various forms of oversight are exercised, by the Chair and by the various colleagues and teams with which Chairs work. The report to the 2022 Conference, *Oversight Trusteeship and Leadership*, noted that, 'the reduction in Districts and new ways of expressing district leadership have implications for the role of the District Chair,' and 'recommends that questions about the oversight role of the District Chair are given urgent attention alongside continuing reflection on District leadership.'⁸

8 *Oversight Trusteeship and Leadership* (2022), sect 6.5

28. The Role of a District Chair

- 4.2 Larger Districts necessitate a more focused and intentional sharing of oversight, and this is to be welcomed and encouraged. It has been noted previously that problems can ensue when District Chairs attempt to take on too much responsibility for oversight themselves:

That can result in Chairs being given notional authority and power and many responsibilities, but no means of fulfilling those responsibilities except by doing everything themselves. In other cases Chairs who have a lot of energy and personal charisma may be able to force through their own opinions. All of this can be a cause of stress and breakdown in the Chair, District or wider Connexion. It is important to find ways in which there can be a proper exercise of the shared nature of oversight as a means of seeking to prevent this.⁹

- 4.3 New proposals for larger Districts are generating a number of models for sharing oversight, all of which have merit and, in principle, greater sharing in this way is beneficial. This increased sharing of oversight amongst various District structures opens the question of when the District Chair's direct engagement is necessary for shared oversight to function as such. With an increased number of focal points for shared oversight in larger Districts (eg two or more distinct geographical areas in which oversight can be focused), it is apparent that the District Chair cannot be present sufficiently in all situations. Several other roles have become (or are becoming) important in the life of Districts to support the Chair's role in the ministry of oversight. These include Deputy Chairs and Assistant Chairs, and we note a role of District Secretary being proposed in some contexts. There are other contexts in which a number of Chairs are working as a team, including single Districts with multiple Chairs and two or more Districts sharing two or more Chairs.
- 4.4 The diversity of arrangements raises questions about the nature of shared oversight and of the role of the District Chair within that:
- What of a Chair's role is distinctively associated with presbyteral ministry, and so might only be delegated to a presbyter?
 - What is the difference between Chairs, Deputies and Assistants, and other roles, and how should this be clarified?
 - What oversight tasks might Chairs appropriately delegate to others?

⁹ *What is a District Chair*, sect. 33

28. The Role of a District Chair

5. **What of a Chair's role is distinctively associated with presbyteral ministry, and so might only be shared with a presbyter?**

5.1 The ways in which the role of District Chair is a presbyteral role are explored thoroughly in *What is a District Chair*¹⁰ and this continues to reflect Methodist theology and practice.

5.2 In one sense, as presbyters, Chairs are connexional people representing the oversight of the Conference¹¹ and like other presbyters are called to 'stand in the gap' 'represent[ing] God-in-Christ and the community of the church in the world' and 'the world and the community of the church in Christ before God.'¹² In the current configuration of the role, Chairs stand as an interface between the Church connexionally and the Church more locally: by no means the only such interface but a significant one nonetheless. The 1956 report cited in *What is a District Chair* named it in this way:

[Chairs] would have to speak for the Districts and Circuits at a connexional level and speak to the Districts and Circuits on behalf of the Church as a whole

5.3 As presbyters, Chairs share with other presbyters in a specific form of ordained ministry. In the terms of Clause 4, Deed of Union:

Christ's ministers in the church are stewards in the household of God and shepherds of his flock. Some are called and ordained to this occupation as presbyters or deacons. Presbyters have a principal and directing part in these great duties but they hold no priesthood differing in kind from that which is common to all the Lord's people and they have no exclusive title to the preaching of the gospel or the care of souls.

5.4 In common with all ministers, Chairs then have the responsibility of being stewards in God's household and shepherding the flock. As presbyters, they have a principal and directing part in these duties and thus to take responsibility to advance the mission of the Church within their Districts and to further the work of God is a way in which they fulfil the duties laid upon them as presbyters.

5.5 Larger Districts result in roles previously exercised by an individual Chair now requiring support from other appropriate people. Some of these are particular

10 sections 34-55

11 *What is a Presbyter*, para. 10

12 *What is a Presbyter*, para 4

28. The Role of a District Chair

focal points of the presbyteral ministry exercised by the Chair, and so deputising should be reserved to presbyters. These include:

- i. Presiding at services of Holy Communion at which the Chair would normally preside because of their particular representative role.¹³
- ii. Pastoral responsibility is exercised by Chairs for the whole District, but they are 'specifically charged with responsibility for the pastoral oversight of the ministers, deacons and probationers in the District'¹⁴ and thus to act as 'pastor to the ministers and probationers.'¹⁵ There is an analogy here with the way the presbyters have pastoral charge for local churches, but exercise this charge through pastoral responsibility which is shared with the church council and/or pastoral committee. Being 'specifically charged' does not mean that the Chair must carry out all associated pastoral care themselves. The Chair may exercise the charge by sharing pastoral responsibility with other presbyters, primarily with Superintendents,¹⁶ and in some situations with Deputy Chairs. This shared pastoral responsibility, alongside mutual support and accountability is expressed through the gathering of the Presbyteral Session of Synod by the Chair,¹⁷ and so similarly this can only be deputised to another presbyter.

- 5.6 Many tasks usually undertaken by Chairs are not required to be done by a presbyter in particular. For example, Chairs often represent the District in regional ecumenical fora and encourage mutual relationships with other church leaders, many of whom are usually also ordained. Whilst there is often a helpful symmetry of relationship between ordained people in these situations, the ecumenical activity is not always one which in the understanding of the Methodist Church is possible only for a presbyter. For an appropriate lay person from within the leadership structures of the District (eg a lay person appointed as District Ecumenical Officer) to represent the Chair at a suitable ecumenical situation is a fitting and helpful representation of Methodist faith and order. However, situations and contexts vary, and Districts should weigh carefully the way that ecumenical and civic relationships might best be developed when considering appropriate arrangements for people to carry out roles which might otherwise have been fulfilled by the Chair or another presbyter.

13 *What is a District Chair*, sect 34

14 *What is a District Chair*, sect 43

15 SO 424 (1)

16 SO 701 (10) states that 'District Chairs are appointed to give leadership and have care of the life of the Church in the District, and in particular to have care of the ministers and probationers. The pastoral charge of each Circuit remains, however, with the Superintendent and other presbyters appointed to it' and SO 701 (9) states that 'Superintendents [...] have oversight of all the ministers and probationers stationed in the Circuit.'

17 *What is a District Chair*, sect 23

28. The Role of a District Chair

5.7 For a Chair to share aspects of their role with other presbyters can also be an important expression of the way in which the role of Chair does not constitute a third order of ministry in Methodism. An increased intentional sharing of oversight from Chairs to other appropriate presbyters, prompted by larger Districts, might be a helpful opportunity to renew exploration of this aspect of Methodist faith and order.

6. **What is the difference between Chairs, Deputies and Assistants, and other roles, and how should this be clarified?**

6.1 SO 426 details the current provisions for the appointment of Permanent Deputies, Temporary Deputies and how 'a Chair may at any time appoint a person to assist him or her in such way as he or she may think fit'.¹⁸ The key difference between deputies and persons appoint to assist is that deputies can only be presbyters, whilst those assisting can be any person. There is also a distinction in appointment process: Chairs can appoint people to assist, whereas deputies are appointed by the Synod. However, appointments of people to assist also require the approval of Synod or District Policy Committee if they are to 'act publicly on behalf of the Chair'.¹⁹ Whilst those appointed to assist can be any person, 'assistant' roles with delegation to act publicly on behalf of the Chair are often carried out by presbyters. The terminology could be employed in a clearer way if 'assistant' roles with delegation to act publicly on behalf of the Chair were reserved for lay people or deacons, and (as is already the case) deputy roles for presbyters. This would recognise and represent the way that there are particular aspects of the Chair role which are solely presbyteral, but also that the oversight exercised by the Chair is best shared where possible with lay people and deacons.

6.2 The *Deed of Union* makes provision for each District to have at least one Chair,²⁰ and the means, if a District has more than one Chair, to decide which Chair is specified when referred to in the Deed or Standing Orders.²¹ Some Districts currently have more than one Chair and in some contexts more than one Chair is appointed to more than one District. This represents a distinct model alongside sharing oversight through the appointed of deputy and assistant roles.

6.3 The difference between multiple Chairs and Deputy Chairs is that if a District has multiple Chairs they are all appointed by the Conference, whereas Deputy Chairs

18 SO 426 (6)

19 SO 426 (6) (ii)

20 *Deed of Union*, sect 42(a)

21 *Deed of Union*, sect 42(e)

28. The Role of a District Chair

are appointed by the relevant Synod. There is a consequent variety of practice with regards to the relationship between deputy or 'assistant' Chair appointments and stationing procedures. Some presbyteral stations in the Circuits have included an expectation that the presbyter will also be appointed as assistant or Deputy Chair, whereas other appointments are made separately from the stationing process. Given the growing significance of Deputy Chair roles in larger Districts it could be beneficial to include such roles in stationing procedures, in a way similar to superintendencies. It may also be helpful to consider the inclusion of roles assisting the Chair within diaconal stations (which would also require conversation with the Warden of the Diaconal Order). Cooperation between Circuits and Districts when designing these stations ought to be in place as good practice anyway, for example, for the appointment of Deputy Chairs by Synod separately from the stationing process. The relationship between a presbyter's role in a Circuit and as a Deputy Chair should be clarified within the letter of understanding for that station (which should be amended if the appointment to Deputy Chair is made within the period of the station). It is noticeable that stationing profiles often seem to describe the role of a Deputy Chair, with the job title of 'assistant Chair'. Districts should be clear about what, in practice, the role entails, and should ensure that it complies with the relevant Standing Orders. We are aware, however, of some anomalies which may make this more complicated. In particular, under SO 426(2)(iii), Deputy Chairs can be appointed only for a period of three years in the first instance, which does not relate easily to the five years usually expected of a station to a Circuit.

- 6.4 As one example of how district structures are developing, some merging Districts (eg the new North West England and West Midlands Districts) are proposing the appointment of one or more District Secretaries, 'mirroring the connexional role of the Connexional Secretary, co-ordinating and where appropriate managing the district staff.'²² They propose that this could be a lay or ordained person, employed or stationed. The relationship between the District Secretary and the District Chair is as yet unexplored and may need fuller theological consideration of the implications for faith and order, including attention to the relationship between the continuing roles of the Secretary of the Representative Synod and the Secretary of the Presbyteral Synod, and any new role of District Secretary. As new district roles are explored, Districts should consider these issues carefully.
- 6.5 We do not think it appropriate to prescribe a precise structure for sharing the ministry of the Chair and believe that flexibility will be necessary for our present

22 *Report from the Birmingham District and the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District on a proposed amalgamation of the two Districts MC/23/71, sect 5.1*

28. The Role of a District Chair

situation. Nevertheless, we do recommend that the position of Deputies and those appointed to assist the Chair be clarified and that provision is needed to allow the development of appropriate senior leadership within Districts.

7. What oversight tasks might Chairs appropriately share with others?

7.1 The primary role of the Chair is to ensure that communal and collegial oversight is exercised well in the District. This entails the Chair's personal oversight of some matters, but more importantly requires the coordination of collaborative working within the District's structures. It is to be expected and encouraged that many of the tasks which constitute oversight are not carried out directly by the Chair and all Districts have some form of structures and arrangements to facilitate this.

7.2 Both established and evolving district structures devolve oversight tasks to Deputy Chairs, assistant Chairs, other officers of the District (eg Synod Secretaries, Lay Stationing Representatives etc), and as discussed above, potentially also other roles such as district Secretaries. That the Chair personally needs to be able to discern the difference between the various aspects of oversight, and to exercise and share them with care, is thoroughly discussed and detailed in the *What is a District Chair* report.²³ The Chair has a leading role in helping the district structures to decide how to share in oversight, and regardless of the agreed shape of this,

'The Chair of District also has a vital role to play in ensuring that the lay officers, deacons, presbyters and formal bodies in the District all exercise their complementary roles and share appropriately in the exercise of oversight of the Church's life, work and mission in the District and its constituent Circuits, churches and institutions, and in the wider society in which they are placed.'²⁴

7.3 Whilst this all continues to be relevant to the role of the Chair, attention needs to be paid to the changing context of the church. As Districts get bigger geographically, they will need to take decisions as to which tasks of oversight previously exercised personally by Chairs will now instead be shared and/or deputised to other officers. This might include geographical separation of tasks (eg Deputy Chairs and/or those appointed to assist the Chair) with particular geographical areas in which to relate with ecumenical partners and civil society),

23 *What is a District Chair*, sects 23-26

24 *What is a District Chair*, sect 26

28. The Role of a District Chair

and also separation of governance and managerial tasks (eg the management of district staff being the responsibility of officers other than the Chair, eg Deputy Chairs, those appointed to assist the Chair(s), District Secretaries or other officers). The pressing question therefore might not be about what tasks can be helpfully done by people other than the Chair, but rather what should remain the focus of the Chair if other tasks are delegated and shared.

- 7.4 The *What is a District Chair* report states that, 'Oversight is a means of ensuring that a movement or church remains true to its nature and purpose as it grows and develops and as its context changes.'²⁵ This is of pressing importance as the Methodist Church undergoes significant change and decline. Though growth was envisaged in 2006, overall decline has continued. The *God for All Strategy*, building on previous learning since 2006 is now the primary means by which the Methodist Church is fostering new developments and proclaiming the gospel in new ways. As the shapes and structures of Districts are re-shaped, it is important to ensure that new structures enable the church to remain true to its nature and purpose: in the broad work of leadership and vision as well as in the care of more detailed tasks of management and governance. Leadership structures should allow this to be appropriately shared so that the oversight of the District is properly exercised in every respect.
- 7.5 The 2022 statement on *Ministry in the Methodist Church* warns against allowing the description of oversight as constituting 'governance, management and leadership'²⁶ to lead to 'the development of a rather narrow and functional understanding of oversight.'²⁷ Instead, oversight is described like this:
- 'Oversight is the function of ensuring that the Church is true to its calling. It involves "the process of reflecting on experience in order to discern the presence and activity of God in the world." It has always been necessary to the life of the Church, and a key feature of that oversight is ensuring the continuity of the Church in apostolic faith and mission. In the Methodist Church that continuity is located in the Conference.'²⁸
- 7.6 As the key representative of the Conference in the District, the focus of the Chair could be on 'ensuring the continuity of the Church in apostolic faith and mission'. Releasing Chairs from some tasks should be encouraged, in order to allow focus on this primary central task of oversight. An enhanced missional focus for the

25 *What is a District Chair*, sect 17

26 The Methodist Church, 2005, *The Nature of Oversight*, 1.8-1.13

27 *Ministry in the Methodist Church*, 6.2

28 *Ministry in the Methodist Church*, 6.1

28. The Role of a District Chair

Chair could be a clear benefit of larger Districts being able to organise shared oversight in new ways.

8. The role of the Chair beyond their District

8.1 The Deed of Union, Standing Orders and *What is a District Chair* all say much more about a Chair's role in their District than they do about it as a broader connexional role. There is much about the connexional aspect of it that appears to have arisen or developed rather than being conscious choice. That itself is a cause for reflection and in considering the connexional role of a Chair of District we might consider the ways in which this development has responded to the needs of the Church.

8.2 The report *What is a District Chair* noted:

Connexional issues have increasingly meant that Chairs collectively and individually have had tasks to perform beyond their work in their Districts. For example, all the Chairs are members of the Connexional Leadership Team (together with the General Secretary/Secretary of Conference and the Co-ordinating Secretaries; the past, present and designated President and Vice-President; the Warden of the Diaconal Order; and the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee) which meets to confer, articulate vision and thereby offer leadership to the Church, and which from September 2006 will offer a report on their conferring to the Methodist Council. They have also belonged to a Chairs' Meeting, in which they have dealt with matters of common concern and which, because of the particular knowledge and experience which they bring to it, has been consulted from time to time by the Conference or the Methodist Council about matters of connexional policy and practice. Furthermore, together with a few connexional officers they constitute the Stationing Matching Group which plays a key role in the stationing matching processes.

8.3 Chairs' roles beyond their own District that are named in our discipline include membership of the Conference, responsibilities of stationing and the Connexional Leaders' Forum and Chairs' Meeting. In addition to this there is a number of connexional responsibilities which are resourced by the District Chairs. In some cases, this is because our discipline requires it; in other cases it occurs through well-established custom, no doubt because it has been found to be a useful way of proceeding. Where someone familiar with connexional processes and well-connected with people across the Connexion is needed, it is unsurprising that among the Chairs has been a common place to look. As patterns of district structure, and consequently numbers of Chairs available change, it is necessary

28. The Role of a District Chair

to consider this again. At the same time, our commitment to broadening participation encourages us to recognise that others can also bring relevant gifts and experience to such roles. As with all ministers, in some cases a Chair may take on a connexional role connected to their specific gifts and interests and we should in those cases make sure not to create a precedent that their successor in that connexional role must be a Chair. We suggest that those considering recruiting Chairs to specific connexional responsibilities consider:

Where is it necessary to have a Chair? This may be because Standing Orders require it or because the specific nature of the role means only a Chair is able to fulfil it.

Where is it useful to have a Chair because they are a Chair? By virtue of holding the role of Chair, there may be a specific contribution that can be made. However, consideration should be given as to whether there may be others who could make that contribution.

Where might a Chair undertake this role because they have specific gifts or interest? It is good for all ministers to be able to have areas of specialism within their overall ministry.

- 8.4 One aspect of the connexional character of the role of a District Chair could be traced back to their appointment. While all ministers are stationed by the Conference, District Chairs are elected by the Conference to serve in this role.²⁹ This is in contrast to the earlier days of Methodism when Chairmen (sic) were elected by their Districts. In provisions for the Connexional Leaders' Forum, Standing Orders provide that leaders appointed by the Conference shall work together collegially in the oversight of the whole church. It is important to note that this is not limited to District Chairs but they are a significant such category of leaders. Although this Standing Order was suspended by the Conference of 2023 to allow consideration of other models, it is suggested that the principle of shared oversight remains fundamental. The Conference itself is the most powerful and significant expression of this and Chairs appointed by the Conference are called, with others, to embody this principle within their connexional ministry. The oversight offered by Chairs is never isolated from the rest of the Connexion and while each will have their distinctive approach to their ministry, it remains a ministry to be exercised on behalf of the Conference and connected to the wider church.

²⁹ *Deed of Union*, 42

28. The Role of a District Chair

- 8.5 Chairs as a group do not have a fundamentally different role within the Conference from any other members of the Conference. However, the nature of their role more broadly implies a degree of collegiality around specific duties, most notably those connected to the Conference's act of stationing. Alongside this, they contribute to the Conference's discernment across the full range of its concern, bringing insights from their District (along with the representatives elected by the Synod) as well as broader connexional concerns. In a smaller Conference, and as Conference-elected representatives are phased out, they have a particular opportunity to contribute to the Conference's institutional memory.
- 8.6 Like all presbyters, Chairs are called to have a vision wider than simply the immediate context of the ministry to which they have been appointed. However, the nature of the role means that this will always have particular and concrete expression in ways it may not always have for other presbyters. Chairs are called publicly and visibly to hold together the connexional nature of the church with its commitment to the local: in the courts of the church, together with presbyters, deacons and lay people across the Connexion and in the churches and Circuits of their District.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 The committee recognises that we are in a time of change and development, much of which will be organic and exploratory, alongside more strategically planned work. It therefore does not believe this is the time for a fundamental re-casting of our understanding of the role of a District Chair. The reflection offered here seeks to situate that understanding in the light of our current context and the committee hopes it will aid Districts and others as they consider their structures and ways of working.
- 9.2 The committee believes that the current provisions regarding Deputy Chairs and those who assist the Chair need amendment for clarification and to provide appropriate flexibility for a situation that will have a wide variety of District structures. We propose that the role of Deputy Chair should remain a presbyteral role, able to deputise for the Chair and more widely to share in the Chair's ministry, including in those aspects which require the ministry of a presbyter. Further consideration should be given to the possibility of deputising for the Chair in the Conference and other connexional gatherings and to the implications of that for the mode of appointment and reinvitation of a Deputy Chair. Although the term Assistant Chair is widely used, it is not found in the current Standing Order. At the same time, others see it as a problematic term which limits such a ministry or creates confusion with the role of Deputy Chair. We propose that there should be the possibility for Districts to appoint persons to share with the Chair

28. The Role of a District Chair

in the leadership of the District, without formally deputising for them. This would then include deacons and lay people, and could also include presbyters who would not be deputies. Such persons would share in the public ministry of the Chair and in the oversight of the district (except for those things which are formal acts of deputisation) and could have specific areas of responsibility delegated to them. All of these roles should normally be appointed by the Synod (but see the consideration of stationing below) and provided with an appropriate role description. The existing ability of the Chair to appoint any person to assist them more generally should be retained (although it may not be necessary to enshrine this in the Standing Order) and the language of 'supporting the ministry of the Chair' would seem appropriate to us.

- 9.3 In the case of ministers, we recommend that further consideration be given to whether Deputy Chairs and others who share in the leadership of the District (as described in paragraph 9.2) should be able to be appointed through the stationing matching process or whether they should only be appointed from those already stationed in the District and to the relevant adaptations to those processes, if necessary. Further we recommend consideration be given to the circumstances (if any) in which such roles may be appointed by advertisement.
- 9.4 Work on changes to the relevant Standing Orders about sharing in the leadership of the District has been undertaken by the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group, in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee, and will be presented elsewhere in the agenda.

*****RESOLUTION**

- 28/1. The Conference receives the Report.**

29. Safeguarding Committee

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1. Overview

This report provides an overview of safeguarding across the church over the last 12 months. Detailed information relating to safeguarding activity across this period can be found in Appendix B.

The Safeguarding Committee recognises the strong work that is being undertaken on safeguarding across the Connexion – both in the connexional Safeguarding Team and in the Districts. The work can be tough, and the committee can see that work is being undertaken prayerfully, respectfully and transparently.

The committee can see real progress in safeguarding across this period and would particularly like to draw attention to the indicators that safeguarding is increasingly seen as an outworking of faith and an integral part of our work on justice. Survivor voices are being heard more clearly, more people are engaging with the theology of safeguarding, and more churches are holding “Safeguarding Sunday” services which encourage people to discuss openly how to ensure that the Church is a safer place.

Across the Connexion, action is being taken to address systemic issues and recommendations arising from lessons learned reviews are being actively managed and monitored to ensure timely and effective improvements are being made. A greater focus is now being placed on the culture of safeguarding and strengthening safeguarding leadership. The programme of safeguarding audits is an important way in which the committee can evidence whether cultural change is being embedded effectively.

The committee continues to see evidence that – in the main – safeguarding processes are working. Concerns are being raised and processes are being followed in a timely manner.

However, there is a great deal more work that as the Methodist Church we need to undertake to ensure that we are a safer place where everyone can flourish. The section below on Future Plans sets out more information about this. The committee would like the Conference to note that it remains concerned about the increasing backlog of ministerial DBS checks. While DBS checks and safer recruitment practices are only one part of what we need to do to ensure a

safer church, they are nevertheless very important in managing risk in line with our responsibilities, accountabilities and connexional policy. The committee therefore asks the Conference to aver that those who are required to have a DBS check (or equivalent in other jurisdictions) and are without an up-to-date disclosure should be suspended from the exercise of their office or ministry should such a disclosure has been obtained or it has been agreed that an exemption is appropriate. Only in this way, the committee believes, can the risk of damage be mitigated and the Church have confidence that precautions are taken seriously.

2. Independence of safeguarding

The Safeguarding Committee has done some important work this year in relation to establishing how to ensure independence in safeguarding in the Methodist Church and improving policy and practice accordingly. In light of this work, we have made some important changes to both policy and practice. The development of a connexional conflict of interest, duty and loyalty policy is a key recommendation arising from this review. The connexional employment of DSOs is also a key element in ensuring independence. Elsewhere in the Conference Agenda, the Council reports on progress made in response to M21 (2022).

See Appendix A below for the detailed paper on ensuring independence in safeguarding.

3. The Structure of the Safeguarding Committee

The Safeguarding Committee has reviewed its effectiveness in fulfilling its Terms of Reference as set out in the Standing Orders. In order to increase its efficiency and effectiveness in achieving its role, the Committee has decided that we need to separate the more operational responsibilities (such as holding Safeguarding Panels and Appeals) from the overview and scrutiny functions and ensuring an appropriate balance between lay and ordained committee members. There will also be a clearer distinction between those roles on the committee requiring relevant professional skills and experience from those roles requiring those same professional skills and experience in addition to the requirement to be a practising Methodist.

The changes required are set out in the appendix to the report concerning independence in safeguarding (which is Appendix A to this report). Work is underway to prepare the amendments to the Standing Orders that these changes will require.

29. Safeguarding Committee

4. **Interaction between Safeguarding and Complaints and Discipline Processes**

The interaction between the Safeguarding and Complaints and Discipline Processes as currently operating can result in processes taking longer than should be the case which causes distress for all parties involved. The Connexional Safeguarding Team and the Safeguarding Committee have been part of the Part 11 Review and have contributed to the way forward as described in report on that review elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.

5. **Training**

We know that our training material and resources are well regarded both internally and by organisations outside the Methodist Church. These resources have been updated in line with feedback from attendees and to ensure that we stay current in terms of legislation and best practice, and are ready to be rolled out. Of particular note is the development of a Safeguarding Leadership Programme specifically developed for District Chairs and senior connexional officers and staff. The Church of England Leadership Development programme and pathway has been considered in the development of our training.

6. **Future plans for 2024/5**

In addition to the work described above which is necessary to implement more independence in safeguarding and to ensure that the committee is better structured so that it is more effective in exercising its scrutiny and oversight role, the committee has set the following priorities for the next year:

- Transparency – how to better balance openness with GDPR and confidentiality.
- Oversight of embedding of safeguarding culture and policy through the audit programme and ensuring recommendations from lessons learned reviews are implemented.
- Oversight of the take-up of and outcomes from the new safeguarding senior leadership training
- Survivor voice – ensuring that survivor perspectives are considered more deeply in decision making.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

29/1. The Conference receives the Report.

29/2. The Conference reaffirms the policy that certain office-holders should be in possession of up-to-date DBS/PVG checks and that such checks should be renewed every five years, and further directs that those not in possession

of the appropriate disclosure should be suspended from the exercise of their office or ministry until a disclosure has been obtained or an exemption granted.

Appendix A

Independence of Safeguarding in Faith Communities¹

1. Briefing for the Methodist Council

The Safeguarding Committee has done a piece of work over the last three months on independence in safeguarding as we wanted to establish our current position and identify actions that we should take as a Church to improve.

The top line message is that – although there is more we must do – we are on the “right lines” in relation to how we approach this in our environment and bearing in mind the Methodist Way of Life. The further work that needs to be done partly sits with the Connexional Safeguarding Team (CST) and the Safeguarding Committee (SGC), but there is a number of things to be addressed connexionally and systemically. The recommendation section at the end of this document sets out this further work and identifies what needs to be done connexionally and what needs to be done by CST/SGC.

The Council is requested to note the connexional actions required and to advise on how best we bring these things to the attention of the 2024 Conference so that the appropriate action can be taken.

2. Context

Independence in safeguarding in faith communities is a hotly debated topic at the present time. Many churches and religious institutions have fallen short of their responsibilities in relation to mission and ministry, have “looked the other way” and colluded in cover-ups. For a variety of reasons many have failed to acknowledge, accept, and apologise for what’s been happening for many years (and continues to happen).

As well as a focus on prevention, the imperative for safeguarding to be survivor-focused must be kept at the front of mind - those with lived experience must be at the heart of processes and decision-making. Just as Christ had a preferential option for the poor, many people see properly functioning safeguarding as

¹ This report was received by the Methodist Council in April 2024

29. Safeguarding Committee

having a bias for survivors. Others express concerns about this, saying that independence means impartiality and therefore there cannot be a bias for survivors.

While the imperative to support everyone is clear, it is the past propensity to support abusers that has caused mistrust across Christian churches in the UK because many abusers have been (or are) in positions of power and have deployed that power to their own advantage.

The current clarion calls for independence in safeguarding have emerged from this context, along with calls for transparency and strengthened accountability.

The concept of independent safeguarding that is external to the church has also arisen in response to this. There are widely differing views on what this means and how it might work in practice. In some areas, the debate does not appear to understand the critical distinction between accountability and responsibility or between independent and/or external operational delivery of safeguarding.

Professor Alexis Jay has been commissioned by the Church of England to “develop proposals for a fully independent structure for safeguarding scrutiny”. She has started the work with a national consultation. Although this view is being primarily expressed in relation to the Church of England, it is important that the Methodist Church considers this perspective.

Calls for an independent regulator like the Care Quality Commission or Ofsted are being made as a response to this context. This was discussed at the recent discussion on “Reporting, Secrecy, and Silencing in Cases of Abuse in Religious Contexts” facilitated by the University of Kent in September 2023. The regulator would provide oversight across faith communities (not just Christian denominations), seek to ensure compliance, ensure that processes have been properly followed in a timely manner, and have the powers to sanction institutions as appropriate.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to explore good governance of safeguarding and the concepts of independence, transparency, and accountability. It has been discussed at the Methodist Connexional Safeguarding Committee and with the Methodist Survivor Advisory Group at their residential meeting in October.

Justin Humphreys, the CEO of Thirtyone:eight (the Christian safeguarding agency formerly called Churches Child Protection Agency), and Margaret Casely Hayford,

29. Safeguarding Committee

eminent lawyer and governance expert, have provided input and critical challenge. Their contributions are gratefully acknowledged.

The Safeguarding Committee now shares the paper with the Methodist Council so that appropriate steps can be taken.

The purpose of this paper is not to chronicle the history of abuse in faith settings nor to comment on previous or current cases.

The paper is structured as follows:

- Section 3 reminds the reader of the theological basis for safeguarding.
- Section 4 summarises the principles of good governance.
- Section 5 describes the role of independence in safeguarding.
- Section 6 sets out the governance of safeguarding in the Methodist Church and identifies areas which could potentially be strengthened.
- Section 7 sets out opportunities for enhancing independence and suggests next steps

4. **Mission and Ministry**

The starting point for this exploration is the Methodist Church's mission and ministry and the theology of safeguarding as approved by the Methodist Conference. The scriptural basis for safeguarding is set out in the 2021 Conference Report 'The Theology of Safeguarding' and in the 'God Welcomes All' study material.

Spiritual abuse is recognised by the Church and is specifically addressed by the Methodist Church's safeguarding policy and the spiritual abuse training that is currently being rolled out.

As the Methodist Church welcomes and proactively encourages the inclusion of voices of those with lived experience in its decision-making, survivors have contributed extensively to this paper.

5. **Good Governance**

The governance of safeguarding must be seen in the context of good charity governance and the oversight and trusteeship structure of the Church. The Charity Commission's guidance on safeguarding applies in addition to the Connexional safeguarding policy.

29. Safeguarding Committee



Good governance in Safeguarding diagram from Bond

Good governance includes focus on mission, fiduciary duties, strategy, oversight, compliance and stewardship of resources and finances.

Members of the governing body must be selected on merit according to pre-defined criteria and must be of good standing – fit and proper persons. Lived experience of abuse should be one of these criteria and there should be a proportionate number of members with this experience on the governing body.

Independence is an important criterion in selection of members - they should not have any conflicts of interest, duty and/or loyalty that could affect the

execution of their roles. Policies that set out how to manage conflict are fundamental building blocks. Term limits are also vital – balancing “fresh eyes” and fresh perspectives with institutional knowledge. They help to limit or prevent patronage.

Controls need to be in place to ensure compliance with critical policies or procedures. The governing body need to seek objective evidence that the controls are working in practice. This is called assurance. Assurance involves a systematic and structured process that includes various activities, such as auditing, verification, or validation, to ensure that a particular outcome is reliable and accurate. It includes clarity of delegation in so far as this explains what has been delegated and to whom; and this should be allied to a system of assessment, risk awareness/risk management, and reporting, in line with and in response to that delegation.

Assurance therefore enables effective scrutiny. Independent (or external) audit is required to demonstrate that the controls and assurance are working effectively.

Accountability, transparency, independence, and integrity are hallmarks of good governance.

A healthy culture that is open and prepared to challenge is a pre-requisite for good governance, as are policies covering complaints (internal and external) and whistleblowing².

6. Independence in governance of safeguarding

Governance of safeguarding is about preventing abuse from occurring, early identification of abuse when it does occur, and responding in a timely and effective manner. It is concerned with the timeliness and effectiveness of the system of controls and assurance. As Justin Humphreys from Thirtyone:eight says:

“Independence and accountability serve as fundamental pillars in safeguarding, ensuring that the decisions and actions we take are free from undue influence or bias and are open to appropriate scrutiny. An independent view of processes, practices, and culture helps to instill a sense of trust and confidence, enables a fair and unbiased evaluation of situations, and prevents conflicts of interest from compromising the process or the outcome.”

2 Thirtyone:eight (named after Proverbs 31:8 and formerly called the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service) run a very helpful course called “Creating Healthy Christian Cultures and Understanding Spiritual Abuse”

29. Safeguarding Committee

Independence acts as a safeguard against corruption and undue external pressure, guaranteeing that decisions and actions are driven solely by the pursuit of justice and the welfare of individuals. It allows all those involved to perform their duties with integrity, empowers individuals to act according to their expertise and professional judgment, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of safeguarding efforts”.

In terms of effective governance of safeguarding, it is essential to acknowledge that, although operational delivery of safeguarding can be externally delivered, the Church cannot outsource its duties, responsibilities and accountabilities for keeping people safe. Developments in safeguarding in the public sector (and particularly from the Working Together agenda) reveal that attempts to outsource responsibility lead to a situation where subcontractors (whether companies or charities) manage the delivery of their contract rather than “doing the right thing”, trying to prevent abuse from occurring and bringing about cultural change.

A potential unintended consequence of having complete independence is that the interfaces of accountability and responsibility become vague with the potential to shift accountability onto other bodies operating in the church safeguarding space. Complex governance overlaid onto the complex structures that exist in the church, whilst not a reason to avoid change, do require deep reflection and understanding of the practical consequences.

Prevention of abuse starts with suitable appointments – both in terms of the governance and scrutiny functions and also in employment of staff. Vetting procedures (like Disclosure and Barring Systems), careful scrutiny, and the importance of references need to be recognised as critical controls. Other controls in this context include safeguarding policies and procedures that are compliant with legislation, regulation and best practice. Information about what is happening in practice on the ground is a pre-requisite for assurance. Evidence to be scrutinised includes safeguarding audits, thematic reviews, lessons learned reviews, complaints and whistleblowing, in addition to the analysis of information about concerns being raised, clusters of issues, patterns, internal networks demonstrating nepotism or favouritism, safer recruitment processes and so forth.

Independence in reviews or investigations usually means that the senior responsible officer drafts and approves the terms of reference, and a senior person in a separate management line, who has no connection with the issue or with key stakeholders (either people named in the allegations or the people raising the allegations), undertakes the investigation and reports back to the senior responsible officer. If a senior independent manager is not available to lead the investigation, then an external independent investigator will be commissioned

29. Safeguarding Committee

and will report to the senior responsible officer. The senior responsible officer may decide to establish a small independent team to provide oversight of the process and to ensure that there is challenge and accountability.

Independent external scrutiny of safeguarding on a periodic basis by an appropriately qualified individual or organisation is good practice and is helpful to ensure objectivity. It also engenders trust and confidence in the rigour of objective or non-partisan safeguarding governance.

Independence also means that – while working to GDPR and confidentiality policies, the broad subject area of the investigation will be brought to the attention of the governing body or a subcommittee of the governing body (often a risk and audit committee). The governing body (or subcommittee) can then decide whether to seek additional assurance whether internally or externally and/or include the matter in their audit programme to ensure that recommendations are being fully implemented.

Transparency – while different from independence – has a major impact in building trust and confidence in safeguarding. Conversely, not publishing such documents as suitably redacted lessons learned reviews or suitably anonymised documents to protect the identities of survivors/victims (as an alternative to a redacted document) can give the appearance of a cover up. Note that the former is more personal. A redacted document is normally lots of blacked out text, which depersonalises the document. It is possible to be transparent while at the same time conforming to GDPR and confidentiality policies.

7. Governance of safeguarding in the Methodist Church

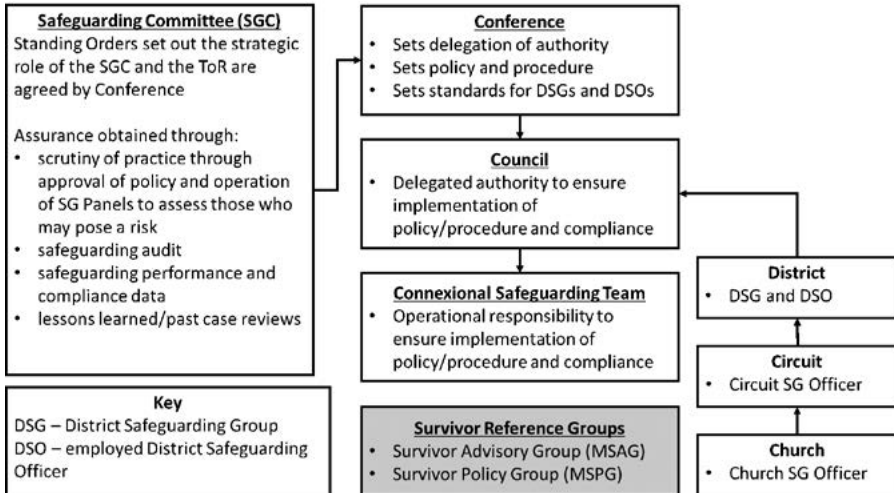
Methodist structure for safeguarding governance

District Safeguarding Groups (DSGs) are a crucial element in terms of governance of safeguarding as they have a key role in operationalising policy and modelling healthy cultures in their geographic areas. They are also responsible for oversight of compliance to safeguarding contracts where certain conditions have been placed on individuals in their engagement with church (or church related activities) following risk assessments.

Some DSGs are starting to collaborate across regions to share best practice and to make best use of resources. However, these are emerging developments and are not part of the formal safeguarding structure. This situation must be addressed to ensure consistency of approach across the Connexion which embodies best practice.

29. Safeguarding Committee

METHODIST SAFEGUARDING GOVERNANCE



Culture

It is important to note that in the governance arrangements for safeguarding which set out clear expectations in terms of practice, culture is a critical factor which can influence the extent to which policies are embedded in practice. The programme of safeguarding audits has revealed that there are different cultures in the different parts of the Church. The connexional centre has its own culture, and many of the districts, circuits and churches do too. Some parts of the Church regard safeguarding as part of mission and ministry, while other parts do not appear to regard it in this way. The various “micro-cultures” in the Church means that strong local leadership is required to ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are followed diligently and appropriately.

Safeguarding Committee terms of reference, structure, and membership

In contrast to safeguarding structures in some other Christian denominations, the Connexional Safeguarding Committee has formal terms of reference. The Committee reports to the Conference each year. The committee can (and does) bring items of concern to the attention of the Council. There are terms of reference for the chair of the committee.

In recent years, vacancies for the chair and members of the committee have been advertised formally in the safeguarding newsletter and on the connexional

29. Safeguarding Committee

website. Safer recruitment processes are followed. The independent Chair is not employed or remunerated by the Church. Currently all members of the Safeguarding Committee are Methodist. Thirtyone:eight recommends that this requirement be removed so that there might be a mixture of Methodists and safeguarding specialists from other denominations, as this would enhance independence. It is worth noting that the Church of England has Methodist and Catholic representatives on its National Safeguarding Panel.

There is a balance of lay and ordained members on the committee. Only one of the lay members is employed and remunerated by the Church – a District Safeguarding Officer. There are some members who identify as survivors, in addition to the specific Survivor Representative nominated by the Methodist Survivors' Advisory Group.

The Secretary of the Conference attends the Committee but is not a member of the Committee. In contrast to the Church of England's National Safeguarding Panel (NSP) where bishops attend the meeting but are not voting members of the NSP, ordained people can be full voting members of the Committee. Again, in contrast to the NSP, all members of the committee are required to be Methodist. As mentioned above, this has caused some people to question the extent of the committee's independence.

Members of the committee with the appropriate skills act as chairs of panels where a determination needs to be made about the outcome of an investigation and the conditions under which the subject can continue (or not) their involvement in the life of the Church as appropriate. This is analogous to the role that some non-execs of NHS bodies such as Foundation Trusts undertake. While care is taken to ensure that ordained panel chairs do not have supervisory or other relationships or responsibilities in areas or with people involved in safeguarding processes and panels, this is an area that needs to be kept under close review and the number of lay panel members must be increased.

Other structural considerations

Church and circuit safeguarding officers are voluntary roles. The District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) are currently employed by the Districts, and do not have a direct reporting line to the Connexional Safeguarding Team. This gives rise to inconsistencies in practice and presents a potential conflict of interest given that they are employed in the area and by the people about whom concerns could be reported. A proposal to make all DSOs connexional employees is the subject of another paper to the Council.

29. Safeguarding Committee

Further to recent reviews, there is now a much greater understanding about independence in the allocation of pastoral support and how to ensure that arrangements that are put in place do not create actual or perceived conflicts.

As mentioned above, DSGs are key in terms of governance of safeguarding as they have a key role in operationalising policy and modelling healthy cultures in their geographic areas. The Church of England appoints independent chairs for Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panels (the equivalent of the DSG). The Safeguarding Committee and the Connexional Safeguarding Team are not sighted on how DSG chairs have been appointed previously and whether they are independent. However, this is an area that is included in the district audit programme and expectation is that all DSGs are moving towards the appointment of independent chairs. The requirement for an independent chair will be explicitly included in the next iteration of the DSG standards.

Through the Jay Review, the Church of England is considering removing all safeguarding operations from the church and setting up an independent charity to undertake all aspects of safeguarding instead. A further charity may be established to scrutinise the charity undertaking safeguarding. The Safeguarding Committee is not in favour of this approach for a number of reasons but primarily because it blurs lines of accountability and responsibility. For this reason, the Methodist Survivors' Group are very opposed to this as an approach.

Independent external experts

There is routine use of independent external risk assessors within the Methodist Church. Independent external investigators are also used when there is no suitable person available within the Church.

Safeguarding Standards

Safeguarding standards have been developed for use by DSGs. The function of the Standards and their associated model criteria is to facilitate DSGs in:

- providing an overview of the profile of safeguarding in the district,
- enabling evaluation of safeguarding
- assisting in determination of priorities
- supporting the development of a strategic plan.
- enabling review of progress against the plan

Standards have been developed to inform and guide the work of the DSOs although these have not fully been rolled out. The structural change mentioned above will enable effective embedding of the standards.

29. Safeguarding Committee

Oversight and scrutiny

The Safeguarding Committee has open access to information and evidence to inform its scrutiny and oversight functions, including data on concerns raised, substantiated concerns, blemished DBS checks (or failure to undertake DBS checking), stats on training and so forth. Although there's more that can be done in terms of presentation of this information, no information is withheld or is otherwise not available.

The Methodist Conference approved a 5-year programme of safeguarding audits. The Safeguarding Committee currently leads the process of independent safeguarding audits which looks at embedding of safeguarding processes and a healthy culture throughout the Connexion. The committee decides which circuit, district or theme will be audited and when. However, in line with the Conference resolution, an external agency will be contracted by the Safeguarding Committee to undertake the audits after the 2024 audit programme has been completed. The Safeguarding Committee will then review the evidence from the audits as part of its scrutiny role.

Future developments

When the current Chair was appointed in January 2022, she undertook a review of the Committee and spoke to all members. The review highlighted areas for improvement which will improve governance and Committee effectiveness including:

- tightening up on term limits
- a greater focus on scrutiny
- a greater focus on quality assurance of things like risk assessments
- restructuring the Committee and introducing sub committees with delegated responsibilities for certain areas
- clarifying and revising the categories of Committee membership as some categories are seen as unhelpful.

The committee's terms of reference are likely to be amended in the light of these changes.

In June 2023, the Chair of the Safeguarding Committee, with the Secretary of Conference and the Chair of the Council's Risk & Audit Committee, agreed that the committee will establish its own risk register (using the connexional format) which will feed into the overall risk register. Establishing this process

29. Safeguarding Committee

is underway and the first safeguarding risk register was discussed by the Committee in October 2023.

The review of the complaints and discipline processes is also under way currently (see MC/24/51). One of the reasons for the review is that the complaints and discipline process and the safeguarding process can currently interact in an unhelpful manner which causes processes to take longer than is necessary and increases upset and distress for all concerned. The Chair of the Safeguarding Committee is a member of the task group undertaking this work. The timetable for completion of this work is that the report with recommendations will be presented to the Conference in 2024.

8. **Opportunities and next steps**

While much is in place in relation to governance of safeguarding and independence, as set out above there are some immediate opportunities to deepen this. Particularly key to strengthening independence, accountability and transparency are:

- Connexional employment of DSOs
- Developing a connexional policy on conflicts of interest, duty and loyalty
- Strengthening the whistleblowing policy by stating clearly that whistle blows should be sent to a senior independent person not line managers and others as stated in the current policy.
- Publicising the whistleblowing policy (which is currently quite hard to find on the website)
- Clarifying the requirement that DSG chairs are independent in the DSG standards
- Recruitment of more lay panel chairs given that ordained chairs are much more likely to know each other and to have close connections in the circuit or district.
- Recruitment of new panel chairs - a bigger pool of chairs gives more options and flexibility in terms of avoiding conflicts of interest.
- Restructuring the Safeguarding Committee as described above and in appendix 1
- Strengthening and broadening the Standing Orders in relation to declarations of interest and management of conflict of interest.
- Publishing without fear or favour appropriately redacted results of reviews and lessons learned exercises (while at the same time ensuring the privacy of all concerned in line with GDPR and with confidentiality policies).

29. Safeguarding Committee

- Appointing an external agency to undertake the safeguarding audits from Connexional year 2025-26 onwards.
- Changing the requirement for Committee members from being a Methodist to being a practising Christian.

Given recent changes and ongoing developments, the time is not right at the moment for an external independent review of the Methodist Church's governance of safeguarding. However, an external review will be arranged for the start of the 2025-26 connexional year in September 2024.

***RESOLUTIONS

54/1. The Council received the report.

54/2. The Council agreed the approach to independence outlined in this report and commended the steps in paragraph 8 not already proposed to the Conference in other reports to the Conference for implementation.

54/3. The Council supported the restructuring of the Safeguarding Committee as set out in appendix 1 and commended it to the Conference.

Appendix 1

Methodist Safeguarding Committee Structure

1. Briefing for the Methodist Council

The Safeguarding Committee (SGC) has been reviewing its effectiveness over the last three months and have decided that the structure and membership of the Committee needs to change to increase its effectiveness and better deliver on all the elements set out in their Terms of Reference. The timing of these changes is critical because currently aspects of the SGC's responsibilities (e.g. timely safeguarding panels) is a challenge.

There are still some details that need to be clarified and some practicalities that need to be worked out, but this paper sets out the agreed direction of travel that the SGC wants to take. Given that this will require a change to Standing Orders which would need to be approved by the Conference, the SGC wanted to share the direction of travel with Council at the earliest opportunity so that Council can advise the SGC on the best way forward given the imperative to achieve approval by Conference in 2024.

29. Safeguarding Committee

2. Introduction

The Methodist Safeguarding Committee seeks to ensure that the Church is a safe place for all – children, young people, and adults.

Under Standing Order 232, the Committee provides oversight and scrutiny of safeguarding across the Church. It also provides advice and guidance on policies and practice. Panels comprising Committee Members review risk assessments and assess the cases of individuals who may pose a safeguarding risk and identify suitable measures to manage such situations.

Committee members (whether lay or ordained) are all volunteers. They work quietly and effectively, making a significant contribution in helping to ensure that the Church is a safer place.

The Committee has reviewed its terms of reference to strengthen governance and to be even more effective in fulfilling all its duties and functions. In parallel with this, the Committee has also undertaken a review of independence in safeguarding and several improvements have been identified.

This paper sets out the changes that the Committee wants to make and seeks approval from the Council and Conference for these changes.

3. The Case for Change

SO 232 prescribes that the Committee should have a chair and up to 18 members (five who in the judgment of the Council command respect (called senior members) and ten others with relevant experience).

The distinction between seniors and other members of the Committee is unhelpful. In recent years, members of some of the Methodist charities have been members of the Committee but in practice rarely attend. A survivor nominated by the Methodist Survivors' Group attends committee meetings but is not a full voting member. The Secretary of Conference and the Director of Safeguarding attend the meeting but are not voting members.

The size of the committee makes it unwieldy to organise meetings and manage meetings in the allotted time. Meetings encompass strategic direction and governance in addition to providing advice and guidance on more operational matters, like training or the operation of panels. It is difficult to give proper focus to the breadth and depth of the terms of reference, and some Committee members' experience is more relevant to some elements of the terms of

29. Safeguarding Committee

reference rather than others. A smaller number of members' experience spans all areas covered within by the committee.

The committee wishes to change the membership criteria so that the survivor representative is a full voting member of the committee rather than just attending. In addition, it recommends that the distinction between senior members and other members of the Committee be removed.

Engagement with senior leadership and safeguarding professionals in the Methodist charities can be achieved by working through the existing CEOs group, convened by the Secretary of Conference. This will enable integrated approaches to sharing good practice and managing risk without those organisations having a dedicated seat on the Safeguarding Committee with full voting rights.

The work by the committee on independence makes other recommendations in relation to the terms of reference for the committee including:

- Clarifying and tightening up on term limits (two terms of three years with a maximum of six years).
- Recruitment of more lay panel chairs given that ordained chairs are much more likely to know each other and to have close connections in the circuit or district.
- Recruitment of new panel members and chairs - a bigger pool gives more options and flexibility in terms of avoiding conflicts of interest.

4. Other Considerations

The committee's work on strengthening the governance of safeguarding and independence has highlighted that there are other aspects of good governance that need to be put in place connexionally in order to support and enable effective safeguarding across the church including:

- Clarifying the requirement that District Safeguarding Group (DSG) chairs are independent in the DSG standards.
- Developing a connexional policy on conflicts of interest, duty and loyalty
- Strengthening the whistleblowing policy by stating clearly that whistle blows should be sent to a senior independent person and not line managers and others, as stated in the current policy.
- Publicising the whistleblowing policy (which is currently quite hard to find on the website)

29. Safeguarding Committee

- Strengthening and broadening the Standing Orders in relation to declarations of interest and the management of conflicts of interest.
- Publishing, without fear or favour, appropriately redacted results of reviews and lessons learned exercises (while at the same time ensuring the privacy of all concerned in line with GDPR and with confidentiality policies).
- Streamlining the interface between the safeguarding and the complaints and discipline process.

The committee notes the pertinence of the review of Part 11 to this section of its recommendations.

5. **Proposed Structure of the Safeguarding Committee**

The proposed structure for the safeguarding committee is for a strategy and oversight group, with several subgroups and a group that holds safeguarding panels. It will comprise:

- An Oversight group which sets strategy and provides oversight and scrutiny of safeguarding across the Church.
- Sub-groups that provide advice and guidance on policies, procedures and practice, training and quality assurance.
- A Safeguarding Panel group which reviews risk assessments and assess the cases of individuals who may pose a safeguarding risk and identify suitable measures to manage such situations.

5.1 Oversight group

Under the proposed structure the Secretary of Conference and Director of Safeguarding would attend the meetings of the Oversight Group but would not be full voting members.

As mentioned above, the oversight group will set strategy and provides oversight and scrutiny of safeguarding across the Church. This includes monitoring rollout of training, progress in implementing safer recruitment processes (e.g. overdue DBS checks), monitoring the implementation of recommendations from lessons learned reports, and considering how well safeguarding is embedded in practice by reviewing the findings of safeguarding audits.

Members of the Oversight Group would meet with DSG chairs at least once a year to share best practice and discuss trends and issues.

The chairs of the subgroups would report to the oversight group on the work of the subgroup and issues arising. This would take the form of submitting a short, written report. If the report raises substantive issues, the chair of the subgroup may be invited to attend the relevant agenda item at a meeting of the oversight group.

5.2 Subgroups

Members of the subgroups would not normally sit on the oversight group (unless there's a compelling reason which would make this helpful). Subgroups would include the following areas:

- Quality assurance
- Training
- Policy and procedures
- Risk assessment
- Survivor engagement
- Theology of safeguarding

The terms of reference for the committee should allow the establishment of new subgroups or "task and finish" groups, and the closing down of existing subgroups depending on the context in which the committee operates and the progress being made.

The subgroups would be responsible for ensuring that best practice is adopted and disseminated across the church.

5.3 Safeguarding Panels Group

Within the overall Committee structure, this group would comprise panel members (and panel chairs). The chair of the group would work with members of the group to ensure that the approach to panels conforms to best practice and that panels are run consistently and equitably.

The chair of the Safeguarding Panels Group would report to the oversight group on the work of the group and issues arising. This would take the form of submitting a short, written report. If the report raises substantive issues, the chair of the group may be invited to attend the relevant agenda item at a meeting of the oversight group.

29. Safeguarding Committee

6. Committee Member Roles

There are three types of roles available under this proposed structure:

| Members of Oversight Group | Sub-group Members | Panel Members |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Essential criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion for excellence in safeguarding • Member of the Methodist Church (whether lay or ordained) and in good standing. • Understanding of the theology of safeguarding • Understanding of issues associated with abuse of power. • Experience of governance, oversight and scrutiny • In-depth strategic experience of safeguarding <p>Desirable criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding of survivor's perspectives. <p>Time commitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 days a year • Active participation in 4 meetings a year (two virtual and two in person). | <p>Essential criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion for excellence in safeguarding • In-depth strategic and operational experience of safeguarding • Understanding of issues associated with abuse of power. • In-depth strategic and operational experience of one or more of the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Quality assurance ◦ Training ◦ Policy and procedures ◦ Risk assessment ◦ Survivor engagement ◦ Theology of safeguarding <p>Desirable criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding of survivor's perspectives. <p>Time commitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 days a year • Active participation in 4 meetings a year (two virtual and two in person). | <p>Essential criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion for excellence in safeguarding • In-depth strategic and operational experience of safeguarding • Understanding of risk assessment processes and approaches to risk mitigation <p>Desirable criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding of survivor's perspectives. <p>Time commitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 days a year • Active participation in 4 meetings a year (two virtual and two in person). |

29. Safeguarding Committee

All roles would be non-remunerated, but expenses would be paid for travel to meetings. Additional to the time commitments set out above, training and support would be provided as required.

The committee is keen to increase its diversity and to welcome applications from all sections of the communities that it serves.

Appointments would be for a three-year period, renewable for a further three years with a maximum term of office of six years.

The committee does not recommend that District Safeguarding Officers should be eligible for appointment to the committee.

Appendix B

Safeguarding Casework and Development work

Case Statistics

| Period | 1/9/19-31/8/20 | 1/9/20 - 31/8/21 | 1/9/21-31/8/22 | 1/9/22-31/8/23 | 1/9/23-29/2/24 |
|---------------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| DBS/PVG cases open | 89 | 28 | 79 | 48 | 31 |
| DBS/PVG cases closed | 186 | 50 | 56 | 39 | 49 |
| Non DBS/PVG cases open | 57 | 27 | 17 | 44 | 178 |
| Non DBS/PVG cases closed | 13 | 17 | 2 | 8 | 78 |

29. Safeguarding Committee

Safeguarding Panels

| | 1/9/19-31/8/20 | 1/9/19-31/8/20 | 1/9/20-31/8/21 | 1/9/20-31/8/21 | 1/9/20-31/8/21 | 1/9/21-31/8/22 | 1/9/21-31/8/22 | 1/9/22-31/8/23 | 1/9/22-31/8/23 | 1/9/23-29/2/24 | 1/9/22-29/2/24 | |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------|
| Outcome | Number | Appeals | Number | Appeals | Number | Appeals | Number | Appeals | Number | Appeals | Number | Appeals |
| Not cleared | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Restrictions on role and Safeguarding Contract | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Cleared with conditions | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Cleared with no conditions | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| No changes to current Safeguarding Contract | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Safeguarding Contract ended | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Safeguarding Contract ended with conditions | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Resigned from Role | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 19 | 0 | 10 | 1 | 16 | 1 | 9 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 1 |

30. Stationing Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | Ms Jenny Jackson, Chair of the Stationing Committee chairstationing@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In my first report to the Conference as Chair of the Stationing Committee, I start by describing the overall work which is further explored in the sections that follow. It reflects the breadth of work and the commitment of Local Churches, Circuits and Districts. Throughout the year, many people work together with their representatives on the Stationing Committee, and members of the Connexional Team, to honour the commitment to send ministers - not simply to where they might wish to go, but to where they are needed most.
- 1.2 The work reflected in what follows represents hours of dedication – and I begin by expressing the enormous thanks to the many people who, behind the scenes and therefore often ‘unsung’, work tirelessly supporting the vital task of matching presbyters and deacons, to appointments where they can live out their calling as they offer their personal gifts and talents to Circuits, on behalf of the Conference.
- 1.3 Standing Order 780 sets out the various categories of stationing. Broadly, stationing matching is the process through which Conference ensures that Circuits receive ministers - presbyteral and diaconal – who are matched to appointments across the Connexion. The process is carried out by and demonstrates a model of partnership working between lay and ordained people in churches and Circuits, with appointed lay and ordained colleagues in each District. Each aspect of the work is overseen by the connexional Stationing Committee, and the work of stationing begins with student ministers and others, entering their first appointments in British Methodism. In the absence of a Chair of District, the district Lay Stationing Representative (LSR) always acts as deputy, and is present at every stage of the process locally, thus affirming the importance of this partnership. Each District has one district LSR, although as some Districts become larger, it could be appropriate to explore nominating an assistant LSR. However, the appointed district LSR will always deputise in the absence of the Chair of District.
- 1.4 The Stationing Committee constantly faces challenges and in the last eight months we have reviewed in depth a number of key issues beginning with the assumptions around stationing in our current age.

30. Stationing Committee

The Stationing Committee

- 1.5 The journey into ordained ministry of course begins long before a student enter theological college and is influenced by, and impacts on the lives of those who support them as they takes early steps towards ordination. Many children in 'manse households', like their parents, have lived through the impact of the pandemic and this cannot be overstated. We also recognise that as our population in Britain ages, ministers face additional social responsibilities.
- 1.6 As minister's partners seek to fulfil their own service and calling through vital work, wherever possible, we take account of these as we match ministers to appointments. Increasingly too, the elderly parents who supported their daughters and sons at the outset of their travels, now have greater and more challenging needs to consider. We salute the commitment of all those impacted by our decisions as we seek to send ministers to where they can flourish whilst serving the areas and places in greatest need.
- 1.7 Before the work even begins, Stationing Committee reviews and (where necessary) recommends amendments to the stationing Code of Practice. The Code of Practice seeks to honour decisions taken by the Conference to amend Standing Orders, and some change is inevitable year on year. The Connexion is indebted to the work undertaken this year by Sue Walters, LSR in the Northampton District, who on behalf of the committee, has incorporated these changes with care and endeavoured to ensure that we stay on track with competing requirements as they emerge.
- 1.8 The Stationing Committee has also recognised the impact of legislative changes in mainland Britain on ministers from other jurisdictions (within the Connexion) as well as those seeking to serve in Britain from other Conferences and Churches. Moving between jurisdictions within one connexional church can present a difficult challenge.
- 1.9 The Stationing Committee is very grateful to the Revd Jenny Impey, who has guided the Stationing Matching Group, to the Revd Dr Stephen Lindridge, who chairs the work of the Stationing Action Group, to Deacon Karen McBride and the Revd Dr David Hinchliffe, responsible for guiding the work of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee, and to the Revd Dr Claire Potter, Ministerial Coordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries, for all the prayerful work they undertake throughout the year as they support the 'stationing' of ministers.

30. Stationing Committee

- 1.10 Discussion at the conclusion of the third Stationing Matching Group meeting recognised that because Circuits and Districts now routinely review their stationing requirements, all circuit appointments accepted for inclusion in the stationing process require equal priority in the stationing matching process. Every effort is made to match the needs of a circuit appointment with an available minister. To this end, the previous categorisation of labelling some appointments as more 'critical' than others is less relevant and this was discussed at a Stationing Committee meeting this year. As Districts already determine the 'order of call' when they seek to match appointments, the 'critical' designation has now been discontinued. (Of note, this terminology was introduced some years ago to meet a specific need.)
- 1.11 We recognise that across the Connexion, ordained ministry 'feels' thinly spread. This is due to a variety of factors, and in June 2024, the Stationing Committee will explore the reasons for this, and the wisdom and appropriateness of an increasing number of permissions granted to ordained ministers to serve outside of circuit ministry. Presently, 38 ministers have permission to be without appointment and 74 to be in an appointment outside the control of the Church. The reasons for this are varied and this work will continue into the next connexional year.
- 1.12 Alongside this there has been a small increase in the number of candidates for ministry offering for training with limited deployability – again for many reasons. The reasons inevitably impact on the perception of 'shortage' of ministers, and I anticipate returning to this in my report to Conference in 2025.

2. Stationing Matching Group

- 2.1 Stationing matching is a process in which we are attempting to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Circuits and presbyters. This year the group was able to meet in person for the first two rounds which enhanced that sense of the whole Connexion being present in one place, with each minister and Circuit known. The work was, as always, conducted carefully and prayerfully with time being taken to consider each presbyter and Circuit as the group sought to make matches which would enable presbyters and Circuits to flourish in mission and ministry and ensure ministry was spread across the Connexion in response to the greatest need.
- 2.2 There was widespread awareness at the beginning of the matching process that the gifts, skills, experience and aspirations together with the

30. Stationing Committee

limitations on deployability would mean that many critical appointments and superintendencies would not be filled by the end of the process and that resources were stretched to the limit already in many places. As a Connexion we need to keep on grasping the issues of what work will not be done, which profiles will not be matched and how presbyters and Circuits can flourish and be equipped to engage in the current context but those things will not be addressed by the stationing processes alone. It may be that more awareness of the Methodist Council report on flexible patterns of working (<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/ministries/flexible-working-for-ministers/>) and greater willingness on the part of Circuits to recognise the possibility of spreading the 12 sessions across the week in more flexible ways might enable some presbyters to be more widely deployable and still be able to be responsive to their family and other needs.

SMG 1

- 2.3 By the beginning of the matching process, 104 circuit profiles and 73 presbyteral profiles had been submitted. As the process continued, a further three circuit profiles and two presbyteral profiles were submitted. Requests were received for 38 appointments to be designated as critical and following scrutiny, 17 were accepted as critical appointments. Reasoned statements were sought for 16 other appointments which appeared to be less challenging than those that could be accepted for initial stationing for ministers of other Conferences and Churches (MOCCs) and which, therefore, needed to be tested against these criteria. Of these, some were reshaped, two were withdrawn and four were reshaped as part time appointments. Twelve of the profiles were for part time appointments of which one offered no manse.
- 2.4 During the first meeting of the Stationing Matching Group (SMG 1), at the beginning of November, there were 104 Circuits seeking presbyters and 68 presbyters available for matching. All 68 presbyteral matches were made, including for all of the critical appointments. Visits resulted in 51 invitations being issued and accepted of the 68 matches made. Of the 17 that were declined, 13 were declined by the presbyter and two by the Circuit, and a further two by both. Overall 75% of the visits resulted in invitations being issued and accepted. One presbyter did not visit.
- 2.5 Out of the 17 critical appointments matched, nine were accepted, six declined by the presbyter, one by the Circuit and one by both. One visit did not take place. This meant that 82% of non-critical appointment matches were accepted against 53% of matches to critical appointments.

Figures

| | Total | Agreed | Dec Presbyter | Circuit Dec | Decline | No visit P Dec | % agreed |
|---------------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Total matches</i> | 68 | 51 | 12 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 75% |
| <i>Non critical</i> | 51 | 42 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 82% |
| <i>Critical</i> | 17 | 9 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 53% |
| <i>Double match</i> | 36 | 29 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 80% |
| <i>Identified presbyter</i> | 18 | 15 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 83% |
| <i>Identified circuit</i> | 3 | 2 | | | 1 | | 66% |
| <i>Identified neither</i> | 11 | 5 | 5 | | | 1 | 45% |

2.6 From the figures, the matching group appears to give priority to those matches identified by the presbyter or both. Whether or not the presbyter identified it also seems to influence greatly whether a match is agreed. Although seven out of the 14 of the matches where the presbyter had not identified the Circuit did stick, it is worthy of comment that seven out of the 54 Circuits where the presbyter had identified the Circuit were subsequently declined by the presbyter and that seven out of the 36 double matches were declined.

SMG 2

2.7 At the beginning of December, the SMG met at the King's Park Conference Centre, Northampton. There were 52 circuit profiles to be considered (of which eight were critical) and only 17 presbyters available for matching. A further two appointments were not available for consideration because of incomplete curtailments. Seventeen matches were made, including matches for two of the critical appointments. Eleven matches were agreed but three were declined by the presbyter, one by the Circuit and one by both. No visit was made to one further appointment. Overall, 65% of the visits resulted in accepted invitations.

SMG 3

2.8 The third meeting of the Stationing Matching Group (SMG 3) was held online in January. At that stage there were 43 Circuits (among them five appointments

30. Stationing Committee

designated as critical) seeking presbyters and only nine presbyters available. Matches were found for eight of the presbyters and a further match was made to a critical appointment with a presbyter who was not expecting to be in stationing. Six of the visits resulted in invitations being issued and accepted. Two matches were declined by the presbyters and one by the Circuit. This left 40 appointments unmatched at the end of SMG3, including five critical appointments and 18 Superintendencies.

- 2.9 The Stationing Matching Group is grateful for the engagement of presbyters and Circuits in exploring the matches, all those who prepared profiles, drew up lists to indicate the kinds of presbyters and Circuits they could see themselves working with and flourishing in, prepared for visits and travelled out of their comfort zones to prayerfully engage in discernment conversations. The final recommendations to the Conference come not from the group but from the presbyters and Circuits who say yes to one another and begin the journey of discovering gifts and opportunities for mission and who will commit themselves at welcome services to “join together in the work to which God has called us” (MWB, p. 361).

3. Report of the Initial Stationing Sub-Committee

3.1 Scrutiny

- Twenty-two profiles for **presbyteral probationer appointments** were submitted by Circuits;
- Two were withdrawn after the first scrutiny process;
- Three were not approved by the scrutiny group;
- Seventeen were approved. All of these were for full time appointments but one later was reshaped into a part time appointment;
- Eight profiles for Ministers of Other Conferences and Churches (**MOCC appointments**) were submitted by Circuits;
- Two were withdrawn after the first scrutiny process;
- Six were approved. All of these were for full time appointment;
- In January a further appointment was submitted and approved (part time), in the same Circuit as one of the full time appointments;
- For all of the approved appointments, a satisfactory district manse report was received and checked, a Chair’s reference for the Minister in Oversight and the Supervisor was received and checked, and, where necessary, an ecumenical agreement and reasoned statements were received and checked.

3.2 Stationing – Presbyteral Probationers

- Fifteen presbyteral probationers were in initial stationing;

30. Stationing Committee

- Three of these had candidated under limited deployability;
- Another one needed a part time appointment;
- Another is married to a probationer who is in a circuit appointment;
- A further five had another form of restriction;
- All 15 were matched at ISSC1 in January;
- All of the matches were confirmed though there were some where the students and Circuits needed to navigate some challenges;
- Two profiles were unmatched.

3.3 Stationing – Diaconal Probationers

- One diaconal probationer was in stationing;
- There were several diaconal appointment profiles which could have been suitable for a probationer. A match was made at Diaconal Stationing in January which was confirmed;
- The Chair's reference for Minister in Oversight and Supervisor and the district manse report were provided to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers' Oversight Committee.

3.4 Stationing – Ministers of Other Churches and Conferences

- Four MOCCs were recommended (or conditionally recommended) through the transfer panels in November, one to become Recognised and Regarded and three to transfer into Full Connexion.
- Two of these subsequently met with the Stationing Advisory Committee and both were given permission to serve in an appointment outside the control of the church.
- One MOCC met the Changing Status panels in October and was recommended to transfer into Full Connexion.
- Two MOCCs were nominated by their home churches to become Fellowship Group chaplains / coordinators, alongside a part time circuit role. They went through a reduced transfer process in late November and were both recommended to become Recognised and Regarded (RR).
- At ISSC2 on 8 February, three ministers were matched with appointments (two RR and one Full Connexion). One of these was to a part time appointment in circuit and part time to a profile for a fellowship group chaplain / coordinator.
- As SAG2 on 26 February, one MOCC was matched to a full time appointment.
- At 1 March 2024, there remain two appointments unfilled and one MOCC minister unmatched. The delay has been related to the need for a part time appointment and funding for the fellowship group chaplain / coordinator role.

30. Stationing Committee

These aspects are being resolved and it is hoped that a match will be made at SAG3.

- The four matches that have been made have all been confirmed.

3.5 Induction

- An induction day in person was held for two members of each Circuit Leadership Team for Circuits who will be receiving probationers, in Nottingham on 28 February. Twelve of the sixteen Circuits were represented. It was a helpful day of sharing information and good practice. The leadership team included two recent ordinands, a superintendent and a circuit steward who have wide experience of welcoming probationers, the Queen's Foundation Director for Continuing Ministerial Development and the Ministerial Coordinator in the Connexional Team.
- Further meetings will be held later in the summer at the Queen's Foundation between Ministers in Oversight, superintendents and probationers.
- An induction day on Zoom was held on 13 March for two members of each Circuit Leadership Team for Circuits who will be receiving MOCCs. This is being led by two superintendents who have welcomed MOCCs recently, and themselves were both MOCCs, a circuit steward who has welcomed a MOCC, a recently arrived MOCC, and a District Safeguarding Officer.
- The MOCCs themselves will engage with induction events at various points throughout their first year. The MOCC handbook has been updated and has been provided for all of them. It can also be found on the Methodist Church website here: handbook-for-moccs-and-circuits-2024-2025-complete.pdf (d1yuutt686hf0.cloudfront.net).

4. Report of the Stationing Action Group

- 4.1 The Stationing Action Group (SAG) commenced its work on 29 January 2024 and will continue through to the Conference. At the beginning of the process, there were 40 available appointments (of which five had been identified as 'critical'). Nine presbyters (not all of whom have been available to be matched for a variety of reasons) had still to agree an appointment.
- 4.2 Since then, 16 presbyters and four new appointments have been considered by SAG.
- 4.3 In January, four matches were made which led to invitations being accepted by four presbyters, one of which was for the critical appointment. In February,

30. Stationing Committee

six presbyteral matches were made which led to four invitations to serve being accepted. In March, four matches were made, two of which were for critical appointments. One critical appointment remains unfilled. However, two SAG meetings in April and May, are still to come.

- 4.4 Following submission of a reasoned statement, 13 requests were made to withdraw circuit profiles, at the end of March, one of which was for a critical appointment.
- 4.5 The actions reported mean that at Easter 2024 there remain nineteen available appointments, eight of which are superintendentcies. At the time of writing, there are five presbyters who have not yet been successfully matched with an appointment.

5. Report of Diaconal Stationing

- 5.1 The diaconal stationing process began with nine ordained deacons and one diaconal probationer and 12 circuit profiles. During the matching process, one further ordained deacon entered the stationing process and three further circuit profiles were received.
- 5.2 Despite the numbers of circuit profiles being generous, and all deacons in the matching process upholding and committing to the discipline of direct stationing and itinerancy, the matching process was multifaceted. This was because three ordained deacons in the process are part of a clergy couple where the partner is in a (continuing) station, and other deacons are living with significant pastoral and personal responsibilities.
- 5.3 The Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee working with the Warden took extreme care to seek to understand and honour both the hopes and needs of all those in matching process whether a deacon or a Circuit and sought to make the matters which through prayer they discerned would best enable the Church to join in with the service of God to world.
- 5.4 All circuit and deacons profiles were carefully scrutinised, with 'in person' visits by the Warden to Circuits continuing to be an essential part of the diaconal direct stationing process. In November, the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee (DSSC) met in person with the ordained deacons and those to be stationed as probationers and their households, for stationing conversations.

30. Stationing Committee

- 5.5 The current Deputy Warden was one of the ordained deacons in the stationing process and it had been previously agreed that she would be matched at the beginning of the process to allow her to fulfil her duties in the matching of others.
- 5.6 In January, the DSSC matched eight ordained deacons and one diaconal probationers to nine of the remaining 11 circuit profiles. Two ordained deacons who are part of clergy couples were not matched. The matches were called at SMG3. At the end of January, all these matches were confirmed.
- 5.7 Following on from DSSC 2/SMG 3, the DSSC has continued to work in collaboration with the Stationing Action Group, with Circuits and with members of the Order. This ongoing work includes: two Circuits being able to offer appropriate diaconal appointments for the two deacons not matched in January, another ordained deacon entering stationing and being matched to one of the Circuits without a match in January, and a further circuit profile being received. At the time of writing, two circuit profiles remain unfilled and the prayerful work of discernment is continuing between these Circuits and DSSC.
- 5.8 The DSSC recognises and appreciates that its work has been enabled by the willingness of Circuits to discern diaconal appointments. In addition, the DSSC is thankful for the faithfulness of deacons and their households in living out of the diaconal principles of itinerancy and direct stationing and their generosity in embracing the invitations and opportunities these bring to join in with the work of God in the world.
- 5.9 The Warden has had the privilege of being able to journey with and be a part of the Stationing Review Group. Much of the group's work and recommendations focus around the presbyteral matching/stationing process. Therefore, there will be no significant change to the diaconal matching/stationing process; as the Conference in 2019 continued to uphold the need for a commitment to the discipline of direct stationing and itinerancy for deacons and all candidates for ordained diaconal ministry. However, the Stationing Review Group expresses its gratitude to the members of the MDO who have engaged with and prayed for their work.

6. Stationing Code of Practice

- 6.1 Amendments have been made to the Stationing Code of Practice which reflect changes in Standing Orders and other matters which the Stationing Committee wish to emphasise in the light of experience from year to year. This year, more clarity has been given to the requirements for entering stationing and also the section on Visits has been amended to ensure that all those in the process understand the purpose of the visit and how it is to be conducted.

7. Projections

7.1 Number of Methodist presbyters and probationers in the active work

| Connexional Year | Actual 2020/2021 | Actual 2021/2022 | Actual 2022/2023 | Estimate 2023/2024 | Estimate 2024/2025 |
|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Start of Year | 1308 | 1228 | 1167 | 1122 | 1072 |
| Normal Retirements | 80 | 74 | 65 | 60 | 60 |
| Early Retirements | 4 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Resignations | 13 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Other Losses | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL LOSSES | 98 | 90 | 76 | 71 | 71 |
| New Probationers | 13 | 23 | 21 | 16 | 20 |
| Other Gains | 5 | 6 | 11 | 5 | 5 |
| TOTAL GAINS | 18 | 29 | 31 | 21 | 25 |
| END OF YEAR | 1228 | 1167 | 1122 | 1072 | 1026 |

30. Stationing Committee

7.2 Number of Methodist deacons and probationers in the active work

| Connexional Year | Actual 2020/2021 | Actual 2021/2022 | Actual 2022/2023 | Estimate 2023/2024 | Estimate 2024/2025 |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Start of Year | 135 | 134 | 139 | 132 | 126 |
| Retirements | 5 | 3 | 11 | 8 | 5 |
| Resignations | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other Losses | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL LOSSES | 6 | 3 | 11 | 5 | 5 |
| New Probationers | 5 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| Other Gains | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL GAINS | 5 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| END OF YEAR | 134 | 139 | 132 | 126 | 126 |

8. Stationing Review Group (SRG) Update

8.1 The Stationing Review Group's work continues and, following consultations with the Ministries Committee, the Chairs' Meeting and the Methodist Council, a number of recommendations will be offered to the Church for wider consultation, with a final report to come to the Conference of 2025. The Presbyteral Session of this year's Conference will have the opportunity to consider the current proposals being offered by the SRG.

9. Going Forward

9.1 In conclusion, the Stationing Committee recognises with appreciation the efforts of Circuits and Districts who regularly review ministry requirements, and where appropriate, consider the reconfiguration of appointments, the employment of lay workers, accommodation of alternative expressions of ministry and a recognition of the importance of responding to the request for flexible working patterns, as they discern a way forward in their vision to inspire mission and ministry in their local areas.

9.2 The Stationing Committee membership is by its nature 'fluid'. In broad terms, one Chair of District and one Lay Stationing Representative represent their wider (regional) geographical areas in on behalf of the local lay and ordained

30. Stationing Committee

colleagues. Members of the Stationing Committee, work closely with connexional colleagues, to ensure that the Stationing Committee maintains oversight and responsibility for all matters related to stationing.

- 9.3 We express our thanks therefore to members of each committee and group, recognising the years of service offered by those some of whom this year, hand over with care the baton of their responsibility to new colleagues. Our committee meetings, many of which are now held using Zoom, receive a vast amount of paperwork reflecting the work, which generates guidance and advice to those on the ground carrying different responsibilities. The committee is committed to work in partnership – as lay (generally unpaid) and ordained members - together.
- 9.4 It goes without saying that the Stationing Committee is indebted to ordained ministers who, as they minister alongside churches and Circuits, constantly develop new personal gifts and skills, and share these with lay colleagues, again in the local area. Our gratitude recognises those who, each year, stretch their initial geographical aspirations to respond to the wider needs of the Connexion in the light of the apparent diminishing availability of those offering to serve the Circuits – where the need appears greatest.
- 9.5 Without these committed servants of the Church, ministry as we know it today would simply not exist. We await with interest the work of the Stationing Review Group and note that whatever recommendations are made to the Conference, radical change will require careful and considered introduction, so as to take effect at appropriate times in the stationing calendar. I trust the Conference will be assured of the commitment of this committee to serve the Connexion through times of change ahead.

***RESOLUTION

30/1. The Conference receives the Report.

31. Referred Memorials and Notices of Motion

Below appears a list of Memorials and Notices of Motion from previous Conferences that have not yet received a final reply or are not reported on elsewhere in the Agenda. In October 2023 the Methodist Council received an update on work arising from the 2023 Conference.

In the final column of the list below, under the heading 'current situation', a report is given on how the items of business have been dealt with at this Conference, or what recommendations are being made about how they are dealt with in the future.

Memorials from the 2018 Conference

| MEMORIALS | Work to be undertaken by (eg committee or team) | Deadline for report to the Conference | Current situation |
|--|--|--|--|
| M10: Membership of Church Councils by presbyters | Methodist Council | N/A | Ongoing work. Forming part of the work on ministerial wellbeing. |

Memorials from the 2019 Conference

| MEMORIALS | Work to be undertaken by (eg committee or team) | Deadline for report to the Conference | Current situation |
|--|--|--|--|
| M1, 2: Reimbursement for stipends of ministers on long term sick leave | The Council | 2021 | This is on the agenda of the Connexional Allowances Committee. |

31. Referred Memorials and Notices of Motion

Memorials from the 2022 Conference

| MEMORIALS | Work to be undertaken by (eg committee or team) | Deadline for report to the Conference | Current situation |
|---|--|--|--|
| M12: Energy Efficiency Rating of Methodist Buildings and SO 973 | The Council | | This is being considered as part of the Action for Hope project. |
| M13: Climate Change and Energy Efficiency of Manses | Ministries Committee | | |
| M17: Ecumenical appointments of ministers | Ministries and Stationing Committees | | This has been referred to the Stationing Review Group. |

Memorials from the 2023 Conference

| MEMORIALS | Work to be undertaken by (eg committee or team) | Deadline for report to the Conference | Current situation |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| M13: Ministerial Development Review | Ministries Committee | 2025 | |
| M20: SO 650(6) | The Council, with Law and Polity Committee | 2024 | This is on the Law and Polity Committee's agenda and a report will be brought in 2025. |
| M23: Data Protection | The Council | 2024 | This is on the Law and Polity Committee's agenda and a report will be brought in 2025. |

31. Referred Memorials and Notices of Motion

Notices of Motion from previous Conferences referred for report to the Conference

| NOTICES OF MOTION | Work to be undertaken by (eg committee or team) | Deadline for report to the Conference | Current situation |
|---|--|--|---|
| NoM 2018/205 Stationing Matching | Stationing Committee, Methodist Council | 2019 | The Council conducted some preliminary work on this and, noting the complex challenges, referred its report to the Stationing Committee for further consideration. It has now been referred to the Stationing Review Group. |
| NoM 2022/201: Healing Ministry and Neurodiverse Conditions | Faith and Order Committee | 2024 | See the Faith and Order Committee report for an update on this work. |

***RESOLUTION

31/1. The Conference adopts the Report.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | David Orford, Complaints and Standards Consultant |
| Resolutions | See end of report. |

Summary of content

| | |
|--|---|
| Main points | The purpose of this report is to present to the Conference the recommendations which flow from the review of Part 11. Feedback from discussions in the Council has been reflected in the report. The report contains enhanced rationale explaining the reasoning for each recommendation. |
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | Notice of Motion 2019/202 MC/23/44 Part 11 Review MC/24/18 Part 11 Review Update and Recommendations Memorials M14 (2023), M15 and M20 (2022), and M28 and M29 (2019) |
| Consultations | The Law and Polity Committee The Complaints and Discipline Subcommittee The Methodist Council, January 2024, April 2024 The Part 11 Review Task Group The Safeguarding Conference |

Executive Summary

This paper recognises and builds upon the work already undertaken to drive forward improvements in the Church Complaints and Discipline processes (Part 11). Since August 2023, an external consultant has assisted a dedicated Task Group and the Council to bring forward several recommendations to the Conference.

The recommendations ensure that the tenet and principles of the Complaints and Discipline processes have been retained, and the core values of seeking reconciliation whilst providing support to those impacted by complaints is enhanced.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

The work has identified several areas for potential improvement.

- Initial contact and recording of complaints.
- Confidential/Anonymous/Third party reporting.
- Resolution approaches.
- Investigations.
- Case management.
- Information sharing.
- Management of risk, including complaint triaging, and assurance.
- Records management, and monitoring.
- Awareness, training, and professional development.
- Governance, oversight, and proportionality.

The recommendations have been considered by the Task Group and twice reviewed by the Council prior to presenting to the Conference.

Taken together they would develop the Complaints and Discipline processes for the Church as follows, and where further work is required, the Conference is asked to approve certain recommendations in principle.

The current role of the part time Connexional Complaints Support Worker would be enhanced. A full time Connexional Complaints Support Manager post would be created with an increased scrutiny and decision-making role to oversee the effective management of complaints on behalf of the Church.

Currently the Church does not have full visibility of all complaints, and they may be raised to connexional level at a time in the lifetime of the complaint which makes support and reconciliation more challenging.

There would be a new requirement for all complaints to be recorded and retained at connexional level to assist with managing risk for the Church and the identification of patterns over time. This is vital to ensure that good practice is shared around the Connexion. The report also contains recommendations to improve record keeping and information management.

The Connexional Complaints Support Manager will act as a central point of contact for all external agencies who wish to liaise with the Church, and for members in Circuits and Districts who receive complaints initially.

As society has become more adversarial, it is recommended that the Church amend the role of Local Complaints Officer (LCO) to Local Resolution Officer (LRO). This will help to

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

communicate to both complainants and respondents that the Church will always seek reconciliation and resolution at an early stage where this is appropriate.

Recognising that complaint resolution is a skill and that there can be occasions where there is conflict with the pastoral role of Superintendents who normally act as LCOs it is recommended that any member within a District could be appointed to act as LRO (including the Superintendent if applicable). This would be a matter for Districts to determine.

The recommendations also include an amendment to the current processes whereupon a complaint that is purely related to the conduct of a member would be dealt with solely at District level, including any appeals. The Council also requested that suggested timescales for complaint resolutions are included in the recommendations.

The recommendations also include points that will assist the Safeguarding functions of the Church. Along with better information recording and management, are recommendations to improve formal information sharing with Safeguarding teams, and joint, auditable strategy meetings to ensure effective case progression. This is to ensure that where it is appropriate for safeguarding and complaint processes to work in parallel, that they can do so effectively thus reducing the overall timescales for complaint resolution.

To assist with this, it is recommended that the Church adopt a tiered approach to complaints, to assist with clarity for complainants and respondents.

- Tier 1 – Reconciliation and Resolution
- Tier 2 – Investigation
- Tier 3 – Hearing

Currently there is a mixed pattern of approach at tier two. A complaints panel of three members under a chair is formed to examine complaints. Forming such a panel can take some time, and panels can take a wide approach to complaints from acting almost as a hearing and taking “evidence” to seeking reconciliation again, but with more fervour.

It is recommended that the Church enhance the options it has at tier two, by retaining the current complaints panel, but also allowing the Complaints Support Manager to utilise different methods to progress the complaint. This could include asking a complaints panel chair to investigate alone, or to direct the complaint to a suitably trained case worker, or even external support.

The work also makes recommendations in relation to suspension, and how alternative approaches may be considered by the Church.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

Timeline Summary

Over many years the Conference has amended and changed Part 11 (Complaints and Discipline) of Standing Orders to better serve the mission of The Methodist Church.

