VOLUMES
1, 2 and 3

Agenda

The Conference 2025

The **Methodist** Church

Presbyteral and Representative Sessions

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

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

Chaplains will be available throughout the Conference.

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

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

131 Rules of Debate.
(1) In this Standing Order 'the President' means the person presiding for the time being over the Conference in accordance with the provisions of clause 28 of the Deed of Union.
(1A) Any member who wishes to speak shall catch the President's eye but shall not proceed further until called upon by the President.
(2) Every speaker shall address the President.
(3) No member may speak more than once on the same question without leave of the Conference, except in the exercise of a right of reply under clause (18) below. For this purpose an amendment or procedural motion raises a fresh question.
(4) (*a*) Subject to sub-clause (*b*) below every resolution or amendment shall be circulated beforehand in writing in the Agenda, or by other form of official report, or by notice of motion.
(*b*) Sub-clause (*a*) does not apply:

(i) to procedural motions under clause (11) below or resolutions to extend sittings of the Conference beyond the time already determined;
(ii) to resolutions submitted by the Law and Polity Sub-committee under clause (25) below;
(iii) to business taken in closed session;
(iv) to further amendments moved after a resolution has already been amended;
(v) where the Conference has dispensed with circulation under clause (19)(*a*)(ii) below or Standing Order 129(4)*(b)* or 129A or otherwise;
(vi) if the President judges it necessary for the effective conclusion of a debate to admit a resolution or amendment without prior notice.

(*c*) Where sub-clause (*b*) applies, except by virtue of head (i), the resolution or amendment shall be produced in writing when proposed, and immediately handed to the Secretary.
(5) Every resolution or amendment, except a resolution moved on behalf of a body authorised to report to the Conference, requires to be seconded in order to be submitted to the Conference. With the same exception, all movers and seconders of resolutions or amendments must be members of the Conference.

(6) Persons presenting reports may speak to the resolutions in them and may give information on any development of major importance which has arisen since publication. Otherwise reports circulated in the Agenda or otherwise shall be presented without introductory speeches.
(7) When a resolution or amendment has been duly submitted it may not be withdrawn without the leave of the Conference.
(8) The seconder of a resolution or amendment may reserve the right to speak.
(9) (*a*) Any amendment of the terms of a resolution may be proposed if it is relevant to the subject-matter of the resolution, unless the same result could be achieved by the rejection of the resolution.
(*b*) If an amendment is carried the resolution as amended becomes the substantive motion, and as such may itself be amended under this clause.
(*c*) When an amendment has been duly submitted no other amendment may be moved until it has been disposed of, but any member may give notice of a proposed amendment and may state whether it is to be moved in any event or if not in what circumstances.
(10) A resolution may be disposed of by adoption (with or without amendment), rejection or withdrawal. Until it has been so disposed of no other resolution may be submitted except a procedural motion.
(11) The following are procedural motions, which may be adopted by the Conference at any time:

(i) that the vote be now taken;
(ii) that the question be not put;
(iii) that the question be referred to the Connexional Council or a committee;
(iv) that the debate be adjourned;
(v) that the Conference adjourn.

(12) If a resolution and amendment are before the Conference:

(i) a motion that the vote be now taken relates only to the amendment;
(ii) a motion that the question be referred or that the debate be adjourned relates to both;
(iii) a person moving that the question be not put must state whether that motion relates to both or only to the amendment.

(13) A motion that the vote be now taken requires a majority of two thirds and shall be voted upon without discussion, but the President shall not be bound to put it to the vote if of the opinion that there has not been adequate opportunity for necessary debate.
(14) A motion that the question be not put may be discussed concurrently with the question to which it relates.
(15) A motion that the debate be adjourned may specify the time of resumption or be a motion for adjournment to a time to be resolved upon later.
(16) A motion for the adjournment of the Conference shall specify the time of resumption.

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

(i) that it be referred back to the reporting body or referred to the Connexional Council or a committee;

(ii) that it be received;

(iii) that it be adopted.

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

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

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

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

(i) to rectify any manifest factual error; or

(ii) to amend the terms of any passage which it is asked to endorse (whether expressly or by the operation of (*d*) above).

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

(i) an amendment is proposed to any such resolution; or

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

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

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

(i) the seconder of the resolution or amendment to be put, if he or she has reserved the right to speak and has not already exercised that right;

(ii) the mover of the substantive resolution, unless the question to be put is an amendment to which he or she has already spoken;

(iii) if the question to be put is an amendment, the mover of the amendment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(*b*) Any resolution which, on the advice of the financial committee given in accordance with Standing Order 136A, would result in amendment of the provisions of the connexional budget for the Methodist Church Fund proposed under Standing Order 204(1) shall, if moved after the budget has been adopted, require a majority of two thirds, and, if carried, shall have the effect of amending the Conference's resolution on the budget without the operation of sub-clause (*a*) above.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(i) to make consequential provisions; or

(ii) to amend the earlier resolution for the purpose only of – clarification, or reconciliation with the requirements of the law or of Methodist polity, or the avoidance of unintended results, or the better achievement of the intention of the Conference, or the correction of factual error, or any other purpose considered by the Conference to be within the scope of the functions of the Law and Polity Committee; or

(iii) to rescind the earlier resolution on the ground of illegality, irregularity or impossibility or any other ground considered by the Conference to be within the scope of the above functions.

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

(i) to amend the earlier resolution for a purpose within head (ii) of clause (25) above; or

(ii) to rescind the earlier resolution on a ground within head (iii) of clause (25) above.

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

132 Notices of Motion.

(1) Subject to Standing Order131(4) any two members may upon notice of motion complying with this Standing Order bring before the Conference any lawful resolution within the competence of the Conference.

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

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

(ii) where such a proposal to amend is not accepted by those responsible, the proposer and seconder and four other persons;

(iii) in all other cases, the proposer and seconder and eight other persons.

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

(3) A notice of motion which proposes to amend a resolution for the appointment of the members of the Connexional Council by removing from the list of names of those proposed for appointment the name of a current member of the council shall not be accepted later than 14 days before the commencement of the Representative Session of the relevant Conference except in cases of urgency and on the advice of the Law and Polity Conference Sub-committee.

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

134 District Resolutions.
(1) Resolutions and reports submitted under Standing Order 419(2) in due time shall be printed in the Agenda. If a report is included the cost of printing shall be a charge on the District.
(2) *[revoked]*
(3) Such resolutions shall be moved and seconded in the Conference by representatives of the District and shall, subject to any recommendation from the business committee, be debated.
(4) If it appears likely to the Business Committee that the Conference will not, in the time available, be able to debate all such resolutions adequately, it may recommend to the

Conference that one or more of such resolutions be dealt with instead as memorials. If the Conference adopts such a recommendation, the convener of the Memorials Committee shall, after such consultation as he or she thinks appropriate, frame a proposed reply, which shall be printed for the Conference in an order paper.

134A En Bloc Business.
(1) (*a*) The Business Committee shall consider, taking into account the recommendations of the Memorials Committee made under Standing Order 138(5A), which resolutions to which sub-clause (*b*) of this Standing Order applies are unlikely to become provisional resolutions or to give rise to opposition or debate or to require amendment other than within sub-clause (*e*) below. It shall, no later than the opening of the Representative Session, table a list of such resolutions with notice of its intention to invite the Conference in due course to adopt all such resolutions en bloc.
(*b*) This clause applies to all resolutions in the Agenda or otherwise circulated before the opening of the Conference except those for the confirmation of provisional resolutions, or for the adoption or confirmation of special resolutions under Standing Order 126, and except resolutions relating to Conference Statements under Standing Order 129.
(*c*) Subject to sub-clause (*e*) below any resolution, including any recommended reply to a memorial, which becomes the subject of an amending notice of motion shall be removed from the list. In addition, by giving notice to the Secretary of the Conference in writing before the close of business on the third day of the Representative Session, any six members of the Conference may, without proposing an amendment, require any item or items, except a recommended reply to a memorial, to be removed from the list. The Business Committee itself shall be free at any time before the resolutions are moved to remove any item or items from the list.
(*d*) The resolutions remaining in the list shall not earlier than the fourth day of the Representative Session be moved en bloc and voted upon without discussion.
(*e*) A need to make minor corrections to the text of any resolution on the list shall not necessitate its removal, and it may be moved under sub-clause (*d*) above as corrected. The Business Committee shall decide all questions as to the application of this sub-clause.
(2) The Business Committee may also advise, in the exercise of its functions under Standing Order 136(2A)(*c*), that such resolutions based upon the recommendations of reference groups as it considers appropriate for such procedure should also be moved en bloc and voted upon without discussion. Sub-clause (1)(*c*) shall apply to the removal of any resolution from that procedure, provided the notice is duly given before the close of business on the day upon which such advice is circulated to the Conference.

