

### 3. Methodist Council, part 1

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#### **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](http://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;

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- 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;

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- 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.*

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*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*

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*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.

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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

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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.



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**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

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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

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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);

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- (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 (chaplaincies);
- (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.

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(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.**