Those amendments have covered several structural, legal, and cultural areas.

In 2019, the Conference considered and adopted the following motion.

Notice of Motion 2019/202: Reviewing Part 11 of Standing Orders: In the light of the significant changes, both in UK society and for the Methodist Church of Great Britain since our Standing Orders regarding complaints and discipline were drawn up, the Conference directs the Methodist Council to set the terms of reference for and facilitate the work of a thorough review of Part 11 of our Standing Orders.

This review should include and address how processes of Safeguarding, Complaints and Discipline, and Connexional Team Grievances, can best relate to each other.

The Conference seeks a set of processes that are able to be enacted in timescales that are fair for all concerned and that are appropriate to the capacity, resources and size of the Methodist Church of Great Britain as it is today.

The detailed terms of reference for the review are at Appendix A.

In 2020 the Church received comment from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) that highlighted the requirement to examine church processes in the light of the Inquiry findings.

A stakeholder event was held in January 2021, which helped to clarify and provide focus on the specific issues that needed to be addressed. Once these had been identified, the project progressed through work-streams, each of which had the task of looking at a particular aspect of the Review.

A report was drafted by the Interim General Counsel in October 2021 detailing the work undertaken by the workstreams and offering suggestions for improvements to the Part 11 process. The report highlighted some notable positives.

The report noted firstly that progress in improving the process has already been made. The *Place for Hope* mediation pilot had aided early resolution of complaints at local level before they escalate disproportionately and there had been improved communication and co-ordination between those handling safeguarding matters and those handling complaints and discipline matters.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

The report also argued that the process largely works well but needed refinement.

Opinions were divided between those who considered that Part 11 should simply be replaced, and those who thought that Part 11 worked quite well in practice but needed some refinement. The report concluded that the current Part 11 process should be retained but made to work better.

The report outlined a number of areas to which attention needed to be given if the processes were to work better including:

- The need for a clear distinction between what is a “complaint” and what might be classed as a “grievance”, and for clarification of the different processes for dealing with them.
- The need for the early (or earlier) resolution of complaints and for an initial ‘triage system’ to assess each complaint and how best it can be resolved (eg by referring to mediation or local reconciliation rather than initiating the formal complaints process), with the aim of avoiding unnecessary escalation.
- The need to review roles (eg the appropriateness of the Local Complaints Officer (LCO) role being held by Circuit Superintendents and District Chairs).
- The possibility of ways to streamline the current process to reduce delays and perceived complexity (eg by reducing the number of levels within the disciplinary process and/or fast tracking some cases straight to the disciplinary stage).
- The need to consider IICSA’s recommendations, particularly the desire for transparency in the investigation of complaints.
- The possibility of entering into agreements with other denominations to determine each other’s complaints or establishing an “Ecumenical Ombudsman” to maintain impartiality and objectivity when assessing complaints.
- The need to review the types of sanction that can be imposed and how they can be enforced.
- The need to review the terminology used in the process (which is perceived to be legalistic and not user-friendly).
- The need for detailed work to align the Part 11 process with the Church’s Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) strategy as it was adopted at the 2021 Conference.
- The importance of ensuring care for survivors of abuse.
- The need for regular, obligatory training for all involved in managing the process.
- Noting that the current process relies heavily on volunteers (and recognising delays caused by volunteers’ lack of availability), the need to review the resources available to manage the process.
- The need to consider enabling complaints panels to meet online rather than in person by default (as meetings can be convened more quickly if held online) and consider other ways in which technology can be used to support the overall process, integrating practices that were adopted out of necessity during lockdown.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

In 2021 the Conference also adopted the Strategy for Justice, Dignity, and Solidarity which further impacted on the review of the Complaints and Discipline processes.

Further hiatus was caused by the Covid 19 pandemic, and consideration of the final IICSA report which was not published until 2022.

The 2022 Conference adopted the report 'The Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers: Commitments and Expectations'. The language of "expectation" carries with it the possibility of implications for the Church's disciplinary processes, if and when it is alleged that those expectations have not been met and raises the question of how, therefore, should the Commitments and Expectations be treated under Part 11.

At its meeting in April 2023, the Council received paper MC/23/44 relating to the review of the Church's complaints and discipline process and passed the following resolutions:

44/2 The Council directs that an interim report is made to the 2023 Conference, and that a final report is made to the 2024 Conference.

44/3. The Council directs the Secretary of the Conference to appoint a Task Group to assist the external consultant and to recommend the final report to the Conference, comprised as follows.

- *The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice, or their representative.*
- *Up to two representatives of the Law and Polity Committee and/or the Complaints and Discipline Sub-Committee.*
- *A representative of the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee.*
- *A presbyter or deacon with appropriate pastoral experience.*
- *A representative of the Safeguarding Committee.*
- *Up to two other persons with, relevant expertise.*

An interim report was made to the 2023 Conference, at Section H of the Council's report.

After the Conference an open recruitment process was held to find a consultant to take forward the final stages of the Review. More than 20 applications were received from which five candidates were interviewed. The role was offered to, and accepted by, Mr David Orford in late August 2023.

Mr Orford (The consultant) is an ex-senior police officer with many years experience of complaints and discipline processes in many organisations. He is now a private consultant working in the UK and abroad.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

Consultation Methodology

The timescales for the consultation and Task Group phase prior to this paper for Conference were as follows.

- August 2023
 - Consultant appointed.
- September 2023
 - Document review of work conducted to date and benchmarking exercise with comparable organisations.
- October 2023
 - Interviews with key stakeholders and groups within the Methodist Church.
 - Analysis of research.
 - Production of initial draft recommendations.
- November 2023
 - First task group meeting to consider draft recommendations.
 - Further interviews with internal and external stakeholders.
- December 2023
 - Review and analysis of task group feedback and actions.
 - Process mapping and flowchart production.
 - Council paper drafting.
- January 2024
 - Second task group meeting. Confirmation of further recommendations to the Council.
 - Council meeting and consideration of recommendations.
- February 2024
 - Review and analysis of Council feedback and requested actions.
 - Further meetings and evidence gathering with internal and external stakeholders.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

- March 2024
 - Third task group meeting and approval of final recommendations to the Conference.
 - Draft Conference paper for the Council.
- April 2024
 - Council meeting approval for final recommendations to the Conference.

Benchmarking Results

The work undertaken to date by many in the Church provided an excellent foundation for this initial phase of the Part 11 review. Those findings have been summarised earlier and are available in Conference archives.

The consultant further examined the Complaints and Discipline processes within the following organisations using publicly available information, and some limited interviews.

- The Church of England
- The Catholic Church
- The Baptist Church
- The United Reformed Church
- The Board of Deputies of British Jews
- The Muslim Council of Britain
- The Salvation Army

Benchmarking was carried out to a foundation level examining common building blocks for an effective complaints and discipline process.

- Access to information
- Complaint reporting pathways
- Support to complainants
- Whistleblowing
- Anonymous and third party reporting
- Appeal pathways
- Process transparency

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

As only publicly available information was accessible, the consultant was not able to benchmark against the following areas

- Recording practices
- Resolution approaches
- Investigation methods
- Appeal processes
- Oversight and scrutiny governance

However, it was possible to deduce certain information from published documents such as hearing transcripts, or media reporting. This information was considered as part of the workstream.

Overall, no organisation was found to have a fully comprehensive, open and transparent suite of complaint policies and procedures.

In general safeguarding complaint processes were much easier to find in comparison to complaints relating to the conduct of an individual. In some organisations safeguarding complaints were the only obvious complaint route.

Some organisations restricted the complaint process to complaints only made against persons in more prominent positions, combined with a significantly reduced pathways for other complaints.

A number of organisations had limited appeal pathways, with no national oversight and scrutiny.

Very few organisations appeared to provide a pathway for the reporting of anonymous information, or third-party reporting. Although, most did have whistleblowing policies.

No organisation was found to have a comprehensive approach which could be used as a complete benchmark for excellence.

As such, the current policies and procedures of the Methodist Church were not found by the Consultant to be disproportionate in relation to comparable organisations.

In fact, in many areas the Consultant found the Methodist Church was seen to be setting an excellent example, although often at the expense of timeliness or proportionality.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

Task Group Findings

The Task Group held its first meeting on 3 November 2023 and discussed a report from the Consultant which identified potential improvements in the following areas:

- Initial contact and recording of complaints.
- Confidential/Anonymous/Third party reporting
- Resolution approaches
- Investigations
- Case management
- Information sharing
- Management of risk, including complaint triaging, and assurance
- Records management, and monitoring
- Awareness, training, and professional development
- Governance, oversight, and proportionality

Following the Task Group workshop and further meetings with key stakeholders, the initial recommendations were consolidated within the following areas:

- Policy and Guidance
- Records Management
- Process Improvement
- Governance, management, and oversight
- Safeguarding alignment
- Learning and Development

The Task Group met again on 12 January 2024 to consider the Consultant's updated recommendations, and these were submitted to Council on 30 January 2024.

The Council considered and supported all recommendations in principle and made recommendations to assist with clarification and communication.

The Task Group met again on 18 March 2024, and the Council again in April 2024.

Following final revisions, this document is presented to the Conference.

The future proposed Complaints and Discipline structure

The new proposed structure is intended to achieve the following for the Church.

- Increased focus on early reconciliation and resolution.
- Improved timeliness for dealing with complaints.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

- Greater consistency of outcomes across the Connexion.
- Increased visibility and transparency.
- Improved co-ordination with Safeguarding.
- Improved risk management.

A key feature of the Methodist Church approach to complaints is the desire to see Methodist values at the core of processes. As society has become more adversarial during disputes with organisations, achieving reconciliation in any complaint process has become more challenging. This was recognised by many participants in the review, from all perspectives.

It was an aspiration of previous workstreams to attempt to resolve complaints at an earlier stage in their life cycle.

It is a foundation of the amended structure to re-energise both early resolution and reconciliation for the benefit of all involved in a complaint.

In essence, the current complaints and discipline process works at three tiers:

- (i) resolution of complaints at local level;
- (ii) referral of unresolved complaints to connexional level;
- (iii) referral of serious complaints to disciplinary charges and hearings

A flow chart of the current process is at Appendix B.

Feedback from many involved in the current processes is that they have areas of overlap that are both formal and informal that can cause confusion.

For example, complainants can be engaging with safeguarding staff who quite rightly have a focus on gathering information to assist with risk assessments, whilst staff working within Part 11 are considering reconciliation opportunities.

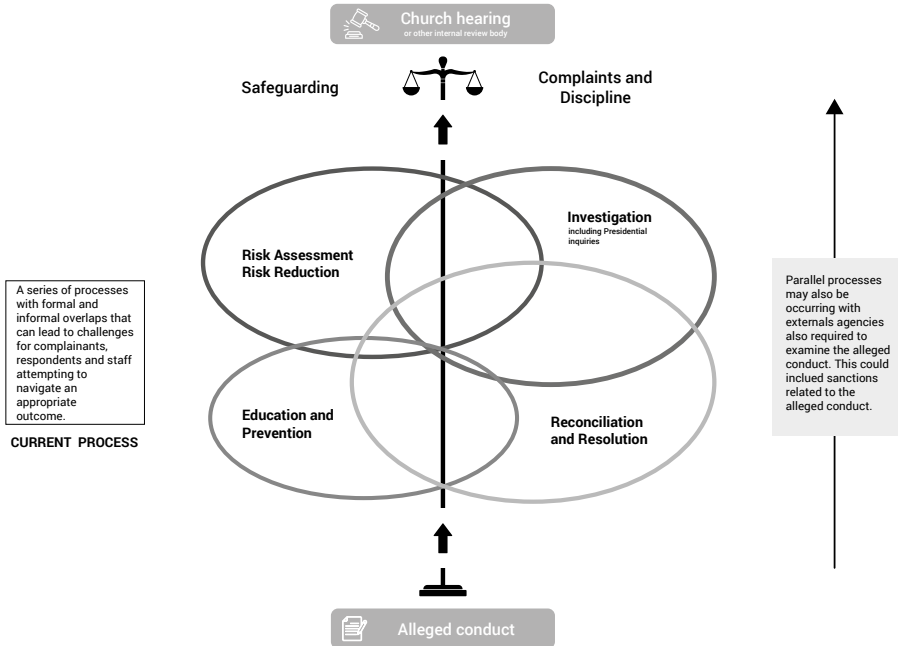
Equally Safeguarding Committees have a formal remit to act as Local Complaints Officers within Part 11 Complaints and Discipline processes.

It is not intended that Part 11 will require significant amendments that will alter the tone and tenor of the processes. This also aligns with previous Conference decisions.

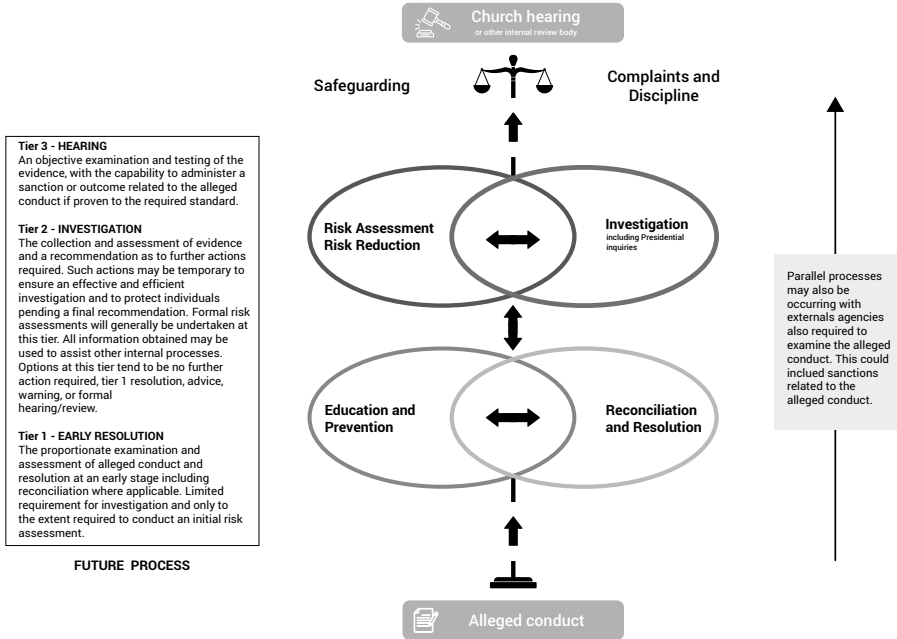
It is intended to retain the current three-tier model, but with improved support and resources. This was also a request of the 2019 Conference.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

The graphics below illustrates the current processes, and how the amended processes are intended to bring greater clarity and consistency to Part 11 for all those involved.



32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders



The amended structure and processes are intended to adjust the formal and informal overlaps between safeguarding and complaints that currently exist.

Where overlaps are required, they will be formalised, and where they cause confusion, they will be re-configured.

This diagram for the future structure above can be summarised as follows:

- (i) **Tier One:** as currently, the focus is on reconciliation and resolution, involving proportionate examination and assessment of alleged conduct and resolution at an early stage. This will include reconciliation where applicable. There will be little need for any significant investigation at tier one and only to the extent required to conduct an initial risk assessment. However, complaints will be handled by Local Resolution Officers, not Local Complaints Officers. The rationale for this is outlined later in the document.
- (ii) **Tier Two:** the focus is on investigation, involving the collection and assessment of evidence relating to a complaint and a recommendation as to further actions

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

required. Such actions may be temporary to ensure an effective and efficient investigation and to protect individuals pending a final recommendation.

Formal safeguarding risk assessments will generally be undertaken at tier two. All information obtained as part of a safeguarding investigation may be used to assist a complaint investigation (or other internal process if appropriate) and vice versa.

Options at tier two may be:

- no further action required, case closed.
- refer back to tier one for resolution, reconciliation, or advice.
- provide feedback, which might be cautionary in nature, to assist with personal reflection, but otherwise no further action required.
- refer up to tier three for formal hearing/review/panel (as required).

(iii) **Tier Three:** as currently, this relates to disciplinary charges for serious matters, involving an objective examination and testing of the evidence, with the capability to administer a sanction or outcome related to the alleged conduct if proven to the required standard.

The arrows on the graphic indicate formal information flow and options. For example, it is possible for a complaint to be assessed initially as quite serious, and then following prompt investigation for it to be reviewed and referred for reconciliation.

Currently it is custom and practice for safeguarding investigations to take primacy and for complaint processes to be suspended until their conclusion. This brings a degree of simplicity to the processes, but can add significant time to achieve a conclusion, including added stress for all those involved.

The graphic illustrates that the new safeguarding and complaints processes can work in parallel and may also be in conjunction with processes outside of the Church. For example, police investigations or local authority interventions.

At times the processes may overlap regarding information sharing, or co-ordination of strategy. To improve alignment with current safeguarding processes then full cognisance of the potential outcomes at each stage must be taken, and this discussed within the church within a formal structure.

Whilst improvements have been made in a number of these areas since the workstream commenced in 2019, it is hoped that the recommendations below will add more structure and formalise good practice.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

Recommendations to the Conference with the rationale.

Each recommendation is summarised below, with a rationale explaining the background and reason why the recommendation is being made to the Conference.

Some recommendations are seeking definitive guidance, and others may be seeking approval for a principle, or agreement of a direction of travel.

It is also acknowledged that some recommendations may have budgetary implications. These discussions have commenced within the Connexional Team and more information will be available for the Conference.

Recommendation One - *The current definition of a "complaint" in Standing Order 1101(i) should be improved. Part 11 should be amended to clarify what Part 11 may not be used for, or to indicate alternative procedures for certain complaints (See Appendix C).*

Policy and Guidance Recommendations

The definition of a complaint is the foundation of the Part 11 process. Benchmarking with other organisations showed a number of different approaches. Some organisations define a complaint in a very specific way, often related to a defined code of conduct for members of that organisation.

Others take a wide view of what constitutes a complaint to ensure that many issues are captured. But then provide clarification as to what is not a complaint.

The Methodist Church takes a different approach with a definition that captures many issues, but no subsequent clarification as to what is not a complaint.

This creates a risk that the process may not be used for the role it was originally intended and may also create an unrealistic expectation in the minds of complainants.

It also risks complainants utilising multiple processes, with a consequent impact on them, respondents and the Church.

As the Church does not have a code of conduct that is drafted in a way that would be widely recognised as such, then the absence of any clarification at this stage of the complaint process is a risk.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

The consultant has advised that the initial recommendations were based on an assumption that the definition of a complaint would not be altered as reflected in previous Conference considerations.

However, it is not the case that the recommendations are linked specifically to the requirement to redefine a “complaint”.

It would however be advisable for it to be clarified before any recommendations on improvements in information management and record keeping are implemented. As these will use the definition of a complaint to determine system processes and recording requirements.

Recommendation Two - *Guidance should be drafted to assist the identification of alternative resolution approaches where reconciliation may not be appropriate. The guidance to include suggested timescales, and pathways for support that may be available to any member with specific needs or vulnerabilities.*

Appendix C contains illustrative examples of options to consider in relation as to what Conference may wish to exclude from the Part 11 process.

To maximise opportunities for early resolution of complaints, there may be occasions where reconciliation is not possible and where there may not be a justification to proceed to a more formal investigation as indicated at tier two. Examples may be a lack of evidence, or a lack of desire to take the matter further. There may be opportunities for the harm caused by a complaint to be acknowledged in a non-judgemental way that assists with healing and recovery but where true reconciliation is not possible.

It is therefore recommended that additional guidance is provided for tier one to assist with exploring other approaches which could potentially be used for an early resolution.

For all tiers, there may be occasions where either a complainant or a respondent may require support in order to take part in the processes. In principle, and in line with the mission and goals of the Methodist Church, such support should be facilitated wherever possible. Examples are the use of services from Place for Hope to assist with mediation, or the Discrimination and Abuse Response Service which has been trialled to assist members suffering from such issues.

It is not possible to be prescriptive about the entirety of support services that may be engaged by support members, but ongoing revised guidance should assist members to access such services as they are available.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

Recommendation Three – *The title and role of “Local Complaints Officer” should be changed to “Local Resolution Officer” with other appropriate amendments to Standing Orders and guidance where required.*

It is recommended that the guidance include suggested timescales for complaint resolution to assist complainants and respondents manage expectations. Initially it is recommended that these are one month for tier one, and three months for tier two.

As mentioned earlier, with the advent of a more adversarial approach to complaining against organisations in society, there is a risk in calling the initial contact individual a “Complaints” officer.

Our current terminology allows a perception that a complaint progresses along an adversarial pathway when the desire is to maintain the focus on resolution and reconciliation wherever possible.

The research and benchmarking also found that certain members of the Church felt there was conflict with their role under Part 11 as a Local Complaints Officer, and their desire to be pastoral in their approach.

By amending the title to Local Resolution Officer for the initial contact officer the Church will be communicating a proportionate expectation to both complainant and respondent at the first stage.

It is further recommended that there is no requirement in role for Circuit Superintendents to act as Local Resolution Officers although they should not be precluded from taking on the role if they wish.

The aim should be the identification of the correct person with the best skills and approach to assist with the resolution of complaints at tier one.

It would be for a District to appoint their own Local Resolution Officers through the most appropriate means. This could be through the District Policy Committee or the District Resolution Group.

To assist with increasing the potential for early resolution, it is further recommended that where a complaint is made by a member or any other person, and it is solely in relation to the conduct of another member (not being an office holder) then this complaint will only be dealt with at tier one.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

As the discipline options against a member are extremely limited it is disproportionate within the Part 11 process to take such complaints beyond an attempt at reconciliation and resolution.

Within this context it is recommended that such complaints only have an avenue of appeal to their District Chair.

Recommendation Four - *All complaints should be categorised and recorded at connexional level to assist with oversight, scrutiny, and improvement.*

Records Management Recommendations.

Currently complaints that come to the attention of the Connexional Complaints Worker are recorded. These are complaints where the complainant has elected their right to refer a matter to connexional level, or the matter has been referred by the Local Complaints Officer.

Where a complaint is either resolved locally, or the complainant does not elect their right to refer, then there is no commensurate connexional awareness of the issue.

This is a risk for the Church in relation to identifying issues for improvement, or patterns which may necessitate further examination. For example, a District may not have any recorded complaints because nobody has complained, or they have an excellent approach to resolving issues prior to a complaint being generated. In both situations the Connexional Complaint Worker would receive no notification of complaints from the District.

This may be good practice within the District that could benefit the whole Church, but the pattern may not be identified with no connexional awareness looking at the whole picture.

It is also a risk in relation to certain individuals. Over time a complaint pattern may arise in relation to their conduct as they move across different roles and locations.

This is often seen as a lesson learned from inquiries where patterns of behaviour were missed by organisations where each individual complaint appeared minor or was dismissed. But when the whole pattern was examined there was a picture that warranted further examination.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

Finally, a standardised recording approach across the Church would assist with any audit and scrutiny function, along with statutory compliance requirements in relation to information management.

It would also assist in terms of transparency should the Church wish to communicate internally or externally in relation to the complaint picture as a whole, or for certain sub-groups.

Recommendation Five - *The Church should adopt a records management system for storing all complaints data in line with the Church's overall records management strategy*

The solution to these issues is to ensure that all complaints are recorded and retained centrally at connexional level.

Currently any complaint referred to connexional level is recorded in the personal directories of the Connexional Complaints Worker using standard office management tools (Microsoft Office).

This is a risk for the Church in terms of GDPR and information management compliance. It also does not assist in relation to managing cases and ensuring appropriate disclosure for hearings if required.

Other more bespoke systems are widely used within customer service organisations or the legal profession, and it is believed that a proportionate system to match the requirements of the Church can be obtained.

Process Improvement Recommendations.

Recommendation Six - *The Church should adopt an appropriate case management system for recording complaints, including a formal process for review, oversight and scrutiny.*

Recommendation Seven - *The Church should adopt a holistic anonymous reporting system to capture concerns from all individuals who wish to raise them.*

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

In concert with recommendation five, it is recommended that any system obtained by the Church to record complaints, should facilitate their early resolution or investigation as required, with all information held appropriately to ensure oversight and scrutiny and assist with joint decision making such as with safeguarding who also have a case management system.

In many organisations there may be individuals who wish to raise concerns, but do not want to give their personal details. This is slightly different to whistleblowing where confidentiality of personal details is paramount, although there are parallels between the two approaches.

During many external inquiries the lack of such a system was reported as a barrier to some individuals who would have informed an organisation of their concerns relating to the conduct of individuals. However they did not wish to be a whistleblower.

Questions were raised by members during consultation on the necessity for this recommendation, as a whistleblowing policy did exist within the church, and it could give pathway for malicious accusations.

Assurances were given that any issue passed to the Church through this pathway would still receive a triage examination and proportionate action.

It is highly unlikely that any investigation would commence solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

However, it has been the experience of other organisations that an anonymous report can add weighting to other information or corroboration which could assist decision making.

Recommendation Eight - *The Church should adopt a simplified three tier model for addressing complaints which better aligns with safeguarding practices.*

The adoption of an anonymous reporting system is recommended in relation to managing risks to the reputation of the Church. The working party believes that it is much better to know about a potential issue and decide not to take action, than to not know about it and be ignorant of any risk. Any such system would have to ensure absolute confidentiality for the person raising the concern and assure them that they cannot be identified and demonstrate that the Church has provided the widest possible routes for concerns to be raised.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

Under the current model, District Safeguarding Officers conduct limited investigations into issues relating to the alleged conduct of individuals. This requirement is to assist the overall risk assessment processes of the Church and make proportionate and informed decisions.

It was found during the benchmarking and stakeholder interviews conducted that there was reasonable clarity and understanding of what was trying to be achieved within safeguarding processes.

At this tier within the Complaints and Discipline processes the examination of issues is carried out by a Connexional Complaints Panel.

As can be seen on the current flowchart at Appendix B, the panel has the option to explore reconciliation, dismiss the complaint, or carry out a full investigation. However, the current weighting and expectation of the panel remains that they seek reconciliation wherever possible.

This wide variation in role can lead to a wide variation in operating practices as different panel chairs adopt different approaches.

Feedback to the Consultant was that this can be the case, which can cause confusion for complainants and respondents. Especially if they are also dealing with safeguarding processes which have the potential to be more intrusive in their questioning.

It is therefore recommended that it is made clear that any examination of an issue at tier two within the complaint's framework is more of an investigative examination.

This does not preclude an issue being referred for reconciliation if the opportunity arose, however experience would indicate that reconciliation at this stage is more challenging as positions tend to be more entrenched.

By increasing the transparency and alignment between complaints and safeguarding processes at this tier, it also raises the opportunity to share information and evidence obtained. As it has been gathered for an investigative reason at tier two in both processes with greater transparency provided to complainants and respondents.

This may minimise the number of times a complainant or respondent is required to give information for Church purposes. It may also assist with formal risk assessment purposes as more of a holistic picture can be obtained with the shared information.

Within the proposed framework it is also recommended that the Church increase the number of options available to assist with the investigation of complaints should it be required.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

There was strong support for the retention of a Complaints Panel formed of trained volunteer members. However, such an approach may not be proportionate in certain cases either due to the timeliness required, or the severity of the allegations.

As such it is recommended that wider discretion is allowed within the Church to include other options to assist with an appropriate response to an allegation. These are outlined with the process flowchart, and are as follows:

- Investigation by a Complaint Panel Chair
- Investigation by a Complaint Panel of two persons and a Chair
- Investigation by a Methodist Church specialist case worker (if required)
- Investigation by an external person, or organisation.

Recommendation Nine - *The Church should ensure that these recommendations are adequately resourced to ensure that capability matches anticipated future demand.*

It remains the case within the amended processes that a Complaints Panel may be convened if that is the appropriate response.

A number of the recommendations are designed to ensure that complaints are dealt with at an appropriate level. This is designed to reduce the risk of the complaint escalating to a higher level, and maximising the opportunities for reconciliation and resolution.

However, it is acknowledged that the current approach of utilising a part time Connexional Complaints Worker and an all-volunteer cohort of Local Complaints Officers and Complaints Panels has reached the limit of its capacity.

Recommendation Ten - *The Church should introduce a post of "Connexional Complaints Support Manager" to replace the current post of Connexional Complaints Worker. Standing Orders should be amended to give the post appropriate decision-making powers related to the management of complaints.*

Governance, Management and Oversight Recommendations

Whilst the post of Connexional Complaints Worker is not fully defined within Part 11, their role greatly assists with the effective management of complaint processes.

It was clear from the research that the Complaints Worker has a deep understanding of church issues and has gathered significant expertise whilst in role.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

However, their role remains an advisory role within the current processes and this does not assist the proportionate and expeditious management of complaint cases where they are unable to formally intervene and bring their experience to focus where required.

As a manager, there would be an expectation from the Church that they were required to assist with the timely management of complaints, the identification of issues to improve learning and prevent further occurrences, along with providing support to both complainant and respondents during the process.

Previous reports to the Conference have sought to find a way to better triage complaints, and it is recommended that this role would be required to provide that function on behalf of the Church.

Because there will be increased visibility of complaints at connexional level through improved recording, the Connexional Complaints Support manager will be the hub of a complaints triage process that will direct complaints along the correct pathway at the earliest stage. This will ensure that complaints are proportionately examined, and should an issue not be a complaint under Part 11 it can be referred to the correct pathway as early as possible. Oversight of the Complaints Support Manager's decisions will be enshrined in normal line management processes within the Connexional Team.

The new process envisaged that appeals against the manager's decisions could be addressed to the President in certain circumstances.

Recommendation Eleven - *The Church should ensure that there is an independent review capability to ensure confidence in the system for all parties.*

It is further recommended that the role includes a requirement to report on trends, lessons learned and outcomes from complaints to enhance transparency, understanding and confidence in the processes, in particular in relation to JDS matters.

Recommendation Twelve - *Standing Orders should be amended to align the rights of appeal for complaints to ensure proportionality, including altering the rights of appeal for certain complaints at appropriate levels.*

Currently the Church has obtained external assistance to review certain practices and investigations when required. Such assistance often takes time to acquire and commission. It is therefore recommended that the Church considers formalising their

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

external review requirements that will allow the Church to more adequately demonstrate confidence in their systems to complainants, respondents and external interested parties.

The research and benchmarking carried out by the Consultant showed that there are significant routes of appeal for any person who makes a complaint to the Methodist Church. On the one hand this demonstrates a real desire to achieve a fair resolution for the complainant, but on the other hand can significantly add to the process and support requirements to resource the appeal processes.

It is therefore recommended that the Church adopt a more proportionate approach to appeals that balances the needs of complainants, respondents and the Church.

The main recommended changes to the appeal levels are as follows.

- A member or other person complaining about the conduct of another member will have access to an appeal that will be determined at District level and not Connexional level. Appeals to connexional level will be reserved to complaints related to a member who also holds a formal position or office within the Church. This is a proportionate approach and reflects the risks to Church reputation that office holders carry, in comparison to the conduct of members as individuals.
- A member may appeal to the President should they feel that their complaint was inappropriately managed at tier two. This includes the decision to not record a complaint under Part 11. The President's role is to examine the appropriateness of the process undertaken and may re-direct as required. It is not to determine the validity of a complaint and pass judgement.

Recommendation Thirteen - *The act of "Suspension" should be amended to describe more adequately the temporary duties to be carried out by members who are respondents to a complaint. Suspension should only be used in circumstances where the respondent is required to temporarily cease and desist from any and all activities associated with the Church and may not in any capacity exercise their role.*

- There are no recommended changes to appeals following a discipline hearing.

The consultant advised that there could be a significant perception challenge when utilising the term "suspension". For many organisations the act of suspending an individual is to temporarily remove the rights, privileges or powers associated with their duties.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

However, in the Church this is often not the case, and the act of suspension is to temporarily put conditions on the duties of the respondent. When the individual is then observed carrying out certain other activities whilst “suspended”, this can cause confusion for complainants.

Suspension can have a significant impact on the respondent as there will always be a requirement to hold all information in confidence and so a wide understanding of the rationale is not always possible. This can lead to undue stress and cause significant personal challenges for respondents.

It is therefore recommended that the Conference amend Standing Orders to allow a more proportionate description of the activity restrictions placed on individuals who are temporarily under investigation.

If suspension is retained as an option, then this is recommended to refer to a full temporary revocation of the right to conduct any activities undertaken in their normal role.

If there is only a partial restriction placed on their duties then alternative terminology to suspension should be utilised. The Church may wish to approve this recommendation in principle (the levels) and remit further work to other groups to determine the final terms to be used to describe each level.

For example,

Level 1 – No restrictions on duties

Level 2 – Voluntary restrictions on duties (agrees to only carry out certain duties)

Level 3 – Restricted duties (directed to only carry out certain duties)

Level 4 – Suspension (directed to cease all activity in their role, and may have other conditions imposed)

Any breach of the conditions will automatically trigger a review of the conditions and may also constitute a separate Complaints and Discipline investigation.

Recommendation Fourteen – *The Church should formalise the risk and information sharing conversations that take place between complaints and safeguarding staff. It is recommended that this is undertaken through regular strategy meetings.*

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

Safeguarding Alignment Recommendations

There are excellent relationships within the Church, and information is currently shared on a case by case basis. This does however raise a risk that information sharing relies on personal relationships. New staff may take time to build those relationships and equally there are risks if staff are absent on leave or other reasons.

Formalising information sharing in a proportionate structure will reduce these risks, whilst also affording the Church an enhanced audit trail to assist with decision making, scrutiny and transparency.

It is proposed that this is initially trialled as a twice monthly auditable strategy meeting at connexional level between those senior members tasked with oversight and management of their respective safeguarding and complaint cases.

Recommendation Fifteen – *Standing Orders should be amended to remove the requirement for the Safeguarding Committee to act as a Local Complaint Officer.*

Along with the attendance of the Church Communications team to ensure appropriate advice where there is a risk of reputational harm.

Under current Standing Orders, the Safeguarding Committee has the power to undertake the role of a Local Complaint Officer.

The Safeguarding Committee, on a referral to it of any matter under clause (9) above or in the fulfilment of its functions under Standing Order 232, and without prejudice to those functions, may investigate any such matter as if it were a local complaints officer with all the powers and responsibilities of such an officer but following its own procedures as set out in Standing Orders

Should the Conference adopt the recommendation for Local Complaints Officers to be changed to Local Resolution Officers then it is considered that this section of Standing Orders would no longer be required.

Recommendation Sixteen – *The Conference should recognise that through shared decision making processes there may be occasions where complaints and safeguarding processes take place in parallel and direct that Standing Orders enable this to happen.*

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

There is also a risk that conflating the role may give rise to confusion for complainants and respondents who interact with both processes at the same time.

Research within the Church and an examination of previous cases has shown that in general complaint cases are paused until the parallel safeguarding processes have fully concluded. This appears to be common practice rather than an evidence based decision following a risk assessment.

Automatic suspension of activity without a review or rationale can often lead to an increased risk, and create new issues. Especially for those who raise concerns or those subject of investigations.

It is recognised that complaint cases may be paused for reasonable grounds, however this should be an auditable, evidence-based decision.

Where it is appropriate both processes should be allowed to run in parallel to reduce the harm to all those involved and assist with earlier outcomes and healing.

Recommendation Seventeen – *The Church should maximise the use of its current Learning Network to assist with developing the best skills in all members who may be required to undertake roles within the Complaints and Discipline process.*

Learning and Development Recommendations

As an organisation that is geographically diverse, raising the knowledge, understanding, and skills of members is a challenge. Traditional methods of training and development may not always be appropriate.

With the use of the Learning Network, the Church could maintain and enhance the knowledge of those who have to undertake different roles within the Complaints and Discipline processes.

Recommendation Eighteen – *The Church increase the involvement of its Communications function within the Complaints and Discipline processes in order to provide advice, guidance and assistance with internal and external communications.*

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

This could further enhance lessons learned from Complaints if they are also used as part of continual development and the production of learning packages.

There is an old adage that bad news does not get better with time. Involving the Communications team at an earlier stage in complaints cases gives the Church a better chance to assist with managing reputational risk. It is recommended that a member of the Communications team takes part in the regular case strategy meetings with Safeguarding and Complaints staff.

It is further recommended that the Communications team assist with regular campaigns to raise awareness of the new and updated complaints processes, the methods to raise an issue, and the support that may be offered to members.

Proposal

If all recommendations are accepted, **Appendix D** contains a process map showing how the amended processes would be expected to work in practice.

The Conference is requested to consider the proposed recommendations and support their implementation through the appropriate Church mechanisms.

The motion 2019/202 of Conference stated, *“The Conference seeks a set of processes that are able to be enacted in timescales that are fair for all concerned and that are appropriate to the capacity, resources and size of the Methodist Church of Great Britain as it is today.”*

It is the recommendation of the Complaints and Discipline Task Group and the Methodist Council that these recommendations will support the motion above.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 32/1. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 32/2. The Conference adopts Recommendation 1 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to draft wording for the definition of a complaint to ensure that it covers the behaviour of a respondent and is limited as in Appendix C.**
- 32/3. The Conference adopts Recommendation 2 and directs the Connexional Team in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee to produce guidance.**
- 32/4. The Conference adopts Recommendation 3 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to draft the necessary Standing Orders.**

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

- 32/5. The Conference adopts Recommendations 4, 5, 6, and 7, and directs the Connexional Council to oversee implementation.**
- 32/6. The Conference adopts Recommendation 8 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to draft the necessary Standing Orders.**
- 32/7. The Conference adopts Recommendations 9 and 10 and directs the Connexional Council to oversee implementation.**
- 32/8. The Conference adopts Recommendation 11 and directs the Connexional Council in conjunction with the Law and Polity Committee to oversee implementation.**
- 32/9. The Conference adopts Recommendations 12 and 13 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to draft the necessary Standing Orders**
- 32/10. The Conference adopts Recommendation 14 and directs the Connexional Council to oversee implementation.**
- 32/11. The Conference adopts Recommendations 15 and 16 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to draft the necessary Standing Orders**
- 32/12. The Conference adopts Recommendations 17 and 18 and directs the Connexional Council to oversee implementation.**
- 32/13. The Conference adopts the Report as its further reply to Memorials M14 (2023), M15 and M20 (2022), and M28 and M29 (2019).**

Appendix A – Review Terms of Reference

- 1 To clarify the purpose of the complaints and discipline process;**
- 2 To clarify what the complaints and discipline process is not to be utilised for and what it cannot be expected to achieve as an outcome;**
- 3 To make recommendation as to whether there is a need to narrow the definition of complaint as currently set out in SO 1101;**
- 4 To consider whether there is a need to clarify or alter the scope of the role of the local complaints officer and who fulfils this role for the purposes of SO 1121.**
- 5 To make recommendations as to any change or clarification that is required in Part 11 in respect of role of the local complaints officer;**

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

- 6 To review the ability of complainants to refer a complaint that a local complaints officer refuses to refer to the Connexional Complaints Panel and make recommendations as to whether the right of a complainant to refer themselves in such a situation should continue, and to consider whether there should be alternative means by which the decision of a local complaints officer can be reconsidered and if so, how such alternative means would work;
- 7 To make recommendations as to how the consideration of complaints can be undertaken in a more efficient and effective way which ensures uniformity as to the process followed and that the consideration of the complaint and drawing of conclusions takes into account the nature, context and background to the complaint;
- 8 To make recommendations as to any amendments required to the courses of action open to a complaints team either at the initial stages (SO 1123) or after full consideration (SO 1124);
- 9 To make any recommendations as to whom a complaint should be capable of being made against with a particular view to clarifying whether or not officeholders who are not members of the Church should be subject to Part 11;
- 10 To clarify the alternative dispute resolutions that can be utilised as part of the complaints process and to make recommendations as to how and when alternative methods of dispute resolution are best utilised and those circumstances where such methods are not appropriate;
- 11 To make recommendations as to the implication that not being willing to participate in alternative method of dispute resolution, when deemed appropriate, would have on the conclusion of a complaint;
- 12 To consider whether there is a need to expand the right to appeal against the conclusions of a complaints team and, if such an expansion is considered appropriate, to make recommendations to address this;
- 13 To consider the reasons for delays occurring within the Part 11 process and make recommendations that seek to reduce these delays and in particular to consider whether there are “types” of complaints or complaints in certain circumstances that should be dealt with in a reduced time period, and to make recommendations as to how this might be achieved;
- 14 To make recommendations as to the further work that needs to be undertaken more effectively to link the complaints and discipline, safeguarding, competence, and stationing procedures as well as the Connexional Team grievance procedure.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

Appendix A2 – Additional matters outside Terms of Reference

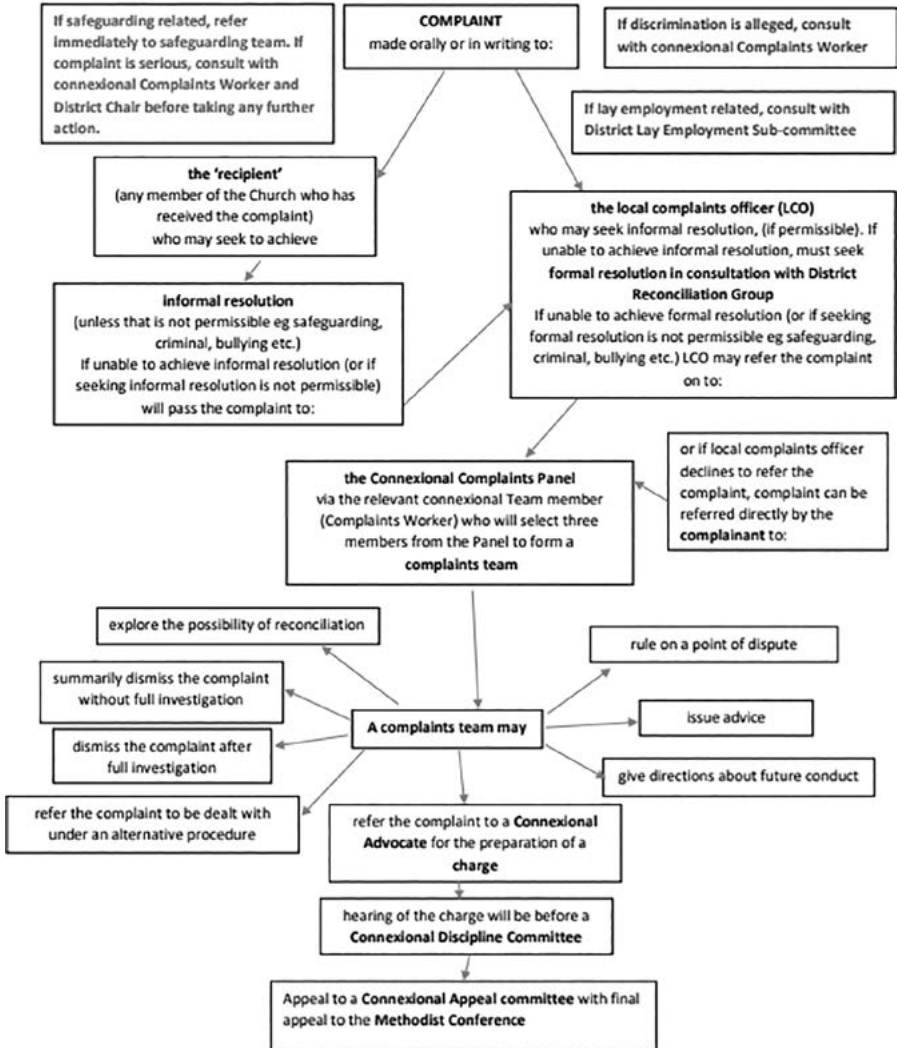
- 1 To ensure the Church's JDS strategy is embedded as part of the Review.
- 2 To clarify and improve the Church's record-keeping process for managing complaints.
- 3 To consider the role of the Connexional Complaints Worker role in the complaints process and redefine this as necessary.
- 4 To consider and recommend what other resources might be required to better serve the process at all levels within the Church.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

Appendix B

Current Complaint Flowchart

PART 11 - COMPLAINTS AND DISCIPLINE PROCESS - FLOWCHART FOLLOWING A COMPLAINT



Updated 12/2021

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

Appendix C

It is recommended that the following are not complaints for the purposes of Part 11 where they relate to allegations or issues raised.

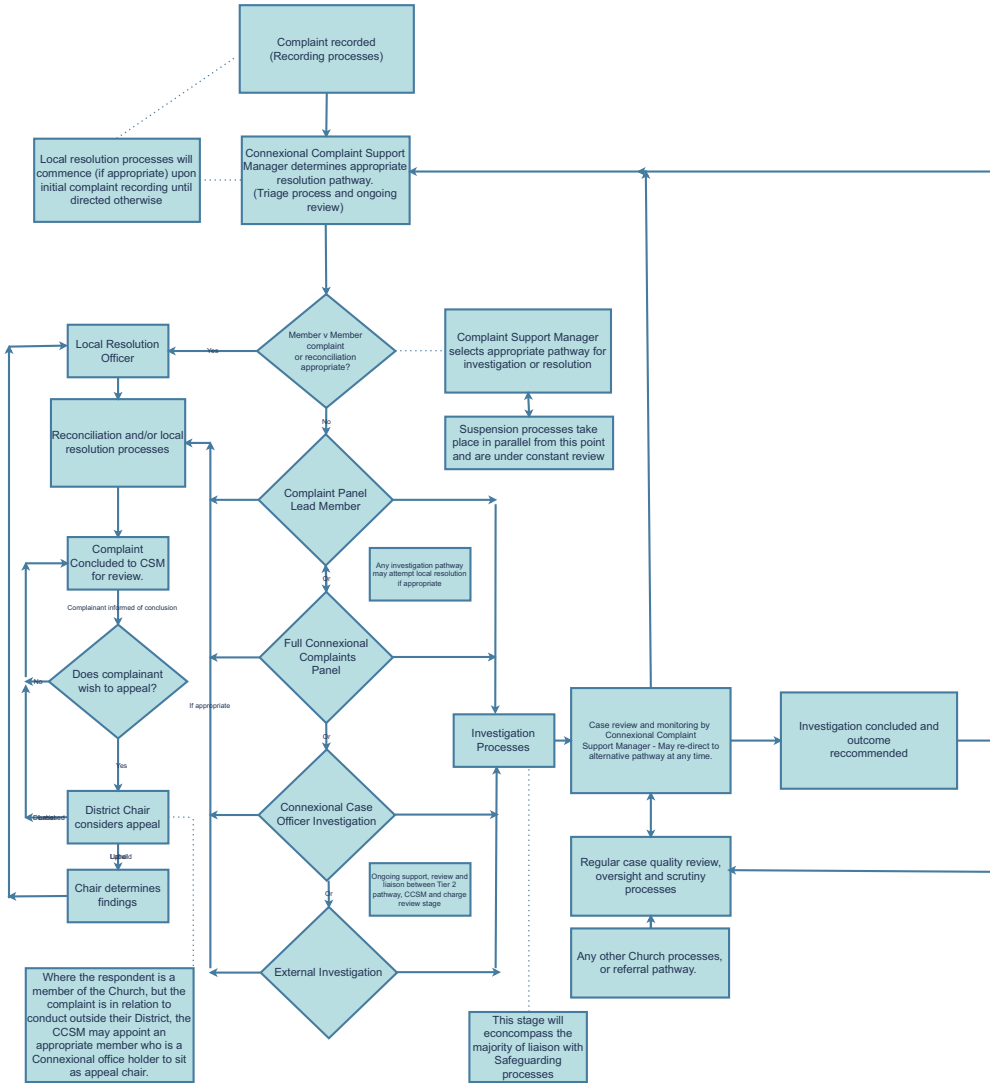
- Complaints about the conduct or behaviour of employees of the Church.
- Complaints about the outcome of Church policies and procedures where there is a route of appeal within that procedure.
- Complaints about the function or outcome of Church policies and procedures where there is no allegation related to an individual member's conduct and behaviour.
- Complaints about the decisions or outcomes of panels, committees or other standing groups.
- Complaints about any group or persons carrying out an official role where an existing external body has statutory oversight, or professional accountability. Where the complaint relates to that professional function, and not their membership of the Methodist Church.
- Complaints about the conduct of a member not made within six months of the alleged conduct. Dispensation may be granted by the Complaints Support Manager in exceptional circumstances.

It is the role of the Connexional Complaints Support Manager to determine the appropriate pathway for complaints and refer them to alternative routes if applicable.

The Connexional Complaints Support Manager will always retain the scope to consider any complaint within the Part 11 processes should it be in the best interests of the Church. Members will also have the right of appeal to the President should their complaint be rejected for consideration within Part 11.

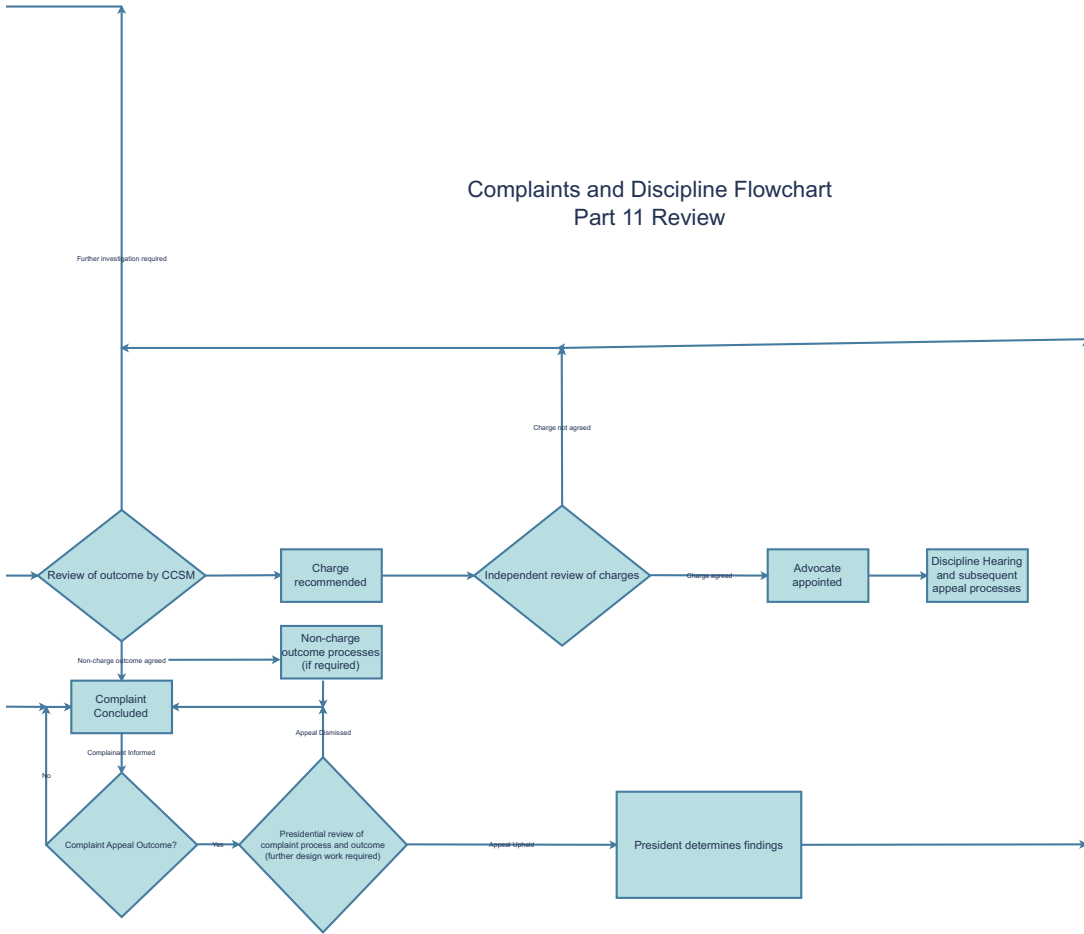
Appendix D

Proposed Complaint Flowchart



1. A Connexional complaint panel lead member investigation is one where a single member investigates the complaint. This may be appropriate for lower level complaints.
2. A full connexional complaint panel investigation is as per the current Part 11 process. A three member team with a lead member. Such a response may be appropriate in more challenging cases where different perspectives may be required to assist resolution or investigation.
3. A connexional case worker investigation would be for more complex cases where the experience of an investigator with more formal training and experience is required. This approach may assist where a more independent investigation is needed and in cases where liaison is required outside of the Church. It may also assist with more prompt investigations.
4. An external investigation is one where the issue is so complex or challenging that the Church commission an external individual or organisation to carry out the investigation

Complaints and Discipline Flowchart Part 11 Review



Tier 3 - Hearing

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

Appendix E

Summary Table of Recommendations

| | Recommendation |
|----|--|
| 1 | <i>The current definition of a “complaint” in Standing Order 1101(i) should be improved. Part 11 should be amended to clarify what Part 11 may not be used for, or to indicate alternative procedures for certain complaints.</i> |
| 2 | <i>Guidance should be drafted to assist the identification of alternative resolution approaches where reconciliation may not be appropriate. The guidance to include timescales and suggested pathways for support that may be available to any member with specific needs or vulnerabilities.</i> |
| 3 | <i>The title and role of “Local Complaints Officer” should be changed to “Local Resolution Officer” with other appropriate amendments to Standing Orders and guidance where required.</i> |
| 4 | <i>All complaints should be categorised and recorded at Connexional level to assist with oversight, scrutiny, and improvement</i> |
| 5 | <i>The Church should adopt a records management system for storing all complaints data in line with the Church’s overall records management strategy.</i> |
| 6 | <i>The Church should adopt an appropriate case management system for recording complaints, including a formal process for review, oversight and scrutiny.</i> |
| 7 | <i>The Church should adopt a holistic anonymous reporting system to capture concerns from all individuals who wish to raise them.</i> |
| 8 | <i>The Church should adopt a simplified three tier model for addressing complaints which better aligns with safeguarding practices.</i> |
| 9 | <i>The Church should ensure that these recommendations are adequately resourced to ensure that capability matches anticipated future demand.</i> |
| 10 | <i>The Church should introduce a post of “Connexional Complaints Support Manager” to replace the current post of Connexional Complaints Worker. Standing Orders should be amended to give the post appropriate decision-making powers related to the management of complaints.</i> |
| 11 | <i>The Church should ensure that there is an independent review capability to ensure confidence in the system for all parties.</i> |
| 12 | <i>Standing Orders should be amended to align the rights of appeal for complaints to ensure proportionality, including altering the rights of appeal for certain complaints at appropriate levels.</i> |

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

| | |
|----|---|
| 13 | <i>The act of "Suspension" should be amended to describe more adequately the temporary duties to be carried out by members who are respondents to a complaint. Suspension should only be used in circumstances where the respondent is required temporarily to cease and desist from any and all activities associated with the Church and may not in any capacity exercise their role.</i> |
| 14 | <i>The Church should formalise the risk and information sharing conversations that take place between complaints and safeguarding staff. It is recommended that this is undertaken through regular strategy meetings.</i> |
| 15 | <i>Standing Orders to be amended and remove the requirement for the Safeguarding Committee to act as a Local Complaint Officer.</i> |
| 16 | <i>The Church recognises that through shared decision-making processes there may be occasions where complaints and safeguarding processes take place in parallel.</i> |
| 17 | <i>The Church should maximise the use of its current Learning Network to assist with developing the best skills in all members who may be required to undertake roles within the Complaints and Discipline process.</i> |
| 18 | <i>The Church increase the involvement of its Communications function within the Complaints and Discipline processes in order to provide advice, guidance and assistance with internal and external communications.</i> |

APPENDIX F

M28 (2019) Streamlining Discipline Processes with regard to Safeguarding Panel Outcomes following Risk Assessments

The Newcastle upon Tyne District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 144; Voting: 143 for, 1 against), asks the Conference to review the process and relevant Standing Orders connected to the failure of a member or minister of the Methodist Church to comply with the outcomes of a safeguarding panel following a risk assessment.

Where a person who has been subject to a risk assessment and consideration of that assessment by the Safeguarding Committee under SO 232 but declines to comply with the direction of the Committee, a complaint can be brought against that person. However, the Complaints Process, which has at its heart healing and reconciliation, seems manifestly unsuitable for a safeguarding process which is designed to ensure compliance and the management in light of the decision of the Safeguarding Committee.

Therefore, the Synod asks the Conference to consider a more streamlined process, which enables the discipline of the Methodist Church, as exercised by the Safeguarding

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

Committee, to be more easily upheld by reference to a Connexional Discipline Committee, in cases where a person refuses to comply with the discipline of the Church.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Newcastle upon Tyne District for its memorial and for drawing the attention of the Conference to some of the difficulties inherent in the Church's processes for complaints and discipline where safeguarding matters are concerned. The Synod is right to note that there can be a tension between the aims of our complaints process (which is to achieve reconciliation so that God's people can experience healing and go on together to follow our calling) and safeguarding (which aims to ensure that all God's people are protected from harm) though the two are complementary rather than contradictory.

In other cases, a complaint can be brought against an individual of the Church if they refuse to comply with recommendations following a risk assessment. It would be then be for the local complaint officers to decide how best to proceed. The Standing Orders allow for the appropriate use of the power of suspension in Standing Order 013 if the necessary delay means that the risk is still to be addressed.

Nevertheless the Conference accepts that it may be possible to streamline the process and directs the Law and Polity Committee to consider the inclusion of a provision for immediate referral to the Connexional Complaints Panel in such circumstances. The Conference also directs Law and Polity Committee to review Standing Order 1120(4) and (5) and to consider making additional provision for a direct referral to the Connexional Complaints Panel where the complaint is about non-compliance with a direction under SO 232(2)(i).

The Conference accepts the memorial.

M29 (2019) Streamlining Discipline Processes with regard to Safeguarding Panel Outcomes following Risk Assessments

The Darlington District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 85; Voting: 83 for, 2 against) asks the Conference to review the process and relevant Standing Orders connected to the failure of a member or minister of the Methodist Church to comply with the outcomes of a safeguarding panel following a risk assessment.

Where a person who has been subject to a risk assessment and consideration of that assessment by the Safeguarding Committee under SO 232 but declines to comply with the direction of the Committee, a complaint can be brought against that person. However, the complaints process, which has at its heart healing and reconciliation,

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

seems manifestly unsuitable for a safeguarding process which is designed to ensure compliance and management in light of the decision of the Safeguarding Committee.

Therefore, the Synod asks the Conference to consider a more streamlined process which enables the discipline of the Methodist Church as exercised by the Safeguarding Committee to be more easily upheld by reference to a Connexional Discipline Committee, in cases where a person refuses to comply with the discipline of the Church.

Reply

The Conference adopts the same reply as to M28.

M15 (2022) Positive Working Together

The Birmingham (5/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 60; Voting: unanimous), draws the Conference's attention to both Positive Working Together and the 2015 Methodist Conference *Report to Conference 40. Positive Working Together* and asks the Conference to take the following action:

- 1) To signpost people to the anti-bullying policy in the current Safeguarding policy. To ensure there is work done to include anti-harassment in Policy (as indicated in Positive Working Together and in the Conference 2015 Report).
- 2) To revisit the layout of Positive Working Together and make clearer the Shared Commitment to ensure it is distinct and easy to access and use (it is currently among other text on pages 11-12 of the Positive Working Together booklet).
- 3) To change the status of The Shared Commitment from being 'guidance' to being the expected behaviour of every person in Methodist Church life.
- 4) To make accessible resources more easily available and for it to be clear that every person in church life can be enabled to use Positive Working Together to help create a safe and more inclusive church community.
- 5) For the Shared Commitment to be recognised by every Church Council, to be part of Role Descriptions, and used alongside/integrated with Safeguarding training and documentation.
- 6) To integrate the Shared Commitment from Positive Working Together into other Conflict Resolution courses being used in the Methodist Church.
- 7) To include Positive Working Together in the Standing Orders of the Methodist Church.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

Reply

The Conference thanks the Birmingham Circuit Meeting for drawing attention to the work on Positive Working Together and the 2015 Methodist Conference Report *Positive Working Together* (Agenda Item 40).

The memorial highlights the need for ongoing work as the church continues to encourage and develop engagement with Positive Working Together so as to enable all those who are part of the church community to live well with difference.

The Birmingham Circuit is thanked for its support and its local implementation of Positive Working Together and in particular commends its work around The Shared Commitment.

The Conference is aware that work is already underway within the Learning Network to offer a regular pattern of Positive Working Together training opportunities, across the Connexion, through Growing through Change and Conflict, Responding to Bullying and Harassment and Spirituality, Scripture and Conflict alongside Faith in Change and Conflict, which is run in partnership with Place for Hope and Cliff College and offered as a Cliff Certificate course. It is believed that this approach will offer greater accessibility to resources. The Shared Commitment will be produced as a standalone document, from the full report, made available on the Methodist Church website and directly referred to within these training resources.

The Conference believes that the work of the group reviewing Section 11 Complaints and Discipline of CPD will be able to incorporate the inclusion of Positive Working Together within Standing Orders as part of its ongoing work. The Conference believes that the incorporation of Positive Working Together in Standing Orders together with the Commitments and Expectations proposed in Agenda Item 19 of the 2022 Conference *The Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers: Commitments and Expectations* will change the status of The Shared Commitment from 'guidance' to being the expected behaviour of every person in Methodist Church life.

The Conference strongly encourages Churches and Circuits to adopt The Shared Commitment and to consider inclusion within Role Descriptions and its use alongside Safeguarding training and documentation.

The Conference recognises the existing work undertaken by the Safeguarding team to incorporate the anti-bullying policy within the overall Safeguarding Policy. The Safeguarding team is due to review the policy later this year and at that point will seek to include anti-harassment within the overall Policy.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

The Conference recognises that further work is required to enable a greater engagement with Positive Working Together and therefore accepts the overall direction of the memorial and directs the Methodist Council to arrange how best to take this work forward.

M20 (2022) Safeguarding

The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly District Synod (Present: 94 for: 43 against: 32) expresses its disquiet that when a safeguarding complaint is lodged this is addressed by a panel of the Connexional Safeguarding Committee. It is not clear, however, from Standing Orders 232-237, that its processes are sufficiently robust and transparent to ensure fairness to all concerned. With only limited grounds for later appeal, the panel appears generally to comprise only three people. Yet it has authority based on an adjudged 'risk', to implement a Safeguarding Contract with severe restrictions upon a person's life and work. It thus has powers that can be devastating for someone and their family. Yet it is unclear that these powers are properly accountable, neither is it clear that the trust and confidence of the church is being maintained.

A model of best practice is found in our Complaints and Discipline procedures, based on a commitment to fairness and natural justice. (Standing Orders 1100(3)(v) and 1102(1)) This commitment is expressed through rigorously defined 'due process', the appointment of those with legal expertise as chairs, and through proper scrutiny of evidence. It also seeks initially a facilitated reconciliation between complainant and respondent.

This memorial proposes that a task group be set up to explore how 'Safeguarding Panels' may better model such best practice. We urge at least that membership of such panels be augmented by some appointed by the Conference to address Complaints and Discipline (pages 61-3 of the 2021 *Minutes*), including for all panels someone with legal expertise. The further option should also be explored, namely that complaints deemed to concern 'safeguarding', but not referred to the police, should be addressed directly through our Complaints and Discipline procedures, members of Connexional Safeguarding Committee being co-opted or consulted so as to contribute their expertise. This is indeed already envisaged in Standing Orders 1111(1) (ii) and 1112(2). For such an option those with specific 'safeguarding' expertise may 'advise', but the wider court of competent jurisdiction will 'decide'.

The Church must of course be vigilant to ensure it be a 'safe place' and that those acting on the church's behalf must be 'safe'. But the church must also be a place of justice, fairness, and grace. And the Methodist people must have confidence in, and trust, the church's processes. Justice must be 'seen to be done'. That trust and confidence is precious, and the church must constantly watch lest it be endangered. This memorial is proposed in the interests of justice and fairness to all, both complainants and respondents, and in the interest of maintaining confidence and trust in our processes.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

Reply

The Conference thanks the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly District Synod for the memorial and for raising the concerns it contains.

The Conference agrees that it is vital that confidence and trust in our processes are maintained and that the way in which those processes operate affords justice and fairness to all and that these principles should be consistently applied. It notes, however, that the relationship between the Safeguarding and Complaints and Discipline processes is one that has been the subject of much discussion and has been considered within the ongoing review of Part 11 of CPD which the Council now intends to report to the Conference in 2023. Rather than establish a separate task group to consider the District's proposal, the Conference refers this memorial to the Council to be considered by those working on the review of Part 11.

M14 Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

The Nottingham Trent Valley (22/4) Circuit Meeting (Present: 39; Voting: unanimous), with reference to the decision of the 2019 Conference to undertake a review of Part 11 of the Standing Orders, asks the Conference that the following proposals are considered as part of that review, with a view to improving the experience of all those affected by the processing of complaints about and between ministers:

- We request the involvement of an independent professional body to manage/co-ordinate the processing of complaints.
- We request the provision of specific and separate third-party support for Circuit Leadership Teams and individual congregations affected by complaints involving any member(s) of their ministerial teams during and after the processing of these complaints, to include:
 - The sharing of appropriate (non-confidential) information about the process and its progression, promoting a sense of transparency;
 - Advice and guidance on activities and communications with the minister(s) involved during the process;
 - Advice and guidance on representations to a Connexional Complaints Panel;
 - Communication about processes, progress, actions taken and outcomes in order to mitigate damaging rumour-mongering;
 - Pastoral care and prayer.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Nottingham Trent Valley Circuit Meeting for the memorial and for raising these concerns.

32. Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders

The Conference agrees that it is vital that confidence and trust in our processes are maintained and that the experiences of all those affected by the processing of complaints about and between ministers and other church officeholders is improved.

The Conference notes the Circuit Meeting's requests for the involvement of an independent professional body to manage/co-ordinate the processing of complaints, and for third-party support to be provided to Circuit Leadership Teams and individual congregations affected by complaints.

The Conference understands that these issues are already being considered within the overall review of the Church's complaints and discipline process ("the Part 11 Review"), as reported elsewhere in the Council's first Report to the Conference, Section H (page 71 of the Agenda).

Notwithstanding the above, the Conference, by way of interim reply, refers it to the Methodist Council for consideration by those working on the Part 11 Review.

33. Managing Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall Westminster

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Nigel Cowgill Chair of the Trustees nigel@methodistlondon.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

Introduction

This report from the Managing Trustees gives an overview of the varied activities and events that have been part of the life of Methodist Central Hall Westminster (MCHW) during 2023-24. The trustees oversee the building on behalf of Conference. Letting and related income generated through our wholly owned trading company is used for the upkeep of the Grade 2* listed building, to support the worshipping community based there and the mission of the church.

The year continued to be financially challenging for Central Hall Westminster Ltd (CHW). The corporate market is slowly returning to pre Covid levels. Whilst revenues have improved, CHW was unable to return to an operating profit due to a high cost base driven by exceptional increases in utility prices. CHW is taking a number of actions to maximise revenue and reduce cost and expect to break even next year. The building has benefited from significant essential work, it remains fully compliant with all regulations and the trustees through the work of CHW are committed to working towards achieving Net Zero within our guidelines.

The trustees have received a grant from The Methodist Church which has enabled the trustees to cover the debts and losses caused, inter alia, by its long closure during the Covid emergency. The trustees are most grateful for this grant, give thanks to the Lord and look to the future with confidence.

Ministry of the Church

The MCHW is a vibrant and diverse church at the heart of the building and is a 'Global Christian family following Jesus at the heart of London'. We work in partnership with others where we can, including Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral, other members of Churches Together in Westminster, St Vincent's Family Project, Westminster Foodbank, The Passage, and Premier Media Group. The worship, mission, and witness of MCHW is healthy and our work is focussed upon 'nurture' and 'outreach', maintaining and growing our existing work but also adding new initiatives during the year.

In October 2023, MCHW celebrated our 111th Church Anniversary. The Revd Lesinga Vunipola was our guest preacher, visiting with members of the UK Tongan Community, many of whom joined a total of 290 guests for our Church Anniversary lunch. The

33. Managing Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall Westminster

MCHW congregation bucks the trend of numerical decline. Our Easter Day service had an attendance of about 370. The church community has maintained a vibrant multi-cultural congregation, representing c.30 different countries. Attendances are nearly back to pre-pandemic levels and our church membership stands at c.416, including 16 new members welcomed into the life of the church. Our additional weekly online services regularly reach between 750 and 1,000 viewers, of whom some 200 watch live at 9.30am. Our online services serve our housebound members, and both Methodists around the Connexion and globally. New initiatives include online Lent, Advent, Alpha, and Bible study courses online.

Our work with children, teenagers, and young adults is healthy, though finding leaders is a challenge. In addition to our weekly Sanctuary (young adults) congregation, we have also launched Interim - aimed at ex-YPF members and those in their 20s – 30s.

MCHW seeks to engage with local issues and supports local charities, including St Vincent's Family Project (which we host on site), the Westminster Food Bank, the Westminster SWEP Night shelter, The Passage (helping homeless people), the London Prison's Mission, and we are working at reviving the Methodist Parliamentary Fellowship. The Methodist Parliamentary Covenant Service was well-attended this year, with an encouraging engagement from both MPs and Lords. We seek to engage with social justice issues, including becoming an Eco Church. We are also setting up a Neighbourhood Evangelism Team, and we launched three new house groups.

MCHW's many special events include Daffodil Day, our Healing Conference, a Traditional Carol service, Jazz Carols, Jazz Vespers, organ Matinee concerts. We endeavour, where possible, to partner with other organisations, like Premier Radio and the BBC, and are able to feature our renowned versatile choir, which embraces music from classical, to Methodist hymns, to world music, and contemporary songs. We also help to facilitate other Christian and charity events.

Regrettably, the Trust's grant to the Church has now been suspended for the foreseeable future due to the lack of funds. This will hugely diminish our resources in both the Church and Circuit. We rejoice that the congregation raised over £72K through a 'Mission Investment 60' appeal and continues to be encouraged to increase its giving to help meet the financial challenges. The congregation remains in good heart, and we are seeking grant funding to help maintain and extend our local church ministry and our wider work and witness.

Our Business Centre

The year to 31 August 2023 saw many successes in creating a new team and event delivery; however, it continued to be financially challenging for Central Hall Westminster

33. Managing Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall Westminster

Ltd (CHW). Whilst revenues returned to close to pre Covid levels (c.£8.2m), our cost base was exceptionally high – particularly impacted by increases in utility prices, and we were unable to return an operating profit.

Our sales mix has changed since pre Covid and now includes many more social and celebratory events such as concerts and graduations. The corporate market is slowly returning but we still have availability mid-week for our larger and more profitable spaces. It should be noted that revenues for this financial year included the hire of roof spaces for both the Queen's Funeral and the King's Coronation. The former displaced revenues of a similar value but with a lower cost base, the latter generated additional revenues which we would not typically expect to see in the month of May.

Our budget for the current year to 31 August 2024 is for revenue across our three sites of c.£8m in event revenues, this is a little under pre-pandemic levels and reflects a building closure at Westminster for seven weeks over the winter to undertake essential refurbishment of the goods lift and install a new sound system in the Great Hall. Our business continues to see a significant number of concerts and other similar public events in the mix, we are also seeing signs of a return to higher numbers attending some corporate events – with a positive impact on catering revenues.

We anticipate reaching our revenue targets for the current year but, like many Methodist churches throughout the country, are faced with the enormous cost of heating, lighting, and maintaining our beautiful building. Our cost base has shown little sign of slow down since return to operations following covid, the labour market has demanded significantly higher base salary and benefits, and the impact of the Ukraine/Russia war has of course seen utility bills soar.

Our ambitions for the future are driven by the introduction of four new focus groups for the business. Key outcomes include growing our revenue base to £10m through a variety of new activities including our intention to host our own ticketed events and become known as a venue of choice for public events. Other priorities for the business include refining our culture and values and ensuring these are embedded across our relatively new team. Sustainability remains high on our agenda, and we have an active agenda item to work towards net zero. Finally, we will be working towards ensuring that our use of technology is efficient and underpins all our operations.

The Building

The Hall Fabric Committee oversees the maintenance and upkeep of the building. We continue a programme of proactive maintenance designed to keep reactive maintenance to a minimum and in recent years have operated a small capital expenditure programme.

33. Managing Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall Westminster

There have been two significant works over the last year. Firstly the goods lift, which was frequently breaking down, has been completely refurbished. Secondly our in-house production partner, White Light, has paid for a major enhancement to the acoustics in the Great Hall, using state of the art technology and using a customised approach to avoid damaging the fabric of the building.

Methodist Central Hall Westminster remains fully compliant with all health and safety, building, and environmental regulations. We remain on track to comply with the recommendations of the Quinquennial Inspection in 2022. We recognise that our operations have a local and global environmental impact, and so we are committed to reducing this as much as possible by following sustainability best practices. We are committed to innovative ideas in assisting the building to reach Net Zero within government and Methodist guidelines.

Financial Situation

The Trust and its trading subsidiary CHW were severely impacted by Covid which caused the closure of Central Hall from March 2020 to August 2021. During this period there was no income but substantial costs were still being incurred. To cover the losses recorded during Covid, we took out borrowing facilities of £3.5 million with HSBC. Based on our financial performance prior to Covid, it was thought that, once the business had recovered from the pandemic, the borrowings could be repaid over a period of perhaps five years.

Since the autumn of 2022, the business struggled under exceptional increases in energy prices and at the same time our borrowing costs increased as base rates were raised by 5%. Revenues have not yet recovered to pre Covid levels and all of these effects meant that we were still making losses. Although we continued to repay on time every instalment due on our bank loans, this was only possible by asking HSBC for an increase of £0.5 million to our overdraft limit.

In January, the Trustees approached the senior leaders of the Connexion to ask for financial support. An application for a connexional grant of £4 million was made by the Trustees to cover historic losses and repay the ensuing bank debt. The grant was approved by the Methodist Council on 15 April and the money was transferred to the Trustees shortly afterwards.

The priority for the Trustees is to underpin the commercial future of CHW as this is essential to generating funds to meet our goals of maintaining the building and supporting Methodist mission. As CHW generates profits they will be gift aided to the Trust. We aim to build a cash reserve of £1 million in the Trust to cover periods when the

33. Managing Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall Westminster

business does not generate a profit. Since January, we have stopped paying our monthly grant to the Westminster church to preserve cash; the grant will not recommence until our cash reserve reaches its target level. In the meantime, the church will look to receive support through grants from the Connexion.

The Trustees

The role of Chair of the Trustees is currently held by Revd Nigel Cowgill as one of the Chairs of the London District; he will stand down as a Trustee on 31 August 2024. An independent Chair of Trustees is being recruited in line with a new role description to reflect the particular skills and expertise required. As an appointment of the Conference, the recruitment will follow the connexional Nomination Committee process.

The first task of the new Chair will be to assess the current Trustee body to ensure it has the skills and expertise required and to make recommendations to the Connexional Council on the appropriate composition of the Trustee body. The appointment of Trustees will be in accordance with the arrangements for all other Connexional committees.

See the Committee Appointments section of the Agenda for the trustee appointments.

We appreciate the work done by the trustees and record our thanks for their work.

*****RESOLUTION**

33/1. The Conference adopts the Report.

34. Methodist Ministers' Housing Society (MMHS)

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | Mairi Johnstone CEO mjohnstone@mmhs.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|--|

1. Introduction

This report covers the period **1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023**, but in the report, we also comment on developments of note from 1 September 2023 to date.

Our mission is to meet the housing and housing-related needs of retired Methodist ministers of limited means, their spouses, widows and widowers and to offer support for their wellbeing in the key areas of mobility and independence.

Our vision adopts words to be found in Acts 4:34, 'There was not a single person in need among them'.

Our core values are underpinned by a Christian ethos of which we are proud. Our concern is to show high standards of care in all we do, and to be professional both as individuals and as an organisation.

2. Overview of the period

During 2023, we had the great pleasure of celebrating our 75th anniversary. We enjoyed commemorating the year in a number of ways, from the commissioning of a contemporary hymn, *Christ is The Cornerstone*, to the hosting of a dinner for an inspiring gathering of people who, one way or another, were connected to our charity and its work.

Looking back, the generosity of one extraordinary donor, a Mrs M Hoult, leaps off the pages of MMHS's history. Mrs Hoult saw the clear housing needs of presbyters and in response, she donated her manor house and surrounding land. This was a true catalyst event and one which inspired other movers and shakers to step forward. MMHS was formed on 19 November 1948 and the foundation stones for its first purpose-built properties, constructed on Mrs Hoult's land, were laid on 15 June 1949. Fast forward to today; it is our privilege still to be meeting need.

As with most organisations, we found the year on which we are reporting a challenge. The economic climate, not least the cost-of-living crisis, had an impact, so too inflationary pressures. We were all affected – ministerial residents, staff members, suppliers, and trustees alike. Notwithstanding all the pressures, we commenced delivering our Strategy for 2022-2027 with commitment and enthusiasm.

34. Methodist Ministers' Housing Society (MMHS)

3. **Housing provision during the period**

As at 31 August 2023, we had 894 properties. Of that number, 685 were occupied by our Ministerial Residents, 162 by market tenants and 47 were empty. Empty property numbers are kept to a minimum and the time they are left empty is kept as short as possible; numbers fluctuate monthly. They are unavoidable due to transition periods when Ministerial Residents transfer, or during marketing periods.

We were pleased to provide housing for 13 new Ministerial Residents during the period, including one retiring early for a medical reason. We also transferred five Ministerial Residents to alternative properties.

Our Equity Sharing Scheme enables our Ministerial Residents to acquire a financial interest in their property. At the end of August 2023, 394 Ministerial Residents had equity interests with a total fair value of £18,330,000.

During the year, we provided properties through a mix of new purchases and suitable ones identified from within our existing portfolio. One key consideration we have is the suitability of properties for long-term independent living.

4. **Rent and finances for the period**

Our standard charitable rent is the same for all Ministerial Residents across the whole country; for 2022-23, the rent rose from £300pcm to £322pcm (from £3,600pa to £3,864pa). Some of our Ministerial Residents pay a supplement if their income in retirement is above the upper-limit figure we use to qualify for our standard charitable rent.

We continued to cross-subsidise those less able to pay using our designated Wellbeing Fund. We are pleased that we are able to maintain a standard charitable rent which is well below those set by social housing providers, and substantially below market level rents.

Rental income from Ministerial Residents amounted to £2.665m for the year. A further £1.646m of gross rental income was generated from market tenancies, £372k from interest and dividends and £676k from legacies, bequests and grants. Donations amounting to £66k were received from individuals, churches and circuits within the Methodist family. The net surplus derived from the sale of surplus properties amounted to £281k.

Total expenditure was £7.472m which exceeded total income by £1.766m, although this operating deficit reduced to £670k after taking account of unrecognised gains of £1.096m on fixed asset investments.

MMHS's total funds as at 31 August 2023 were £187.823m.

34. Methodist Ministers' Housing Society (MMHS)

5. **Refurbishments and repairs and maintenance**

Our rolling programme for maintaining our properties, including kitchen and bathroom refits, continued apace.

Refurbishments comprise kitchen and bathroom replacements; upgrading joinery, heating, plumbing and electrical installations; building fabric repairs, redecoration and replacement of finishes. A comprehensive specification is prepared which prevents projects drifting into remodelling, extensions and structural alterations.

Over the period, we refurbished 17 homes. We continued to benefit from highly competitive quotations for our refurbishments through the use of smaller contractors. The environment continued to be tough in terms of the costs of materials and labour.

Over 1,700 jobs were recorded relating to the repair and maintenance of our properties including 19 bathroom and 14 kitchen refits, 48 driveway repairs and 81 external decorations.

Electrical inspections and associated remedial works were administered and undertaken by HES Fire Protection Limited. Gas-Elec Limited were our national supplier for our gas compliance checks and associated remedial works.

We remain very committed to 'greening' our properties whenever we can. Energy efficiency and insulation considerations are constantly reviewed. By way of example, our boiler replacement programme saw 69 new combination boilers installed during the period and our window and door replacement programme provided 31 properties with new windows and external doors.

6. **Board of Trustees**

The Chair and the CEO worked closely together to manage the business of the board, the effective stewardship of MMHS's assets and the sound governance of its operations. Trustees are expected to keep themselves up-to-date with legislative and regulatory developments and take part in a Learning and Development programme tailored to equip them to perform well in their trustee roles. The Board began the year with eight trustees and ended it with six. One trustee retired from the Board in October 2023. During the year, the trustees had committed to strengthening the skill-base and experience of the Board, with a focus on property and finance. Following recruitment, four further trustees joined the Board in November 2023.

7. **Staff**

During the reporting period, the Senior Management Team comprised the CEO and two executive Directors (Finance and Operations). The CEO is responsible for the implementation of the decisions of the trustees and the day-to-day

34. Methodist Ministers' Housing Society (MMHS)

management of the affairs of MMHS. She is also the Company Secretary. The CEO is also responsible for the development of effective management systems to ensure all staff understand their roles and objectives and have appropriate appraisals and training to enable them to fulfil their roles.

8. Plans for the future

We are now well into the second year of our Strategy for 2022-2027. Change is all around us. MMHS has always sought to respond well to change whether social, economic or political, and we will continue to do so. We also aspire to be changemakers as well as being an organisation which responds well to change not of our own making.

We continue to face into powerful headwinds, for example, continued cost of living and inflationary pressures. Declining numbers in the Methodist Church also present a medium to long-term challenge. In response to that, we are looking at new areas of mission.

Insofar as our existing mission is concerned, we are enhancing it. We are innovating where we can, primarily by taking advantage of new technology. This should result in improved efficiency and data quality. It should also speed up reporting processes. We are taking a 'property and people' approach to everything we do. Each is equally important. MMHS prides itself in providing quality housing and we will continue to care for and improve our housing stock and focus on such matters as heating, insulation and energy efficiency. We are expanding our existing mission to include wellbeing. Our wellbeing support encompasses matters connected to age, ill-health, disability and finance.

9. Conclusion

In our celebratory 75th anniversary year, we were again reminded of the foundation stones on which MMHS was built. We are committed to pulling the best of the past into the present and using it to energise us as we take on new challenges and opportunities.

We would also like to say that we are forever grateful for the generosity shown to us in so many ways, in particular through gifts, donations, bequests and legacies. We cannot say 'thank you' enough.

***RESOLUTION

34/1. The Conference receives the Report.

35. Pension Schemes

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | Matt Tattersall – Executive Director of Finance and Resources tattersallm@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Action required | For approval |
| Resolutions | <p>35/1. The Conference receives the report.</p> <p>35/2. The Conference approves the payment from the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme (MMPS) surplus of a discretionary inflation uplift of 5% over and above the planned MMPS inflation in September 2024.</p> <p>35/3. The Conference approves that £2.6m of surplus funding in the Pension Reserve Fund (PRF) is transferred to the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons (FSPD) and the balance of surplus funding in the PRF, after accounting for the 2023 Valuation, be transferred to the Connexional Priority Fund.</p> <p>35/4. The Conference approves the revised security package outlined in the paper as part of the 2023 Valuation.</p> <p>35/5. The Conference approves that MMPS contribution rates are set at 9.3% for ministers and 20.0% for circuits/other bodies from September 2024, with the 4.4% excess collected put into a ring fenced sub-fund of the PRF.</p> <p>35/6. The Conference approves that the voluntary contributions to the Pension Reserve Fund be returned to the donors with interest paid at the CFB Deposit Rate.</p> <p>35/7. The Conference approves the re-appointment of Capital Cranfield Pension Trustee Limited, as represented by Richard Hubbard, as Director of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Trust Limited (MMPTL - the Trustee body of MMPS) for a period of three years commencing September 2024.</p> |

35. Pension Schemes

Summary of content

| | |
|--|--|
| Subject of aims | To update the Conference on various pension matters. |
| Main points | Decisions are required in order to meet the statutory timetable for the agreement of the 2023 Valuations. The improved funding position allows for benefits to be shared across various stakeholders. Some administrative matters relating to Board appointments require approval. |
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | Pension report to the 2023 Conference Pension Schemes |
| Consultations | Pension Trustee bodies Methodist Council |

Summary of impact

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Financial | Improvements in the pension valuations will reduce the costs of pensions going forward and allow security to be released over some assets. |
| Wider connexional | Voluntary contributions received for the pension schemes can be returned to donors. |
| Risk | Risk continues to be reduced in relation to the pension schemes. |

Glossary

De-risking

The process of reducing the risk in the investment portfolio held by the pension trustees. Typically selling equities (shares) and buying bonds. The lower risk investments provide lower investment returns.

Framework Agreement

A comprehensive legal agreement between the Church and pension trustees that was put in place at the last triennial valuation. It sets out how the schemes are to be funded

and what security is to be provided. It was developed to deal with deficits in the scheme and how the schemes would derisk over the next decade. Circumstances have overtaken the agreement and the de-risking has already been delivered.

Insurance Buy-in

The process of selling the existing investment portfolio and buying an annuity from an insurer. This annuity pays out each month the exact amounts required to pay on to the pensioners. The insurer takes on the investment risk and the risk that pensioners live longer than anticipated.

Insurance Buy-out

The process of closing a pension scheme where the insurer pays an annuity direct to each pensioner equal to the pension they were due from the pension scheme. It allows the pension scheme to be wound up thus saving on the costs of running a scheme.