135 Closed Sessions.
(1) The Conference may at any time meet in closed session and shall do so when hearing any appeal arising out of any charge within Part 11.
(2) *[revoked]*

(3) During any closed session other than one for the hearing of an appeal within Part 11 no one may be present except members of the Conference entitled to vote on the business under consideration and any other persons or classes of persons whom the Conference may for the time being resolve to admit.

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

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

The Secretary and assistant secretary of the Conference shall be in attendance but without a vote and the connexional Press Officer shall attend as a consultant when required.
(1A) Where there will be a vacancy in the elected membership of the committee for the next Conference, an election shall be held after nomination by members of the current Conference. Each nomination shall be signed by a proposer and seconder. It shall contain the District and Circuit in which the person being nominated is stationed or is a member, current appointment or current offices within the church, age, occupation, and any other relevant information (up to fifteen words). No member shall nominate more than one person. In electing such members, the Conference shall consider the composition of the committee with regard to age, sex and ethnic origin. The election shall be by single transferable vote and the chair of the Business Committee or his or her representative shall be the returning officer. The returning officer shall declare the persons elected to serve, together with two persons in each category as reserves in the event of any person who received a higher number of votes, or a continuing member under clause (1B), not being a member of the next Conference or not being able or willing to attend. Such reserves shall serve for the period for which the person originally elected would have served and shall not be eligible for immediate re-election.
(1B) Committee members shall be elected for three years and shall not be eligible for immediate re-election. If an elected member is not a member of or is unable to attend the next ensuing or one of the subsequent Conferences the appointment shall lapse and the vacancy shall be filled in accordance with clause (1A) or (1C).
(1C) If it becomes clear during the course of the connexional year that there will be a vacancy on the committee which cannot be filled in accordance with the above provisions, the Secretary of the Conference after consultation with the President-designate and Vice-President-designate shall have the power to appoint a member

from amongst the members of the next Conference. Such appointment shall be for that Conference only.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(*c*) The committee may advise that certain items in the business of the Conference be dealt with in reference groups, with the expectation that the recommendations of such groups will be dealt with by the Conference en bloc under Standing Order 134A(2).

(2B) The committee may recommend that the Conference deal with any business by referring the questions raised to Synods and/or to Circuit Meetings for consideration or action without itself expressing a judgment on the substance of the issue. In such a case, the committee shall recommend whether Synods and Circuit Meetings are to report their conclusions to the Conference and, if so, a timetable for such reports.

(2C) The committee shall arrange for the budget for the Methodist Church Fund proposed by the Connexional Council under Standing Order 204(1) to be presented and considered not later than the fourth day of the Representative Session. The

formal resolution for its adoption, and the consequent resolution as to the allocation to the respective Districts of the assessments, shall be moved on the final day of the Representative Session.
(3) All recommendations of the committee shall be reported daily to the Conference for approval or amendment. The person presiding shall have the power to limit the length of any debate on procedural questions arising from the committee's report.

136A Conference Scrutiny Sub-committee.
(1) The Connexional Council, with a view to the discharge of its functions generally and in particular its functions under Standing Orders 203(2) and (3), 204(1) and (2) and 205(3) during the periods of the Conference, shall appoint a Conference Scrutiny Sub-committee annually, consisting of the Connexional Secretary (who shall chair the sub-committee), a member of 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.
(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 scrutinise all material coming before the Conference which 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 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 resolutions coming before the Conference which, if adopted, would have increased resource implications the sub-committee shall advise the Conference, prior to any debate or vote upon them,

(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 in accordance with the provisions of clause (2) above of any proposal contained in material coming before the Conference.

122 Provisional Resolutions.
(1) If the Conference judges that any resolution which it has adopted is of such significance that it ought to be considered by the Synods and confirmed before coming into effect it may declare that it shall be a provisional resolution. If the resolution is being dealt with as shared business under clause 24(*c*) of the Deed of Union, such a declaration by the Conference in either of the sessions dealing with the business shall be effective.
(2) Notice shall be given of any motion for such a declaration either by means of a notice of motion which complies with Standing Order 132 or by the inclusion of a resolution to that effect in the report upon that business contained in the Agenda. Where notice is given before the adoption of the substantive resolution to which it relates the motion shall not be considered by the Conference until after such adoption.
(3) Provisional resolutions shall be submitted to the Synods of the home Districts and to the Law and Polity Committee, each of which may approve, disapprove or approve with amendments. Provisional resolutions shall be submitted for confirmation to the next annual meeting of the Conference with a report of the opinions of the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee, and shall take effect only if then confirmed.
(4) The Conference may direct that the whole or some specified part of the text of any report leading to the adoption of a provisional resolution be submitted with it to the Synods. Unless it does so the Secretary of the Conference shall ensure that a brief summary of the arguments for and against the resolution and of the implications of adopting or declining it is prepared for the same purpose. The resolution and the above text or summary, as the case may be, shall be distributed by the district officers to all members of the Synod before its meeting. The district Policy Committee may arrange for such consultation within the District as it thinks fit before the Synod expresses its judgment.
(5) Provisional resolutions submitted to the Synods under clause (3) above shall be dealt with in their Representative Sessions and, if falling within one or more of the categories defined in heads (i), (ii) and (iii) of sub-clause 24(*c*) of the Deed of Union and dealt with under that clause, also in their Presbyteral Sessions.
(6) On receiving the reports of the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee upon a provisional resolution the Conference may confirm it unamended or may decline to confirm it, or may confirm it with amendments, and in the last event may, by the procedure of clauses (1) and (2) above, declare that the resolution as so amended shall itself be a provisional resolution.

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

Introduction to the Agenda of the 2025 Methodist Conference

The Methodist Conference sits at the heart of the Connexion. The reports it receives reflect the life of the Connexion in all its dimensions over the last 12 months; the resolutions it adopts direct and guide the work of the Connexion through the next connexional year and beyond. In all this, the Conference opens itself to the Spirit of God and strives to respond in mission to the call of God it discerns.

The 2025 Conference seeks to do this in a climate of uncertainty. The Presbyteral Session will be led in exploration of the theme 'Broken World: Broken Church' by Bishop Christian Alsted. Bishop Alsted is the retiring bishop of the United Methodist Church's Nordic, Baltic and Ukraine Central Conference. His presence with us reminds us that (at least at the time of writing) there is war in Eastern Europe, during which Bishop Alsted has shown remarkable leadership to and on behalf of the Methodist Church in Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine has been one factor creating the high number of displaced people in the world today. The 2023 Conference adopted a recommendation that the Conference should confer annually around one of its identified Priorities for Justice. This year, the theme on which we will be led is Seeking Justice for Refugees: One People, One World. Members of the Conference might find it helpful to refresh their memories of the section in the 2023 report (*A Justice-seeking church*) on this priority.[1]

The 2024 Conference made a number of historic decisions about the Governance of the Church. The Connexional Council came into being on 1 September last year and so brings to the Conference its first report. Members of the Conference will note that much if its work has been inherited from the Methodist Council but that new ways of working have enabled the Connexional Council to focus on the responsibilities that it holds as the charity trustee and to delegate work to its three main committees (Mission, Ministries and Resourcing). As the report will make clear, this has been a year of discovery for the council; along with the Church as an whole, it is a work in progress.

