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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.

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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.

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- 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

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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.

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- 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.

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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

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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.

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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://d1yuutt686hf0.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

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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.]

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***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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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

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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

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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.

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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))

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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.

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- 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

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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.

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- 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.

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- 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.

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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.

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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.

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- 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

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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.

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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

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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.

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	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.

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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

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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.

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***RESOLUTION

22/16. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION N METHODIST SCHOOLS COMMITTEE

Introduction

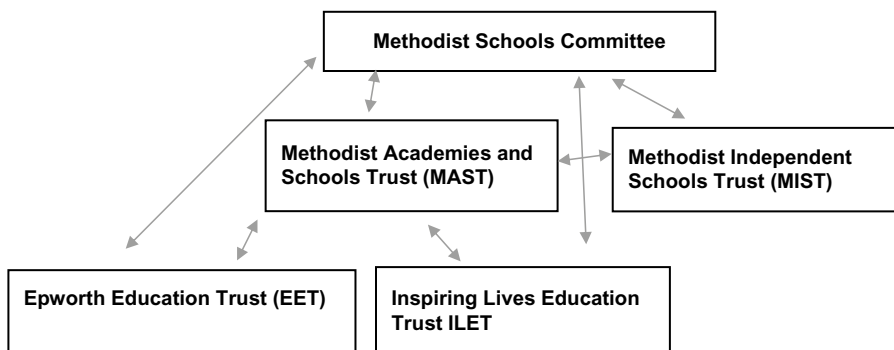
This year the report to the Conference appears in a different format. It reflects the commitments of Transforming Lives, the strategy adopted by the Conference in 2021. The first of those strategic commitments is to encourage and support Methodists to engage with schools in their locality. Much of the 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.

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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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>

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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

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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

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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,

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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~~

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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.

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(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.

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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**

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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.**