Long term objective funding level

A measure of how close the scheme is to having sufficient funding to cover the liabilities of the scheme based on a low risk (and therefore low investment return) portfolio. It was assumed MMPS would reach the objective by 2035 and PASLEMC by 2032. However, both schemes have already achieved this funding level.

MMPS Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme

The pension scheme for ministers in the Church

MMPTL Methodist Ministers' Pension Trust Limited

The trustee body of the MMPS

PASLEMC Pension and Assurance Scheme for Lay Employees of the Methodist Church

The pension scheme for lay employees of a number of Methodist bodies (primarily the Council i.e. Connexional Team). It closed to future accrual in 2019.

MLEPTL Methodist Lay Employees Pension Trust Limited

The trustee body of the PASLEMC

Pension Reserve Fund (PRF)

A designated fund under the control of the Methodist Conference. Until 2023 it received a share of the property levies received on the sale of Methodist property. It has been used to make deficit payments to the pension schemes. It also provides assurance to the pension trustees that funds are available in future should deficits emerge.

35. Pension Schemes

Property Charges

A legal agreement in favour of the pension trustees that allows them to force a sale of some Connexional property should the Church default on its financial contributions to the schemes.

Triennial Valuation

Every three years there is a statutory requirement for the pension trustee to undertake an actuarial valuation of a pension scheme. This sets out the funding position and agrees any recovery plan with the employer where there is a deficit.

Summary

- 1 This paper draws together a number of current issues relating to both the Methodist Ministers Pension Scheme (MMPS) and the Pension and Assurance Scheme for Lay Employees of the Methodist Church (PASLEMC).
- 2 These issues are inter-related and need to be considered as a whole package. In doing so, an attempt has been made to share the benefits of the improved funding position. The proposals can be summarised as follows:
 - Increase MMPS pensions by an additional 5% over and above the standard inflation uplift from September 2024.
 - Reduce circuit contribution rates from 26.9% to 20% from September 2024.
 - Retain ministers' contributions to MMPS at 9.3%.
 - Reduce total contributions paid over to MMPS to 24.9% from September 2024, and put the 4.4% excess (20%+9.3%-24.9%) paid by circuits in to a ring fenced part of the Pension Reserve Fund to offset future increases in circuit contribution rates.
 - Repay the voluntary contributions made to the Pension Reserve Fund (PRF) following the 2021 Conference appeal, including the payment of interest by the end of this Connexional year.
 - Remove the property charges on Connexional manses and the North Bank Estate that provide additional security to the pension trustees, retaining the charge on The Wesley Hotel Euston.
 - Reduce the monies set aside in the PRF to address future deficits.

Triennial Valuation 2023**Summary**

- 3 Every three years the trustees must agree an actuarial valuation of the pension schemes with the Conference (for MMPS) and the Council (for PASLEMC). The initial results for 2023 have been shared by the Pension Trustees. The headlines compared with the 2020 figures are summarised as follows:

| | MMPS | PASLEMC |
|--|-------------|----------------|
| Deficit 2020 | (£14.2m) | (£16.7m) |
| Surplus 2023 | £44.7m | £1m |
| Future service contribution rate in 2020 | 38.8% | - |
| Future service contribution rate in 2023 | 24.9% | - |
| Long term objective funding level 2020 | 97% | 82% |
| Long term objective funding level 2023 | 113% | 102% |
| Contingent asset requirement in 2020 | £68m | £1.1m |
| Contingent asset requirement in 2023 | £0 | £0 |

MMPS pension inflation

- 4 The rules in MMPS concerning annual inflation uplifts are as follows.

“Pensions are increased in line with increases to the Index of Consumer Prices (“CPI”) for January, as follows:

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| | Increase |
| Benefits earned prior to 01/09/2006 | CPI, maximum 5% pa |
| Benefits earned on or after 01/09/2006 | CPI, maximum 2.5% pa |

Additional increases may be awarded at the discretion of the Trustee and with the consent of The Conference, if the finances of the Scheme permit.”

- 5 The maximum inflation uplift of 2.5% was introduced by the Conference in 2006 in order to mitigate the rising costs of the scheme. It reduced the cost of the Scheme by 1.5%, however, Circuit contributions still had to increase by 3.5% to 17%, and minister contributions increased by 1% to 7%.

35. Pension Schemes

- 6 The Conference in 2016 took the decision to change the measure of inflation from RPI to CPI for inflation uplifts from September 2018 onwards.
- 7 At each stage of these changes, the Conference has made decisions that clearly reduced the future benefits of the Scheme in light of the affordability of the Scheme. It is clear that a cap on inflation would impact pensioners during times of high inflation. This is the situation faced over the last two years, and likely to be experienced for at least one further year. The mechanism is working as intended, albeit with adverse consequences for pensioners.
- 8 However, it is noted that active ministers have benefitted from stipend increases of 6.8% (2024 proposed) 7.8% (2023), and 4.2% (2022) which raises questions about fairness and equity.
- 9 The MMPS Trustee has approached the Church with a proposal to increase pensions by an additional 5% in September 2024 over and above the inflation increase that would be payable anyway. They are content this can be funded from the surplus in the scheme.
- 10 Should the funding position deteriorate significantly in future, it won't be possible to reverse this proposed increase. However, over the last three years, significant progress has been made in de-risking the investment portfolio of the pension scheme. Therefore, whilst risk remains, it is the trustee's view that the proposal is reasonable. As it will be funded from the pension surplus and not the PRF it is recommended that the Conference approves this uplift.
- 11 This 5% uplift will not fully mitigate the real reduction in the value of MMPS pensions. Given there remains surplus funds in the PRF it is proposed that a contribution of £2.6m is transferred from the PRF to the FSPD to support with future benevolent claims from supernumeraries. Whilst the FSPD remains well funded, its balance has reduced materially in recent years and £2.6m will help replenish some of these funds.

Framework Agreement and security package

- 12 This is the first Valuation since the Framework Agreement was signed in April 2022. The creation of the Framework was to safeguard the funding position of the Schemes. Since it was approved, the funding position of both schemes has improved beyond all recognition. As a result, it would be possible to collapse the entire agreement. However, if the Framework is taken away, the Trustees and Council would need to renegotiate a whole new agreement to put in its place. This

would be at considerable time and expense. Also, whilst there is reason to believe that the extensive de-risking activity of the last two years has materially reduced the risk of future deficits, the Framework does at least provide a mechanism for dealing with such eventualities.

- 13 Consequently, it is proposed that the Framework Agreement is not scrapped, but that a 'side letter' is produced noting that it is highly unlikely that any of the triggers in the Agreement will be reached, but that, for now, the structure of the agreement is maintained. In doing so, this protects the Covenant between the Church and the schemes, which in turn has a positive impact on how the Valuation is calculated.
- 14 Whilst retaining any property security is not required under the Framework Agreement, continuing to provide some security supports the Trustees as they continue to manage the derisking of the MMPS. In turn, this reduces both the likelihood and scale of potential future deficits. However, it is not possible to eliminate all risk, and whilst MMPS remains open to future accrual, further financial risk is created.
- 15 Consequently, it is proposed to reduce the security that the Church offers the trustees by approximately 50% as follows:
 - Property security is released from all Connexional manses and Chester House.
 - Property security is retained on The Wesley Hotel Euston (c£20m), in favour of the MMPS.
 - Security on the property sub-funds of the Pension Reserve Fund is released with the balances being transferred in to the main Pension Reserve Fund.
 - Retain c£30m of the Pension Reserve Fund to protect the Church against future deficits with the balance of the PRF released for other purposes.

Contribution levels

- 16 The improved Valuation also reduces the cost of future accrual in the MMPS. This means contribution levels can be reduced accordingly. Having consulted with the District Treasurers, there was a strong preference for taking a lesson from Genesis 41 when Joseph filled the barns during the years of plenty to prepare for the years of famine. In order to avoid significant peaks and troughs in contribution rates it is proposed to use some of the reduced level of contributions to save for the years ahead when the contribution rates may need to increase again.
- 17 Over the last 20 years minister contribution rates have risen by 3.3% points from 6% to 9.3%. Over the same period circuits have increased their contributions by

35. Pension Schemes

13.4% points from 13.5% to 26.9%. In addition, the PRF has been used to subsidise 2.6% for the last three years, and the church has spent multiple millions from the PRF covering deficit payments. Consequently, it is proposed that the subsidy from the PRF is stopped (as it was only ever intended as a short term measure) and the remaining reduction in contributions benefits circuits as outlined below:

| | Current contribution levels % | Proposed contribution levels % |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Pension Reserve Fund subsidy | 2.6 | - |
| Ministers | 9.3 | 9.3 |
| Circuits | 26.9 | 20.0 |
| Total | 38.8 | 29.3 |
| Contributions to MMPS | 38.8 | 24.9 |
| Balance to be held in the PRF | - | 4.4 |

It is not proposed to reduce minister contribution rates given they may need to increase again in three years' time. However, it is recognised that, if future Valuations return favourable results, it could be possible for the Conference to reduce minister contribution rates at that time.

Pension Reserve Fund

- 18** The Conference of 2023 agreed to suspend further payments into the PRF from property levies. It also agreed that the voluntary contributions to the PRF should be returned to donors, with interest, if circumstances allow. The package of measures in this paper mean that those circumstances have now arisen and the repayments can be actioned following the Conference.
- 19** The PASLEMC Trustee has made further progress in de-risking its investment portfolio and has undertaken an insurance buy-in. As a consequence, not all the future deficit contributions that had been committed from the PRF will now be required.

35. Pension Schemes

20 The estimated position in relation to the fund can be summarised as follows:

| | PRF £'m |
|--|----------------|
| Balance as at 31/1/24 | 53.7 |
| Return of voluntary donations | -8.0 |
| Funds committed to PASLEMC | -7.1 |
| Savings from the PASLEMC buy-in | 4.0 |
| Release funds for the FSPD | -2.6 |
| Release funds into the Connexional Priority Fund | -10.0 |
| Remaining balance | 30.0 |

Appointment of a professional independent trustee director

21 In 2021 the Council appointed Capital Cranfield Pension Trustees Limited, represented by Mr Richard Hubbard, as Director of the Methodist Lay Employees' Pension Trust Limited (MLEPTL - the Trustee body of PASLEMC). In 2022 the Conference made the same appointment to the Methodist Ministers' Pension Trust Limited (MMPTL - the Trustee body of MMPS) and delegated the review of the contract for this service to the Methodist Council.

22 The contract ends in August 2024, with the option for a three year extension. Having consulted with the trustee directors, there was unanimous support for the reappointment of Capital Cranfield with Richard Hubbard as director and Chair of both boards for a further three year term. In particular, the directors noted how he had calmly led the boards through the unprecedented turmoil crated by the government's fiscal statement in September 2022, and also how both schemes had reduced the level of risk the Church was exposed to. It is also notable how the relationship between the boards and the Church had strengthened over the last three years. Therefore, his reappointment is recommended to the Conference.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

35/1. The Conference receives the Report.

35/2. The Conference approves the payment from the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme (MMPS) surplus of a discretionary inflation uplift of 5% over and above the planned MMPS inflation in September 2024.

35. Pension Schemes

- 35/3. The Conference approves that £2.6m of surplus funding in the Pension Reserve Fund (PRF) is transferred to the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons (FSPD) and the balance of surplus funding in the PRF, after accounting for the 2023 Valuation, be transferred to the Connexional Priority Fund.**
- 35/4. The Conference approves the revised security package outlined in the paper as part of the 2023 Valuation.**
- 35/5. The Conference approves that MMPS contribution rates are set at 9.3% for ministers and 20.0% for circuits/other bodies from September 2024, with the 4.4% excess collected put into a ring fenced sub-fund of the PRF.**
- 35/6. The Conference approves that the voluntary contributions to the Pension Reserve Fund be returned to the donors with interest paid at the CFB Deposit Rate.**
- 35/7. The Conference approves the re-appointment of Capital Cranfield Pension Trustee Limited, as represented by Richard Hubbard, as Director of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Trust Limited (MMPTL - the Trustee body of MMPS) for a period of three years commencing September 2024.**

36. Second Report of the Conference Business Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Loraine N Mellor Chair of the Conference Business Committee loraine.mellor@cornwallmethodists.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

En bloc items

The Business Committee proposes the following items to be taken *en bloc*:

3. Methodist Council part one sections A, B, D
6. Trustees for the Bailiwick of Guernsey Methodist Church Purposes
7. Trustees for Jersey Methodist Church Purposes
10. New Room
11. Forces Board
12. Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland
13. Revision to MIST Articles
15. Methodist Schools appointments
22. Methodist Council part two sections F, I, N, O, Q, S
23. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes
27. Methodist Homes
30. Stationing Committee
31. Referred Memorials and Notices of Motion
33. Managing Trustees of Central Hall Westminster
34. Methodist Ministers' Housing Society
39. Ecumenical Report
40. Central Finance Board
53. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report
56. Trustees for Manx Methodist Church Purposes

Under the terms of SO 134A, if Notices of Motion are received about items in the *en bloc* list those items will automatically be removed from the list. In addition, by giving notice to the Assistant Secretary of the Conference, any six members of the Conference may, without proposing an amendment, require that an item be removed from the list and debated. Such notice must be given before the close of business on Monday 1 July (SO 134A(1)(c)).

***RESOLUTION

36/1. The Conference adopts the Report of the Business Committee.

37. Permission to Serve

1. **PRESBYTERS OFFERING AS CANDIDATES FOR THE DIACONATE**
No case
2. **TRANSFER TO OTHER CONFERENCES AND DENOMINATIONS**
No case
3. **TRANSFER TO THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND**
No case
4. **PERMISSION TO SERVE ABROAD**
See the draft of the stations
5. **PERMISSION TO RESIDE ABROAD**
See the draft of the stations
6. **PERMISSION TO SERVE ANOTHER CHURCH (under Standing Order 735)**
See the draft of the stations

*****RESOLUTION** (Presbyteral Session)

- 37/1. **The Conference adopts the Report.**

38. Presbyteral Transfers and Reinstatements

1. **Recommendations of the Discerning Ordained Vocation Committee acting as a Transfer Committee**

- 1.1 The report of the Appeals Committee on applicants who have appealed against the recommendations of the committee under Standing Order 730(10) [see also SO 730(14)]

No case

- 1.2 Report on cases where there have been medical objections

No case

- 1.3 Applicants for transfer recommended by a 75% majority or more in the Discerning Ordained Vocation Committee to be transferred to the jurisdiction of this Conference under SO 730

Quophie Anochie Ababio, Methodist Church Ghana

Tokunbo Ezekiel Olusegun Asogbon, Methodist Church Nigeria

Fiona Marie Calverey, Methodist Church of Southern Africa

Kennedy Gondongwe, Methodist Church Zimbabwe

Allen Moyo, Methodist Church Zimbabwe

Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde, United Church of Zambia

Bethany Marie Willers, UMC, Iowa Annual Conference

- 1.4 Applicants for transfer recommended by a 75% majority or more in the Discerning Ordained Vocation Committee to proceed to probation prior to Reception into Full Connexion

No case

- 1.5 Applicants for transfer recommended by a 75% majority or more in the Discerning Ordained Vocation Committee to be received on transfer upon fulfilment of stated conditions

Helen Lawson, Church of the Nazarene. Conditional on permission to serve outside the control of the church. Permission given for 5 years.

Kim Leslie Alexander, Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Conditional on stationing. Condition met.

Adrian Trevor Roux, Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Conditional on stationing. Condition met.

38. Presbyteral Transfers and Reinstatements

1.6 Applicants not recommended for transfer

Ilidio Christina de Oliveira Junior, Methodist Church of Brazil

Ian James Forsyth, Baptist Church in Ireland

Henry Chilemeze Ohakah. Methodist Church Nigeria

1.7 Former presbyters and deacons of other Churches applying to be received into Full Connexion (under Standing Order 731)

(a) Those recommended

No case

(b) Those recommended upon fulfilment of stated conditions Steven Granville Jones, ex Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Conditional on permission to serve outside the control of the church. Permission given for 5 years.

(c) Those not recommended

No case

1.8 Applicants recommended to be recognised and regarded as presbyters in Full Connexion with the Conference under Standing Order 732

Donna Lynne Fowler-Marchant, UMC, North Carolina Conference

Sean Colin Turner, UMC, Western North Carolina Conference

Jacqueline Anne (Rivas) Jones, Methodist Church of Southern Africa

Christopher Nyarko Andam, Methodist Church Ghana

Opeyemi Olufemi Awe, Methodist Church Nigeria

2. **TRANSFER FROM THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND**

No case

3. **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REINSTATEMENTS TO FULL CONNEXION**

No case

4. **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REINSTATEMENTS AS LOCAL PREACHERS**

No case

38. Presbyteral Transfers and Reinstatements

***RESOLUTIONS (Presbyteral Session)

- 38/1. The Conference adopts the Report.**
- 38/2. The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that those persons whom the Conference has duly adjudged as fit to be received by transfer as presbyters be now or at a specified date presented to the Representative Session to be received into Full Connexion with the Conference, and if not already ordained, to be ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands.**

39. Ecumenical Report

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Michaela A Youngson Assistant Secretary of the Conference asc@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

Gathered by one Shepherd

Extracts from the homily of Pope Francis to those gathered for the Ecumenical Prayer Vigil, St Peter's Square, Rome, September 2023

"Together". Like the early Christian community on the Day of Pentecost. Like one flock, loved and gathered by one Shepherd, Jesus. Like the great crowd in the Book of Revelation we are here, brothers and sisters "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (Revelation 7:9), from different communities and countries, daughters and sons of the same Father, inspired by the Spirit received in baptism, and called to the same hope (cf. Ephesians 4:4-5)

As we approach the important anniversary of the great Council of Nicaea, let us ask that we may know how, like the Magi, to worship in unity and in silence the mystery of God made man, certain that the closer we are to Christ, the more united we will be among ourselves. And as the wise men from the East were led to Bethlehem by a star, so may the heavenly light guide us to our one Lord and to the unity for which he prayed. Brothers and sisters, let us set out together, eager to meet him, worship him and proclaim him, "so that the world may believe" (John 17:21).

A group of Methodist young adults accompanied the Secretary of the Conference to attend the ecumenical vigil in Rome in September 2023. The vigil was part of the Pope's initiative of a process of 'synodality', encouraging the voices of all within the Roman Catholic Church to be heard and to include the voices of ecumenical partners in that listening.

Trish Earlam, one of the participants offers a reflection on the Methodist Church website of her sense of being at times lost, and yet the joy and affirmation of being part of such a broad and welcoming ecumenical event. Her reflection is at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about/our-stories/together-gathering-of-the-people-of-god/> and here are a few extracts:

I often get lost; but if I am lost in worship, even if it is in another language, and I can feel God's presence, then it is a good thing.

Throughout the weekend we lived with host families. This gave us an insight to life in Rome. Some families spoke English well, while others spoke none at all, we

muddled through using our hands, Spanish, French and sometimes our phones for translations. We shared food and stories, hobbies and found similarities within the differences. I will be staying in touch with our wonderful host Gabriella.

We met each another as a Parish Group, as a Methodist Group, and we were hosted by the Revd Matthew Laferty the Executive Director of the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome for two evening meals. There was a wonderful sense of unity and inclusion throughout the whole weekend. I often get lost but if I am lost in togetherness with people from all backgrounds, denominations, and cultures then this is a good thing.

When thinking about what I shall pass on to the young people I work with, the congregations I preach to and the ecumenical partners I gather with, I shall tell them that this trip has taught me rather than fearing being lost in the differences, I should be lost more often in wonder, worship, and togetherness.

Life in Covenant

On 3 November 2003 the Anglican-Methodist Covenant was signed, representing a new relationship and new hope for transformation as the British Methodist Church and the Church of England committed themselves to work together for the sake of Christ's mission. The Life in Covenant Group and the Methodist Anglican Panel for Mission and Unity (MAPUM) are supporting plans for a year of events marking the 'coming of age' of the Covenant as it reaches its 21st anniversary in November this year. It is hoped that a service will be held on 4 November at which the Archbishop of Canterbury and the President and Vice-President will be present – this will be an affirmation of on-going commitment to work together, as well as an opportunity to acknowledge the areas in which the commitments within the Covenant are as yet unfulfilled.

When meeting with the President and Vice-President of the Conference, both the Archbishops of Canterbury and York spoke warmly and with commitment of the need for the covenant relationship between our churches to continue and to be deepened.

It is in this context that the new Life in Covenant Group has met to continue the work of advocating for and supporting the Covenant – with a realism that many in both churches do not know of its existence, or understand its meaning for local mission and ministry. The Revd Tim Norwood (CofE Officer for Local Ecumenism) and the Connexional Ecumenical Officer facilitated an online meeting of District and Diocesan Ecumenical Officers, enabling a warm and realistic conversation about the impact of the Covenant in their contexts and participants offered helpful suggestions about ways to mark the 21st anniversary.

39. Ecumenical Report

Free Churches Group (FCG)

The Free Churches Group comprises twenty-seven denominations which seek to promote faithful Christian witness in the public square.

FCG seeks to express the unity in Christ that is shared by Free Churches in England and Wales by promoting fellowship, shared counsel and working together, where possible, to extend Christ's kingdom in every sphere of society. This is done whilst recognising that each Group Member remains at liberty to fulfil its own distinctive witness and mission.

There is a particular focus on chaplaincy work in Prisons, Healthcare and Education although much wider issues in these areas and other fields are considered. Maintaining the spiritual testimony of the Free Churches, upholding their full religious liberty and taking action on matters of principle, where appropriate, are rooted in FCG's mission.

A recent initiative is a collaboration between the FCG and the Methodist Church in launching The Chaplaincy Chain Podcast which aims to open up conversations about the joys and challenges of chaplaincy by exploring its depths and breadths. Follow the link to hear the Moderator of the Free Churches Group, the Revd Helen Cameron, host a conversation about the importance of honouring chaplaincy in the life of the church.

Churches Together

The various national and pan-national ecumenical bodies continue to work together, producing resources, encouraging shared mission and ministry, and learning from one another as we all work out what it means to be the Body of Christ in this challenging world.

The Methodist Church continues to be committed to working with ecumenical partners from a wide variety of Christian traditions. We continue to encourage flexible ways of working together wherever possible as we engage in God's mission. The call to unity is a gospel imperative and a mission imperative and we continue to be challenged by the "Lund Principle"¹ that we should "act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately." The challenge is not only to

1 The Lund principle is derived from a question raised by the 1952 Faith and Order Conference of the World Council of Churches, held at Lund, Sweden. "Should not our Churches ask themselves whether they are showing sufficient eagerness to enter into conversation with other Churches, and whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?"

seek to act together but to articulate, understand and seek ultimately to resolve or to hold together those deep differences which divide us.

The Concordat between the United Methodist Church and the Methodist Church in Britain continues to offer opportunities for mutual learning and support for both churches. Four members of the Methodist Church in Britain have attended the UMC General Assembly, at a time when that Church faces great challenges, with a number of conferences and some local churches disaffiliating from the denomination.

Engagement with our Methodist and Uniting Church partners in Europe continues through the work of the European Methodist Council (EMC) which continues to meet online and in person. The EMC is a critical place for us walking with UMC Conferences as they make decisions about their future and we pray for all those impacted by decisions currently being made.

We also continue in our work with the Churches' Commission on Migration in Europe (CCME) as well as our support of the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome (a partnership with EMC and the World Methodist Council) and Mediterranean Hope (a partnership project based in Lampedusa working with refugees).

Since 2019 the role of Connexional Ecumenical Officer has been part of the work of the Assistant Secretary of the Conference (ASC), supported by an Assistant Ecumenical Officer. Whilst the ASC will retain oversight of the work of the new Connexional Ecumenical Officer, for capacity reasons the roles have been separated. The Revd Steven Cooper was appointed to the role of Connexional Ecumenical Officer by the Methodist Council and began work at the end of April.

*****RESOLUTION**

39/1. The Conference receives the Report.

40. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

Report for the twelve-month period ended 29 February 2024

Introduction

The Council of the Central Finance Board has determined to change the accounting reference date of the Central Finance Board to 31 August. This aligns the financial reporting of the Board with that of the broader Methodist Church. The Board will therefore be preparing financial statements for an eighteen-month period ending 31 August 2024. The Methodist Church Funds Act 1960 requires that the financial statements of the Board are presented to a general meeting at least annually. There will therefore be a general meeting of the Board on Monday 16 December 2024 where the main business of the meeting will be to approve those financial statements and review the appointment of auditors to the Board.

However, before the December general meeting of the Central Finance Board, there is the significant matter of the 2024 Methodist Conference.

This report on the activities of the Central Finance Board for the period 1 March 2023 to 29 February 2024 is therefore submitted to the Conference for consideration. It does not contain financial statements. Financial statements for the 18-month period to 31 August 2024 will be included in the report of the Central Finance Board to the 2025 Methodist Conference to be held in Telford. The content of this report has been expanded this year to include submissions from Roz Amos, the Board's Chief Investment Strategist and the Revd Dr Andrew Harper, our Chief Responsibility Officer. The report was approved by the general meeting of the Central Finance Board on Friday 26 April 2024.

Chair's statement

Investing for the future

Last year I reported on the significant decline in the assets managed by the Central Finance Board as the assets we managed on behalf of several Methodist pensions schemes declined by £382m, or 37% of our total assets under management. In response to these losses, the Council made several redundancies, increased the management fees in the CFB Funds and made other significant cost savings. However, we still reported a consolidated loss for the twelve-month period ended 28 February 2023 of £572k. These cost savings alone would not have been enough to secure the CFB's future and I must once again express my thanks to the Methodist Council who paid sufficient additional management fees to the CFB during 2023/24 to ensure that we will operate profitably during the current financial year.

This additional support has given the CFB breathing space to focus on the long-term solution to the shrinking assets that we manage on behalf of the Church – growth in our

40. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

regulated subsidiary, Epworth Investment Management Limited. The Chief Executive's Report updates the Conference on the progress that Epworth has made in new business and product design in the last year. Epworth has had a successful year and it is pleasing to see the CFB's long term strategic plan delivering the additional clients' assets that are needed to replace the substantial attrition in the assets that the CFB manages for the Church.

Perhaps the greatest change in Epworth over the last three years has been the identification and annunciation of their client propositions. Historically, Epworth presented itself as the Manager of four Charity Commission regulated funds – one investing in equities, two in sterling bonds, and a deposit Fund. The structure of these funds and the way that they are presented to the potential investor has changed considerably. Alongside the Deposit Fund, there are now three equity funds that form the foundation of a portfolio management service for Charities. Epworth therefore presents itself as the potential manager of a charity's entire liquidity – their cash and their "risk" money. The Epworth funds are used as the most efficient way to deliver Epworth's unique offering of investing with Christian ethics. However, for other asset classes third party fund managers are used. Epworth chooses the best in-class Manager - but only after ensuring that the external Manager meets the rigid criteria as set out in our unique and much-admired Ethical Pillars Document.

David discusses the performance of our Discretionary Service for Charities and the Epworth Multi Asset fund in his CEO report. Whilst strong sales of the Epworth Cash Plus Fund have led to a significant improvement in the financial position of the consolidated organisation, it is these client propositions that will secure our long-term future.

Improvement in investment returns.

The "annus horribilis" that the CFB suffered in 2022 was compounded by a year of poor absolute and relative investment returns in most of our Funds. The war in Ukraine led to a surge in the stock prices of many companies in which the CFB does not invest on ethical grounds – oil and gas companies and defence companies. I am pleased to report that 2023 saw a reversal of much of this underperformance. The CFB's "First Fund" is now called the Managed Mixed Fund and wholly invests into Epworth's Multi Asset Fund. That Fund has just been awarded a four crowns rating by a major fund rating agency – meaning that it sits within the top 15% of the funds in its peer group for consistency of good investment returns.

The CFB's financial position

We are now two thirds of the way through this eighteen-month reporting period. I am hopeful that, after the injection of additional fees from the Methodist Council, we will finish the new financial year-end in positive territory. A further key objective is that we

40. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

end the financial period trading on a positive basis through our organic business. The balance sheet of the Central Finance Board remains strong with in excess of £2m of consolidated net assets as at 29 February 2024.

Moving to Methodist Church House

We are looking forward to moving in to the new offices at Methodist Church House in Tavistock Place alongside our colleagues in the Connexional Team. It is looking highly likely that we will be in the new building by the end of this calendar year. I hope that we will be able to hold our general meeting in December in the meeting rooms on the ground floor of Tavistock Place.

Membership of Council

The general meeting of the Central Finance Board being held on 26 April 2024 agreed the following changes to the membership of Council:

Retirements

Peter Howson and Morwenna Williams

Peter and Morwenna will retire by virtue of the age limitation contained in the governing statute. Both will continue to serve as Board members and advisers to the Council. I must extend my thanks to them both for their diligent and passionate support for the Central Finance Board.

Appointments

Nicola Sivori, Andrew Slim and Julian Blakemore

Nicola, Andrew and Julian filled casual vacancies on the CFB Council at the Council meeting held on 26 March 2024. The General meeting of the CFB to be held on 26 April 2024 confirmed these appointments.

Chief Executive Officer's report

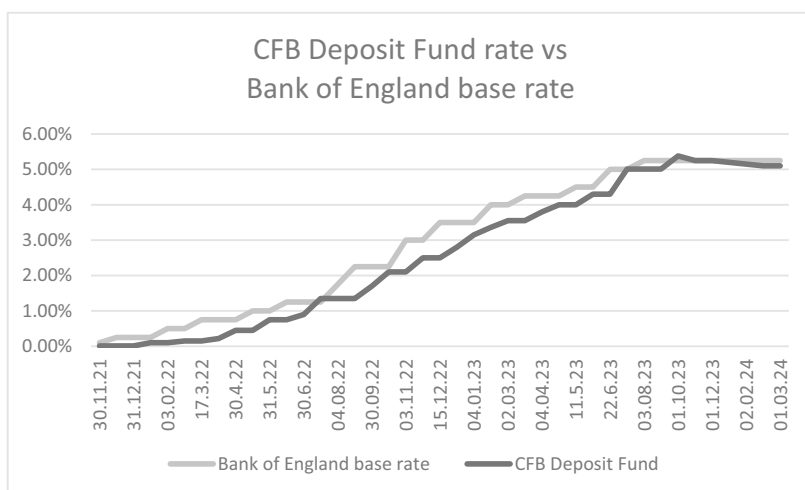
After a difficult 2022, I am pleased to reflect on a much-improved 2023. The rise in interest rates has made Epworth's Cash Plus Fund an attractive proposition to charities and I must thank Simon Woolnough for the amount of tyre rubber and shoe leather he has used

40. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

during the last year to visit numerous bursars and treasurers. One comment that we have received consistently is about the speed and ease with which we open new accounts and for that I must thank the client, compliance and operations teams. As our Deputy Chair frequently reminds me; everyone in the business can contribute to our sales effort. Whilst we have had a much better year, there is still a lot of work to do. We will only be able to report a profit this year thanks to the help from the Methodist Council and we will lose a further £34m of assets from the Methodist pensions schemes before the end of this calendar year. By that point, all of the major accounts from the pension schemes of the Methodist Church with the CFB or Epworth will have been closed, a decline of £570m over the last seven years. A major capital investment is also required in our Deposit Funds to significantly improve our service to clients. 2023 has been a much better year – but we are not yet in a position to switch from a cost constraining model to a push for rapid growth.

CFB Deposit Fund

When I wrote this report last year the CFB Deposit Fund had just declared an interest rate of 3.56%. Today it is 5.10%, having peaked at 5.38% in October 2023. As the Chief Investment Strategist notes, we are not expecting interest rates to retreat quickly, meaning that churches and our other depositors will continue to receive positive real returns (ie adjusted for inflation) on their balances in the Deposit Fund. This Fund has seen some attrition in the last year with several major Methodist institutions needing to access their reserves for operational purposes, but the core balance invested through the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes remains remarkably stable.



40. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

We have a major project underway to investigate how we can better support this Fund from an operational and Information Technology perspective. The current IT platform that the Fund sits on uses legacy software that is not robust nor well supported. Nowhere is this more evident than in the portal that our deposit fund clients use to access their balances and pass through instructions. This is frequently “down” due to issues with compatibility with other systems as they get upgraded. We have engaged an external firm of consultants to identify potential solutions, their costs, risks and delivery timetable. This is likely to lead to a major project that will significantly upgrade our systems within the next 24 months. We will also need to consider how we interface with the broader Church as we move away from paper correspondence and into the world of electronic communications – and I suspect that this is a project that will take a lot longer than two years.

The CFB's Fixed Interest funds

When I joined the Central Finance Board over seven years ago, the CFB offered a broad range of funds that invested in the Sterling bond market:

CFB Index -Linked Bond Fund

CFB Short Dated Fixed Interest Fund

CFB Corporate Bond Fund

CFB Gilt Fund

CFB Managed Fixed Interest Fund

This range of funds met the credit and duration needs of our institutional clients; unfortunately, these clients have subsequently withdrawn their bond and credit portfolios from the CFB's management. The Index-Linked fund was closed three years ago and the Short-Dated, Corporate Bond and Gilt funds were closed in early 2024 in reflection of the placement by the Methodist pension' schemes of their credit portfolios with third party managers. The small balances in the residual funds were merged into the CFB's Managed Fixed Interest Fund. This Fund uses external collective investment schemes for government and corporate debt exposure.

Epworth Investment Management Limited

The strategic plan of the Central Finance Board has always acknowledged that the assets the CFB managed on behalf of the Church would decline and that, to replace them, we would need to grow our external business through our wholly owned subsidiary, Epworth

40. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

Investment Management Limited. The sudden attrition of 2022 increased the burden on Epworth to deliver this growth at a time when our capacity for risk was limited. Epworth therefore focused its sales efforts in 2023 on the Epworth Cash Plus Fund where there was an opportunity created by the sudden rise in interest rates and the inability of the High Street banks to pass all of the interest rate rises through to their customers. The Epworth Cash Plus Fund is available to charities in the United Kingdom and can use the structural advantage offered by the core investment from the CFB Deposit Fund to place money on longer term deposits whilst still offering instant access to our depositors. I am delighted to report that gross sales of that Fund in the last year have exceeded £120m (£80m net). The recovery in consolidated assets under management from their low of £860m to £980m today can be largely attributed to the sales of this Fund, together with some help from the better returns from the equity markets.

Whilst Epworth's Cash Plus Fund has been the source of our recovery over the last year, we do not see it as the long-term solution as sales and depositors will inevitably dry up as interest rates decline. For our longer-term security, we need to see growth in Epworth's risk products – its discretionary portfolio service for charities, its Multi Asset fund and the Model Portfolio Service for the retail investor.

Epworth's portfolio service has produced good investment returns, consistent with the relevant risk profiles across its five models since its re-launch in January 2023. This consistent performance, combined with a simple on-line reporting system, places Epworth in a strong place to leverage their strength in the Christian ethics of investment to seek long term investment monies from Charities. The Multi Asset Fund offers a similar investment solution but within a product wrapper for those charities that want a simple solution. As the financial position of the organisation improves, Epworth is increasing its investment in relevant Conferences and other profile-raising opportunities. Our Chief Responsibility Officer is becoming an in-demand guest on mainstream media such as the ITN news and The Times newspaper. The impact of our improved propositions and the work of the business development team is evident in the strength of Epworth's new business pipeline. I am pleased to add that this has been delivered at the same time as Epworth made a significant investment in our compliance culture as it dealt with the FCA's Senior Managers & Certified Regime, Consumer Duty and the new Sustainability Disclosure Requirements.

Epworth's offering to the "person in the pew", the Model Portfolio Service (MPS), has seen only limited take up. Epworth did not embark on a direct-to-consumer sales strategy due to the substantial costs this required. Instead, the sales strategy for MPS is via independent financial advisers. This has certainly slowed the sales process down and Epworth made an initial mistake with the product pricing compounded by poor performance from the services' sub-Investment Manager. The Epworth board has taken steps to remedy both of these issues and is hopeful that the sales of their Model Portfolio Service for the retail investor will pick up later in 2024.

40. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

Award

I am delighted to announce that, for the second year in a row, Epworth received the award for Best Charity Investment Fund Management Firm in the UK from the Wealth & Finance Awards.

Report of the Chief Investment Strategist

The last year in investment markets has been one of improvement globally, although this overall rosy picture hides quite a lot of variation in the performance of regions and countries. Around the world inflation has fallen back to close to long-term targets, following the spikes seen a year ago. While interest rates remain at elevated levels compared to the preceding decade, most market participants are expecting to see falls in these rates throughout the year. There is cautious optimism that an economic 'soft landing' has been achieved - that is, policymakers have succeeded in reducing inflation without creating a deep or long recession. The US economy has surprised on the upside with its strength and resilience, and even in other markets such as Europe and China where growth has been sluggish, we are seeing tentative green shoots of recovery.

This overall rosy picture hides quite a lot of variation in the performance of various asset classes. The outstanding performer, in terms of both economic and stock market growth, has been the United States, and in particular a small number of large US technology companies which are at the forefront of the new technology super-cycle emerging in the form of artificial intelligence. These companies are now very large but also very profitable, and are increasingly dominant in global stock markets, and have been nicknamed the 'Magnificent Seven'.

Global equities, turbocharged by this Magnificent Seven, returned 18.3% over the year. The UK equity market, by contrast produced a barely positive 0.6%, highlighting the impact of exposure to these high growth sectors. Our CFB Funds have performed broadly in line with the indices over the year. The UK bond market was largely flat, but higher yields meant that overall returns were around 4%. Cash rates remain high, and the CFB Deposit Fund has a rate of over 5% at time of writing, although this is expected to fall through the year as interest rates decline. Highly indebted sectors, such as property and infrastructure, have performed poorly due to the increased interest rates we have seen.

CFB Fund performance

2023 was broadly a better year for ethical equity funds as the oil price stabilised. As noted above, the CFB's Global Equity Fund significantly outperformed the UK Fund Equity Fund:

40. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

CFB Equity funds: Investment performance to 29.02.2024 (All figures annualised and after fees)

| | Fund size 28.2.23 (m) | Fund size 29.2.24 (m) | | One year | Three years p.a. | Five Years p.a. | Ten years p.a. |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| CFB UK Equity Fund | £63.5 | £41.1m | Fund | 0.48% | 4.81% | 3.95% | 4.58% |
| | | | Benchmark | 0.57% | 7.78% | 5.02% | 5.00% |
| | | | Excess return | -0.09% | -2.97% | -1.07% | -0.42% |
| CFB Global Equity Fund | £49.9 | £35.1m | Fund | 16.06% | 8.52% | 10.96% | 11.46% |
| | | | Benchmark | 18.26% | 10.93% | 12.44% | 12.47% |
| | | | Excess return | -2.20% | -2.41% | -1.44% | -1.01% |

The decline in the value of the CFB equity funds reflects further withdrawals by the Methodist pensions schemes during the year.

The fixed Interest markets showed a positive return in 2023 but the substantial falls seen in 2022 are reflected in the negative longer-term numbers. The CFB Managed Fixed Interest Fund is the only Fund (outside of the CFB Property Fund) that does not invest through equivalent funds offered by the CFB's regulated subsidiary, Epworth Investment Management Limited. The CFB Managed Equity Fund is actively asset allocated between the Epworth UK and Global Equity Funds while the Managed Mixed Fund uses Epworth's Multi Asset Fund.

Managed CFB funds: Investment performance to 29.02.2024 (All figures annualised and after fees)

| | Fund size 28.2.23 (m) | Fund size 29.2.24 (m) | | One year | Three years p.a. | Five Years p.a. | Ten years p.a. |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| CFB Managed Equity Fund | £29.0m | £27.0m | Fund | 8.46% | 6.46% | 5.63% | 5.94% |
| | | | Benchmark Over rolling five year periods, to achieve through holdings in the CFB UK Equity and Global Equity Funds, a total return equal to or in excess of the composite index measuring the constituent asset classes. | | | | |

40. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

| | Fund size 28.2.23 (m) | Fund size 29.2.24 (m) | | One year | Three years p.a. | Five Years p.a. | Ten years p.a. |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| CFB Managed Fixed Interest Fund | £21.9m | £34.8m | Fund | 4.30% | -4.35% | -1.67% | 0.83% |
| | | | Benchmark Over rolling five-year periods, to achieve, a total return equal to or in excess of the UK Government fixed interest market. | | | | |
| CFB Managed Mixed Fund | £28.5m | £28.2m | Fund | 5.45% | 4.76% | 5.34% | 5.92% |
| | | | Benchmark Over the long term, to provide a good level of income, with capital growing in line with inflation | | | | |

The rise in the assets held in the Managed Fixed Interest Fund during the year reflect the consolidation of the residual balances in the other CFB fixed interest funds into this Fund.

Report of the Chief Responsibility Officer

Safeguarding Our Climate

The CFB doesn't just manage the Church's investments; it plays a significant part in safeguarding the Methodist Church's approach to justice, its reputation in the public sphere, and its legacy through investment decisions. In other words, the CFB are stewards, entrusted by the Church to manage investments in line with Christ's mandate for life.

The CFB views good stewardship as actively engaging with the companies we invest in - pushing them to do better when it comes to environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and good governance. By fostering this kind of dialogue, the CFB not only helps drive positive change within these companies, but also contributes to the greater good of God's creation.

The investment space is full of complex issues. One only needs to look at the state of the planet and its people to witness all sorts of suffering, violence, poverty, and exclusion. So, how does the CFB choose what topics to engage on? When the CFB looks for opportunities for engagement, it does so with consideration for the missional priorities of the church, alongside the potentiality to make real change.

40. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

During this reporting period, the CFB focused its engagement efforts on topics ranging from the climate emergency to labour rights, tax justice, and healthier food standards. All the topics included in the detail below reflect the CFB's steadfast commitment to advancing Christian ethics, as defined by the Methodist Church, in the investment space.

Climate Action and Extractive Industries

The Central Finance Board (CFB), in partnership with Climate Action 100+, continues to actively engage with Anglo American, a prominent multinational mining company. Anglo American's operations, spanning platinum, diamonds, copper, nickel, and iron ore, are under scrutiny due to their significant methane emissions resulting from coking coal mining. Methane, a potent greenhouse gas, poses a considerable threat to our climate, with emissions from coking coal mining surpassing those from global gas pipelines and Liquid Nitrogen Gas (LNG) facilities combined, as calculated by the International Energy Agency (IEA).

As methane emissions represent a substantial portion of Anglo American's Scope 1 emissions, it is imperative for investors to monitor and assess the company's progress in mitigating these emissions. Hence, the CFB, alongside co-leads Robeco and the Church of England Pensions Board, is advocating for methane-specific reduction targets from Anglo American to address this urgent environmental concern.

Climate Accountability in Banking Sector

Continuing its advocacy efforts, the CFB has been actively involved in holding banks accountable for their climate pledges. I shed light on HSBC's contradictory actions in an interview with ITV's Business and Economics editor, Joel Hills. Despite HSBC's climate commitments, investigations revealed its involvement in financing expansionist oil and gas projects, prompting public concern.

As a result of heightened scrutiny, HSBC has committed to disclosing its off-balance sheet emissions associated with capital raises for oil and gas ventures—an essential step toward transparency and accountability in the banking sector. Moreover, the CFB, in collaboration with ShareAction and institutional investors, has filed a shareholder resolution against Barclays PLC, aiming to refine the company's policies regarding financing oil and gas extractive activities. This ongoing engagement demonstrates the commitment to holding financial institutions accountable for their environmental impact.

40. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

Promoting Biodiversity Conservation

In response to the growing recognition of biodiversity's importance, the CFB has embraced initiatives like Nature Action 100, which aims to mitigate the impact of corporate operations on nature. By engaging with select companies, the CFB endeavours to set specific targets and ensure annual disclosures to track progress towards reducing their environmental footprint. This aligns with previous engagement efforts with companies like MJ Gleeson and Anglo American, emphasising a holistic approach to environmental stewardship.

Navigating Conflict and Labour Issues

Adapting Conflict Policy

Recognising the evolving landscape of global conflicts, the CFB has developed a comprehensive Conflict Policy to address various conflict scenarios worldwide, including the Israel/Palestine conflict. This policy provides clear guidance to fund managers, ensuring rigorous assessment and proactive engagement with investee companies to navigate geopolitical risks responsibly.

Promoting Labour Rights

The CFB remains vigilant regarding labour rights violations, as evidenced by its response to allegations of sexual violence in Kenyan tea plantations formerly owned by Unilever. Despite the lack of response from Unilever, the CFB is committed to engaging with the company and collaborating with stakeholders like the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka to address these issues. Through proactive dialogue and advocacy, the CFB seeks to uphold labour rights and promote a culture of accountability within investee companies.

Advocating for Fairness and Transparency

Addressing Tax Justice

The CFB continues its proactive engagement with investee companies to promote fair taxation practices, emphasising the importance of timely and transparent tax payments. This includes engaging with UK-based firms as well as extending efforts to European holdings to enhance tax transparency standards. By aligning with organisations like

40. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

the Fair Tax Mark and advocating for global tax transparency, the CFB reinforces its commitment to responsible investment practices.

Ensuring Effective Voting Practices

In fiscal year 2023, the CFB demonstrated its commitment to responsible stewardship by voting at 100% of eligible meetings through its subsidiary Epworth Investment Management Limited, reflecting a robust approach to corporate governance. With a focus on sustainability and shareholder values, the CFB, in collaboration with the Church Investors Group, employs a joint voting policy. This policy prioritises sustainable, long-term shareholder value and encompasses diverse issues, including remuneration structures and director elections, to promote accountability and transparency in corporate decision-making.

Voting record of Epworth Equity Funds 2023-2024

| Type | For | Against | Abstain | % Against or abstain (%) |
|--------------------------------|------|---------|---------|--------------------------|
| Auditor appointments | 250 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Directors | 2063 | 472 | 4 | 19 |
| Remuneration reports | 104 | 221 | 9 | 69 |
| Executive pay schemes (UK) | 52 | 14 | 0 | 21 |
| Shareholder capital (overseas) | 156 | 15 | 0 | 9 |
| Other | 1359 | 214 | 14 | 14 |
| Total | 3984 | 938 | 27 | 20 |

Advancing Diversity and Equity

Supporting Diversity in the Workforce

The CFB's engagement efforts extend to promoting diversity and inclusion within investee companies, as demonstrated in discussions with IntegraFin. By encouraging initiatives to promote women and minorities in traditionally male-dominated sectors like

40. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

finance, the CFB emphasises the importance of fostering an inclusive corporate culture. Additionally, by advocating for unbiased recruitment practices and supporting initiatives like the 10k Black Interns and Women in Finance, the CFB underscores its commitment to advancing diversity and equality in the workplace.

Advocating for Fair Wages

The CFB's engagement with companies like Greggs underscores its commitment to fair labour practices, including equitable pay structures for employees. By engaging with investee companies on issues related to living wages, the CFB seeks to ensure that workers are fairly compensated for their contributions. Through ongoing dialogue and advocacy, the CFB aims to promote fair labour standards and uphold the dignity and well-being of workers within the corporate sector.

Prioritising Public Health and Well-being

Promoting Healthy Food Practices

The CFB remains vigilant regarding public health concerns, as evidenced by its support for resolutions promoting healthy food sales targets at companies like Nestlé. By advocating for greater transparency and accountability in setting targets related to healthy food sales, the CFB underscores its commitment to promoting consumer well-being. Despite not participating in the co-filing process, CFB remains actively engaged with Nestlé and supports efforts to prioritise public health in corporate decision-making.

Commitment to External Standards and Accountability

Adherence to Stewardship Standards

The CFB upholds high stewardship standards as outlined in the Financial Reporting Council's UK Stewardship Code, reflecting its commitment to responsible investment practices. Through regular reporting and adherence to stewardship principles, the CFB demonstrates transparency and accountability in its investment approach. By seeking approval of its stewardship reports and engaging with stakeholders, the CFB reaffirms its dedication to promoting sustainable and ethical investment practices.

By refining and articulating these communications, the Central Finance Board can effectively convey its commitment to environmental sustainability, social responsibility,

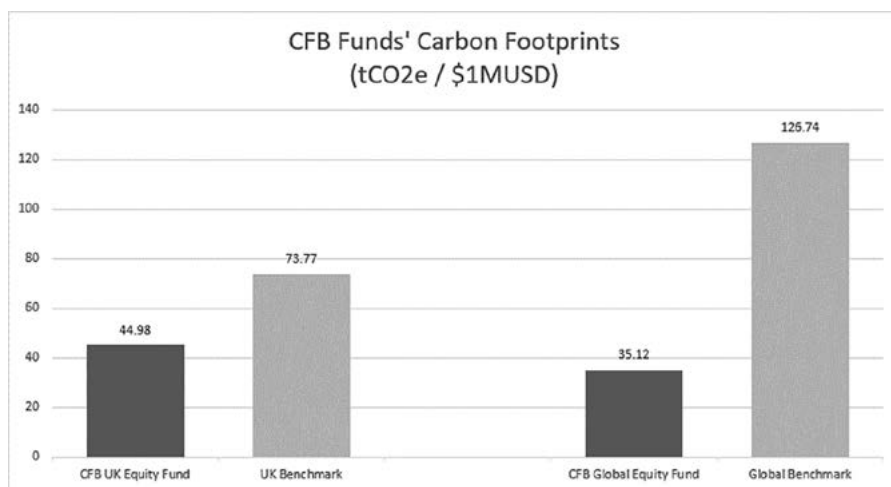
40. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

and ethical investment practices to stakeholders, thereby fostering trust and accountability within the investment community.

The Carbon Footprint of the CFB Equity Funds

The CFB recognises that investment performance is only one measure that our clients hold us to. The other is our ethical performance. The Epworth Funds that the CFB invests in are actively managed to reduce the consolidated carbon footprint of the companies in the portfolio relative to the Funds benchmark:

Carbon footprint of Epworth Equity funds at 29.02.2024



***RESOLUTION

40/1. The Conference adopts the Report of the Central Finance Board.

41. Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr Claire Potter potterc@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

1. Special Reports

- 1.1 Candidates accepted at previous Conferences and given permission to delay entry into training
 - (a) Those given permission to defer by a further year
No case
 - (b) Those given permission to enter into training
No case
- 1.2 Candidates to be accepted at this Conference and to be given permission to delay entry into training
No case
- 1.3 Candidates to be accepted at this Conference and to be given permission to transfer to another Conference
- 1.4 Candidates conditionally accepted at previous Conferences
 - (a) Those judged to have fulfilled the condition and therefore to be accepted as candidates
No case
 - (b) Those judged to have failed to fulfil the condition and thereby not to be accepted as candidates
No case
 - (c) Those still to fulfil the condition
Olive Ruzvidzo
- 1.5 Changes in expected date of Reception into Full Connexion
 - (a) To an earlier date
No case
 - (b) To a later date
Chi Lok (Rocky) Chan from 2026 to 2027
Rachel Read from 2026 to 2027

41. Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee

- 1.6 Deferment or suspension under SO 726
 - (a) Student presbyters
No case
 - (b) Probationers
No case
- 1.7 Withdrawals under SO 727
 - (a) Candidates
No case
 - (b) Student presbyters
No case
 - (c) Probationers
No case
- 1.8 Transfer to other Conferences or Churches
No case
- 1.9 Reinstatements under SO 761
 - (a) Student presbyters
No case
 - (b) Probationers
No case
- 1.10 Discipline
No case
- 1.11 Discontinuance under SO 031(4)
No case

*****RESOLUTION** (Presbyteral Session)

41/1. The Conference adopts the special reports of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

41. Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee

2. CANDIDATES FOR PRESBYTERAL MINISTRY

***RESOLUTION (Presbyteral Session)

41/2. **The Conference resolves to recommend to the Representative Session for training those persons whose names have been duly presented to it.**

***RESOLUTION (Representative Session)

41/3. **The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that it accepts for training, unconditionally or conditionally as the case may be, the candidates for presbyteral ministry recommended by the Presbyteral Session whose names are recorded in the Daily Record for that Session.**

3. PREACHERS RECOMMENDED FOR CONTINUANCE ON TRIAL

In the following lists:

** = change from the lists approved by the 2023 Conference*

+ = candidates accepted by the 2023 Conference

| Surname | First name(s) | Due to be received into Full Connexion |
|------------|------------------------|--|
| Alex | Abi | 2026 |
| Banks | John Paul | 2025 |
| Banks | Kyung Mi | 2026 |
| Barker | Michaela Jayne | 2026 |
| +Bediako | Eric Obenaye | 2027 |
| Bell | Judith Helen Elizabeth | 2025 |
| Birks | Tracy Ann | 2025 |
| Brooker | Tina | 2025 |
| Bryon | Ian David | 2026 |
| Carney | Owen Gerallt | 2027 |
| Carrington | Anna Marie | 2026 |

41. Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee

| Surname | First name(s) | Due to be received into Full Connexion |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| *Chan | Chi Lok (Rocky) | 2026 |
| Chikaviro | Godfrey | 2027 |
| Chun | Hannah Moon | 2025 |
| Clark | Julie | 2026 |
| Cullingford | James Jeremy | 2026 |
| Dowson | Ruth Elizabeth | 2025 |
| Edbarg | Christvin Johnson Kirubakara Pandian | 2027 |
| Edmondson | Hayley Lisa | 2025 |
| Frimpong-Manso | Collins | 2027 |
| Geeson | Nicola Jayne | 2026 |
| +George | Daniel Richard | 2027 |
| Gillard | Samantha Jane | 2025 |
| Haraszi | Ildiko Maria | 2027 |
| Holmes | Christopher John | 2025 |
| Hooks | Sarah Anne | 2025 |
| Jacobs | Susan Nerissa | 2026 |
| Jennings | Cassandra Emma | 2027 |
| Kwallah | Joseph Ndehi | 2025 |
| Makunde | Sincere | 2025 |
| Marshall | Rebecca Jane | 2026 |
| Martin | Laura Sarah | 2026 |
| Mayo | Stephen Neil | 2026 |
| McGhee | Kirsty Seonad | 2025 |
| McMahon-Riley | Jason Lee | 2025 |

41. Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee

| Surname | First name(s) | Due to be received into Full Connexion |
|----------------|----------------------|---|
| Pinkney | Rachel Elizabeth | 2025 |
| Pipet | Dorothy Anne | 2027 |
| Popoola | Joyce | 2026 |
| Porter | Richard John | 2025 |
| Prince | Rachael Helen | 2025 |
| Read | Rachel | 2026 |
| Sam | Agnes Eyiaba | 2025 |
| Sheridan | Liam James John | 2028 |
| Simmons | Heather Elizabeth | 2025 |
| Smith | Fiona Marie | 2025 |
| Sparey | Naomi-Rachel Frances | 2026 |
| Sutcliffe | Claire Lucy | 2027 |
| Tedd | Paulette Rosemarie | 2026 |
| +Thevanesan | Obeth Ratnesan | 2027 |
| Thorne | Penelope | 2025 |
| +Watkin | Stuart John | 2028 |
| +Wheeler | Lorraine Fay | 2028 |

*****RESOLUTION** (Presbyteral Session)

41/4. The Conference adopts the report on preachers recommended for continuance on trial.

41. Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee

4. Preachers on trial presented to the Conference for reception into Full Connexion in 2024

| Surname | First name(s) |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Bell | Jonathan |
| Bhajan | Evelyn |
| Caddell | Sarah Louise |
| Collins | Rachel Irene |
| Dainty-Share | Tiras Philip |
| Day | Anne Mary |
| Donnison | Steven David |
| Fugill | Rebecca Elizabeth |
| Hughes | Catharine |
| Kisob | Juliet Aritey |
| Mayisiri | Joyce |
| Middleton-Laing (formerly Laing) | Alexandra Dagmar |
| Moss | Rachel |
| Mutopo | Rosemary |
| Onyett | Michelle (Mo) |
| Patterson | James Alan |
| Robinson | Philip |
| Smith | Matthew Barrie |
| Sutton | Steven |
| Tull | Marcia Yvonne |
| Walker | Wendy |
| Weir | Fiona |
| White | Blayze Kyle |

41. Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee

***RESOLUTION (Presbyteral Session)

- 41/5. The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that it judges that those persons whose names are printed in the Agenda have duly completed their training and probation and thereby it recommends them to the Representative Session as fit to be received into Full Connexion with the Conference as presbyters and, if not already ordained, to be ordained.**

***RESOLUTION (Representative Session)

- 41/6. The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that those persons whose names have been read to the Conference and are printed in the Agenda and Daily Record be now received into Full Connexion with the Conference as presbyters, and that those not already ordained, be ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands on the afternoon of this day, 30 June 2024, at:**
Batley Central Methodist Church
Bradford Cathedral
Brighouse Central Methodist Church
Wesley Chapel, Harrogate

42. Authorisations Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr Andrew J Lunn Chair of the Authorisations Committee |
|---------------------------------|--|

1. The Authorisations Committee has reviewed applications from Circuits to authorise those who are not ordained as presbyters (both lay people and probationer presbyters) to preside at services of Holy Communion in accordance with Standing Order 011. Careful consideration was given to applications using the revised criteria set out in Book VI, Part 3 of CPD.
2. In 2023 the Faith and Order Committee completed its review of the current criteria for Authorisations, as tasked by the Conference (see Report 29 to the 2023 Conference) which has led to a new set of criteria. This has led to a new application form which requests information from Circuits in a more discursive way, including justification of how the request relates to their mission plan, as well as evidence of the need for the authorisation. The first year of working with these new forms has involved the Committee in learning different ways of working as we assess the applications. In some ways it places more weight on the considerations of the Authorisations Committee. We will continue to reflect on the implications of this new way of working.
3. The committee considered a total of 61 applications (including renewals after three years): 12 for presbyteral probationers and 49 for lay people. 59 authorisations are recommended to the 2024 Conference. The committee declined to recommend two applications which did not meet the missional criteria. The committee understands that one of these applications is subject to an appeal which is being considered under the terms of SO 011(3), and a report on that will be made separately to the Conference.
4. Applications are scrutinised by Circuit Meetings and District Policy Committees before submission. We are grateful to those Circuits and Districts which supply us with full and accurate details, as that helps us complete our part of the process with the minimum of uncertainty and delay.
5. All applications for consideration in 2025 should be submitted by Friday 28 March 2025 to authorisations@methodistchurch.org.uk. The committee will meet on 29 April 2025 to consider the applications received.
6. Authorisations, when granted, are for one year and their scope is limited to the Circuit in which the person resides. If the District Policy Committee (DPC) is satisfied that the person authorised remains suitable and the circumstances of the Circuit have not changed, it may on the application of the Circuit Meeting recommend

42. Authorisations Committee

a renewal of the authorisation for a second or third year, and the Authorisations Committee supports any such recommendation without further investigation (see lists B and C below). However it should be noted that DPCs are required to re-examine cases at the end of year 1 and year 2 to check these are still appropriate.

7. The Authorisations Committee presents three lists to the Conference. List A records the recommendations of the Committee on the initial applications and renewals at the end of a three-year term. Lists B and C set out the recommendations of the Authorisations Committee on renewals for a second or third year.
8. The committee welcomes informal consultations with any Circuit considering making an application for an authorisation.

***RESOLUTIONS

42/1. The Conference receives the Report.

42/2. The Conference authorises the following persons to preside at the Lord's Supper for the year commencing 1 September 2024 in accordance with the provisions of SO 011:

AUTHORISATIONS TO BE PRESENTED TO THE 2024 CONFERENCE

Key: P = Probationer presbyter
L = Lay person
M= Approved under missional criterion

LIST A – New applications for authorisations for three years

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-----|
| 2/6 | Bridgend United Area | Neville Granville | L |
| 2/20 | South West Wales | John Birch | L |
| 5/1 | Birmingham | Julie Clark | P |
| 5/6 | Birmingham (West) and Oldbury | Michael Hall | L |

42. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-----|
| 6/5 | Wigan | Kenneth Vernon | L |
| 7/7 | Gloucestershire | James Cullingford | P |
| 11/4 | Mid-Cheshire | Kathryn Craig | L |
| 11/5 | Dane and Trent | Anna Carrington | P |
| 11/18 | Stoke-on-Trent | Amy Wyatt | L |
| 11/18 | Stoke-on-Trent | Glynis Cooper | L |
| 11/22 | North Staffordshire | Karen Barnett | L |
| 11/24 | Staffordshire Moorlands | Beryl Stew | L |
| 11/24 | Staffordshire Moorlands | Gillian Meredith | L |
| 12/1 | Camborne, Redruth and Hayle | Sarah Flowerday | L |
| 12/1 | Camborne, Redruth and Hayle | Robert Manley | L |
| 12/7 | St Austell | Jo-Anne Petzing | L |
| 12/14 | The Lizard and Mounts Bay | Tracie Haslam | L |
| 12/14 | The Lizard and Mounts Bay | Sylvia Richards | L |
| 12/14 | The Lizard and Mounts Bay | Shirley Wearne | L |
| 12/14 | The Lizard and Mounts Bay | David Pascoe | |
| 12/24 | Mid-Cornwall | Miranda Knight | L |
| 14/10 | Norfolk Broads | Shaun Cushion | L |
| 17/11 | Barton, Brigg and Wolds | Jane Lloyd | L |

42. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|---------------------|---|--------------------|------------|
| 18/9 | Wirral | Ian Jackson | L |
| 18/9 | Wirral | Steve Cooper | L |
| 18/9 | Wirral | Judith Stelfox | L |
| 18/9 | Wirral | Mark Thomas | L |
| | | | |
| 19/7, 19/8, 19/9 | Stretford and Urmston, Altrincham, Sale | Dorothy Bretherton | L |
| | | | |
| 21/1 | Burnley and Pendle | Ian Wheeler | L |
| | | | |
| 22/2 | Nottingham (South) | Naomi Sparey | P |
| 22/12 | National Forest East | Alan Brady | L |
| 22/12 | National Forest East | Nicola Geeson | P |
| | | | |
| 23/23 | West Oxfordshire | Susan Jacobs | P |
| 23/29 | Vale of Aylesbury | Peter Honeyball | L |
| | | | |
| 24/1 | Plymouth and Devonport | Rebecca Marshall | P |
| 24/7 | Tavistock | Ali Mansfield | L |
| 24/11 | Bude and Holsworthy | Andrew Pitt | L |
| 24/11 | Bude and Holsworthy | Kevin Hogarth | L |
| 26/8 | Dorset South and West | Pamela Woodland | L |
| 26/8 | Dorset South and West | Anthony Boyden | L |
| | | | |
| 27/32 | Bradford North | Stuart Ayrton | L |

42. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 28/2 | Brownhills and Willenhall | John Worth | L |
| 28/2 | Brownhills and Willenhall | Michael Cronogue | L |
| 28/4 | Walsall | Sue Smith | L |
| 28/4 | Walsall | Sharon Jackson | L |
| 28/4 | Walsall | Bruce Kirk | L |
| 28/13 | Dudley and Netherton | Peter Roberts | L |
| 28/13 | Dudley and Netherton | William Jones | L |
| 28/21 | Telford | Josephine Kudlacik | L |
| | | | |
| 29/16 | Tadcaster | Abi Alex | P |
| 29/26 | Nidd Valley | Ian Bryon | P |
| | | | |
| 31/10 | North of Scotland Mission | Sarah Sim | L |
| | | | |
| 34/1 | North Bedfordshire | Paulette Tedd | P |
| 34/10 | Southend and Leigh | Stephen Mayo | P |
| 34/10 | Southend and Leigh | Colin Turner | L |
| 35/37 | Teddington | Philip Slater | L |
| | | | |
| 36/1 | Hampshire Surrey Border | Kyung Mi Banks | P |
| 36/25 | South Kent | David Songer | L |
| 36/25 | South Kent | David Smith | L |

42. Authorisations Committee

LIST B – Renewals after one year for applications granted in 2023

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|------------|--------------------------------|------------------|-----|
| 2/13 | Gwent Hills and Vales | Hugo Potgeiter | L |
| 2/13 | Gwent Hills and Vales | Celia Price | L |
| 2/18 | Neath Port Talbot | Clem Raymond | L |
| 2/18 | Neath Port Talbot | Robin Sherwood | L |
| 2/27 | Vale of Glamorgan | Phillipa Doble | L |
| | | | |
| 5/1 | Birmingham | Danielle Wilson | M |
| 5/12 | South Warwickshire | Tina Brooker | P |
| 5/12 | South Warwickshire | Sheila Brown | L |
| | | | |
| 6/1 | Bolton | Sarah Hooks | P |
| | | | |
| 9/14 | South Lakes | Hayley Edmondson | P |
| 9/16 | South West Cumbria United Area | Hayley Edmondson | P |
| 9/16 | South West Cumbria United Area | Janet Ladds | L |
| 9/16 | South West Cumbria United Area | Robert Mantle | L |
| | | | |
| 12/1 | Camborne, Redruth and Hayle | Archie Rowe | L |
| 12/7 | St Austell | Jenny Taylor | L |
| 12/8 | Bodmin Padstow & Wadebridge | Sophie Doyle | M |
| 12/12 | Fore Street, St Ives | William Thomas | M |
| 12/19 | Liskeard and Looe | David Nicholls | L |
| 12/20 | Camelford and Week St Mary | Peter Daniel | L |

42. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|------------|--|---------------------|-----|
| 12/20 | Camelford and Week St Mary | Julie E Swann | M |
| 13/7 | Cleveland and Danby | June Feather | L |
| 13/10 | Bishop Auckland and Shildon | Rachel E Pinkney | P |
| 14/10 | Norfolk Broads | Judith H E Bell | P |
| 15/1 | Isle of Man | Rita Norrey | L |
| 17/6 | East Lincolnshire | Susan Alldread | L |
| 17/6 | East Lincolnshire | Tricia Johnson | L |
| 17/6 | East Lincolnshire | Richard Neale | L |
| 18/9 | Wirral | Ruth Dowson | P |
| 19/19 | Alderley Edge and Knutsford | Sincere Makunde | P |
| 20/6 | South East Northumberland Ecumenical Area | Richard Porter | P |
| 22/1 | Nottingham North East | Jason McMahon-Riley | P |
| 22/2 | Nottingham South | Paul A Johns | L |
| 23/13 | Northampton | Samantha Gillard | P |
| 23/27 | High Wycombe | Rachael Prince | P |

42. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 24/1 | Plymouth and Devonport | Janet Dobinson | M |
| 24/7 | Tavistock | Sandra Dodd | L |
| 24/10 | South Devon | Rachel Mitchell | L |
| 24/11 | Bude and Holsworthy | Courtney Drew | L |
| 24/11 | Bude and Holsworthy | Michael Reeves | L |
| 24/11 | Bude and Holsworthy | Mark Shepherd | L |
| 24/20 | Ilfracombe and Barnstaple | Sylvia Edwards | L |
| 24/22 | South Molton and Ringsash | Susan Procter | L |
| 24/23 | Torrige | Roy Harris | L |
| 24/23 | Torrige | Elsie Potter | L |
| 24/23 | Torrige | Frank Watson | L |
| 24/24 | West Devon | Angela Banfield | L |
| 24/28 | Teignbridge | Sharon Hurlow | L |
| | | | |
| 25/14 | Doncaster | Sean Worsley | L |
| 25/17 | Rotherham and Dearne Valley | Edward A Siddall | L |
| | | | |
| 26/1 | Southampton | Penny Thorne | P |
| 26/4 | Basingstoke and Reading | John Banks | P |
| 26/6 | Meon Valley | Rosie Banks | L |
| 26/11 | Isle of Wight | Shirley Whittingstall | L |
| | | | |
| 27/17 | Aire and Calder | Christopher J Holmes | P |
| 27/21 | Settle | Wendy Holt | L |
| 27/31 | Airedale | Tracy Ann Birks | P |

42. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|------------|---------------------------|------------------|-----|
| 28/3 | Shropshire and Marches | Ruth Downes | L |
| 28/3 | Shropshire and Marches | Mike Hallworth | L |
| 28/3 | Shropshire and Marches | Adrian Williams | L |
| 28/9 | Stafford | Jean Harrison | L |
| 28/9 | Stafford | Robert Johnson | L |
| 28/14 | Gornal and Sedgley | William Caldwell | L |
| 29/24 | Ripon and Lower Dales | Sarah L Caddell | P |
| 29/36 | Goole and Selby | Joseph Kwallah | P |
| 34/1 | North Bedfordshire | Paul Cooper | L |
| 34/6 | Colchester | Hannah Chun | P |
| 34/10 | Southend and Leigh | Heather Simmons | P |
| 34/11 | South Essex | Fiona Smith | P |
| 36/17 | Hastings, Bexhill and Rye | Alan Hurrell | L |
| 36/17 | Hastings, Bexhill and Rye | Jill Sayers | L |
| 36/18 | Weald of Kent | Kirsty S McGhee | P |
| 36/21 | North Kent | Oscar Siu | L |
| 36/25 | South Kent | Roy Hollands | L |

42. Authorisations Committee

LIST C – Renewals after two years for applications granted in 2022

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|------------|---|-------------------|-----|
| 2/1 | Bathafarn Area of the Cymru | Elizabeth Jones | L |
| 2/1 | Glannau Maelor Area of the Cymru | Maryl Rees | L |
| 2/1 | Ceredigion a Merionnydd Area of the Cymru | Eluned Williams | L |
| 2/16 | Mid Glamorgan Mission | Paul Cooke | L |
| 2/16 | Mid Glamorgan Mission | John Cullwick | L |
| 2/16 | Mid Glamorgan Mission | Jane Williams | L |
| | | | |
| 6/5 | Wigan | James Whelan | L |
| 6/8 | Bury | Thomas King | M |
| | | | |
| 9/4 | Western Fells | Lilian Dixon | L |
| 9/4 | Western Fells | Vivienne Kendall | L |
| 9/4 | Western Fells | Douglas McDevitte | L |
| 9/4 | Western Fells | Amanda Taylor | M |
| 9/7 | Kirkby Stephen, Appleby and Tebay | David Askew | L |
| 9/7 | Kirkby Stephen, Appleby and Tebay | Wilf Capstick | L |
| | | | |
| 11/15 | Potteries Mission | Paul Owen | L |
| 11/18 | Stoke-on-Trent Mission | Alison Price | M |
| | | | |
| 12/3 | Falmouth and Gwenapp | Jenny Lockwood | L |
| 12/7 | St Austell | Bernard Goudge | L |
| 12/7 | St Austell | Mary Lightfoot | L |
| 12/7 | St Austell | Tony Warren | L |

42. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 12/24 | Mid Cornwall | Christine Roberts | L |
| 13/11 | Durham and Deerness Valley | Fiona Weir | M |
| 17/6 | East Lincolnshire | Nick Adams | L |
| 17/6 | East Lincolnshire | Neil Baxter | L |
| 17/6 | East Lincolnshire | Roger Maidens | L |
| 19/8 | Altrincham | Kevin Jaquiss | L |
| 21/1 | Burnley and Pendle | Richard Hoyle | L |
| 22/13 | Borders Mission | Jacqueline Dawson | L |
| 22/13 | Borders Mission | Michael Render | L |
| 22/22 | National Forest East | Susanna Draper | L |
| 23/11 | Hinckley | Judith Cooke | L |
| 23/12 | Melton Mowbray | Jennifer Oliver | L |
| 23/14 | East Mercia | Patricia Basson | L |
| 23/14 | East Mercia | Kate Hitchcox | L |
| 24/16 | Tiverton and Wellington | Richard Allington | L |
| 24/16 | Tiverton and Wellington | Gill Atkinson | L |
| 24/16 | Tiverton and Wellington | Ruth Hartley | L |
| 24/16 | Tiverton and Wellington | Hazel Parsons | L |
| 24/22 | South Molton and Ringsash | Sheila Collier | L |

42. Authorisations Committee

| Circuit no | Circuit name | Application | Cat |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 24/23 | Torridge | David Ley | L |
| 25/1 | Sheffield | Nick Waterfield | M |
| 25/14 | Doncaster | Jack Key | M |
| 25/14 | Doncaster | Christine Ogley | L |
| 25/17 | Rotherham and Dearne Valley | David Guy | L |
| 25/17 | Rotherham and Dearne Valley | Anne Holmes | L |
| 25/17 | Rotherham and Dearne Valley | Clive Taylor | L |
| 25/19 | Trinity | Keith Abel | L |
| 26/2 | Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey | Peter Castle | L |
| 26/2 | Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey | John Evans | L |
| 26/8 | Dorset South and West | Chris Warren | L |
| 26/8 | Dorset South and West | Timothy Wells | L |
| 26/11 | Isle of Wight | Mike Hackleton | L |
| 26/11 | Isle of Wight | Jane Morris | L |
| 27/34 | Calderdale | Caroline Stead | L |
| 28/3 | Shropshire and Marches | Vivienne Thomas | L |
| 28/4 | Walsall | Peter Kelsall | L |
| 29/1 | Kairos | Liane Kensett | M |
| 34/10 | Southend and Leigh | Bob Briant | L |
| 34/10 | Southend and Leigh | Agnes Sam | P |

43. Designations for Appointment of District Chairs

***RESOLUTIONS

- 43/1. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Dr James N Tebbutt as Chair for the North West England District for a period of six years from 1 September 2024.
- 43/2. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Helen R Hollands as Chair for the East Anglia District for a period of six years from 1 September 2024.
- 43/3. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Rachel A Bending as Chair for the Southampton District for a period of six years from 1 September 2024.
- 43/4. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Dr Jonathan Dean as Chair for the London District for a period of six years from 1 September 2024.
- 43/5. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Victoria J Atkins as Chair for the Sheffield District for a period of six years from 1 September 2025.
- 43/6. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Jonathan A Sewell as Chair for the Newcastle upon Tyne District for a period of six years from 1 September 2024.

The following resolutions require a majority of 75%.

- 43/7. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Kerry W Tankard as Chair for the Yorkshire West District for a further period of five years from 1 September 2025.
- 43/8. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Novette S Headley as Chair for the Birmingham District for a further period of one year from 1 September 2025.
- 43/9. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd S Mark Slaney as Chair for the Shetland and Scotland Districts for a further period of four years from 1 September 2025.
- 43/10. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Helen R Kirk as Chair for the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District for a further period of five years from 1 September 2025.

43. Designations for Appointment of District Chairs

Reasoned Statements:

The Revd Dr James Tebbutt

James Tebbutt has served as Chair of the Cumbria District since 2019. He will bring to this new role a pastoral heart, organisational gifts, ecumenical commitment, and an ability to think strategically. He empowers and encourages others in his relational leadership style.

Dr Tebbutt has been part of the regional review group which designed the innovative working methods that will be adopted and has a wide knowledge of the new District, having served in Circuit in the Manchester and Stockport District earlier in his ministry. He offers to the new District the theologically informed understanding and experience of collaborative leadership which is needed as the District navigates the next stage of its development.

The Synods of the present Bolton and Rochdale, Cumbria, Lancashire, Liverpool, and Manchester and Stockport Districts recommend to the Conference that the Revd Dr James N Tebbutt is appointed to serve as Chair for the North West England District for a period of six years from 1 September 2024.

The Revd Helen Hollands

Helen Hollands is Superintendent Minister of the South Kent Circuit and Assistant Chair of the South East District. She has a background in law, having lectured at the University of Kent, as well as offering oversight and pastoral care to students, and has a Masters Degree in Systematic Theology. She is an accredited supervisor and has received training in conflict transformation, safeguarding and in various topics to do with being a school governor.

Helen offers effective spiritual leadership, is a skilled communicator and works collaboratively with others. She has demonstrated her ability to contribute as a senior leader of the church by deputising for the District Chair in a number of contexts and she is committed to ecumenical engagement, currently serving as the Co-Chair of the Kent Church Leaders Group, having previously served as an Ecumenical Officer for the South East District. Helen's pastoral sensitivity is widely appreciated, as is her wisdom in dealing with situations of conflict in which she has engaged on the District's behalf.

Helen is a very skilled and fine leader within the life of our Church. Not only can she exercise the essentials of ministry well, such as chairing meetings, ensuring good governance in the churches and Circuit under her direct oversight, preaching and

43. Designations for Appointment of District Chairs

teaching, and pastoral care; she is also able to lead with vision and graciousness, building up her lay and ordained colleagues by the trust she places in them and the care she offers them. Helen's approach to relationships is open, inclusive and welcoming. Equally Helen is not afraid to address the challenges of ministry and context, helping the Church to face the future squarely and honestly. Helen's ministry, like her preaching and teaching, is rooted in her deep Christian faith, and especially in her appreciation of Methodist theology and practice.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Helen Hollands is appointed to serve as Chair for the East Anglia District for a period of six years from 1 September 2024.

The Revd Rachel Bending

Rachel Bending is Superintendent of the Ealing Circuit in the London District. She brings a calm presence and a commitment to listening and working with others in order to lead the District's response to the challenges of the mid-21st century. She is passionate about the continued development of reflective supervision and the processes that are needed to ensure that churches are safe, welcoming and inclusive. With 23 years of experience in circuit ministry and a track record of fostering good ecumenical relationships and establishing new work whilst carefully pastoring existing expressions of faithfulness, Rachel will challenge the District to take risks, to be open to different perspectives, and to be joyful as it responds to God's call in the next stage of its mission.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Rachel Bending is appointed to serve as Chair for the Southampton District for a period of six years from September 2024.

The Revd Dr Jonathan Dean

Jonathan Dean has twenty-two years of presbyteral ministry, in circuit, academic, ministerial training and Connexional Team appointments in Britain and in the United States. He offers to the District a passion for the gospel, a deep and beautifully articulated spirituality, a pastoral understanding of the position of lay and ordained colleagues and an ability to inspire and encourage. The Synod believes that his gifts will complement those of others in the leadership of the District in a confident and collaborative exercise of ministry.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Dr Jonathan Dean is appointed to serve as Chair for the London District for a period of six years from September 2024.

43. Designations for Appointment of District Chairs

The Revd Victoria Atkins

The Revd Vicky Atkins is currently serving as Superintendent of the Calderdale Circuit. She has previously served as a presbyter in two circuits and as Chaplain to the Woodhouse Grove School; prior to that she was a deacon, serving as a District Mission and Evangelism Enabler and in a circuit diaconal appointment. Before following her call into ministry, Vicky spent time in social work, managing teams of volunteers and prior to this taught art therapy to adults and children – which is something she has continued to utilise in her ministry. The Synod believes that she will bring a broad range of skills and a depth of experience in strategic leadership, pastoral care, creativity and oversight to the role of Chair of the Sheffield District.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Victoria Atkins is appointed to serve as Chair for the Sheffield District for a period of six years from September 2025.

The Revd Jonathan Sewell

The Revd Jona Sewell currently serves as Superintendent Minister of the Newcastle West Circuit, having previously served in two sections of the North Shields and Whitley Bay Circuit. Prior to training for ordained ministry Jona spent time as a pastoral worker in the Church of England and as a family worker for an LEP, as well as serving in the hospitality industry. He is a trained spiritual director and has demonstrated his ability to show effective spiritual leadership with clear missional focus. The Synod believes that Jona is a deeply spiritual, pastorally responsive minister, bringing a prophetic voice into leadership, as well as being able to handle difficult situations with sensitivity, wisdom and an understanding of the Chair's role in exercising discipline, care and oversight.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Jonathan Sewell is appointed to serve as Chair for the Newcastle upon Tyne District for a period of six years from September 2024.

The Revd Kerry Tankard

Kerry Tankard has served as Chair for the Yorkshire West District since 2019. He offers the District strong leadership and guidance. He leads with quiet authority, is perceptive yet challenging, with a probing mind and he is not afraid to lead where a decision needs to be made.

Kerry is helpful and approachable in areas of pastoral support. He is seen to be compassionate, kind hearted and caring and is good at responding to calls for help. His

43. Designations for Appointment of District Chairs

friendliness and sense of humour are lovely assets. Kerry makes every effort to attend circuit staff and leadership meetings in order to get to know people and the context in which they minister and consequently has become someone who is both approachable and trusted.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Kerry Tankard is appointed to serve as Chair for the Yorkshire West District for a further period of five years from September 2025.

The Revd Novette Headley

Novette Headley has served as Chair for the Birmingham District since 2022. The Birmingham Synod recommends that the Revd Novette Headley should be invited to serve for a further year from September 2025 either as one of two joint chairs for the first year of the new West Midlands District or as chair of the Birmingham District, subject to the Conference's decisions concerning the proposals for a new West Midlands District.

Novette's ministry is valued for her ability to listen, her calm wisdom and her nurturing and encouraging leadership. The Synod believes that Novette would bring continuity and strong pastoral leadership at a time of change and potential upheaval.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Novette Headley is appointed to serve as Chair for the Birmingham District for a further period of one year from September 2025.

The Revd Mark Slaney

Mark Slaney has served as Chair of the Shetland and Scotland Districts since September 2019. Six months into his appointment, he faced the challenge of COVID and the disruption it brought to all of our lives. In leading services on YouTube, Mark helped Methodists from across the Districts feel connected, and his pastoral concern and sense of humour are widely appreciated.

As we emerged from the COVID restrictions, challenges which were already facing the Districts came more sharply into focus. Mark has not shied away from these, and has encouraged challenging conversations and radical decision making. His ongoing leadership is valued through times of change, not least as the Scotland District move towards combining the current six circuits into a single one, and the Shetland District reduce from two ministers to one. Mark has taken seriously his role as Chair of two Districts, and in doing so has strengthened the links between them.

43. Designations for Appointment of District Chairs

Mark is Chair not just in a District, but a Nation, and takes this responsibility seriously. He has particularly taken a lead in developing ecumenical relationships across the Scottish churches. He also recognises the need to represent Scotland (with its different legal system, ecumenical landscape and cultural context) to the Connexion, and the Connexion to Scotland.

The Synods recommend to the Conference that the Revd Mark Slaney is appointed to serve as Chair for the Shetland and Scotland Districts for a further period of four years from 1 September 2025.

The Revd Helen Kirk

Helen Kirk has served as Chair of the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District since 2019, taking up the role just months before the impact of Covid 19 and the consequent lockdowns. Despite the inevitable isolation across the District, Helen maintained excellent support and communication with lay and ordained colleagues. Helen's leadership of the District has been deeply appreciated, particularly expressed through the relevance and depth of her leading worship, often through the creative use of storytelling. She has demonstrated a clear and down to earth leadership of Synod and the key district committees. Helen has worked hard to strengthen and develop the many positive aspects of the mission and ministry of the District including leading on the appointment of key new posts. As a result of Helen's leadership the District is developing new ways of supporting Circuits in their work and mission. Pastorally Helen has an obvious and genuine concern for people. Her warmth, her ability to listen have been widely appreciated as has her down to earth approach and sense of humour.

Helen offers a pragmatic but deeply spiritual approach to supporting the work of colleagues and she places great value on lay and ordained ministry together. Helen's gifts are greatly valued across the District.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Helen Kirk is appointed to serve as Chair for the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District for a further period of five years from 1 September 2025.

44. Presbyters and Deacons Becoming Supernumerary or Returning to the Active Work

PRESBYTERS BECOMING SUPERNUMERARY OR RETURNING TO THE ACTIVE WORK

1. Recommended to return to the active work

No case

2. Permission to return to the active work granted during the year

John C Howard-Norman

Roger L Walton

3. Permission to become supernumerary granted during the year

* Vivienne R D Atter

* Nicola K Hilmy-Jones

*Those marked * were granted permission on grounds of ill health under Standing Order 790(2).*

4. Presbyters requesting permission to become supernumerary

The figure in brackets indicates the number of years of status as a presbyter of the person concerned (with any former years of status as a deacon added with the prefix D).

| | | | |
|----------------------|------|---------------------|------|
| Julian C Albrow | (27) | Jonathan K Gichaara | (21) |
| Sheryl M Anderson | (28) | Barbara C Glasson | (30) |
| Frances E Balham | (24) | Louise E Grosberg | (24) |
| Stuart A Bell | (40) | * Brian J Hadfield | (29) |
| * Timothy C Boocock | (26) | W Arthur Harbottle | (35) |
| Raymond Borg | (13) | Timothy J Harrison | (43) |
| Christopher P Briggs | (34) | John Hellyer | (42) |
| Susan M Burton | (10) | Rachel A Hextall | (27) |
| Trevor Capstick | (40) | Roger K Hides | (35) |
| Rita Carr | (10) | Trevor Hoggard | (43) |
| Rosemary E Coles | (10) | Jacqueline A Horton | (24) |
| Heather D Cooper | (39) | Hilary Howarth | (22) |
| Robert C Cotton | (33) | Keith W Hunt | (33) |
| * Andrew Dart | (31) | Fredrick R Ireland | (44) |
| Gordon H Davis | (26) | Stephen P Jakeman | (10) |
| Lesley Dinham | (10) | Kevin P Johnson | (31) |
| Jennifer M Ellis | (32) | Gareth P Jones | (42) |
| Albert Gayle | (41) | H Elaine Joseph | (34) |

44. Presbyters and Deacons Becoming Supernumerary or Returning to the Active Work

| | | | |
|-------------------------|------|---------------------|------|
| * Sue Keegan von Allmen | (25) | Valerie J Reid | (13) |
| Ian P Kemp | (19) | Alison Richards | (14) |
| Lindsay D Kemp | (20) | Alison Richardson | (15) |
| Donghwan Kim | (20) | John D Ritson | (41) |
| R Blair Kirkby | (21) | Joy M Rulton | (25) |
| Christine J Legge | (22) | Paul Saunders | (26) |
| Katherine J Le Sueur | (24) | Israel Selvanayagam | (43) |
| Sally J Long | (39) | David M Shaw (B) | (37) |
| Andrew J Lunn | (39) | Peter D Sheasby | (42) |
| Julie A Lunn | (35) | * Ruth Simpson | (11) |
| Deborah C Mallett | (10) | Eleanor J Smith | (11) |
| Lorraine N Mellor | (29) | Amanda Stevens | (19) |
| Adele F Moorhouse | (20) | Harold Stuteley | (20) |
| Elizabeth Morris | (23) | Timothy A Swindell | (16) |
| C David J Moss | (34) | Shaun Swithenbank | (32) |
| R Margaret K Mwilu | (18) | Richard J Teal | (44) |
| Keith A Osborn | (20) | Mark H Wakelin | (45) |
| David R Owen | (28) | Roger L Walton | (49) |
| Yvonne J Pearson | (24) | Allison Waterhouse | (28) |
| Jonathan H Pye | (46) | Rosalind Watson | (10) |
| Melanie Reed | (19) | Heather A Wilson | (12) |

*All applications are made under Standing Order 790(1), except those marked * who are applying on grounds of ill health under Standing Order 790(2)).*

***RESOLUTIONS

- 44/1.** (Presbyteral Session)
The Conference receives the Report.
- 44/2.** (Presbyteral Session)
The Conference recommends to the Representative Session that the presbyters listed above be permitted to become supernumerary on the grounds shown.
- 44/3.** (Representative Session)
The Conference permits those presbyters whose names have been recommended by the Presbyteral Session to become supernumerary.