By contrast, the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group brings its final report to this Conference. A great debt of thanks is owed to those who have served on the OTTG, whose wisdom has guided the Conference in the creation of the Council. The OTTG report includes proposals on the structures that we need to support the Conference and the Council in their respective roles. Again, we are a work in progress, and members of the Conference will need to expect that the Order Paper will contain significant resolutions as we move into what we hope will be the final phase of our reorganisation. Inevitably, some of this might seem slow and painstaking (as, for example, when we receive the reports on the consultation about the Special Resolutions), and one criticism

1 https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf-23-pc-12-walking-with-micah-project_UPlJz3.pdf, Priority 3

of the Church is that we spend more time discussing our structures than we do engaged in mission.

This Conference Agenda belies that accusation. Much of the Council report is taken up in reports on mission and ministries, narrating (among many other things) how we have appraised 3Generate; developed our collaboration with the Methodist Church in Ireland in parts of our God for All strategy; thought afresh about the discernment and support of vocations to senior leadership in the Church; begun our review of learning for ministry; continued to embed our Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy into the Connexion's life; reviewed and celebrated our engagement with children and young people through our schools; and creatively and sensitively used the Modern Art Collection.

One of the last recommendations of the Methodist Council to be adopted by the 2024 Conference was to amend the processes for the election of the President and Vice-President in order to bring them more into line with the principles of safer recruiting. The Law and Polity Committee will bring proposals for Standing Order changes to implement that decision, so for this year the process is unchanged. Nevertheless, I would encourage anyone considering allowing their name to be placed before the Conference to contact me in advance of our gathering in Telford.

The Conference Business Committee notes that the decision of the 2023 Conference to reduce the length of our meeting by a day has put pressure on the timetable. It is, therefore, important that our debates are well organised and to that end can I encourage members of the Conference carefully to take note of the committee's report about the methods of engaging? For those who are members of the Conference for the first time, our ways of working can seem bewildering; my colleagues in the Record Office are available and happy to advise on any questions about process.

The 2023 Conference also voted to reduce the size of the Conference. The Presbyteral Session Business Committee has reflected on the effect that the reduction has had on the composition of that session and a discussion paper is included in the Agenda. At its heart, the question the committee is asking the Conference is, what does it mean and what do we need to confer well? It was a question with which Mr Wesley himself wrestled (and which appears in the *Minutes* of his Conferences):

> Are we convinced how important and how difficult it is to order our conversation right? Is it always in grace? Seasoned with salt? Meet to minister grace to the hearers? Do we not converse too long at a time? Is not an hour at a time commonly enough? Would it not be well to plan our conversation beforehand? To pray before and after it?

As Wesley implies, it is essential that conferring is in the context of prayer and prayer is essential if we are to use well our time together. Each morning, we shall begin with Bible Study as part of our devotions, reflecting on the story of God's love and grace to us and to all the world. The President and Vice-President remind us in their theme that the Methodist people are called to live out and to sing out the story we have received in order that we, too, become a chapter in the story. As we confer in Telford, we will contribute to the chapter that is now being written.

Jonathan R Hustler
Secretary of the Conference

1. THE ELECTION AND DECLARATION

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

*****RESOLUTION**

1/1. The Conference elects the Reverend Richard Mark Andrew to be the President of the Conference.

A standing vote is taken.
The President says:

I declare that **the Reverend Richard Mark Andrew** has been duly elected to be the President of the Conference.

The Conference is invited to sit.
The Secretary moves the resolution for the election of the Vice-President.

*****RESOLUTION**

1/2. The Conference elects Matthew Alexander Forsyth to be the Vice-President of the Conference.

A standing vote is taken.
The Vice-President says:

I declare that **Matthew Alexander Forsyth** has been duly elected to be the Vice-President of the Conference.

2. THE INDUCTION

The President and Vice-President enter together.
The Conference is invited to sit.

The Ex-President says:

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

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

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

The President and Vice-President respond:

I do so trust.

The Ex-Vice-President says:

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

They respond:

I will, God being my helper.

The Ex-President says:

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

They respond:

I will, God being my helper.

The Ex-Vice-President says:

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

They respond:

I will, God being my helper.

The Ex-President addresses her successor:

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

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

The President replies:

I will, God being my helper.

The Ex-Vice-President addresses her successor:

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

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

The Vice-President replies:

I will, God being my helper.

3. THE PRAYERS

The Ex-Vice-President says:

Let us pray.

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

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

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

4. THE GIVING OF SYMBOLS

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

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

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

A hymn is sung and the Conference continues its business.

2. First Report of the Conference Business Committee

Contact name and details	Dr Daleep Mukarji Chair of the Conference Business Committee daleepmukarji@googlemail.com

1. Membership of the Conference Business Committee

The Conference Business Committee for 2025 comprises Dr Daleep Mukarji (chair), Barbara Easton, Daniel Keen, Anna Malnutt, the Revd Leigh Maydew, the Revd Stephen Radford, the Revd Mmasape Thathane-Tyolweni.

2. Meetings and reports

- The Business Committee will meet on Saturday 28 June at the close of business, following the Scrutineers' briefing.
- The Scrutineers are asked to meet for a briefing on Saturday 28 June immediately at the close of business.
- The Business Committee will report each day in the Order Paper. It will indicate any variations to the outline schedule printed in the Agenda. Members of the Conference should be aware that the length of time spent on each item of business cannot adequately be predicted and therefore it is likely that the timetable will change during the Conference.

3. Notices of Motion

Standing Order 132 reads as follows:

132 Notices of Motion. (1) Subject to Standing Order 131(4) any two members may upon notice of motion complying with this Standing Order bring before the Conference any lawful resolution within the competence of the Conference.
(1A) Every notice of motion shall be handed or otherwise delivered to the Secretary in written or other permanent form and signed by the following persons:

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

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

after the first day of the session shall be accepted if lodged before the close of business on the day before the resolution is to be dealt with.
(3) A notice of motion which proposes to amend a resolution for the appointment of the members of the Connexional Council by removing from the list of names of those proposed for appointment the name of a current member of the council shall not be accepted later than 14 days before the commencement of the Representative Session of the relevant Conference except in cases of urgency and on the advice of the Law and Polity Conference Sub-committee.

3.1 A Notice of Motion is the proper way for members of the Conference to invite the Conference to take decisions which differ from the resolutions in the Conference Agenda. Such Notices of Motion are published in a series numbered from 100 (printed on green paper). Notices of Motion which do not relate to the business set out in the Agenda are published in a second series numbered from 200 (printed on yellow paper).

3.2 The 2013 Conference agreed that it should be mandatory for proposers of Notices of Motion to complete a 'Submission of a Notice of Motion' form, including information about budgetary implications. The 2021 Conference directed the Council to establish a framework to analyse the cumulative impact of all resolutions brought to the Conference and the Notice of Motion form has therefore been developed to take account of this and to enable the work of the new Conference Scrutiny Sub-Committee. The form is available to download from the website, and from the Conference Office (email conferenceoffice@methodistchurch.org.uk) prior to the Conference or from the Help Desk at the Conference.

3.3 The Committee encourages members of the Conference to adhere to the following principles when bringing Notices of Motion:

(a) The Notice of Motion must be brought about a matter that is urgent and could not have been brought as a memorial or district resolution;
(b) The Notice of Motion must be within the competence of the Conference and if it requests something of another body over which it does not have jurisdiction (eg MHA, Action for Children), it must be phrased in an appropriate way;
(c) The Notice of Motion must be properly researched beforehand – it is not possible for those advising the Conference (including the officers of the Conference) to undertake background work in the time available;
(d) The Notice of Motion must be drafted in such a way, that if passed by the Conference, it can be implemented;

(e) The Notice of Motion must not require the Conference to make a policy decision without adequate background information and thought given to the consequences;

(f) The Notice of Motion, if passed, must not require such a level of resource that would require resources (human and financial) to be diverted from other areas of agreed work. To this extent if the Conference Scrutiny Committee rules that the Notice of Motion cannot be accommodated within the contingency provided in the Central Services Budget, the Business Committee might need to rule that the Notice of Motion cannot be put before the Conference without further work on the part of the movers on how resources might be found.

3.4 In enabling Conference members to submit Notices of Motion related to business scheduled for the afternoon and evening of Saturday 28 June, the Business Committee requests that these be submitted by email to batesj@methodistchurch.org.uk to arrive not later than Friday 27 June at 2.00pm. The Committee has determined that it will only require the names (which will be printed on the Order Paper) of a proposer and a seconder to be supplied at this stage: the four further signatories, should the Notice of Motion be resisted by the proposer of the resolution (as per SO 132(1A)(ii)), may therefore be acquired after arrival at the Conference on Saturday 28 June but must be handed to the Record Office by 1.00pm on that day. Members of the Conference are encouraged to submit notices of motion electronically, however, all signatories' information will need to be verified (by use of the email address which has been submitted for the purposes of voting and other communications during the Conference). This means that any member of the Conference who agrees to be a signatory to a notice of motion must either provide a signature to the Record Office or respond to an email from the Record Office before the deadline for the submission of that notice of motion.

3.5 Further, for the Business Committee to prepare the business to be conducted on Monday 30 June, members of the Conference who wish to submit Notices of Motion relating to the business to be taken on Monday, or amended replies to any memorials to be taken with it, are requested to hand them to the Record Office by 5.30pm on Saturday 28 June.

3.6 Similarly, Notices of Motion relating to items of business to be taken on Tuesday 1 July should be submitted by 12.30pm on Monday. This, and the deadlines in the previous paragraphs, will enable the Business Committee to prepare full and informed Order Papers for the smooth transaction of business. It is helpful for the Business Committee to know by 12:30pm on Monday, if any member of the Conference intends to bring a Notice of Motion related to Wednesday's business.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.10 The 2011 Conference approved the principle of enabling those Notices of Motion that do not relate to business already in the Agenda to be prioritised, by means of a ballot, should time not permit all such Notices of Motion to be considered. Should such a ballot be required, it will be held on the morning of Tuesday 1 July. Any such Notices of Motion which are not considered during the Conference will be dealt with as in the next paragraph.

3.11 The Business Committee may recommend that a particular Notice of Motion is not considered by the Conference but is referred to the Connexional Council in the coming year. The Council is required to report back to the following Conference its judgement on that Notice of Motion.

3.12 In order for the Business Committee to test, on the floor of the Conference, its own judgements about which Notices of Motion to refer to the Connexional Council without debate, on the afternoon of Tuesday 1 July the Chair of the Business Committee will move that the Conference adopts the list of Notices of Motion that the Committee recommends be referred to the Council. The Conference will be able to amend the list without the need of a written Notice of Motion.

4. Use of time

4.1 The Conference is reminded that the decision in 2023 to shorten the Conference by a day has increased the pressure on time. The Business Committee is particularly concerned to monitor the progress of business and may deem it necessary to bring further proposals during the Conference to ensure that the Conference is able to deal properly and expeditiously with the business before it. In addition, members of the Conference are particularly encouraged to raise points of clarification personally or by email with those named as responsible for each item of business before the Conference rather than taking up time on the floor of the Conference.

4.2 Members of the Conference will want to ensure that their time is spent wisely and effectively. To this end, the Business Committee will endeavour to ensure that as far as possible, business follows the schedule published. As well as those

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

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

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

4.4 The Committee proposes the following hours of session from Monday 30 June: 9:15-11:00; 11:30-13:00; 14:15-16:15; 16:45-18:30.
The Conference will adjourn no later than 13:00 on Wednesday 2 July.

5. Addressing the Conference

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

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

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

6. Memorials

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

7. Nominations

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

Nominations for designation of **President and Vice-President of the Conference** of 2026 must be on the prescribed form and placed in ballot boxes as early as possible and at the very latest by **1:00pm on Monday 30 June**. They will be displayed as soon as possible on Monday; voting will close at 6.00pm on Tuesday; the results will be announced on Wednesday. The Secretary of the Conference will need to contact all nominees for these offices, to confirm that they are willing to serve should they be elected.

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

This year, one Business Committee member, a lay person, is required to be elected and may serve for the three years 2026-2028.

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

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

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

8. Provisional legislation

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

9. Letter-writing

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

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

10. *En bloc* items

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

because of the limitations on time, not to require a separate debate. This list will include some Memorials to the Conference, and recommendations on those are made on the advice of the Memorials Committee.

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

Under the terms of SO 134A, if Notices of Motion are received about items in the *en bloc* list those items will automatically be removed from the list. In addition, by giving notice to the Secretary of the Conference (via Jane Bates at batesj@methodistchurch.org.uk), any six members of the Conference may, without proposing an amendment, require that an item be removed from the list and debated. This provision includes any Memorials which are designated as being in the *en bloc* list. Such notice must be given before the close of business on Monday 30 June (SO 134A(1)(c)).

*****RESOLUTION**

2/1. The Conference adopts the First Report of the Business Committee.

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

SECTION A
GENERAL REPORT

The Connexional Council is charged under clause 37B of the Deed of Union with responsibility for the general control and management of the connexional administration of the Methodist Church. SO 203 sets out its specific responsibilities as the trustee body, and SO 204 its responsibilities in respect of finance and property. SO 205 charges the Council with responsibility to keep in constant review the life of the Methodist Church, so as to assist in making its work and witness more effective. SO 203(3) directs that in fulfilment of these responsibilities, the Council shall help to ensure that the Conference's decisions and objectives are implemented in a timely, cohesive and considered manner, and shall bring such proposals and reports to the Conference as will assist the Conference to determine the future policy and objectives of the Conference.

The Council has begun to reflect on strategy with members of the Senior Management Group, recognising the constraints that the Connexion faces in terms of the decline of its membership, the need to make some critical decisions about what is no longer sustainable, and the opportunities that the short-term boost to the Connexional Priority Fund from the sale of redundant property is likely to offer. This is a continuing piece of work and the Council has determined to devote time in 2025-26 to the further exploration of these issues.

The membership of the Connexional Council for the year 2024/2025 is as follows:

The Secretary of the Conference	
The President of the Conference	
Vice-President of the Conference	
The Chair of the Connexional Council:	Sonia Hicks
The Chair or Deputy Chair of the Mission Committee:	Joanne Cox-Darling
The Chair or Deputy Chair of the Ministries Committee:	Gill Newton
The Chair or Deputy Chair of the Resourcing Committee:	Alethea Siow
The Chair or Deputy Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee:	Keith Hickey

Up to fourteen other persons: Richard Byass, David Goodall, Beverly Hollings, Michael Long, Anna Malnutt, David Matthews, Nick Oborski, Sarah Parkin, Paul Spray, Tim Swindell, Dawn Wood.

The Connexional Secretary, Assistant Secretary of the Conference and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice also attend the Council's meetings. The Council has also invited other members of the Senior Management Group and the Legal Counsel to be present for most of its discussions.