44. Presbyters and Deacons Becoming Supernumerary or Returning to the Active Work

DEACONS BECOMING SUPERNUMERARY OR RETURNING TO THE ACTIVE WORK

- 1. Recommended to return to the active work**
No case
- 2. Permission to become supernumerary granted during the year**
No case
- 3. Deacons requesting permission to become supernumerary**

| | |
|----------------------|------|
| Sheila Dawson | (11) |
| Donna Ely | (27) |
| Janet Heys | (20) |
| Linda R Kinchenton | (12) |
| Pamela Luxton | (10) |
| Alison McCauley | (13) |
| Jane Paine | (15) |
| Margaret E Patchett | (10) |
| Kina Saunders | (15) |
| * Robert Stoner | (6) |
| Annie Trembling | (15) |
| Sara M Windsor-Hides | (16) |
| Jennifer Woodfin | (19) |

*All applications are made under Standing Order 790(1), except those marked * who are applying on grounds of ill health under Standing Order 790(2).*

***RESOLUTIONS

- 44/4.** (Representative Session)
The Conference permits those deacons whose names have been recommended by the Conference Diaconal Committee to become supernumerary.

45. Report to the Conference of the Nominations Committee

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Name and contact details | Bala Gnanapragasam, Chair of the Nominations Committee bala@balasylvia.com |
|---------------------------------|---|

- 1.1 The 2023 Conference agreed to the creation of a Nominations Committee of up to seven persons which the Secretary of the Conference was directed to convene. The committee reports with regret that it has operated with fewer than the maximum of seven members for most of 2023-24.
- 1.2 The committee now comprises a Chair, three members and the Secretary of the Conference. The Committee brings the nomination of an additional member to the committee below as follows: Ms Cathryn Martin.
- 1.3 The committee has sought to exercise its responsibilities in partnership with the bodies to which appointments need to be made. It does not, therefore, produce the paperwork for each appointment, but scrutinises both the paperwork and the methods of advertising, interview and selection. One of its members will usually chair the shortlisting and interview panels.
- 1.4 The committee was directed by the 2023 Conference to bring nominations for the Connexional Council and to exercise the other intended functions included in the draft Standing Orders it adopted.
- 1.5 The committee has been clear that a major reason for its creation was the will of the Conference that its committees should reflect the diversity of the Church and enable the participation of people of different backgrounds in decision-making processes. To this end, it has asked some who offered and are eminently appointable to serve only for a year to enable a more diverse council to evolve. The Nominations Committee is exploring how younger people and those from other under-represented groups might be invited to witness or to shadow the work of council members to develop their experience of the Church's decision-making processes.
- 1.6 The committee has made nominations for the Chairs of the Connexional Council and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, along with members of the Connexional Council and the Resourcing Committee.
- 1.7 The committee brings the following nomination for the Chairs of the Connexional Council and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (reasoned statements below), noting the other appointments are made in the Committee Appointments Report:
Chair of the Connexional Council: The Revd Sonia M Hicks
Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee: Mr Keith Hickey

45. Report to the Conference of the Nominations Committee

- 1.8** The committee brings the nominations for membership of the Connexional Council under 1(a)(vii) of the Standing Order as adopted by the 2023 Conference (see resolution 45/4 below).
- 1.9** The committee brings the nominations for membership of the Resourcing Committee under the Standing Order as adopted by the 2023 Conference which are included in the Committee Appointments Report (Agenda Item 46).
- 1.10** The advice of the committee has also been sought in relation to a number of other appointments, including Chair of Trustees of Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, and the Conference-nominated trustee of Methodist Homes (MHA).

***RESOLUTIONS

45/1. The Conference receives the Report.

45/2. The Conference adopts the appointment in paragraph 1.2.

45/3. The Conference adopts the appointments in paragraphs 1.7 of the Report.

45/4. The Conference appoints the Connexional Council for 2024-25:

- (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: The Revd Sonia M Hicks
- (iv) the chair or a deputy chair of the Mission Committee: The Revd Dr Joanne Cox-Darling
- (v) the chair or a deputy chair of the Ministries Committee: The Revd Gillian M Newton
- (vi) the chair or a deputy chair of the Resourcing Committee: Alethea Siow
- (vii) the chair or a deputy chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee: Keith Hickey
- (viii) up to fourteen other persons: The Revd Richard Byass, the Revd David Goodall, the Revd Beverly Hollings, the Revd Dr Michael J A Long, Anna Malnutt, Professor David Matthews, the Revd Nicholas A Oborski, the Revd Sarah Parkin, Paul Spray, the Revd Timothy A Swindell, Dawn Wood

45. Report to the Conference of the Nominations Committee

Reasoned statements

- Keith Hickey a member of Orpington Methodist Church in the London District. He is an accountant who worked for many years at British Gas. He has considerable experience of charity finance and charity governance including experience as the Finance Director of two major charities and Chief Executive of the Charity Finance Group. He was also a member of numerous influential committees in the charity sector. For ten years he was an independent member of the Audit Committee at The Media Trust and is currently a Trustee and the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee for MHA.
- Sonia Hicks the President of the Conference for 2021/22 and she has served as the Chair of the Methodist Council since 2022. Sonia is currently the Superintendent of the Wembley Circuit and she has previously served in various roles in British Methodism, in the Irish Connexion and in the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas. She is Chair-designate of the Northampton District. Sonia has experience of presiding over the Conference, chairing meetings and bringing a written and verbal report to a meeting. Sonia recognises the importance of the work of the new Connexional Council and its responsibilities.
- Richard Byass a presbyter currently serving as a Superintendent in the Nottingham North East Circuit, with experience in a variety of circuit, district and connexional roles as well as trustee experience outside of the Methodist Church.
- David Goodall a presbyter currently serving as the District Enabler in the Yorkshire West District with responsibility for Leeds City Centre. He brings a working knowledge of New People for New Places work and has represented the SRC on the Methodist Council.
- Beverly Hollings a presbyter with twenty-five years circuit experience including nine as a Deputy District Chair. She is seen as a person able to connect vision, aims and strategy whilst absorbing and critiquing a wide range of subjects.
- Mike Long Superintendent Minister of the Forest Circuit. He brings significant trusteeship experience from organisations within and beyond the Methodist Church, eg Action for Children, QVSR and Kensington and Chelsea Citizens Advice. He brings a wealth of experience and knowledge of Methodist Church structures and of the wider charitable sector.

45. Report to the Conference of the Nominations Committee

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Anna Malnutt | a committed layperson, Community Development Coordinator at Thrum Hall Methodist Church. She brings experience of a range of Methodist structures, Circuit Meetings, the District Policy Committee and the Conference Business Committee. This in addition to having served on the Executive Committee of the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE). She is a trustee of WORTH (Women on the Road to Healing). |
| David Matthews | a committed layperson with recent experience on the SRC as well as the Methodist Council. He brings extensive trustee involvement including chairing the Trustees of Oxford Hospitals Charity and Diabetes UK. |
| Nick Oborski | a presbyter currently Circuit Superintendent in the Hants Surrey Border Circuit and Synod Secretary in the South East District. He has served in a variety of circuit, district and connexional roles including the SRC and the Safeguarding Committee. He also has extensive experience of change management which is necessary on the Council. |
| Sarah Parkin | a presbyter serving in the Bramhall and Wythenshaw Circuit. Previously Public Policy Manager for a national charity (Groundwork UK) for 5 years, using skills in organisational development, and worked in both the public and charitable sectors. She has studied financial management, risk analysis and management, HR, governance, strategic development and analysis. |
| Paul Spray | dedicated layperson who has worked with Traidcraft, Christian Aid and CAFOD. He has a wealth of experience in change management. Presently Synod Secretary in the Northampton District, serves as the Chair of the World Mission Fund Grants Committee and is a member of the Memorials Committee. |
| Tim Swindell | a presbyter about to 'sit down'. He has been the Connexional Treasurer and is presently a council member on the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church. He has a wide knowledge of finance both in the Methodist Church and in wider society. |
| Dawn Wood | keen layperson presently employed as Director of Development for Minstead Trust. She brings the ability to foster a strong strategic framework of Vision, Mission and Value to the work of the Connexional Council, taking into account the potential risk impact of what it seeks to do. |

46. Committee Appointments

***RESOLUTIONS

46/1. The Conference appoints the panel for the nomination of District Chairs:

The Revds Anne E Brown, Richard J Byass, David P Easton, John Hellyer, Christine Jones, Marian J Jones, Nichola G Jones, Charity D Madenyika, Paul Nzacahayo, Keith A Reed, Daniel P Reed, D Paul C Smith, Graham Thompson, Martin H Turner, Dr Martin Wellings.

Deacons Melanie Beaven, Josephine F A Critchley, David C Hunt, Suzie Viana.

Ms Jane Allin, Ms Janet Arthur, Mrs Sue Chastney, Ms Evelyn de Graft, Prof Peter D Howdle, Miss Marion Mear, Miss Elizabeth Ovey, Mr Malcolm Pearson, Mr Noel Rajaratnam, Mrs Caroline Stead, Dr Malcolm Stevenson, Mrs Rosemary Wass, Mrs Ruth Wilton, Mrs Helen Woodall, Mr Rob Wylie with the Secretary of the Conference as convener.

46/2. The Conference appoints the panel for Connexional Discipline, Pastoral and Appeal Committees and persons with associated functions:

Connexional Complaints Officer: Professor Diane Rowland, the Revd James A Booth (deputy).

Chairs: Mr Stephen Allinson, Mr Graham Danbury, Mr Robert Gaitskell, Ms Jane McIvor, Sir Alastair Norris, Miss Elizabeth Ovey.

Advocates: Mr Stephen Allinson, the Revd Jennifer M Dyer, Mr Adrian Turner, the Revd Stuart Wild.

Conveners: Discipline, Appeals and Pastoral: The Revd C Mary Austin, the Revd Andrew Cordy, Mr David Kendrew, Mr Chris Kitchin, Mrs Shelagh Morgan, the Revd Ian S Rutherford,

The Revds Derek A Aldridge, C Mary Austin, Peter E Barber, Inderjit S Bhogal, Neil A Bishop, Nick Blundell, Jill B Bowden, Kathleen M Bowe, Dr Stuart J Burgess, R Graham Carter, David Clowes, John A Cooke, K Hilary Cooke, Judy M Davies, Paul H Davis, Dr Valentin Dedji, Christine A Dybdahl, Jennifer M Dyer, Stuart Earl, Hazel M Forecast, Albert Gayle, Anne E Gibson, Dr Barbara C Glasson, Yvonne Haye, David A Haslam, Sonia M Hicks, Brian R Hoare, Kenneth G Howcroft, Jimione Kaci, Jacob Kaiga, Prof Teddy Kalongo, Saidu Kanu, Ermal Kirby, Christina Le Moignan, Julie A Lunn, Charity Madenyika, Paul Martin, Loraine N Mellor, William R Morrey, Siperire Mugadzaweta, Gillian M Newton, Dr Paul Nzacahayo, Hayford Ofori-Attah, R Stephen Penrose, Dr David W Perry, Stephen J Poxon, Dr Kathleen M Richardson, Dr Neil G Richardson, J Roger

46. Committee Appointments

Roberts, John D Robinson, Ian S Rutherford, D Paul C Smith, Ian Souter, Kenneth Stokes, Thomas J Stuckey, Richard J Teal, G Jeff Thomas, Alison Tomlin, Martin H Turner, Dr Mark H Wakelin, C Norman R Wallwork, Dr Roger L Walton, Peter Whittaker, Julia M Wiktorska, Sharon Willimott, Ian Yates.

Deacons Kate Barrett, Sue Culver, Jane Middleton, Myrtle Poxon, Kerry Scarlett, Rowland H Wilkinson.

Mrs Jane Allison, Mr Donald B Appleyard, Mrs E Jill Baker, Dr B Jill Barber, Mr John A Bell, Mr Simon Birks, Mrs Stella Bristow, Mrs Teresa Broadbent, Mr Dudley Coates, Mr John Connor, Mr Colin Cradock, Mr Andrew Cross, Ms Gillian M Dascombe, Mr Brian Davies, Mr Peter Dawe, Mrs Barbara Easton, Mr Balachandren M Gnanapragasam, Prof Peter Howdle, Mr David Kendrew, Mr Michael P King, Mrs Sophie Kumi, Ms Rachel J Lampard, Mrs Carolyn J Lawrence, Mrs Helen R Letley, Prof Clive Marsh, Dr Daleep S Mukarji, Mrs Nwabueze Nwokolo, Mrs Margaret Parker, Mrs Ruth Pickles, Mr Timothy Ratcliffe, Mrs Jean Schroeder, Mr Stephen Schroeder, Dr Alan Thomson, Mr Brian Thornton, Mrs Rosemary Wass, Mr Ivan Weekes.

46/3. The Conference appoints the panel for Connexional Complaints Teams:

The Revds Timothy J Bradshaw, Hilary Cheng, Molly Chitokwindo, Edson Dube, Jacquie P Evans, Andrew F Goodhead, Oluyemisi Jaiyesimi, David Jebb, Christopher Jones, Saidu Kanu, Simon H Leigh, Charity Madenyika, Farai Mapamula, R Margaret K Mwilu, Nicholas A Oborski, Stephen Penrose, David M Shaw (A), Kate Strange, Mmasape Thathane-Tyolweni, Phillip Warrey, Ruth E Whittard, Stuart Wild, Linda M Woollacott.

Deacons Myrtle Poxon, Stephen F Roe.

Miss Joan Ball, Mr Malcolm Bell, Mr Peter Binks, Ms Charlotte Boaitey, Mr David M Chandler, Mr Leo Cheng, Mr Peter Dawe, Mrs Eve DeGraft, Mr Daniel Djaba, Mr David Hilton, Mr David Kendrew, Mr Chris Kitchin, Miss Kathryn Larrad, Mr David Laycock, Ms Betty Maynard, Mrs Nwabueze Nwokolo, Mrs Jean Schroeder, Mr John Scott.

46/4. The Conference appoints the members of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation:

The Revds Dr Iain M Ballard, Nicola Briggs, Richard J Byass, Mark Carrick, Benjamin P Clowes, Ashley Cooper, Dr Graham M Edwards, Dr Simon C Edwards, David R Emison, Mark P Hammond, Helen E Hickson, Catherine Hutton, Philip J Jackson, David Jebb, Naomi Kaiga, Saidu Kanu, Dr Elizabeth A Kent, M Susan E Lawler, Farai Mapamula, Vindra Maraj-Ogden, Paul Mellor,

46. Committee Appointments

Andrew C Moffoot, Anthony J D Morling, Charity Nzegwu, Dr Claire R Potter [SO 320(1)(i)], James Pritchard, Mary Sachikonye, Christopher L A Sandy, Cleopas Sibanda, Vivienne G Smith, Tina F Swire, Etlewa Walker,

Deacons Melanie Beaven, Dawn N Canham, Richard D Goldstraw, David Keegan, Belinda S Letby, Pamela Luxton, Jonathan Miller, Julie Morton, Suzanne Peat, Kerry R Scarlett, Sian M Street, Suzie Viana, Linda Watkin, Helen Webster, Jacqueline L Wright, Ruth Yorke,

Ms E Jane Allin, Ms Winnie Baffoe, Ms Charlotte Ballard Scott, Mr Geoffrey Best, Ms Anne Browse, Ms Jenny Cheung, Ms Sharon Clutterbuck, Ms Paula Dawson, Ms Jo Henderson-Merrygold, Mrs Jane Lloyd, Ms Victoria Loveday, Mrs Catherine Roots, Ms Denise Tomlinson, Mr Joshua Wilson.

The Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order has the right to attend but not to vote.

46/5. The Conference appoints oversight tutors [in accordance with Standing Order 321(5)(b)]:

Where more than one oversight tutor is appointed for the same institution one shall be identified as having oversight responsibility. In the following list, that person is identified by an asterisk.

Queen's Foundation, Birmingham: *The Revd Dr Jane Craske, Deacon Melanie Beaven, the Revd Dr Christine Dutton, the Revd Dr Catrin Harland-Davies, the Revd Dr Gary P Hall, Deacon Julie Hudson, the Revd Dr Paul Nzacahayo, the Revd Dr Judith Rossall.

46/6. The Conference appoints the Faith and Order Committee:

A senior member of the Connexional Team representing the Secretary of the Conference: The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler.

The Secretary of the Committee: The Revd Mark Rowland.

The Revd Moses Agyam, Deacon Angie Allport, the Revd Jonny Bell, the Revd Dr Adrian Burdon, the Revd Yanyan Case, Ms Anna Clough, the Revd Dr Graham Edwards, the Revd Dr Kennedy Godongwe, the Revd Dr Catrin Harland-Davies, the Revd Kevin Highfield, the Revd Dr Eleanor Jackson, the Revd Dr Clement Matarirano, Mr Craig Price, the Revd Jo Rand, the Revd Dr Judith Rossall, the Revd Neil Stubbens, the Revd Simon Sutcliffe, the Revd Dr Martin Wellings (Chair), the Revd Dr Caroline Wickens, the Revd Ian Yates.

46. Committee Appointments

46/7. The Conference appoints the Stationing Committee under Standing Order 322:

- (i) Lay Chair: Ms Jenny Jackson
- (ii) The Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Conference: The Revds
Dr Jonathan R Hustler and Michaela A Youngson
- (iii) Seven district Chairs and seven district Lay Stationing Representatives:
 - South-East The Revd Dr Jonathan Dean
Mr Keith Norman
 - South-West The Revd Dr Marcus Torchon
Mr Chris Beckett
 - Wales/Midlands The Revd Rachel Parkinson
Mrs Val Mayers
 - Yorkshire The Revd Leslie Newton
Ms Claire Corp
 - East Midlands The Revd Angela J Long
Mrs Sue P Walters
 - North-West The Revd Dr James N Tebbutt
Mr Malcolm Aspey
 - North/Scotland The Revd S Mark Slaney
Sue Marshall-Jennings
- (iv) No more than two Team members with responsibility for presbyteral and diaconal selection; and for the stationing of probationers: The Revd Dr Claire Potter
- (v) *deleted*
- (vi) *deleted*
- (vii) The chair of the Stationing Advisory Committee: The Revd
Dr Jongikaya Zihle
- (viii) The Warden or deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order: Deacon
Karen McBride
- (ix) The chair and a lay member of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-committee:
The Revd Dr David Hinchliffe; Mr Steve Cooper
- (x) The chair of the group responsible on behalf of the Stationing Committee
for overseeing the matching of particular presbyters to appointments:
The Revd Jennifer A Impey
- (xi) The convener of the Stationing Action Group: The Revd Dr David Hinchliffe

46/8. The Conference appoints representatives to ecumenical bodies as follows:

- (a) *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI): Annual General Meeting*
Mr Bala Gnanapragasam
- (b) *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland: Senior Representatives' Forum:*
Mr Bala Gnanapragasam; the Revd Steven R M Cooper

46. Committee Appointments

- (c) *Churches Together in England (CTE): Enabling Group*
The Revd Dr David M Chapman, the Revd Steven R M Cooper
- (d) *Scottish Christian Forum (formerly Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS)): Members' Meeting:*
The Revd S Mark Slaney; the Revd A James Patron Bell
- (e) *Cytûn (Churches Together in Wales): Enabling Group*
The Revd Dr Jennifer A Hurd
Proxies: The Revds Dr Ian D Morris, Phillip A Poynor

46/9. The Conference appoints the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee:
Mrs Sarah Atwell-King, Mr Adrian Burton, Mr Keith Hickey (Chair), Mrs Susan M Mortimer, Mr Michael Rickard.

46/10. The Conference appoints the following officers of the 2025 Conference:

Representative Session

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Journal Secretary: | The Revd Jennifer M Dyer |
| Record Secretary: | Mr Martin Harker |
| Convener of the Memorials Committee: | The Revd Catherine Dixon |

Presbyteral Session

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| Record Secretary: | The Revd Jennifer M Dyer |
| Assistant Record Secretary: | The Revd Rosemarie E G Clarke |

46/11. The Conference appoints the following officers of the Conference Diaconal Committee:

Recording Officer: Deacon Tracey J Hume
Reporting Officer: Deacon Gail Morgan

46/12. The Conference appoints the Ministries Committee:

Mrs Karen Attaway, Mr Iain A S Henderson, Ms Angharad Herriman, the Revd Leigh A Maydew, the Revd Gillian M Newton (Chair), Deacon Lemia Nkwelah, Mr Keith Norman (Deputy Chair), Deacon Andrew C Packer, the Revd Michaela A Youngson (Convener).

46/13. The Conference appoints the Mission Committee:

Miss Rebecca Ainsworth, the Revd Richard Andrew, Mr Tim Baker (Deputy Chair), Mr Paul Bridges, the Revd Dr Joanne Cox-Darling (Chair), Mr Matthew Forsyth, the Revd Dr Laurence Graham, the Revd Elaine M Lindridge, the Revd

46. Committee Appointments

Charity Madenyika, the Revd Ian S Rutherford (Deputy Chair), the Revd Jennifer A Spouge, Mr Paul Spray, the Revd Michaela A Youngson (Convener)

46/14. The Conference appoints the Resourcing Committee:

Ms Alethea Siow (Chair), Ruby Beech, Sharon Clutterbuck, Ian Hancock, the Revd Eleanor Smith, Michael Spurr, Sarah Strickland

46/15. The Conference appoints the Trustees of Epworth Old Rectory:

the Revd Vicky Atkinson, Dr Ashley Boggan Dreff, Mrs Sarah Friswell (Chair), Professor William Gibson, the Revd Stuart Gunson, the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, the Revd Angela Long, Mr John Purdy (Secretary), the Revd Paul Wilson, Mrs Maggie Woods

World Methodist Council Trustees:

The Revd Dr John Beyers, Archbishop Michael Kehinde Steven.

46/16. The Conference appoints the Methodist Diaconal Order Support and Advisory Group:

Ms Rachel J Lampard (Chair), the Revd Adrian Burdon, Deacon Dawn Canham, the Revd Cathy Gale, Ms Caroline Hutchings

46/17. The Conference notes that the trustees of Action for Children for the current year are:

Sarika Patel (Chair), Dawn Warwick (Vice-Chair), Mike Long, Enda Johnson, Steve Bell, Peter Curran, Lynne Atkin, Leslie Evans, Charles Geekie, Navin Kaul.

46/18. The Conference appoints the Connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry:

The Revd Kate Strange (Chair), Ms Sarah Chadwick, the Revd Dr Neil Cockling, the Revd William Davis, the Revd Robert Birnie.

46/19. The Conference appoints the Nominations Committee:

Mr Nick Garrett, Mr Bala Gnanapragasam, the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler (convener), Ms Cathryn Martin, the Revd Dr Nicola Price Tebbutt, Ms Verity Wild

46/20. The Conference appoints the Revd William Gates as Trustee of the Aldershot Methodist Military Trust.

46. Committee Appointments

46/21. The Conference elects the following persons to the Central Finance Board for the period of one year from 1 September 2024:

Dr Keith Aldred, Jennie Austin, Ruby Beech, Julian Blakemore, Graham Boyd, Julian De Garis Parker, Revd Anne Ellis, Ashley France, Bala Gnanapragasam, Anne Goodman, Alan Groves, Sue Haworth, Peter Hobbs, Revd Dr Peter Howson, David James, Nick Moore, Revd Leslie Newton, Colin Pearson, Revd Jennifer Potter, Martin Rees, John Sandford, Nicola Sivori, Andrew Slim, Revd Eleanor Smith, Revd Timothy Swindell, Matthew Tattersall, Revd Graham Thompson, Morwenna Williams

46/22. The Conference appoints the following Managing Trustees of the Conference Property at Central Hall Westminster:

Chair of the Managing Trustees to be appointed, the Revd Anthony D Miles (Superintendent, London Westminster – ex officio), the Revd Dr Jonathan Dean (Chair of the London District – ex officio), Mr Nevil Tomlinson (Treasurer to the Trustees), Mr Bala Gnanapragasam (Secretary to the Trustees), Mrs Ama Ackah-Yensu, Mr Joseph Adjei, the Revd Lansford Penn-Timity, Mrs Judith Mitchell

46/23. The Conference appoints the trustees of John Wesley's New Room:

The Secretary of the Conference – the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler Chair of the Bristol District – the Revd Dr Marcus Torchon Superintendent of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit – The Revd Teddy Kalongo

The Revd Josette Crane, the Revd Ivan Fowler, Clifford Friend, the Revd Ward Jones, the Revd David Weeks, Mrs Jane Allin, Mr Geoffrey Gollop, Mrs Linda Jones (Secretary), the Revd Sharon Lovelock, Mr Michael Rose, Mrs Aroona Smith, the Revd Dr Martin Wellings.

Details of new nominations (underlined above)

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| Ama Ackah-Yensu | Treasurer of the Westminster Church and Circuit and makes the important financial connection between the Church and the Connexional Trustees. |
| Joseph Adjei | Senior Circuit Steward for the Westminster Circuit |
| Chris Beckett | Lay Stationing Representative for the Bristol District. |

46. Committee Appointments

- Ruby Beech** A member of Hope Community Methodist Church in the Newark and Southwell Circuit. She has held senior positions in a range of organisations including Co-ordinating Secretary (Connexional Team of the Methodist Church); Assistant Serjeant at Arms (House of Commons), and Director of Corporate Services (Hestia Housing & Support). She is a past Vice-President, former member of the Methodist Council, former member of the World Methodist Council, current Chair of the Connexional Allowances Committee, Conference-elected member of the Conference, alongside numerous other roles and responsibilities at church, circuit and connexional level. She has held trustee roles in the YMCA, YWCA and Action for Children and was a non-executive director of Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Trust.
- Jonny Bell** Stationed in the Central Norfolk circuit and is due to be received into Full Connexion and ordained at this Conference. They studied for an MA in Theology, Ministry and Mission at the Queen's Foundation and have interests in queer, disability and liberation theologies. Jonny is keen to develop their understanding of Methodist doctrine further.
- Adrian Burdon** Currently Superintendent of the Oldham Circuit. He holds a PhD in theology from the University of Manchester, serves as Chair of the CTBI Writing Group for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and has wide interests in Methodist history, theology, liturgy and worship. He has previously been a member of the Faith and Order Committee and convener of the Liturgy and Worship Subcommittee. It is intended to nominate him to the Faith and Order Committee for appointment as Chair of the Liturgy and Worship Subcommittee.
- Mark Carrick** A presbyter, currently serving in the Derbyshire North East Circuit. He brings experience in recruitment, development and mentoring of staff in senior management. Since becoming a presbyter, he has managed a number of people, undertaken supervision and line management training and journeyed alongside a number of potential candidates.
- David Chapman** Nominated by the Chairs' Meeting
- Anna Clough** Currently studying theology at the University of Cambridge. She is a member of Wesley Methodist Church, Chester and worships at Castle St Methodist Church when in Cambridge. She has interests in Biblical Studies and modern global Christianity and has explored contextual theologies with other students.

46. Committee Appointments

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| Sharon Clutterbuck | A member of Dorridge Methodist Church in the Birmingham Circuit. She worked for Centrica (British Gas) for 37 years, starting in Human Resources and subsequently moving to broader management roles responsible for large teams of employees, strategic development and customer satisfaction. She has held a variety of roles at church and circuit level including church and circuit steward. She is currently in training as a local preacher. |
| Steven Cooper | The Connexional Ecumenical Officer |
| Claire Corp | Lay Stationing Representative for the Yorkshire West District. |
| Paula Dawson | A member of Beeston Methodist Church, Nottingham. She is a registered nurse and has experience in a range of professional roles including recruitment and selection. She is a good listener and communicator with good organisational skills and a desire to work collaboratively. She is a local preacher and church steward and has been a circuit steward. |
| Jonathan Dean | Nominated to the Conference as Chair of the London District |
| Simon Edwards | A presbyter, currently serving in the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit. He has a PhD in practical theology with an emphasis on Methodist ecclesiology and Fresh Expressions. He is a Deputy Chair of District and brings listening skills, administrative efficiency and an instinct for collaboration. |
| Clifford Friend | Circuit steward. Extensive budgetary, senior and change management experience. Methodist heritage interest. |
| Kennedy Godongwe | Stationed in the Oldham circuit and due to be received into full connexion at this Conference. He has a PhD in Christian History from the University of KwaZulu Natal and has previously served as Mission Director of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe and as Principal of United Theological College. Having previously trained as a lawyer, he has interests in the interaction of faith and law and also brings his wide experience of theological education. |
| Richard Goldstraw | A deacon, currently serving in the London District. He brings a breadth of experience from district candidates' and probationers' committee and previous service on the Connexional Candidates Committee at various times. He has also supervised student ministers on placements. He is a good listener and has skills of discernment having journeyed alongside many people discerning their call. |

46. Committee Appointments

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| Ian Hancock | A member of Solihull Methodist Church in the Birmingham Circuit. He worked for BT plc for 37 years in a variety of managerial roles. He is a specialist in Workforce Planning and Workforce Management and has a broad range of managerial skills. He has held many volunteer roles at church and circuit level including being a member of the envisioning team when the new Birmingham Circuit was formed. He also sits on the Solihull Music Hub Advisory Board, is a trustee of Solihull Young Musicians' Support Association, and volunteer membership officer for Olton Mere Sailing Club. |
| Keith Hickey | A member of Orpington Methodist Church in the London District. He is an accountant who worked for many years at British Gas. He has considerable experience of charity finance and charity governance including experience as the Finance Director of two major charities and Chief Executive of the Charity Finance Group. He was also a member of numerous influential committees in the charity sector. For ten years he was an independent member of the Audit Committee at The Media Trust and is currently a Trustee and the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee for MHA. |
| Helen Hickson | A presbyter, currently serving in the Hull Centre and West Circuit. She brings experience of teaching RE, pioneer ministry, hospital chaplaincy and community outreach. She also has training in deep listening in counselling, and an ability to ask the right questions. She will engage in robust conversation to find the right way forward, and collaborates well. |
| Kevin Highfield | A presbyter in the Cleveland and Danby Circuit. He holds an MTS from Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington DC and an MPhil in theology from the University of Cambridge and has interests in sacramental theology and the means of grace. Kevin is beginning doctoral studies exploring holiness in queer and Wesleyan theology. |
| David Hinchliffe | Nominated as chair of the Stationing Action Group. |
| Angela J Long | Chair of the Lincolnshire District. |
| Sharon Lovelock | A presbyter in the Bristol area. Pioneer enabler, encourager of mission, circuit evangelism group co-ordinator. |
| Sue Marshall-Jennings | Lay Stationing Representative for the Scotland District |

46. Committee Appointments

- Cathryn Martin A member of the East Oldham Methodist Church. She has been working in Mental Health within the NHS for the past 27 years, with responsibilities covering a large amount of recruitment related work; including recruitment for mental health nurses internally and externally, carrying out interviews as well as writing adverts, scheduling interviews and working with HR with offers of employment. Previously, Cathryn worked for BA (British Airways) managing the recruitment team for cabin crew.
- Clement Matarirano A presbyter in the Liverpool (South) circuit. He has a PhD in New Testament from the University of Pretoria as well as having studied a wide range of theological topics. Before coming to Britain, he served at United Theological College, Zimbabwe as Senior Tutor for Methodist students, Lecturer and Academic Dean.
- Leigh Maydew A presbyter in his fifth year of ministry stationed in the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit. After a background with the Ministries in Training Council during formation studies and probation, Leigh was appointed to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC) in 2022 as a 'recent ordinand' and will now be the MCPOC representative on the Ministries Committee.
- Julie Morton A deacon, currently serving in the Nottingham (North East) Circuit. She brings previous experience as a HR officer in the Health Service which included interviewing people from a variety of disciplines. She has an ability to listen well and to establish relationships quickly and easily.
- Jo Rand A presbyter in the South Lakes circuit. She has an MA in Theology and Pastoral Studies from the University of Leeds in which she completed a dissertation on 'The fulfilment of Isaiah's Exodus in Luke-Acts' and is shortly to begin doctoral studies at Cliff College exploring the nature of preaching in NPNP communities. She served as a tutor at Hartley Victoria before entering circuit ministry.
- Chris Sandy A presbyter, currently serving in the North Bedfordshire Circuit. He brings experience of both the District Candidates' and Probationers' committees as well as experience as a mentor and supervisor for candidates. He has good interpersonal skills with an eye for detail. He is researching in the area of cross-cultural leadership in the Methodist Church in Britain. He has professional experience of working with people from many nationalities and cultures in his previous roles as a driver trainer and manager as well as now as a cross-cultural circuit minister.

46. Committee Appointments

- Eleanor Smith** A presbyter, currently serving in the Staffordshire Moorlands Circuit. She qualified as an accountant in 1980 and had a long career in local government finance, including as Head of Financial Services at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. She has served on numerous church committees at church, circuit and district level and has held school governor roles for over ten years. She was elected as a member nominated director of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme in 2019.
- Vivienne Smith** A presbyter, currently without appointment. She brings wide experience including as a lay worker and as a superintendent. She has previously coordinated the 'under 5's group' in the District. Her experience of working with many different colleagues has confirmed for her that God calls many very different people.
- Michael Spurr** A member of the Whitechapel Mission in the Tower Hamlets circuit. He worked in the Home Office/Ministry of Justice for 36 years, starting out as a Prison Officer and going on to become the Chief Executive of the National Offender Management Service / HM Prison and Probation Service. With significant experience leading a complex government agency he brings particular skills in financial management, people management and project management. He is currently President of the New Bridge Foundation; a trustee of the Prison Radio Association, and is Chair of the Butler Trust.
- Sarah Strickland** A member of Paythorne Methodist Church in the Clitheroe circuit. She worked at Skipton Building Society for 39 years holding a wide range of roles covering internal audit, IT governance, mortgage underwriting and customer service. She also led an internal not for profit subsidiary that provided IT services to other smaller building societies. She has experience of volunteering including as a school governor, for Craven Cassette Talking Newspaper and the Ilkley Literature Festival.
- James N Tebbutt** Nominated to the Conference as Chair of the North West England District.
- Denise Tomlinson** A lay member of Teddington Methodist Church in the London District, Denise brings a commitment to supporting the journey to ordained ministry. She has been a member of CSC in the past and a member of her District Candidates' Committee, as well as Synod Secretary. She is currently a member of the District Probationers' Committee and MCPOC. She is a worship leader.

46. Committee Appointments

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| Nevil Tomlinson | A trustee and has been the treasurer since 2017, he works closely with CHW management to guide us through the challenges caused by Covid and the ensuing indebtedness. |
| Marcus Torchon | Chair of the Bristol District from September 2024. |
| Eva Walker | A presbyter, currently serving in the North Shields and Whitley Bay Circuit. She has served on the District Candidates' Committee and has shown good discernment in testing a call. She has an MA in consultancy, ministry and mission and previously trained students in mission at Cliff College. She brings a wide and personal understanding of cultural diversity. |
| Helen Webster | A deacon, currently serving in the Brownhills and Willenhall Circuit. She brings experience from serving on District Candidates' Committees in two districts as well as membership of the Religious Order Advisory Committee for 6 years. She has skills of good listening and is a reflective and creative thinker. Her focus on the call to be part of the religious order will be helpful. |
| Martin Wellings | Methodist historian; London District Archivist; editor online Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland. |
| Maggie Woods | Currently co-chair south for Methodist Women in Britain and it is in that role that she became aware of the important work behind the scenes supporting the Epworth Rectory and its links with MWiB. Maggie is serving as a circuit steward and an accredited lay preacher within the Tendring circuit in Essex. |
| Jackie Wright | A deacon, currently serving in the Sheffield Circuit. She has experience on her District Probationers' Committee and brings wide and varied experiences of people and situations. |

47. Presbyters and Deacons from other Churches

PRESBYTERS TO BE RECOGNISED AND REGARDED AS PRESBYTERS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

The names of persons to be recognised and regarded as Presbyters in Full Connexion are printed below and may be amended in the Order Paper at the Conference in order to incorporate any changes consequent upon the decisions of the Stationing Committee.

(1) Presbyters of the Irish Conference

Under Clause 43 of the Deed of Union all presbyters admitted into Full Connexion with the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland are automatically recognised and regarded as presbyters in Full Connexion with the Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain, irrespective of whether they are stationed by the latter Conference (although they only come under the rules and discipline of the Conference when stationed by it). The names of those who serve on the stations of the Methodist Church in Britain are printed in the Minutes of the Conference.

(2) Presbyters of other autonomous Methodist Conferences

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| Christopher N Andam | 23/7 | Methodist Church Ghana |
| Opeyemi O Awe | 35/12 | Methodist Church Nigeria |
| Annie Deche | 24/15 | Methodist Church Kenya |
| Shannon C DeLaureal | 27/15 | United Methodist Church |
| Ilidio Christino de Oliveira Jr | 5/6 | Methodist Church in Brazil |
| Jimmy Dube | 5/4 | Methodist Church Zimbabwe |
| Donna L Fowler-Marchant | 34/14 | United Methodist Church |
| Jacqueline Jones | 35/31 | United Methodist Church |
| Matthew A Laferty | ASA | United Methodist Church |
| David A Markay | 35/7 | United Methodist Church |
| Kristin C Markay | 35/6 | United Methodist Church |
| Josefa Mairara | 26/FC | Methodist Church Fiji |
| Tongayi J Matamba | 36/8 | Methodist Church in Zimbabwe |
| Collin L Moore | 7/16 | Methodist Church of Southern Africa |
| Ung Soon Nguang | 35/39 | Methodist Church Malaysia |
| Emmanuel A Onabanjo | 35/15 | Methodist Church Nigeria |
| Manoa Ratubalavu | 22/16 | Methodist Church Fiji |
| Nimilote Rokotoro | 26/FC | Methodist Church Fiji |
| Sean C Turner | 15/1 | United Methodist Church |

47. Presbyters and Deacons from other Churches

***RESOLUTION

47/1. By a Standing Vote, the Conference welcomes those presbyters to be appointed to the stations, whose names are listed in the Agenda and as amended by the Order Paper circulated to the Conference, as ministers of other autonomous Methodist Conferences who, by virtue of clause 44 of the Deed of Union, will thereby be recognised and regarded as presbyters of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion.

(3) Presbyters of other communions to be recognised and regarded

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| Chellaian Lawrence | 35/30 | Church of South India |
| Mark R Mander | 26/FC | Independent Methodist Churches |
| Andrew S C Melvin | 36/13 | Baptist Union of Great Britain |
| Aboseh Ngwana | 7/2 | Presbyterian Church in Cameroon |
| Rajbharat Patta | 19/2 | Evangelical Lutheran Church in America |

***RESOLUTION

47/2. By a Standing Vote, the Conference, by virtue of clause 45 of the Deed of Union, declares that the persons whose names are printed for this purpose in the Agenda as amended by the Order Paper circulated to the Conference, shall be recognised and regarded during the period of their appointment to the stations for the next ensuing year as presbyters of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion.

DEACONS OF OTHER CHURCHES TO BE RECOGNISED AND REGARDED AS DEACONS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

No case

PRESBYTERS AND DEACONS OF OTHER COMMUNIONS APPLYING TO BE AUTHORISED PRESBYTERS OR DEACONS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

The names of presbyters and deacons to be authorised to serve are printed in the draft of the stations circulated to the Conference, which may be amended via the changes to the stations distributed to the Conference while it is in session.

***RESOLUTION

47/3. The Conference resolves that the persons whose names are printed for this purpose in the draft of the stations as amended by the changes to the stations

47. Presbyters and Deacons from other Churches

circulated to the Conference, be authorised to serve the Methodist Church as presbyter or deacon as the case may be for the next ensuing year by virtue of Standing Order 733(1) and that each person so authorised shall reside for the purposes of the stations in the Circuit under which his or her name is listed.

PRESBYTERS AND DEACONS OF OTHER COMMUNIONS APPLYING TO BE ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERS OR DEACONS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

The names of presbyters and deacons of other communions to be granted the status of associate presbyter or associate deacon as the case may be are printed in the draft of the stations circulated to the Conference, and may be amended in the changes to the stations distributed to the Conference whilst it is in session.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 47/4. The Conference resolves that the persons whose names are printed for this purpose in the draft of the stations as amended by the changes to the stations circulated to the Conference, be granted the status of associate presbyter for the next ensuing year by virtue of Standing Order 733A(1) in the Circuit whose number appears against his or her name so listed.**
- 47/5. The Conference resolves that the persons whose names are printed for this purpose in the draft of the stations as amended by the changes to the stations circulated to the Conference, be granted the status of associate deacon for the next ensuing year by virtue of Standing Order 733A(1) in the Circuit whose number appears against his or her name so listed.**

48. Appreciations

Dr Daleep Mukarji

Daleep Mukarji has served as Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee since 2019. He has brought to the role wide connexional experience, along with a clear understanding of the Committee's role in the life of the Church. During his time as Chair he has had to address a wide-ranging agenda, whilst being alert to a changing world and society and has, with knowledge and experience, ensured that all shades of opinion are voiced within the Committee to reach the best-informed answer to any question. Dr Mukarji has worked to ensure that the work of the SRC is carefully and meticulously planned whilst also ensuring that the mission of the Church is at the centre of all its deliberations. His wisdom has been an indispensable part of the conversations on Oversight and Trusteeship which have brought the work of this committee to an end.

Dr Mukarji has exercised with care and compassion the committee's responsibility for the oversight of work of the Senior Management Team (SMG). The SMG is grateful for his support, challenge and insight, and for his care in weighing with the committee the impact of its (and the Council's and Conference's) decisions on the Team.

The Conference has cause to be thankful to God for the skill and integrity with which Dr Mukarji has served the Church as Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

*****RESOLUTION**

48/1. The Conference expresses its gratitude to Dr Daleep Mukarji for his service as Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee and wishes him well in the future.

The Revd Sonia Hicks

Sonia Hicks has served as Chair of the Methodist Council since 2021. During her ministry in this role she has been dedicated to her work as Chair, perspicacious in the scrutiny of the committee's agenda, and diligent in ensuring that the business of the Council has been completed. With a wide experience of the Connexion, Sonia has worked tirelessly to make sure that the meetings of the Council attended to the work before them and to its consequences, with a good humour, patience and clarity, and a sense of the pastoral needs of all those involved.

The Conference expresses its thanks to Sonia for her unwavering commitment, rooted firmly in the love of God and wishes her well in her future ministry.

***RESOLUTION

- 48/2. The Conference expresses its thanks to the Revd Sonia Hicks for her service as Chair of the Methodist Council and wished her well in the future.**

Members of the Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee

The Conference offers its thanks to all who have been members of the Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee. The Conference is very grateful for the time and effort that has been put in to ensure the work of the Connexion continued fruitfully between meetings of the Conference. The dedication and commitment that have been witnessed in meetings has been instrumental in ensuring the Church is equipped fully as it continues to move forward in sharing Our Calling as a Church and that it has grasped opportunities to bear witness in the present age.

Membership of both the Council and the SRC has often involved much work outside meetings, in preparation, in serving on working parties and task groups, and in time-critical decision-making, often about unexpected and difficult questions. The Conference thanks all those involved who have given of themselves unstintingly and graciously.

***RESOLUTION

- 48/3. The Conference thanks all the members of the Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee for their hard work and service in the life of the Church.**

Anne Bolton

Anne Bolton has been Connexional Treasurer since 2023, taking up the role at a point when there was an expected transition to a new way of working with the Resourcing Committee coming into being in 2024. Anne has brought her considerable experience of financial matters to the role, applying her skills and expertise in a way which has greatly assisted the Church, particularly through its Strategy and Resources Committee, to consider strategic and important issues. She has helped to work towards the abolition of the role of Connexional Treasurer, ensuring that there is a proper handover of responsibilities.

The Conference expresses its thanks to Anne for her commitment to use her skills in the service of the Church through the role of Connexional Treasurer.

***RESOLUTION

- 48/4. The Conference thanks Anne Bolton for her service as Connexional Treasurer and wishes her well for the future.**

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

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| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr James N Tebbutt Chair of the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity cumbriamethodistchair@outlook.com |
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SECTION A GENERAL REPORT

1. The committee is charged under Standing Order 338 with the scrutiny of all new legislation which is proposed to the Conference in order to ensure its coherence with existing usage and Methodist polity. Various members of the committee undertake this task and have commented upon the proposals submitted to the committee by the Methodist Council and other bodies. The committee also seeks to ensure that Standing Orders comply with any changes in legislation or case law.
2. The committee was saddened to record the death of Mr Lynn John, a former member of the Committee who in a professional capacity as a solicitor had advised the Methodist Church for over 30 years, including regarding some key legislative developments.
3. Following appropriate recruitment processes, the committee was pleased to welcomed five new members in October 2023: Mrs Susan Eldridge, the Revds Helen Hollands, Tom Osborne, Mr Tom Pye, and the Revd Adam Wells.
4. The committee appointed Miss Elizabeth Ovey as its representative to the 2024 Conference under Standing Order 102(1)(iii).
5. The committee appointed its 2024 Conference Sub-committee under Standing Order 338(6) as follows: the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice (secretary and convener), the Secretary of the Conference, the Revd Jennifer M Dyer, Mr David Gibson, the Revd Kenneth G Howcroft, Miss Elizabeth Ovey, and the Revds Keith A Reed, Ian S Rutherford and Dr James N Tebbutt (Chair). The Revd Helen Hollands and Mrs Susan Howdle will join the Sub-committee as observers and consultants if required.
6. The committee appointed its Complaints and Discipline Sub-committee for the year in accordance with the Sub-committee's terms of reference to discuss matters pertaining to the Church's complaints and discipline process. A report on progress with the review of Part 11 of Standing Orders appears elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.
7. The Secretary of the committee meets regularly with the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee to collaborate on matters in which both Committees have an

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

interest. On the committee's behalf, the Revd Kenneth G Howcroft attends the Faith and Order Committee's meetings as an observer.

8. The committee once again had a very busy year, meeting four times in total: in person in October 2023, and electronically in December 2023, and March and April 2024. The committee has provided support and guidance to the Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Team on numerous matters and continues to assist with significant pieces of work being undertaken by the Church. Individual committee members have also joined various working groups to assist in reviewing particular processes or guidance, notably: Mrs Susan Howdle and the Revd Dr James Tebbutt are the committee's representatives on the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group.
9. The Chair and Secretary of the committee are grateful to all the committee members for their continued support and willingness to assist with the committee's work.

***RESOLUTION

49/1. The Conference receives the General Report.

SECTION B AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

1. In the preparation of the 2023-24 Edition of Volume 2 of CPD a number of minor editorial or consequential amendments were made to give effect to the Conference's decisions and to ensure coherence within Standing Orders. These were ratified by the committee at its October 2023 Committee. A list of the amendments involved is available on request from lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk.
2. Usually in this section the Committee submits a list of corrections to Standing Orders identified during this year, consequent upon decisions already taken by the Conference, or to remedy errors or omissions. On this occasion, with one exception set out in the paragraph below, such amendments have been placed in other sections of this report or other reports before the Conference. Wherever such amendments are proposed, the numbering of and cross references to some of the Standing Orders in this Report will need to be updated if changes proposed elsewhere in the Agenda, particularly the substantial rearrangements this year to Parts 2, 3 and 10 of the Standing Orders as set out in the Oversight and Trusteeship Report, are approved by the Conference.

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

3. Amendment to Standing Order 654(4)(ii)

Standing Order 654 concerns the destination of funds when a Local Church closes, and sub-clause (4)(ii) concerns those balances, including permanent endowments, that are held on specific trusts other than the Model Trusts. Following concerns raised by TMCP, the Law and Polity Committee agreed that this sub-clause is too sweeping in its current form. Charity legislation requires particular processes to be followed when new trustees are appointed for such funds, and the purposes of the trust will often also need amending. The Law and Polity Committee therefore proposes that the sub-clause be amended to read as follows:

654 Cessation...

(4)...(ii) if held on any other specific trust, other than the Model Trusts, shall be held **by such new trustees** and applied ~~by the circuit treasurers upon that trust~~ **upon such trusts as shall be determined in accordance with charity legislation to most closely fulfil the original purposes of the trust**, or...

***RESOLUTIONS

49/2. The Conference receives Section B of the Report.

49/3. The Conference amends Standing Order 654 as set out above.

SECTION C

NOTICE OF MOTION 2023/101: SECTION C OF THE OVERSIGHT AND TRUSTEESHIP REPORT

Introduction

1. The Conference of 2023 adopted the following Notice of Motion:

Notice of Motion 2023/101: Section C of the Oversight and Trusteeship Report

The Conference recognises that it is important that the proposals for the establishment of the Connexional Council and its relationship with the Conference should command the confidence of the Methodist Church in Britain generally. The Conference therefore directs the Law and Polity Committee:

to consider and report to the Conference of 2024 on the questions (1) how any dispute between the Conference and the Connexional Council would be resolved

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

and (2) how and in what circumstances members of the Connexional Council might be removed (whether or not in the event of such a dispute); and

to bring to that Conference any amendments to Standing Orders which the Committee recommends should be made in the light of the report.

2. As the Notice of Motion makes plain, it was brought in the light of the proposals for the establishment of the Connexional Council which formed a major part of the wider proposals resulting from the discussions about the Church's oversight and trusteeship structure which began in 2017. That discussion process is summarised in Section A of the Oversight and Trusteeship Report to the Conference of 2023 ("the Report"). As there explained, the Conference of 2021 agreed in principle to the establishment of the Connexional Council, recognising that that would involve amendments to the Deed of Union. The proposed amendments were brought to the Conference of 2022 and those amendments were then consulted on with the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee during the connexional year 2022-2023.
3. Section C of the Report summarises the rationale for the establishment of the Connexional Council as follows:

"... two points have been central 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."
4. Section C also reports the outcome of the consultation with the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee, setting out the voting figures. In addition it identifies:

"two inter-related concerns that were expressed about the effect of the proposed change to the Deed [of Union] 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."
5. In response to those concerns, the Report outlines in paragraph 17 the consideration given to them by the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group ("the Task Group") and other bodies within the life of the Church and draws attention to the work undertaken to ensure that the process of appointment to the Connexional Council

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

will lead to the establishment and maintenance of a body which is representative of the life of the Church and properly equipped to fulfil its functions. The paragraph concludes:

“Furthermore the [Task Group] would also note that the changes to the Deed have been drafted in such a way (and, again, approved by Counsel) [as] 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.”

6. Against that background, the Law and Polity Committee understands that in reporting to the Conference as directed, and in particular in addressing the question whether it recommends any amendments to Standing Orders, it should have in mind:
 - 6.1 whether the available mechanisms for the resolution of any dispute between the Conference and the Connexional Council would protect appropriately the authority of the Conference; and
 - 6.2 in any case, whether there are appropriate mechanisms for the removal of members of the Connexional Council if such removal appears desirable for the purpose of ensuring that the Connexional Council continues to command the confidence of the Methodist Church in Britain generally.

Summary of relevant provisions

7. Under the Deed of Union amendments approved by the Conference of 2023:
 - 7.1 clause 18(a) gives the Conference “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”, subject to the caveat that it may not act in such a way as to “prevent or inhibit the members of the Connexional Council from or in performing their duties as its trustees”;
 - 7.2 clause 18(b) in particular gives the Conference final authority over doctrine, legislation, connexional mission and policy, connexional polity, the formation, admission and discipline of ministers, officers and members, stationing and the connexional budget and allocation of district contributions. The authority over the connexional budget is given to the extent and in the manner determined by Standing Orders;

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

- 7.3 clause 21 gives the Conference further powers relating to connexional funds or institutions, the election and appointment of various committees, boards, officers of such committees and boards, representatives or delegates of the Conference and delegation generally;
- 7.4 clause 37B gives the Connexional Council “the general control and management of the connexional administration of the Methodist Church,” but “without derogation from the position, authority and powers of the Conference as governing body”;
- 7.5 clause 37C(b) gives the Connexional Council exclusive authority over the direction and management of the members of the Connexional Team, all matters relating to or arising out of the employment of persons by connexional bodies and compliance with legal requirements affecting the conduct of connexional bodies (including requirements of charity or trust law, data protection, safeguarding, and health and safety);
- 7.6 clause 37C(c) imposes on the Connexional Council a duty to formulate and analyse connexional policy options for presentation to the Conference with the council’s appraisal and recommendations “except on subjects assigned for this purpose by Standing Orders to other bodies”;
- 7.7 clause 37C(d) enables the Conference to delegate further powers, responsibilities and functions to the Connexional Council.
8. The Report envisaged that the constitution of the Connexional Council would be set out in Standing Orders and that the Council should operate in accordance with terms of reference to be approved by the Conference. A draft Standing Order and draft terms of reference were contained in the Report and were approved by the Conference. At the time of writing, the Task Group’s Report to the 2024 Conference is not in final form, but the Law and Polity Committee understands that some minor amendments have been made to the draft Standing Order and that it is now proposed that the draft terms of reference should largely appear in Standing Orders. The committee has seen a number of drafts of the relevant parts of the Task Group’s draft report (the most recent being the draft as it stood on 24 April 2024) and, as explained below, has worked with the Task Group to incorporate in that report some of the recommendations which result from its consideration of the Notice of Motion.
9. The following points as they appear in that draft are relevant to this report:
 - 9.1 The membership of the Connexional Council as specified in a new Standing Order 200 will include the President and Vice-President of the Conference, the Secretary of the Conference, and the chair or deputy chair of the Mission Committee, the

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

Ministries Committee, the Resourcing Committee and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The remaining members will be appointed by the Conference on nomination by the Nominations Committee. All members of the Council must be members of the Methodist Church.

- 9.2 The appointments of the chair and deputy chair of the Connexional Council are subject to termination in accordance with the process set out in Standing Order 200(4)(b) to (f). The Task Group has included these provisions on the recommendation of the Law and Polity Committee and they are explained further in paragraphs 25 and 26 below.
- 9.3 A person's membership of the Connexional Council may cease in a number of circumstances set out in Standing Order 200(4)(a) and in that event the Council has authority to appoint an eligible replacement for the period until the end of the following Conference. The Task Group has revised the original draft on the recommendation of the Law and Polity Committee and again the Committee's recommendation is explained further in paragraph 24 below.
- 9.4 The Council has power under a new Standing Order 201 to appoint committees, working parties or other groups for the purpose of fulfilling its responsibilities.
- 9.5 A new Standing Order 202 gives the chair or deputy chair of the Council power to take executive action on behalf of the Council where the power to do so has been specifically delegated by the Council and to act in the name of the Council in urgent matters. Any such action must be reported to the Council as soon as practicable and the chair and deputy chair must work within any guidelines on speaking and acting on behalf of the Methodist Church which have been approved by the Conference.
- 9.6 The general powers and responsibilities of the Connexional Council as trustee body are set out in a new Standing Order 203. In summary they are:
 - 9.6.1 the direction and management of the members of the Connexional Team;
 - 9.6.2 oversight of the general work of the Connexional Team "in providing a coherent and effective service on behalf of the Conference" and appropriate supervision of the work of the Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary;
 - 9.6.3 oversight of committees appointed by the Council "to undertake the various areas of work for which the Council is responsible";

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

- 9.6.4 employment and compliance matters relating to connexional bodies;
 - 9.6.5 recommending to the Conference the adoption of Standing Orders or guidance affecting districts, circuits and local churches on employment and compliance matters;
 - 9.6.6 exercising a non-delegable power to revoke, amend, add to or suspend Standing Orders or resolutions of the Conference, with effect until the close of the following Conference, as necessary following legislation or a judgment of the court;
 - 9.6.7 acting as managing trustees of property where such responsibility is assigned under the Model Trusts;
 - 9.6.8 acting as trustee body for all connexional funds and having responsibility for preparation of the consolidated accounts.
- 9.7 A new Standing Order 204 obliges the Connexional Council to present financial statements to the Conference for information and the budget for central services for approval. The Council is required to receive and consider advice from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and to ensure that the Conference is informed about any significant concerns raised by the Committee. The Standing Order also provides for the exercise of the Council's general authority in relation to property under the Model Trusts, subject to the authority of the Conference, and contains a general delegation from the Conference to act on behalf of the Conference in relation to property affairs.
- 9.8 A new Standing Order 205 expressly requires the Council to seek to implement the vision, strategies, decisions and directions set by the Conference. "In partnership with others giving spiritual leadership in the Church", it is required to keep the life of the Church in constant review, and it is also required to help to ensure that the Conference's decisions and objectives are implemented "in a timely, cohesive and considered manner" and to bring proposals and report to the Conference to assist in determining its future policy and objectives.
- 9.9 A new Standing Order 206 gives the Council power to act on behalf of the Conference between the close of one Conference and the opening of the next, provided that the action is not contrary to the Deed of Union, Standing Orders or any subsisting resolution of the Conference. The Conference in turn has power to delegate to the Council duties and powers which are not already exclusively the Council's responsibility.

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

- 9.10 The Council is required under a new Standing Order 207 to report annually to the Conference and to regulatory bodies in accordance with the requirements of those bodies.
10. The Law and Polity Committee notes that although these provisions are contained in a new Section 20, they do draw significantly upon the provisions of the current Section 21 relating to the Methodist Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee, particularly as respects the matters identified in paragraphs 9.1, 9.2, 9.6.6 and 9.7.
11. The Report also brought to the Conference of 2023 changes to the Model Trusts which will come back to the Conference of 2024 for final approval. Those changes primarily substitute references to the Connexional Council for references to the Methodist Council, but also constitute the Connexional Council the body which appoints the managing trustees of the small group of properties held as Conference property, who are currently appointed annually by the Council.

Resolving disputes

12. In the view of the Law and Polity Committee, the effect of the provisions summarised above is clearly that, if they are adopted, the Conference, which remains a representative body, retains its authority over the life of the Methodist Church. The areas for which the Connexional Council has sole responsibility are the areas of employment and regulatory compliance. Although the Council has sole authority over the direction and management of the Connexional Team, that authority must be exercised in support of the decisions taken by the Conference. The Council may no doubt have significant influence through its recommendations and its responsibilities in relation to the connexional budget, but it is for the Conference to decide whether or not to accept those recommendations and to approve the budget.
13. It is also to be recalled that the members of the Connexional Council include the President and Vice-President, who will have been elected fairly recently by the Conference. In addition the members include the chairs or deputy chairs of the Ministries, Mission, Resourcing and Audit and Risk Assurance Committees, who may be expected to have a particular interest in ensuring that their respective committees work effectively to carry out the policies determined by the Conference. The Nominations Committee which is responsible for nominating the chairs and deputy chairs and the members of the Connexional Council who are not ex officio members is itself appointed annually by the Conference. Finally, both the Faith and Order Committee and the Law and Polity Committee continue to report directly to the Conference and the Law and Polity Committee will now be appointed by the

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

Conference, which already appoints the Faith and Order Committee. It is within the scope of the responsibilities of the Law and Polity Committee as set out in a new Standing Order 211 to consider whether there are questions relating to the relationship between the Conference and the Connexional Council which require to be addressed and to make recommendations to the Conference as to how that might be done if the committee thinks it appropriate to do so.

14. It is the committee's understanding that the Notice of Motion is directed towards disputes which are in substance disputes between the Conference and the Connexional Council and what follows is based on that understanding.
15. Given what is said above, it is the view of the committee that the new structures offer substantial safeguards for the protection of the authority of the Conference and the smooth working of the relationship with the Connexional Council based on clearly defined areas of responsibility. If, despite those safeguards, a dispute were to arise, it appears to the Law and Polity Committee that the dispute would involve questions of the construction of the relevant provisions of the Deed of Union and Standing Orders or other Methodist legislation. Such an issue would ultimately fall to be determined by the law of England and Wales, both generally and in particular as contained in the Charities Act 2011, since that is the law to which the Methodist Church as a charity is subject.
16. Any proceedings raising such issues would fall within the definition of "charity proceedings" in s.115(8) of the Charities Act. Under that section, charity proceedings may be brought by the charity, any of the charity trustees or any person interested in the charity, but the consent of the Charity Commission is required, although if the Commission refuses its consent, an application for leave to bring proceedings may be made to one of the judges of the Chancery Division of the High Court. As a last resort, then, it would be open to the Connexional Council or the President, having been directed by the Conference to take such action, to seek to bring proceedings to resolve the dispute. It is not unknown for the constitutional affairs of religious charities to be resolved by such means.
17. There are, however, many steps which could be taken to try to reach a resolution before such extreme steps are taken. An obvious starting point would be for the dispute to be referred to the Law and Polity Committee for its consideration, advice and, if appropriate, recommendations, either by agreement between the Conference and the Council (presumably taking the form of a resolution of the Conference in terms agreed by or on behalf of the Connexional Council) or by the Conference or the Council alone. It is to be hoped that the committee's advice, perhaps coupled with recommendations for legislative changes, would enable the dispute to be resolved. It is to be noted that, again following a recommendation by the Law and Polity Committee, the new Standing

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

Order 211 (which provides for the appointment of the committee and for its functions) requires the committee to advise both the Conference and, if requested, the Council, but its duty to advise the Council is limited so that it is only required to give such advice if there is no conflict with its duties to the Conference.

18. Another obvious course would be for external legal advice to be sought on the dispute. The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice (COLCP) already obtains external legal advice when it is appropriate to do so and such advice is of course shared with the Law and Polity Committee. In this particular context, however, it might be argued that as the COLCP is a member of the Connexional Team, the holder of that office will be subject to the management and oversight of the Connexional Council, including budgetary limits, and might face some constraints in seeking advice on such a dispute. The Law and Polity Committee therefore invites the Conference to consider the inclusion of an express power for the COLCP to seek such advice after consultation with the committee itself. A draft Standing Order giving such a power is set out below.
19. It is also open to any charity trustee under s.112 of the Charities Act to seek the opinion or advice of the Charity Commission on any matter relating to the performance of that person's duties as charity trustee or otherwise relating to the proper administration of the charity. Although any member of the Connexional Council could take advantage of the power to do so, it appears that the Conference could direct, for example, the President to make such an application for the purpose of resolving a dispute, although the circumstances of the particular case would require careful consideration before any such direction was given.
20. Finally, the Conference retains its powers over Methodist legislation. It would therefore be possible for the Law and Polity Committee to recommend to the Conference, or for the Conference to decide of its own motion, that changes to the legislation governing the relationship between the Conference and the Connexional Council are required if any of the dispute resolution procedures discussed above leads to an outcome which is not acceptable to the Conference. The Law and Polity Committee does not envisage, however, that it would make any recommendations which would undermine the basic principle that the Connexional Council should be a body which can serve as the charity trustees of the Methodist Church in Britain.

Removal of members of the Connexional Council

21. Members of the Connexional Council will necessarily cease to be such members on resignation or on ceasing to be members of the Methodist Church. Ex officio appointments will of course cease if the member concerned ceases to hold the relevant office.

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

22. The model governing documents produced by the Charity Commission provide that a trustee shall cease to hold office by resignation or if:
- 22.1 the trustee is disqualified under s.178 and s. 179 of the Charities Act. These provisions cover matters such as conviction of certain offences, bankruptcy, disqualification from acting as a company director or having been held to be in contempt of court;
 - 22.2 in the written opinion given to the charity of a registered medical practitioner treating the trustee, the trustee has become mentally or physically incapable of acting as a trustee and may remain so for more than three months;
 - 22.3 the trustee is absent from all trustee meetings for a period of six months without the consent of the other trustees and they pass a resolution that the office be vacated.
23. In addition, where the charity is a charitable incorporated organisation and adopts the association model, the members of the charity will have power to remove a trustee at a general meeting, subject to requirements relating to the giving of notice and reasons, an opportunity for the trustee to make representations to the meeting and potentially a special majority. Where the charity is a company, the company in general meeting has a similar power to remove a trustee director under s.168 of the Companies Act 2006, subject to similar protective requirements.
24. Having considered these examples, the Law and Polity Committee recognises that Methodist polity has not previously adopted provisions such as those in paragraphs 22.2 and 22.3. (Disqualification is clearly a different matter, since disqualification occurs automatically under the Charities Act itself.) Most Methodist bodies, however, have a strong representative character, as does the Methodist Council. The Notice of Motion was brought in part because of the different character of the Connexional Council and the fact that a substantial number of its members will be appointed not on a representative basis but in the light of the experience, expertise, representative roles and skills the members will bring to the work of the Council. In those circumstances, the Law and Polity Committee has concluded that it would be desirable in principle to follow the model documentation of the Charity Commission and to include such provisions in relation to the members who are not ex officio members and in respect of whom alternative approaches are not available. The committee does not think it would be appropriate to make such provisions applicable to ex officio members.
25. Different considerations apply to the chair and the deputy chair because of the potential significance for the continued maintenance of the confidence of the

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

wider Methodist Church of the way in which the responsibilities of those offices are exercised. It is in theory possible, although it is to be hoped that such a situation would not arise in practice, that a chair or deputy chair might lose the confidence of the rest of the members of the Connexional Council or of the Methodist Church generally without events having occurred or conduct having taken place which would mean that the chair or deputy chair ceased to be a member of the Council. The Law and Polity Committee considered whether such a situation might be dealt with by amendments to existing provisions, such as the current curtailment provisions in Standing Order 316, but concluded that it would be preferable to address the matter by new provisions designed to deal with the particular situation. As already noted, those provisions are to be found in the new Standing Order 200(4).

26. In summary, the new provisions introduce a termination of appointment process under which the ground for an application for termination is a loss of confidence in the chair or, as the case may be, the deputy chair. The application is to be made in writing and is to state the reasons for the contention that the ground is made out. The application may be made by 25 members of the previous Conference who include a group of 10 people with significant connexional responsibilities. If an application is made, the Secretary of the Conference is required to appoint a Termination Panel of seven persons who were members of the Conference in at least one of the previous five years and who are to consider whether the appointment should be terminated on the ground specified. The Panel is to include a deacon and at least three lay people and is to be chaired by a past President or Vice-President. There is no particular significance in the numbers 25 and seven, but the intention is to require a reasonably large number of applicants with a connexional perspective to trigger the process and a reasonably large and representative panel to consider the application.
27. The question remains whether the Conference should have an express power to decline to appoint a current member of the Connexional Council whose term of office would normally continue after the end of the Conference. The Law and Polity Committee has concluded that, in the absence of experience to suggest otherwise, it is preferable not to try to devise in advance a process which would reflect the full protective requirements applying to removal by a general meeting in the Charity Commission's model documents and in the Companies Act. The committee nevertheless invites the Conference to consider whether members of the Conference who wish to submit a notice of motion objecting to the appointment of a current member of the Connexional Council should be required to do so 14 days before the opening of the Representative Session of the relevant Conference. Such a requirement would reflect the sort of timescale envisaged in the Charity Commission model document and in the Companies Act provisions and would enable the Conference Business Committee to consult the affected member or

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

members and to give proper consideration to the process to be followed in a way appropriate to the Conference but influenced by those Charity Commission and statutory provisions.

28. As explained above, draft Standing Orders to reflect the committee's recommendations as to the cessation of membership of the Connexional Council are included elsewhere in the Agenda in the Task Group's report. Draft Standing Orders to reflect the Committee's proposals as to the relationship of the Conference (and specifically the COLCP) with the Council and as to non-renewal of the appointment of a member of the Council are set out below. It will be observed that the draft amendments to Standing Order 132 include amendments which will be generally applicable relating to the form in which and method by which a notice of motion should be given to the Secretary of the Conference. These amendments have been introduced in view of the early date by which notice is proposed to be required for non-renewal of an appointment, but the Committee's view is that they could helpfully apply generally rather than being limited in their application to that particular case.
29. The Law and Polity Committee has not been asked in terms to consider whether there should be provision for a power to remove and replace the whole Connexional Council, analogously to the power given to district policy committees to remove and replace circuit meetings under Standing Order 512B or church councils under Standing Order 611A in cases of a serious breach of trust or Methodist discipline, but for completeness the committee has considered whether to make such a recommendation.
30. The committee's present view is that it would not be helpful or appropriate to create such a power in the light of the following practical and legal matters:
 - 30.1 The Conference itself has other powers available to it while it is meeting.
 - 30.2 There is no other obvious body to which such a power could be given, although it would be possible to devise a mechanism for removal at least (for example, by providing that the power was exercisable by written resolution of any five of a group consisting of the President, the Vice-President, the past President, the past Vice-President, the President-designate, the Vice-President designate, the Secretary of the Conference, the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and the chair of the Chairs' Meeting, or of a different number of members of a differently constituted group.) It would, however, be much more difficult to form an immediate replacement body which had the necessary range of experience, expertise, representational roles and skills. It would not be feasible to conduct a process of the kind required to be undertaken by the Nominations Committee.

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

- 30.3 The removal of the ex officio members might have wide-ranging implications. Although they could be reappointed, doubt might be cast on the propriety of the whole exercise if those members were among the persons who decided to exercise the power, as might arise if the example suggested in the previous paragraph were to be adopted.
- 30.4 In cases of the removal of circuit meetings or church councils, the “old” circuit meeting or church council has a right of appeal to (at present) the Methodist Council. The obvious appeal body in the present case would be the Conference itself, but if the reason for the removal is in substance a dispute between the Conference, or those who see themselves as representing the Conference, and the Connexional Council, there would be an obvious breach of natural justice.
- 30.5 It is possible, although perhaps unlikely, that it might be argued that the effect of giving such a power would be that the Connexional Council does not have the general control and management of the administration of the Methodist Church.
- 30.6 Other means of dispute resolution are available, as already discussed.

***RESOLUTIONS

49/4. The Conference receives Section C of the Report.

49/5. The Conference amends Standing Orders as follows:

108 Relationship between the Conference and the Connexional Council

- (1) The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice may at any time after consultation with the Law and Polity Committee seek external legal advice on any matter connected with or arising out of the relationship between the Conference and the Connexional Council at the office holder's discretion and notwithstanding the office holder's position as a member of the Connexional Team.***
- (2) All such advice shall be reported to the council, the Law and Polity Committee and the following Conference.***
- (3) The Law and Polity Committee shall bring to the following Conference such recommendations arising out of that advice as it may think appropriate, if any.***

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

49/6. The Conference amends Standing Orders as follows:

132 Notices of Motion

(1A) Every notice of motion shall be handed *or otherwise delivered* to the Secretary in written *or other permanent* form and signed by the following persons: ...

(3) *A notice of motion which proposes to amend a resolution for the appointment of the members of the Connexional Council by removing from the list of names of those proposed for appointment the name of a current member of the council shall not be accepted later than 14 days before the commencement of the Representative Session of the relevant Conference except in cases of urgency and on the advice of the Law and Polity Conference Sub-committee.*

SECTION D

THE COMPOSITION OF THE CONFERENCE

1. The Conference of 2023 received the Report 35. Composition of the Conference and voted on various resolutions to confirm a reduction in the size of the category and various changes as to how its membership should be comprised. This section of the committee's Report deals firstly with the confirmation of a special resolution amending the Deed of Union in respect of the membership of the Conference, secondly with various consequent changes that are necessary to Standing Orders, and thirdly identifies some further minor changes to the Deed of Union.

*****RESOLUTION**

49/7. The Conference receives Section D of the Report.

2. **Special Resolution 35/7 (2023)**

The 2023 Conference passed Special Resolution 35/7 to change Clause 14(2) of the Deed of Union in relation to the adjusted membership of the Conference as part of the wider Oversight and Trusteeship process with the recommendation that the necessary consultation should be with the Methodist Council. However, since the special resolution had been moved by the Council, under Standing Order 126(c) the consultation should have been referred to the committee. The Council acknowledged this by passing Resolution 68/4 at its October 2023 meeting. The

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

committee duly considered the special resolution at its October 2023 meeting, with all those voting approving it unanimously. The Conference is there asked to confirm the Special Resolution as previously approved by the 2023 Conference.

***RESOLUTION

49/8. The Conference amends the Deed of Union as set out below:

14 The Representative Session

(2) **Membership.** The Conference in its Representative Session shall comprise:

- (i) the persons who when it commences its sitting hold office as the President, the Vice-President and the Secretary of the Conference;
- (ii) the persons who last held office as the President and the Vice-President of the Conference;
- (iii) the President-Designate, the Vice-President Designate and (if any) the Secretary-Designate nominated by the last preceding Conference;
- (iv) assistant secretaries and other officers of the Conference, as prescribed by Standing Orders;
- (v) the Chair or Chairs of each home District;
- (vi) the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- (vii) the President **or the Lay Leader** of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Secretary of the Irish Conference;
- (viii) the members and associate members appointed by or on behalf of other conferences, churches and Christian bodies as prescribed in sub-clauses (3) and (4) below;
- ~~(ix) the conference-elected representatives, as prescribed below;~~
- (x) **such** representatives of **the Connexional Council and** of connexional committees, funds and institutions, **and such other connexional officers**, as **are** prescribed by Standing Orders;
- (xA) representatives, as prescribed by Standing Orders, of a Methodist Youth Assembly to be established in accordance with Standing Orders;
- (xB) ~~[deleted]~~
- (xi) members elected by the Representative Sessions of Synods, as prescribed below.

(3) **The Irish Conference and the The General Conference of the United Methodist Church.** The Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

and the General Conference of the United Methodist Church shall each be entitled to appoint annually to the Conference two persons.

~~(5) Conference-elected Representatives. (a) The conference-elected representatives shall be elected by the Conference. One shall be a deacon and the remaining members shall consist of equal numbers of presbyters and lay persons:~~

~~(b) Subject to (a) above, the numbers, term of office and other matters concerning the election and service of conference-elected representatives shall be prescribed by Standing Orders.~~

~~(c) Any conference-elected representative who becomes incapable of acting or unfit to act or ceases to be a member of the Methodist Church or, being a presbyter or deacon when elected, ceases to be such shall be disqualified from being a conference-elected representative and his or her office shall forthwith become vacant.~~

~~(d) Casual vacancies occurring from time to time in the number of the conference-elected representatives shall be filled by the Conference.~~

17 Substitutes. (a) The Conference shall have power to elect a substitute for any member who is unable or unwilling to attend except the President **or the Lay Leader** of the Methodist Church in Ireland or the Secretary of the Irish Conference or a member or associate member appointed under clause 14(3) or 14(4) above, but in the case of a member elected by the Representative Session of a Synod only upon nomination in accordance with Standing Orders:

- (i) if the member is a deacon, by the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order; or
- (ii) otherwise, by an officer or officers of that **Synod**.

43 The Irish Conference.

...

(c) Ministers and lay members of the Methodist Church in Ireland may be appointed members of the Conference, ~~of the Missionary Committee~~ or of any other committee of the Conference of the Methodist Church.

2. Standing Order Changes

Resolution 35/4 of the 2023 Conference directed the Committee to bring the necessary amendments to the Standing Orders to implement changes to the membership of the Conference that will follow if the Special Resolution is confirmed. These amendments are set out below, the primary amendments being to SOs 102 and 103, followed by some consequential amendments, and then a resolution adopting them. A further resolution follows to give effect to

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

the Daily Record of the 2023 Conference, which at 8/4/2 indicated that, if the Special Resolution effecting the changes to the Deed of Union is confirmed by the 2024 Conference, a resolution would nevertheless be brought to the Conference to enable any existing Conference-elected representatives to complete their term of office, notwithstanding implementation of the general changes to the composition of the Conference.

102 Representatives of Connexional and Other Bodies. (1) The **Connexional Council and** connexional committees, funds, and institutions **and concerns** to be represented in the Conference pursuant to clause 14(2)(x) **and (xA)** of the Deed of Union and the representation of each shall be as follows, any representative not otherwise identified being appointed by the body in question **or, in the case of subclauses (v)-(vii), by the Connexional Council:**

[Delete the remainder of clause 102(1) and replace with:]

- (i) the chair and **seven other members of the Connexional Council;**
- (ii) the Connexional Secretaries;
- (iii) one representative of the Faith and Order Committee;
- (iv) one representative of the Law and Polity Committee;
- (v) one presbyter who is a commissioned chaplain;
- (vi) one person who is serving overseas under the direction of the council or is a minister whose ministry is based on an overseas appointment under Standing Order 780(1)(vi);
- (vii) three persons representing the concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion;
- (viii) **the Youth President together with one lay person elected at the preceding Methodist Children and Youth Assembly in accordance with Standing Order 250(11).**

(2) If a person appointed as a representative to the Conference under clause (1) of this Standing Order cannot attend then the responsible body shall **subject to Standing Order 250(11)** appoint a substitute in the appropriate category (presbyteral, diaconal or lay), failing which the **Methodist Connexional Council** shall nominate a substitute for election by the Conference under clause 17 of the Deed of Union.

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

(3) *[revoked]*

(4) *[revoked]*

(5) ~~The Methodist Children and Youth Assembly shall be represented by the Youth President together with one lay person elected at the preceding Methodist Children and Youth Assembly in accordance with Standing Order 250(11):~~

[revoked]

(6) ~~A lay member of another communion may be a member of the Conference if he or she is a member of the Connexional Team and is appointed under head (i):~~

[revoked]

(7) *[revoked]*

103 Conference-elected Representatives *[Delete the entire Standing Order]*

129 Conference Statements. (1)...

(c) If the Conference decides to refer it shall appoint a revision committee consisting of a chair nominated by the President (after consultation with the Vice-President), one representative of each District and three Conference-elected **Connexional Council** representatives...

250 Methodist Children and Youth Assembly...

(11) The sessions of the Assembly shall through procedures agreed by all the sessions jointly elect the three representatives to the next Conference required under Standing Order 102(51)(viii). To be eligible to be elected, a person shall

- (i) be a member of the Assembly at which the election takes place; and
- (ii) if not already a member of the Methodist Church, have signified the intention of seeking to become a member.

The Youth President, after consulting any available former Conference representatives still under 23, shall appoint an eligible person as a substitute for any appointee who cannot take his or her place in the Conference by reason of not being a member of the Methodist Church.

336 Justice, Dignity and Solidarity...

(4) The committee shall be responsible for making nominations to the council for persons to fulfil Standing Order 102(1)(vii)(g).

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

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

...

(ix) ~~all eligible lay persons who are Conference-elected representatives to the Conference;~~

770 Base of Ministry...

(3) Membership of the Conference shall be open to a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion whose ministry is based on an overseas appointment only (i) by election as a representative ~~of~~**by** the ~~Methodist~~**Connexional** Council under Standing Order 102(1) (vi), ~~head (f),~~ or (ii) while stationed in a home District, upon the terms which apply to presbyters or deacons whose ministry is based on the home Districts.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

49/9. The Conference amends Standing Orders as set out above.

49/10. The Conference resolves that, notwithstanding any other resolutions that the Conference has agreed regarding the composition of the Conference, any existing Conference-elected representatives shall complete their terms of office as members of the Conference.

1. Possible Future Deed of Union Changes

Some of the Standing Order amendments above have suggested that for consistency further minor amendments to the Deed of Union would be necessary or helpful. However, rather than instigate a further special resolution two year process this year, it might be wiser to wait a further year to discern whether any other consequential amendments might be needed as a result of the extensive amendments being undertaken through the Oversight and Trusteeship process to Parts 2 and 3 of Standing Orders in particular. The exception would be if it proves appropriate to bring another special resolution in connection with the Oversight and Trusteeship work this year, in which case any such resolution is likely to be brought by the Committee's Conference Sub-committee on the Order Paper. For now, the possible changes are simply noted below.

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

(ix) ~~'conference-elected representatives' has the meaning appearing from clause-14 (5) below;~~

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

14 (2) Membership

...

- (ix) Representatives of **the Connexional Council and** connexional committees, funds, and institutions **and concerns**, as prescribed by Standing Orders;

16 List of Members. (a) Before the assembling of the Conference in each year the Secretary of the Conference shall make out a list of the ~~conference-elected representatives and other~~ persons entitled to be members of the forthcoming Conference.

(b) On the assembling of the Conference in each year and before any other business is transacted the Secretary of the Conference, if present and willing to act, failing whom the person who has most recently held office as such, if present and willing to act, and failing any such person then some person chosen by the Conference for that purpose shall lay before the Conference the list made out by the Secretary of the Conference under sub-clause (a). If the completeness or correctness of that list is forthwith questioned by any person who (in the opinion of the Conference) is entitled to be a member of the Conference the Conference shall forthwith supply any omission or correct any error but subject as aforesaid such list shall be taken to be final and conclusive as to the persons of whom the Conference consists other than the persons (if any) appointed by the Conference as herein provided to fill up the casual vacancies (if any) in the number of the ~~Conference-elected representatives or~~ as substitutes for any members who are not able or willing to attend.

SECTION E

AMENDMENT OF MODEL TRUSTS

1. **Special Resolution 42/5 (2023) – Oversight & Trusteeship: Amendment of Various Model Trusts**

The 2023 Conference passed Special Resolution 47/5 amending various Model Trusts as set out in paragraph 26 of Report 57 Oversight and Trusteeship to the Conference of 2023, as amended on the Order Paper. In accordance with the consultation required under Standing Order 126(1)(c), the Methodist Council approved the special resolution by resolution 68/3 at its meeting in October 2023. Standing Order 126(1)(a) also requires Special Resolutions amending the Model Trusts to be submitted to the Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Scotland and Shetland Synods for consultation. An update on that consultation will be brought on the Order Paper by the Committee's Conference Sub-committee. Subject to that further report, the formal proposal to confirm the Special Resolution is presented in a separate report, *Special Resolutions*, elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

2. **Special Resolution 57/5 (2023) – Model Trust 26**

On the committee's advice in Section F of the committee's Second Report to the 2023 Conference, the 2023 Conference passed Special Resolution 42/5 amending Model Trust 26 to remove the unnecessary (in the light of developments in Charity Law) and burdensome requirement for a memorandum of consent to be entered into for numerous transactions in connection with Model Trust property. The Committee directed that the consultation required under Standing Order 126(1)(c) should be with the Methodist Council, which at its meeting in October 2023 approved the special resolution by resolution 68/2. Standing Order 126(1)(a) also requires Special Resolutions amending the Model Trusts to be submitted to the Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Scotland and Shetland Synods for consultation. An update on that consultation will be brought on the Order Paper by the committee's Conference Sub-committee. Subject to that further report, the Conference is asked to confirm the special resolution.

***RESOLUTIONS

49/11. **The Conference receives Section E of the Report.**

49/12. (Three quarters majority) **The Conference, by special resolution, amends Model Trust 26 by deleting the definition of "memorandum of consent" in sub-paragraph (1) and deleting sub-paragraphs (3) and (4), and directs that consultation on the proposed amendments be with the Methodist Council under Standing Order 126(1).**

SECTION F

COMPOSITION AND MODIFIED CONSTITUTIONS OF CIRCUITS

1. Section C of the Methodist Council's Report to the Conference in this Agenda sets out the reasons and principles for the Law and Polity Committee's proposed Standing Order amendments in connection with the *Composition and Modified Constitutions of Districts*, which the Methodist Council has approved and is recommending that the Conference adopts.
2. That report also acknowledges the merit of making parallel amendments to the provisions in Standing Order 501 regarding the composition of Circuits, and in Section 58 regarding the adoption of Modified Circuit Constitutions. The proposed amendments have now been prepared and are set out in this section of the Committee's Report.