Information about the Council can be found on the Methodist Church website at www.methodist.org.uk/council

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

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

1.1 Governance responsibilities

In accordance with its governance responsibilities, the Council:

- appointed connexional committees, trusts and representatives for the year 2024/2025;
- received reports from a number of committees and trustee bodies;
- approved a scheme of delegation;
- received reports at each meeting from the Senior Management Group of the Connexional Team;
- adopted a revised risk management policy and the corporate risk register;
- received updates on serious incident reports made to the Charity Commission;
- approved the signing of a data sharing agreement between the Pension Trustee and the Pensions Team;
- approved the 2023 Valuation of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme and associated documentation;
- appointed an approval group to consider applications under Model Trust 20(1) and Model Trust 14(2A);
- appointed its representatives to the Conference;
- a report concerning the Special Resolutions which the 2024 Conference had referred to the Council;
- received an annual report concerning Action for Hope;
- as required by Notice of Motion 2024/104, appointed Nick Oborski to hold before the Connexional Council the needs and differences of jurisdictions other than England and Wales on all matters considered by the Connexional Council, particularly those with legal and jurisdictional dimensions such as GDPR, Employment Law, relationship with TMCP, Charity Legislation, etc;

- acting on behalf of the Conference, appointed the Law and Polity Committee, the Safeguarding Committee, the Forces Board, the Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee, the Authorisations Committee;
- acting on behalf of the Conference, appointed Brian Oakley and Thomas Osborne to the Nominations Committee;
- appointed a review group to consider an appeal against a decision made under SO 376(6)(i);
- agreed a process and appointed a scrutiny group to consider reinvitations for those whose appointments fall under the terms of SO 387(2);
- adopted a policy concerning Connexional Team members holding positions on Methodist trustee bodies and related committees;
- agreed to enter into a Deed of Indemnity for the outgoing members of the Methodist Council and authorised the Chair and Secretary of the Connexional Council to finalise the Deed;
- agreed to relinquish the reversionary gift left to the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons under Trust 10465 and to authorise the release of the capital from the Trust to enable the Managing Trustees of Trinity St Andrew's Methodist Chapel to pursue the release of capital in accordance with the Charities Act 2011;
- agreed to recommend to the Conference that the Revd Gillian M Newton be stationed to the Connexional Team from 1 September 2025, for an initial period of six years;
- agreed to recommend to the Conference that the Revd David M Goodall be stationed to the Connexional Team from 1 September 2025, for an initial period of six years;
- agreed to recommend to the Conference that the Revd Dr George Bailey be stationed to the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education for a period of five years from 1 September 2025;
- agreed to recommend to the Conference that the Revd Dr Catrin Harland-Davies be stationed to the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education for a period of five years from 1 September 2025;
- agreed to recommend the extension of the Revd Graham Jones's appointment as Learning and Development Officer for five years from 1 September 2025;
- noted the change of role to be undertaken by Deacon Kerry Scarlett within the Connexional Team from 1 March 2025 and agreed to recommend to the Conference that Ms Scarlett be stationed to the Connexional Team for a further five years from 1 September 2025;
- agreed to recommend to the Conference that the Revd Dr Andrew Stobart be stationed as Principal of Cliff College from 1 September 2025, for two years;

- agreed to recommend to the Conference that the Revd Sylvester Deigh be stationed to the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education for a period of five years from 1 September 2025;
- acting on behalf of the Conference, agreed that The Methodist Church Upper Myanmar be invited to send a representative as an Associate Member of the 2025 Conference in place of the Methodist Church in Malaysia;
- approved a revised role description for membership of the Connexional Council.

1.2 Other business

The Council received an annual report from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

*****RESOLUTION**

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

SECTION B
APPOINTMENT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE CONFERENCE

The Council noted that the current invitation of the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, in his role as Secretary of the Conference, comes to an end in August 2026. The Methodist Council, at its meeting in April 2024, had received a paper outlining a potential process for considering a reinvitation/nomination. The Methodist Council delegated to the Strategy and Resources Committee the responsibility for devising the process for considering the reappointment or appointment of the Secretary of the Conference and directed the Strategy and Resources Committee to establish a small group to oversee the process during the connexional year 2024/2025 and to report back to the Connexional Council. The group was duly appointed to act as the reinvitation committee.

Following a pastoral conversation with Dr Hustler, the reinvitation committee met in August 2024 and agreed the process to be followed and the questions to be asked in a consultation process. The committee reviewed the summary of the feedback received and noted the overwhelmingly positive responses which had been submitted. It recommended to the Council that an extension of five years be recommended to the Conference. Members of the reinvitation committee met with Dr Hustler to share the feedback, to talk through some of the points raised, and to confirm his willingness to accept a reinvitation.

The Council recommends to the Conference that the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler be invited to serve as Secretary of the Conference for a further period of five years from 1 September 2026.

Reasoned statement

Jonathan Hustler brings wisdom, honesty and integrity, trustworthiness and competence to the office of Secretary of the Conference. His leadership style is collaborative and supportive of others, and he appreciates and supports the expertise of others with whom he works. He has particular skills in assimilating complex material and presenting it accessibly, and brings a depth of knowledge and theological insight to the role. In relation to the Conference, connexional groups and committees, he brings extensive wisdom and provides a calming presence which engenders confidence, particularly at a time of uncertainty and change.

Jonathan's leadership and management of the Connexional Team is felt to be collaborative and thoughtful, recognising the gifts and skills in others and delegating appropriately. He is supportive and listens honestly to District Chairs and the Warden of the Order, providing timely and helpful advice in response to specific enquiries. He is ecumenically sensitive and contributes wisely to ecumenical contexts.

Jonathan has resilient capacity, inhabiting the office with humility, and bringing wisdom, knowledge and a care for the Church.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

3/2. The Conference receives the Report.

3/3. The Conference appoints the Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler as Secretary of the Conference for a further period of five years from 1 September 2026.

SECTION C
RESPONSE TO MEMORIALS M1 AND M2 (2019)

1 In 2019, Memorial 1 and Memorial 2 were sent to the Conference (see Appendix 1) regarding the financial provisions for ministers who are on sick leave for six months or more (covered in Standing Order 376, previously numbered 365). The Conference's response to the memorials requested a report to be submitted no later than 2021.

2 Between 2021 and 2024, the Connexional Allowances Committee (CAC) submitted annual reports which gave recommendations for the financial provision for ministers who are on long-term sick leave. The CAC agreed the following on an interim basis until September 2026:

- Circuits can claim back monies paid to a minister for 12 months (minus Social Security benefits and statutory sick pay) if the minister has been off sick for 26 weeks, thus enabling a minister to have up to 18 months of sick leave.
- Ministers can apply for a grant from the Methodist Church Fund for up to £350 per quarter in lieu of fixed costs they would not recover through their usual mileage claims.
- Ministers can claim up to £600 for recuperative breaks, of which £400 is non-taxable.
- Funding for additional wellbeing support services, consultation and appropriate recuperative treatment to help facilitate recovery is also available from the Methodist Medical Benevolent Fund (MMBF).
- The Secretary of the Conference has the discretion to grant a recuperative year to a minister in order to assist their recuperation and return to the active work. These breaks have been funded by the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons (FSPD) with each case agreed between the President's Governance Adviser and the CAC.

3 The Council agreed to recommend that the funding for ministers who are off sick for over six months is picked up by connexional funds and the 12 month time limit is removed from the Standing Order. Whilst it would be expected that ministers are supported back to work in a shorter timeframe than 18 months (six months funded by the Circuit and 12 by connexional funds), in the rare circumstances where this is exceeded, it should remain a cost to connexional funds, rather than reverting to the circuit.

4 In relation to the provision of a manse during a period of sickness, it is expected that this should remain the responsibility of the Circuit and this could be added to the Standing Order.

5 The Council noted that further work is underway to consider ministerial wellbeing issues more generally.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

3/4. The Conference receives the Report.

3/5. The Conference adopts the Report as its further reply to Memorials M1 and M2 (2019).

3/6. The Conference directs the Law and Polity Committee to bring the SO amendments to the 2026 Conference.

Appendix
M1 Reimbursements for stipends of ministers on long term sick leave

The Yeovil and Blackmore Vale (26/5) Circuit Meeting (Present: 31; Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference to amend Standing Order 365 so that responsibility for the stipend of a minister on long term sick leave does not revert to the Circuit from the Methodist Church Fund should a minister still be on sick leave after eighteen months.

Reply
The Conference thanks the Yeovil and Blackmore Vale Circuit for its memorial and for drawing the attention of the Conference to the difficult issue of the financial support of presbyters and deacons who are on long-term sick leave.

SO 365 aims to take from the Circuit some of the responsibility for the provision for ministers who are unwell. The Circuit is right to note that the assumption of responsibility for the stipend is time-limited to a period of twelve months ('the eligible year'). This, effectively, offers a twelve-month period in which the minister can be helped back to full time work or explore other possibilities.

There have been a number of ministers unable to work for a considerable period over the last few years. The Strategy and Resources Committee has expressed concern that this is a part of the budget which cannot be predicted and is difficult to manage. Since the last revision of SO 365, statutory provision has changed and an employer (as which for these purposes the Methodist Church is classified) can no longer recover sick pay.

Members of the Connexional Team have been working at the behest of the Ministries Committee reviewing the support that is offered to ministers to prevent ill-health and through periods of absence and it is clear that this is a serious and complex problem of which finance is one aspect.

The Conference therefore encourages these pieces of work. The Conference notes that the stipend is not a salary and that a minister's need for support is no less (and can be greater) in periods of illness than in health. During such periods, it is incumbent on the Church to ensure both that the minister is supported and, as far as possible, free from additional stress through financial worry, and that the Circuit, or other body is able to offer ministry in the stead of that of the incapacitated minister.

In light of the ongoing work the Conference declines the memorial but directs the Council to ensure the policy for the payment of stipends and the provision of a manse for ministers on sick leave as set out in SO 365 and SO 801(4) is reviewed and a report made to the Conference no later than 2021.

M2 Amendment of Standing Order 365

The Salisbury (26/12) Circuit Meeting (Present: 25; Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference to amend Standing Order 365 so that responsibility for the stipend of a minister on long term sick leave does not revert to the Circuit from the Methodist Church Fund should a minister still be on sick leave after eighteen months.

Reply
The Conference adopts the same reply as to M1.

SECTION D
RESPONSE TO MEMORIAL M16 (2024)

1 Memorial 16 to the 2024 Conference requested a review of the policy regarding housing payments for Authorised Ministers from other denominations. The Southport Circuit has requested the payment for a housing allowance for ministers from other churches/denominations who are authorised to serve the Methodist Church.

Update

2 The Resourcing Committee requested the views of the Ministries Committee on the issues raised in the memorial. The Chair of the Resourcing Committee presented the paper to the Ministries Committee, who received the report. The Ministries Committee discussed the memorial and advised that it did not believe that there is a need for a revision to the policy regarding Ministers' Housing Allowance. In addition, it noted that Circuits have a number of ways in which ministry costs can be compensated through existing expense claims.

3 The Council therefore noted that there does not appear a compelling argument to treat Authorised Ministers differently in the circumstances outlined in the Memorial. If a manse is available, then the minister should be expected to move in to it. If no manse is available then the usual rules apply.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

3/7. The Conference receives the Report.

3/8. The Conference adopts the Report as its further reply to Memorial M16 (2024).

Appendix
M16 Ministers' housing allowance

The Southport Circuit Meeting (18/17) (Present: 30 Voting: in favour 29, against 0) is aware that there is a significant number of ministers of other churches/denominations who are 'authorised to serve' the Methodist Church.
The Southport Circuit requests that the Conference considers agreeing to payment of Accommodation Allowances to Authorised Ministers from other denominations who request to live in their own homes. We ask the Conference to permit the payment by Circuit Meetings.

The current position places ministers who have good reason for such a request at a major financial disadvantage. For example, in some cases the minister may have lived in his/her own home for a considerable number of years and chosen to do this. This is the case of one of our Authorised Ministers where the Liverpool Diocese has previously paid an accommodation allowance.

It is appreciated that a manse can often be made available if the authorised minister is not already living in the house provided with their primary role. However, the latter is not always the case so the Authorised Minister may be expected to move. However, the initial period of invitation can make moving into a manse costly and relatively inconvenient. In addition, the Conference only authorises people to serve the Methodist Church, 'during the ensuing connexional year'.

The Southport Circuit suggests that, since the minister remains under the discipline of their denomination, allowances should be modelled on the arrangements currently in place or currently agreed for any particular ministers of these respective denominations and also with the agreement of the appropriate authority in their own church/denomination.

The Southport Circuit requests that the Conference requests the Connexional Allowances Committee to consider the matter and also consider the documents provided with this memorial (available on request) which show the relative position of the Church of England, United Reformed Church and The Baptist Union.

Reply
The Conference thanks the Southport Circuit Meeting for this memorial.

The work of the Connexional Allowances Committee will, subject to decisions of this Conference, become the responsibility of the Resourcing Committee as of September 2024. The Conference refers the question raised by this memorial to the Resourcing Committee for consideration, in consultation with the Ministries Committee, and requests a report back to the Conference of 2025.

SECTION E
RESPONSE TO MEMORIAL M13 (2023)

Memorial M13 to the 2023 Conference asked the Ministries Committee to consider withdrawing the requirement to engage in Ministerial Development Review. The Conference, in its reply, declined that proposal but recognised that there is further work to be done in order for 'Renewing Full Connexion' to bear fruit in the life of the church. It directed the Ministries Committee to consider these matters and to report to the Conference of 2025.

The Ministries Committee reported to the Council that, in response to this request, the Ministries Team is in the process of developing the following resources:

- A short 'explainer' of *The Covenant Relationship between the Church and Its Ministers* in everyday language
- A wide variety of activities for each ministerial *Covenant* commitment for use in meetings and for MDR which links *The Covenant* more closely to MDR
- A short resource for MDR to explain how *The Covenant* can be used to develop greater mutual accountability
- Three short videos: *The Covenant* 'explainer', Using *The Covenant* in MDR, and *The Covenant* and ministerial wellbeing.

There are plans to discuss these at Superintendents' Conferences and Circuit Stewards' Communities of Practice and also to develop webinars to demonstrate both an understanding of *The Covenant* and its relation to MDR. These new resources will be publicised and their use modelled widely to ensure that they are embedded across the Connexion.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

3/9. The Conference receives the Report.

3/10. The Conference adopts the Report as its further reply to Memorial M13 (2023).

Appendix
M13 Ministerial Development Review

The Newcastle upon Tyne District Synod (Present: 115; Voting: 111 for, 1 against) welcomes the advent of 'The Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers' and the opportunities that this brings for reflection on the ministry of the

whole people of God. Given that the Covenant is about a partnership between church and minister, the existing process of Ministerial Development Review (MDR) no longer seems appropriate, given that it is purely minister-centred. Furthermore, many of the commitments and expectations within the covenant more than adequately cover the requirements of MDR.

The Ministerial Covenant also references CPD Book VII Guidance, Part 3 re the expectation that full-time stations will involve only 12 sessions a week. We are concerned that engaging in MDR and regular review of the Commitments and Expectations will make heavy/unrealistic demands on time for both lay and ordained.

Ministers are discovering the value of our supervision system and finding the benefit of this for the development of ministry. This requires 6 sessions a year and preparation as well as training for those involved in its delivery.

The Synod believes that it would be better, in the light of the covenant relationship and alongside supervision, to use the commitments of the Covenant instead of MDR for members, presbyters and deacons to review and develop the ministry of members, presbyters and deacons within the District.

In addition, we ask the Ministries Committee to consider the question of withdrawing the mandatory requirement to engage in MDR.

Reply
The Conference thanks the Newcastle Upon Tyne District Synod for the memorial and particularly for its welcome of 'The Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers' (2022), which now forms Part 6 of Book IV of CPD and is entitled 'Renewing Full Connexion: Commitments and Expectations'.

'Renewing Full Connexion' sets out mutual expectations of ministers, members and the Church and can offer a helpful framing of a range of conversations including supervision, MDR, discernment processes and as part of the lifelong work of reflecting on ministry of both lay and ordained.

The purpose of the Ministerial Development Review (MDR) is set out in Standing Order 743 as being a process which enables every presbyter or deacon to reflect, with input from others, on how the ministry of that presbyter or deacon is being experienced and fulfilled both in relation to the Church as a whole and within the particular context in which the ministry of the relevant presbyter or deacon is being exercised.