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

3. The reasons and principles for the proposed amendments are similar to those explained in paragraphs 1., 2.c) and 3.c) of Section C of the Council report, to which the members of the Conference are referred. In particular, once more the desire is to disentangle the respective provisions of SO 501 and Section 58, so that changes in the composition of Circuits should only be effected through the former, so as to ensure that the policy considerations behind the consultations and processes in SO 501 are always applied in cases of amalgamation.
4. However, consideration of the provisions for adopting modified circuit constitutions in Section 58 has also enabled some clarification to be provided as to where responsibilities might lie for approving modified constitutions. In addition to the Circuit Meeting, or Circuit Meetings where a proposed amalgamation is also involved, voting to adopt a modified constitution, it should now be for District Policy Committee, on the advice of the Secretary of the Conference, to confirm that a draft modified constitution complies with the requirements of Section 58; or, where, an amalgamation of Circuits is also involved, the Synod and the Conference should also approve adoption of the draft constitution as a part of the wider SO 501 amalgamation process.
5. The Committee therefore proposes that the Conference approves the following amendments to the Standing Orders.

501 Constitution and Changes in Composition. (1) Subject to the following clauses of this Standing Order, the names and enumeration of Circuits shall be set out year by year in the stations appointed by the Conference.

(2) In this Standing Order any reference to a change in the composition of Circuits is to a change in ~~the a~~ **particular Circuit or Circuits** in which one or more Local Churches are placed, and this Standing Order applies to all such alterations.

(3) All proposals for the division or amalgamation of Circuits or other changes in their composition ~~or for the adoption of a modified constitution as defined in Standing Order 580 or both~~ shall be considered by the district Policy Committee, which shall consult the Circuit Meetings and Church Councils involved. ~~In the case of changes in composition~~ ~~†~~The committee shall formulate a draft recommendation, obtain the resolutions of the Circuit Meetings and Church Councils on that draft and report those resolutions to the Synod with its own substantive recommendation. The Synod shall make its own recommendation to the Conference, reporting with it the resolutions received by the district Policy Committee. ~~And stating whether or not it approves any associated proposals for a modified constitution. In the case of proposals to adopt a modified constitution which do not involve a change in the composition of Circuits the committee shall inform the Secretary of the Conference whether it approves them.~~

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

(4) Where changes within this Standing Order involve Circuits in more than one District the relevant district Policy Committees and Synods shall consult, with a view to making joint recommendations where possible.

(5) When any recommendation for change in the composition of Circuits is before the Conference any Circuit Meeting or Church Council involved has the right to make **formal** representations **in writing** to the Conference **in advance of the meeting of the Conference**.

(6) Upon making any change in the composition of Circuits the Conference may give consequential directions, in particular as to transitional arrangements, including directions as to the making of appointments to circuit committees and offices.

(6A) If in addition to the proposed changes in composition of a Circuit or Circuits it is also proposed to modify the standard constitution of the Circuit, this shall be dealt with according to the provisions of Section 58 of Standing Orders either contemporaneously or subsequently.

(7) The determination of any change in circuit composition is ultimately a matter for the Conference, but if, in the judgment of the Conference, any change resolved upon by the Conference is substantially out of accord with the reported resolution of any Circuit Meeting involved, or, where more than one District is involved, with the recommendation of any Synod, it shall take effect only if confirmed by the Conference of the year next following.

Section 58 Circuits with Modified Constitutions

580 Definitions.

In this Section:

- (i) an 'adoption resolution' means a resolution for the adoption of this Section passed in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 581 below;
- (ii) a 'Section 58 Circuit' means a Circuit in respect of which an adoption resolution is in force;
- (iii) a 'modified constitution', in relation to any Section 58 Circuit, means the constitution by which the affairs of that Circuit are governed.

581 Adoption resolutions. (1) Subject to the further provisions of this Section, a Circuit may at any Circuit Meeting pass a resolution that this Section shall apply to that Circuit,

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

or to a Circuit amalgamated under Standing Order 501 of which it will be part, with effect from the beginning of such connexional year as the resolution may specify and that the affairs of the Circuit shall thereafter be governed by a modified constitution in the form of a draft identified in the resolution.

(2) A resolution under clause (1) above must be brought by two members of the Circuit Meeting who are

- (i) ministers appointed to the Circuit; or
- (ii) circuit stewards; or
- (iii) other lay persons appointed by the Circuit Meeting to give leadership within the Circuit in accordance with Standing Order 515(2).

Notice of the resolution must be given to all members of the Circuit Meeting no later than **two** three months before the date of the Circuit Meeting at which the resolution is to be debated. A copy of the draft modified constitution must be supplied free of charge to any member of the Circuit Meeting who requests one.

~~(3) A draft modified constitution may provide for the governance as a single Circuit of more than one existing Circuit.~~

(4) In the debate on a resolution under clause (1) above, no proposal for the amendment of the draft modified constitution shall be considered unless written notice of the proposed amendment has been given to the Circuit Meeting Secretary no later than 14 days before the date of the relevant Circuit Meeting, unless that Circuit Meeting otherwise agrees. **If the draft modified constitution relates to a Circuit to be formed by amalgamation under Standing Order 501, such notice must be given to the secretaries of the relevant Circuit Meetings involved no later than 14 days before the date of the relevant Circuit Meeting, unless the Circuit Meetings otherwise agree.**

(5) A resolution under clause (1) above is only valid if it is passed by three quarters of those present and voting at the relevant Circuit Meeting ~~or, if~~ **if** the draft modified constitution **relates to a Circuit to be formed by amalgamation under Standing Order 501** ~~provides as set out in clause (3) above,~~ the resolution is only valid if it is passed by such a majority **three quarters** of those present and voting at the relevant Circuit Meeting of each Circuit concerned and the terms of the draft modified constitution identified by the resolution passed by each Circuit are identical.

(6) A resolution under clause (1) above will only take effect according to its terms if the draft constitution has been approved by the relevant Synod or district Policy Committee in accordance with Standing Order 501(3) and **on the advice of** the Secretary of the Conference confirms before the relevant 1st September that the draft modified

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

constitution complies with the requirements of this Section. Such confirmation may be given prior to the passing of the resolution **by the Circuit Meeting, or if the draft modified constitution relates to a Circuit to be formed by amalgamation under Standing Order 501 by each Circuit Meeting concerned**, but if the draft modified constitution is passed in an amended form after confirmation has been given, a further confirmation must be obtained. If no such confirmation has been given before the relevant 1st September, the resolution will not take effect until 1st September next following such confirmation.

(7) If a draft modified constitution

- (i) **is for an existing Circuit, the district Policy Committee shall report to the Synod and to the Conference Office the passing of any resolution under clause (1) above and the date on which the modified constitution shall take effect; or**
- (ii) **is for the governance of a Circuit to be formed by the amalgamation under Standing Order 501 of more than one existing Circuit, the Synod shall also state whether or not it approves the draft modified constitution when making its recommendation to the Conference about the proposed amalgamation, and the Conference shall consider the draft amended constitution in making any directions or passing any resolutions in connection with the proposed amalgamation, including, if approved, the date on which the modified constitution shall take effect.**

Provides as set out in clause (3) above, the Circuits which have passed the relevant adoption resolution shall form one new Circuit from the date on which the adoption resolution takes effect and the form in which the constitution and enumeration of the Circuits is set out pursuant to Standing Order 501(1) shall reflect that change.

582 Termination of effect of adoption resolutions. (1) Subject to the further provisions of this Section, the Circuit Meeting of a Section 58 Circuit may at any time pass a resolution that with effect from the beginning of such connexional year as the resolution may specify this Section shall cease to have effect in relation to that Circuit, **after which the affairs of the former Section 58 Circuit will be governed by the provisions of Part 5 (other than this Section) as amended from time to time.**

(2) The requirements of clause (2) of Standing Order 581 above shall apply to determine by which officers or members of the Circuit a resolution under clause (1) above may be moved and what period of notice of such a resolution must be given, unless the modified constitution of the Section 58 Circuit (whether as originally agreed or as amended in accordance with Standing Order 583 below) contains more stringent requirements. Any such resolution is only valid if it is passed by three quarters of those present and voting at the relevant Circuit Meeting.

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

(3) ~~Where~~ Unless the modified constitution of a Section 58 Circuit **relates to a Circuit** created in accordance with Standing Order 501 ~~above expressly so provides~~, the coming into force of a resolution under clause (1) above will not reconstitute **any of** the Circuits which existed prior to the coming into force of the adoption resolutions leading to the creation of that Circuit, **and the provisions of Standing Order 501 would again need to be applied to reconstitute any of the previous Circuits if desired** but the affairs of the former Section 58 Circuit will be governed by the provisions of Part 5 (other than this Section) as amended from time to time.

(4) ~~If the modified constitution of such a Section 58 Circuit does provide that the coming into force of a resolution under clause (1) above will reconstitute the former Circuits, the resolution must specify, by reference to an identified draft if appropriate, the arrangements by which the former Circuits are to be enabled to operate again from the relevant 1st September and the reconstitution will only then take effect if before that date the Secretary of the Conference confirms that the necessary arrangements have been made. If no such confirmation has been given before the relevant 1st September, the reconstitution will not take effect until 1st September next following such confirmation and in the meantime the affairs of the former Section 58 Circuit will be governed as the affairs of one Circuit and by the provisions of Part 5 (other than this Section) as amended from time to time.~~

583 Amendment of modified constitutions. (1) The modified constitution of a Section 58 Circuit may be amended by a resolution passed by a simple majority of those present and voting at the relevant Circuit Meeting, but the requirements of clause (2) of Standing Order 581 shall apply to determine by which officers or members of the Circuit such a resolution may be moved and what period of notice of such a resolution must be given.

(2) The procedure specified under clause (1) above must include a provision that any amendment to the modified constitution will not come into force until **the district Policy Committee on the advice of** the Secretary of the Conference has confirmed that the modified constitution in its amended form will continue to comply with this Section.

584 Provisions relating to modified constitutions. (1) Nothing in this Section affects the provisions of the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts ('the overriding legislation') and a modified constitution must conform to the requirements of the overriding legislation.

For the Methodist Church Act 1976 see Vol. 1 p. 2, for the Deed of Union Book II, Part 1 and for the Model Trusts Book II, Part 2.

(2) A modified constitution may not contain provisions contrary to the following provisions:

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

- (i) Standing Order 500 (nature and purposes of a Circuit)
- (ii) Standing Order 502 (chairing, **form** and notice of meetings)
- (iii) Standing Order 503 (eligibility for appointment)
- (iv) Standing Order 504 (duration of appointments)
- (v) Standing Order 505 (connexional funds)
- (vi) Standing Order 514(2) (list of members of the Circuit Meeting)
- (vii) Standing Order 515 (responsibilities)
- (viii) Standing Order 516 (memorials)
- (ix) Standing Order 517 (procedure at the Circuit Meeting)
- (x) Standing Order 518 (irregularities)
- (xi) Section 52 (Circuit ministry)
- (xii) Section 54 (Circuit invitations and appointments)
- (xiii) Standing Order 550 (obligatory appointments)
- (xiv) Standing Order 552 (ex-officio membership)
- (xv) Section 56 (local preachers)
- (xvi) Standing Order 574 (Chair's rights on appointment of lay employee)

(3) While an adoption resolution is in force the provisions of Part 5 (other than this Section) as amended from time to time shall continue to apply to the relevant Section 58 Circuit except as otherwise provided by the Circuit's modified constitution.

(4) A modified constitution may contain provisions varying the provisions of Standing Order 510 (constitution of the Circuit Meeting), but the spirit of Standing Order 513 shall be observed and any such modification shall contain provisions to ensure that:

- (i) a meeting is clearly designated as the Circuit Meeting for the purposes of clause 40 of the Deed of Union, sub-paragraph 2(1) of the Model Trusts, Section 54 of Standing Orders and Standing Orders 553 and 566 to 566B and for any other purpose for which a Methodist Circuit Meeting may be required;
- (ii) the Local Churches in the Circuit are represented on the Circuit Meeting either through each Local Church being separately represented by such person or persons as the modified constitution may provide or through all the Local Churches being constituent members of and separately represented on groups of Local Churches that are so represented;
- (iii) where the Local Churches are not separately represented on the Circuit Meeting, each Church Council shall have the right to make representations to the Circuit Meeting about any proposal that would directly affect its financial or other resources before the decision on that proposal is made, or to submit a resolution to that meeting on any other matter relevant to the work of the Circuit and attend the meeting to present and speak to the resolution.

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

(5) Subject to clause (2) above, a modified constitution may contain such other provisions varying the provisions of Part 5 as may be agreed, but in that event shall also include provisions to secure the effective carrying out within the Section 58 Circuit of the areas of work covered by the provisions so varied, taking into account also the need to comply with any other Standing Orders applicable to such work and the need to ensure consistent and fair treatment of all people across the Connexion.

(6) A modified constitution shall contain provisions to ensure that all the functions given by the overriding legislation (as defined in Standing Order 584(1) above) and Standing Orders to the Circuit Meeting as managing trustees shall be undertaken by that meeting, and that as respects all other such functions given by the overriding legislation to the Circuit Meeting there is an identified body responsible for the performance of each of those functions, by whatever name that body or (if more than one) those bodies may be known.

(7) A modified constitution shall contain provisions to ensure that as respects all the functions given by the overriding legislation and Standing Orders to an officer or the officers of the Circuit there is an identified individual or there are identified individuals responsible for the performance of each of those functions, by whatever title that individual or (if more than one) those individuals may be known.

(8) Subject to the foregoing provisions of this Section, a modified constitution may make such provision as the Circuit Meeting approves with regard to:

- (i) the functions, powers, duties and membership of the committees or other bodies constituted to carry out the purposes of the Section 58 Circuit;
- (ii) the functions, powers, duties and terms of employment (if applicable) of the officers of the Circuit.

***RESOLUTIONS

49/13. The Conference receives Section F of the Report.

49/14. The Conference amends Standing Orders as set out above.

SECTION G

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS OF STANDING ORDERS FOLLOWING REVISIONS TO CANDIDATING PROCESSES IN SECTIONS 71 AND 73

Last year there were substantial changes to Section 71 following the introduction of the new procedures for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation. Following a review of

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

these, and further liaison with or direction from the Connexional committees and team members responsible for this work, two subsequent pieces of work around safeguarding and changing orders of ministry have required further amendments to this section as set out below, or some further consequential amendments elsewhere.

1. **Safeguarding:** Reference is made in SO 232(2)(iiiA) to SO 713(7A), which, since the revision of Section 71, no longer exists. This omission needs to be rectified, and, to make it clear that reference to the safeguarding officer of any safeguarding issues or concerns applies to the whole process of candidating, a new, separate Standing Order is required.

714A Safeguarding Concerns. If at any stage in the operation of the process of Discernment of Ordained Vocation as set out in this Section of Standing Orders it appears to any of the persons involved or to a group, a panel, a committee or a section of a group, panel or committee that safeguarding issues or concerns are, or may be, involved, then the matter shall immediately be referred to the safeguarding officer (as defined in Standing Order 232(1A)), who may offer advice or refer the matter to the Safeguarding Committee for its advice, or risk assessment and recommendations as that committee judges appropriate.

In consequence, the following amendment is also required:

232 Safeguarding Committee

(2) The functions of the Safeguarding Committee shall be:

....

(iiiA) to act upon any referral to it by the safeguarding officer, following referral to that officer made under any of Standing Orders ~~714A~~~~713(7A)~~, 725(6), 761(15) or 1102(9) or otherwise made as a result of the operation of any of the processes of the Church

2. **Change of Order of Ministry:** The 2017 Conference directed MCPOC to review the current interpretation of SO 718. This review has now been completed and MCPOC has recommended that Standing Order 718 should be updated in consultation with Law and Polity to create a standard but flexible process. This process has resulted in the following recommended changes to SO 718.

718 Change of Order of Ministry. (1) A deacon in Full Connexion or diaconal probationer intending to offer as a candidate for the presbyterate shall inform the Superintendent,

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

Chair and the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. A student deacon intending so to offer shall inform the oversight tutor with overall responsibility for the student's training institution and the Warden.

(2) A presbyter in Full Connexion or presbyteral probationer intending to offer as a candidate for the diaconate shall inform the Superintendent and Chair. A student presbyter intending so to offer shall inform the oversight tutor with overall responsibility for the student's training institution.

(3) Every such candidate must be prepared to accept the form and length of training prescribed by the Conference.

(4) The candidate shall arrange for the provision of such documentation and other information and fulfil such other requirements as may be directed by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, including in the case of a presbyteral candidate such reports on the candidate's ability to lead worship and to preach as may be appropriate. The candidate must also demonstrate an adequate ability to benefit from study and to apply what has been learnt. In the case of a student or probationer this shall include reports from the relevant training institution.

(5) The provisions of Standing Orders 713 to 717 shall apply, and the period of pre-ordination training and probation shall be determined by the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or Conference Diaconal Committee when the candidate is accepted.

For the Conference Diaconal Committee see cl. 25A of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and Section 18.

(1) A student minister seeking to change order of ministry shall complete an application form. If requesting to move into diaconal ministry, the student shall have an interview with the diaconal tutor of the training institution and the Warden who shall jointly write a report. If requesting to move into presbyteral ministry, the student shall have an interview with their personal tutor and the oversight tutor of the training institution who shall jointly write a report. All such students shall meet with a panel of the training institution's oversight committee which shall make a recommendation to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, which may also complete a panel interview with the student. The focus of the meeting shall be on the order of ministry alone. The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall report the outcome to the Conference under one of the following categories:

- 1. Recommending an immediate transfer to the training pathway for the other order of ministry.***

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

2. *Recommending a suspension of their current training whilst they do further guided discernment (and the timing and nature of that discernment is determined).*
3. *Not recommending the transfer.*

(2) Any probationer seeking to change order of ministry shall have a vocational conversation with the Chair of District and complete an application form. If requesting to move into diaconal ministry, they shall have a formal interview with the Warden who shall write a report. If requesting to move into presbyteral ministry, they shall have a formal interview with their Chair of District who shall write a report. All such probationers shall meet with a panel from the District Probationers Committee which shall make a recommendation to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, which may also choose to see the probationer in a panel interview. The focus of the meeting shall be on the order of ministry alone. The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall report the outcome to the Conference under one of the following categories:

1. *Recommending a transfer to the other order of ministry after a period of training, followed by stationing to a new 2 year appointment on probation to the other order.*
2. *Recommending stationing in the next connexional year to a new probationer's appointment in the other order, followed by reception into full connexion and ordination after 2 years in the case of someone transferring to the diaconate, and after 1 or 2 years for someone transferring to the presbyterate.*
3. *Not recommending the transfer.*

(3) Any ordained minister wishing to change order of ministry shall have a vocational conversation with the Chair of District and shall complete an application form. Any presbyter requesting to move into diaconal ministry shall have a formal interview with the Warden, who shall write a report. Any deacon requesting to move into presbyteral ministry shall have a formal interview with the Chair of District who shall write a report. All such ordained ministers shall meet with a Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee panel. The focus of the panel shall be on the order of ministry alone. The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall report the outcome to the Conference under one of the following categories:

1. *Recommending a transfer to the other order of ministry after a period of training at a training institution.*
2. *Recommending a transfer to the other order after 2 years' probation in the case of someone transferring to the diaconate, and a transfer after 1 or 2 years' probation in the case of someone transferring to the presbyterate.*
3. *Not recommending the transfer.*

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

(4) In all cases the nature and oversight of the formation and probation are determined by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

(6) (5) A candidate who is a deacon shall cease to be in Full Connexion as a deacon and to be a member of the Methodist Diaconal Order on the commencement of pre-ordination training or on entry upon probation, whichever is the earlier. If for any reason pre-ordination training or probation for the presbyterate is not completed, the candidate shall be entitled to apply for reinstatement as a deacon under the provisions of Standing Order 761.

(7) (6) A candidate who is a presbyter shall cease to be in Full Connexion as a presbyter on the commencement of pre-ordination training or on entry upon probation, whichever is the earlier. If for any reason pre-ordination training or probation for the diaconate is not completed, the candidate shall be entitled to apply for reinstatement as a presbyter under the provisions of Standing Order 761.

3. Consequential Amendments: Some consequential amendments are also required to other provisions within CPD, as follows:

SO 32A0(2)(ii) Ministries Committee, SO 32A1(3) General Responsibilities

Following the rewriting of Section 71 in 2023, the Ministerial Candidates Selection Committee is now the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation, therefore SO 32A0(2) and SO 32A1(3) should be amended as follows:

32A0 "(2) In appointing the committee... (ii) the ~~Ministerial Candidates Selection~~

Committee **for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation** and the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee..."

32A1 "(3) The committee may... or by the ~~Ministerial Candidates Selection Committee~~ **for**

the Discernment of Ordained Vocation, the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee..."

SO 32A1(4) General Responsibilities

Following the rewriting of Section 71 in 2023, what was SO 710A has been replaced by SO 710(5). Therefore SO 32A1(4) needs amending as follows:

49. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity

“(4) The committee shall recommend to the Conference, through the council, selection criteria for adoption under Standing Order ~~710A~~**710(5)** and, as required, amendments to those criteria.”

Standing Order 711(2) Appointments

Pursuant to the standard drafting protocol in CPD to denote obligations, the “will” in SO 711(2) requires amendment to “shall”.

“(2) An Advisory Group Panel of three people selected from the Advisory Group by the relevant member of the Connexional Team and normally comprising a presbyter, a deacon and lay member, ~~will~~**shall** meet with each candidate.”

Standing Order 761(11) Reinstatement

Following the rewriting of Section 71 in 2023, what were SO 718(9) and SO 718(10) are now SO 718(6) and SO 718(7) respectively. SO 761(11) therefore needs amending as follows:

“(11) Where the applicant is a former presbyter or deacon who ceased to be in Full Connexion by the operation of Standing Order 718(9) ~~or (10)~~**(6) or (7)**, clauses (2) to (10) above shall apply with the following modifications...”

Additionally, whilst the Editorial Notes are not a formal part of CPD, as a consequence of the rewriting of Section 71 in 2023, the need to amend the footnote to SO 730(4) referring to the stationing of a supernumerary from SO 780(1)(v) to SO 780(1)(x) has been noted for attention; as also has the need to amend references to the Methodist Council such as in the notes beneath SOs 710(5), 715(1), 715(2) and 716(2).

*****RESOLUTIONS**

49/15. The Conference receives Section G of the Report.

49/16. The Conference amends Standing Orders as set out above.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

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| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, Secretary of the Conference SoC@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Resolutions | See end of Report. |

1. Introduction

- 1.1** This report builds on the work that has been done by or brought to the Conference over the last seven years. A fuller history of the process was included in the 2023 report, 57. Oversight and Trusteeship,¹ taking its starting point for the current phase of reform as 2017. Members of the Conference may want to consult the reports that have been brought to the Conference in the intervening period in order fully to understand (or to refresh their memories about) this stream of work.
- 1.2** In brief, those reports are:
2018 discussion paper 'Reaffirming *Our Calling*: the future call of the Methodist Church'.
2019: 'Reaffirming *Our Calling*'
2020 'Reaffirming *Our Calling*: Oversight and Trusteeship'.
2021 'Oversight and Trusteeship'
2022 'Oversight and Trusteeship'
2023 'Oversight and Trusteeship'
- 1.3** The changing nomenclature in no way indicates any less of a commitment to *Our Calling* in the later reports. For all that this process has necessarily explored in detail questions of committee structure, methods of appointment, trustee responsibility, legal compliance, and methods of conferring, those who have worked on the various task groups have been mindful that the mission of the Church is to respond to the Gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship. The question before those groups has never simply been 'How do we create an efficient and effective structure to comply with our responsibilities as a charity?' Rather, it has been, 'What structures enable us effectively and nimbly to be compliant in our trustee responsibilities in order that we might serve the mission of God in our age and place?'
- 1.4** In many ways, that question was answered in the 2022 Conference when the creation of the Connexional Council was referred to the Synods for ratification.

1 2023 Conference Agenda Item 57. Oversight and Trusteeship

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

From 1 September 2024, the Connexional Council will be the trustee body for the connexional business of the Methodist Church in Great Britain. The Conference is asked this year to confirm the amendments to the Model Trusts provisionally adopted last year, and to adopt the Standing Orders under which the council will work.

- 1.4.1** A draft of those Standing Orders is included in the appendices to this report. It might be helpful to the reader to note that because of the movement of material from other parts of *Constitutional Practice and Discipline* (CPD) into these sections, there has been considerable renumbering. Where possible, the number of the comparative Standing Order (SO) in 2023 has been included in square brackets.
- 1.4.2** Inevitably, some of the Standing Orders have also been subject to proposed revision by other bodies. Where that revision is extensive and, in the view of the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group (OTTG), may possibly generate considerable conversation in the Conference, the section or part of a section has been omitted with a note to where else in the Agenda material might be found. Where the OTTG believes that the changes are relatively minor and/or uncontroversial and where the OTTG is supportive of the change, the revised wording is included in this report. The Law and Polity Subcommittee will, of course, advise the Conference where an amendment or the adoption of the resolutions to this report necessitates an amendment to the text of or a decision in relation to another report, and vice-versa.
- 1.5** Whilst extensive work has been done by the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group and our colleagues on the Law and Polity Committee, and many difficult issues have been resolved, there is a number of outstanding questions on which the Conference needs to give its opinion.
- 1.5.1** One is the issue of a quorum for the Connexional Council. The membership of the council has been set by the Conference as between 18 and 22 persons, eight of whom will be *ex officio*, as set out in categories (i)-(vii) in draft Standing Order 200(1)(b). (Since the draft Standing Order presented last year for the constitution of the Connexional Council, the OTTG has considered and decided to recommend that the Chair or Deputy Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee should also be an *ex officio* member of the Connexional Council, given this important aspect of and perspective on the Trustees' work.) Whilst it is implied by the Charity Commission that in the interests of good governance a charity should set a minimum number of trustees who have to participate in a decision, the custom of the Methodist Church in Great Britain

(MCB) has been to require that all trustees be given ample opportunity to attend and contribute in an informed manner to a meeting and to regard that as being sufficient to ensure that decisions are taken in an appropriate and representative manner.

- 1.5.2** There are, therefore, no requirements in the Standing Orders for trust bodies to have a quorum. However, the level of responsibility (and therefore of risk) carried by the Connexional Council is such that the OTTG recommends to the Conference that the council has authority to make decisions only when at least twelve of its members are present. Aside from the various precedents for the number, the OTTG notes that whilst the total membership of the council might vary from year to year, this figure would never be more than two thirds nor less than half of the total membership.
- 1.5.3** The OTTG debated whether there should be any distinction in setting the quorum between the *ex officio* members and others and determined that there should not be. Such a distinction could be unhelpful as the council develops its ways of working and might imply a difference in perspective for which there is no evidence.
- 1.5.4** The Conference is asked to agree to the establishment of a quorum and to the method of calculating it, or to direct that another approach be taken.
- 1.6** The OTTG also recommends that there be specific provision for the Conference, in the unlikely event it deemed it necessary, to bring to an early end the term of office of the Chair or Deputy Chair of the Connexional Council. Such a termination would need to be undertaken by the Conference but the question might arise between meetings of the Conference and could not be left until the Conference next assembled.
- 1.7** The OTTG therefore proposes a draft Standing Order by which no less than a tenth of the Conference membership could ask for a termination process to be set in train and for a panel of the Conference to determine the question on the Conference's behalf. The draft is included with the other proposed Standing Orders below.
- 1.8** Previous Conferences have approved at various points terms of reference for the bodies that will report to the Conference or Connexional Council. The OTTG feels that it is important to stress that those bodies are bound to work under the provisions of the Deed of Union and Standing Orders where those are provided and that terms of reference and Standing Orders are not the

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

same thing. It therefore brings the draft Standing Orders for Parts 2 and 3 with the understanding that:

- a) All committees, working parties and task groups will need a 'Ways of Working' document of some sort. Apart from bodies which are required to do their work with the regulation of the Deed of Union and Standing Orders (ie, the Conference itself (which works under the Deed and SO131) and Synods), these bodies should normally agree their own ways of working (provided, of course, that these accord with CPD and terms of reference set by the Conference, Council or the committee which established them or to which they report).
- b) Those committees, working parties and task groups whose functions are not detailed in the Standing Orders (including those which are not listed in the Standing Orders) or for which the Standing Orders prescribe that terms of reference should be set, and those which are created by the council or its main committees either as standing committees or groups created for particular pieces of work, should have terms of reference agreed by the body which appoints their members or to which they report (or both). Such terms of reference will not normally need to be included in CPD (though, again, must be consonant with it).
- c) Not every committee will need terms of reference in addition to the Standing Orders and, following further reflection this year, the OTTG believes that it can be confusing if such terms are created where detailed Standing Orders exist or are still needed. They will, however (point a) above) need to agree ways of working which, for the sake of transparency, should be included in or appended to the committee's reports.

1.9 For a number of reasons, the OTTG has not been able to complete all the work that it hoped to complete this year. In particular, whilst the principle of the three main committees having flexibility in the creation and revision of groups that report to them, the work of revising existing committees is still ongoing. In addition to the Methodist Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee (the Connexional Council being the successor body for both), some committees have now been wound up and their work transferred, including:

- The Connexional Allowances Committee, whose work will come under the oversight of the Resourcing Committee
- The Property Development Committee, whose work will come under the oversight of the Resourcing Committee

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

- The Finance Subcommittee of the SRC, whose work will come under the oversight of the Resourcing Committee
- The Pay and Grading Committee of the SRC, whose work will come under the oversight of the Resourcing Committee.
- The Medical Committee, the work of which was agreed by the Council no longer to be needed in the light of changes to the Standing Orders on candidates for the ministry and supernumeraries reflecting evolving understanding and practice.

1.10 The OTTG therefore recognises that the work for which it was brought into being is far from complete. The final section of this report contains a proposal for the appointment of a task group for 2024-25 in order that the work that remains outstanding can be brought to the 2025 Conference. The OTTG believes that little is served by discontinuity at this point in a lengthy process, and therefore the majority of those who are nominated to be part of the 2024-25 OTTG have served on the OTTG or its predecessor bodies. Accordingly, for the benefit of continuity, the OTTG requests that the Conference appoints those who are being nominated.

2. Nominations Committee

2.1 As directed by the 2023 Conference, the Nominations Committee has met during the year to produce nominations for the membership of the Connexional Council and Resourcing Committee. It has also sought to strengthen its own membership.

2.2 The report of the Nominations Committee is contained elsewhere in the Agenda.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

50/1. The Conference receives Sections 1 and 2 of the Report.

50/2. The Conference adopts the recommendation at paragraph 1.5.4.
The specific provision is contained in draft Standing Order 200(1)(b) in Appendix A below.

50/3. The Conference adopts the recommendations at paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7.
The specific provisions are contained in draft Standing Order 200(4)(b) – (f) in Appendix A below.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

3. New Parts 2 and 3 of Standing Orders and related matters

The drafting of Parts 2 and 3

3.1 The creation of the Connexional Council has necessitated far-reaching amendments to the Standing Orders, as well as amendments to the Model Trusts (provisionally adopted last year and reported to the Conference in the Special Resolutions report elsewhere in the Agenda). Much of the task of the OTTG, and in particular the members of the group appointed to it by the Law and Polity Committee, has been to work carefully through the proposed revisions. The principal task has been to replace the existing Parts 2, 3 and 10 of Standing Orders by new Parts 2 and 3, to reflect the creation of the Council, its relationship with the Conference, and the committees which report to the Conference or the Connexional Council (or both).

3.2 However, the group notes that in response to the developing mission and ministry of the Church, the revision of the committee structure of the Church is still work in progress: the details of the various committees' responsibilities will begin to be worked out and consideration given to how much still needs to be prescribed by Standing Orders in 2024-25. Consequently, whilst in the revision here offered to the Conference the contents of Parts 2, 3 and 10 have been considerably rearranged, to align with the new relationships involved, much of the actual text of those existing Parts remains unaltered, at least for the forthcoming year. The Conference is asked to note, furthermore, that a more in-depth review of other Parts of Standing Orders is envisaged by the Law and Polity Committee in the coming years.

For ease of reading, the OTTG sets out below the new Parts 2 and 3 in full, in Appendix A. Wherever possible, references to where the particular provisions previously appeared have been included in square brackets. Where there is no such reference, the provision contains entirely or mostly new material. However, for ease of reading, Parts 2 and 3 have been set out in the Appendix in plain text; the only use of the bold italic and strikethrough conventions is to indicate amendments in *existing* material which has been taken over into the new Parts (most of such changes being minor cross-references, with any significant policy points being mentioned in the body of this report), although it needs also to be noted that clauses within SOs have been renumbered to deal with previous additions and deletions.

In a few instances, an editorial note has been included for the guidance of the Conference. As is customary, these notes do not form part of the text being proposed for adoption.

Consequential amendments to the text of Standing Orders

- 3.3** Besides the production of the above parts, there has been the major task of examining the rest of the Standing Orders to see what consequential amendments of wording (running into hundreds) are then required. This list appears in Appendix B. It would be unhelpful to try to set out the full text of all the amendments in full, but they fall into several categories. The approach that has been taken is as follows:
- 3.4** There are points where it seems clear that “Methodist Council” should be replaced by “Connexional Council” and they are listed in the Appendix.
- 3.5** There are other areas where particular functions of the Methodist Council should not now fall within the ambit of the Connexional Council, because the main focus of the council must be its trustee responsibilities and it does not have the same ‘representative’ nature as the Methodist Council. In some instances the Conference, or one of its officers, is now the appropriate body to exercise the particular functions. In others, it will be appropriate for the Council’s three main committees (Mission, Ministries and Resourcing) to deal with these matters directly (reporting, where appropriate, to the Conference). However, in some of those instances it has been thought better to assign such functions formally to the Connexional Council for the time being, rather than embodying the changes in Standing Orders this year, on the basis that the council will at its inception delegate them to such committee as is thought appropriate, and with the expectation that after review during the coming year any necessary Standing Order changes will then be brought.
- 3.6** The other main group of amendments comprises an assortment of provisions which are needed to give effect to the general intentions of the legislation. They are set out below with any necessary explanation.
- 3.7** The opportunity has been taken, whenever possible, to amend the text being dealt with to reflect the Conference’s commitment to gender neutral language.

Cross-referencing

- 3.8** There are many cross-referencing amendments which will need to be made, by the time that *Constitutional Practice and Discipline* (CPD) is published in the summer, simply to deal with the changed numbering in Parts 2 and 3. Rather than setting them all out in the Agenda - and bearing in mind any further changes which would need to be made as a result of possible amendments made by the Conference itself - it is proposed that the Conference Officer for Legal and

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

Constitutional Practice, in her capacity as editor of CPD, be directed to make all such cross-reference amendments as are necessary.

- 3.9** The same consideration applies to whatever cross-references are necessary (either of numbering, or of text consequential upon what the Conference may adopt as the new Parts 2 and 3) in Books IV to VII of CPD (principally the Guidance Section). It is proposed that a similar resolution is adopted for that purpose.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 50/4.** The Conference receives Section 3 of the Report.
- 50/5.** The Conference revokes Parts 2, 3 and 10 of Standing Orders, and replaces them by Parts 2 and 3, as set out in Appendix A below.
- 50/6.** The Conference makes the consequential amendments to the remainder of Standing Orders as set out in Appendix B below.
- 50/7.** The Conference directs the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice to make such amendments of the numerical cross-references in Standing Orders generally as are necessary to accord with the changes made by the adoption of Resolutions 50/5 and 50/6 above.
- 50/8.** The Conference further directs the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice to amend, where necessary, the text of Books IV to VII of *Constitutional Practice and Discipline* for the same purpose.
- 50/9.** The Conference directs that the changes made by the adoption of Resolutions 50/5 and 50/6 above shall come into effect from 1 September 2024.

4. District Leadership

- 4.1** The move towards larger Districts, including District mergers and amalgamations, is leading towards new ways of being a District and new patterns of officers serving them. This particularly applies to the roles of Chairs of District and those who deputise for them or assist them, and more generally to the principles of shared and collaborative district leadership. Over the years a wide range of patterns have emerged which are increasingly divergent, and that tendency is likely to increase under the new developments. Care must therefore be taken to ensure that arrangements can be tailored to suit the context of an individual District, but within a consistent connexional pattern.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

- 4.2** The matter was previously before the 2021 Conference which by Resolution 30/10 directed the Methodist Council to review the provisions of Standing Order 426 in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee. This was partly connected to the (then) emerging proposal that all Districts should move to regional reconfigurations (which was not received by the 2022 Conference, albeit SO 401 continues to permit individual Districts to amalgamate if they desire), and partly related also to wider questions about the nature of District leadership. The Faith and Order Committee has reported separately on the issue of District leadership (see Agenda item 28). Given these wider considerations, and notwithstanding that Resolution 44/20c of the 2022 Conference directed the OTTG to consider the matter further (as was also acknowledged in Section A of the 2023 Conference OTTG report), it was not possible for the OTTG to bring final proposals for the amendment or development of SO 426 to this or previous Conferences. However, alertness to this has not been lost: the OTTG here makes initial recommendations with the expectancy that final proposals will be brought if possible in 2025.
- 4.3** The relevant Standing Order, SO 426, makes provisions for a Synod to appoint one or more people to act as deputies to the Chair [Clauses (1) and (3)].
- 4.3.1** As the role of Chair involves exercising pastoral responsibility, ministerial oversight, and some forms or expressions of pastoral charge, these deputies are to be presbyters in the active work stationed in the District concerned [Clause 2(ii)]. Being “in the active work” and having regard to Deed of Union Clause 1 (iA), means that they cannot be a supernumerary or without appointment, and it is inferred that they may be Recognised and Regarded (under DU 45 and SO 732), but cannot be an Authorised (or Associate) Presbyter (under SO 733 or 733A)). Given silence on the point, they may apparently be full-time in this role or part-time.
- 4.3.2** Their role is to perform the duties specified in a role description approved by the Synod [Clause (2)(i)]. The Standing Order does not specify what those duties should be, but it does specify that they cannot include anything that the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts expressly state can only be performed by the Chair of District. The only thing that can easily be found to be without exception in that category is that another presbyter cannot substitute for a Chair of District in the membership of the Conference (clause 14(2)(v) of the Deed of Union).
- 4.4** Secondly, SO 426 makes provision for a Chair to appoint other people “to assist him or her” [Clause (5)]. The language is important here. Some Districts have adopted the terminology of ‘Assistant Chairs’. That is understandable in common

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

speech, but the language of the Standing Order would suggest that technically it would be more correct to refer to them instead as 'Chair's Assistants'. Assisting the Chair in this way may involve a range of duties other than those of exercising presbyteral oversight and forms of pastoral responsibility or charge. This is demonstrated by the fact that the people appointed to this role may be other than presbyters in the active work. Standing Order 426(6) allows for both ordained and lay possibilities.

- 4.4.1** If ministers, they have to "reside in the District for the purposes of the stations" [SO 426(6)(i)]. Standing Orders 005(vi), (vii) and 785(4)(a) imply that this encompasses presbyters or deacons who are in the active work, those who are authorised ministers, those in appointments not within the control of the Church, those without appointment, or those who are supernumeraries; but not those residing for the purposes of the stations within the categories referred to in SO 785(8)(c) or (d). In suggesting amendments below to this category of those who assist Chairs and contribute to the leadership of a District, it is proposed to narrow the possible classes of minister involved to those in the active work who are stationed in the District (although those outside the District should be able to apply but would need to be stationed in the District on appointment to the role).
- 4.4.2** Alternatively those appointed as 'Chair's Assistants' have to be members in the District concerned. That means that they can be lay people.
- 4.5** Going forwards, a consistent intent has been to retain Deputy Chairs, but to be clearer about the role(s) of Chair's Assistants/Assistant Chairs, and not least to acknowledge that such roles may contribute to or have a share in the leadership of the District as a whole (whether lay or ordained), rather than merely 'assisting' the District Chair, even if that is conceptually or practically part of the role. Further considerations follow regarding the possible nature, purpose and terminology of the different roles.
- 4.6** Deputy Chairs will share with the Chair(s) of a District in the Chair's presbyteral duties of maintaining Methodist order and discipline [SO 424(2)]; exercising oversight of the character and fidelity of the presbyters and presbyteral probationers in the District [SO 424(3)]; stationing; being a pastor to the ministers and probationers [SO 424(1)]; representing the District in the Conference (if agreed, as proposed, from now on), Connexion and wider world; and representing the Conference and wider Connexion in the District. They may also substitute for the Chair with delegated authority where appropriate. The Deputy (or a particular one of them if there is more than one, as determined by the District Policy Committee from time to time) should in addition be designated as the person to fill the role of the Chair (including as a member of the Conference, if this change

were to be agreed) should the Chair be incapacitated or unable for a time to exercise their office.

- 4.7** Three particular proposals arise (the first and second perhaps standing or falling together):
- 4.7.1** The connexional aspects of the role of the Chair that a Deputy or Deputies would thereby share or fulfil as a substitute mean that representatives of the wider Connexion should play some role in the appointment of Deputies, just as they are in the initial appointment of a Chair (but perhaps not to the same extent, involving for example two members of the connexional panel referred to in Standing Order 421A(3)).
- 4.7.2** Districts should be entitled to have a Deputy Chair substitute for their District Chair in the Conference, which would require a change to clause 14(2)(v) of the Deed of Union by special resolution. Such a change was not contemplated in the Reply accepted by the Conference of 2019 when a question to that effect was raised in Memorial M12; however, a precedent towards allowing the filling of a Conference seat by alternate or substitute named officers will be established if the 2024 Conference confirms the special resolution amending clause 14(2)(vii) of the Deed of Union (as recorded in the Minutes of the 2023 Conference at page 11) which would permit the filling of a seat by alternates: “the President or the Lay Leader of the Methodist Church in Ireland...”.
- 4.7.3** The appointment of someone as a Deputy should be shown against the name of the person concerned on the stations. If the Deputy role is only part-time and they are also appointed to other duties it can be shown against their name in the Circuit in which they are stationed as “... (... also Deputy Chair)”. If ever full time, it would be shown under the District Chair’s name at the start of a District’s list, provided that in the appointment there has indeed been connexional panel involvement as suggested above.
- 4.8** The Chair’s Assistant role would become more focused on contributing to the leadership of the District in other ways than the specifically presbyteral role described above. It might be open to both lay members in the District, or ordained, and if ordained, to either deacons or presbyters stationed in the District, but in either case being clearer that those ordained should be in the active work (ie in Full Connexion or Recognised and Regarded). Since the role would be focused on contributing to and sharing in leadership of the District:
- 4.8.1** Firstly, a title other than ‘Chair’s Assistant’, or even ‘Assistant Chair’, might be preferred and should be permitted. Indeed, if the role is filled by a lay person,

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

there has been concern expressed in the OTTG that using 'Assistant' of a lay person reinforces a risk of actual or perceived hierarchy rather than the practice of collaborative leadership. (As an alternative term, 'District Secretary', with its analogies to Connexional Secretary or Diocesan Secretary, is gaining currency in the proposals for some merged Districts, a term that need not be confused with the role of Synod Secretary.) However, since no single term commands universal assent or meets every contextual requirement, flexibility in the use of terms should be permitted, but with the proviso that the Synod should determine which title should be used for the role in their context (as suggested in the Standing Order amendments below).

4.8.2 Secondly, since the category is primarily envisaged as involving a contribution to District leadership, references to clerical and administrative duties should now be removed (given that Standing Order provisions are surely not required for this). If helpful in practice these or other forms of support can still be provided for the District Chair or other District Leaders as may be required (but again without requiring a Standing Order to permit them).

4.9 In terms of distinguishing between the roles:

4.9.1 If the Deputy role can be defined as in paragraph 4.6 above, it should be explicit that the role(s) of those who assist Chairs or contribute to District Leadership in this category do not include those duties. If that is made clear then the confusion of describing 'Deputies Chairs' as 'Assistant Chairs' might be ended. This will require adjustment in the use of terms in some contexts, where usage has perhaps sometimes developed as a pragmatic response to the methods of recruitment set out by the present Standing Order (which will also be addressed below), rather than through focusing on the essence of a deputy's role as envisaged in SO 426(1)-(4), and which it is proposed to be made clearer through the suggested amendments so as to ensure greater connexional commonality and clarity concerning the different categories.

4.9.2 As for 'Chair's Assistants'/'Assistant Chairs'/'District Secretaries', in essence these lay or ordained roles will be focused on contributing to the leadership of the District in general or specified ways, other than through fulfilling the presbyteral functions referred to above. Such roles will, like Deputy Chairs but in other ways, constitute and enable helpful and valued contributions to the life and mission of both traditional sized and merged Districts.

4.10 The development of larger Districts with more complex or creative features for fulfilling the responsibilities of a District in the contemporary environment has raised related questions about how both ministerial and lay roles might best

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

be recruited or appointed, which also needs to be considered. The Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group has long noted that the Methodist Church has become increasingly aware that recruitment and appointment processes should be transparent and inclusive. Thus, whilst at present under SO 426(6)(ii) any public facing aspect undertaken by a Chair's Assistant must be approved by the District Policy Committee or Synod, in other respects, a Chair's Assistant can be appointed by the District Chair alone: the EDI risks of appointing by an individual, at worst simply through a 'tapping on the shoulder' method, should from now on be avoided; and the greater leadership aspect being emphasised through the development of the role to meet emerging circumstances also suggests that a public process should be embedded. For these reasons, but also out of concerns that there should be scope for recruiting suitable postholders to both Deputy Chair and Assistant Chair/District Secretary roles, the following suggestions are made to reinforce and develop the processes for recruitment and appointment going forwards.

- 4.11** Given the presbyteral and representative responsibilities for deputising for the District Chair, it is proposed that Deputy Chairs should be appointed connexionally on the nomination of the Synod.
- 4.11.1** Potentially this would mean that the District might advertise for applications or to invite nominations for suitable presbyters from both within or outside the District for full or part time roles. Such appointments should involve two members of the connexional panel involved in the nomination of District Chairs and, on the nomination of the Synod, mean that the appointee would be stationed to the role by the Conference, either by separate resolution of the Conference (as for District Chairs) or more simply through the adoption of the stations with the deputy being listed as such in the stations for that District.
- 4.11.2** Given the present Stationing Review and the need for any proposals to align with the outcome of that, it is not proposed to bring these proposals until 2025. However, in principle it is suggested that advertisement of a Deputy Chair role, whether full or part time, should not require the approval of the Stationing Committee (nor require the presbyter to seek the approval of the Stationing Advisory Committee ['SAC'], since this is an appointment within the control of the Church).
- 4.11.3** However, if a part time role is involved and appointment to a circuit role is also desired in connection with the appointment, which may require recruitment from outside the District, or a circuit appointment within the District that is half time or more, then, regarding the circuit aspect, the applicable stationing matching provisions and processes should still be applied. This would require the timetable

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

of the circuit and District appointment processes to be correlated between the District and the Circuit to enable stationing to both aspects to take place at the same time, and to be subject to both a satisfactory circuit match and satisfactory appointment to the deputy chair role, to be approved by the Conference through the adoption of the stations.

- 4.12** Regarding any other type of leadership role under SO 426 (such as that of an Assistant Chair or District Secretary):
- 4.12.1** If this is to be advertised for appropriate fulfilment by a lay person, a successful recruitment process involving advert, agreed role description, application and interview should lead to appointment by the District Policy Committee ('DPC') as the District Trustees and employing body, and not be dependent on or wait for confirmation by the Synod, provided that the role has previously been agreed to in principle by the Synod through the approval of a role description specifying the duties that will be involved.
- 4.12.2** If the role is also open to a minister in the active work, following existing principles, the District will not need permission from the Stationing Committee to advertise nor the minister to seek permission from SAC (although references from the minister's minister in oversight should as standard be required, and from the Warden of the Diaconal Order in the case of a deacon). For parity (and reflecting the possibility in the present Standing Order), appointment should be by the DPC, again providing the role has previously been agreed in principle by the Synod, although in a minister's case also being subject to the Conference's confirmation of the stations.
- 4.12.3** If ever the role were appropriately to be suitable only for an ordained minister, the minister will need to be in the active work, and appointment should again be by the DPC, but to a role previously agreed in principle by the Synod. Additionally:
- i. if the role is part time and involves release of a minister stationed within a circuit, it could be dealt with as an internal matter between the District and Circuit (but in the case of a deacon will require the agreement also of the Warden of the Diaconal Order).
 - ii. if part time but requiring a 'new' minister who will also be expected to fulfil a circuit role, recruitment should be through the standard stationing matching process.
 - iii. if a full time role and it is desired to advertise and seek applications for the post, the permission of the Stationing Committee will be required.

- 4.13** In terms of the length of the appointment of Deputy Chairs or Chair's Assistants, at present SO 426(2)(iii) provides for repeatable three-year terms for Deputies, and there is no provision in 426(5)-(6) regarding Chair's Assistants. The present Stationing Review is understood to continue the move adopted in the recent Changing Patterns of Ministry Report towards establishing more flexible appointment periods. Part time district leadership appointments might also be coupled with circuit appointments, themselves of different length. Lay appointments usually need to be open ended, or at least to reflect available funding, and are subject to general provisions regarding redundancy and dismissal. Thus, seeking to legislate comprehensively for appointment lengths might be difficult or unwise, even if desired, although there would be merit in allowing for greater flexibility for appointment periods of deputies. Therefore, an initial maximum length of a ministerial appointment as Deputy Chair, or as an Assistant Chair/District Secretary, is suggested as being five years, to correspond with the standard initial circuit appointment, as included in the indicative Standing Order amendments (and thereafter the principles of a circuit reinvasion process have been referred to where connected circuit appointments are also involved). There might be other views as to what might be helpful.
- 4.14** Since there are various considerations and related reports or processes that make it difficult to bring final proposals to the Conference of 2024, this section of the Report is intended to indicate some potential clarifications regarding the roles and recruitment of Deputy Chairs and others who may also be appointed under Standing Order 426 to senior leadership in a District. Accordingly, the proposed amendments to SO 426 set out below are indicative at this stage, and the Conference is not being asked to adopt them this year. By sharing them in this way, it allows opportunity for reflection and comment upon them. However, one aspect proposed is that a Deputy Chair should be able from now on to substitute for a District Chair as a member of the Conference in limited circumstances where appropriate. Given that this requires a change to the Deed of Union and therefore a two-year special resolution process, it is proposed to bring the first year's special resolution this year, so that if the Conference agrees both this and next year, that change could come into effect next year (rather than delaying a further year). Accordingly, the OTTG therefore proposes the following amendment to the Deed of Union:

Deed of Union clause 14(2)

(v) the Chair or Chairs of each home District, ***or, as prescribed by Standing Orders, a deputy for a Chair who is unable to attend;***

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

- 4.15** The OTTG sets out the following indicative amendments to Standing Order 426 which, subject to comments received, including in relation to the Stationing Review, and further amendment, may be brought to the Conference of 2025 for approval.

426 Permanent Deputies, Temporary Deputies and Assistants. *Deputy Chairs and other senior District leaders*

(1) ***On the nomination of t***The Synod, ***the Conference*** may appoint a person ***presbyter or presbyters in the active work*** to the office of deputy to the Chair. ***A Deputy Chair shall share with the Chair in the leadership and presbyteral duties of the Chair, dealing with matters of Methodist order and discipline, stationing, the pastoral care of ministers and probationers, representing the Conference in the District and the District in the Conference.***

(2) Any appointment made under clause (1) above shall comply with the following requirements:

(i) the appointment shall be on terms that the deputy is to perform the ***particular*** duties specified ***in each case*** in a description of the deputy's role which has been approved by the Synod;

(iA) The Secretary of the Conference and two members of the panel appointed annually by the Conference under Standing Order 421A(3) shall be consulted in making any nomination to the Synod concerning such an appointment.

(ii) the person appointed shall be a presbyter in the active work who is stationed in the District ***the appointment may be full-time or part-time and in either case shall be advertised. Following satisfactory recruitment (and completion of any stationing matching process applying to a related circuit appointment), the appointment shall be brought to the Synod for nomination to the Conference for confirmation by designation on the list of the stations in the District;***

[Suggested editorial note: The words in parenthesis relate to situations where a presbyter is being appointed as a part-time Deputy Chair and also being newly stationed to a part-time circuit appointment, when the applicable stationing matching processes will still need to be followed for the circuit appointment. Other situations may involve the partial release of a presbyter from their existing circuit appointment, where a new stationing matching process will not be required but where the District should still liaise sensitively with the Circuit. In all cases, the processes for both the District appointment and any related part-time new or reconfigured Circuit appointment should be coordinated, and

will culminate with the Conference's confirmation of the appointments through the adoption of the stations for the ensuing year.]

(iii) the appointment shall be for a specified period not exceeding three years in the first instance (but capable of extension for a further period or periods each of which shall not exceed five years, ***provided that the requirements of (iA) above shall apply again to any extension that would take the cumulated periods of appointment beyond six years in total***), and upon terms that it shall terminate if the person ***presbyter*** appointed ceases to be qualified under ~~(ii) above~~ ***in the active work and stationed in the District***;

(iv) the duties to be performed by the deputy shall not include duties expressly required to be performed by the Chair by any provision of the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts:

(3) The Synod may appoint more than one person to hold office as a deputy at the same time, but each appointment shall comply with the requirements set out in clause (2):

~~(4) If the Chair of a District or a deputy appointed under the preceding clauses of this Standing Order is temporarily unable to fulfil all or any of the duties of the office because of accident, illness, absence from the country, sabbatical leave or other cause, ***the Deputy Chair duly appointed under this Standing Order shall substitute for and act as the Chair in all matters, including that of membership of the Conference. If more than one Deputy Chair has been appointed, one of them shall have been expressly designated in advance to substitute as a member of the Conference by the Synod or the district Policy Committee,*** or~~

(4) In cases of emergency and in the absence of a deputy previously appointed under this Standing Order, the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf, after consultation with the Synod or district Policy Committee and the Conference Office, may appoint a person, being a presbyter in the active work stationed in the District, with authority to fulfil such of those duties which the Chair or deputy is unable to perform as may be specified in the appointment. An appointment made by the President or Vice-President shall continue only until such time as the Synod or district Policy Committee is able to confirm their nomination of the appointment, or to appoint nominate another person under the provisions of this clause Standing Order, for appointment by the Conference by designation on the list of the stations in the District.

(5) A Chair ***The district Policy Committee*** may at any time appoint a person to assist him or her in such way as he or she may think fit ***the Chair and contribute to the senior leadership of the District. The appointment shall not be to fulfil the duties set out in clause (1) above, but to fulfil such duties as are specified in each case in a description of the role approved by the Synod, with such title as shall be determined by the Synod.***

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

[Suggested editorial note: This replaces a previous provision for the appointment by a District Chair of an assistant (sometimes to a purely clerical or administrative role, since such support can be provided without requiring a Standing Order to that effect), with a provision enabling Districts to appoint others to share in the senior leadership of the District, including, if a minister, from within or beyond those already stationed in the District.]

(6) Unless the assistance is purely clerical or administrative, ~~a~~Any appointment made under clause (5) above shall comply with the following requirements:

(i) the person appointed, ***if a minister***, shall reside ~~be in the active work stationed~~ in the District for the purposes of the stations, ***or, if a lay person***, shall be a member in the District, and the terms of appointment shall provide for it to terminate if this requirement ceases to be satisfied;

(ii) if the person appointed is to act publicly on behalf of the Chair, the appointment shall not take effect until it has been approved by the Synod or the district Policy Committee. ***the appointment may be full time or part time and shall be advertised if open to lay persons or to lay persons and ministers. If the appointment is appropriately open only to ministers, it may be advertised if any necessary permission has been given; otherwise, recruitment shall be through a stationing matching process. Following satisfactory recruitment (and, in the case of a minister, completion of any stationing matching process applying to a related circuit appointment), the district Policy Committee shall make the appointment, subject in the case of ministers to the Conference's confirmation of the appointment by designation on the list of the stations in the District;***

[Suggested editorial note: Permission of the Stationing Committee is usually required to advertise ministerial appointments, unless also open to lay persons. If the appointment is part time and involves a minister who is also being newly stationed to a part-time circuit appointment, the applicable stationing matching processes will still need to be followed for the circuit appointment. Other situations may involve the partial release of a minister from an existing circuit appointment where a new matching process will not be required but where the District should still liaise sensitively with the Circuit, and, in the case of a Deacon, additionally with the Warden of the Diaconal Order. In all cases, the processes for both the District appointment and any related new part-time or reconfigured Circuit appointment should be coordinated, and will culminate with the Conference's confirmation of the appointments through the adoption of the stations for the ensuing year.]

(iii) the duties to be performed by the person appointed shall not include duties expressly required to be performed by the Chair by any provision of the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts ***if the appointment shall be of a minister, the appointment shall be for a specified period not exceeding five years in the first instance***

(but capable of extension for a further period or periods following a reinvitation process that shall reflect the principles involved in a circuit reinvitation process), and upon terms that it shall terminate if the minister ceases to be in the active work and stationed in the District.

(7) Nothing in this Standing Order infringes upon the provisions in the Deed of Union for filling casual vacancies.

See cl. 42(c) of the Deed (Book II, Part 1).

*****RESOLUTIONS**

50/10. The Conference receives Section 4 of the Report.

50/11. [Special Resolution]

The Conference amends clause 14(2) of the Deed of Union as follows:

(v) the Chair or Chairs of each home District, *or, as prescribed by Standing Orders, a deputy for a Chair who is unable to attend;*

5. Connexional Leaders' Forum

5.1 The 2023 Conference adopted a proposal 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.'

5.2 The Day of Reflection was held in person at King's Park, Northampton, overnight, 4 to 5 March, and was facilitated by the Secretary of the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Revd Dr Heather Morris. Those invited were (and in attendance except where noted):

The President and Vice-President

The President and Vice-President designate

The Youth President

The Chair of the Council

The Chairs of the Mission (the deputy chair was there in the place of the chair who was on sabbatical) and Ministries Committee and the incoming Chair of the Resourcing Committee.

The District Chairs and designated/nominated Chairs from September 2024 (three chairs and one designate were not able to attend).

The Senior Managers of the Connexional Team (seven of whom attended)

The Senior Methodist Tutor at the Queen's Foundation and the Principal of Cliff College

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

The Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee
The Chair of the Stationing Committee and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice (both of whom sent apologies).

5.3 The meeting addressed a number of perceived underlying issues, including:

- The levels of trust that are necessary for meetings of connexional leaders to be effective;
- The question of representation and whether there is a tension between representation and effective conversation;
- Some models of conferring used elsewhere that might be employed by connexional leaders.
- The role of the Conference as a discerning body;
- The idea that connexional leadership is shared between District Chairs, the Senior Managers in the Team, members of the Connexional Council, and others;
- The recognition of power.

5.4 Different configurations of connexional leaders were explored, including:

- The District Chairs (or a representative number of Chairs) and the Warden of the Order;
- The Presidency (and past Presidents and Vice Presidents);
- The Senior Management Group of the Connexional Team (or just the Conference Secretariat);
- The Chair of the Council and its three main committees (plus the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee);
- The Connexional Council (or members of it);
- Combinations of some of the above.

The meeting noted its concern that the worthy objective of enabling reflection would also, particularly for members of the Connexional Council, become another demand on precious time.

5.5 Unsurprisingly, the gathering was unable in 24 hours to reach a common mind. It agreed that this is a period of transition and that it might become clearer what is needed as the Connexional Council and associated bodies are bedded in. It therefore agreed to recommend that for 2024-25, SO 230 should remain suspended and that there be two meetings:

1. A gathering of Chairs, the Warden and Senior Managers at the end of the Conference to consider the implication and implementation of the Conference's decisions, and

2. A retreat-type gathering of the Chairs and Connexional Council for reflection on the work of God.
- 5.6** The gathering was hugely grateful to Dr Morris for her careful and skillful facilitation and recognised the value of external leadership in whatever future structures are created.

***RESOLUTIONS

50/12. The Conference receives Section 5 of the Report.

50/13. The Conference suspends Standing Order 212 [as renumbered from SO 230 if resolution 50/5 above is adopted] with effect from the close of the Conference of 2024 until the close of the Conference of 2025.

6. Continuation of the OTTG

- 6.1** As noted above (paragraphs 1.9 and 1.10) the OTTG believes that there is still work to be done to bring to completion all that the Conference has asked in this area. It also believes that continuity has been helpful in making the progress that has been made over the last twelve months and therefore recommends that the membership of the OTTG for 2024-25 remains as:
Mrs Anne Bolton, the Revd Dr David Chapman, Mrs Susan Howdle, the Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler, Dr Daleep S Mukarji, the Revd Leslie M Newton, Mr David Pickles, the Revd Mark Rowland, Ms Sandie Smith, Mr Doug Godfrey-Swanney, the Revd Dr James N Tebbutt.

***RESOLUTIONS

50/14. The Conference receives Section 6 of the Report.

50/15. The Conference reappoints the members of the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group as set out in paragraph 6.1 to serve for a final year until the Conference of 2025 to complete the work noted in this Report as still requiring to be done.

A resolution to appoint the panel required by the new SO 291 will be brought on the Order Paper.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

APPENDIX A

PART 2 Bodies appointed by or relating directly to the Conference

*[This Part contains the Standing Orders relating to:
connexional bodies including the Connexional Council and panels appointed by the Conference;
connexional bodies reporting to the Conference;
entities which have a significant relationship with the Conference or Methodist Church as a whole;
Conference properties as defined in the Model Trusts.]*

Section 20 The Connexional Council

200 Connexional Council: constitution

[In this Standing Order 200, items in bold italics or strike-through indicate proposed changes to the text originally adopted by the Conference of 2023 for implementation from 1 September 2024.]

(1) (a) The Connexional Council constituted by clause 37A of the Deed of Union shall be appointed annually by the Conference and shall comprise at least 18 and no more than 22 members.

(b) In accordance with clause (1)(a) the membership of the council 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 ~~a~~ deputy chair of the Mission Committee;
- (v) the chair or ~~a~~ deputy chair of the Ministries Committee;
- (vi) the chair or ~~a~~ deputy chair of the Resourcing Committee;
- (vii) the chair or a deputy chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee;**
- (viii) up to *fourteen* other persons appointed in accordance with clause (2)(b) below.**

The meeting shall be quorate when twelve members are present.

(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

effectively with its business, other persons whose attendance is appropriate may also be invited to be present and speak but not to vote.

(e) A single named person shall be nominated annually by the relevant committee for appointment under each of heads (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) of sub-clause (1)(b) above. There shall be no provision for voting substitutes. In the temporary absence of the appointee the alternative eligible officer in each case may where appropriate be invited to be present and speak but not to vote.

(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 **provisions of clause (4)**, 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)(viii) 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 any curtailment of these appointments:

(b) The persons appointed under head (1)(viii) 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, **subject to the provisions of clause (4)**, 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) (a) A person shall cease to be a member of the council where any of the following conditions are satisfied:

(i) the person ceases to be a member of the Methodist Church

(ii) if appointed to the council under head (iii) or (viii) of sub-clause (1)(b) above, the person resigns from the council;

(iii) if appointed to the council under head (i), (ii), (iv), (v), (vi) or (vii), the person ceases to hold the relevant office;

(iv) if (A) in the written opinion given to the council of a registered medical practitioner treating a person appointed to the council under clause (1)(vii) above that person has

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

become mentally or physically incapable of acting as a trustee and may continue to be so for more than three months; or

(B) a person so appointed is absent from the meetings of the council for six months without the consent of the council and in either case the council has resolved that the relevant person shall cease to be a member of the council;

(iv) in the case of the chair or deputy chair of the council, the appointment has been terminated under the provisions of sub-clause (b) below.

(b) The appointment of the chair or deputy chair of the council may be terminated before the expiration of the period provided for by sub-clause (2)(a) above if the following conditions are satisfied:

(A) at least 25 persons who were members of the previous Conference and who include 10 persons falling within the group of persons specified in paragraph (c) below request the Secretary of the Conference to appoint a Termination Panel in accordance with paragraph (d) below to consider the termination of the appointment of the chair or the deputy chair on the ground specified in paragraph (e) below; and

(B) the Termination Panel decides that the relevant appointment should be terminated.

(c) The persons specified for the purposes of paragraph (b)(A) above are the following: the President, the Vice-President, the ex-President, the ex-Vice President, the President-designate, the Vice-President designate, the Secretary of the Conference, the Connexional Secretary, the District Chairs and the members of the council appointed under heads (iv) to (viii) of clause (1)(b).

(d) A Termination Panel shall consist of seven persons who were members of the Conference in at least one of the previous five years, of whom at least one shall be a deacon and at least three shall be lay people and shall include a past President or Vice-President who shall chair the panel.

(e) The ground on which the appointment of a Termination Panel may be requested is that the chair or the deputy chair (as the case may be) no longer commands the confidence of the council or (alternatively or additionally) of the Methodist Church in the exercise of the functions of chair or deputy chair of the council.

(f) A request for the appointment of a Termination Panel shall be made in writing, shall be signed by the persons by whom the request is made and shall state the reasons which are alleged to give rise to the loss of confidence forming the ground for such a request.

[Note: there are other situations where by virtue of general trust law a person becomes disqualified from being a trustee and therefore the appointment automatically comes to an end; these instances do not need to be provided for expressly here, but it is anticipated that an editorial note could offer guidance.]

(5) (a) Where a person ceases to be a member of the council under clause (4)(a), the council shall have authority to appoint to its membership with immediate effect until the end of the next Conference an eligible replacement for the relevant person but shall not be obliged to do so unless it is necessary to restore the membership of the council to 18.

(b) If the chair ceases to be a member of the council under clause 4(a) or the appointment of the chair is terminated under clause (4)(b) the deputy chair shall act as chair until the end of the next Conference. In that event, or if the deputy chair ceases to be a member of the council under clause (4)(a) or the appointment of the deputy chair is so terminated, the remaining members of the Council may, but need not, appoint a person from among their number to act as deputy chair until that time. If the appointments of both the chair and the deputy chair are terminated under clause 4(b) the remaining members of the council shall appoint persons from among their number to act as chair and deputy chair until that time.

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

(6) 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 electronically 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.

(7) Except where a Standing Order requires otherwise, any resolution of the council is adopted if approved by a simple majority of those present and voting. In the event of a tied vote, the person chairing the meeting shall have a second, casting vote.

(8) The council shall agree and publish a working document setting out the rules it has adopted from time to time relating to matters designed to regulate appropriately its conduct of its business.

201 Authority to appoint committees and other groups

In addition to such committees as are prescribed by Standing Orders, the Connexional Council shall have power, for the purposes of fulfilling its responsibilities under the Deed of Union, Model Trusts and Standing Orders, to appoint committees, working parties or

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

other such groups as necessary, in each case determining their powers and functions and clarifying where relevant the extent of any delegation.

202 Chair's executive authority

(1) The chair, or the deputy chair, of the Connexional Council may take executive action on behalf of the council where the power to do so has been specifically delegated by the Council.

(2) In urgent matters requiring response that occur between meetings of the council and when members of the council cannot be quickly consulted, the chair, or in the chair's absence the deputy chair, may act in the name of the council and shall as soon as practicable report such actions to the council. They shall in all cases work within any guidelines for speaking and acting on behalf of the Methodist Church approved by the Conference.

203 General powers and responsibilities as trustee body

(1) In the exercise of its exclusive responsibility for the general control and management of the connexional administration of the Methodist Church, as defined by clause 37B of the Deed of Union, and without prejudice to the generality of this responsibility as a trustee body, the Connexional Council shall have the powers and exercise the functions laid down in the following clauses of this Standing Order.

(2) The council shall have the direction and management of the members of the Connexional Team (as defined in Section 38 of Standing Orders) and be the employing body for those persons appointed to the Team under Standing Orders 380(3)(iii) and 384.

(3) It shall exercise oversight of the general work of the Connexional Team, including that of the Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary, in providing an effective and efficient service on behalf of the Conference.

(4) It shall exercise oversight of the committees which have been appointed by the council under Section 30 or otherwise to undertake the various areas of work for which the council is responsible.

(5) With regard to any connexional bodies, the council shall be responsible for

- (i) all matters relating to or arising out of the employment of persons by such bodies; and
- (ii) compliance with legal requirements as to the conduct of such bodies, including but not limited to those listed in clause 37C(b)(iii) of the Deed of Union.

(6) (a) Without derogating from such responsibilities laid by Standing Orders upon other bodies, the council shall be responsible for recommending to the Conference the adoption of Standing Orders or guidance, as appropriate, affecting Districts, Circuits and Local Churches, in relation to matters of employment or compliance with other applicable legal requirements

(b) If at any time legislation is enacted or judgment is delivered by a court of law in any territory within the Home Districts in consequence of which any Standing Orders or subsisting resolutions of the Conference are illegal, or no longer achieve their intended purpose, or fail to give effect to legal requirements, the council may, so far only as it judges necessary to meet any such defects within that territory before the next meeting of the Conference, revoke, amend, add to or suspend any such Standing Orders or resolutions or take other actions which would, but for this sub-clause, be contrary to their effect.

(c) The council shall not delegate any powers exercisable only by virtue of sub-clause (b) above.

(d) If the council takes any action authorised only by sub-clause (b) above it shall be reported to the next Conference and shall cease to have effect at the close of that Conference unless meanwhile ratified by it.

(7) The council shall be the managing trustees of such property as is assigned to be its responsibility under the Model Trusts.

(8) The council shall be the trustee body for all connexional funds and have responsibility for the preparation and approval of the consolidated accounts.

204 Responsibilities for finance and property

(1) The Connexional Council shall be responsible for:

- (i) presenting to the Conference the financial statements, for information; and
- (ii) presenting to the Conference the budget for expenditure upon the central services for which the council is responsible, for approval by the Conference.

(2) In order to assist the council in the exercise of its trustee functions, it shall receive and consider such advice and reports from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee as are required in Standing Order 222 and shall ensure that the Conference is informed about any significant concerns raised by the committee.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

(3) The council has responsibility throughout the home Districts, subject to the authority of the Conference as the governing body of the Methodist Church as set out in clause 18 of the Deed of Union, for all model trust property affairs and the building, legal and financial aspects of shared schemes under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969, and for that purpose is empowered to draw up its own regulations, subject to the approval of the Conference.

(4) For the purposes of the Methodist Church Act 1976 and the Model Trusts the council is the connexional organisation authorised by the Conference to act generally on behalf of the Conference in relation to property affairs and constituted to discharge the responsibilities of the Property Division.

(5) The council shall be responsible for the administration of a central scheme of Gift Aid recovery for the benefit of local church, circuit and other Methodist funds to which the Methodist Church Funds Act 1960 applies.

205 The Conference's Vision and Strategy

(1) To enable the Church to fulfil its calling, the council shall seek to implement the vision, strategies, decisions and directions set by the Conference.

(2) In partnership with others in giving spiritual leadership in the Church, the Connexional Council shall keep in constant review the life of the Church, so as to assist in making its work and witness more effective. It shall receive and consider any representations which the Chairs' Meeting may from time to time submit upon matters of connexional or district concern.

(3) In fulfilment of these responsibilities, the council shall help to ensure that the Conference's decisions and objectives are implemented in a timely, cohesive and considered manner, and shall bring such proposals and reports to the Conference as will assist the Conference to determine the future policy and objectives of the Conference.

206 Powers to act on behalf of the Conference

(1) Between the close of any Conference and the opening of the next succeeding Conference the Connexional Council is authorised to act on behalf of the Conference, provided that with the exception expressed in Standing Order 203(6)(b) *such* action is not contrary to the Deed of Union or Standing Orders or to any subsisting resolution of the Conference.

(2) The Conference may, by Standing Order or otherwise, delegate to the council such duties and powers (not being those which in any case are exclusively the council's responsibility as the trustee body) as it deems appropriate.

207 Reports

(1) The Connexional Council shall annually report to the Conference on the discharge of its responsibilities.

(2) The council shall report, in accordance with their respective requirements, to all relevant regulatory bodies (including, but not limited to, the Charity Commission).

Section 21 The Conference's Committees on Faith and Order and on Methodist Law and Polity

210 [330] Faith and Order Committee (1) The Conference shall appoint annually a Faith and Order Committee consisting of:

- (i) a senior member of the Connexional Team, representing the Secretary of the Conference;
- (ii) the secretary of the committee, who shall be appointed in accordance with Standing Order 385 or 386;
- (iii) up to twenty other members.

(2) The secretary of the committee shall be a member of the Connexional Team.

(3) The committee shall appoint a Liturgy and Worship Sub-Committee, chaired and convened by members of the committee but including persons who are not members of the committee in order to assist the committee in the completion of its tasks.

(4) The committee shall encourage reflection on the theological implications of all the work undertaken by the Connexional Team, shall seek to stimulate theological reflection and study throughout the Church, and shall disseminate the results of its work as widely and accessibly as possible.

(5) The committee shall consider and report upon all matters remitted to it by the Conference touching the faith or order of the Church, and bring to the notice of the Conference any matter of faith or order to which it should give attention.

(6) The committee shall in particular consider and report upon all matters so remitted which arise in connection with proposals and projects for inter-communion or organic union between the Methodist Church and other Christian churches at home or overseas.

(7) When the Church is involved with another denomination in a local or area scheme for uniting congregations or groups of congregations or for sharing a building or personnel the faith and order aspects of the scheme shall be scrutinised by the committee.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

(8) The committee shall consider and report upon all matters touching faith or order which concern the relations of the Conference with other Methodist and ecumenical bodies to which the Methodist Church relates.

(9) The committee is empowered to deal with any communication that may be received during any connexional year on the above-named and kindred subjects and to report to the succeeding Conference what, if any, action it has taken with reference thereto.

(10) The committee is authorised to make proposals to the Conference for the revision from time to time of the forms of service authorised by the Conference for use in the Methodist Church, and forms of worship intended for regular and general use in Methodist public worship shall be submitted to the Conference for approval after a period of experimentation on the recommendation of the committee.

(11) ***The committee shall be consulted on*** all matters directly concerning the faith or order of the Church ***that are to be*** presented to the Conference by other bodies, ***including the Connexional Council, or presented to the council for decision under the council's own powers, and shall in due course formally scrutinise the relevant reports.***

(12) The committee shall report annually to the ~~Conference~~ **Methodist Council** and, whenever its business requires, to the ~~Conference~~ **Connexional Council**.

211 [338] Law and Polity Committee (1) The ~~Methodist Council~~ **Conference** shall annually appoint a Committee on Methodist Law and Polity. The Secretary of the Conference shall be ex officio a member of the committee ***and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice shall be its convener.***

(2) The committee shall, as may be necessary, consider questions which concern the laws of the Connexion, together with other matters relating to Methodist legislation and administration which may require special attention.

(3) The committee shall advise the Conference ***and, where requested to do so and where no conflict with the committee's duties to the Conference arises, the Connexional Council*** as to the interpretation and application of its ***the Conference's*** laws and Standing Orders and, in case of necessity, suggest any alteration or modification or put forward other proposals for legislation.

(4) The committee is entrusted with the duty of examining and correlating the various elements of the constitution of the Church.

(5) The committee is charged in particular with the scrutiny of all new legislative and administrative proposals as to their coherence with existing usage and with other proposals which may at the same time be under consideration. ***The committee shall be consulted upon all matters directly concerning the law and polity of the Church that are to be presented to the Conference by other bodies, including the Connexional Council, or to the council for decision under the council's own powers.***

(6) With a view to the discharge of the committee's responsibilities during the periods of the Conference the committee shall annually appoint a Conference Sub-committee, which shall consist of the committee's secretary and other members of the next Conference, who need not be members of the committee.

(7) The committee shall report annually to the Conference and, whenever its business requires, to the Connexional Council.

Section 22 Nominations, Scrutiny and Risk Assurance

220 Nominations Committee

[This text, apart from the insertion in (2), is as approved by the Conference of 2023.]

(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, ***none of whom shall be members of the Connexional Council.*** 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 Standing Order 330(1).

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

(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 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 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.

(7) For the avoidance of doubt, the provisions of Standing Order 016 do not apply to nominations brought to the Conference or any other body by the committee.

221 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

(1) The Conference shall appoint a scrutiny group (“the JDS scrutiny group”) to provide strategic scrutiny of the implementation and embedding of the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy and reports to the Conference, and assurance that the work for which the Connexional Council is responsible to the Conference is executed in accordance with the principles of that strategy.

(2) The group shall comprise three persons with relevant experience, knowledge and skills relating to the implementation of complex issues and understanding of the workings of the Methodist Church, who shall be nominated annually to the Conference by the Nominations Committee.

(3) The group shall operate under terms of reference agreed from time to time by the council.

(4) The group shall report annually to the Conference.

222 [213A] Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

(1) The Conference shall each year appoint, upon the nomination of the ~~Methodist~~ **Connexional** Council, a connexional Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, having the constitution and responsibilities specified below, in order to assist the council in its functions under Standing Order 203 and 204.

(2) The committee shall consist of no fewer than three persons, including one appointed by the Conference to chair the committee, all of whom shall be members of the Methodist Church and all of whom shall normally serve for an initial term of four years and thereafter on an annual basis for a maximum of three years. No person shall be eligible to be a member of the committee who is a member of the Connexional Team, or the Strategy and Resources Committee, or the council.

(3) Any nomination for appointment which will result in a committee member serving for a continuous term exceeding seven years may only be made in exceptional circumstances and shall require a resolution of the council carried by a majority of 75% of those present and voting.

(4) The committee shall meet as frequently as need be, but in any event at least three times a year and also whenever the auditors appointed under Standing Order 012 require it to do so.

(5) When required to do so by the committee, ~~the connexional Treasurer and any~~ appropriate members of the Connexional Team shall also be in attendance at meetings.

(6) The responsibilities of the committee shall be:

- (i) to advise the council upon the appointment in accordance with Standing Order 012 of auditors for all the funds for which it is responsible, and (subject to that Standing Order) upon the nature and scope of the audit required;
- (ii) to review the **consolidated accounts** ~~unified statement of connexional finances~~ required by Standing Order 203(8);
- (iii) to review, in direct consultation with the auditors, their annual report;
- (iv) to review and monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of the financial and other internal control systems with regard to moneys and other assets for which the council is responsible;

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

- (v) to review and monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of risk management processes and assurance reporting arrangements;
- (vi) to submit an annual report to the council.

(7) In carrying out its functions the committee shall have reference to the terms of reference for the committee provided by the council from time to time.

Section 23 Safeguarding

[This text is essentially the current text, with only the necessary amendments e.g. as to appointment by the Conference, references to the Methodist Council, gender neutral language and re-numbering. It is anticipated that proposals for further substantive changes will be brought in future years.]

230 [232] Safeguarding Committee. (1) The Methodist Council ~~Conference~~ shall annually appoint a Safeguarding Committee consisting of:

- (i) a chair who shall be appointed for four years;
- (ii) up to 18 people who shall be appointed for six years who shall include:
 - (a) at least five persons who, by virtue of their relevant experience, will in the judgment of the council ~~council~~ **Conference** command wide respect.
 - (b) at least ten other persons with relevant experience.

(2) The safeguarding officer and such other persons as deemed appropriate by the committee shall be able to attend as advisers and shall not be voting members.

(3) For the purposes of this Standing Order:

- (i) a 'blemished disclosure' is a disclosure document, received from any body with official responsibility for providing information about the criminal records of individuals, which contains convictions, cautions or any other adverse entry;
- (ii) 'the safeguarding officer' means the person or one of the persons in the Connexional Team responsible for issues relating to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- (iii) a 'relevant party' means any person who is the subject of a decision, determination or recommendation made by the committee in the exercise of its functions under clause (4) below or in relation to whom a risk assessment has been carried out for purposes connected with the exercise of those functions, and references to "the Superintendent" and "the District Chair" or "the District Safeguarding Officer" in relation to a relevant party are references

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

to the Superintendent of the Circuit in which the relevant party is stationed or is a member and to the Chair or safeguarding officer of the District of which that Circuit forms part.

(4) The functions of the Safeguarding Committee shall be:

- (i) to give directions to and offer guidance on the steps to be taken by the relevant appointing body in respect of any blemished disclosure or any related matter or application following referral of that disclosure, matter or application under Standing Order 234 and a risk assessment under Standing Order 235;
- (ii) without prejudice to the provisions of Standing Orders 234 and 235, to make recommendations to the Secretary of the Conference as to the action to be taken in respect of any minister, local preacher or member of the Church who, pursuant to the Church's policy for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, signs a form in which ~~he or she declares~~ a conviction or caution in respect of an offence of the kind specified in sub-clause (i) or (ii) of Standing Order 010(2) **is declared**;
- (iii) to determine whether to authorise the making of an appointment or entry into a contract following a reference under the provisions of Standing Order 010(5);
- (iv) to act upon any referral to it by the safeguarding officer, following referral to that officer made under any of Standing Orders 713(7A), 725(6), 761(15) or 1102(9) or otherwise made as a result of the operation of any of the processes of the Church as determined by Standing Orders by carrying out such investigations and making such recommendations to the referring person or body as it thinks fit;
- (v) without prejudice to the provisions of Standing Orders 234 and 235, to make recommendations to the Secretary of the Conference, upon a reference by the safeguarding officer, as to the action to be taken in respect of any minister, local preacher or member of the Church who has been the subject of a complaints and discipline process (whether under Part 11 of these Standing Orders or a previous form of process) and in respect of whom a safeguarding risk remains or where new information requires a reassessment of the risk;
- (vi) without prejudice to paragraph (v) above, to recommend to the Secretary of the Conference that a direction under Standing Order 013C be given to any minister, local preacher or member of the Church and to review any such recommendation. Any such recommendation shall be in writing and may be made only on the ground that there is a safeguarding risk in respect of that person, and the reasons for which the committee believes that ground to exist shall be set out as part of the recommendation;
- (vii) to recommend that a contract should be entered into for the purposes of Standing Order 690(2)(c) and make recommendations as to the terms of such a contract;

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

- (viii) to make recommendations as to the terms of, or the continuance of, an existing contract under Standing Order 690(2)(c) following a review undertaken in accordance with Standing Order 690A;
- (ix) to approve annually a list of assessors who may be instructed to conduct a connexional risk assessment in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 235(5);
- (x) to be available for consultation by those members of the Connexional Team whose responsibilities include the Church's policy for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- (xi) to promote effective safeguarding practice and safe recruitment across the connexion;
- (xii) in response to developments in safeguarding practice and to concerns raised by the committee in fulfilling its functions, **to report and** make recommendations to the ~~Methodist Council~~ **Conference and, as required, to the Connexional Council to enable the council to fulfil its trustee responsibilities;**
- (xiii) to ensure the sharing of information and close working relationships with statutory authorities and other denominations;
- (xiv) to carry out such other functions as the Conference by Standing Order or otherwise may direct or request.

(5) The chair of the committee shall nominate such members of the committee (~~including him or herself~~ but not being fewer than three in number **and which may include the said chair**) as **the chair** thinks fit to be the panel to make any determination or recommendation in discharge of the committee's functions set out in sub-clauses (ii) to (ix) of clause (4) above. For the purpose of giving directions or guidance under clause (4)(i) above, the safeguarding officer shall convene a panel of not fewer than three members of the committee having regard to the expertise required in the particular case.

(6) (a) When discharging the functions specified under clause (4)(i) and (ii) to (ix) above, the panel nominated shall contain one person referred to in clause (1)(ii)(a) and two persons referred to in clause (1)(ii)(b).

(b) Requests for consultation by members of the Connexional Team under clause (4)(x) above shall be made to the chair in the first instance.

(7) (a) For the purpose of carrying out its functions under clause (4)(i) to (ix), a nominated panel (the members of which shall as far as possible act together) may make such inquiries, meet such persons and obtain such expert advice in each individual case as the panel thinks fit.

(b) The panel shall consider any risk assessment prepared in accordance with Standing Order 235 in connection with the exercise in the particular case of one of its functions

under clause (2)(i) to (iv). Copies of any such risk assessment or a summary of the assessment shall be provided to other persons or bodies in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 235.

(c) A panel may choose to hold any meeting by telephone if so agreed by all members of the panel.

(8) A panel appointed in accordance with clause (7)(a) above shall send a written notice to the relevant party, informing ~~him or her~~ **that person** of the direction, recommendation or determination given or made by the panel. A copy of the notice shall be sent to the District Chair, the District Safeguarding Officer and the Superintendent and also to the relevant party's line manager where the relevant party is an employee of a church court and to any group appointed under Standing Order 690(2)(a).

(9) The committee shall report to the next ensuing Conference each determination or recommendation made under clause (4)(ii) to (ix) above. Any such report shall be made to the Representative Session in closed session and shall be confined to the number of appeals under each category of case, the number of persons concerned who were lay and the number who were ordained, the number of appeals allowed and dismissed, the number of authorisations given and refused and the number of recommendations made and their nature in each case.

(10) In addition to any report under clause (9) above, the chair shall make a general report to the Conference in its Representative Session at least once every three years. This report shall deal with any questions of principle raised in the matters dealt with, but without reference to any personal details, and it shall be open to the Conference to debate those questions.

231 [233] Grounds of Appeal. (1) A relevant party, that party's District Chair or Superintendent or the safeguarding officer may appeal against a direction or determination under Standing Order 230(4)(i) or (iii) and the effect of the direction or determination shall be suspended pending the hearing of the appeal. The person appealing is hereafter referred to as the appellants.