MDR offers an opportunity for feedback from those amongst whom ministry is exercised, in a way which supervision does not. The Ministries Committee has recently

reviewed MDR and recognised it is one part of a suite of support and accountability tools for ministers and the Church. In 2021 a new resource supporting MDR was launched, which can be accessed at **media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/ministerialdevelopmentreview_final_Bc1lxRw.pdf** on the Methodist Church website.

Whilst the Conference declines the proposal to remove MDR, it recognises that there is further work to be done, in order for 'Renewing Full Connexion' to bear fruit in the life of the church and directs the Ministries Committee to consider these matters and to report to the Conference of 2025.

SECTION F
RESOURCING COMMITTEE

1 The Resourcing Committee is appointed by the Council to advise and assist 'in fulfilling the Council's responsibilities for the strategic oversight and use of resources with regard to personnel, finance and physical assets which are within the purview of the council' (SO360).

2 In addition to overseeing the production of the Connexional Central Services Budget for the Council to present to the Conference, the Committee has been actively engaged with a wide range of topics during its first year.

3 Its initial work focussed on supporting the establishment of a Scheme of Delegation to help give clarity to the Council, its Committees and its officers about where responsibility was being delegated and where it was being retained. It also agreed a new Connexional Allowances and Ministerial Grants Policy that built upon the considerable work undertaken by the previous Connexional Allowances Committee.

4 The Committee received the annual report of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee and noted the concerns raised about the lack of volunteers able to maintain our historic churches. It also noted that a subsequent internal audit report had found that the Listed Buildings processes 'are rigorous and provide strong compliance assurance'.

5 A range of other property issues considered during the year included: a review of the successful new Methodist Church House project; the annual report on Connexional and District Consents; transition of oversight of connexional manses from the Connexional Manses Committee; a briefing on the expanded Property Support team; and a recommendation was made to the Council to sell the former Methodist Publishing building in Werrington as it was surplus to requirements.

6 As the lead employer for the Pension and Assurance Scheme of Lay Employees of the Methodist Church (PASLEMC), the Council was advised by the Committee on a number of matters. The work by the PASLEMC Trustee to seek an insurance buy-out of the scheme reached a conclusion and, following the appropriate due diligence, the Committee recommended to the Council that the scheme be formally wound up.

7 The Committee received reports on a wide range of Human Resource issues. Areas of particular focus included: the work being undertaken in relation to ministerial wellbeing, the process for the transfer of District Safeguarding Officers into the Connexional Team, and the ongoing development of the lay employment resources on the website.

8 The Council has delegated to the Committee the governance oversight of those entities that form part of the consolidated connexional accounts (Cliff College; Methodist International Centre; Southlands Trust; All We Can). As the issues facing each entity are so different, the Committee decided to calibrate its approach to oversight accordingly. The Committee also liaised with Methodist Central Hall Westminster (which is a Conference Property) and its new Chair as it continued to reshape its business post the pandemic.

9 The Committee is also responsible for the key partnerships with the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) and the Central Finance Board (CFB). TMCP undertakes legal work for the Connexion under Standing Order 931(3) and the Committee has oversight of the Service Level Partnership Agreement that covers this work. The CFB reported to the Committee on the performance of the Council's investments and the parameters used to manage the investments; discussion was had on the investment strategy for Connexional Funds.

10 The routine work of the Committee includes the review and/or approval of ministerial grants; the review of the connexional management accounts; the review of investment and cash movements; the ongoing process to review how some historic restricted funds of the Council can be used effectively; the review of various resource related policies; and making recommendations to the Council on other matters related to the terms of service of ministers.

Connexional Allowances

11 A full list of the proposed allowances for 2025/26 can be found in Appendix 1. In line with the Connexional Allowances and Ministerial Grants Policy, a number of these allowances has been reviewed in 2024/25 as set out below.

Stipends

12 Using the index numbers published in October 2024, the Consumer Price Index movement for the year to September 2024 was +1.7% and the Average Weekly Earnings Index movement for the year to August 2024 was +4.43%. The average of these is 3.06%. In line with the stipend formula agreed by the Conference of 2024, the annual standard stipend for the year beginning 1 September 2025 is to £31,980 (rounding up to the next highest figure divisible by 12, to give a monthly stipend of exactly £2,665).

Responsibility Payments

13 Whilst responsibility payments are not due for a review this year and are simply uplifted in line with the uplift in the stipend, a simplification is being proposed. Currently, the allowance for a number of posts is to be agreed by the Remuneration Committee (now disbanded and the task transferred to the Resourcing Committee). In reality, the practice for some time has been to pay as follows:

Grade of post	% responsibility allowance
0-4	0
5	10
6	20
7	25

In order to add clarity and avoid the need for individual decisions requiring Committee sign-off, it is proposed that this practice is now adopted as a policy.

Allowances for Malta and Rome

14 An annual review of the position in respect of appointments in Malta and Rome is undertaken to assess if currency fluctuations require an additional allowance to be paid for these appointments. Over the last five years the £:€ exchange rate has moved from £1.00:€1.17 to £1.00:€1.18 so no allowance would be proposed for such an appointment.

Relocation allowances

15 The relocation allowance exists to support ministers when they move station. It is in addition to removal and travel expenses. It was last uplifted for inflation in 2012, from £500 to £600 (N.B. an allowance of £800 is paid where two ministers sharing a manse move simultaneously). No representations have been made to increase the allowance which would be an additional financial cost to circuits (for active ministers) or the Fund for Support of Presbyters and Deacons (for ministers sitting down).

Sabbatical annual levy expenses level

16 A levy of £100 per minister is levied on districts as part of the Assessment process. These monies are then used to fund the costs of sabbaticals taken by ministers up to a cap of £1000 per minister per sabbatical. This cap was last uplifted in 2015 (from £800 to £1000) and inflation since would imply an uplift of c35% is justified. However, given the affordability issues being experienced across the Connexion and the fact the sabbatical costs are wholly discretionary it is not proposed to make any changes for 2025/26.

Computers in Ministry

17 This annual allowance was introduced for all ministers to equate to approximately 25% the cost of a new computer (therefore funding new equipment every four years). It increases each year in line with CPI (as at September) so will increase by 1.7% to £211.

Local Allowances

18 The Committee reminds circuits that in line with Standing Order 801(1)(b) no discretionary local allowance can be paid without the prior authorisation of the Committee. As agreed by the Conference of 2024, this also encompasses ministers stationed in district appointments and the Committee asks the Law and Polity Committee to draft the necessary amendment to Standing Order 801(1)(b).

Ministers in part-time appointments

19 The Conference of 2007 reviewed the policy on part-time appointments. In particular it clarified that ministers in part time appointments ('part-time minister' is not an appropriate term) are paid a 'proportional allowance', not a part-time or proportional stipend. Further, they clarified that there is no requirement for a manse to be provided for a part-time appointment.

20 This situation is not clearly reflected in Standing Orders and therefore, in reality, there will be many circuits that do provide a manse in such circumstances. Furthermore, whilst a policy has been developed in relation to manse provision and housing related costs where the minister has a second role outside the control of the Church, there is no policy to cover the situation where no such outside role exists. These situations need to be agreed locally and the consequent 'local allowance' approved by the Committee.

21 The Committee was made aware of an anomaly where a minister was in two appointments under the control of the Church, each appointment being less than 50%, but the two collectively being greater than 50%. Having reviewed the issues that arose as result of this situation, the committee proposes that where a minister is in multiple appointments under the control of the Church the financial

arrangements should follow current policy as if it were a single appointment, with an agreement required between the relevant bodies and a sharing of costs proportionate to each appointment. It is anticipated the number of situations to which this will apply will be few.

Ministerial Grants

22 The Committee has oversight of the ministerial benevolent funds on behalf of the Council. These continue to provide ministers, both active and supernumerary, and their dependants, essential financial support in times of financial need. Whilst the funds remain in relatively good health, the demands on the funds increase year on year. Therefore, the Committee remains very grateful for the ongoing donations received from across the Connexion to allow this growing need to be met.