(2) The grounds of appeal for the purpose of this Standing Order are:

- (i) that there was a material irregularity in how the matter was dealt with by the safeguarding panel or the risk assessor appointed under Standing Order 230(7)(b);
- (ii) that the panel or the risk assessor failed to take into account all relevant matters or took into account irrelevant ones;

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

(iii) that in the light of events occurring since the direction was given or the determination was made (as the case may be), or of evidence of which the appellant could not reasonably be expected to have been aware at the time, substantial doubt has been cast upon the correctness of the direction or determination.

(3) The appellant shall within fourteen days of receiving written notice of the direction or determination give notice of the appeal in writing to the chair of the Safeguarding Committee.

(4) The notice of appeal shall be accompanied by a written statement indicating on which of the grounds in clause (2) the appeal is brought and the specific nature of any error, omission or other matter relied on. The chair of the Safeguarding Committee shall pass it to a safeguarding officer, as defined in Standing Order 230(3)(ii), who has not been involved in the direction or determination against which the appeal is brought. The safeguarding officer shall act as the convener of the panel hearing the appeal.

232 [234] Appeal Process. (1) The convener shall arrange for the appeal to be heard by an appeal panel which shall include one person referred to in Standing Order 230(1)(ii) (b) and two persons referred to in Standing Order 240(1)(ii)(a), and one of the latter shall chair the appeal panel. No member of the appeal panel shall have been involved in giving or making the direction or determination which is the subject of the appeal.

(2) The appeal will be by way of report and there will be no rehearing or further evidence, except evidence admitted under Standing Order 231(2)(iii) above. Any such evidence not already supplied with the notice of appeal shall be provided by the appellant to the convener no later than 14 days before the date of the meeting and copies shall be provided by the convener and the members of the appeal panel no later than seven days before the date of the meeting.

(3) At the meeting of the appeal panel a member of the safeguarding panel which gave the direction or made the determination appealed against shall first present that panel's report.

(4) The appellant shall have the right to attend and put forward his or her ~~the~~ case on the basis of the grounds of appeal specified, and to be accompanied by a friend or the relevant party (if not the appellant), who shall also have the right to speak.

(5) Members of the appeal panel who wish to raise any matter not referred to in the report given under clause (2) above shall do so before the appellant leaves the meeting and both the presenting member of the panel and the appellant shall be given an opportunity to deal with it (for which purpose the meeting shall be adjourned if necessary); no fresh matter shall be raised after the appellant has left.

(6) The convener shall make the appellant aware of the importance of attending the meeting. If ~~he or she~~ **the appellant** then refuses or fails to attend, the panel must consider the reason for his or her absence and may adjourn for that purpose. The panel may then, if it thinks fit, hear the appeal and reach a decision in the absence of the appellant.

233 [235] Appeal Decision. (1) The panel shall decide whether to uphold or dismiss the appeal or refer the matter back to the Safeguarding Committee for further consideration or a further risk assessment. The decision of the appeal panel shall be reached solely on the basis of the documents relied upon by the original safeguarding panel or supplied in accordance with Standing Order 232(2), the submissions presented at the meeting and any other documents which both the person representing the original panel and the appellant agree the appeal panel may consider. The appeal panel shall give reasons for its decision and shall embody them in the document announcing the decision.

(2) The decision of the panel shall be communicated to the appellant (and the relevant party if not the appellant) in writing. If the appellant is the relevant party, a copy of the decision shall also be sent to the District Chair, district safeguarding officer and the Superintendent.

234 [236] Safeguarding Concerns and Procedures. (1) Every member of the Methodist Church has a responsibility to children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in the life of the Church to take all reasonable steps to protect them from the risk of harm.

(2) In order to discharge that responsibility the Church follows the procedures for dealing with safeguarding concerns which are set out in clauses (5) to (10) below and in the safeguarding policies ~~and practice guidance~~ from time to time adopted by the **Methodist Connexional** Council.

(3) A safeguarding concern exists where:

- (i) the words, actions or behaviour of any person involved in the life of the Church may cause or may have caused children, young people or vulnerable adults to be abused, harmed or neglected;
- (ii) subject as provided in Standing Order 010(2), a person involved in the life of the Church has been convicted of or has received a simple or conditional caution in respect of an offence referred to in sub-clause (b) of that Standing Order; or
- (iii) a member of the Methodist Church may be failing or may have failed to exercise ~~his or her~~ **the** responsibilities **for which the member is accountable** in respect of the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults in the Church context.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

(4) In relation to a safeguarding concern:

- (i) “the subject” means the person about whom the concern exists;
- (ii) “the relevant Circuit” means the Circuit in which the subject is stationed or is a member or with which, if the subject is not a minister or a member, ~~he or she~~ **the subject** has the closest connection;
- (iii) a “safeguarding officer” means the safeguarding officer as defined in Standing Order 230(3)(ii) or the District Safeguarding Officer of the District of which the relevant Circuit forms part;
- (iv) “the referring body” or “the referring person” means the body or person by whom the concern is referred to a safeguarding officer in accordance with clause (6) below.

(5) A member of the Church who becomes aware that a safeguarding concern exists must act on that concern in accordance with the safeguarding policies and practice guidance adopted by the council as currently in place.

(6) A body or person becoming aware of a safeguarding concern either in the context of a local church, circuit or district or in the exercising of a responsibility on behalf of the Church must refer that concern to a safeguarding officer.

(7) On receiving a referral under clause (6) above, the safeguarding officer in question must act in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 235 below and the safeguarding policies and practice guidance adopted by the council as currently in place.

(8) The referring body or person and the subject of the safeguarding concern shall be given an adequate opportunity to respond to any information or reports gathered or made in connection with that concern.

(9) Subject to clause (10) below, the existence of and the materials relating to any safeguarding concern shall be confidential and any member of the Methodist Church breaching this confidentiality may be the subject of a complaint under Part 11.

(10) Clause (9) above is without prejudice to the obligation of any person engaged in the investigation of a safeguarding concern to pass information to statutory agencies in accordance with guidance adopted by the council.

235 [237] Assessment of Risk. (1) In this Standing Order:

- (i) “blemished disclosure” has the meaning given by Standing Order 230(3)(i);
- (ii) “the subject” and a “safeguarding officer” have the meanings given by Standing Order 234(4); and
- (iii) “the District Safeguarding Officer” means the safeguarding officer of the District of which the relevant Circuit forms part.

(2) When a safeguarding concern is referred to a safeguarding officer under Standing Order 234(6), the officer will undertake an initial exploration into that concern in order to determine whether a connexional or district risk assessment should be undertaken.

(3) A connexional or district risk assessment may be undertaken in relation to any person about whom a safeguarding concern exists in the context of a local church, circuit or district or in the exercising of a responsibility on behalf of the Church in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order.

(4) A connexional safeguarding officer acting on behalf of the Safeguarding Committee may require a connexional risk assessment following a request from a District Safeguarding Officer or in any other case when:

- (i) a safeguarding concern exists about any person wanting to worship or continue to worship in a Methodist church;
- (ii) a person to whom Standing Order 690(1) applies wishes to worship or continue to worship in a Methodist church;
- (iii) a safeguarding concern exists about a person wishing to hold or continue to hold a role or responsibility to which Standing Order 010(3) applies;
- (iv) a request is made by a church court or body under Standing Order 010(5);
- (v) a blemished disclosure reveals a safeguarding concern about a person wanting to hold or continue to hold a role or responsibility to which Standing Order 010(3) applies;
- (vi) a referral is made to the committee under the provisions of any of Standing Orders 731(7A), 725(6) and 761(15);
- (vii) a referral is made to the committee under Standing Order 1102(9);
- (viii) a referral is made to the committee under Standing Order 690A in connection with the review of a contract;
- (ix) a statutory agency provides information which reveals a safeguarding concern or requests that a risk assessment be undertaken.

(5) A connexional risk assessment shall be undertaken by a suitably qualified assessor upon the instruction of a connexional safeguarding officer acting pursuant to clause (4) above and upon completion shall be provided to the Safeguarding Committee for use in the discharge of a function of the committee under Standing Order 230(4).

(6) When a connexional safeguarding officer determines that a connexional risk assessment is required, the officer shall consult with the referring person or body to determine the terms of reference for the risk assessment.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

(7) A district risk assessment may be undertaken:

- (i) before a contract under Standing Order 690(2)(c) is entered into;
- (ii) (in conjunction with a connexional safeguarding officer) where a change in the terms of such a contract is sought;
- (iii) where the District Safeguarding Officer is informed of a blemished disclosure;
- (iv) at the request of a connexional safeguarding officer made in accordance with the safeguarding policies and practice guidance adopted by the **Methodist Connexional** Council as currently in place.

(8) A district risk assessment shall be undertaken by a safeguarding officer or a person in relation to whom that officer exercises the power to delegate that responsibility.

(9) Any person who is the subject of a safeguarding concern will be expected to participate in any risk assessment process required by a safeguarding officer pursuant to clause (4) or clause (7) above.

(10) If the subject of a safeguarding concern declines to participate in such a risk assessment, the assessment may continue without such participation.

(11) The subject, the District Chair, the District Safeguarding Officer (if not conducting the assessment) and the Superintendent of the relevant Circuit shall be given the opportunity to speak to the risk assessor.

(12) The risk assessor shall speak to such other person or persons as ~~he or she~~ **the assessor** reasonably considers necessary.

(13) The responsible officer as defined by Standing Order 013(2)(ii) shall be responsible for ensuring pastoral support is offered to the subject, such persons connected with the subject as the officer thinks fit and any person referring the safeguarding concern.

(14) Upon completion of the risk assessment, the risk assessor shall send a copy of the report to the subject. The subject shall have 14 days to provide any comments on the report before it is considered by the Safeguarding Committee in accordance with Standing Order 230(4) or by the District Safeguarding Officer for the purpose of giving directions or guidance or making recommendations.

(15) A copy of the risk assessment together with a copy of any comments provided by the subject shall be sent to the District Safeguarding Officer (in the case of a connexional risk assessment) and to the line manager of a subject who is employed by a church court (in any case). A summary of the risk assessment shall be sent to the District Chair and Superintendent referred to in clause (11) above and, where relevant, to any group appointed under Standing **Order** 690(2)(a) in relation to the subject. The District

Safeguarding Officer may provide copies of the risk assessment or the summary to other persons in accordance with the safeguarding policies and practice guidance adopted by the council as currently in place.

(16) When a blemished disclosure or any related matter or application is referred to a safeguarding officer, the officer may:

- (i) give directions to and offer guidance on the steps to be taken by any relevant appointing body in respect of that disclosure, matter or application; or
- (ii) refer that disclosure, matter or application to the Safeguarding Committee to give directions to and offer guidance on the steps to be taken by that appointing body following a connexional risk assessment.

(17) Instead of or prior to commissioning or carrying out a risk assessment, a safeguarding officer may take such other reasonable steps for the protection of children, young people or vulnerable adults as are consistent with the safeguarding policies and practice guidance adopted by the council as currently in place.

(18) In relation to a person employed under a contract of employment, this Standing Order shall apply only so far as consistent with the terms of that contract and employment legislation.

Section 24 Methodist Children and Youth Assembly

[In section 1 of the Methodist Council report part 2 (report 22) of the Agenda a substantially re-drafted Standing Order is presented for adoption. If adopted, the changes that would otherwise have been proposed in this Oversight and Trusteeship report would not require to be dealt with, and therefore they are not printed here. If the Conference is not minded to adopt the proposed re-draft, the Law and Polity Conference Sub-committee will present the changes required to give effect to the Oversight and Trusteeship, and Composition of the Conference, reports.]

Section 25 Committees for the Authorisation of Ordained Vocations

250 [320] Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation. (1) There shall be a connexional Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation appointed annually by the Conference and consisting of:

- (i) two Team members responsible for initial presbyteral and diaconal training and candidates, and
- (ii) not more than eighty other persons nominated by the Methodist Council **Ministries Committee** of whom not more than twelve shall be involved in initial ministerial training.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

In addition the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall have the right to attend meetings of the committee but shall have no vote.

(2) If it becomes apparent that the number of members of the committee appointed under head (ii) of clause (1) above who are able to attend any of its meetings in a particular year will be insufficient for the proper conduct of the committee's business, the council **Ministries Committee** shall co-opt as necessary further members who have appropriate prior experience. Such co-opted members will be members of the committee for the year of co-option only. Any such co-options shall be reported to the subsequent Conference.

(3) **The committee's primary responsibilities are:** (i) ~~to The committee shall recommend to the Conference Diaconal Committee the names of those to be accepted as candidates for the diaconate;~~

(ii) ~~to The committee shall recommend to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference the names of those to be accepted as candidates for the presbyterate.~~

(4) It shall discharge those responsibilities in accordance with the provisions laid down in section 71 of Standing Orders, and carry out such other functions as the Conference, by Standing Order or otherwise, requires it to fulfil.

251 [326A] Appeals The Methodist Council **Ministries Committee** shall appoint an Appeals Panel consisting of persons who are not members of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation to deal with appeals under Standing Order 716 or 722(3). The council **Ministries Committee** shall also appoint a convener of Appeals Committees.

252 [321] Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee. (1) The Methodist Council **Conference** shall annually appoint a connexional Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee consisting of:

- (i) no more than two representatives of oversight committees of training institutions;
- (ii) three persons each of whom has recent and relevant experience of discerning vocation for candidates; and
- (iii) three persons each of whom is a current or recent member of a district Probationers Committee;
- (iv) one district Chair;
- (v) one recent ordinand in their third, fourth or fifth year of ministry;
- (vi) two of the Team members responsible for presbyteral candidates, initial presbyteral training and presbyteral probationers;

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

- (vii) further deacons where necessary to ensure that the committee includes at least two;
- (viii) further lay people where necessary to ensure that the committee includes at least two;
- (ix) further presbyters where necessary to ensure that the committee includes at least two;
- (x) the Warden or deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- (xi) up to five further members, selected in collaboration with the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee, to ensure that leadership is offered regarding the concerns of justice, dignity and solidarity, having regard to the leadership also offered by other members of the committee;
- (xii) a further member to be the safeguarding adviser to the committee if no other member of the committee is able to act as the safeguarding adviser.

For the purposes of this sub-clause a person is a recent member of a committee or ordinand during the three years after membership ceased or after ordination (as the case may require).

(2) The persons under heads (i) and (ii) of clause (1) above shall be nominated by the committees concerned by agreement among themselves as necessary.

(3) The committee shall be no smaller than 14 members and no larger than 20 members.

(4) The Secretary of the Stationing Advisory Committee shall be entitled to attend and speak at meetings as consultant to the committee when the business requires it.

(5) (a) The term of appointment will usually be six years, subject to agreement with the person concerned, but the person appointed under head (v) of clause (1) above shall be appointed for a term of three years only.

(b) A member of the committee appointed under heads (i), (ii), (v) to (viii) of clause (1) above is not required to vacate office if no longer eligible for initial appointment in the category in which that member was appointed or if an appointment in that category is no longer required.

(c) A member of the committee who has already served a six year term may only be appointed again if the nomination is supported by a minuted recommendation from the committee.

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

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

(7) All members of the committee must have undertaken foundation level safeguarding training before their appointment takes effect. The committee must ensure that its members receive up-to-date training thereafter.

(8) In nominating members to the ~~Council~~ **Conference** for appointment the **Ministries** ~~Committee~~ must seek to ensure that the committee includes members from all of the stationing regions and that a balance of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and order of ministry is maintained.

(9) When the business so requires, a Welsh-speaking member of Wales Synod Cymru shall attend meetings as a consultant.

(10) Reporting to the Ministries Committee as provided in Standing Order 311 the committee shall be responsible for the recruitment of candidates for ordained ministry, the administration of the regulations for candidates, and decisions about training requirements. It shall have oversight of the whole period of a person's training from acceptance as a candidate by the Conference until reception into Full Connexion and ordination, and in particular shall perform the functions prescribed in Section 72.

(11) The committee shall appoint one or more student oversight committees for each training institution.

(12) (a) The committee shall co-ordinate and guide the work of the oversight tutors of the training institutions in so far as it relates to the oversight of student presbyters and deacons. The oversight tutors shall ensure that reports and other services for the connexional and local committees are provided as required.

(b) For every training institution, whether under the authority of the Conference or otherwise, the Conference shall appoint, upon the nomination of the ~~Methodist Council~~ **Ministries Committee**, one or more oversight tutors to assist the student and connexional oversight committees in performing the functions specified in Standing Orders. Where more than one oversight tutor is appointed for the same institution one shall be identified as having oversight responsibility.

(c) In relation to institutions within sub-clause (b) above any reference in these Standing Orders to the principal shall, unless this clause is expressly excluded or the context otherwise requires, be construed as a reference to the relevant Methodist oversight tutor.

Section 26 Stationing

260 [322] Stationing Committee (1) There shall be a connexional Stationing Committee appointed annually by the Conference, ~~on the nomination of the Methodist Council~~, which shall consist of:

- (i) a lay chair, being the person for the time being appointed to that office in accordance with clause (1A) below;
- (ii) the Secretary of the Conference who shall act as convener, and the assistant secretary of the Conference;
- (iii) seven district Chairs, one of whom shall be the district Chair appointed under Standing Order 286 to be a member of the Forces Board, and seven district Lay Stationing Representatives appointed with a view to the representation of suitable regional groupings of Districts;
- (iv) no more than two Team members with responsibility for presbyteral and diaconal selection and training and for the stationing of probationers;
- (v) the chair of the Stationing Advisory Committee;
- (vi) the Warden or deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- (vii) the chair and a lay member of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-committee;
- (viii) the chair of the group responsible on behalf of the Stationing Committee for overseeing the matching of particular presbyters to appointments;
- (ix) the convener of the Stationing Action Group appointed in accordance with clause (8) below.

(2) A lay person shall be appointed by the Conference as chair of the committee. ~~Subject to Standing Order 316, he or she~~ **The chair** shall be appointed **for a period not exceeding six years** in the first instance for six years and may be appointed for further periods of one or more years thereafter. Any nomination for appointment beyond six years shall require a resolution of the ~~Methodist Council~~ **Ministries Committee** carried by a majority of 75% of those present and voting and reported, with a reasoned statement, to the Conference. No person shall hold office as chair for more than nine years consecutively.

(3) The chair of the committee and the Secretary and assistant secretary of the Conference shall attend the committee only in their official character as specially charged with the general interests of the whole Church and shall not be eligible for appointment in any other capacity.

(4) The committee shall, as prescribed in Section 78, recommend to the Conference the stations for the ensuing year of presbyters, deacons and probationers to the several Districts and Circuits, including presbyters and deacons in chaplaincies

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

and appointments not within the control of the Church. Reporting to the Ministries Committee as provided in Standing Order 311 it shall advise on stationing policy, and in particular shall assess priorities for the appointments to be made by the Conference of the next connexional year and, after appropriate consultation, for the appointment of additional presbyters and deacons in the Circuits and Districts. It shall obtain and consider information and opinions offered by district Policy Committees and the Connexional Team. It shall keep under review the stationing code of practice and shall determine the number of stations available to ministers of other Conferences and Churches not already serving the Church.

(5) Discussion in the committee about particular ministers and appointments shall be absolutely confidential.

(6) The committee shall appoint a Diaconal Stationing Sub-committee to advise the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order upon the recommendations to be made for diaconal stationing under Standing Order 783 and related matters.

(7) The committee shall appoint an Action Group to deal with stationing difficulties and emergencies as they arise.

(8) The committee shall have power to appoint other sub-committees to carry out aspects of its work, but all actions of such sub-committees shall be subject to the approval of the committee.

261 [323] Stationing Advisory Committee. (1) The Methodist Council **Stationing Committee** shall annually appoint a Stationing Advisory Committee.

(2) The committee shall:

- (i) explore the opportunities for ministry in various areas of society and community life and in ecumenical agencies and, where appropriate, encourage presbyters and deacons with suitable qualifications to consider applying for such appointments;
- (ii) receive, co-ordinate and interpret reports of such ministries;
- (iii) consult with the members of the Connexional Team who have responsibilities for work done by presbyters and deacons in chaplaincies and appointments not within the control of the Church;
- (iv) consider applications from presbyters and deacons in Full Connexion and probationers for full-time service in chaplaincies and appointments not within the control of the Church, and from employing authorities;
- (v) report on such applications and opportunities with recommendations to the Stationing Committee to be presented, if they are approved, to the Conference as an integral part of the stations;

- (vi) advise on the movements of presbyters and deacons within such appointments and between them and Circuits in the light of the initial and subsequent reviews of deployment prescribed by Standing Order 781;
- (vii) perform the functions prescribed by Standing Order 802 in relation to part-time appointments;
- (viii) perform the functions prescribed by Standing Orders 790(3) and 793(1) in relation to applications to become a supernumerary or to return to the active work;
- (ix) advise the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf **of the President** on recommendations which would involve a presbyter's or deacon's moving during the course of the connexional year;
- (x) perform such other functions as may be required from time to time by Standing Orders.

(3) If any application or potential application under clause (2)(i) or (iv) above involves the possibility of the curtailment of a current period of invitation or appointment or deemed invitation or appointment of a person in a circuit appointment the committee shall consult the circuit Invitation Committee and take its views into account.

Section 27 Educational bodies

270 [This enacts the provision for the Inspiring Lives Education Trust, as reported to the Conference of 2023.] **Inspiring Lives Education Trust**

The Methodist Conference shall exercise any powers it may have in accordance with the Articles of The Inspiring Lives Education Trust to nominate and remove any member or members of the board of that body.

271 [243A] [The Epworth Education Trust was formed following the merger of the Wesley Trust and the Acorn Trust in November 2020. The Wesley Trust was previously dealt with in Standing Order 243.] **The Epworth Education Trust.**

The Methodist Conference shall exercise its powers contained in the articles of the Epworth Education Trust to appoint up to twelve directors nominated by the members of the company **any powers it may have in accordance with the Articles of The Epworth Education Trust to nominate and remove any member or members of the board of that body.**

272 [342] **State Funded Schools (including academies, free schools and children's centres where appropriate).** (1) (a) The Methodist **Connexional** Council **through the Ministries Committee** is responsible for the oversight of Methodist state funded schools and for Methodist responsibilities in the oversight of state funded schools which are ecumenical projects with other denominations.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

(b) The Methodist council shall also be responsible for matters within the state funded schools relating to standards, ethos and school improvement.

(2) The Connexional Team shall, as may be necessary, consider government legislation which affects the governance of these schools and any directive or proposal by a local authority or other body or denomination which may affect individual schools.

(3) The Team shall give information and counsel to the Policy Committee of each District in which schools are situated to enable it to carry out its responsibilities to watch over the interest of those schools.

(4) Any proposal to alter the category or status of a Methodist or ecumenical school must be reported by the governors to the trustees, the district Policy Committee and the Connexional Team member with responsibility for these schools.

(5) No Methodist state funded school may be discontinued at the instance of its governors or trustees until permission has been given by the Methodist Council. The governors and trustees shall submit any recommendation for discontinuance to the district Policy Committee for its advice before seeking the permission of the council or taking any steps towards closure.

(6) Any proposal to promote a Methodist state funded school or to join in promoting an ecumenical school shall be reported by the Superintendent of the Circuit concerned to the district Policy Committee, the Connexional Team member with responsibility for these schools and the connexional Property Secretary.

[As to the Property Secretary see S.O. 006(2A).]

(7) No arrangements for new leases of Methodist property to the Local Education Authority or to the governors of an ecumenical state funded school for the purpose of a school shall be made and no arrangements for the renewal of such leases shall be made until after consultation with the Connexional Team member with responsibility for these schools and the connexional Property Secretary.

[As to the Property Secretary see S.O. 006(2A).]

(8) Trustees of Methodist property used as a state funded school shall ensure that the premises are adequately insured and, in the case of controlled schools, require that the trustees' interest in the property is safeguarded in the insurance policy taken out on the premises by a local education authority.

(9) Every Instrument of Government for a Methodist or ecumenical school shall include a place as ex-officio Foundation Governor for the Circuit Superintendent or ~~his or her~~ **the** nominee **of the said Superintendent**, and shall require to be approved by the Connexional Team member responsible for these schools.

(10) No proposal for a Methodist or ecumenical school shall receive approval unless the school's admissions policy complies with the Statutory Admissions Code and gives priority to children living nearest the school. All admissions policies for Methodist or ecumenical state funded schools require the approval of the Connexional Team member responsible for these schools.

273 [244 and 343] Independent Schools. (1) The Conference shall exercise its powers contained in the articles of Methodist Independent Schools Trust (a company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales) ("the Company"), being the incorporated governing body of schools held on the trusts of The Methodist Independent Education Trust Deed of 1903 (as amended), to appoint the trustees of the Company, in accordance with and subject to the Company's articles, as follows:

- (i) the chair of the Company;
- (ii) three persons nominated by the Company on the recommendation of the Chairs of Governors of the schools held on the trusts of The Methodist Independent Education Trust Deed of 1903 (as amended);
- (iii) up to five persons nominated by the **Methodist Connexional** Council; and
- (iv) up to five other persons nominated by the Company.

(2) The Company shall bring **the** nominations to the Conference for the appointments to be made under clause (1) above.

(3) The Company shall appoint one of its members to be the deputy chair of the Company in accordance with its articles.

(4) **The following clauses of this Standing Order relate** ~~This Standing Order relates to all the schools subject to the Methodist Independent Education Trust Deed of 1903.~~

(5) Connexional policy in relation to those schools shall be within the purview of the **Methodist Connexional** Council.

(6) In recommending to the Conference the appointment of presbyters as chaplains to such schools the Stationing Committee shall take into consideration any invitations duly

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

given and accepted. For that purpose Standing Orders 543 to 545 shall apply with the substitution of references to the school for those to the Circuit and with the following further adaptations:

- (i) The functions of the Circuit Meeting and its invitation committee shall be exercised by the head teacher or by the Governing Body or the Methodist Independent Schools Trust, as may be appropriate, having regard in particular to responsibility for making appointments to the teaching staff. Any doubt as to the appropriate person or body shall be resolved by the **Team member Connexional-Secretary** responsible for secondary education affairs. Whoever of the above exercises such functions shall at each stage inform and consult the other and the **Connexional-Secretary relevant Team member**.
- (ii) In clause (1)(a)(i) of Standing Order 544 delete 'after consulting the church stewards of the Local Churches in which the person concerned exercises pastoral responsibility'.
- (iii) For clause (1) of Standing Order 545 substitute '(1) No presbyter shall be appointed chaplain to the same school for more than five successive years except upon an invitation given in accordance with clause (2) or (3) of this Standing Order.'

(7) Every such chaplain shall act in respect of ministerial duties under the direction of the Chair of the District.

274 [343A] Methodist Schools Committee. The **Methodist Connexional** Council shall annually appoint the Methodist Schools Committee which shall:

- (i) encourage collaboration and the sharing of resources between all the bodies responsible for undertaking the council's responsibilities under Standing Orders 272 and 273;
- (ii) encourage the development of all the above bodies' and Methodist schools' understanding of the Methodist ethos;
- (iii) report annually to the Methodist Conference, through the **Methodist Council**, on behalf of all the bodies responsible for undertaking the council's responsibilities in respect of schools.

275 [344] Institutions in the Higher Education Sector. (1) This Standing Order applies to the appointment of a presbyter as:

- (i) the chaplain to Southlands College; or
- (ii) the Westminster chaplain, Oxford Brookes University.

(2) In recommending to the Conference the appointment of such a presbyter the Stationing Committee shall take into consideration any invitations duly given

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

and accepted. The invitation and re-invitation process shall follow, as closely as circumstances allow, the equivalent provision in Standing Orders and Guidance approved by the Conference as to circuit appointments. The functions which, in the case of a circuit appointment, would be performed by the circuit stewards, Circuit Meeting or invitation committee shall be performed:

- (i) as to the Southlands chaplain, by the Methodist members of the Southlands Liaison Group; and
- (ii) as to the Westminster chaplain, by the directors of Westminster College Oxford Trust Limited, acting in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Oxford Brookes University. In either instance the persons so acting shall appoint one or two of their number to fulfil the functions performed by the circuit stewards in such a case.

(3) Those responsible for the process shall act in consultation with the relevant member of the Connexional Team.

(4) The initial invitation to a presbyter shall be for a period of five years, no annual invitation being necessary during that period.

(5) In the fifth year the invitation may be extended for a specified number of years not exceeding five, and in the final year of this extension, and of any subsequent agreed extension, shall be open to further extension, on each occasion for a specified number of years not exceeding five.

(6) No presbyter shall be appointed chaplain under this Standing Order for more than five successive years except upon an invitation given in accordance with clause (5) above.

(7) Standing Order 544 shall apply to appointments made under clause (2) above, with the following adaptations:

- (i) for references to the circuit Invitation Committee substitute as to the Southlands College chaplain: the Methodist members of the Southlands Liaison group; as to the Westminster chaplain: the directors of Westminster College Oxford Trust Limited (acting in consultation, as in clause (2)(ii));
- (ii) in clause (1)(a)(i) of Standing Order 544 delete 'after consulting the church stewards of the Local Churches in which the person concerned exercises pastoral responsibility'.

(8) Each such chaplain shall act in respect of ministerial duties under the direction of the Chair of the District.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

Section 28 Conference Properties and Other Bodies

280 [220] The New Room, Bristol. (1) The Conference-**Connexional Council** shall, **in exercising its powers of appointment in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2(1)(dA) of the Model Trusts**, annually appoint managing trustees **as provided below** for **the Conference Property at** John Wesley's Chapel (the New Room), and 4 Charles Street (Charles Wesley's house) and 5 Charles Street, Bristol.

(2) The trustees shall be:

- (i) the Secretary of the Conference;
- (ii) the Chair of the Bristol District;
- (iii) the Superintendent of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit;
- (iv) the warden of the New Room;
- (v) not more than twenty other persons.

(3) The trustees shall appoint a chair, a secretary and a treasurer from among their own number, **with the agreement of the council.**

281 [223] Westminster Central Hall. (1) The **Connexional Council** Conference shall, **in exercising its powers of appointment in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2(1)(dA) of the Model Trusts**, annually appoint, **as provided below**, the managing trustees of Westminster Central Hall, **as a Conference Property.**

(2) The trustees shall be one of the Chairs of the London District, the Superintendent of the Westminster Circuit and not more than 22 other persons.

(3) The trustees shall appoint a secretary and a treasurer from among their own number.

(4) The chair of the trustees shall be **appointed by the council, upon the nomination of the Nominations Committee** the Chair of the London District appointed as a trustee, ~~unless the Conference appoints another person upon the nomination of the trustees and with the concurrence of the persons who will be the Chairs of the London District in the relevant connexional year.~~

282 [240] Action for Children. The Conference shall exercise any powers it may have under the constitution of Action for Children to appoint and remove any member or members of the board of that body. ~~Clauses (2), (4) and (5) of Standing Order 203 and Standing Order 206 shall apply to nominations for any such appointments. The names of members of the board appointed otherwise than by the Conference shall be reported to the Conference each year.~~

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

283 [241] **Methodist Homes.** The Conference shall exercise its powers of nominating any member of the board of Methodist Homes in accordance with the constitution of that body as amended from time to time. ~~The provisions of Standing Order 206 shall apply to the proposal of any such name as if it were a Conference appointment.~~

284 [242] **Methodist Women in Britain.** (1) There shall be a body known as Methodist Women in Britain which shall encourage and support activities primarily but not exclusively by and among women which are within the purposes of the Methodist Church, subject to any Standing Orders applying to such activities.

(2) Without limiting the generality of clause (1) above the activities of Methodist Women in Britain shall include the furtherance of fellowship and training and of mission at home and overseas.

~~(3) Methodist Women in Britain may report to the Conference through the Methodist Council.~~

(3) There shall be a president of Methodist Women in Britain, chosen biennially by consultation among district representatives of Methodist Women in Britain during the year next but one before the year of taking office. The president shall hold office as such for two connexional years and during the year before taking that office and also the year after leaving it is the vice-president.

(4) Methodist Women in Britain shall act on behalf of the women of the Church as the British unit of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women and through the Methodist Council **Mission Committee** shall nominate to the Conference representatives to the assemblies of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women.

285 [245] **Methodist Relief and Development Fund ("All We Can").** The trustees of the fund shall be appointed by the Methodist **Connexional** Council, and shall include at least one member of the council. The working relationship between the fund and the Connexional Team shall be set out in a Memorandum of Understanding.

286 [1007] **The Forces**

[In section O of the Methodist Council report part 2 (Report 22) of the Agenda a substantially re-drafted Standing Order is presented for adoption. It incorporates (at (1) and (1B)(vi) and in its cross-references) the changes that would otherwise have been proposed in this Oversight and Trusteeship report. If the Conference is not minded to adopt the proposed re-draft, the Law and Polity Conference Sub-committee will present whatever changes are nevertheless still required in relation to the clauses and cross-references mentioned above, in line with this Oversight and Trusteeship report.]

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

Section 29 Connexional Panels and Connexional Leadership Meetings

290 [231] *[This Standing Order has been left unamended for the time being this year. It is anticipated that it will be reviewed in the light of any amendments or additions brought in subsequent years as to eg Safeguarding and Part 11 of Standing Orders.]*

Connexional Panel for Discipline, Pastoral and Appeal Committees (1) The Conference shall annually appoint a Panel of persons from which members may from time to time be chosen to serve on:

- (i) connexional Discipline Committees convened under Standing Order 1131 or 1141, connexional Pastoral Committees convened under Standing Order 013 or 042 and connexional Pastoral Committees of Appeal convened under Standing Order 056 and
- (ii) connexional Appeal Committees convened under Standing Order 1141, 033 or 042(4).

(2) There shall be two conveners of the Panel, responsible respectively for each of the heads specified in clause (1) above, together with such number of deputy conveners as may be appropriate. All these persons shall be appointed from among the members of the Panel by the Conference or, if a casual vacancy occurs or those appointed are disqualified or, by reason of the number of cases to be dealt with, more require to be appointed, by the President after consultation with the Vice-President.

(3) The Panel shall include an appropriate number of persons selected for their qualifications or experience to chair Discipline and Appeal Committees and identified as such in the resolution of appointment.

(4) A deputy appointed under this Standing Order may exercise any power, fulfil any duty or function, and occupy any position conferred on the relevant convener or officer by any Standing Order.

291 Connexional Panel for Review Groups

The Conference shall annually appoint a panel of appropriately qualified and experienced persons from which members may from time to time be chosen to serve on any group (whether referred to as a review group or otherwise) which is required by any Standing Order to be established for the purpose of considering and, as the case may be, making recommendations or decisions in relation to the matters specified in the relevant Standing Order. The Conference shall further appoint such number of conveners as are thought to be required to deal with the number of cases which are likely to arise.

292 [32A4] Connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry. (1) The Conference shall appoint annually a panel of persons, to be known as the connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry, upon the nomination of the Ministries Committee made in accordance with the terms of reference for the panel adopted from time to time, **after consultation with the Faith and Order Committee, by the Ministries Committee** the Methodist Council.

(2) The panel shall have the responsibilities set out in such terms of reference, which shall include the arrangements, terms and conditions for the grant of authorisation of persons as practitioners in the field of deliverance ministry.

293 [*This Standing Order has been included, with the necessary consequential amendments, but a resolution is brought to suspend its operation for a further period.*]

The Connexional Leaders' Forum. [230]

(1) Leaders appointed by the Conference to exercise oversight in particular bodies or spheres of responsibility shall work together collegially in the oversight of the whole Church. The leaders listed in (2) below shall meet together as often as practicable to watch over one another in love in order to support each person in the exercise of his or her particular responsibilities, to engage in prayerful theological reflection, to share insights and develop vision, and to confer about how the vision and policies adopted by the Conference might be implemented in the Church.

(2) The Connexional Leaders' Forum shall consist of:

- (i) the Secretary of the Conference;
- (iA) the assistant secretary of the Conference;
- (ii) The President, Vice-President, ex-President, ex-Vice-President, President-Designate and Vice-President-Designate of the Conference;
- (iii) the District Chairs;
- (iv) the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- (v) the Connexional *Secretaryies* as defined in Standing Order 383;
- (vAvi) the members of the senior management group as defined in Standing Order 383 not otherwise forming part of the Connexional Leaders' Forum under this clause;
- (vii) the chair of the ~~Methodist~~ **Connexional** Council;
- ~~(vii) the chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee;~~
- (viii) the chair of the Ministries Committee**
- (ix) the chair of the Mission Committee**
- (x) the chair of the Resourcing Committee**
- ~~(ix)~~ **(xi)** the Youth President.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

(3) Other persons appointed by the Conference to fulfil connexional duties shall be invited to form part of the Forum on particular occasions, as appropriate.

294 [230A] Chairs' Meeting. There shall be a meeting of the Chairs of the home Districts not less than three times a year for the discussion of stationing issues and other matters of mutual concern, and reflection upon the work of God in the Districts and Connexion **and consideration of whether there any matters that the meeting believes to be necessary or appropriate to bring to the Conference's or Connexional Council's attention.** The expenses of these meetings shall be pooled and charged to the District Expenses Funds of the Districts, assisted by a grant from the Methodist Church Fund.

PART 3 COUNCIL-APPOINTED COMMITTEES AND AREAS OF WORK

Section 30 The main Council Committees: general provisions

300 The Main Council Committees: appointment (1) This Standing Order applies to the appointment of the following committees:

- the Ministries Committee
- the Mission Committee
- the Resourcing Committee

referred to here and elsewhere as 'the main council committees'.

(2) The Connexional Council shall appoint the main council committees, to which the following clauses shall apply.

(3) Each such committee shall have a chair and a deputy chair (or more than one such deputy, if so approved by the council), all being appointed by the council.

(4) The council shall work in consultation with the Nominations Committee, in accordance with that committee's responsibilities under Standing Order 220, to make the appointments under clauses (2) and (3) above. For the avoidance of doubt, the provisions of Standing Order 016 do not apply to nominations brought to the council by the committee.

(5) All persons appointed to the main council committees shall initially be appointed for a period of three years and may be reappointed for a further period of no more than three years. The council may only extend the appointment for a further period beyond the initial reappointment if it is satisfied that there is good reason to do so in the light of a statement by the Nominations Committee as to the exceptional nature of the circumstances which have led the committee to make the further nomination.

(6) Each committee may invite such other observers or consultants, from within and beyond the Connexional Team, as are appropriate.

301 Responsibilities (1) The respective general areas of responsibility of the main council committees shall be as delineated in Standing Orders 311, 321 and 361 below, together with any other Standing Orders which specifically allocate functions to any of those committees, but the Connexional Council shall have power, for the better fulfilment of its purposes, to redistribute particular areas of work between the committees, reporting such decisions to the Conference, with such recommendations as to the amendment of the Standing Orders as are necessary.

(2) The main council committees shall each work under the oversight of the council, and in accordance with any applicable Standing Orders and, subject to those Standing Orders, with such terms of reference as are approved from time to time by the council.

302 Reporting Each main council committee shall report primarily to the Connexional Council, but where the matter being reported upon concerns the committee's direct responsibility to the Conference, as provided in the relevant Standing Orders, the committee shall report directly to the Conference.

303 Authority to appoint groups

In addition to any such appointments required by Standing Orders, the main council committees may appoint such sub-committees, task groups, working parties or other groups as are necessary to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities, in each case determining their powers and functions and clarifying where relevant the extent of any delegation of the committee's powers. Where it is intended that a group is intended to have responsibilities of a continuing nature rather than for a time-limited piece of work or where it is to have delegated powers, the permission of the Connexional Council to the inclusion of such terms shall be obtained.

Section 31 The Church in Ministry and Mission: Ministries Committee and Training

310 [32A0(2)] Ministries Committee: appointment. In exercising its power of appointment of the Ministries Committee under Standing Order 300, the Connexional Council shall ensure that as far as possible the members of the committee between them shall represent the interests of:

- (i) the ordained and lay ministries and offices of the Church, including local preachers and stewards;
- (ii) the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation and the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee and the Stationing Committee.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

311 [32A1] **Ministries Committee: general responsibilities**

(1) The committee shall ~~seek report to the Methodist Council~~ to enable the Church to develop and maintain a strategic vision for the use of ordained, accredited, commissioned and informal ministries and offices throughout the Connexion.

(2) The committee shall be accountable to the Conference through the **Connexional Council** for:

- (i) developing and supporting the processes relating to the oversight, accountability and professional development of those engaged in the ministries and offices of the Church;
- (ii) developing and supporting programmes for nourishing, equipping and resourcing those engaged in the ministries and offices of the Church;
- (iii) developing and supporting the Church's structures, partnerships and resources for learning, training, quality assurance, scholarship, research and development;
- (iv) in collaboration with other bodies, supporting the development of structures that enable the use of various forms of ministry as resources for mission within Circuits and Districts;
- (v) overseeing connexional policy regarding its ordained ministries, including that relating to the processes for offering as a candidate, the oversight of students and probationers, and stationing, but without adjudicating on individual cases, which shall remain the task of the bodies appointed to fulfil that responsibility.

(3) The committee may, after consultation with the ~~Methodist Council~~, report to the Conference on matters of policy or process requiring the attention of the Conference that have been identified by the committee or by the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation, the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, the Stationing Committee or the Stationing Advisory Committee.

(4) The committee shall recommend to the Conference, through the council, ~~selection-~~**discernment** criteria for adoption under Standing Order 7-10A**710(5)** and, as required, amendments to those criteria.

312 **Ministerial and Lay Education and Training**

(1) [340A] The ~~Methodist Council~~ **Connexional Council**, **acting through the Ministries Committee**, is responsible for the oversight of theological colleges and other training institutions and shall bring nominations to the Conference for the appointment of oversight tutors to carry out the functions described in Standing Order 252(12).

(2) [341] The ~~Methodist Council~~ shall appoint the Cliff College Committee to serve as the governing body of the college. The council and the committee shall maintain,

administer and develop the work of the college in all its aspects in accordance with their respective powers under the trusts applying to the college and its associated property and funds.

[There are other areas of training elsewhere in Standing Orders which come under the aegis of the Ministries Committee. See in particular Section 56 on Local Preachers and 56A on Local Lay-Pastors.]

Section 32 The Church in Ministry and Mission: Mission Committee and the Church's relationship with partners

320 [1000A0(2)] **Mission Committee: appointment** In exercising its power of appointment of the Mission Committee under Standing Order 300, the Connexional Council shall ensure that as far as possible a diversity of persons involved in varied missional activities in differing contexts is included.

321 [1000 and 1000A1] **Mission Committee: general responsibilities**

(1) The committee shall ~~report to the Methodist Council~~ **seek** to enable the Church to develop and maintain a strategic vision for mission.

(2) The committee shall be accountable to the Conference through the ~~Methodist~~ **Connexional** Council for:

- (i) developing and supporting the mission of the Church both locally and globally, embracing the Conference's affirmation that **(whilst the terms 'overseas' and 'home' have the meanings and uses assigned to them in the Deed of Union and Standing Orders)** there is no distinction between the nature of mission exercised in different parts of the world;
- (ii) developing, supporting and reviewing initiatives for nourishing, equipping, resourcing and accompanying those engaged in the mission of the Church both locally and globally;
- (iii) overseeing connexional policy for mission;
- (iv) determining the processes, and overseeing, monitoring and evaluating the disbursement of grants or funds, for mission in Britain.

(3) The committee may, after consultation with the ~~Methodist Council~~ report to the Conference on matters of policy or process requiring the attention of the Conference.

(4) Within its general responsibilities for the missional activity of the Church in its widest sense shall be included the functions specifically referred to in this section or elsewhere in Standing Orders, but also whatever wider areas of work will enhance and support God's

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

mission in the world, for instance, through evangelism and growth; through embracing and advocating for justice in the Church and the world; through nurturing of work among children, young people and families.

322 Relationships with Global Partners and Partner Churches

[335] (1) The **Mission Committee** shall annually appoint a Global Relationships Committee consisting of not more than ten members which shall report to the Mission Committee.

[1002A] (2) ***In fulfilment of the commitment of the Methodist Church in Britain to work in partnership with Churches across the world, the Global Relationships Committee shall annually appoint the World Mission Fund Grants Committee, which shall include a representative of the Methodist Church in Ireland and with a majority of the committee having been nominated by partner Churches across the world. Its responsibility shall be, within the parameters set by the Connexional Council, to administer the grants allocated under Standing Order 373(2) below, reporting thereon annually to the Global Relationships Committee.***

(3) The ~~Methodist Council~~ shall provide reports to the Conference on global relationships.

(4) [1002(1) and (2)]~~The Methodist Council~~ shall be responsible for implementing the declared commitment of the Conference to the engagement of the Methodist Church in Britain with Churches across the world in a spirit of partnership, collaboration and mutuality through the sharing of resources of all kinds including the interchange of personnel. To that end it shall arrange for the selection, training and appointment of men and women for service overseas as mission partners with an autonomous conference or united church or other agency in accordance with mutually agreed arrangements and shall make appropriate provision for their support in retirement.

(5) Wherever possible lay persons appointed for service under clause (4) above shall for the duration of their service overseas transfer their membership to a Local Church in the place where they serve.

(6) Those appointed for service under clause (4) above serve at the invitation of and under the regulations and, subject to clause (7) below, the discipline of the church or agency concerned.

(7) The mutually agreed arrangements referred to in clause (4) above shall ensure that, in the event of disciplinary proceedings grave enough to call into question the status of

a minister or probationer or the membership or local preacher status of a lay person so appointed:

- (i) such status shall not be removed by any court overseas;
- (ii) the case shall, whether or not the appointment is terminated, be reported to the appropriate member of the Connexional Team who shall ensure that whatever further action is required by or appropriate under the Standing Orders of the relevant home conference is taken;
- (iii) for that purpose the membership of any lay person whose status may be in question shall, where necessary, be transferred to ~~his or her~~ **that person's** home church.

323 Local Ecumenical Development

[334] (1) The ~~Methodist~~ **Connexional** Council, **on the nomination of the Mission Committee**, shall annually appoint representatives to the Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission, or such successor ecumenical body as the council shall from time to time designate, to exercise the functions specified in this Standing Order. They shall include a member of the Connexional Team, designated as the ecumenical officer of the Methodist Church.

(2) The Methodist representatives to the Panel shall act on behalf of the ~~Methodist~~ council in performing the following functions:

- (i) keeping under review the development of local ecumenical relationships in Britain and advising the Connexional Team accordingly;
- (ii) providing guidelines for use of the Synods in establishing ecumenical partnerships in extended areas that do not require shared governance and in designating local ecumenical partnerships and other local schemes involving constitutions for shared churches, and monitoring their operation, and, through the ecumenical officer, receiving and scrutinising all proposals for new schemes;
- (iii) offering advice in new or difficult situations.

(3) By virtue of section 1, sub-sections (4) and (10), of the Sharing of Church Buildings Act, 1969, the consent of the ecumenical officer shall be required for the making or amendment of any sharing agreement under that Act or any legislation amending or replacing it. Where any such agreement requires consent to its termination to be given on behalf of the Church the ecumenical officer is authorised to give such consent.

(4) The ecumenical officer shall be responsible for providing information to the Conference and other bodies about ecumenical partnerships in extended areas that

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

do not require shared governance and for the making of recommendations to the Conference on applications for the designation of ecumenical areas under schemes involving partnership at circuit level, and on proposals to give or revoke a direction under Standing Orders 512 and 611, as to all of which the ecumenical officer shall first obtain the report of the district Policy Committee.

(5) The ecumenical officer shall compile a list of all new schemes approved by the Synods under Standing Order 412(2) and of all sharing agreements authorised or signed by him or her **the said officer**, and ensure that they are reported to the Methodist Council.

324 [1005] New Towns and New Areas (1) In a new town or city officially designated as such by the appropriate government department or, at the request of the Chair or Chairs of the District or Districts concerned, in a new town not officially designated, or when an expansion scheme to house a population of 20,000 or more is planned by a local authority, the Methodist **Connexional** Council, **on the nomination of the Mission Committee**, may appoint a New Town or New Area Commission to encourage the Methodist Church towards policies of imaginative experiment and ecumenical co-operation and to reinforce all such sound planning and effective action as will build up the Church and extend its outreach into the life of the new communities.

(2) A commission shall include representatives of the Connexional Team and of the District or Districts and Circuit or Circuits concerned, as well as other persons with appropriate expertise, and its chair shall be the Chair or one of the Chairs of the District or Districts concerned.

(3) The commissions shall meet at least annually during the planning and major development phases of the new towns and new areas. They shall act as advisory committees to the Circuit Meetings, district committees and connexional bodies concerned.

(4) When the planning and major development phases in a new town or new area are completed the commission may resolve that the work of the Church there shall in future be under the supervision of the district Policy Committee for such time as the committee judges it necessary. While a new town or new area is under the supervision of the district Policy Committee it shall submit an annual report on its progress, approved by the district committee, together with complete copies of accounts to the Methodist Council

(5) A commission may be reconstituted at any time if the district Policy Committee considers it advisable.

Section 33: The Church in Ministry and Mission: a Justice Seeking Church

330 [336] Justice, Dignity and Solidarity. (1) The Methodist Church seeks to become a church in which God's unconditional love is expressed in word and actions, and where all are fully able to play their part in the church's life. In working to achieve that aim it follows the principles of justice, dignity and solidarity, which require that:

- (i) diversity is reflected in all aspects of leadership in the church through the adoption of policies and procedures which avoid all unjust discrimination and enable all people to use their gifts in God's service through their service to the church;
- (ii) the church treats all people with respect, recognising them as made in the image of God and avoiding any form of conduct which might undermine their dignity and worth;
- (iii) the church is committed to the support of those who have suffered or may suffer any form of unjust discrimination and to standing in solidarity with them in asserting and maintaining their rights to be treated with justice and respect for their dignity.

(2) The Methodist **Connexional** Council, **on the nomination of the Mission Committee**, shall annually appoint a Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee, to discharge the following duties:

- (i) making strategic recommendations and giving support and guidance to the council in all matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion;
- (ii) maintaining an overview of policies and procedures to ensure that matters of justice, dignity and solidarity are addressed;
- (iii) assisting the council in identifying and responding to emerging risks, challenges and opportunities in relation to matters of justice, dignity and solidarity;
- (iv) supporting the council in taking steps to implement any policies adopted by the Conference in relation to matters of justice, dignity and solidarity, and in promoting and embedding equality, diversity and inclusion across the Connexion;
- (v) nominating one of **either** the committee's co-chairs **or deputy chair** to act as adviser to the Conference on matters of justice, dignity and solidarity, ~~and the other co-chair may~~ **(the committee's deputy chair or chair, as the case may require, being able to** act as an alternate).

(3) The committee shall report annually to the Methodist Council.

(4) (a) The committee shall consist of;

- (i) ~~two co-chairs~~ **a chair and a deputy chair** appointed in accordance with sub-clause (c) below
- (ii) ~~two members~~ **one member** of the Methodist Council;
- (iii) up to eight other persons.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

(b) A member of the Connexional Team shall be the convener of the committee but not a voting member. Other members of the Connexional Team with responsibility for matters of equality, diversity and inclusion may attend committee meetings by invitation of the **chair or, when deputising for the chair, the deputy chair**, ~~co-chairs~~, and shall have a right to speak but not to vote.

(c) The ~~co-chairs~~ **chair and deputy chair** shall be appointed by the ~~Methodist Council~~ to serve for six years.

(d) The members of the committee shall not normally serve for more than six years in succession.

(5) The committee shall be responsible for making nominations to the council for persons to fulfil Standing Order 102(1)(~~i~~)(~~g~~)(**vii**).

331 [1004] Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice

(1) The Conference has declared its commitment that the Methodist Church, in faithfulness to its missionary calling to evangelism, social caring and political justice, will strive to use its resources for all in society, recognising that this will mean especially taking sides with those experiencing poverty and inequality of resources, and has challenged the Methodist people to respond seriously and imaginatively to the issues raised by that commitment. To give expression to its commitment the Conference has instituted and continues Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice.

(2) The purposes of Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice are:

- (i) advocacy of the Church's commitment to those experiencing poverty and inequality of resources;
- (ii) assistance by way of grants for personnel or property schemes, primarily to Local Churches and Circuits, to assist them in supporting those experiencing poverty and inequality of resources.

(3) Grants from Methodist funds for Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice, whether for personnel or property schemes, must be wholly for a purpose or purposes of the Methodist Church, and shall meet the following criteria:

- (i) there must be evidence of insufficient resources to meet the material needs of individuals whether in an urban or a rural setting;
- (ii) there must be a commitment to work alongside those experiencing poverty and inequality of resources, thereby enabling them better to respond to their own sense of God's calling.

Section 34: The Church in Ministry and Mission: Methodist Heritage

340 [337] **Methodist Heritage Committee.** (1) The Methodist-**Connexional** Council shall annually appoint a Methodist Heritage Committee, to discharge the following responsibilities:

- (i) to protect, advocate and advance the interests of Methodist heritage throughout the Connexion;
 - (ii) to give directions that artefacts, publications and records which are model trust property and which the committee judges to be of historic significance to the Church and specifies for this purpose individually or by category shall not be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of or parted with except as provided by Standing Order 936, to establish and maintain a list of the property so specified, and to monitor and report to the council on compliance with any such directions and with Standing Order 936;
 - (iii) to formulate and keep under review a policy for the development and advancement of Methodist heritage, with a particular focus on the role of Methodist heritage as a tool for the contemporary mission aims of the Methodist Church;
 - (iv) to oversee all Methodist archives and other historical material and to advise managing trustees and others responsible for such material;
 - (v) to give general support to the development, interpretation and promotion of sites of historic importance to the Church;
 - (vi) to give support specifically to those which have been identified as being of particular significance to the wider Connexion, namely:
 - The Old Rectory, Epworth, Lincolnshire
 - The New Room (John Wesley's Chapel), Bristol
 - Wesley's Chapel, John Wesley's House and the Museum of Methodism, City Road, London
 - Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism;
 - (vii) to act as the Committee of the World Methodist Historical Society (British Section).
- (2) (a) The committee shall consist of:
- (i) the chair, appointed as such in accordance with sub-clause (b) below;
 - (ii) four trustee representatives, one each appointed by the respective trustee bodies of the sites referred to in clause (1)(vi) above;
 - (iii) the two liaison officers for Methodist archives and collections appointed under clause (4) below;
 - (iv) **a** ~~the~~ Connexional Secretary (or ~~his or her~~ **a** representative);

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

- (v) up to 6 other persons chosen to ensure that the committee has expert knowledge, experience and skills recognised as desirable, in areas which may include:
- theology
 - historical research
 - archiving and record management
 - care and conservation of historical buildings, artefacts and records
 - heritage and museum work outside the Church
 - funding, fundraising and marketing
 - heritage tourism
 - the World Church
 - information technology in heritage and education contexts
 - education and lifelong learning
 - events and activity programming.

The Methodist heritage officer appointed under clause (3) below **member of the Connexional Team with responsibility for Methodist Heritage** shall be the convener of the committee but not a voting member.

(b) The chair shall be appointed by the Methodist council to serve for six years.

(c) The other members of the committee, except where appointed ex officio under head (iii) or (iv) of sub-clause (a), shall not normally serve for more than six years in succession.

(3) The Methodist Council shall also appoint a Methodist heritage officer, who shall be a member of the Connexional Team. The officer **Connexional Team member referred to in clause (2)(a) above** shall share with the Methodist Heritage Committee overall responsibility for the coordination of the Church's interest in and work relating to Methodist heritage and its links to the Church's contemporary mission aims.

(4) (a) The committee shall appoint a liaison officer for Methodist archives, who shall oversee, advise, support and connect the various bodies responsible for the production, supervision, deposit and safekeeping of Methodist archives, other historical material and modern records across the whole Connexion, and in particular the Connexional Team and District Archivists.

(b) The committee shall appoint a liaison officer for Methodist collections, who shall oversee, advise and support the various bodies responsible for the acquisition, disposal, interpretation and safekeeping of Methodist historical collections across the whole Connexion, and in particular the Connexional Team, the curators of the sites identified in Standing Order 340(1)(vi) and District Archivists.

(5) The committee shall also appoint a specialist group with expertise in the archiving of historical material and in modern records management to advise it upon the discharge of

its responsibilities under clause (1)(iv) above, and may appoint such other groups as are deemed appropriate to enable it generally to fulfil its responsibilities.

[221] **(6) (a) The committee shall be responsible, on behalf of the council as the connexional trustees, for appointing a group to oversee the affairs of the Aldersgate Memorial and such other assets and funds as are related to it. The members of the group (who need not be members of the committee) shall include the Superintendent of the City Road (Leysian Mission/Wesley's Chapel) Circuit and other persons with appropriate links with civic life, Methodist heritage and the London Committee.**

(b) The memorial and any related assets or funds shall, without restricting or excluding the provisions of the Model Trusts otherwise applicable, be held for the following connexional purposes:

- (i) the commemoration of the Aldersgate conversions of John and Charles Wesley in May 1738;
- (ii) the purposes of the Methodist Church with particular reference to the City of London.

341 [332] Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (1) The Methodist **Connexional** Council shall annually appoint as one of its committees a Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, which shall have the responsibilities and functions prescribed in Section 98.

(2) The committee shall be constituted in such a way as to have expert knowledge of historic church buildings, and shall consist of a convener, as specified in clause (3) below, together with not less than eight other persons chosen with the above object in view and having among them in particular:

- (i) knowledge of the history, development and use of Methodist chapels;
- (ii) knowledge of Methodist liturgy and worship;
- (iii) knowledge of archaeology;
- (iv) knowledge of the history and development of architecture and the visual arts; and
- (v) experience of the care of historic buildings and their contents.

(3) The convener shall be the Property Secretary.

As to the Property Secretary see S.O. 006(2A)

(4) The Connexional Team shall keep a register of all chapels, ancillary premises and manses which are listed buildings or in a conservation area, and shall supply to managing trustees, for inclusion in the relevant log books, to the appropriate bodies specified in Standing Order 930(5)(a), and to district archivists copies of the relevant parts of the register, giving them the necessary information and guidance to enable the

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

significance of such listing to be taken into account whenever a scheme involving a listed building or property in a conservation area is under consideration.

Section 35 The Church in Ministry and Mission: Chaplaincy

350 [1006] Prison Chaplaincy

(1) The Connexional Team shall have the oversight of all work done by persons appointed as chaplains in pastoral care of Methodist inmates of prisons and prison staff. Such chaplains shall send a report of their work to the Synod and to the Superintendent Chaplain of prisons, appointed by the Methodist Council.

(2) The Team shall be responsible for the nomination of prison chaplains. The Superintendent Chaplain of prisons shall consult with the Chair of the District in which a prison or young offenders institution is situated concerning a suitable nomination to be forwarded to the Prison Governor for appointment as Methodist chaplain.

(3) In the case of any presbyter to be appointed to full-time chaplaincy, the Superintendent Chaplain shall first secure the agreement of the Stationing Committee to the opening or continuation of a station for such an appointment, and after selection has been made by the appropriate authority shall forward the name of the person to be appointed to the Stationing Committee.

351 [1008] Workplace Chaplains

The Connexional Team member responsible for work relating to industry, business and commerce shall be responsible for securing the agreement of the Stationing Committee to the opening of stations for the appointment of workplace chaplains and for recommending to the committee the name of any presbyter or deacon to be appointed as such a chaplain. In the case of a deacon, any such recommendation shall be made after consultation with the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

Section 36 Resourcing the Church

360 Resourcing Committee: appointment

In exercising its power of appointment of the Resourcing Committee under Standing Order 300, the Connexional Council shall ensure that the persons to be appointed shall cover the range of skills, experience and availability necessary to fulfil its responsibilities for the proper care and use of the Church's resources.

361 Resourcing Committee: general responsibilities [213(2B)] (1) The committee shall advise and assist the Connexional Council, *and where required act under delegated*

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

authority, in fulfilling the council's responsibilities for the strategic oversight and use of resources with regard to personnel, finance and physical assets which are within the purview of the council.

(2) [213(2C)] It shall further advise and assist the Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary as they devise strategic policies for presentation to the council or the Conference.

362 Resourcing Committee: particular responsibilities

(1) Without limiting the ambit of its general responsibilities as outlined in Standing Order 361, the committee's responsibilities shall include those listed below.

(2) [213(3)] The committee shall be responsible for **(i) the detailed examination of the accounts required by Standing Order 370 to be prepared** ~~financial statement required by Standing Order 360~~ and for recommending ~~its~~**their** adoption by the council; and

(ii) the preparation of summary accounts to be presented for information to the Conference.

(3) [213(4)] To enable the council to fulfil its responsibilities under Standing Order 204(1) and Section 37, the committee shall

(i) propose to the council, **for presentation to the Conference for its approval**, the budget **from the connexional funds** for expenditure upon the central services for which the council is responsible, together with a rationale for it in terms of the priorities and mission strategies of the Methodist Church, recommending the total amount required to be levied by the Conference for the next connexional year and the payments to be made from the fund, taking into account the priorities judged necessary by the council.

(ii) ~~propose to the council also the budgets for the other major connexional funds under its oversight.~~

(4) [213(4B)] The committee shall act to advise and enable the council to fulfil its legal duties and obligations as an employer. It shall have responsibility for all personnel matters for those with ~~Methodist Council~~ employment contracts, and shall act as the responsible body for implementing the Church's duty of care towards those ministers appointed to serve in appointments under the direction of the council and those ministers appointed as officers of the Conference and located in the Connexional Team.

(5) The committee shall, on behalf of the council, oversee and administer the funds referred to in Section 37 below, and all other connexional funds of which the council is trustee.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

(6) [212(3) and (4)] The committee shall make recommendations to the council, to be brought to the Conference, as to ministerial stipends and related matters. These shall include (but not be limited to) recommendations as to: minimum stipends to be paid to ministers and probationers; the amount of any additional allowances and initial payments; the level of travel expenses payable; financial arrangements for ministerial sabbaticals; expenses incurred and any additional allowances payable on removal between circuits.

(7) The committee shall be responsible for the administration on behalf of the council, of the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons.

(8) The committee shall produce guidance for ministers, probationers and students as to grants, loans and allowances available to them (particularly where stationed in one of the Island districts, the Isles of Scilly, the Isle of Wight, Malta or Gibraltar).

(9) The committee shall be responsible for making recommendations as to any other terms under which ministers and probationers serve within their covenant relationship with the Conference.

Section 37: Resourcing the Church: Finance

370 [360] **Accounts.** (1) The Methodist **Connexional** Council shall submit to the Conference annually a unified statement of connexional finances **ensure accounts are prepared**, clearly distinguishing between restricted and unrestricted funds and conforming to the law and accounting regulations, so as to give an overall view of those moneys and other assets for which the council is responsible.

(2) The general or other funds formerly administered by or in connection with a Division or connexional committee which ceased to exist on or before the 31st August 1996 and for which thereafter there are no separate trustees or other body with responsibility to administer the same and dispose of their assets shall be administered by the Methodist Council as restricted funds in accordance with clause (3) above.

371 [361] **Methodist Church Fund.** (1) The Methodist **Connexional** Council shall **raise** administer **and as the trustee body be responsible for the administration of** the Methodist Church Fund.

(2) The fund shall be maintained by an assessment levied by the Conference on each Circuit in the home church through the several Districts, by contributions from Methodist colleges and schools and other organisations, by donations and legacies for the general purposes of the Methodist Church and by dividends and interest.

(3) Out of the fund shall be met:

- (i) the expenses necessary to give effect to the decisions of the Conference;
- (ii) the expenses of the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Conference;
- (iii) costs incurred in guarding the rights and privileges of the Conference, so far as not chargeable to another fund;
- (iv) grants, not otherwise provided for, to Districts, Circuits and Local Churches;
- (v) grants in support of ecumenical work and dues and subscriptions to ecumenical bodies;
- (vi) payments in accordance with Standing Order 376;
- (vii) allocations or grants as required by Standing Order or determined by the Methodist Council for any connexional purpose;
- (viii) the cost of the work of the Connexional Team;
- (ix) all other connexional expenses not chargeable to other funds.

(4) Provision shall be made for grants from the fund to support Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice in accordance with Standing Order 331.

372 [361A] Racial Justice. (1) As part of the Church's witness to the gospel and in order to promote racial justice, provision shall be made from any appropriate funds for grants to Methodist and ecumenical bodies and projects and to other organisations (whether local or national) in order to support work against discrimination and marginalisation on racial grounds.

(2) To the extent that the trusts affecting the funds referred to in clause (1) above so require, grants may be made only to bodies having charitable status.

373 [362] Specified Funds. (1) The Methodist *Connexional* Council shall raise and administer **and, as the trustee body, be responsible for the administration of** the four restricted funds specified in clauses (2) to (5) below, for which contributions, including public collections, subscriptions, donations and legacies, shall be invited for particular aspects of the work of the Church.

(2) **(a)** The purposes of the Methodist World Mission Fund shall be:

- (i) to promote and encourage Christian mission overseas;
- (ii) to encourage the establishment of churches overseas which will themselves undertake that mission within and beyond their own borders;
- (iii) to engage in relationships of mutual help and enrichment with churches and ecumenical bodies overseas;
- (iv) to foster and take part in ecumenical relationships in the field of world mission, including the work of the World Council of Churches;
- (v) in furtherance of these purposes to engage in education, advocacy, recruitment and fundraising.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

(b) In the allocation of grants from the World Mission Fund the council shall **work through** the World Mission Fund Grants Committee appointed under Standing Order 322(2) above to have responsibility, through the Global Relationships Committee, to the council for the administration of the grants so allocated, in line with the policy adopted by the Connexional Council in relation to such grants.

(3) The purposes of the Methodist Mission in Britain Fund shall be

- (i) the support of work in furtherance of the Church's mission, including grants to Local Churches and Circuits, in the home Districts. Provision shall be made for grants to support Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice in accordance with Standing Order 331; and
- (ii) to bear witness to the global character of Christian mission by supporting work with and among ethnically diverse communities in Britain and Ireland which have their origin in other countries.

(4) The purposes of the Methodist Fund for Training shall be:

- (i) the provision of initial and further training for presbyters, deacons, lay employees and other lay persons;
- (ii) the provision of maintenance grants for persons undergoing such training and their dependants;
- (iii) the improvement and maintenance of trust property, management and staffing of the Methodist training institutions;
- (iv) contributing to the improvement and maintenance of property, management and staffing of joint theological colleges;
- (v) the examination of candidates for the presbyterate and the diaconate and of presbyteral and diaconal probationers.

(5) (a) The purposes of the Methodist Fund for Property shall be:

- (i) the support of work in aid or on behalf of trustees of Methodist property;
- (ii) grants and loans for property purposes to trustees of Methodist property in the home Districts.

(b) Subject to sub-clause (a) above provision shall be made for grants to support Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice in accordance with Standing Order 331.

(6) The income of Junior Mission for All shall be allocated as to four fifths to the Methodist World Mission Fund and as to one fifth to the Methodist Mission in Britain Fund.

374 [363] London Mission Fund. (1) The Methodist **Connexional** Council shall raise and administer **and as trustees be responsible for the administration of** the London Mission Fund as a restricted fund and shall appoint trustees of the fund **a committee**, to be known as the London Committee, **which may act on its behalf** for that purpose.

In making the appointments, the council shall ensure that the area of each of the four former London Districts is fairly represented.

(2) There shall be advocacy of the fund in each Circuit within the area of the former four London Districts and in such chapels and preaching-places as have been assisted by the fund.

(3) Income shall be solicited by way of donations and subscriptions.

(4) The consent of the trustees shall be obtained to the erection of any buildings or the purchase of any site for which aid is sought from the fund.

(5) No help from the fund shall be given to Circuits which neglect to comply with the foregoing requirements.

(6) Provision shall be made for grants from the fund to support Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice in accordance with Standing Order 331.

(7) This Standing Order does not apply to the Malta United Area or to the Gibraltar Circuit, which are not eligible for any grant from the London Mission Fund.

(8) In this Standing Order 'the four former London Districts' means the London North-East District, the London North-West District, the London South-West District and the London South-East District as those Districts were constituted immediately prior to 1st September 2006.

375 [364] Other Restricted Funds. (1) The Methodist **Connexional** Council shall raise and administer **and as trustees be responsible for the administration of** the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons, the objects of which shall be to provide assistance at the discretion of the council, or of any committee or officer to whom it may delegate its powers in this behalf, to **the persons listed below:**

- (i) supernumeraries;
- (ii) persons who have been permitted or directed to become supernumerary;
- (iii) ministers in the active work or without appointment, persons recognised and regarded as ministers by virtue of clauses 43 to 45A of the Deed of Union, probationers and student ministers who, in any such case, are in acute financial need;
- (iv) ministers who are in need as a result of illness or impairment or the illness or impairment of any member of their immediate household, for the purpose of enabling them to continue in or resume the active work;
- (v) probationers who are in need as a result of illness or impairment or the illness or impairment of any member of their immediate household, for the purpose of enabling them to continue on or resume probation or to complete probation and enter the active work;

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

- (vi) student ministers who are in need as a result of illness or impairment, or the illness or impairment of any member of their immediate household, for the purpose of enabling them to continue their ministerial formation and training; and
- (vii) the spouses or civil partners of deceased ministers and probationers and other members of their immediate households who, in any such case, are in need; **and to make such grants or payments as appear in clauses (2) and (3).**

(2) **It shall be an object of the fund** to make grants to the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society.

(3) The objects of the fund shall further include making the following payments:

- (i) payments to circuits seeking reimbursement from connexional funds of payments made by them under the provisions of clauses (1) or (4) of Standing Order 376;**
- (ii) payments to the relevant person or persons under clause (3) of Standing Order 376.**

(4) The council shall administer the sabbatical fund which shall be raised by means of an annual levy on each Circuit or other body responsible for payment of the stipend of any presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion appointed to a station within the control of the Church. The amount of the levy shall be that from time to time prescribed by the Conference.

(5) In pursuance of its powers under the Deed Poll dated the 5th June 1882 establishing the Necessitous Local Preachers Fund the Conference directs the trustees of that fund to pay the income of the fund to the Methodist Council to be applied according to the trusts of the above Deed. The council shall have power to delegate to any two or more persons, whether or not members or a committee of the council, decisions as to the application or distribution of such income according to the said trusts.

376 [365] Reimbursements and other Special Payments (1) If at any time (subject to clause (2) below) a circuit minister or probationer has by reason of illness or injury been unable for a total of 26 weeks during the preceding 24 months to discharge the responsibilities of his or her **the** appointment **to which the minister or probationer is stationed** any Circuit involved shall on application be reimbursed out of **connexional funds** ~~the Methodist Church Fund~~ for all sums (less the credit for Social Security benefits and statutory sickness pay) paid by the Circuit to that person under Standing Order 801(4) in respect of any continued or further periods of incapacity during the next twelve months (any such twelve months being referred to in clause (2) below as an 'eligible year').

(2) (a) In calculating the total of 26 weeks referred to in clause (1) above there shall be disregarded:

- (i) individual periods of incapacity of four weeks or less each;
- (ii) after the occurrence of an eligible year, any incapacity occurring before or during that year.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

(b) The fund shall not in any event be liable to reimburse the same Circuit in respect of any payments made to the same minister or probationer for the next twelve months following an eligible year.

(3) If a circuit minister or probationer dies after the end of February in any connexional year leaving a spouse or civil partner and/or dependants entitled under Standing Order 801(5)(a) to remain in the manse until the end of that connexional year a sum shall be paid out of the ~~Methodist Church Fund~~ **connexional funds** to that spouse or civil partner and/or dependants equal to rent at the rate then currently charged by the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society for the period from the end of that connexional year until the date six months after the death.

(4) Any Circuit involved shall on application be reimbursed out of the ~~Methodist Church Fund~~ **connexional funds** for all sums (less the credit for Social Security benefits) paid by the Circuit to a circuit minister or probationer under Standing Orders 807A(5)(a), 807B(4) and 807C(5).

(5) Payment shall be made out of the ~~Methodist Church Fund~~ **connexional funds** of all sums required to be so paid:

- (i) to any person by virtue of any Standing Order relating to disciplinary proceedings or of any direction given by a competent body and authorised by any such Standing Order;
- (ii) as determined under Standing Order 774(9) by the Stationing Committee or the President or Vice-President, in respect of any minister or probationer for whom no appointment can be found; and
- (iii) as determined by a district Consultative Committee under Standing Order 040(8) or by a connexional Pastoral Committee under Standing Order 042(5).

(6) Payment may also be made out of the ~~fund~~ **such funds** at the discretion of the council or of any committee or officer to which the council may delegate this discretion:

- (i) to reimburse any person or body for or discharge any payments, expenses or liabilities incurred or arising in connection with any actual or potential disciplinary proceedings against any person, whether or not a charge is brought, or in connection with any other case involving financial irregularity or improvidence on the part of a minister or probationer or where an application is made under Standing Order 013(11); or
- (ii) in accordance with any recommendation of the Stationing Advisory Committee or the connexional Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee under Standing Order 774(6); or
- (iii) in accordance with any recommendation of an advisory committee under Standing Order 042(6).

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

377 [367] All accounts submitted to the Conference shall, except by approval of the Conference, be closed for each year on the 31st August.

378 [368] **Central Finance Board.** Pursuant to section 5(3) of the Methodist Church Funds Act 1960 the Conference:

(f)authorises the ~~Methodist~~ **Connexional** Council and connexional committees to seek the advice of the Central Finance Board as to investments and empowers that board to give such advice to them and to any other body administering any funds or finances of the Church or any part of the Church or any charity connected with the work of the Church.; and

(ii)appoints the said board to act, for so long as is required by the Methodist Council, as the covenantee for the purpose of the scheme specified in Standing Order 212(13).

Section 38 The Connexional Team

380 [302] **The Connexional Team.** (1) There shall be a Connexional Team whose members work collaboratively to provide a ~~coherent~~ **efficient** and effective service on behalf of the Conference **and the Connexional Council.**

(2) The work of the Connexional Team, the assignment of particular tasks and the co-ordination of the work shall be supervised by the ~~Methodist Council through its Strategy and Resources Committee.~~

(3) The Connexional Team shall consist of:

- (i) the ~~Secretaries~~ **Connexional Secretary** as defined in Standing Order 383, who shall work under the direction of the Secretary of the Conference;
- (ii) all other ministers appointed under Standing Order 385 or stationed under Standing Order 387 to work as members of the Team;
- (iii) all other persons employed by the ~~Methodist Council~~ to work as members of the Team;
- (iv) all other persons specified in Standing Orders as members of the Team.

381 [303] **Purposes of the Connexional Team.** (1) The overall task of the Connexional Team is to assist the Church in furthering the purposes of the Methodist Church, in particular enabling it better to fulfil its calling of responding to God's love in Christ and working out its discipleship in mission and worship.

(2) The Team is charged with providing appropriate support for Local Churches, Circuits and Districts as they work to fulfil the purposes of the Methodist Church. Such support shall include acting on their behalf or offering them such services and resources as the Team can **efficiently and effectively** ~~uniquely or best~~ provide. In providing such

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

support the Team shall act in accordance with Standing Orders and any directions of the Conference given from time to time.

(3) The Team is authorised to act on behalf of the Church in relation to national institutions and public issues in harmony with the existing statements and resolutions of the Conference.

(4) The Team is responsible for assisting the Methodist Council in considering future policies.

(5) The Team shall have particular responsibility for the areas of work which are prescribed in the Deed of Union or specified in Standing Orders, or approved from time to time by the Conference and the Methodist Council.

382 [305] and [329] Other Specific responsibilities

(1) The Connexional Team is authorised by the Conference, as occasion may require, to obtain from Chairs and Superintendents such statistical returns and other information as are necessary for the business of the Team and Chairs and Superintendents shall furnish all such information in due form.

(2) The Team shall prepare every three years a report on the membership returns for presentation to the Conference in the Presbyteral and Representative Sessions. The Conference, on the advice of the Methodist **Connexional** Council, shall determine the frequency of the collection of the membership returns.

(3) The Team shall keep under review all arrangements for the employment of lay persons in the light of developments in employment law and good employment practice.

(4) The Team shall provide standard terms and conditions for contracts of employment within Standing Order 438A, standard conditions of occupancy and such other guidance as may from time to time be required, including any special terms and conditions to be included in contracts of employment of workers under Standing Order 570.

383 [304] The Connexional Secretaryies and the Senior Management Group of the Connexional Team.

(1) The Connexional Team shall include a Connexional **Secretaryies**, appointed to that office, who shall assist the Secretary of the Conference in the execution of his or her **the** overall responsibilities **of the Secretary of the Conference**. Under his or her **the** direction **of the Secretary of the Conference** they **the Connexional Secretary** shall have responsibility, together with the other members of the senior management group defined in clause (2) below, for the work of the Team and ensure that it is effectively carried out, in accordance with the Deed of Union, Standing Orders and the directions from time to time of the Methodist Conference and the Methodist **Connexional** Council, and, with the wider senior leadership of the Church, shall support

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

him or her **the Secretary of the Conference** in leading the development of the Church's vision of unity, mission, evangelism and worship. They are **The Connexional Secretary** is authorised when so required to act as his or her **the representative of the Secretary of the Conference. The Connexional Secretary is further authorised to delegate from time to time the performance of such of the functions of the office, including attendance and (where the Connexional Secretary has the right to vote) voting at meetings, to such person or persons as are appropriate to the particular function concerned, but without derogation from the ultimate responsibility of the Connexional Secretary for the proper performance of the duties of the office.**

(4) The number of Connexional Secretaries shall be determined from time to time by the Conference, which may determine that there shall be a single Connexional Secretary.

(2) The senior management group of the Connexional Team shall consist of the Secretary of the Conference, the assistant secretary of the Conference, the Connexional Secretaries, and such other members of the Connexional Team as the **council Strategy and Resources Committee** shall approve.

384 [312] Contracts of Employment of Connexional Team members and tutors.

(1) This Standing Order applies to the engagement for remuneration of any person within either of the categories specified in clause (2) below to serve in a post which is within the Connexional Team, or as a tutor in a theological college.

(2) The categories referred to in clause (1) above are:

- (i) ministers and deacons of other churches (whether or not recognised and regarded as presbyters or deacons of the Methodist Church under clause 44, 45 or 45A of the Deed of Union), other than ministers of the Irish Conference; and
- (ii) all other persons not within Standing Order 385 or 387.

(3) In every such case there shall be a contract of employment in writing between the ~~Methodist Council~~ and the employee, complying with the law and with Standing Order 386 where applicable, and containing such other provisions as the council considers proper.

385 [313] Ministerial Designations and Appointments by the Conference. (1) When it is proposed to appoint or re-appoint a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion, minister of the Irish Conference or probationer to serve, full time or part time, as ~~a~~ **the Connexional Secretary or secretary of the Faith and Order Committee, the Methodist Connexional Council** shall submit a nomination for that office to the Conference, accompanied by a reasoned statement indicating the qualifications of the person nominated. The nomination shall be printed in the Agenda if possible, or failing that shall be circulated

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

at or before the opening of the Representative Session, and no other names may be brought to that Conference.

(2) For designation to a new appointment, which shall in the first instance be for a specified period not exceeding six years, the nomination by the council and the designation by the Conference shall each require a simple majority of those present and voting.

(3) For designation to a re-appointment, which shall be for a specified period not exceeding five years, the nomination by the council and designation by the Conference shall each require a 75% majority of those present and voting. The council shall vote by ballot.

(4) A designation under the provisions of this Standing Order is a statement by the Conference of its intention that, if later Conferences concur, a presbyter or deacon be appointed to the office concerned:

- (i) with effect from the beginning of the connexional year after the year immediately following the designation, unless the resolution of designation otherwise provides; and
- (ii) annually for the period of designation, but subject always to the provisions of clause (8) below.

(5) Where the majority required under clause (2) or (3) (as the case may be) is not obtained in the Conference, the Conference shall determine its own procedure, which may include requiring the council to submit a new nomination to the following Conference, and shall include appropriate arrangements for ensuring the performance of the duties of the office until an appointment is made (whether after designation under this Standing Order or by the procedure specified).

(6) When new appointments or re-appointments are under consideration in the council they shall be discussed in the absence of the persons concerned.

(7) The council shall complete its work as early in the connexional year as possible and shall notify the Circuit or other authority responsible for the person's current station that the designation is to be proposed.

(8) When it is proposed to nominate a deacon or diaconal probationer for an appointment under this Standing Order the ~~Methodist~~ Council shall consult the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, before submitting the name to the Conference.

(9) Appointments to be made pursuant to designations under this Standing Order shall be included in the stations and nothing in this Standing Order shall derogate from the ultimate authority of the Conference over stationing annually.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

386 [314] Other Appointments authorised by the Conference. (1) This Standing Order applies to the appointment of a person within either of the categories specified in clause (2) of Standing Order 384 as ~~a~~ **the** Connexional Secretary or as secretary of the Faith and Order Committee.

(2) The provisions of Standing Order 384 shall apply to all appointments under this Standing Order.

(3) Subject to clause (7) below the appointment by the ~~Methodist~~ **Connexional** Council of ~~a~~ **the** Connexional Secretary or the Conference officer for legal and constitutional practice requires the prior authority of a resolution of the Conference on the recommendation of the council, specifying the name of the appointee, the date upon which the appointment is to take effect and the period (if any is to be fixed) for which it will continue unless earlier terminated under any contractual provision in that regard.

(4) The provisions of clause (3) above apply also to the appointment of the secretary of the Faith and Order Committee, with the omission of the word 'prior', but any such appointment made, and any related contract of employment entered into by the ~~Methodist~~ **C** council before obtaining the authority of the Conference, shall be expressly conditional upon obtaining such authority at the next annual meeting of the Conference and shall be void if such authority is declined.

(5) The Conference shall not authorise the making of an appointment under this Standing Order except upon the recommendation of the ~~Methodist~~ **C** council, and no further names may be added in nomination, by Notice of Motion or otherwise, or considered.

(6) If an appointment is terminated for any reason before the end of the period (if any) specified in the resolution of authority or otherwise than by notice given by either party the ~~Methodist~~ **C** council shall report the event in appropriate terms to the next meeting of the Conference.

(7) If because of the termination of the appointment of ~~a~~ **the** Connexional Secretary for any reason it is not practicable to comply fully with the requirements of clause (3) above ~~Methodist~~ **C** council shall nevertheless have power to appoint a **replacement** Connexional Secretary despite such non-compliance. In that event as many of the provisions of clause (3) above shall be implemented as is practicable.

387 [315] Other Ministerial Staff Appointments. (1) The ~~Methodist~~ **Connexional** Council may recommend that a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion, minister of the Irish Conference or probationer be stationed to serve, full-time or part-time, in the Connexional Team in an appointment other than those within Standing Order 114,

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

116A, 116C or 385, or as a member of staff in a training institution or other body within the control of the Methodist Council or (if a deacon in Full Connexion) as the deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. Such a recommendation shall be for an initial specified period not exceeding six years. The appointment shall be included in the stations in the same way as an appointment to a Circuit and no separate resolution of appointment by the Conference shall be required.

(2) The council may recommend a re-appointment for one or more further specified periods, each not exceeding five years. Such a recommendation shall be determined as soon as possible in the final year of the current period and shall require the votes of not less than 75% of those present and voting.

(3) Nothing in this Standing Order shall derogate from the ultimate authority of the Conference over stationing annually.

388 [316] Curtailment. (1) This Standing Order shall apply whenever it is desired on either side to curtail the period of:

- (i) designation or recommendation of a minister for appointment to a station under Standing Order 116A, 116C, 385 or 387 or
- (ii) ~~appointment of a person to an office under Standing Order 210(1)(i), 213(1)(i), 311 or 322(1A);~~

and the person appointed and the body designated in the relevant Standing Orders as being responsible for making, recommending or nominating to the appointment are unable to agree or when a connexional complaints team appointed under Standing Order 1122 considers that the question whether such a period should be curtailed should be examined. When requested to do so by the person appointed or by the officer specified in clause (2) below or by a team so appointed the President or the Vice-President on ~~his or her~~ **the President's** behalf shall appoint a curtailment committee to consider the matter. The committee shall consist of the President or ~~his or her~~ **the President's** representative, who shall preside, and six other **persons chosen by the President from the panel appointed under Standing Order 291.** ~~members of the Methodist Council or, where the matter relates to an appointment under Standing Order 210(1)(i), six members of the Strategy and Resources Committee who are not members of the council.~~ The committee's judgment shall be reported to the body responsible for the appointment and as further required in clause (3) below.

(2) Clause (8) of Standing Order 544 shall apply to the constitution of the curtailment committee appointed under clause (1) above, and clause (10) of that Standing Order to its procedure, in each case with any necessary adaptations.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

(3) The officer referred to in clause (1) above shall be:

- (i) in the case of the assistant secretary of the Conference, the Conference officer for legal and constitutional practice or ~~a~~ **the** Connexional Secretary, the Secretary **of the Conference**;
- (ii) ~~in the case of the connexional Treasurer, the chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee of the Methodist Council;~~
- (iii) ~~in the case of the chair of the Methodist Council or chair of the Stationing Committee, the Secretary;~~
- (iv) ~~[deleted]~~
- (ivA) ~~in the case of the chair or an appointed member of the Strategy and Resources Committee of the Methodist Council, the Vice-President of the Conference;~~
- (ii) in all other cases, the Connexional Secretary responsible for the oversight of the appointee.

(4) In the case of a minister appointed to a station, the judgment of the curtailment committee shall be reported to the Stationing Committee, and in the case of a diaconal appointment also to the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. In the case of such an appointment under Standing Order 116A, 116C or 385 a report shall also be made by the curtailment committee in appropriate terms to the Conference. ~~In the case of an appointment under Standing Order 210(1)(i), 213(1)(i), 311 or 322(1A) a report shall be made by the committee in appropriate terms to the Conference and the Conference shall have power to curtail any such appointment if and to the extent that the report so recommends.~~

(5) Nothing in this Standing Order shall derogate from the ultimate authority of the Conference over stationing annually.

APPENDIX B

PART 1: Replacement of Methodist Council, and related bodies, by Connexional Council or Council's main committees, and associated amendments

a) Replacements

1. Replace "Methodist Council" by "Connexional Council" in the following Standing Orders:

006(2A)
010(3)(vi)
012(6)
113(1)

126(1)(c)
129(1)
131(11)(iii); (17)(a)(i)
133(4)
136(2C)
138(8)
401(2)
428(1A); (2)
431(v)
438A(3)(v)
544(3)
690(2)(a)
744(12)
755(1)
804(2)
808
909
913(2); (3)(d)
917(4)
930(5)(a)
930(7)
931(3)(a)
935(1)
943(3)
973(1A); (5)
983A(12)
985(4)
1152(1)

2. Replace “Methodist Council” by “Secretary of the Conference” in the following Standing Orders:

105(1A)
106(2); (3)(b); (4); 107(2);(3) adding in each instance “after consultation with the Ecumenical Officer”
116B
124(11)
136(1)(i)
136(1C) adding “after consultation with the President-designate and Vice-President-designate”
139
140(4)
150(2)(ii)

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

3. Replace "Methodist Council" by "Conference Business Committee" in the following Standing Order:

016A(3A)

4. Replace "Methodist Council" by "Ministries Committee" in the following Standing Orders

564A(3)

564C(3)

565(1)

565A(1)

565B

566(1)

566A(1)

566B(1)(ii)

680(1)(ii)

715(1); (2)

716(2)

728(7)

728A(7)

730(12)

730(13)(a)

5. Replace "Methodist Council" by "Mission Committee" in the following Standing Order:

440(1)(a);(b);(7)

6. Replace "Methodist Council" by "Resourcing Committee" in the following Standing Orders:

445

803(1)(c)

803(6)

7. Replace "Strategy and Resources Committee" by "Resourcing Committee" in the following Standing Order:

138(2)(vii)

8. Replace “Connexional Allowances Committee” by “Resourcing Committee” in the following Standing Orders:

528(1); (2A)
782(2)
783(4)
801(1)(b)
801(6)(a) and (c)

b) Other amendments related to these changes

002(1) Terms defined in the Deed of Union

Insert as new item (viiiA) ‘the Connexional Council’, and renumber the following two items as (viiiB) and (viiiC).

128 Extent of Legislation

Delete second sentence.

137 Committees of Reference

The Methodist Council **President, Vice-President and Secretary** shall annually approve **compile and circulate to the Conference** a list of the names of persons, all of whom are expected to be members of the ensuing Conference, who may be appointed to serve on Committees of Reference in accordance with clause (4) below. The list shall include, and identify as such, the names of an appropriate number of persons who may act as conveners.

402 District Committees

(1) ... In addition to the Chair of the District and the secretary of the Synod ~~and any member of the Methodist Council nominated by the Synod, ...~~

410 Constitution [of the Synod]

(1) (vii) ~~the lay representatives, if appointed, of the Synod to the Methodist Council, the district lay Stationing Representative....~~

418 Connexional Bodies

Delete the whole Standing Order.

435 Nominations

Delete clause (3).

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

565 Training Programmes [for Local Preachers]

(2) The council **committee** may delegate ...

565A Validation of Training Programmes

(3)(i) the training programme meets the council's **committee's** training specification, and

(ii) ... to ensure it continues to meet the council's **committee's** training specification.

(4) ... that the council's **committee's** training specification is not being met....

(5) ... shall pay to the council the prescribed fee.

722 Pre-ordination Training

(1) ... in accordance with connexional guidelines by the **Ministries Committee** body appointed to do so by the Methodist Council.

744 Sabbaticals

(7) ... Where there is a dispute it shall be considered and determined by the Methodist Council **Ministries Committee** or by a committee **group** appointed by the council **committee** for the purpose.

971 The [Connexional Priority Fund] Committee

Delete the Standing Order.

974

(1)(i) ...being determined by the Strategy and Resources Committee **Connexional Council**;

(3) All grants shall be at the discretion of the committee **council**.

Section 99 Property Development Committee

Delete the whole section

1104(4A) Record-keeping, Confidentiality and Related Matters

... shall be in accordance with guidance adopted by the Methodist Council **Conference**

PART 2 Other amendments required to reflect what the Conference has decided, or related to changes being brought in this report, grouped as far as possible by subject matter

1. The removal of the role of Connexional Treasurer

136 (1) " ... and the connexional Treasurer and the connexional Press Officer shall attend as consultants when required"

140(2)

head (vii): the Connexional Treasurer **a Connexional Team member responsible for connexional financial matters**

2. Connexional Secretary reduced to single role

114(1E)

"The Secretary may delegate to the assistant secretary, or any of the Connexional **Secretary Secretaries**..."

806(4)(viii)

(e) "... in the case of any other person who is a member of the Connexional Team, the Connexional Secretary responsible for the oversight of the appointee ..."

3. Amendments redistributing the provisions in the previous Section 20

Note: this Section, "General Provisions", contained some matters which are more appropriately dealt with in Part 1 of Standing Orders as relating to the Conference, and so it is proposed that they are moved into that Part, with any necessary amendments indicated in the usual way. Other provisions in Section 20 no longer need to be provided for in Standing Orders, and therefore they will be deleted if the Conference adopts the resolution to replace the whole of the current Part 2 by the new Part 2.

200 Renumber as 110(3A) and amend as follows:

Chairing of Committees. Except where Standing Orders otherwise provide, the President and Vice-President of the Conference have the right to chair **particular meetings or items of business at meetings of all committees or bodies constituted by the Conference, other than the Connexional Council**, of which they are, ex officio, voting members **where after consultation with the duly appointed officers of the committee or body concerned the President and Vice-President deem it appropriate.** and **If** both are present they shall determine which of them shall exercise the right.

202 Renumber as 192, as part of a new Section 19 entitled "Appointments by the Conference and Other Bodies", and amend as follows:

Expenses and Loss of Earnings. (1) This Standing Order applies to the Conference, the Methodist **Connexional** Council, and all boards and committees appointed by the Conference **or Connexional Council** (in this Standing Order called 'parent bodies') and to all subordinate committees, sub-committees and working parties appointed by or on the authority of a parent body.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

(2) All sums payable under this Standing Order shall be paid out of the funds administered by the relevant body, or if none out of the Methodist Church Fund.

(3) The expenses of the members of all bodies to which this Standing Order applies (including sums necessarily paid to carers), incurred in attending the meetings or doing the work of the relevant body, shall be reimbursed, if desired.

(4) A loss of earnings allowance shall be paid, if desired, in accordance with clauses (5) and (6) below, to all members of the Conference, the **Methodist Connexional** Council and any other bodies to which this Standing Order applies and which are specified for this purpose under clause (7) below.

(5) The amount of any such allowance shall be the amount of the loss of earnings actually sustained by attending a meeting of the relevant body, or the maximum determined under clause (6) below, whichever is the less.

(6) The **Methodist Connexional** Council shall determine annually for the next connexional year the maximum daily allowance for loss of earnings.

(7) Each parent body shall specify annually for the next connexional year which bodies, if any, from among that parent body and its subordinate bodies, shall qualify for loss of earnings allowances.

203, 204 and 206 Renumber and amend the clauses which are proposed to remain as follows:

190 Nominations to the Conference for appointment (1) This Standing Order relates to all bodies appointed by the Conference, subject to any contrary legal requirement **or to any provision in the Standing Order specifically dealing with the appointment of the relevant body.**

(2) In appointments for which nominations are brought ~~either~~ by the bodies themselves ~~or by Synods~~ no person may be so nominated to the same body in the same category for more than six years in succession, except by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting in the nominating body on a ballot vote taken after all proposals for nomination have been made, those for re-nomination containing a record of attendances and the special reason for re-nomination.

(3) Where nominations are made by the bodies themselves consideration shall be given to the composition of the body as a whole with regard to the age, sex, and ethnic origin of its members, and (subject to Standing Order 010) the diversity of experience and opinion in the church, including minority views.

(4) The secretaries or conveners of committees appointed by the Conference shall supply to the Secretary of the Conference, for inclusion in the Conference Agenda, lists of the names, including one Christian name, of each person nominated, distinguishing those proposed for re-appointment and those proposed for the first time.

(5) (a) All new nominations for committees, commissions or other bodies appointed by the Conference shall be supported by ~~brief particulars (up to fifteen words)~~ of **a reasoned statement (up to 25 words)** about the nominee.

(b) These ~~particulars~~ **statements** shall, unless printed in the Conference Agenda or otherwise officially circulated to the Conference, be displayed by notice in the Conference hall.

207 Special Days Renumber as 129B and amend as follows:

The Methodist **Connexional** Council, **in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee**, may **propose** ~~recommend~~ to the Conference the observance by the Church of special days for prayer and the consideration of particular concerns.

208 Renumber as 191 and amend as follows:

Commencement Date for Appointments.

All appointments made by the Conference or the Methodist **Connexional** Council shall, ...

4. Memorials Committee

[As the constitution of the committee is generally expressed now in terms of office-holders and representatives of other bodies, there would appear to be no need for its actual appointment as SO 138 currently provides. The following changes are therefore proposed.]

138 (1) The Methodist Council shall annually appoint a committee to **The Memorials Committee, constituted in accordance with clauses (2) to (4) below**, shall consider all memorials from Synods and Circuit Meetings and make a recommendation on each to the Conference.

(2) ... (vii) a member of the Strategy and Resources Committee **a member of the Resourcing Committee**

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

5. The relationship between the Methodist Diaconal Order and the Connexional Council

753(2)

In addition to sessions for devotion, study and fellowship, the agenda of the Convocation shall include:

- (i) nomination to the Conference of a representative of the Order to the Methodist Council;
- (ii) recommendations, if any, to the Methodist **Connexional** Council;
-

754(1B) The procedure for the appointment of the Warden shall be determined by the **Conference on the recommendation of the Ministries Committee.**

755(1) The Conference shall each year appoint the Methodist Diaconal Order Support and Advisory Group upon nominations from the Methodist Council **Ministries Committee**

- (3) (ii) oversee any such arrangements as from time to time may be required for consulting the Methodist Diaconal **Order on matters referred to it by the Conference or the Council-Ministries Committee.**

6. Provisions where hitherto the Methodist Council (or a group drawn from it) has determined various matters

011(3) Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper

All such applications shall be sent to the convener of an Authorisations Committee appointed for the purpose by the Methodist Council **Conference on the nomination of the Ministries Committee** Appeals against the committee's recommendations shall be heard by a further committee appointed for the purpose from among the members of the next Conference by the Methodist Council **Ministries Committee.**

013(12)

(ii) in relation to the President, Vice-President, Secretary or Secretary-Elect of the Conference the functions of the Pastoral Committee [*to deal with certain matters of suspension*] shall be discharged by a panel appointed for that purpose from among the members of the Strategy and Resources Committee by the convener of connexional Pastoral Committee. **review group of three persons chosen for that purpose from the panel constituted under Standing Order 291 by a convener of that panel.**

[*Note: the changes proposed for the following Standing Order include all those necessary to change the language of the whole Standing Order to become gender-neutral, including in clauses not otherwise amended.*]

013A(1)(i) [*Decision about the President, Vice-President, Secretary or Secretary-Elect being incapable of acting or unfit to act*] any issue ... shall be determined by the Strategy and Resources Committee of the Methodist Council, **a group of five persons chosen for that purpose from the panel constituted under Standing Order 291 by a convener of that panel, the group being called** in this clause called 'the committee';

(ii) if the responsible officer believes that the President, Vice-President, Secretary or Secretary-Elect of the Conference is so incapable or unfit, ~~he or she~~ **the officer** shall refer the matter to the committee;

(iii) any two persons, being ministers or members, may request the responsible officer in writing to exercise his or her the powers under **given by** (ii) above and, if dissatisfied with the response, may refer the matter to the committee;

(iv) [*Appeal from that decision to the Methodist Council*] the President, Vice-President, Secretary or Secretary-Elect may appeal to the Methodist Council against any decision **finding** by the committee **of incapacity or unfitness to act**. that he or she is incapable of acting or unfit to act. **The appeal shall be dealt with by a group of at least three persons chosen for that purpose from the panel constituted under Standing Orders 291 by a convener of that panel, being persons who were not involved in the determination under head (i) above.**

(v) ... the committee or **the appeal group constituted under (iv) above** the council, as the case may be, shall ensure that the President, Vice-President, Secretary or Secretary-Elect, as the case may be, is informed of, and has an adequate opportunity to deal with, the reasons why it is alleged that he or she is incapable of acting or unfit to act **for the allegation of incapacity or unfitness to act, ...**

(vi) the committee to fill a casual vacancy not otherwise filled [*i.e. as to one of the officers named above*] shall be the Methodist Council **a group constituted as in head (i) above.**

(2) For the purposes of clause 42(c) and (d) of the Deed of Union:

- (i) any issue whether a Chair is incapable of acting or unfit to act on grounds not apt to be the subject of a charge within Part 11 shall be determined by the Pastoral Committee, as defined in Standing Order 013(2)(iii);
- (ii) if the responsible officer believes that a Chair is so incapable or unfit ~~he or she~~ **the officer** shall refer the matter to the Pastoral Committee;
- (iii) any two persons, being ministers or members, may request the responsible officer in writing to exercise his or her **the** powers under **given by** (ii) above and, if dissatisfied with the response, may refer the matter to the Pastoral Committee;
- (iv) on any reference to the Pastoral Committee under (ii) or (iii) above it shall ensure that the Chair is informed of, and has an adequate opportunity to deal with, the reasons why it is alleged that he or she is incapable of acting or unfit to act **for the allegation of incapacity or unfitness to act**, and the facts relied upon in support of those reasons, and subject to that shall determine its own procedure, and its decision shall be final.

50. Oversight and Trusteeship

512B(7) The old Circuit Meeting may appeal to the Methodist Council, or to a committee appointed by the Methodist Council for this purpose, against a direction of the authorised body under clause (4) above, *[about the replacement of the old Circuit Meeting by a new Circuit Meeting in an exceptional case]* but until the appeal is determined the direction shall remain in effect. Any such appeal shall be brought by notice in writing ... meeting convened for the purpose. **The appeal shall be determined by a group of five persons chosen for that purpose from the panel constituted under Standing Order 291 by a convener of that panel. ...**

611A(7) The old Church Council may appeal to the Methodist Council, or to a committee appointed by the Methodist Council for this purpose, against a direction of the authorised body under clause (4) above, *[about the replacement of the old Circuit Meeting by a new Circuit Meeting in an exceptional case]* but until the appeal is determined the direction shall remain in effect. Any such appeal shall be brought by notice in writing ... meeting convened for the purpose. **The appeal shall be determined by a group of five persons chosen for that purpose from the panel constituted under Standing Order 291 by a convener of that panel. ...**

761 Reinstatement

(4) *[Appointment of panel for reinstatement interviews]* The interviewing committee shall include as voting members the President or the Vice-President or an ex-President or ex-Vice-President as chair, the convener as secretary and up to five other persons chosen **for that purpose from the panel constituted under Standing Orders 291 by a convener of that panel.**

7) ... the interviewing committee's recommendation shall forthwith be communicated to the President of the Conference who shall, in writing, officially inform the applicant, the Methodist Council and, where the applicant is a former deacon, the Warden of the Order.

(8) If the interviewing committee recommends that an application be not granted, the Methodist Council may on the application of the applicant **may apply**, by notice in writing to the Secretary of the Conference within seven days of being informed of the recommendation, reverse **for** that recommendation **to be reversed**. **The application shall be decided by a group of five persons chosen for that purpose from the panel constituted under Standing Order 291 by a convener of that panel, and in dealing with the application** On any such application the Methodist Council **the group** shall determine its own procedures.

(9) If the Methodist Council refuses **group appointed under clause (8) above declines** to reverse a recommendation that the application be not granted the applicant may...

(10) ... except upon the recommendation of an interviewing committee under clause (5) above, or of the Methodist Council **group** under clause (8) above

770 Base of Ministry

(4)(b) ... appointed to serve in the home Districts for such periods and on such terms as the Methodist Council **Ministries Committee** ...

6)(c) The application shall then be considered by the Methodist Council **Ministries Committee**, which shall have the right to prescribe any tests it may consider necessary and shall ensure that suitable arrangements regarding pension funds can be made and that any other obligations to connexional funds will be met. The ~~council~~ **committee** shall then make its recommendation to the Conference, which shall determine the matter.

7. Property matters, in relation to the Connexional Council's own trusteeship.

Where the Connexional Council is exercising its functions in relation to other parts of the Connexion (as intended by the Model Trust amendments which are being brought for confirmation to this Conference) the relevant consequential amendments have been included in PART 1(a) above.

Any necessary amendments relating to the Connexional Council's own powers and duties as the trustee body for connexional property will be brought on the Order Paper when further consultation and consideration has been able to be brought to bear on this area of work.

51. District Amalgamations

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| Contact name and details | The Revd Sonia M Hicks, Chair of the Council ChairCouncil@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

1. North West England

The 2023 Conference agreed to the formation of a new North West England District with effect from 1 September 2024. The new District will comprise the present Bolton and Rochdale, Lancashire, Liverpool and Cumbria Districts. The Council, in May 2023, authorised a consultation process with the present Manchester and Stockport Districts in respect of whether the new North West England District would also include the Manchester and Stockport District.

Under the terms of SO 401, the Council authorised a consultation process with the Synod and Circuit Meetings of the Manchester and Stockport District, and appointed a scrutiny group to assess whether the proposals had been set out clearly, whether all the views (both for and against) had been reasonably considered and whether the proposal had support within the Manchester and Stockport District. The Council also ensured that consultation was undertaken with Synods and Circuit Meetings of the Bolton and Rochdale, Lancashire, Liverpool and Cumbria Districts, since this represented a change to the proposals on which those Circuit Meetings and District Synods had previously voted.

The Council heard that there had been full consultation within the Manchester and Stockport District and with the other four Districts which are forming the new North West England District, and that the voting results in all five Districts were very largely in favour of the Manchester and Stockport District also amalgamating on 1 September 2024 with the other four Districts to form the new North West England District.

The Council therefore recommends to the Conference that the Manchester and Stockport District forms part of the North West England District, which comes into being on 1 September 2024.

***RESOLUTIONS

51/1. The Conference receives the Report.

51/2. The Conference adopts the recommendation of the Council that the North West England District, which comes into being on 1 September 2024, should comprise the Manchester and Stockport District as well as the Bolton and Rochdale, Cumbria, Lancashire and Liverpool Districts.

2. South West Peninsula

The proposals have been carefully set out by the Joint Working Party and have been widely discussed both locally and at the Methodist Council. The Council agreed that there should be consultations with the district Synods and with the circuits, which was duly undertaken.

As part of the wider South West Region, the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly and Plymouth and Exeter Districts have a long history of collaborative working and sharing of resources across boundaries in ways which have promoted mission and sustained ministry. The proposal for a new single District stems from a desire not simply to join the administrative functions of two Districts together over a wider area but rather to use the opportunity to change how the two Districts are empowering, encouraging and resourcing Circuits, churches, and individuals for mission.

The vision is for collaborative leadership and closer working with Circuits to support the development of vision and outworking of the mission of God. This proposed amalgamation is a proactive approach to the unique opportunity for the two Districts to reconsider patterns of leadership and to reshape existing structures to better promote and support mission. It provides an exciting opportunity to offer a new approach to support mission better, not least in the area of developing New Places for New People (NPNP) across the Circuits. The proposed renewed approach to collaborative leadership will make richer use of the gifts and graces of volunteers, lay employees and ordained staff across the new District, and may provide Circuits with targeted support that is closer to hand than is currently offered.

Have the proposals been reasonably considered?

The Council reports that there has been widespread consultation and discussion in the Districts and the Circuits. Voting has taken place at Circuit Meetings and District Synods. Care has been taken to outline the proposals and there is no doubt that much in-depth liaison, reflection and debate have been undertaken with the clear imperative of enhancing mission.

A consultation document prepared for deliberations and decision making at Circuit Meetings and Synods covered well thought out areas under the following headings:

- Introduction
- Leadership
- Structure of proposed district
- Missional Policy
- Personnel
- Financial information

51. District Amalgamations

It also included a helpful FAQ section. In addition, a PowerPoint presentation accompanied the information sharing at each meeting.

The scrutiny group reported to the Council that there is a substantial majority in support of the proposal, with twenty five of the thirty Circuits across both Districts voting in favour. The Council is confident that there has been, and will continue to be, careful pastoral and prayerful liaison, outreach and discussion with the Circuits that were not in favour. The voting in the Synods represented a vote in favour of 82%.

The Council therefore recommends to the Conference that a new South West Peninsula District is established, with effect from 1 September 2024, comprising the present Plymouth and Exeter and Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Districts.

***RESOLUTIONS

51/3. The Conference receives the Report.

51/4. The Conference adopts the recommendation of the Council that, with effect from 1 September 2024, a new South West Peninsula District is established, comprising the present Plymouth and Exeter and Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Districts.

3. West Midlands

Background

In September 2023 a joint meeting of the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury and Birmingham Synods received proposals to create a new merged District from September 2025. Each Synod, meeting separately, returned a vote of 70% in favour of requesting the Methodist Council to take this proposal forward. The Methodist Council, under the terms of SO 401, authorised a full consultation in Circuit Meetings and the Synods.

Every Circuit Meeting received a presentation, and had the opportunity to raise questions and concerns.

Circuits varied considerably in how many questions they raised. Questions often focused on the following areas:

- how a larger body might affect the quality of relationships within the District
- financial implications for Circuits in the short and medium term
- the impacts that belonging to a larger District might have on day-to-day circuit life
- how a new leadership structure might work in practice
- accessibility to District life (eg Synods) when on a larger scale
- location of District Office / Synods / District meetings

Reflection and Learning by the Joint District Task Group

The process of meeting with the Circuits helped the task group to refine and shape what they hope a new District might embody. In particular they noted:

- The image in the video presentation of the District as a trellis upon which the vine of circuit / church life can grow proved to be a powerful one. It reconfirmed to the task group that the District is, above all, a resourcing network. They noted that a trellis structure is not a centrist model....it spreads across the area where plants are growing, offering equal support in every location.
- Whilst it will be important to “get the structure right”, a primary focus should continue to be placed on a new District as a place of good communications and relating. Leaders in a new District should prioritise the building of good relationships across the whole region.
- The strong negative reaction from one Circuit is a welcome reminder that this was not a rubber-stamping exercise. Attention will continue to be paid to addressing the concerns of this and other Circuits.
- The current Districts have within them many “marginal” or “fringe” people and places. These include:
 - churches on the geographical fringes
 - children and young people, especially those present in churches in very small numbers.
 - fledgling communities trying to be church in new ways
 - churches both urban and rural serving places of severe economic disadvantage
 - people and communities vulnerable to unjust treatment on account of their ethnicity, sexuality or differing ability.

The task group is reflecting on what a District might look like that puts these margins at the centre.

Does the proposal have support?

All twenty-two circuit meetings voted. All but one voted in favour.

In total, 634 people registered a vote (266 in Birmingham; 368 in Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury). The average circuit vote across the two Districts was 87% in favour (92% Birmingham, 82% Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury). The scrutiny group reported to the Council that there is strong support for the proposals in both the Synods.

The Council therefore recommends to the Conference that a new West Midlands District is established, with effect from 1 September 2025, comprising the present Birmingham and Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury Districts.

51. District Amalgamations

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 51/5. The Conference receives the Report.
- 51/6. The Conference adopts the recommendation of the Council that, with effect from 1 September 2025, a new West Midlands District is established, comprising the present Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury and Birmingham Districts.

52. Briefing for conferring on the Justice Priority: Poverty in the UK

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | Rachel Lampard, Director of Social Justice and Social Action LampardR@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Action required | For information |
| Resolutions | None |

Summary of content

| | |
|--|---|
| Subject and aims | This briefing introduces the session on Poverty in the UK, and invites members of the Conference to consider some questions in preparation. |
| Main points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current impact of poverty in the UK • Range of responses by churches • Questions for consideration |
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | The Justice-seeking Church report (2023) https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/29385/conf-23-pc-12-walking-with-micah-project.pdf Let's End Poverty Movement https://letsendpoverty.co.uk |

Briefing for conferring on the Justice Priority – poverty in the UK

Introduction

1. The Methodist Conference 2023 adopted the Justice-Seeking Church report.¹ One of the recommendations was:

“that the Conference sets aside time each year for members to confer deeply on one of the five Priorities, in a way which offers resource or direction for the future, a practice that could also be reflected in districts and circuits... the main focus would be on discerning where God is acting for justice within the priority areas and conferring on how the Methodist Church can best join in.”

¹ <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/29385/conf-23-pc-12-walking-with-micah-project.pdf>

52. Briefing for conferring on the Justice Priority: Poverty in the UK

2. Conference members will this year be invited to confer on the priority of **Tackling inequality and poverty: seeking life in all its fullness**. This paper: offers some contextual information on poverty in the UK; describes some of the ways Methodists are tackling poverty and inequality, including through the Let's End Poverty movement in the run up to the General Election; and suggests some ways in which members of the Conference might prepare for this session.

Poverty in the UK

"My brain is on fire all the time, and that's all just through the pressure of life, really I can't look beyond today. I'm treading water. My head is just above the water at the moment. Just above. It is a struggle." 53-year-old man, living alone

"When I used to have a job supporting other people to try to get back to work, I'd do an exercise where I'd get them to draw a wall and then write on the bricks what barriers stood in their way. Then we'd try to address those barriers. Now that I'm in the situation myself, I can see what the barriers are but I just can't see a way to overcome them." 44-year-old woman, living with her three children. (An Essentials Guarantee report, Trussell Trust & Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2023)

3. Poverty in the UK is increasing. More than 1 in 5 people in the UK (22%) were in poverty in 2022-2023 – that represents 14.3 million people, including 8.1 million working age adults, 4.3 million children and 1.9 million pensioners. Poverty is also deepening: around 3.8 million people experienced destitution in 2022, where they could not meet their most basic physical needs to stay warm, dry, clean and fed. This included around one million children. These figures have more than doubled since 2017.
4. Some groups of people are more likely to experience poverty than others. Around half of people in Pakistani and Bangladeshi households struggle against poverty. In 2024, for the first time data revealed that if you are a child of black, African or Caribbean heritage you were more likely to live in poverty than not (51%). Nearly a third of disabled people are in poverty, and informal carers are more likely to be in poverty than people without caring responsibilities.
5. More people are working but still struggling against poverty. Two thirds of working-age adults experiencing poverty live in a household where at least one person is in work. Poverty is increasing despite employment rates also increasing.
6. Poverty in rural areas can often be hidden, but can be intensified by pressures such as a lack of public transport, seasonal working patterns and fuel costs.

52. Briefing for conferring on the Justice Priority: Poverty in the UK

7. Poverty affects people's life chances and outcomes. The gaps in life expectancy are growing (currently over 10 years between the richest and poorest women), but people in poverty on average also live more of their lives with major illness. Children who are eligible for free school meals in England on average do significantly worse at every stage of their school education than their peers who are not.

Social action and Social Justice

8. We know what causes poverty, and we know what changes are needed in our structures and systems to tackle it. We all need secure housing, a reliable, adequate income that's tailored to our needs, and support when things get difficult. How do we work together as a society to achieve the change that is needed to end poverty and ensure everyone experiences life in all its fullness?
9. The Justice-seeking Church report identified some key areas in which Methodists might find what is "theirs to do" to work for justice: through being rooted in their community; through working for systemic change; and through sharing a vision of a different future.
10. Churches are responding to poverty in their communities in many ways. Many churches host foodbanks, Local Pantries, Warm Welcomes, or community meals as ways of combatting hunger and building relationships. Some are focusing on particular groups such as children, families or carers. Churches making decisions about land or property are sometimes looking at whether they can work with partners to offer community resources or housing. Some churches are engaging with political leaders in their local area, and national representatives, to call for policy change.
11. Yet aspiration to tackle poverty is missing from political debate. YouGov polling by Christians Against Poverty shows that 88% of people say more should be done to tackle poverty in the UK. The Joint Public Issues Team has led campaigns over a number of years and helped form **Let's End Poverty**. Let's End Poverty, of which the Methodist Church is a founder and driving member, is a growing movement of people and organisations united behind a vision of the UK where poverty can't keep anyone down. The aims of the movement are: to mobilise communities to build political and public willingness to end poverty, particularly ahead of the next UK General Election; to bring a diverse group of people behind a positive vision for change; and to create new leaders from communities with lived experience of poverty.

52. Briefing for conferring on the Justice Priority: Poverty in the UK

12. The movement building approach of Let's End Poverty is in harmony with the belief that "Nothing about us, without us, is for us". People with experience of injustice must be involved in shaping their own future, something that is central to the Church at the Margins programme. The Justice-seeking Church report emphasised the importance of "being with" people in seeking justice, rather than "doing to" people.
13. Ahead of the next General Election, churches and communities are being invited to consider how they can play their part in the Let's End Poverty movement, to ensure that the urgent need to tackle poverty is not absent from public and political debate.

Conferring at Conference

14. Conference members will be invited to confer on this justice priority. In order to prepare for this conversation, members are asked to reflect on these questions in advance, perhaps by discussing them with people in their churches or local communities:
 - a. Did any of the statistics above surprise you? What does poverty look and feel like in your community? How do you know this?
 - b. What positive examples of communities or churches tackling poverty have you seen or been part of?
 - c. In an unjust world, where do you see our God of justice at work?
 - d. In the next five years, how can the Methodist Church join in with ending poverty using our gifts, skills and resources?

Sources for the data in this paper include: *Households Below Average Income 2022-23 data*, DWP (2024); *UK Poverty 2024*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2024); *An Essentials Guarantee*, Trussell Trust & JRF (2023); *Health inequalities 2040*, Health Foundation (2024); *Education Inequalities*, IFS (2022)

53. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report

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|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact name and details | Deacon Karen McBride Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order mdowarden@methodistchurch.org.uk |
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Our life together as deacons and members of the Order

Membership:

The Methodist Diaconal Order currently has a complement of 244 members.

125 in the active work (including six diaconal probationers, one ordained probationer and six diaconal ordinands)

106 supernumerary deacons

Seven diaconal students

Three deacons hold 'without appointment' status

One authorised deacon and one associate deacon in the active work

One supernumerary associate deacon

Ten 'Associate members' and a number of 'Friends' who commit to support the Order through prayer and advocacy.

Since the MDO report to the Conference 2023:

- Five full members and three MDO Associate members have died
- Four diaconal probationers have been received into Full Connexion and full membership of the Order, and ordained into the diaconate within the universal Church.
- Six people were accepted as candidates for training in 2023 and four further candidates will be recommended to the Conference 2024
- 13 members are seeking the permission of the Conference to 'sit down'.

MDO Deputy Warden Discernment process

After six very fruitful years as Deputy Warden, Deacon Ruth Richey will be taking up a new appointment in September 2024. Therefore, the Methodist Council asked the MDO Support and Advisory group and the Warden's Nomination Committee to draw up a process to discern the next Deputy Warden of the Order. The discernment group met together for prayer, review and discernment, and following this careful work the panel came to the shared mind and heart that Deacon Michelle Legumi be nominated to the Methodist Council as the Deputy Warden of the MDO from September 2024 for an initial period of five years.

53. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report

Our relationship with other diaconal orders and deacons

The MDO continues to be active in praying for and supporting other Orders of Deacons, looking to build and strengthen ecumenical relationships.

Currently, in collaboration with the United Reformed Church's Church Related Community Workers, a conference 'In the thick of it' is being planned. This follows on from a previous and fruitful conference organised some years ago by the URC to which MDO members were invited. In September 2023 four members of the MDO travelled to Germany to participate in the Diakonia Region Africa-Europe conference and we look forward to sending representatives to the World Diakonia Conference in Tanzania in 2025. We have this year, through DRAE and Convocation, been able to reconnect with the Deaconess Order in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, with two of their members participating in Convocation.

Further work with 2019 Conference Report: The Theology and Ecclesiology Underpinning the Diaconate and the Methodist Diaconal Order

The following brief statements are an attempt to share with the Conference the Order's work to date on two of the outstanding matters raised by the 2019 Conference Report.

The office of Vice-President of the Methodist Conference:

*5.1.2. In its response to Memorial 1, the 2011 Conference directed that the Methodist Council, **Convocation**, and the Faith and Order Committee were to review and report on the question of whether it is consonant with our understanding for the office of Vice-President to be open to deacons as well as lay people. This question has not been explored during this piece of work and will now be given consideration in the light of this report.*

At the Convocation of 2022, the Order had a full and robust conversation facilitated by the Secretary of the Conference, the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler. A number of perspectives were shared and explored, and there were some differing voices. However, the Convocation generally agreed that it remained important for the deacon's ministry to be recognised as one, which offers servant *leadership*. Regardless of whether or not the office of Vice-President included deacons, it was felt vital that this aspect of ordained diaconal ministry had opportunity to be given full expression and, at least on occasions, be prominent within the life of the Methodist Church.

At the Conference, following the 2022 Convocation conversation, Deacon Kerry Scarlett was elected and designated as Vice-President of the Conference for 2023-2024. She is among only a handful of deaconesses/deacons who have occupied this office and the Order believes she, as with other members before her, has held this office with dignity, wisdom and grace.

53. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report

At the 2024 Convocation the Order, believing it has done the work asked of it, agreed to share the following statement with regard to the MDO's mind on this subject with the Conference:

The MDO believes each member who has held the office of Vice-President of the Conference has been able to bring something unique *because* they were a deacon/ess. Therefore, whilst members of the MDO may personally respond differently to the question raised by the 2019 report, there is strong consensus within the Order for the status quo to remain in relation to deacons being able to serve as the Vice President of the Conference.

Diaconal Dress:

5.1.5. There also needs to be some further consideration of the following:

d. Some further reflection on diaconal dress

The colours of navy blue and white forming part of the deacon's formal dress code have not overall been questioned. We have, however, occupied time and energy over the years on what 'items of dress' should be included! Following the 2008 Conference report: *Ministers, Presbyters and Deacons: Signalling Vocation, Clarifying Identity* the Convocation conferred on this matter. As members, we agreed alongside the navy suit a number of other appropriate dress items; this included robes, clerical collar and casual clothing.

Overall we have been able to uphold with respect and sensitivity one another's choices; however, where any ongoing conversation remained it has focused on the wearing of the clerical collar. Some of us are happy to wear a clerical shirt most of the time and others of us never – and everyone else is somewhere in between! It seems clear to the Order that there cannot be a 'one rule fits all' and opinions and circumstances differ, as has the landscape of ministry since 2008/9. We sense, when we put this issue of dress alongside the needs for the ministry we are called to, to keep such a conversation 'live' simply because we may have different approaches is not a healthy or holy way forward!

Therefore, the following proposals were put before and accepted by the Convocation 2024 (these seek to take into account and expand upon the decisions we made in 2009, the guidance of the Ordination Handbook and current practices):

Formal Dress:

- A navy suit (ie jacket with trousers/skirt/dress – at ordination: jacket with trousers/skirt);
- The MDO lapel badge on the left- hand lapel of the jacket;

53. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report

- The MDO Cross;
- A white shirt/blouse and, if wished, a navy tie;
- Or a white or navy clerical shirt (at ordination: a white clerical shirt)

Casual forms of dress:

- Navy and white with the Order's cross/badge or printed on them eg sweatshirts, polo shirts;
- Or what is appropriate for the situation

Cassocks and Robes

- Navy with a scarf/stole, which includes the badge of Order.

Whenever choosing to wear a clerical shirt:

- Colour: navy or white;
- With badge and/or Cross of MDO (unless circumstances prohibit).

Whilst recognising within the Order there are minor differing views around these two areas, we note that both are subjects on which we, as an Order, have already had significant conversations and reflections over the years. It is, therefore, our hope that no further conferring is required at this stage by the MDO and that we might now summarise our reflections and live graciously where there are differing approaches.

The Convocation

The overarching theme for our Convocation this year was 'Embodying Community'. Building and being community has been, and continues to be, a significant part of the story of the Methodist Diaconal Order. The Conference Report of 2019 affirms 'the MDO models discipleship as part of belonging to a community, potentially prompting wider reflection on what it means to journey with one another, to be a praying people, and to live for God and neighbour'.

Community building and belonging are regarded as characteristic of the ministry of deacons. The Diakonia World Federation reminds us, authentic community 'is centred in the **whole** community of Christ. Ideally in community people share what they have, receive what they need, and find support and encouragement for service in the world'. A characteristic of our ministry but not exclusive to the diaconate, it is a task we share with others and so we were delighted that at this year's Convocation, once again, there were a significant number of guests to welcome, to learn and share with.

53. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report

Our guests included:

The President of the Conference, the Revd Gill Newton, accompanied by the Vice-President, Deacon Kerry Scarlett, who, as an active member of the MDO, needed no introduction, however the Convocation was delighted to be able to welcome her and receive from and celebrate the ministry of the Presidency.

We were enabled in deepening our theological reflection of what it means to be in community by the Revd Dr Raj Bharat Patta and the Revd Romeo Regardo Pedro who graciously invited us into that 'wider reflection on what it means to journey with one another, to be a praying people, and to live for God and neighbour'.

A number of guests from around the Connexion and the Connexional Team alongside members also participated in aiding the Convocation to delve deeply into our theme. Encouraged by the Vice-President, the Director of Social Justice and Social Action and the Methodist Anti-Poverty Coordinator we explored 'Being a Justice Seeking Community'; Guided by the Order's Net Zero working group we took further steps into 'Being an Eco Conscious Community'. Running through our worship, business, and reflecting was the call to recognise ourselves as God sees us, as a Beloved Community.

In our worship and in the formal business of the Conference Diaconal Committee we heard the stories and testimonies of those at significant stages of vocation and life; this included celebrating two members reaching their 60th year of ordination and two members reaching their 70th year of ordination. We gave thanks and remembered those members who had died in the past year and celebrated those who were brought into Full Connexion with the Conference, became full members of the Order and were ordained at the 2023 Conference. We recognised the ministry of those seeking permission of the Conference to 'sit down' this year. We recommended to the Conference the candidates for acceptance into initial formation and training; the students and probationers to continue on trial; probationers to be recommended for reception into Full Connexion, full membership of the order and (if not already ordained) ordination. (See the report of the Conference Diaconal Committee elsewhere in the Agenda.)

The Convocation held an evening of Community Celebration in gratitude and love for the ministry of Deacon Ruth Richey, the Deputy Warden. This included the sharing of fellowship and fun, prayers and gifts. The Convocation wished Ruth well as she prepares for her new appointment, promising to hold her and Michelle Legumi in our prayers as together we all adjust to new places and new teams.

In the closing service reflecting on Romans 8, the President charged us to dwell in hope, to not get lost in the great expanse but to seek 'the star' that guides into God's way - the way of hope and renewal for all. The Warden and the Deputy Warden led the Service of Rededication in which each member, full, probationer, student, associate and authorised

53. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report

was required to reaffirm their commitment and willingness to take up the opportunities, obligations and privileges of ministry as deacons in God's church and our shared life within the community of the Methodist Diaconal Order. We did so trusting in God's help and grace to enable us as individuals and as a religious order to live the life of a beloved Community called into a life of prayer and a ministry witness and service for sake of all God's beloved world.

Prayer of the Convocation:

Listen and hear:

Be still and know

God is here

Be still and know

Love is here

Loving God, you call us 'Beloved'.
In this moment of our lives help us
to be one with You and with each other.

Amen

*****RESOLUTIONS**

53/1. The Conference receives the Report.

53/2. The Conference resolves that the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall meet at Yarnfield Park, Staffordshire from Tuesday 6 May until Friday 9 May 2025.

54. Report to the Representative Session of Business Conducted by the Conference Diaconal Committee

The Conference Diaconal Committee met on 8 May 2024. The President took the Chair.

1. **Deacons who have died**

The Committee approved the obituaries of David Bernard Clark, Helen Davie, Ivy Rose Forkin, Maria Howard, Janet Linda Miles.

2. **Candidates**

- 2.1 The Committee recommended, with the required majority, acceptance by the Representative Session of the following candidates to proceed immediately into pre-ordination training:

Jane Brough
Jessica Dalton
Melissa Wheeler
Kathryn Williams

- 2.2 The Committee recommended, with the required majority, acceptance by the Representative Session of the following candidates to proceed to training upon the fulfilment of certain conditions:

No case

- 2.3 The Committee noted the following deacons recommended by the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation for training for presbyteral ministry upon transfer from diaconal ministry:

No case

- 2.4 The Committee noted the following accepted diaconal candidates recommended by the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation for training for presbyteral ministry:

No case

3. **Transfer**

The Committee adopted the recommendation by a 75% majority or more of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation acting as Transfer Committee that the following applicants should be transferred to the jurisdiction of this Conference, as a probationer:

No case

4. **Training and probation**

The Committee adopted the following special reports of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers' Oversight Committee:

54. Report to the Representative Session of Business Conducted by the Conference Diaconal Committee

- 4.1 Candidates accepted at previous Conferences and given permission to delay entry into training
No case
- 4.2 Candidates accepted at this Conference and to be given permission to delay entry into training
No case
- 4.3 Candidates accepted at this Conference and to be given permission to transfer to another Conference
No case
- 4.4 Candidates conditionally accepted at previous Conferences
 - (a) Those judged to have fulfilled the condition and therefore to be accepted as candidates
No case
 - (b) Those judged to have failed to fulfil the condition and thereby not to be accepted as candidates
No case
 - (c) Those still to fulfil the condition
No case
- 4.5 Changes in expected date of Reception into Full Connexion
 - (a) To an earlier date
No case
 - (b) To a later date
Marcianne Uwimana from 2024 to 2025
- 4.6 Deferment or suspension under SO 726
 - (a) Student deacons
No case
 - (b) Probationers
No case

54. Report to the Representative Session of Business Conducted by the Conference Diaconal Committee

- 4.7 Withdrawals under SO 727
 - (a) Candidates
No case
 - (b) Student deacons
No case
 - (c) Probationers
No case
- 4.8 Transfer to other Conferences or Churches
No case
- 4.9 Reinstatements under SO 761
No case
- 4.10 Discipline
No case
- 4.11 Special reports

Alison Hyde
Dorice Williams
- 4.12 Discontinuance under SO 031(4)
 - (a) Student deacons
No case
 - (b) Probationer deacons
No case

54. Report to the Representative Session of Business Conducted by the Conference Diaconal Committee

In the following lists:

* = change from the lists approved by the 2023 Conference

+ = candidates accepted by the 2023 Conference

| Surname | First name(s) | Due to be received into Full Connexion |
|---------------|----------------|--|
| +Blackhall | James | 2028 |
| Brazier | Deborah Jane | 2027 |
| +Chikaviro | Vivian | 2028 |
| Clark | Natalie Mary | 2025 |
| +Cook | Helen | 2027 |
| Da Silva Kaka | Adelha | 2025 |
| +Dolman | Joanne | 2027 |
| Gardner | Helen | 2025 |
| *Hyde | Alison (Ali) | 2025 |
| Laycock | Judith Grace | 2025 |
| Morris | Samantha Jane | 2026 |
| +Paterson | Katrina (Kate) | 2027 |
| +Topping | William (Bill) | 2027 |
| *Uwimana | Marcianne | 2025 |
| Williams | Dorice | 2026 |

5. Ordinands

The Committee recommended to the Representative Session of the Conference that the following are fit to be received into Full Connexion with the Conference as deacons and to be received into full membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order, and, if not already ordained, to be ordained:

Janet Amey
 Margaret Chipandambira
 Douw Gerbrand Grobler
 Marie Poole
 Claire Purfit
 Suzanne Marie Sale
 Vicky Ann Welsh

54. Report to the Representative Session of Business Conducted by the Conference Diaconal Committee

6. **Permission to serve abroad**

Ramona Dinard
Marlene A Skuce

7. **Permission to reside abroad**

Harriet P Bacon
Gordon H Wallace

8. **Deacons becoming supernumerary**

- (a) The Committee recommended to the Representative Session that the following deacons be permitted to become supernumerary:

Sheila Dawson
Donna Ely
Janet Heys
Linda Kinchenton
Pamela Luxton
Alison McCauley
Jane Paine
Margaret Patchett
Kina Saunders
Robert Stoner
Annie Trembling
Sara Windsor-Hides
Jennifer Woodfin

- (b) Permissions granted during the year:

During the year, the President permitted the following deacons to become supernumerary on health grounds:

No case

*All applications are made under SO 790(1), except those marked * who are applying on grounds of ill health under SO 790(2).*

See the Presbyters and Deacons Becoming Supernumerary or Returning to the Active Work section of the Agenda for the resolution to be presented to the Representative Session.

54. Report to the Representative Session of Business Conducted by the Conference Diaconal Committee

9. Resignations

No case

10. Annual Inquiry

The Warden of the Order gave to the President on behalf of the Convocation the assurances as to the character and discipline of the deacons and diaconal probationers required by SO 183.

***RESOLUTIONS

54/1. The Conference receives the Report.

54/2. The Conference resolves, by a Standing Vote, that it accepts for training, unconditionally or conditionally as the case may be, the candidates for ministry recommended by the Diaconal Committee whose names are recorded in the report of that Committee.

54/3. The Conference adopts the report on diaconal students and probationers recommended for continuance in training or on probation as set out in section 4.

54/4. The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that those persons whose names have been read to the Conference and are printed in the Agenda be now received into Full Connexion with the Conference as deacons and into full membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order, and, if not already ordained, to be ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands on the afternoon of this day, 30 June 2024, at Morley Central Methodist Church.

55. Circuit Amalgamations

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Name and contact details | The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler Secretary of the Conference SoC@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

INTRODUCTION

1. The Conference exercises its responsibilities under the Deed of Union (DU 38(a)) to direct the formation 'into Circuits for mutual encouragements and help' the Local Churches of the Connexion when it adopts the Stations as one of the final acts of the Conference each year. In doing so, it adopts any changes to the Circuits which have been proposed to it by Synods under SO 501(3):
'All proposals for the division or amalgamation of Circuits or other changes in their composition or for the adoption of a modified constitution as defined in Standing Order 580 or both shall be considered by the district Policy Committee, which shall consult the Circuit Meetings and Church Councils involved. In the case of changes in composition the committee shall formulate a draft recommendation, obtain the resolutions of the Circuit Meetings and Church Councils on that draft and report those resolutions to the Synod with its own substantive recommendation. The Synod shall make its own recommendation to the Conference, reporting with it the resolutions received by the district Policy Committee and stating whether or not it approves any associated proposals for a modified constitution.'
2. It has not, therefore, normally been the custom of the Conference to receive a report on alterations to the composition of Circuits separate from the adoption of the Stations. This process assumes that the proposed changes are brought to the Conference before the 1 September from which they take effect, even if, as is sometimes the case, the changes in composition are agreed by the District and Circuits concerned a year or more in advance of the change.
3. Recent years have seen circuit amalgamations on a large scale. In such cases, Districts will want to make the decision more than a year in advance of the change in order to allow time for implementation. It can be helpful to the District to have reassurance that the Conference intends to adopt the change proposed. The Conference is therefore asked to note the report of the Scotland Synod and to approve the proposed amalgamation of the Circuits in that District from 1 September 2025.
4. Not every proposed change in composition is unequivocally welcomed by those affected and dissent from the Synod's proposal may be expressed through the

55. Circuit Amalgamations

resolutions adopted by one or more of the Circuits involved. In those circumstances, the Conference is cognizant of SO 501(7):

'If, in the judgment of the Conference, any change resolved upon by the Conference is substantially out of accord with the reported resolution of any Circuit Meeting involved, or, where more than one District is involved, with the recommendation of any Synod, it shall take effect only if confirmed by the Conference of the year next following.'

5. The Conference is therefore asked to note the report of the Cumbria Synod (below) including the voting figures from the Circuits whose amalgamation into the new Cumbria Circuit and to adopt the resolution that the new Circuit be created from 1 September 2025 if, and only if, the change is confirmed by the 2025 Conference (in the adoption of the Stations).
6. The Conference is also asked to note the representation of the Kirkby Stephen, Appleby and Tebay Circuit and the information sheet produced by the District which was circulated to all Circuits during the consultation (Appendix A).

****RESOLUTIONS

55/1. The Conference receives the Report.

55/2. The Conference resolves under Standing Order 501 that the Circuits in the Scotland District amalgamate to form a single Scotland Circuit from 1 September 2025, and that all necessary steps be taken for its implementation.

55/3. The Conference resolves under Standing Order 501 that the Circuits in the present Cumbria District amalgamate to form a single Cumbria Circuit from 1 September 2025, and that all necessary steps be taken for its implementation.

Report from the Scotland Synod

The Synod of the Methodist Church in Scotland, meeting in April 2024, agreed to recommend to the Methodist Conference 2024 that the existing Circuits in the Scotland District amalgamate to form a single Scotland Circuit from 1st September 2025.

It was reported to the Synod that a careful consultation had been conducted and that the process followed was:

February 2023: The District Policy Committee (DPC) with all Superintendent Ministers met for prayerful discernment and to consider models for the future of the District.

55. Circuit Amalgamations

This led to a report and recommendation to the Representative Synod of exploring and engaging in a process that would move towards a shared single circuit.

April 2023: The Synod received and discussed the DPC report and its recommendation. The conversation was made all the richer by the contributions of our ecumenical guests. Having conferred together members of Synod voted to: 'affirm the recommendation of the DPC and commend a shared single Scotland circuit to the circuits for consultation.' (Of the 43 voting synod members present 42 were in favour and 1 against.) SO 501 was noted as providing the appropriate process to follow.

May-August 2023: Consultations with Circuits and churches with open meetings which reported back the general feeling, any concerns or questions raised, any benefits recognised and welcomed. (The Synod report and comments made by Synod members and ecumenical guests were made available to all taking part in consultations.)

September 2023: The DPC and the Synod received the feedback of the consultations and agreed to set up seven working groups (with membership representative from across the District and the six Circuits) to consider and explore issues raised:

Group 1. Organisation, structure, administration

Group 2. Property and Finance

Group 3. Ministry (ordained and lay appointments)

Group 4. Communication

Group 5. Preaching and worship leading

Group 6. Church Life

Group 7. Safeguarding

January 2024: The DPC met to confer over the collated work of the groups and made its recommendation to Circuits and churches as follows:

'The Scotland District Policy Committee recommends that The Methodist Church in Scotland operates as a single Scotland Circuit from 1st September 2025.

'To effect this as simply as possible, five of the current Circuits will come to the end of their existence as charitable bodies on 31st August 2025 and will join with the sixth, the receiving charity, whose name and constitution will be changed accordingly. The decision

55. Circuit Amalgamations

regarding which Circuit will be the receiving charity is yet to be determined but will not imply any Circuit to be more important or valued than any other.

'Accordingly, each Circuit Meeting and Church Council is invited to vote on the following resolution and to report the figures to DPC no later than midday on Wednesday 20 March 2024.

'The X Circuit Meeting or Y Church Council resolves that, under Standing Order 501, the Scotland District Policy Committee and the Scotland District Synod be asked to recommend to the Methodist Conference 2024 that the existing Circuits in the Scotland District amalgamate to form a single Scotland Circuit from 1st September 2025, and that, if the Methodist Conference approves the amalgamation, all necessary steps be taken for its implementation.'

February-March 2024: Church Councils and Circuit Meetings conferred and voted on the recommendation of the DPC (see below for voting figures).

20 March 2024: The DPC and the Superintendents met to receive and consider the votes of Circuit Meetings and Church Councils. This meeting was unanimous in its decision to recommend to the Synod the formation of a single circuit as proposed to Circuits and Churches.

20 April 2024: The Synod met in Representative Session and received the DPC report and recommendation, including the circuit and church voting data. Following a vote of 52 'for' and 2 'against', the Scotland Synod made its own resolution to the Methodist Conference 2024.

March 2024 - Voting figures from Circuits and Churches

Below are the voting figures received from each Circuit Meeting and Church Council in the District on the following resolution:

The "*name of*" Church Council/Circuit Meeting resolves that, under Standing Order 501, the Scotland District Policy Committee and the Scotland District Synod be asked to recommend to the Methodist Conference 2024 that the existing Circuits in the Scotland District amalgamate to form a single Scotland Circuit from 1st September 2025, and that, if the Methodist Conference approves the amalgamation, all necessary steps be taken for its implementation.

55. Circuit Amalgamations

| Circuit Meetings | Votes for | Votes against |
|--|------------------|----------------------|
| Angus, Dundee and Perthshire | 20 | 1 |
| Ayrshire and Renfrewshire | 8 | 0 |
| Forth Valley | 16 | 3 |
| Inverness | 12 | 1 |
| North of Scotland Mission | 16 | 1 |
| Strathclyde | 26 | 0 |
| Church Councils | | |
| ADP Arbroath | 9 | 0 |
| ADP East of Scotland | 14 | 2 |
| ADP Montrose | 5 | 0 |
| A/R Barrhead | 6 | 0 |
| A/R Paisley Central Hall | 7 | 1 |
| FV Armadale | 6 | 1 |
| FV City of Edinburgh | 12 | 0 |
| FV Grahamston United | 12 | 0 |
| FV Granton | 2 | 2 |
| FV Livingston United Parish Church Council | 16 | 0 |
| FV Rosyth | 7 | 0 |
| FV Stirling | 13 | 0 |
| FV Tranent with Cockenzie | 8 | 0 |
| FV Wallacestone | 6 | 0 |
| NoSM Aberdeen | 10 | 0 |
| NoSM Moray Coast | 6 | 0 |
| NoSM Peterhead | 7 | 0 |
| S East Kilbride | 9 | 1 |
| S Ebenezer | 7 | 0 |
| S Glasgow West | 14 | 0 |
| S Kilsyth | 5 | 1 |
| S Netherton | 15 | 0 |
| S New Stevenson | 4 | 1 |
| S Pollokshaws | 13 | 0 |
| S Woodlands | 6 | 0 |

55. Circuit Amalgamations

Report from the Cumbria Synod

- 1.1 Under Standing Order 501, the Conference is asked to approve the Cumbria District Synod's recommendation that the eight Circuits in the present Cumbria District should amalgamate to form a single Cumbria Circuit from 1 September 2025.
- 1.2 The possibility of a single Cumbria Circuit was presented to the Cumbria District Synod in April 2022, and, on the recommendation of the District Policy Committee (or Group, as it is known in Cumbria – the 'DPG'), the September 2022 Synod appointed a Cumbria Circuit Group to explore possible options for reconfiguring the circuits in Cumbria. The Group considered alternative models and recommended to the April 2023 Synod that a single Cumbria model Circuit be pursued, for the following summary reasons:
 - A desire to **release energy for local mission and ministry by sharing governance and administration**. Instead of replicating trustee responsibilities and governance processes eight times whilst often struggling to find office holders and spending much time maintaining the structures, or continuing the series of incremental circuit mergers in recent years, amalgamating to form a single Circuit should pool resources and ensure an effective team and collegiality for supporting local churches to enable them to focus on fellowship and outreach.
 - A desire to **promote further ecumenical working within the Ecumenical County of Cumbria** (being, since 2011, a Covenant Partnership in Extended Area) through its common vision and strategy for mission. Removing the internal Methodist circuit boundaries within the county should allow further development of Ecumenical Mission Communities to undertake mission together, whilst allowing necessary Methodist oversight to operate at county level in respect of local Methodist churches, personnel and processes.
 - A desire **within the new merged North West England District** to become a single Circuit coterminous with the designated Cumbria Mission Area within the new District, to enable the Cumbria Circuit/Mission Area to operate with greater coherence and effectiveness as part of the new District.
- 1.3 The April 2023 Synod agreed that the model of a single circuit should be explored. An open well-attended 'Gathering Day' in July 2023 shared both ideas and concerns, and initial views were expressed through an indicative vote. As a result, under Standing Order 501 the DPG recommended to the September 2023 Synod that the Synod endorse a formal consultation with all the circuit meetings and church councils of the Cumbria District, to which the Synod agreed almost unanimously.
- 1.4 The consultation took place between September 2023 and the end of March 2024. Every church council and circuit meeting within the Cumbria District was asked to

55. Circuit Amalgamations

consider an introductory video that explained the proposal, a formal consultation document that explained the process and possible structure for a single county circuit, and some considered the responses to various Frequently Asked Questions ('FAQs'). Each meeting was asked to vote on the following resolution:

The [x Circuit Meeting or y Methodist Church Council] resolves that, under Standing Order 501, the Cumbria District Policy Group and the Cumbria District Synod be asked to recommend to the Methodist Conference of 2024 that the existing Circuits in the Cumbria District amalgamate to form a single Cumbria Circuit from 1 September 2025, and that, if the Methodist Conference approves the amalgamation, all necessary steps be taken for its implementation.

- 1.5 During the consultation, support was provided by Cumbria Circuit Group where requested and offered where concerns were expressed. An open and well attended 'Listening Day' was held in February 2024, facilitated by Place for Hope, to help those with different perspectives or concerns to understand each other better. This focused a continuing intention to listen to and learn from each other's different perspectives. The FAQs were further developed and reissued as more comments and questions were received.

2. RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION

- 2.1 The results of the votes of each Church Council and Circuit Meeting in the Cumbria District are set out in the Table in Appendix 1, and in the Diagrams in Appendix 2.
- 2.2 Findings:
- 2.2.1 The consultation appeared to be effective in terms of the overall numbers of Circuit Meetings and Church Councils that considered the proposal and reported votes: only two possible meetings failed to report a vote, one small Methodist church that struggled to agree a meeting date, and one small Local Ecumenical Partnership ('LEP'). The consultation could therefore be said to have comprehensively tested the mind of the Methodist churches and Circuits in Cumbria.
- 2.2.2 The relevant columns in the Table in Appendix 1 record, where reported, those present and able to vote, and those voting for or against the resolution (as is standard in the Methodist Church, abstentions or neutral votes were not recorded). Generally, the numbers of those able to vote and choosing to express a vote in each meeting were high, or included everyone present and entitled to vote.
- 2.2.3 Every circuit except one voted in favour of the resolution, with voting in favour being very high or unanimous. The Kirkby Stephen, Appleby and Tebay Circuit

55. Circuit Amalgamations

('KSAT') voted against, overall reporting 35 votes or 25.5% in favour, and 102 votes or 74.5% against, with all but two churches voting against, but with a closer vote in the Circuit Meeting (13 votes or 43.3% in favour, and 17 or 56.7% against).

2.2.4 **Overall in the Cumbria District**, of the 728 votes cast in Circuit Meetings and Church Councils, **597 or 82% were in favour, and 131 or 18% against.**

2.3 During the consultation, the Cumbria Circuit Group also received some comments, verbally or in writing, in favour or against the proposal. The DPG and Cumbria Circuit Group were concerned to ensure the principles of fairness and evenness, so that the evidential basis for views expressed through the consultation should be the votes recorded in relevant meetings, rather than the number or strength of any views separately expressed with the inherent challenges of interpreting or weighing them, whether for or against. Accordingly, the Cumbria Circuit Group and DPG did not seek additional representations, but where concerns were expressed or clarifications requested, these and potential responses were included in updated FAQs, and will be addressed and incorporated to help the Cumbria Circuit, if approved, to be more effective as a result.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Cumbria Circuit Group considered the consultation results.

3.1.1 Aware that a considerable majority had strongly endorsed the proposal, the group was nevertheless concerned for those who had voted against it, especially in the KSAT Circuit. As at earlier stages, the group offered to meet with representatives and members of KSAT or to attend such meetings as may be helpful, and have wanted to ensure pastoral understanding and support regarding the concerns held.

3.1.2 The group considered several possible options for recommendation to the DPG. These included not proceeding; delaying proceeding; proceeding without seeking to include KSAT (but this raised not only potential sadness but also many concerns both for that Circuit, and for the project overall, with possible detriment resulting from not being a single Circuit within the Cumbria Ecumenical County or within the Cumbria Mission Area of the new North West England District); or proceeding with the proposal on the timetable envisaged.

3.1.3 Wanting to respect that more than four fifths had voted in favour of the proposal and the reasons for it, and given their significant concerns about all the other options in response to the consultation results, the Cumbria Circuit Group recommended to the DPG that it should recommend acceptance of the proposal to the Synod.

55. Circuit Amalgamations

- 3.2 The DPG considered the consultation results and the same possible options, all of which were reported to the Synod, together with further updated FAQs. Under Standing Order 501(3), the DPG resolved to make its own substantive recommendation, that the Synod be invited to pass the following resolution:

The Cumbria District Synod, voting on 27 April 2024, resolves under Standing Order 501(3) to recommend to the Methodist Conference of 2024 that the existing Circuits in the Cumbria District amalgamate to form a single Cumbria Circuit from 1 September 2025, and that, if the Methodist Conference approves the amalgamation, all necessary steps be taken for its implementation.

- 3.3 Following full consideration, **the Synod passed the above resolution** (74 voting members present, with voting agreed to be by ballot): **66 votes or 90.4% in favour, and 7 votes or 9.6% against.** The Synod also passed a resolution about the work needed to implement the decision (if approved by the Conference), including to confirm that those concerns which had been expressed should be taken into account in developing the arrangements for a single Cumbria Circuit.
- 3.4 In addition to this report to the Conference, a copy of the consultation document with the Circuit Meetings and church councils, and of the DPG and Cumbria Circuit Group's report to the Synod, have been submitted to the Conference Office. The Orton Methodist Church Council, endorsed by the Newbiggin on Lune Methodist Church Council and by the KSAT Circuit Meeting, have submitted a letter under Standing Order 501(5) expressing their concerns about the proposal, which is included at Appendix 3. Through the FAQs, the Cumbria Circuit Group endeavoured to incorporate and respond to these concerns, the final version of which is included at Appendix 4.
- 3.5 The Conference is asked to approve the Synod's recommendation that the Cumbria Circuits amalgamate to form a single Circuit. Whichever way the Conference votes, inevitably in this case its decision will be "substantially out of accord", either with the KSAT Circuit Meeting if it approves the resolution, or, if it rejects the resolution, with the other seven Circuit Meetings in the Cumbria District. Accordingly, under SO 501(7), the Conference will need to vote on the resolution in both 2024 and 2025 (simple majorities only will be required, and in 2025 this could be by way of adopting the stations). Whilst provisional preparations to implement the new Cumbria Circuit will proceed in readiness for September 2025 if approved, this report has been submitted to enable the two year process, as required in this case, to begin this year to ensure that, if agreed, the Conference's final confirmation can be given in 2025.

55. Circuit Amalgamations

APPENDIX 1 – Consultation Voting figures for Circuit Meetings and Church Councils

| Circuit | Church Name | Date | Voting members attending | For | Against | Total votes | For % | Against % |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|---------|--------------------------|------------|----------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| 9/1 N Cumbria | Circuit Meeting | | 38 | 37 | 0 | | | |
| 9/1 N Cumbria | Brampton | 19.3.24 | 12 | 12 | 0 | | | |
| 9/1 N Cumbria | Carlisle | | 12 | 12 | 0 | | | |
| 9/1 N Cumbria | Cornerstone, Wigton | | 11 | 9 | 0 | | | |
| 9/1 N Cumbria | Dalston | 19.3.24 | 8 | 8 | 0 | | | |
| 9/1 N Cumbria | Gilsland | 11.3.24 | 5 | 4 | 0 | | | |
| 9/1 N Cumbria | Longtown Community | 6.3.24 | 10 | 7 | 1 | | | |
| 9/1 N Cumbria | Monkhill | | 7 | 7 | 0 | | | |
| 9/1 N Cumbria | Thurstonfield | | 11 | 10 | 0 | | | |
| 9/1 N Cumbria | Wetheral | 18.3.24 | 11 | 11 | 0 | | | |
| 9/1 N Cumbria | Totals | | | 117 | 1 | 118 | 99.15 | 0.85 |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Circuit Meeting | 19.3.24 | | 23 | 2 | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Bassenthwaite | | | 5 | 1 | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Brigham | | | 5 | 2 | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Cleator Moor | | | 11 | 0 | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Cockermouth | | | 6 | 0 | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | (Dearham - Class of Maryport) | | | | | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Egremont | | | 11 | 0 | | | |

55. Circuit Amalgamations

| Circuit | Church Name | Date | Voting members attending | For | Against | Total votes | For % | Against % |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------|------------------|
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Frizington | | | 6 | 0 | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | (Gosforth - Class of Seascale) | | | | | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Great Clifton | 27.2.24 | 6 | 6 | 0 | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Harrington | | | 1 | 3 | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Hensingham | | | 9 | 0 | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Keswick | | | 11 | 0 | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Kirkland LEP | | | 8 | 0 | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Maryport | 26.2.24 | 13 | 13 | 0 | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Seascale | | | 11 | 0 | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Workington United | | | 3 | 1 | | | |
| 9/4 Wn Fells | Totals | | | 129 | 9 | 138 | 93.48 | 6.52 |
| 9/7 KSAT | Circuit Meeting | 21.3.24 | 32 | 13 | 17 | | | |
| 9/7 KSAT | Appleby | | 10 | 8 | 0 | | | |
| 9/7 KSAT | Brough | | 8 | 1 | 6 | | | |
| 9/7 KSAT | Brough Sowerby | | 8 | 0 | 7 | | | |
| 9/7 KSAT | Crosby Garrett LEP | | 8 | 1 | 6 | | | |
| 9/7 KSAT | Duffton with Knock | | 9 | 1 | 6 | | | |
| 9/7 KSAT | Kings Meaburn | 18.3.24 | 7 | 0 | 2 | | | |
| 9/7 KSAT | Kirkby Stephen | | 9 | 1 | 7 | | | |
| 9/7 KSAT | Newbiggin on Lune | | 16 | 0 | 16 | | | |

55. Circuit Amalgamations

| Circuit | Church Name | Date | Voting members attending | For | Against | Total votes | For % | Against % |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|-----------|------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| 9/7 KSAT | Orton | | 9 | 0 | 9 | | | |
| 9/7 KSAT | Ravenstonedale | | 11 | 1 | 7 | | | |
| 9/7 KSAT | Soulby | | 9 | 0 | 7 | | | |
| 9/7 KSAT | Tebay | | 12 | 7 | 4 | | | |
| 9/7 KSAT | (Shap - Class of Tebay) | | | | | | | |
| 9/7 KSAT | Warcop | | 8 | 2 | 2 | | | |
| 9/7 KSAT | Winton LEP | | 16 | 0 | 6 | | | |
| 9/7 KSAT | Totals | | | 35 | 102 | 137 | 25.55 | 74.45 |
| 9/8 Sedbergh | Circuit Meeting | 21.2.24 | 14 | 13 | 0 | | | |
| 9/8 Sedbergh | Meth Ch in Western Dales | 21.2.24 | 18 | 16 | 0 | | | |
| 9/8 Sedbergh | Totals | | | 29 | 0 | 29 | 100 | 0 |
| 9/9 E Cumbria | Circuit Meeting | 13.3.24 | 21 | 13 | 2 | | | |
| 9/9 E Cumbria | Alston | 18.2.24 | 8 | 8 | 0 | | | |
| 9/9 E Cumbria | Gablesby | 4.4.24 | 10 | 10 | 0 | | | |
| 9/9 E Cumbria | Kirkoswald | 25.2.24 | 10 | 10 | 0 | | | |
| 9/9 E Cumbria | Langwathby | 15.1.24 | 9 | 0 | 9 | | | |
| 9/9 E Cumbria | Patterdale LEP | | | | | | | |
| 9/9 E Cumbria | Penrith | 29.2.24 | 18 | 8 | 0 | | | |
| 9/9 E Cumbria | Salkeld Dykes | | | | | | | |

55. Circuit Amalgamations

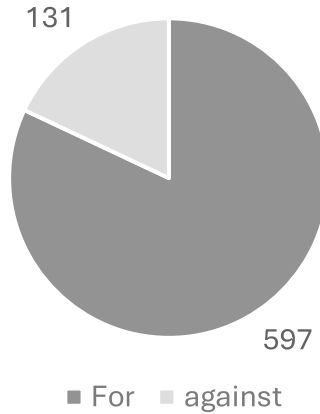
| Circuit | Church Name | Date | Voting members attending | For | Against | Total votes | For % | Against % |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|----------|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| 9/9 E Cumbria | Skelton | 4.3.24 | 10 | 8 | 0 | | | |
| 9/9 E Cumbria | Stainton | 26.3.24 | 10 | 8 | 0 | | | |
| 9/9 E Cumbria | The Cottage Wood Centre | 17.9.23 | 9 | 9 | 0 | | | |
| 9/9 E Cumbria | Totals | | | 74 | 11 | 85 | 87.06 | 12.94 |
| 9/13 Kendal | Circuit Meeting | 21.2.24 | 16 | 16 | 0 | | | |
| 9/13 Kendal | Arnside | 5.2.24 | 6 | 6 | 0 | | | |
| 9/13 Kendal | Kirkby Lonsdale | 27.2.24 | 15 | 15 | 0 | | | |
| 9/13 Kendal | Levens | 19.2.24 | 6 | 6 | 0 | | | |
| 9/13 Kendal | Sandylands, Kendal | 1.2.24 | 14 | 8 | 2 | | | |
| 9/13 Kendal | Storth | 20.2.24 | 14 | 13 | 1 | | | |
| 9/13 Kendal | Stricklandgate, Kendal | ??.2.24 | 12 | 9 | 3 | | | |
| 9/13 Kendal | Totals | | | 73 | 6 | 79 | 92.4 | 7.6 |
| 9/14 S Lakes | Circuit Meeting | 30.10.23 | 18 | 12 | 2 | | | |
| 9/14 S Lakes | Ambleside | ??.10.23 | 8 | 8 | 0 | | | |
| 9/14 S Lakes | Cartmel | 10.11.23 | 13 | 12 | 0 | | | |
| 9/14 S Lakes | Carver Uniting LEP | 6.12.23 | 7 | 7 | 0 | | | |
| 9/14 S Lakes | Coniston | 17.10.23 | 6 | 6 | 0 | | | |
| 9/14 S Lakes | Grange over Sands | 24.1.24 | 13 | 9 | 0 | | | |
| 9/14 S Lakes | (Grasmere - Class of Ambleside) | | | | | | | |

55. Circuit Amalgamations

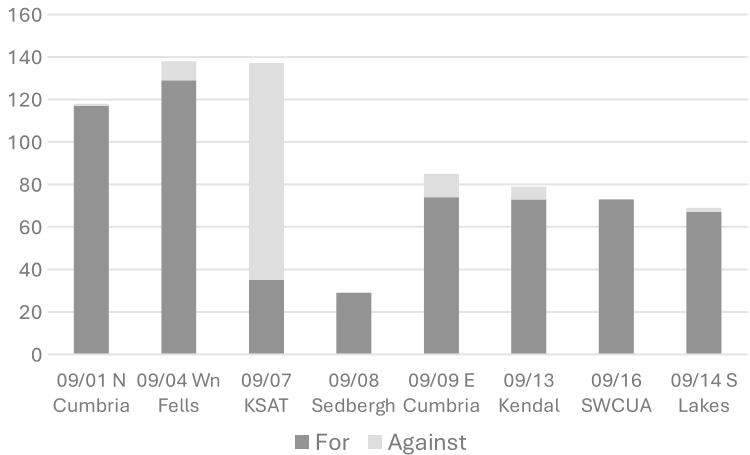
| Circuit | Church Name | Date | Voting members attending | For | Against | Total votes | For % | Against % |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 9/14 S Lakes | (Hawkshead - Class of Ambleside) | | | | | | | |
| 9/14 S Lakes | Ulverston | 27.11.23 | 13 | 13 | 0 | | | |
| 9/14 S Lakes | (Windermere - Class of Ambleside) | | | | | | | |
| 9/14 S Lakes | Totals | | | 67 | 2 | 69 | 97.1 | 2.9 |
| 9/16 SWCUA | Area Meeting | 13.3.24 | 20 | 17 | 0 | | | |
| 9/16 SWCUA | (Askam & Ireleth – Class of Dalton) | | | | | | | |
| 9/16 SWCUA | Beacon Hill, Barrow | 22.2.24 | 11 | 11 | 0 | | | |
| 9/16 SWCUA | Dalton Community Church (LEP) | 26.2.24 | 11 | 7 | 0 | | | |
| 9/16 SWCUA | Hartington Street, Barrow | 5.2.24 | 7 | 2 | 0 | | | |
| 9/16 SWCUA | Kirkby in Furness | 1.11.23 | 6 | 6 | 0 | | | |
| 9/16 SWCUA | Millom | 7.1.24 | 9 | 9 | 0 | | | |
| 9/16 SWCUA | (Ramsden Street, Barrow - URC) | | | | | | | |
| 9/16 SWCUA | Trinity Centre, Barrow | 21.2.24 | 13 | 13 | 0 | | | |
| 9/16 SWCUA | Vickerstown, Barrow | 21.2.24 | 8 | 8 | 0 | | | |
| 9/16 SWCUA | Totals | | | 73 | 0 | 73 | 100 | 0 |
| Overall TOTALS | | | | 597 | 131 | 728 | 82 | 18 |

APPENDIX 2 – Diagrams of Circuit Voting figures

Total Circuit Meeting & Church Council Votes



Votes for & against by Circuit



55. Circuit Amalgamations

APPENDIX 3 – Letter from the Kirkby Stephen, Appleby and Tebay Circuit

21st March 2024

To CSCC Meeting. Cumbria DPG
Cumbria District Methodist Synod
The UK Methodist Conference

We, the Church Council Meeting of Orton Methodist Church who met on 28th February wish to make known to the KSAT Circuit Meeting that we are concerned about the proposal of the Circuits within the District of Cumbria to become one single Circuit. Whilst we recognise the need for change, we do not believe that a Single County Circuit is necessarily the right solution.

Our main concerns regarding a Single County of Cumbria Circuit are as follows:

- Rural churches will be much smaller entities in such a large Single County Circuit and therefore their needs and voice may be diminished
- The unique identity of our Circuit may be diluted or even lost if the Circuit expands to a whole County. We have a particular evangelical background and heritage in this Circuit which may be pushed to the margins if we amalgamate with all the other Circuits in the County where priorities may be different
- There are no clear outlines of how finances in the Single County Circuit would play out, e.g. would church assessments increase?
- There is no clear information on how personnel will be stationed – will we have less ministers and paid lay workers?
- An organisation that becomes larger often becomes less effective
- Bureaucracy is likely to increase – getting answers to queries over property, finance etc. may be less easily available, and for example how would a property steward for the Single Circuit, based on the West Coast know the setting, needs and limitations of a small church in the Eden Valley or the Westmorland Dales – part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park?
- Surely there will be a need for more paid roles such as Property Officer, Finance Officer rather than volunteers on the ground in each current Circuit, this surely will put financial strain on all the churches in the County
- Rather than releasing people for mission by having one Circuit, which has been part of the narrative in this proposal, it is apparent that each church will still have to have 12 members to function and all the treasurer, safeguarding, steward and other roles and associated paperwork will still need to be fulfilled. Therefore the congregations of each church may not be released from the many administrative tasks that are required.

55. Circuit Amalgamations

R Woof
Rowland Woof, Steward

J M Bainbridge
John Bainbridge, Property Steward

On behalf of Orton Methodist Church Council

Endorsed by the Newbiggin on Lune Methodist Church
By Stewards Mr Wilf Capstick and Mr Harry Hutchinson by email on Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Endorsed by the KSAT Methodist Circuit Meeting held on Thursday March 21, 2024
Voting In favour 17, against 13, (abstentions 2).

55. Circuit Amalgamations

APPENDIX 4 – Frequently Asked Questions ('FAQ's)

(April 2024 version as presented to the District Synod: updates that were periodically added are in italicised type).

Why are we doing this?

- A desire for a more **missional** shape to our structures, to afford more time for ministry and outreach in each of our communities: centralise the administration, keep the mission and ministry local. *Strong support for economy of scale, share skills, and particularly to concentrate on the mission.*
- To lessen the **burden of governance** and trustee responsibilities with the centralising of those offices that can best be done once by an experienced team, rather than the present duplications with us all having to fend for ourselves with each circuit struggling to recruit lay officers to cover all the roles. *A recognition that we can't survive as we are.*
- Recognition that we have a number of one or two minister circuits. This leads to a lot of **duplication** (of work/meetings) at Superintendent level, and makes it difficult to recruit (as the ratio of Supers to ministers nationally is not 50:50!). *A desire to free up superintendents to use their gifts.*
- A strong desire to maintain the **identity** of Cumbria, within the planned merger of Districts.
- To preserve and help develop our County **ecumenical relationships** and God for All vision.

Why a single county circuit?

- The District Cumbria Circuit Group's assessment is that one Cumbria-wide Circuit is the best option.
- Recognising that most circuits are struggling from one or several perspectives (although assessments about this sometimes vary!), the expectation is that some further mergers amongst the now 8 Cumbrian circuits are likely still to need to happen, and thus we are presently in an ongoing piecemeal process that perhaps should be accelerated to a place of eventual rest. *A desire from many superintendents to **do this once**, rather than take time and energy merging time and time again for years to come.*
- We have considered alternatives, such as merging to form between 3-5 circuits. However, once a circuit reaches the size of a North Cumbria or Western Fells Circuit, the distance from one end of the circuit to the other is such that circuit life and relationships are already different in some respects from the old circuits. To move to a single circuit, rather than to 4-5 circuits, involves, probably, not a big difference.

55. Circuit Amalgamations

*Any alternative to a single circuit involves a number of circuits within the new **Cumbria Mission Area** (that will form part of the new North West England District).*

- Many circuits are already beginning to work together, plus in the new District configuration, a county circuit meeting would **replace the focus that the Cumbria Synod** would have previously offered until August 2024. A Cumbria Circuit would provide a natural means of consulting within the county, that only being the Cumbria Mission Area within the North West England District won't as easily provide. A county circuit would thus also potentially strengthen Cumbria's part within the new District.
- A major reason for moving to a single county circuit would be to **remove internal Methodist circuit boundaries** that mostly do not align well with ecumenical Mission Communities, hindering their development or focus upon them (see more below).
- **Why have we not been offered more than one model to vote on?** – *The Synod appointed the Cumbria Circuit group to consider the possibility of different models.*

The group recommended that only a single Cumbria Circuit model be developed because it combined far greater advantages than any 'half-way house' given the reasoning set out above. The Synod, comprised of representatives of the circuits, agreed with the reasoning and recommendation, and overwhelming agreed that this should be the model consulted upon.

There has still been a choice of two options: a single Circuit, or leaving things as they are with the possibility of further local and bilateral circuit mergers if needed or desired.

- *Won't a **larger organisation** be less effective and more bureaucratic? – Whilst this can of course be true, other examples, including of larger circuits, illustrate that greater efficiency and less bureaucracy can result from removing replication and by the sharing and ensuring of greater expertise through a merger, releasing time and energy to focus on local mission and mutual support.*

What about ecumenical relationships?

- We have consulted and kept our ecumenical partners at county level informed about the possibility. With the movement of District level to the North West (in line with similar Salvation Army and URC arrangements at the equivalent level), moving to a coterminous Cumbria Circuit, Carlisle Diocese (Anglican), and Cumbria Mission Partnership (URC, within their NW Synod), would **facilitate working together**.
- We and our ecumenical partners recognise that removing internal **circuit boundaries** within the county might help the development of Mission Communities. At present Mission Community, Anglican Deanery and Circuit (or United Area)

55. Circuit Amalgamations

boundaries rarely coincide: a few do, but most circuits presently relate to several Mission Communities, hindering engagement. Also, Mission Community mergers are expected in the years ahead, creating further internal boundary changes. Removing the complication of circuit boundaries within the county will help with this, and help to advance ecumenical development, to which the District has long been committed.

- Increasing participation in **Mission Communities** means that, in time, the local Mission Community and its fellowship, meetings and mission, might become the natural organising unit and focus for local Methodist churches in each area. Thus Mission Community meetings might replace circuit meetings as a focus, and removing local circuit meetings would avoid duplication. (Pending reaching that stage of Mission Community development, local sub-area Methodist meetings may be helpful in some places, as suggested below.)
- *It is recognised that Mission Communities are not working well in all areas; a new circuit will need to work with those churches who might work better initially as a section or sub-area than as an ecumenical gathering.*

What will this mean for meetings?

- Experience of county or very large circuits elsewhere suggests that overall the **number of meetings will significantly reduce**.
- The aim is to widen our governance structures so that in some respects they move up a level. The new **Circuit Meeting would be, in size, shape and nature, akin to our current Synod**, meeting perhaps 3 times a year on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon (with tea and an evening service) to cover all the governance matters dealt with by our present circuit meetings, and allowing a focus on mission across the county. (This would reflect an overall movement of structures and upwards and outwards, through a regional district and a county circuit.) Overall, there would also be fewer numbers of circuit committees.
- Some meetings will of course involve more travel for some attendees, but, again, **overall the amount of travel will be reduced** through fewer meetings, together with the use of hybrid and online options where appropriate.
- The current circuit meetings could be replaced by a number of **sub-area meetings** to facilitate local relationships and mutual support, fellowship and outreach (they would not have governance functions). This is not another layer, but a more nuanced differentiation of how and when some meetings might be more business-focused and others might be more fellowship-focused. The need for sub-area meetings may diminish over time with increased participation in Mission Communities, and might also sometimes be impacted upon by the development of **multi-site churches** under single church councils (which in some cases are already partly replacing previous fellowship at circuit level).

What about our minister and lay workers?

- *How will personnel be stationed, and will we have less ministers and paid lay workers?*
- As a rule of thumb, nationally, there is one minister per 150–250 members. So, the **number of ministers** should not be affected by this proposal.
- *The process of ministerial invitations and **stationing** will remain the same, with local churches offering input into the writing of profiles by circuit stewards, and ministers matched via a national process*
- *The number of **youth and family and outreach workers** will remain determined by vision and budget, and ability to support.*
- With the centralisation of administration, it is intended that local ministers, lay workers and churches can focus their efforts on **local mission** and ministry.

What about a Superintendent minister?

- Experience with county or very large circuits elsewhere has suggested that having a **single superintendent** minister with the oversight and leadership of a circuit, rather than a co-superintendency, generally works better.
- *You are likely to **see the superintendent** as often as you currently see the Chair of District for preaching, and a little more often for other things (since a District Chair also has to spend time on national responsibilities).*
- Given that Cumbria will also become a Mission Area within the new NWE District, to be led by a Mission Area Lead/Deputy District Chair, to avoid confusion, the county Superintendent should also be the same person. It would then mean that ecumenical and secular partners, as well as Methodists, would have **clarity as to who the local Methodist county leader is.**
- The single Superintendent must **work collaboratively**, with lay and ordained colleagues, including with a team of perhaps up to 4 Deputy Superintendents (who might be geographically focused, or have a responsibility for a particular function within the new circuit).
- Even with collaborative working and support, it is not anticipated that the Superintendent (with their combined role also as a Mission Area Lead and Deputy Chair) would have capacity to have pastoral charge (or even shared pastoral responsibility for) a congregation: they would probably be a 'separated' Superintendent.
- *It is suggested that current Superintendents will retain their stipend until at least the end of their current period of invitation.*

What about the Circuit Plan and Local Preachers?

- Preachers will usually continue to **preach in their local area**, not around the whole County – much as many do now in sections – and would use the Chrestos Plan-

55. Circuit Amalgamations

making tool to support the Plan-making process, which has proved efficient and effective in other similar contexts.

- There will be a Circuit Local Preachers meeting at county level, including to provide a **critical mass for training** that most present circuits are individually unable to provide. However, some of the time local preachers will still be encouraged to meet locally for fellowship, in a pattern of meetings that will not add 'an extra layer' and probably even out to present frequencies, but with the advantages of both a wider scale and continued local fellowship.
- The proposed model (for preaching, as also will be the case with some other functions) will thus allow local working, whilst keeping oversight, training and provision of some resources at a county level. *Again, it is not the intention to ask Local Preachers to travel further.*

Won't this mean that roles are larger?

- Yes, and no. The numbers of people have declined, so that the new county circuit roles will often be similar in size to circuit roles that were held 30 years ago; overall, we will need **fewer numbers of circuit officers**.
- There may be some roles that will be paid, as we **pool resources** to employ people with expertise to deal with the larger regulatory burden now required under UK legislation. *There are concerns about cost – but the need for people with expertise is there whether we merge or not; a single circuit allows for pooling of resources and economies of scale.*
- Some roles may be shared, including through property and finance committees, enabling people to **share their experience**, rather than relying on one local person to be the expert in everything (e.g. sharing expertise in making our buildings energy efficient), and achieving economies of scale.
- Some may be ready to lay down roles and responsibilities and 'retire', but we hope that some will continue their circuit offering and be stimulated by the new configuration and collegueship; that others may concentrate their service on continuing responsibilities in Local Churches; and that others will use the opportunity to refocus to support ministry and mission in other ways.

Why now, and why implement in September 2025?

- If by the summer of 2024 the decision has been made to move to a county circuit, the **balance of considerations** suggests that implementation would be best in September 2025.
- If the Conference approves in June 2024, there would not be sufficient time to prepare to implement in September 2024. The Standing Order also includes a

provision for the matter to come back to the Conference if necessary for a second time, so we cannot implement before September 2025 anyway.

- Some might prefer a later date (e.g. September 2026), but others want an earlier date because of stationing (e.g. whether to seek a new superintendent or not), or other considerations in their circuits. So, September 2025 represents a compromise, including that the advantage of a longer preparation time does not outweigh the reasons for not waiting as long as until September 2026.
- If there is merit in moving to a county circuit and we can be sufficiently ready by 2025, why wait longer for getting on with it? In particular, if becoming a county circuit helps to preserve the Cumbrian identity and helps engagement in and promotion of the ecumenical county, why delay any more than a year after the inauguration of the NWE District?

Whose decision is it, and what happens if not all circuits agree?

- Ultimately it is the **Conference's decision**, which will carefully consider the views expressed.
- If several circuit meetings and many church councils vote against, the DPG and Synod are likely to be cautious about proceeding or making a **recommendation** to Conference to do so. Alternatively, if there is significant support, a recommendation to proceed is more likely.
- Whatever the final District recommendation, church councils and circuit meetings can make their own **representations** to the Conference (either way). If the Conference judges that its decision "*is substantially out of accord with*" that of a circuit meeting (rather than a church council), the Conference would need to reaffirm its decision the following year in June 2025 (*Standing Order 501(7)*).
- Hopefully, significant **consensus** emerges through the consultation. If in favour, our path forward becomes clearer; if against, further consideration will be required for navigating our present challenges.

What about losing our own circuit's identity?

- Some will naturally be concerned at losing something of their **present circuit identity**, or control over their affairs and resources.
- Our hope is that each part of Cumbria's membership and identity will still be expressed in various ways, through involvement variously in **ecumenical mission communities, multi-site church arrangements, and sometimes sub-area meetings / sections**. *For example, a former circuit meeting may choose to continue to meet: it will no longer have governance and trustee responsibilities (potentially a relief given*

55. Circuit Amalgamations

that many are struggling to continue with or replace key officers), but will have more time and space to concentrate on mission and mutual support.

- In any event, we hope that members from the different parts of Cumbria will feel sufficiently confident in their own voice and identity to play what will be a valued part in the new arrangements.

This will include different theological preferences and voices, in which our commitment as a Methodist Church is that we continue to seek to live well with our sometimes contradictory convictions. Those different perspectives differ but also connect right across the county, more than might presently be realised. A Cumbria circuit might enable appreciation and better connections to be made, whilst sub-area and sectional meetings will still enable local identity and solidarity to be expressed if desired.

- *Will **Rural churches** be much smaller entities in a large Cumbria Circuit, with their needs and voices diminished? – The great majority of congregations in a Cumbria Circuit will be small, of which most will be in rural contexts. The majority of voices in the circuit meeting will be from these contexts. Representation from local churches in the circuit meeting will be able to ensure that the new circuit is attentive to the needs of all the congregations and contexts, collectively working out how to respond to those needs in practice.*

What about finances?

- We hold the **financial, people and property resources** that God has given us as 'stewards' and trustees, not for our own benefit or purpose, but for God's. Methodism is a connexional movement: we are ultimately one big family together, working things out and collectively deciding on the best use of resources for the benefit of God's purposes. This invites an attitude of generously sharing and letting go, that there might be life. However much our instincts might sometimes be to hold onto something, or to be suspicious of what might happen or of how others might decide things, in listening, talking and working things out together, hopefully trust can grow, and become justified.
- *How will **assessments** be calculated? – See the video (<https://youtu.be/b0-T7DvpALY>): it is likely to take account of a number of factors and seek to be fair, with any adjustments taking place over time.*

*There is realistic understanding that the ability in most places to **fund assessments** is diminishing, and at connexional and District levels assessment rises have been held back or reduced out of consideration for circuits and local churches. The representatives from local churches on the new circuit meeting would ultimately have the power collectively to agree or reject proposed assessments, and it will be a common need to ensure that finances are sensible and sustainable.*

55. Circuit Amalgamations

*Experience of large circuits elsewhere suggests that they are better positioned to ensure a **fair assessment level**, and with greater resources to give particular support when justified for congregations who suddenly struggle. If needed, adjustments between the levels from previous circuits, and for the churches within them, have usually been introduced in a sustainable rather than sudden manner, with attention always given to the 'ability to pay', so as to ensure fairness between what are, after all, different groups of Christians.*

We do not yet know whether much adjustment over the next half decade may be required in Cumbria, or not very much at all, but for decades the present Circuit Treasures have been meeting annually, so there is already a long established basis for mutual trust and understanding: we – all members and local churches – would be in this together, concerned for each other's interests, and the furthering of God's mission.

- *How is **funding going to be allocated**? – Decisions about ministry and mission costs and projects will be determined over time by the new circuit meeting (and thus voted on by the representatives of the local churches), considering the overall needs, fairness and priorities. The intention would be to honour commitments given by existing circuits for at least the initial term of those projects and thereafter where possible and still justified.*
- *Will **professional costs** increase assessments? – The level of costs presently being incurred by the circuits would be available where still justified to ensure the effective operation of a Cumbria Circuit. If any additional costs need to be incurred above this level, including over time to support the needs of local churches and such costs are proportionate and justified, the overall available circuit finances would be considered, including from property income and disposals as well as general reserves, in order to provide for any additional costs, rather than seeking to raise church assessments for this purpose. Again, the new circuit meeting will determine these matters, and will be largely composed of local church representatives.*
- *Experience elsewhere has shown that **pooling resources** from constituent circuits can provide more than the sum of the parts: collective reserves levels can overall be lower than the combined reserves levels of many smaller 'pots', or more resources can be pooled to invest in more mission, such as through more (and sometimes more appropriately ambitious) projects and personnel.*

What about local churches?

- *What about **Managing Trusteeship**? – This will remain as defined in CPD, and will sit with the new circuit meeting and existing church councils. There are no planned changes to church councils in terms of a new circuit 'policy' directive (any multi-site church schemes to combine church councils will be a matter of local choice or sometimes necessity according to the principles and processes in Standing Orders).*

55. Circuit Amalgamations

- *What about **representation** in the circuit? – this will continue to be via your elected circuit representatives and minister, including for smaller churches.*
- *What happens to **individual church administration**? – It stays the same, although local church mergers and multi-site church arrangements may address or help with any local concerns.*
- *If local churches will still need local church roles, how does the proposal help, since they won't be **released** from them? – This is a proposal to reorganise our circuits, to share and reduce the overall amount of roles, processes and administration that is required. Moving from 8 to 1 circuits (even one that will require more to function than a traditional sized circuit) will offer a significant saving. Not as many people will need to double or triple up their responsibilities in church, circuit and district roles. Locally, multi-site arrangements may also help to reduce and share some responsibilities.*
- *Won't a large circuit be more **remote**, meaning for example that a non-local circuit property steward might not understand or respond as quickly to a local church's problem? – In designing a county circuit's structure, the intention is to ensure that wherever circuit advice or support may appropriately be required can be given as, or more, effectively. This will involve teams sharing skills and pooling knowledge, including of different chapels and contexts. Since several circuits no longer have the necessary local officers or available replacements, the choice may be between a breaking down of the present system, or a new one that has been found to be as or more effective elsewhere.*
- *Examples of the **larger church resourcing local churches**? – There are examples outside Cumbria of larger congregations supporting smaller ones (with worship, property, finance administration, stewardship etc.) or of circuits helping smaller local causes in specific ways. In Cumbria there are growing examples of multi-site arrangements (e.g. in North Cumbria and Sedbergh Circuits), mutually supporting each other with trusteeship and administration, and sometimes of larger congregations beginning to support smaller congregations in various ways.*

56. Trustees for Manx Methodist Church Purposes (TMMCP)

The following appointed Trustees served during the 2023/2024 connexional year:

Chair: Mr Eddie Teare

Trustees: The Revd Dr Janet Corlett, Chair of the Isle of Man District
The Revd Stephen Ingrouille,
The Revd Bryan Yardy,
Mr Andrew Foxon,
Mrs Hollie Johnson

Secretary: Mr Alan Gelling (also Treasurer)

- 1 The Trustees continue to exercise their responsibilities as Custodian Trustees of the Methodist Church in the Isle of Man under the Methodist Church Act 1982 (an Act of Tynwald).
- 2 This year, the TMMCP has managed a balanced trustee board of up to eight members, including lay members and presbyters, focusing on the asset management of the Methodist Church on the Isle of Man. Key activities included overseeing property titles and facilitating asset management for the housing needs of a member of the Connexional Team, with no property sales occurring this year.
- 3 Financially, the trust has optimised chapel cash balances by securing favourable interest rates, thus enhancing income for the District through effective cash flow management. The transition of accounts to Lloyds Bank, completed this year, has markedly improved our banking services, facilitated by direct interactions with local decision-makers.
- 4 Furthermore, the trustees have effectively managed legacies and donations, ensuring the continued Methodist mission on the Island. We thank the dedicated individuals serving TMMCP, including our auditor and treasurer, whose expertise has been invaluable throughout the year.

***RESOLUTION

56/1. The Conference receives the Report.

57. Memorials to the Conference

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Contact name and details | The Revd Catherine Dixon Convener of the Memorials Committee memorials@methodistchurch.org.uk |
|---------------------------------|---|

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 the Methodist Council is required to appoint a Memorials Committee 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 7-11 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 Memorials Secretary, Catherine Dixon. For example, if any member wishes to change the recommended reply of the committee, the Memorials Secretary would be happy to advise on how and when to propose either an amendment or the substitution of a different reply.

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

57. Memorials to the Conference

M1 The Theology of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The Cambridge Circuit Meeting (14/26) (Present: 28 voting: unanimous) wishes to draw the attention of the Conference to the recent reports on Artificial Intelligence in the media and the open letters from academics and technology industry leaders warning politicians and the wider world about the potential and the threat AI brings. It asks the Conference to consider the following action:

- To request that the Faith and Order Committee explore theology around AI in terms of the following:
 - a. The image of God
 - b. Prayer and sermon writing threats and opportunities using AI
 - c. The possible relationship and consequences of Online Communion and AI
 - d. The role of Methodist ministers and Lay Office holders and what if any functions can be undertaken by AI
 - e. The framework of this request understands that all of this will be explored within the remit of the EDI impact assessment tool

Reply

The Conference thanks the Cambridge Circuit Meeting for its memorial and for drawing attention to this important topic. The Conference shares the Circuit Meeting's recognition that AI is an ever-increasing part of life with implications for work, leisure, communication and much more. It raises a wide range of questions for the church, including with regard to theology, ethics and practice.

The range of issues identified by the Circuit Meeting do not only touch on the work of the Faith and Order Committee but, for example, also raise questions relevant to the work of the Ministries Committee and to the training and formation of people for a variety of roles within the Church. Alongside this, the Conference also notes that AI raises a range of questions in the wider public sphere (including questions of justice about the value of work and workers) and that these issues affect ecumenical partners as well as a range of other organisations.

The Conference agrees with the Circuit Meeting that the Methodist Church needs to give attention to questions raised by the use of artificial intelligence in a variety of contexts. It accepts the memorial and directs the Secretary of the Conference to establish a working party, with broad representation including from the Faith and Order Committee, Ministries Committee, theological education institutions and relevant members of the Connexional Team, to identify the issues that should be explored by the Methodist Church (including in their consideration those raised by the Circuit Meeting) and to offer reflections, guidance and policy proposals to the Conference.

M2 Disciplinary Process

The Westminster Circuit Meeting (35/3) (Present: 18, voting: unanimous) wishes to draw to the attention of the Conference the deep disquiet felt amongst members over the inordinate and unexplained delay in bringing to a conclusion disciplinary cases brought against members. The Westminster Circuit stresses it is committed to providing a safe Church for all. Nevertheless, we believe too many people and their families have been, and are, suffering unnecessarily by protracted investigations into complaints. Internal reviews are insufficient, there needs to be openness, transparency, and accountability. We believe this is an urgent matter and needs addressing before the conclusion of the current review that is being undertaken.

Because of the resulting and lengthy suspension, and a member not being permitted to attend worship or engage in Christian fellowship in the Circuit, pending the resolution of this case, circuit members can feel unable to offer meaningful support to persons concerned or members of their family. There is concern about the mental distress caused and about their spiritual wellbeing and that of the congregation to which they belong.

The Circuit Meeting requests that the Conference:

- a) Recognises that protracted investigations into complaints give rise to both unhealthy speculation about allegations in the Local Church and Circuits concerned, and a loss of trust and confidence in the investigating authorities;
- b) Recognises that, in spite of assertions to the contrary, suspensions are not regarded or understood by the majority of people, including Methodist Church members, as a neutral act;
- c) Introduces a feasible timescale during which processes relating to Complaints, including those involving disciplinary and/or safeguarding issues should be completed, as part of our Duty of Care;
- d) Makes clear to the Connexion to whom the Connexional Safeguarding Team is accountable and how the processes which they administer are evaluated and overseen.

57. Memorials to the Conference

Reply

The Conference thanks the Westminster Circuit Meeting for the memorial and for raising these concerns.

The Conference recognises the stress that is experienced by those who find themselves subject to a complaint or at the centre of a safeguarding concern and agrees that the stress can be exacerbated by the length of time that the process of a complaint can take. However, the Conference notes that this can be for a number of reasons not all of which can always be mitigated.

The Conference understands that this issue was frequently raised during the Part 11 review. The report that is before the Conference includes recommendations on timescales which should go some way towards addressing the concerns the Circuit raises. Similarly, and as it considers the Part 11 review, the Conference will be asked to adopt a closer alignment between the processes of Safeguarding and those of Complaints and Discipline which should enable speedier resolution of those concerns which need consideration in both aspects.

The Conference notes the Circuit Meeting's concerns around the understanding of suspension being a neutral act. This is also being addressed in the Part 11 Review with some proposals relating to the communication and use of language around suspension. The guidance that is given to responsible officers is always that suspension should be used sparingly and as a last resort, but the Conference remains persuaded that it is sometimes necessary both to mitigate the risk of further (alleged) harm and to free the subject to concentrate on dealing with the matter.

The Safeguarding Team is part of the Connexional Team and, as such, has been accountable to the Methodist Council and will be accountable to the Connexional Council. The Conference has before it proposals to remodel the safeguarding function of the Connexion so that all Safeguarding Officers in Districts would be part of the same accountability structure. This will be the latest step in a series of provisions which, in 2018, ensured that all casework conducted across the Connexion was supervised by Connexional Team members.

The Safeguarding Committee is currently engaged in a series of audits of Safeguarding work and structures in the Districts. The Committee reports to the Council and to the Conference on all its activities, including on the recommendations and determinations it has made (see SO 232(5)). The Conference therefore believes that the accountability of the Committee and those who work as Safeguarding staff in both Connexion and Districts is already clear.

57. Memorials to the Conference

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial but believes that no further action need be taken on the grounds that work is already being undertaken to cover the concerns raised in the memorial.

M3 Telling our Story

The Bramhall and Wythenshawe Circuit Meeting (19/15) (Present: 28 voting: in favour 26, against 0) notes and celebrates the progress made through the Safeguarding and Justice, Dignity and Solidarity modules to make people feel safe and valued in church. However, as the Christian message is increasingly marginalised in our twenty-first century society it is now even more important, as 'Our Calling' notes, to make disciples, which means that we focus on Jesus' command to be his witnesses. Paul in his letters acknowledges the multiplicity of different callings and not all of us are called to be evangelists, however many of us do not find it easy, or feel equipped, to share our faith even though Christ's command in Matthew is to all Christians to 'Go and make disciples of all nations.' In Christ, all of us have a story to tell. We are living in the midst of people who have lost hope. We believe that Christ's command still stands, and he is looking to us to tell our story of the hope we experience in our walk with him. Whilst it is good for us to have training in areas of governance and compliance, surely training in how to tell our story should have equal importance. We note previous voluntary initiatives such as *Time to Talk of God*, and current study material such as *Everyone an Evangelist*, but they do not have equal weighting as they are not mandatory. We call on the Conference to provide the tools that can be used in our Districts, Circuits and Local Churches that will enable, encourage and equip us to tell the story of our faith.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Bramhall and Wythenshawe Circuit for its memorial.

The Conference notes that the engagement of resources such as *Everyone an Evangelist* – produced to help embed the commitments of *God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth* (and mentioned in the memorial) – has been widespread. 789 copies of the course have been distributed around the Connexion since 2021, with very good feedback. Additionally, 242 ordained and lay leaders have been trained through the *Evangelism for Leaders* multi-session course.

God For All (approved by the 2020 Conference for an initial five years and currently before the 2024 Conference for potential extension from 2025 to 2032) offers a range of guidance, resources, and accompaniment around evangelism, missional growth and leadership, discipleship/Methodist Way of Life, and starting New Places for New People and Church at the Margins communities. Local individuals, groups, churches, Circuits, and Districts are encouraged to discern for themselves which of the available tools might support and equip them in *Our Calling* to respond to the Gospel

57. Memorials to the Conference

of God's love in Jesus Christ and to live out discipleship in worship and mission. The Conference notes that many churches and Circuits have appreciated being able to discern for themselves how to best engage with the materials; it is encouraged in hearing testimonies from churches stepping out in mission and evangelism from around the Connexion, often as a direct result of the *God For All* resources and sometimes through other resources, as well.

For many years, prioritising evangelism has been a challenge for many churches and Circuits. While many of these reasons are understandable and flow from complicated theological histories, the Conference realises that if we are to be a Church that is at once inclusive, justice-seeking, growing, *and* evangelistic, 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.

The Conference notes memorials M19 and M20, which join this memorial in celebrating the importance of the mandatory trainings associated with Safeguarding and Justice, Dignity, and Solidarity whilst also asking for increased flexibility in order to train leaders in a way that continues to build adoption and confidence. The Conference holds that a Church fully committed to evangelism and growth must also be fully committed to safeguarding and justice. As *God For All* points out repeatedly, these crucial commitments must be an inseparable unity: any meaningful evangelism, mission, and pioneering or planting must include a deep value for the care and inclusion of all people, most especially those who are young and/or vulnerable.

The Conference notes that, whilst providing accessible and creative training resources, *God for All* places a stronger emphasis on experiential/action learning. Simply stated: we know that individuals and churches are more likely to grow in confidence as evangelists by *doing* evangelism – by getting into our local communities, making new friends, building trustworthy relationships, and having meaningful conversations about spirituality, God, and faith but also by learning about evangelism. The Conference therefore suggests that churches, Circuits, and Districts, rather than simply engaging in evangelism training materials, commit to practical engagement of mission and evangelism in and with their local communities. One way of supporting this aspiration might be to challenge every church on an annual basis to experiment with the annual evangelistic call proposed in *God For All: Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032)* (see pages 162 and 164 of Volume 1). This commitment would yield significantly increased evangelistic participation across the Methodist Church over the next decade.

57. Memorials to the Conference

The Conference accepts this memorial in that it welcomes the suggestion that engagement in the *God for All* strategy should be much more highly prioritised (if not absolutely mandatory), whilst acknowledging that practical engagement (not just conceptual learning) is the desired fruit of the memorial, and whilst also honouring each church's and Circuit's discernment of the most contextually-wise ways of taking important and concrete next steps.

M4 Heritage Sites

The Calderdale Circuit Meeting (27/34) (Present: 41 voting: unanimous) recognises that there is a number of buildings and sites within the Connexion which have a significant role in telling the story of the origins and growth of Methodism. Four of these are formally recognised as museum sites (Wesley's Chapel, the New Room in Bristol, Epworth Old Rectory and Englesea Brook). They receive financial and practical support to enable them to be kept in good order and to continue to tell their part of the Methodist story. But these are not the only sites that are deemed so important to our history that they must not be sold or allowed to fall into disrepair, and the burden for keeping them open falls on local congregations or Circuits.

In the Calderdale Circuit we have the octagonal chapel at Heptonstall and Mount Zion at Ogden one of the earliest NMC chapels, whose societies have ceased to meet, and whose buildings, we have been told, have too great a historic significance to be sold. We are aware of others in a similar position across the Connexion. Whilst we agree that these sites should be preserved, we are also aware of the extra burdens in terms of finance and workload that these sites generate, because they are listed buildings and require extra care in any work that is carried out. We appreciate the work of the Conservation Officer and the Connexional Heritage Officer in all the work they do in offering advice and putting us in touch with other historic sites in order to share best practice. However, we do wonder if, as the Connexion has directed the Circuits to maintain these properties, some more assistance could be given to Circuits. We are not looking for the same level of support as the already acknowledged museum sites, but for some assistance with the maintenance and expertise required to maintain these properties.

Therefore the Calderdale Circuit Meeting asks the Conference to direct the Methodist Council to find ways to offer practical and financial support with both the running costs and the ongoing maintenance of the fabric of those buildings and sites deemed by the Connexion to be too historically significant to lose, so that local funds and volunteers can be focussed on using the buildings for outreach and mission as they tell the rich and varied stories of Methodist Heritage.

57. Memorials to the Conference

Reply

The Conference thanks the Calderdale Circuit for its memorial.

The 2008 Conference identified the four properties mentioned in the memorial for connexional support because, as well as being significant to our heritage and being listed buildings, all were already accredited museums; marrying their architecture, collections, and stories from our essential history with contemporary mission. The funding they have received annually since 2011 has been based on supporting each site to employ a curator/manager, allowing the otherwise volunteer trustee and staff teams at each place at the time, to concentrate on developing missional outreach and visitor income, and seeking external funding for their major development schemes. In common with most heritage sites beyond the Church, while they do generate some income, our museums are not self-sufficient and need to secure additional, external grant funding, particularly for major maintenance needs and property development.

In 2011, the Conference recognised that our heritage is a Connexion-wide mission opportunity and not based in just these four historic house museums. Among the regions highlighted as having very significant historic properties was Yorkshire, and specifically Mount Zion and Heptonstall Chapels in Calderdale, both being Grade II* listed buildings (of which we have only c.50 examples in Methodism). It is the statutory responsibility of the managing trustees of all listed buildings to preserve and enhance the properties in their care. The Circuit can be assured of ongoing advice from the Methodist Heritage and Listed Buildings Advisory Committees (LBAC) and relevant Connexional Team members as it seeks to meet those responsibilities, and determine locally how these properties are to be used in the future, potentially to engage in mission in new and positive ways. However, it is the managing trustees' decision whether to retain any building and how best to use it to further mission.

John Wesley regularly visited Mount Zion, and the Conference congratulates Mount Zion on its 250th anniversary this year of Wesley first preaching there. Heptonstall has (the now very rare) octagonal plan structure favoured by Wesley. The Government's 2017 'Taylor Review', *Sustainability of English Churches and Cathedrals*, looked at how listed places of worship could become more sustainable through regular maintenance and repair and wider community involvement. The Conference commends the trailblazing work to the Sunday School building at Heptonstall, in partnership with the Friends' Group. Missional events are taking place in the community spaces on the first floor and worship within the chapel on a 'Festival Church' model, but consideration has been given to sustainability for the future and income generation as well.

The Conference recognises that this memorial may reflect challenges and opportunities replicated for other Circuits across the Connexion with significant Methodist historic places. Connexional funding for property development is limited

57. Memorials to the Conference

to support for project feasibility studies. 'New Places for New People' funding could be available from the Districts (emphasising that this would be a conversation for each District though), for heritage sites and historic chapels where pioneering and church planting projects that meet the relevant criteria can be developed. The Listed Buildings Advisory Committee and Heritage Committee will be considering the additional factors in managing historic property and using it for mission in 2024/2025. These committees will be aiming to collaborate closely and, working in consultation with district and circuit property stewards, local archivists and heritage volunteers, they will ensure they are offering complementary advice and review whether they should enhance together the guidance currently provided to managing trustees. The Heritage Committee would welcome the experience and advice of the Calderdale Circuit on what more could be helpful. This work will be 'mission-first' focused and aim to support the delivery of the 'God for All' strategy, and will explore meeting the challenges of inclusion/access and net zero commitments for those with responsibility for listed properties, for example.

Therefore, the Conference declines the memorial.

M5 Resourcing

The Burnley and Pendle Circuit Meeting (21/1) (Present: 38 voting: in favour 37, against 0) draws the Conference's attention to the tiredness and exhaustion felt by ministers and volunteers in churches and Circuits in the Connexion. More and more is required by the Conference of fewer people, many of whom have faithfully held roles in the Church for many years.

Whilst the Burnley and Pendle Circuit recognises that some of these requirements stem from government legislation or charity regulations, some stem from very worthy initiatives of the Methodist Council and Conference. These initiatives place too much pressure upon already tired people and dwindling resources.

The Burnley and Pendle Circuit requests a twelve month moratorium on any new initiatives from Methodist Council and Methodist Conference that will have a significant impact on churches and/or Circuits in terms of people's time and financial resources.

Further, we suggest that the whole Connexion spends a year in prayer, discerning where God is leading the Methodist Church of Great Britain at every level, focusing on what we should stop doing and what new things we can do to fulfil our mission of spreading Scriptural Holiness throughout our land.

57. Memorials to the Conference

Reply

The Conference thanks the Burnley and Pendle Circuit for its memorial and for highlighting the importance of the mission of spreading scriptural holiness.

We are called to be a growing, inclusive, evangelistic and justice-seeking Church and over the last few years the Conference has adopted reports and strategies that are now in place - A justice seeking church, the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy, God for All, A Methodist Way of Life and Action for Hope. The Conference, therefore, declines the memorial as there is not a need for a moratorium as there are no current plans for any large scale initiatives.

The Conference encourages all Methodists as part of their Methodist Way of Life discipleship to pray, using the Methodist Prayer Handbook and to visit the Methodist Church's website where additional resources and tools can be found to explore the Church's commitments and to see them embedded in the wider life of the Church.

M6 Nassar Family

The Sheffield Circuit Meeting (Present: 69 voting: in favour 68, against 0) stands in prayerful solidarity with Daoud Nassar and his Christian family at their farm, Tent of Nations, near Bethlehem in the Occupied West Bank. Tent of Nations was awarded the Methodist World Peace Prize in 2017 in recognition of their principled Christian stance: "We refuse to be enemies."

Despite multiple attacks on their olive trees and other crops and violent assaults on themselves, they have maintained this position, and welcomed many international volunteers. Since the terrible events of 7 October 2023 in which of course they played no part, extra roadblocks and Israeli checkpoints have been put in place to make access to the farm more difficult for international visitors.

The Nassar family have owned and farmed this land since 1916, but in 1991 Israel declared it to be "state land". In 2007 the Israeli Supreme Court told the family they could begin the process of re-registration, but ever since then the legal process has been subject to repeated delays and cancellations of court hearings.

We call upon the Conference to:

1. Send a message of support for the Tent of Nations in its Christian stand for peace and justice in the midst of increasing difficulties
2. Urge the Israeli government and the Israeli Supreme Court to allow the hearing of the re-registration case to proceed without further delay

57. Memorials to the Conference

3. Urge the British Government to support by all means possible the access of Daoud Nassar and his family to due legal process.

Reply

The Conference welcomes the invitation of the Sheffield Circuit to offer an expression of solidarity with the Nassar family. Daoud Nassar and family have been welcoming hosts to countless visitors to Palestine and are tireless witnesses to Palestinian steadfastness in the face of adversity. The Methodist Conference is alarmed at the significantly increased dispossession of Palestinian land and houses in the West Bank over the past year, noting that in recent month's violent settler groups have attacked Palestinian communities while IDF forces have stood by and watched.

In accepting the memorial the Conference affirms its prayerful solidarity with the Nassar family. The Conference welcomes representations made to the Embassy of Israel and the British Government by the Secretary of Conference in April 2024. The Conference requests that any further communication draws attention to the appeal of the Sheffield Circuit and the reply of the Conference. The Conference also expresses appreciation for the international Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and its work in facilitating relationships and encounter between Palestinians, Israelis and Methodist people worldwide.

M7 Nassar Family and Israel/ Palestine

The Burnley and Pendle Circuit Meeting (21/1) (Present: 38 voting: unanimous) notes that in 2017 the Nassar family were awarded the World Methodist Peace Award. The Tent of Nations is their family farm south of Bethlehem surrounded by five Illegal Israeli Settlements and is under threat of being 'grabbed' to complete settlement building in the area.

The family have endured attacks on their land and crops as well as physical violence that has left members of the family hospitalised. Despite having land registration documents in the family name for over hundred years the family are involved in a lengthy and expensive court process over 30. This court process is now requiring them to re-register the land.

Despite all they have faced the family have made a conscious decision to remain true to their Christian faith and have chosen a path of non-violent resistance to the intimidation and violence. Their choice is to 'refuse to be enemies'.

57. Memorials to the Conference

The Burnley and Pendle Circuit urges the Conference 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 and in particular the threat to their family's land.

- a) To write a letter of support to the Nassar family from the Methodist Church in Britain assuring them of our prayerful support and solidarity in their peaceful stand against the threats they continue to face,
- b) To write to the Israeli Embassy in the UK stating our awareness of the situation, our continued support for the Nassar family, and requesting that the process to re-register their land is completed quickly.

The Burnley and Pendle Circuit further calls on the Methodist Church to continue to highlight the peace work of the Nassar family through its communications.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Burnley and Pendle Circuit for its memorial and adopts the same reply as M6.

M8 Responding to the Conflict in Gaza

The South Worcestershire Circuit Meeting (Present: 29 voting: in favour 28, against 1) is appalled at the shocking and brutal attack by Hamas on 7 October 2023 in Israel, noting also the UN Secretary General's observation that this did not happen in a vacuum, and the subsequent ruthless and deeply destructive attacks by Israel on the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank. This has resulted in a collective punishment in which tens of thousands have been killed and hundreds of thousands made homeless.

Recognising the depth of the historical oppression of the Palestinian people, the South Worcestershire Circuit requests the Conference to encourage the Methodist people to endorse and fulfil the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against all Israeli products, as a non-violent strategy until Israel recognises a Palestinian state.

It also urges the Conference to call on the British Government to

- a) itself recognise Palestine as a state, believing this offers the best long-term security for Israel itself;
- b) cease all sales of arms and related products to Israel until it recognises the state of Palestine.

57. Memorials to the Conference

It further calls on Barclays Bank and HSBC to withdraw from all loans and investments in relation to the state of Israel, Israeli banks, and companies which are engaged in developing settlements on Palestinian land (in contravention of international law), and encourages all Methodist churches and investment bodies who have accounts or investments in these two banks to vigorously convey to them this message.

Reply

The Conference thanks the South Worcestershire Circuit for its memorial and draws attention to the statements made by the President and Vice-President since 7 October 2023, including joint statements made with ecumenical colleagues.

The Conference recalls its reply to memorials in 2017 regarding the Balfour Declaration stating that a recognition and reassessment of values that guided foreign policy in relation to Palestine during the colonial era is vital, not only for the UK's influence in helping to build a just peace in Israel/Palestine today, but also to support strong community relations in our ethnically diverse British society. Recognising that calls for recognition of Palestinian statehood arise from the appropriate and just pursuit of Palestinian self-determination, the Conference calls on the UK Government to recognise the State of Palestine.

The Conference calls on the UK Government to cease all arms sales to Israel, to remain vigilant regarding the embargo on arms to nations that might support Hamas and to honour the UK's obligations under the international Arms Trade Treaty to the full.

The Conference welcomes the continuing engagement with HSBC and Barclays across a range of issues and is grateful for the oversight provided by the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) including in the drafting of a Banking policy and a revised Conflict and Human Rights policy and asks JACEI to continue to report on issues and engagement in relation to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. The Conference also notes its previous replies in relation to the BDS campaign, draws the attention of the Connexion to the resources that have been produced and commends further study of these matters.

www.methodist.org.uk/ConferencePositionOnIsraelPalestine

www.methodist.org.uk/faith/prayer/israel-palestine/statements-and-briefings/

57. Memorials to the Conference

M9 Israel and Gaza

The East Anglia District Synod (Present: 73 voting: 66 for, 7 against) deplores both the actions of Hamas on 7 October and beyond, including the taking and holding of hostages, and the ongoing response of the Israel Defence Force.

All this has brought death, destruction, displacement and now famine to the people of the region and especially Gaza.

We request that the Conference adds its voice to those urging all parties to agree to an immediate ceasefire, and those requesting that the UK cease all arms supplies to the region. We further ask the Conference to encourage all Methodist people to pray for justice and peace in the region.

Reply

The Conference thanks the East Anglia District for its memorial and welcomes statements made by the President and Vice-President of the Conference including their public communication on 24 February and their joint statement with 140 Christian leaders facilitated by Church for Middle East Peace on 24 March and their correspondence with Ministers in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in this respect. (A list of Methodist Church statements can be found at www.methodist.org.uk/faith/prayer/israel-palestine/statements-and-briefings/). In accepting the memorial the Conference encourages Methodist people to pray for peace and justice, and with respect to arms sales, draws attention to its reply to M8.

M10 Methodist Conference and Specialist Defence and Security Convention UK

The Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod (Present: 73; Voting: 62 for, 1 against) conscious that the Methodist Conference will assemble in 2025 and 2026 at the Telford International Centre, brings to the attention of the Conference the Specialist Defence and Security Convention UK (SDSC-UK) that also takes place at that venue. This major defence and security exhibition hosts arms companies with an active interest in the development of weaponised unmanned aviation vehicles (military robots) and laser weapons. The exhibition also enables companies to market surveillance equipment that is being sold to countries that are governed by autocratic regimes. The District requests that the Conference explores whether it is possible to use an alternative venue as a protest to the SDSC-UK using the Telford International Centre and in any case requests that the Conference directs the Secretary of the Conference to write to the venue expressing these concerns in view of our position as one of their customers, and forwarding a copy of this memorial and the reply.

57. Memorials to the Conference

The District further expresses grave concern over the development of weaponised unmanned aerial vehicles and other lethal autonomous weapons systems that are capable of independently identifying and eliminating targets. We ask the Conference to write to the UK government to urge support for new multilateral negotiations to regulate lethal autonomous weapons systems. Several UN member states, human rights organisations and faith groups are calling for such negotiations to take place outside of the forum of the Convention on Conventional Weapons where discussion has become deadlocked as every state has an effective veto.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod and recognises the concerns expressed.

The Telford International Centre (TIC) worked well as a venue for the Conference in 2022. In the light of a decreasing number of venues suitable and significant increases in venue costs, the Conference Planning Executive (CPE) were pleased to enter a three year contract with the TIC which will host the Conferences of 2025-2027. The CPE does not ask for a list from potential venues as to who their other customers might be, for legal and commercial reasons they are unlikely to share that information. Given that there is no alternative venue for 2025, it is not possible to cancel that contract at this point. Were it possible, such action would cost the Methodist Church financially but would have minimum impact on the TIC and almost certainly no impact on the SDSC-UK. It would also require a new venue to be found and there is no guarantee that other such venues will not have customers based in the arms trade or other sectors that the Conference recognises as problematic.

The increasing levels of autonomy in remotely operated weaponry and further substantial investments by governments in this area, accelerated by the advances in Artificial Intelligence, are a grave concern. The Conference recalls the 2012 Conference Report "Drones: Ethical Dilemmas in the Application of Military Force" and resolution 2012/16.4 on the need for arms control to counter the threat posed by the development of systems capable of autonomous targeting and weapons delivery. The Conference welcomes the call of the UN Secretary General and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for establishment of new prohibitions and restrictions in international law to be concluded by 2026, negotiated in a forum mandated by the General Assembly that includes all stakeholders and that cannot be blocked by the vested interests of a few. The Conference recalls the view expressed in the 2012 Conference report that the autonomous operation of weapons systems without direct human control is a red line that should not be crossed. The Conference welcomes the statement of the UN Secretary General in 2023 that such systems are politically unacceptable and morally repugnant and the continuing work of the Joint Public Issues Team on the future of

57. Memorials to the Conference

arms in conjunction with ecumenical and international partners. The Conference therefore accepts the memorial in part in that it directs a letter to be sent to His Majesty's Government, as set out in the memorial above.

M11 Report of the Independent Commission

The Birmingham District Synod (present: 115 voting: in favour 106, against 0) requests that the Conference warmly welcomes the Report of the Independent Commission for Integration of Refugees, launched in March this year. The District also asks the Conference to encourage Methodists actively to engage with the report, and urge the Government to study and act on the report's far-sighted recommendations.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District for its memorial, and for drawing attention to the report of the Commission on the Integration of Refugees. This offers a cohesive and detailed set of costed proposals for an improved approach to welcoming and settling new arrivals in the UK, backed by strong evidence and wide consultation.

The Methodist Church has already endorsed or called for a number of the policies it recommends, including permitting those seeking asylum to work while their claims are assessed, limiting the use of detention, and extending the notice period people are given to move on from their accommodation after being granted leave to remain in the UK.

Implementing the report's proposals would offer refugees far greater dignity, respect and agency than current approaches, and the Conference agrees that the report should be welcomed, studied, advocated for, and acted upon.

In supporting material sent to the Memorials Committee and available to members of the Conference on request, the Synod suggests that the report could be used as the basis for the Church's 'policy asks' of the government around seeking justice for refugees. The Conference notes that the report has a particular focus on refugee integration, and therefore does not address many of the more contentious questions around asylum and migration policy which have been the subject of political debate and legislation in the UK in recent years. These include such issues as the plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda, how to deal with people-smuggling and tragic loss of lives in the English Channel, 'hostile environment' policies, the need for new safe and legal routes for people to seek asylum in the UK, and how the UK interprets its responsibilities towards refugees under international law and the European Convention on Human Rights. Nor does the report look at how the global causes of forced migration and displacement might be tackled. The Methodist Church has been a vocal advocate for justice and a more compassionate approach on many of these

57. Memorials to the Conference

issues, and the Justice-seeking Church report adopted by the Conference in 2023 sets out a range of ways in which Methodists are already engaged in pursuing justice for refugees, and could develop that engagement further. The Conference therefore makes clear that it does not believe that the policy work of the Church around justice for refugees should be limited to advocating for the recommendations of the Commission on the Integration of Refugees.

The Conference therefore also adds its endorsement to the 'Fair Begins Here' campaign from the Together with Refugees coalition (www.togetherwithrefugees.org.uk), of which the Methodist Church has been a member since its launch in 2021. This is calling for a fair new plan for refugees that:

- Ensures protection for people fleeing war and persecution by upholding the UK's commitment under international law to the right to claim asylum and by scrapping the Rwanda scheme.
- Provides a proper strategy for welcoming and integrating refugees by ensuring fair, rapid decisions on their application for asylum, and the chance to rebuild their lives through settling in a community, being allowed to work and the chance to learn English.
- Forges stronger global cooperation to tackle the root causes that force people to flee their homes and provides positive solutions when they do, including through safe routes to refugee protection.

In the context of the current General Election campaign, the Conference also points to the election briefing from the Joint Public Issues Team on asylum and refugee issues, which summarises key concerns and suggests questions which could be raised with parliamentary candidates.

The Conference accepts the memorial.

M12 Mission Partner Programme

The Bolton and Rochdale District Synod (Present: 47; Voting: 44 for, 0 against) requests the Conference to direct the Global Relationships Committee and the Strategy and Resources Committee to provide a full explanation of the rationale by which the Ordained Mission Partner Programme was chosen to be continued and the Lay Mission Partner Programme was chosen to be closed.

57. Memorials to the Conference

This should include amongst other relevant factors and documents:

1. The mission theology which was used to make this distinction;
2. A copy of the advisory mission-theological paper, which was submitted to the committee to help make this decision;
3. An identification of the 'place' in the financial decision making process where the action was taken to set aside reserves for the continuation of the Ordained Mission Partner Programme but not to set aside reserves for the continuance of the Lay Mission Partner Programme;
4. Whether that decision making 'place' was a committee, an executive individual or some other body;
5. The financial projections of reserves and future programme costs, which was used for the decision;
6. Any other relevant material.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Bolton and Rochdale District Synod for this memorial and gives thanks that God has not stopped calling people, both lay and ordained, to mission and ministry in every corner of the world. However recognising the in depth theological, structural, and participative work already undertaken by the Global Relationships Committee (GRC) and the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC), the Mission Committee, the Council and the debate at last year's Conference in this area, it declines the memorial.

The GRC had to wrestle with what a much-reduced World Mission Fund (WMF) should be used for in future. It did so in the context of unpacking the nature of global partnership in the Gospel. The main uses of the WMF at the time were grants to partner churches covering a Nationals-in-Mission programme, scholarships for leadership training, annual support to poorer churches, and grants given to partner churches in response to emergencies, and to the sending of Mission Partners. The Mission Partner Programme was both ordained and lay. All this spending could no longer all be afforded from the reduced level of income. The budget for all work has needed to be cut. This has resulted in reducing what we will give our Partners in grants by around 90%, and a cut to the Mission Partner budget of at least 50%.

57. Memorials to the Conference

The missional thinking behind cutting less of the Mission partner budget than the grants budget was set out in a confidential paper presented to the Global Relationships Committee in December 2022 and includes the following: *'...Mission Partners generate interest in the global Church and our Partners. This programme is a sign of solidarity, incarnational mission, and a commitment to learn from and be accountable to our Partners...Many who return having served as Mission Partners do so with enhanced skills and new perspectives that are of service in our context.'*

The new financial realities mean that MCB can now only afford to send less than half of its current number of Mission Partners.

The decision then had to be made on how most effectively to use the reduced Mission Partner portion of the budget. After much prayerful consideration and having reflected theologically and examined a range of option, the Global Relationships Committee decided with great sadness to recommend ending the employment of lay Mission Partners. It did this in consultation with the Methodist Church in Ireland with who our overseas work is undertaken in partnership.

The thought, reflection and consideration given were extensive. Just two points are made here;

First, whilst ordained personnel from overseas can enter the MCB via the Ministers of other Churches and Conferences (MOCC) programme, lay folks cannot. Second, whilst ordained Mission Partners and employed Mission Partners receive the same stipends and benefits, there have been costs and risks incurred on the WMF for employees that, in a future programme for only ordained Mission Partners, would no longer be applicable. These costs and risks have been uncertain and large, creating an unsustainably high risk in budget-management.

The Conference recognises and applauds the GRC in its commitment to explore vocational and missional opportunities for all those in the life of the MCB in partnership with its overseas partner churches. The Conference gives thanks for all those who continue to work to increase the giving into the WMF, paying especial tribute to the work of Methodist Women in Britain.

57. Memorials to the Conference

M13 Mission Partners

The Yorkshire North and East District Synod (Present: 99 voting: in favour 94, against 3) requests the Methodist Conference to direct the Global Relationships Committee and the Strategy and Resources Committee to provide a full explanation of the rationale by which the Ordained Mission Partner Programme was chosen to be continued and the Lay Mission Partner Programme was chosen to be closed and a report on the exploration of pathways and partnerships by which Methodist lay people may exercise this calling into the future.

This should include amongst other relevant factors and documents:

1. The mission theology which was used to make this distinction;
2. A copy of the advisory mission-theological paper, which was submitted to the committee to help make this decision;
3. An identification of the 'place' in the financial decision making process where the action was taken to set aside reserves for the continuation of the Ordained Mission Partner Programme but not to set aside reserves for the continuance of the Lay Mission Partner Programme;
4. Whether that decision making 'place' was a committee, an executive individual or some other body;
5. The financial projections of reserves and future programme costs, which was used for the decision;
6. Any other relevant material.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Yorkshire North and East District Synod for the memorial and adopts the same reply as M12.

M14 Connexional Financial Support

The Peterborough Circuit Meeting (23/21) (present: 27 voting: in favour 24, against 0) calls on the Conference to commission a review of how the Connexional Principle (mutual support, and the stronger enabling the weak) is being upheld across our Church, particularly in relation to finance, and how we help poorer Circuits and Local Churches through periods of transition towards growth.

57. Memorials to the Conference

Our concern is that poverty in Circuits is recognised not only in terms of the finance held, but also the financial insecurities around the repurposing or sale of assets, and cash flow. Confidence in the latter is crucial to giving churches and Circuits the capacity to rethink the scope and focus of their mission. This challenge is intensified by our need to focus earlier rather than later on discerning the support that must be in place to help nurture people through change. Meanwhile, the costs of ministry and church upkeep are increasing.

We celebrate how connexional funding is being released to meet the priorities of God for All. We acknowledge that Districts set their own policies for grant giving. However, it may be prudent for the Methodist Church to investigate further and examine how a range of measures such as providing temporary relief towards staffing costs, bridging funding, offering loans as opposed to grants, are being deployed from our investments and reserves.

We would urge that the Methodist Church does all it can to provide Circuits with the security that they need to consolidate into affordable, vibrant, sustainable entities.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Peterborough Circuit for its Memorial.

Considerable work is already undertaken to ensure that Connexional Funds are deployed in the most appropriate way to support Our Calling as a growing, inclusive, evangelistic and justice-seeking Church.

It may assist the Circuit to know that in the Connexional Central Services Budget (CCSB) approved by the Conference in 2023 it was agreed that the District Assessment would be cut in real terms by 3% every year for five years. Whilst a necessary response to the financial pressures that local trustees are facing, this 15% cut will reduce the work that can be delivered connexionally. In relation to the reserves policy, the 2023 Conference approved a reduction in the planned reserve level from £7.5m to a range of £6m - £5m. This change has freed up funds for the mission and is in line with the financial strategy of the Church.

Many parts of the Connexion are facing financial challenges due to the numerical decline in membership, exacerbated by external factors such as the impact of the pandemic and wider economic issues. Despite these challenges, allocations to the District Advance Funds have increased from £5.2m in 2020 to £9.1m in 2023. However, there simply are not the funds at the connexional level to be able to subsidise ministry at the local level through temporary grants or loans as requested. The limited reserves are already allocated. Furthermore, it is estimated that there is approximately £300m sitting in the funds of Local Churches, Circuits and Districts. Even allowing for the fact

57. Memorials to the Conference

that some of this money sits in restricted funds, and other amounts are appropriately held as reserves, it is still estimated there is between £100m and £150m available for supporting the day to day operations of the Church. This money is unevenly distributed across the Connexion and is under the control of local trustees; however, it should be the source of funding to allow churches and Circuits to reorder themselves to become the affordable, vibrant, sustainable entities envisaged by the memorial.

The Conference fully supports the aspiration that the mission and ministry is supported in those places where it is most needed, and that Circuits and churches receive support when necessary, where possible through local redeployment of available resources. As its reply to the memorial, the Conference draws the attention of the Peterborough Circuit to the work proposed on economic justice in the life of the Church, which is contained within the report of the Methodist Council. The reply to the memorial is therefore contained within the resolutions of the Conference.

M15 Connexionalism and Expense Costs

The Angus, Dundee and Perthshire Circuit Meeting (31/11) (Present: 19 Voting: unanimous) notes that connexionalism is a central part of our being as Methodists and gathering for whatever purpose (training, retreats etc) is valued and welcomed. This is undermined when people are invited to connexionally organised events and then Circuits are asked to cover the travel expenses. Circuits that are more geographically distant from where the events are being held will naturally have to pay more, and this, at a time when it is already harder to station ministers in such locations. This puts another burden on these Circuits and potentially increases isolation thereby undermining connexion. Any events (conferences, training, retreats etc) that are organised connexionally should be funded connexionally including travel expenses. If the connexional budget is lacking in this regard a small levy on all Circuits could be added to the existing arrangements. This will ensure the costs are born equally across the Connexion and would reaffirm our connectedness. As such the Conference directs the connexional treasurer to liaise with the District Treasurers to implement this.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Angus, Dundee and Perthshire Circuit Meeting for this memorial and for highlighting how central 'Connexionalism' is to the Methodist Church.

There are many costs that are borne at a local church and circuit level that do not fall evenly across the Connexion. Such differences may reflect differences between rural and urban settings, the age of congregations, the impact of poverty, or, as in this case, geographic distance. Similarly, the ability to pay, or wealth of our Connexion is not evenly distributed, and also reflects a range of factors. The complexity of these issues is beyond the scope of our processes to deal with. Therefore, rather than centralise

57. Memorials to the Conference

all costs, the Church has generally adopted a pragmatic approach to what is funded locally and what is funded Connexionally. However, in recent years, the Church has clearly asked that the burden of the Methodist Church Fund Assessment is reduced, meaning there is less money available to fund things at a connexional level. Introducing a new connexional levy to fund event travel expenses would run counter to this approach.

However, there is a long history across the Connexion of 'those that have' helping 'those that haven't'. If a Circuit is unable to fund these costs it should be encouraged to seek support from neighbouring Circuits who are more fortunate, and/or to seek support from their District. If such efforts are not successful, then an approach to the organiser of the event would be appropriate.

Therefore, the Conference declines the memorial.

M16 Ministers' housing allowance

The Southport Circuit Meeting (18/17) (Present: 30 Voting: in favour 29, against 0) is aware that there is a significant number of ministers of other churches/denominations who are 'authorised to serve' the Methodist Church.'

The Southport Circuit requests that the Conference considers agreeing to payment of Accommodation Allowances to **Authorised Ministers** from other denominations who request to live in their own homes. We ask the Conference to permit the payment by Circuit Meetings.

The current position places ministers who have good reason for such a request at a major financial disadvantage. For example, in some cases the minister may have lived in his/her own home for a considerable number of years and chosen to do this. This is the case of one of our Authorised Ministers where the Liverpool Diocese has previously paid an accommodation allowance.

It is appreciated that a manse can often be made available if the authorised minister is not already living in the house provided with their primary role. However, the latter is not always the case so the Authorised Minister may be expected to move. However, the initial period of invitation can make moving into a manse costly and relatively inconvenient. In addition, the Conference only authorises people to serve the Methodist Church, 'during the ensuing connexional year'.

The Southport Circuit suggests that, since the minister remains under the discipline of their denomination, allowances should be modelled on the arrangements currently in place or currently agreed for any particular ministers of these respective

57. Memorials to the Conference

denominations and also with the agreement of the appropriate authority in their own church/denomination.

The Southport Circuit requests that the Conference requests the Connexional Allowances Committee to consider the matter and also consider the documents provided with this memorial (available on request) which show the relative position of the Church of England, United Reformed Church and The Baptist Union.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Southport Circuit Meeting for this memorial.

The work of the Connexional Allowances Committee will, subject to decisions of this Conference, become the responsibility of the Resourcing Committee as of September 2024. The Conference refers the question raised by the memorial to the Resourcing Committee for consideration, in consultation with the Ministries Committee, and requests a report back to the Conference of 2025.

M17 Prolonged Ministerial Suspension

The South Worcestershire Circuit Meeting (5/16) (present: 29 voting: unanimously) is deeply concerned at the length of time it is taking to resolve ministerial suspensions. For example in one circuit, the Superintendent has been suspended for over two years (since January 2022) and the process is still unresolved. This is a wholly unacceptable situation for the minister concerned and churches involved; it puts a great strain on the suspended minister and on the other circuit staff and lay volunteers.

In this instance, the church where the Superintendent has oversight is continuing to pay its full assessment during this period without for various reasons, receiving the continuous ministerial oversight which it has a right to expect. The Circuit had to bear the full cost of the stipend for 20 months until the Connexion agreed to take on the ongoing costs. It should be possible to reimburse Circuits more quickly, so that alternatives could be examined, such as employment of supernumeraries or suitably qualified lay pastors.

It appears that the Church's Complaints and Discipline process is clearly unfit for purpose. We have been told that a report reviewing the Disciplinary processes was due to be brought to the Conference 2023 but this did not happen. The Circuit urges the Conference to urgently review the disciplinary process. It also wishes to know if there is a regular report of the numbers of complaints in process and how long they are taking.

57. Memorials to the Conference

Reply

The Conference thanks the South Worcestershire Circuit for this memorial and recognises the challenges faced by the Circuit over such a long period of time.

The matter of who is responsible for costs in the case of the suspension of a minister is covered under Standing Orders 013(11) and 1105(10). In both cases the Standing Orders make it clear that a discretionary payment from the Methodist Church Fund can be applied for under Standing Order 365(7)(i).

The Church's Complaints and Discipline process has undergone a thorough review and the recommendations of that work are contained in the Part 11 Review report which is before this Conference. The Conference also notes its reply to Memorials 15 and 16 in 2023 and the revisions to the Standing Orders that are contained in the report of the Methodist Council to the Conference and therefore believes that the reply to this memorial is contained within the resolutions of the Conference.

M18 Ministerial Stress

The Plymouth and Exeter District (Present: 61, voting 57 for, 1 against) is concerned about the personal, resource, and mission costs implied in the number of those involved in all forms of ministry who are stepping back from the active work prior to the national age of retirement, or seeking time off due to stress and not returning; at a time when there are insufficient ordained ministers to fill all stationing vacancies, and churches are finding it difficult to recruit the staff they need.

Aware that the underlying cause of physical and mental ill health can be work-related stress or trauma, and having identified common issues of concern, the Synod requests that the Conference:

Establish a working party to research further into Ministerial Stress, to include hearing the voices of people who have experience of early retirement and extended ill health leave.

To research:

- a. Structural factors which lead to unhealthy working practices, stress-related leave, ill health, early retirement, and resignation, to reveal ways to facilitate more effective wellbeing.
- b. The impact which addressing underlying causes could have by improving wellbeing throughout the Church, and thereby its mission effectiveness.

57. Memorials to the Conference

- c. Areas of Church life where ministers (of any form) can feel powerless, voiceless, or disrespected, and how this might be addressed before stress develops into serious issues.
- d. Causes of 'toxic cultures' and how these might be addressed.
- e. Ways in which the administrative burden of Church life could be reduced.
- f. Any associated training needs.

COST IMPLICATIONS

- It is expected these would be minimal, and would evolve as the work progresses.
- Savings associated with the increased effectiveness of the ministry of the whole church far outweigh any costs – see benefits listed below.

Reply

The Conference warmly thanks the Plymouth and Exeter District for the memorial, for its reminder of the central importance of ministerial flourishing within the life of the Church, and for drawing attention to concerns around ministerial stress, as well as identifying a number of potential causes. The Conference recognises and acknowledges the personal, resource and mission costs of ministerial stress which the memorial notes.

In 2022 the Conference adopted a report designed to enable reflection on the covenant relationship between the members, officers, institutions, committees and Conference of the Methodist Church on the one hand, and its ministers, both presbyters and deacons, on the other. It directed that this be published under the title *Renewing Full Connexion: Commitments and Expectations* as Part 6 of Book IV of The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church. The Connexional Team has also identified ministerial wellbeing as an important and vital area on which to focus and in March a meeting drew together representatives from the Connexion to look, in detail, at the issues of recuperative years, research into ministerial wellbeing which has previously been undertaken, and continues to be funded by the Methodist Church (as well as that currently being undertaken by the Church of England) and evidence gathered from across the Connexion about causes of poor ministerial wellbeing.

It is planned that this work now be quickly taken forward, ensuring that voices and experiences from across the Connexion are heard and feed into the development of the Methodist Church's support and resourcing for ministerial flourishing and wellbeing.

57. Memorials to the Conference

The Connexional Team recognises the need to prioritise this area of church life and thus has recently appointed a Wellbeing Project Officer, in addition to the two Wellbeing Advisers in the Connexional Team. In addition, a new Ministry Development Officer post, focusing on ministerial and vocational flourishing is planned, with the remit to advance and implement the support and resourcing for ministerial wellbeing and flourishing.

The Conference therefore declines the specific request made in the memorial on the basis that there are already plans in place carefully to consider and work towards addressing the issues raised, and to resource this area of Church life. Nonetheless, the Conference wishes very strongly to affirm and acknowledge the critical importance of ministerial wellbeing and flourishing and the need to take active steps to support this.

M19 Mandatory Training Requirements

The Chester-le-Street Circuit Meeting (20/20) (Present: 20 Voting: in favour 16, against 0) draws the Conference's attention to mandatory training requirements, specifically EDI and Advanced Safeguarding.

We greatly value the training opportunities provided by the Methodist Church and we are very grateful to be part of a church that values these issues and takes them seriously. We work hard to ensure that our members complete their training easily and quickly.

We are very aware however that the length of the Advanced Safeguarding Training and the EDI training are proving a challenge both for older members and particularly for those who work full time and have families. Whilst the content of these courses is excellent, we feel we must highlight the need for some different forms of training. These might include more gathered online opportunities or a series of short in person sessions that could be accessed at any time.

In addition, the update of the Advanced Safeguarding Training is vital but covers the entire original training. A shorter refresher course could ease the burden and focus attention on the most up to date aspects of the training.

We are fully committed to encouraging all of our members to engage with their training needs and remain up to date and we urge the Conference to review these matters.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Chester-le-Street Circuit Meeting for highlighting the importance of mandatory training requirements, specifically EDI mandatory training and Advanced Safeguarding, and the need for a variety of delivery formats. We are

57. Memorials to the Conference

grateful for the support and encouragement that is given to the importance and significance of such training in the church.

The feedback that is received through those delivering both the Foundation and Advanced Safeguarding modules is overwhelmingly positive and we are often approached with requests to add more detail or specific items within the training. Consequently, when both courses are being updated and refreshed there is always a careful process that the training working group adopts in order to test out what is included. This is then approved by the Safeguarding Committee and sent to the Methodist Council for adoption.

Discussions about frequency of renewing training are regularly reviewed as four years is now considered by many organisations to be too long a gap but the Methodist Church currently feels that once every four years is sufficient for its purposes. Training is now supported in person and online so that there is a greater range of ways in which to complete it. We have also been supplementing the core training with a series of webinars which cover other aspects of safeguarding concerns and will continue to add to this programme. For most people, training in this area is considered not to be onerous given the significance of the subject as the church develops its understanding of the theology of safeguarding and the demands in the wider world increase.

Nevertheless the Safeguarding Team will seek views of those who lead the Advanced Training (District Safeguarding Officers and members of the Learning Network) to see if it is feasible to enable the course to be spread across two or three shorter online sessions.

In regard to mandatory EDI training and opportunities for gathered in person or online sessions, the Connexional Team have previously responded to similar requests and made available additional resources that would enable Circuits to engage with the training in person or online in groups. It is important to note that both formats can be delivered over a number of sessions. Colleagues from the Learning Network would be available to help plan such sessions.

Please follow the link below for more details:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/the-inclusive-methodist-church/training-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity/mandatory-edi-training-equality-diversity-and-inclusion/>

In declining the specific requests made in the memorial, the Conference notes that the accessibility of the training material is already being addressed, through the work that the Connexional Team has undertaken in providing the additional materials and that the

57. Memorials to the Conference

material allows flexible approaches in engagement. The Conference encourages the Circuit to work with those delivering training to explore the options that are available.

M20 Mandatory Training Requirements

The East Durham Circuit Meeting and Local Preachers/Worship Leaders Meeting (20/19) (Present: 23, voting: unanimous) draws the Conference's attention to mandatory training requirements, specifically EDI and Advanced Safeguarding.

We greatly value the training opportunities provided by the Methodist Church and are pleased to be part of a church that takes equality and safeguarding so seriously.

We are also fully committed to ensuring that all of our volunteers complete their training as quickly as possible and remain up to date. Having said this, it has become clear to us that the length of the advanced safeguarding module (8 hours plus) is proving very difficult for those who work full time. Similarly, the all-day EDI session, whilst extremely valuable, posed a similar problem for those who work full time as well as some of our older members.

We are keen to harness the enthusiasm and commitment of our members to their various ministries and callings but would urge the conference to review the length and renewal frequency of these courses to enable this to happen.

Reply

The Conference thanks the East Durham Circuit Meeting and adopts the same reply as M19.

M21 Modified Constitutions

The Birmingham District Synod (Present: 115; Voting: 111 for, 0 against) has begun to implement the recommendations of the Oversight and Trusteeship Reports and the God for All Strategy. In doing so, across the District, we have a number of different expressions of church oversight emerging and a number of New Places for New People beginning. In these places we are seeing growth in mission and discipleship.

Those involved with leading 'traditional' churches exploring different oversight arrangements, for example multisite churches, and those pioneering New Places for New People, are finding that the constitutional requirements for Local Churches in Part 6 of Standing Orders, in particular the Constitution of the Church Council in SO 610, unhelpful for a variety of reasons. In particular the offices required in SO 610(1) not reflecting the expression of church that is emerging and the desire for smaller governance bodies to release people for mission and discipleship.

57. Memorials to the Conference

The Synod is aware that under Section 48A of Standing Orders, there is provision for Districts with Modified Constitutions, and similarly under Section 58 provision for Circuits with Modified Constitutions.

The Synod therefore asks the Conference to direct the appropriate committee to consider a policy for Local Churches with Modified Constitutions following the precedent already set for Districts and Circuits, and for that committee to work with the Law and Polity Committee to draft the relevant Standing Orders. The Synod believes such provision would enable more flexible and effective oversight and managing trusteeship for Local Churches, particularly New Places for New People, as the Oversight and Trusteeship report envisaged. In terms of New Places for New People, provision would need to be made for a Local Church's first constitution to be a modified one. For existing churches, provision would need to be made for modification of their existing constitution under Standing Order 610.

The Synod hopes the provisions in the Standing Orders would allow for maximum flexibility, with model constitutions being available on the Methodist Church website for both 'traditional' churches and New Places for New People. The Synod recognises modified constitutions would need to be approved and noting the comments in MC/24/15, suggests these could be approved by the District Policy Committee on the advice of the District Chair and Synod Secretary.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District Synod for its Memorial and affirms the work being undertaken in the District to implement the connexional Oversight and Trusteeship and God for All strategies. The Conference is pleased to note the early signs of growth in response, and recognises the need to ensure that the underpinning and enabling governance to support such initiatives needs to be appropriate, proportionate and flexible, whilst still ensuring that all activity is safe and fulfils the Methodist Church's obligations under Charity Law.

The Conference notes, in respect of the Local Church, that the Oversight and Trusteeship Report to the 2021 Conference (see section 8, especially 8.7, at pages 426-440) recommended that trusteeship for Local Church activity should generally remain with the Church Council. At the same time it also recognised that there were practical options for exercising governance in creative and flexible ways, including through multi-site single church arrangements and the use of an expanded power of delegation. Such options have been accepted by the Conference and embodied in CPD. They may therefore already provide solutions for some situations, which the Conference would commend for continued consideration. Nonetheless, given the varied examples of fresh expression, pioneering or other forms of church that

57. Memorials to the Conference

are emerging at this time, it could be that other methods or provisions would further enhance the possibilities of appropriate governance for such projects, schemes or emerging forms of church. This may include developing provisions for modified local church constitutions, in parallel with similar provisions for modified circuit and district constitutions; or, instead or additionally, through other possible means.

Accordingly, the Conference accepts the spirit of the memorial and directs that the present possible governance arrangements for emerging forms of church be reviewed, and if appropriate new forms of governance be adapted or developed within the existing governance framework within CPD, to enable effect to be given to connexional policy and to enable emerging mission opportunities to be responded to and supported effectively. As part of this, the Conference directs that consideration be given to the development of provisions for modified local church constitutions. Such consideration should include the question by which body and on whose advice such modified constitutions might be approved, noting that in order to ensure connexional consistency the role of the Secretary of the Conference has been retained in the proposed adjustments elsewhere in the 2024 Conference Agenda to the provisions for Districts and Circuits with Modified Constitutions. The Conference recognises that consideration will need to be given to the potential virtues, or difficulties, of any existing or proposed options, and to establish the potential benefits and appropriateness, or otherwise, of different options, so that an appropriate suite of options can be developed, understood, and used well.

The Conference directs the Law and Polity Committee to undertake this work and to report no later than to the Conference of 2026, consulting with relevant members of the Connexional Team and with the Mission and Faith and Order Committees, and taking into account practical concerns such as those referred to in the memorial.

M22 Modified Constitutions

The Yorkshire West Synod (Present: 130; Voting: 128 for, 2 against) has begun to implement the recommendations of the Oversight and Trusteeship Reports and the God for All Strategy. In doing so, across the District, we have a number of different expressions of church oversight emerging and a number of New Places for New People beginning. In these places we are seeing growth in mission and discipleship.

Those involved with leading 'traditional' churches exploring different oversight arrangements, for example multisite churches, and those pioneering New Places for New People, are finding that the constitutional requirements for Local Churches in Part 6 of Standing Orders, in particular the Constitution of the Church Council in SO 610, unhelpful for a variety of reasons. In particular the offices required in SO 610(1)

57. Memorials to the Conference

not reflecting the expression of church that is emerging and the desire for smaller governance bodies to release people for mission and discipleship.

The Synod is aware that under Section 48A of Standing Orders, there is provision for Districts with Modified Constitutions, and similarly under Section 58 provision for Circuits with Modified Constitutions.

The Synod therefore asks the Conference to direct the appropriate committee to consider a policy for Local Churches with Modified Constitutions following the precedent already set for Districts and Circuits, and for that committee to work with the Law and Polity Committee to draft the relevant Standing Orders. The Synod believes such provision would enable more flexible and effective oversight and managing trusteeship for Local Churches, particularly New Places for New People, as the Oversight and Trusteeship report envisaged. In terms of New Places for New People, provision would need to be made for a Local Church's first constitution to be a modified one. For existing churches, provision would need to be made for modification of their existing constitution under Standing Order 610.

The Synod hopes the provisions in the Standing Orders would allow for maximum flexibility, with model constitutions being available on the Methodist Church website for both 'traditional' churches and New Places for New People. The Synod recognises modified constitutions would need to be approved and noting the comments in MC/24/15, suggests these could be approved by the District Policy Committee on the advice of the District Chair and Synod Secretary.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Yorkshire West District Synod for its Memorial and adopts the same reply as for M21.

Members of the Conference 2024

| | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | The Revd Gillian M Newton | Retiring President | (Deed of Union 14(2) (i)) |
| 2 | Deacon Kerry R Scarlett | Retiring Vice-President | “ |
| 3 | The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler | Secretary of the Conference | “ |
| 4 | <i>Not attending</i> | Ex-President | (DU 14(2)(ii)) |
| 5 | <i>Not attending</i> | Ex-Vice-President | |
| 6 | The Revd Helen D Cameron | President-Designate | (DU 14(2)(iii)) |
| 7 | Mrs Carolyn Godfrey | Vice-President-Designate | |

Conference Secretariat and other Officers (DU 14(2)(iv) SO 101)

| | | | |
|----|------------------------------|--|--------------|
| 8 | The Revd Michaela A Youngson | Assistant Secretary | |
| 9 | Mr Martin Harker | Record Secretary | |
| 10 | The Revd Jennifer M Dyer | Journal Secretary | |
| 11 | The Revd Catherine Dixon | Convener of the Memorials Committee | |
| 12 | The Revd Loraine N Mellor | Chair of the Business Committee | SO 136(1)(i) |
| 13 | <i>Not attending</i> | Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice | |

The Chair of each Home District (DU 14(2)(v))

| | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 14 | The Revd Dr Jennifer A Hurd | Wales Synod Cymru | |
| 15 | The Revd Andrew Charlesworth | Wales Synod Cymru | |
| 16 | The Revd Novette S Headley | Birmingham | |
| 17 | The Revd Dr Andrew J Lunn | Bolton and Rochdale | |
| 18 | The Revd Dr Jonathan H Pye | Bristol | |
| 19 | The Revd Dr James N Tebbutt | Cumbria | |
| 20 | The Revd Dawn J Saunders | Channel Islands | |
| 21 | The Revd Helen R Kirk | Chester and Stoke-on-Trent | |
| 22 | The Revd Loraine N Mellor | Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly | |
| 23 | The Revd Dr Daniel R Haylett | Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly | |
| 24 | The Revd Richard M Andrew | Darlington | |
| 25 | The Revd Julian M Pursehouse | East Anglia | |
| 26 | The Revd Dr Janet E Corlett | Isle of Man | |
| 27 | The Revd Angela J Long | Lincolnshire | |
| 28 | The Revd Dr Sheryl M Anderson | Liverpool | |
| | The Revd Dr Andrew J Lunn | Manchester and Stockport | <i>dual qualification</i> |
| 29 | The Revd Stephen J Lindridge | Newcastle upon Tyne | |

Conference Membership 2024

| | | | |
|----|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 30 | The Revd Philip J Gough | Lancashire | |
| 31 | The Revd Andrew W Fyall | Nottingham and Derby | |
| | The Revd Helen D Cameron | Northampton | <i>dual qualification</i> |
| | The Revd Dr Daniel R Haylett | Plymouth and Exeter | <i>dual qualification</i> |
| | The Revd Loraine N Mellor | Plymouth and Exeter | <i>dual qualification</i> |
| | The Revd Gillian M Newton | Sheffield | <i>dual qualification</i> |
| | <i>Not attending</i> | Southampton | |
| 32 | The Revd Kerry W Tankard | Yorkshire West | |
| 33 | The Revd Rachel E Parkinson | Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury | |
| 34 | The Revd Leslie M Newton | Yorkshire North and East | |
| 35 | The Revd S Mark Slaney | Scotland | |
| | The Revd S Mark Slaney | Shetland | <i>dual qualification</i> |
| 36 | The Revd Dr David M Chapman | Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire | |
| 37 | The Revd Nigel Cowgill | London | |
| 38 | The Revd Dr Jongikaya Zihle | London | |
| 39 | The Revd Dr David Hinchliffe | South East | |

Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order (DU (14)(2)(vi))

| | | |
|----|----------------------|------------|
| 40 | Deacon Karen McBride | The Warden |
|----|----------------------|------------|

Representatives from the Irish Conference

| | | |
|----|----------------------------|--|
| 41 | The Revd Dr John Alderdice | (President, Methodist Conference in Ireland) (DU14(2)(vii)) |
| 42 | The Revd Dr Heather Morris | (Secretary, Methodist Conference in Ireland) |
| 43 | Pat Jamison | (DU 14(3)) |
| 44 | Elaine Barnett | |

Representatives of United Methodist Church (DU 14(3))

| | |
|----|-------------------|
| 45 | Bishop Sally Dyck |
| 46 | Dr David Field |

Conference-elected Representatives (DU 14(2)(ix), DU 14(5), SO 103)

Retiring in 2024

| | |
|----|------------------------|
| 47 | Ms Ruby Beech |
| 48 | Deacon Jonathan Miller |

Retiring in 2025

- 49 The Revd Kenneth G Howcroft
- 50 The Revd Joanna R Rand
- 51 Ms Martha Rand

Representatives of Connexional and Other Bodies (SO 102)

- 52 The Revd Sonia M Hicks The Chair of the Methodist Council (i)(a)
- 53 Dr Daleep S Mukarji Chair, Strategy and Resources Committee (i)(c)
- 54 Mr Doug Godfrey-Swanney Connexional Secretary (i)(d)
- 55 The Revd Mark Noakes Forces Chaplain (i)(e)
- 56 Melissa Newell Overseas Service (i)(f)
- 57 The Revd Semisi Turagavou Appointed by Partner Churches (DU 14(4)
(d))
- 58 Dr Hubert Morquette Appointed by Partner Churches
- 59 The Revd Dr Mark Rowland Faith and Order representative (ii)
- 60 Miss Elizabeth H Ovey Law and Polity representative (iii)
- 61 The Revd Charity Nzegwu concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion (i)(g)
- 62 The Revd Naomi Kaiga concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion
- 63 The Revd Andrew Brazier concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion
- 64 Mr Thomas Hart Youth President (5)
- 65 Owen Wilkins Youth Assembly

Wales Synod Cymru

- 66 The Revd Janet E Park
- 67 Deacon Laura J Evans
- 68 Ms Emily Barry
- 69 Mrs Wendy Barwise
- 70 Ms Trish Earlam
- 71 Trevor Evans

Birmingham

- 72 The Revd Caroline J Hague
- 73 The Revd Phillip J Warrey
- 74 Deacon Angela P Allport
- 75 Ade Johnson Doyo
- 76 Afon Harland
- 77 Sandra A Smith
- 78 Ms Helen E Woodall

Bolton and Rochdale

- 79 The Revd Darren A Garfield
- 80 The Revd Wilfred W Robinson
- 81 Mrs Anna Malnutt
- 82 Mrs Jill Orrell

Bristol

- 83 The Revd Leigh A Maydeu
- 84 The Revd Rachel H Leather
- 85 Deacon Stephen F Roe
- 86 Mrs Hanna Bevan
- 87 Mr Niall M Briggs
- 88 Mr David Pendle
- 89 Mr Michael C Pryce

Cumbria

- 90 The Revd Stephen J Radford
- 91 The Revd Andrew J Sterling

Conference Membership 2024

- 92 Mrs Diana Armstrong
- 93 Mrs Janice E Rusling

Channel Islands

- 94 The Revd Jacqueline A Cottrell
- 95 Mrs Pam Gidney

Chester and Stoke-on-Trent

- 96 The Revd Julie Hassall
- 97 Mr Robert J Alcock
- 98 Mr Daniel Keen
- 99 Mrs Val Mayers

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

- 100 The Revd Iris R Bray
- 101 Mrs Julie Swann
- 102 Mrs Sarah J Reed
- 103 Mr Thomas W D Reed

Darlington

- 104 The Revd Julia I Reid
- 105 Mrs Elizabeth Chadwick
- 106 Mr Tat Cheong Luk
- 107 Mrs Susan Smith

East Anglia

- 108 The Revd Paul D Critchley
- 109 The Revd Jacqueline S Goddard
- 110 Deacon Jennifer Woodfin
- 111 Ms Rebecca Belshaw
- 112 Mr Christopher R Finbow
- 113 Mrs Samantha Parfitt

Isle of Man

- 114 The Revd Stephen P Ingroupille
- 115 Mrs Rita Norrey

Lincolnshire

- 116 The Revd Luke G S Smith
- 117 The Revd Neil Vickers
- 118 Mrs Susan Brumpton
- 119 Mr Richard Melling

Liverpool

- 120 The Revd Andrew C Moffoot
- 121 Mr Steve H Cooper
- 122 Mr Graham Pegg
- 123 Miss Chloe Twist

Manchester and Stockport

- 124 The Revd Ian S Rutherford
- 125 The Revd Ian W Smart
- 126 Deacon Angleena J Keizer
- 127 Mrs Ruth Dawson
- 128 Mrs Abigail Parr
- 129 Ms Jeanette Saxby

Newcastle-upon-Tyne

- 130 The Revd Etleva Walker
- 131 Deacon Margaret E Patchett
- 132 Mrs Christine Armstrong
- 133 Mrs Kathy Bevan
- 134 Mr David Brown

Lancashire

- 135 The Revd Sarah E Lamb
- 136 Ms Rebecca Ainsworth
- 137 Carolyn Hothersall
- 138 Ms Hope Wild

Nottingham and Derby

- 139 The Revd Christopher P Briggs
- 140 The Revd Manoa Ratubalavu
- 141 Deacon Helen Snowball
- 142 Tanya Cook
- 143 Mrs Jane Goodfellow
- 144 Mr John Heard
- 145 Miss Alison E Stacey-Chapman

Northampton

- 146 The Revd Calvin Cheung
- 147 The Revd Miriam S Moul
- 148 The Revd Rebecca H Wright
- 149 Ms Angharad Herriman
- 150 Mr Matthew Forsyth

- 151 Ms Olive R Ruzvidzo
- 152 Mr Paul Spray

Plymouth and Exeter

- 153 The Revd Darren Middleton
- 154 Ms E Jane Allin
- 155 Mrs Barbara Easton
- 156 Mr Frank L Watson

Sheffield

- 157 The Revd Julie I Coates
- 158 The Revd R Margaret K Mwilu
- 159 Dr Jennifer Bywater
- 160 Mrs Katrin Hackett
- 161 Jude Simms

Southampton

- 162 The Revd Martin P Beukes
- 163 The Revd Karen E James
- 164 The Revd John D Yarrien
- 165 Deacon Suzie G B Viana
- 166 Miss Elizabeth Ward
- 167 Mrs Jane Dronfield
- 168 Mr Michael Parker
- 169 Mr Paul Yarrien

Yorkshire West

- 170 The Revd Dr Tracey A Darling
- 171 The Revd David M Goodall
- 172 The Revd Rebekah J Stennett
- 173 Mr Kevin C Jones
- 174 Miss Pippa R Lupton
- 175 Mr Richard I Sheard
- 176 Mrs Caroline M Stead
- 177 Mrs Laura E Tunnacliffe

Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury

- 178 The Revd Julia Skitt
- 179 Deacon Helen M Webster
- 180 Mr Denis Beaumont
- 181 Ms Lesley Cook
- 182 Mr Keith Walton

Yorkshire North and East

- 183 The Revd Ann Fox
- 184 The Revd Andrew J Lindley
- 185 The Revd Denise E Williamson
- 186 Mrs Emma Crippen
- 187 Mrs Lydia Harrison
- 188 Mrs Sandra Hayward
- 189 Miss Naomi Prince

Scotland and Shetland

- 190 The Revd James Patron Bell
- 191 The Revd Stephen J Charman
- 192 Mrs Janet Bryer
- 193 Mrs Barbara Harrison
- 194 Mr David Gibson
- 195 Samuela Halofaki

Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire

- 196 The Revd Mark P Hammond
- 197 The Revd Zena F Smith
- 198 Deacon Sarah E M McDowall
- 199 Ms Pauline Jackson
- 200 Mr Keith W Norman
- 201 Mr Steven Rogers
- 202 Mrs Margaret Woods

London

- 203 The Revd Richard A J Grocott
- 204 The Revd Rosamund V Hollingsworth
- 205 The Revd Stephanie Njeru
- 206 The Revd Mmasape T Thathane-Tyolweni
- 207 The Revd Benjamin Twumasi
- 208 Deacon Theresa E Simons-Sam
- 209 Ms Janet Arthur
- 210 Miss Margaret Greer
- 211 Mr Adetokunbo Jolaoso
- 212 Mr John R Logan
- 213 Mrs Helen L Lunn
- 214 Ms Sarah Murray
- 215 Ms Omobolaji Nzekwe
- 216 Mr Moses Tandyai

Conference Membership 2024

South East

| | | | |
|-----|------------------------------|-----|------------------------|
| 217 | The Revd Daniel J Balsdon | 221 | Mr Henry Cheung |
| 218 | The Revd Victoria E Davidson | 222 | Mrs Patricia K Oakley |
| 219 | The Revd Nicholas A Oborski | 223 | Mrs Charlotte Scrivens |
| 220 | Deacon Sarah Pitkeathly | 224 | Mr Oscar Siu |
| | | 225 | Mrs Elizabeth Talbot |

Associate Members

(a) Ecumenical

| | | |
|-----|--------------------------|---|
| 226 | Catherine Stephenson | The Church of England |
| 227 | The Revd Fr Jan Nowotnik | The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales |
| 228 | The Revd Geoffrey Clarke | The United Reformed Church |
| 229 | Bishop John Armes | The Scottish Episcopal Church |

(b) Overseas

| | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 230 | Bishop Bannie Manga | Methodist Church The Gambia |
| 231 | <i>to be confirmed</i> | Methodist Church Nigeria |
| 232 | Bishop Pumla Nzimande | Methodist Church of Southern Africa |
| 233 | <i>not attending</i> | Uniting Church of Australia |
| 234 | The Revd Emmanuel Mollick | Church of Bangladesh |
| 236 | The Revd Garo Kilagi | United Church in Papua New Guinea |
| 237 | Dr Ulrich Rösen Weinhold | Eglise Protestante Unie de France |
| 238 | The Revd Luca Anziani | OPCEMI |
| 239 | The Revd Dr Leif-Göte Björklund | UMC Northern Europe and Ukraine |
| 240 | Bishop Medardo Gutierrez | Iglesia Metodista Bolivia |
| 241 | Bishop Juan de Dios Peña | Iglesia Metodista El Salvador |
| 243 | Bishop César Llanco-Zavaleta | Iglesia Metodista Peru |

Presbyters attending the Presbyteral Session of the Conference under their own arrangements

The Revd Dr Keith R Albans
The Revd David R Alderman
The Revd Dr George P Bailey
The Revd Dr Stuart A Bell
The Revd Jacqueline Bellfield
The Revd Nicholas Biggar
The Revd Alan J Bolton
The Revd Nicola A Briggs
The Revd Richard J Byass
The Revd Rosemarie E G Clarke
The Revd Sara P Cliff
The Revd Benjamin P Clowes
The Revd Dr Valentin Dedji
The Revd J Trevor Dixon
The Revd Dr Christine M Dutton
The Revd Jacqueline Bellfield
The Revd Dr Graham M Edwards
The Revd Dr Simon C Edwards
The Revd Jacquie P Evans
The Revd Barbara T Evans-Routley
The Revd Nathan S Falla
The Revd Andrew S Farrington
The Revd Rosemary J Fletcher
The Revd Richard Hall
The Revd Denise Harding
The Revd Helen J Harrell
The Revd Louisa J Haynes
The Revd Conrad J Hicks
The Revd Kevin R Highfield
The Revd Beverly Hollings
The Revd Gillian H Hulme
The Revd P J Jackson
The Revd Dr Vincent M Jambawo
The Revd Marian Jones
The Revd Mary Jones
The Revd Elaine M Lindridge
The Revd Graham R Kent
The Revd Ann L Lett
The Revd Dr J Peter F Levitt
The Revd Susan Levitt
The Revd Matthew Lunn
The Revd Derek J McClean
The Revd Emma R Morgan
The Revd Graham R Morgan
The Revd Stephen G Normanton
The Revd Dr Valerie J Ogden
The Revd Thomas J Osborne
The Revd G Susan Pegg
The Revd Verity J Phillips
The Revd Dr Bonni-Belle F Pickard
The Revd Keith A Reed
The Revd Francesca T Rhys
The Revd Pauline M Salter
The Revd John L Simms
The Revd Mark C Stennett
The Revd Jemima E Strain
The Revd Lily P Twist

Index to Volumes One, Two and Three

| | | |
|----------|--|-----|
| | 3Generate 2022 – The voice of children and young people of the Methodist Church in Britain 2023..... | 63 |
| A | All We Can..... | 43 |
| | Appreciations | 524 |
| | Authorisations Committee | 483 |
| C | Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church | 462 |
| | Circuit Amalgamations..... | 677 |
| | Committee Appointments | 508 |
| | Conference Arrangements..... | 32 |
| | Conference Business Committee (1)..... | 7 |
| | Conference Business Committee (2) | 453 |
| | Connexional Allowances Committee..... | 115 |
| | Connexional Central Services Budget 2024/25 | 303 |
| D | Designations for Appointment of District Chairs | 495 |
| | District Amalgamations | 656 |
| | District Chair, role of | 334 |
| E | Ecumenical Report | 458 |
| | Election and Induction of the President and Vice-President..... | 3 |
| F | Faith and Order Committee | 37 |
| G | God for All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth..... | 127 |
| J | John Wesley’s New Room..... | 49 |
| | Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI)..... | 184 |
| | Justice Priority: Poverty in the UK, briefing for conferring | 661 |
| L | Law and Polity, Committee on Methodist | 526 |
| M | Managing Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall Westminster | 434 |
| | Membership of the Conference..... | 737 |
| | Memorials to the Conference | 704 |
| | Methodist Council (1) | 16 |
| | Methodist Council (2) | 195 |
| | Methodist Diaconal Order General Report | 665 |
| | Methodist Forces Board..... | 54 |
| | Methodist Homes (MHA) | 331 |

Index to Volumes One, Two and Three

| | | |
|----------|---|-----|
| | Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) - Revision to Articles of Association..... | 60 |
| | Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues | 101 |
| | Methodist Ministers' Housing Society (MMHS) | 439 |
| | Methodist Schools Appointments | 74 |
| | Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee | 476 |
| N | Nominations Committee | 504 |
| O | Online Church and Online Communion | 318 |
| | Oversight and Trusteeship | 561 |
| P | Part 11 of Standing Orders, review of | 391 |
| | Pension Schemes | 443 |
| | Permission to Serve | 454 |
| | Presbyteral Session Business Committee | 30 |
| | Presbyteral Transfers and Reinstatements | 455 |
| | Presbyters and Deacons Becoming Supernumerary or Returning to the Active Work | 501 |
| | Presbyters and Deacons from other Churches | 521 |
| | Presbyters attending under their own arrangements | 743 |
| R | Referred Memorials and Notices of Motion | 390 |
| | Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland | 57 |
| | Report to the Representative Session of Business Conducted by the Conference Diaconal Committee | 671 |
| S | Safeguarding Committee | 352 |
| | Singleness | 92 |
| | Special Resolutions | 300 |
| | Stationing Committee | 375 |
| T | Trustees for Jersey Methodist Church Purposes | 36 |
| | Trustees for Manx Methodist Church Purposes | 703 |
| | Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes | 289 |
| | Trustees for the Bailiwick of Guernsey Methodist Church Purposes | 35 |
| U | Unified Statement of Connexional Finances..... | 79 |