23 Further information about each of the funds and the support they offer is available on the Methodist Church website.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

3/11. The Conference receives the Report.

3/12. The Conference directs the Law and Polity Committee to prepare an amendment to Standing Order 801(1)(b) so that it encompasses ministers stationed in district appointments.

3/13. The Conference adopts the proposed policy in paragraph 21 of the Report.

3/14. The Conference approves the changes to connexional allowances as set out in the Report.

Appendix 1

Allowance	Current Amount		Due to be reviewed	Interval	Proposed amount for 2025/26	
Stipend	£31,020 per annum		2024/25	Annual	£31,980	
Stipend formula	Based on CPIH and average earnings		2026/27	3 years		
Responsibility payments		% £	2026/27	3 years	%	£
	President	30 9306			30	9594
	Secretary of the Conference	30 9306			30	9594
	Assistant Secretary of Conference	25 7755			25	7995
	Connexional Secretary	25 7755			25	7995
	Separated District Chair	25 7755			25	7995
	Warden of the MDO	25 7755			25	7995
	Superintendent	10 3102			10	3198
	Training Institution Principal	25 7755			25	7995
	Other roles*:					
	Grade 7	25 7755			25	7995
	Grade 6	20 6204			20	6396
	Grade 5	10 3102			10	3198
	Grade 1-4	0 0			0	0
	* ministers serving in the Connexional Team or stationed to appointments within the control of the Connexional Council, staff members of Training Institutions, and the Deputy Warden of the MDO.					
Island within the UK Allowances	22%		2026/27	3 years	22%	
Allowances for Malta and Rome	0%		2024/25	Annual	0%	
Island travel allowances	2x trips per annum (4x Isle of Wight)		2026/27	3 years	2x trips per annum (4x Isle of Wight)	

Allowance	Current Amount	Due to be reviewed	Interval	Proposed amount for 2025/26
Relocation Allowances	£600 (standard) £800 (if two ministers share a manse)	2024/25	3 years	£600 (standard) £800 (if two ministers share a manse)
Travel Allowances	Car up to 10,000 miles - 45p/mile Car over 10,000 miles - 25p/mile Motorcycle – 24p/mile Bicycle – 20p/mile Additional passenger rate – 5p/mile		In line with HMRC	Car up to 10,000 miles - 45p/mile Car over 10,000 miles - 25p/mile Motorcycle – 24p/mile Bicycle – 20p/mile Additional passenger rate – 5p/mile
Travel grant during sickness	£350	2025/26	3 years	£350
Computers in Ministry	£207	2024/25	Annual	£211
Computers in Ministry formula		2026/27	3 years	
Initial grants to ministers	£3,000	2026/27	3 years	£3,000
Initial loans to ministers	£10,000	2026/27	3 years	£10,000
Grants in lieu of state benefits	Allowance per child	2024/25	3 years	Allowance per child
Preaching fees	£30	2028/29	5 years	£30
Sabbatical levy	£100	2024/25	5 years	£100
Sabbatical expenses	£1,000	2024/25	5 years	£1,000

SECTION G
MISSION COMMITTEE

1 The committee reported to the Council that it had reviewed its workplan.

2 At its meeting in October 2024, the committee received a progress report on the work in response to Memorial 22 (the Slave Trade) to the 2021 Methodist Conference, from the small group designated for this piece of work within the Connexional Team. The group, working together with a Reparations Advisory Group of experts and interested parties, shared that beginning conversations with the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas (MCCA) was taking longer than had been anticipated. The committee agreed that the importance of these conversations with Partner Churches meant that the project timings should be adjusted so that real partnership would be prioritised over timelines. The original timetable brought to the Committee in May 2024 had proposed that the final report should be taken to the Conference in 2026, however, it is now recommended that this is delayed to 2027. It is now clear that the original deadlines will not work for our partners, so the proposal is to bring the final report instead to the Conference in 2027, with an interim report on the historical context in 2026 and, if possible, some form of workshops or consultation around what may be brought the following year.

3 The committee received a report from the Methodist Heritage Committee outlining work achieved over the past year and progress regarding the alignment of Methodist Heritage work to the current strategic priorities of the Church, and the development of a new strategy for Methodist Heritage (2025–2030). The Committee gave its input towards the formation of the new Heritage Strategy, noting the need for key synergies between the strategy and other connexional policies and the Church's ongoing commitment to be growing, inclusive, evangelistic and justice-seeking.

4 The committee received a report from the MMAC Management Committee, which included an update of the Management Committee's work in 2023-24 and welcomed the progress on an appropriate alternative future for the watercolour of *The Annunciation* by Eric Gill. In discussion, the committee approved the proposed outline plan and timeline to return the Gill watercolour to the Collection pages on the MCB website with enhanced interpretation, to be used for mission. Specifically, the Committee approved the Management Committee to lend this work to Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft in summer 2025, as part of a co-curated Collections Display working with the Methodist Survivors' Advisory Group.

5 The committee received an update on the search for a new home for the MMAC and gave its support for continued negotiations with Kingswood School and the

Holburne Museum, Bath, and discussions with Bath Preservation Trust and the Gibbs Trust to scope the potential of this proposal.

6 The committee has worked jointly with the Ministries Committee to convene the Connexional Economic Justice Working Group.

7 The committee received a report from the newly established Global Communities Ministries Sub-Committee, which came into being on 1 February 2025. The current Fellowships Sub-committee will continue to meet as a support group for the fellowships until August 2025. Having previously reviewed and approved the terms of reference for the Global Communities Ministries Sub-Committee, the committee appointed new members to the Sub-Committee. The Committee looks forward to working with the Global Communities Ministries Sub-Committee as they develop the priorities for their work across the Connexion with Global Communities, and as they prepare recommendations that will come to the Council in time for the 2026 Conference.

8 The committee received a report following an appraisal of the 3Generate event and youth ministry work in local settings, and the extent to which these two complement each other to provide spiritual support for children and young people in view of the vision stated and directed by the Mission Committee and held within the Children, Youth and Families strategy. The assessment conducted by the Good Faith Partnership made five management recommendations for the Church to consider as a response to their findings, the focus of which was to redress the balance as to where resources were spent and looking at impact on work at a local level. The committee discussed the recommendations in depth and commended these to the Connexional Team.

9 The committee discussed a proposal to explore the creation of a joint post with Methodist Church in Ireland (MCI) and the Methodist Church in Britain as part of renewal of the *God For All strategy (2025–2032)* (paragraph 13),[1] which made clear the intention and direction of global Methodist and Wesleyan working in respect of growing churches desire and capacity for mission. The committee welcomed this way of working and also commended the contribution MCI makes to the committee through ex officio members of the Mission Committee and with our partnership work.

1 https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf-24-pc-20-god-for-all-strategic-update-renewal-2025-2032.pdf

10 The Committee also discussed the considerations for Methodist participation in the future of Let's End Poverty, after the end of the fixed term funding. Proposals outlining a future for Let's End Poverty brought to the Committee were contingent on partners coming forward with commitments to increase their leadership of the project and their financial and staff contributions towards coordinating capacity. It has recently come to light that despite a positive and committed tone from many partners, there were not sufficient new sources of staff capacity or funding to enable a shared, sustainable future for Let's End Poverty to emerge beyond May. Connexional Team staff are therefore in the process of working with the Let's End Poverty Enabling Group and partner organisations to agree that the current work of Let's End Poverty will finish at the end of May 2025. Opportunities are being generated to share learning from Let's End Poverty and to continue partnerships into future anti-poverty work through Justice-Seeking Church and JPIT.

11 As part of the ongoing work of the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group (OTTG), the committee received terms of reference from sub-committees and working groups that report to the Mission Committee.

12 Following a recommendation from the Conference that a plan be drawn up to embed the Justice-seeking Church Report in the life of the Methodist Church, the committee received an update on the Justice-seeking Church strategy one year in. The update highlighted some of the actions undertaken in the Church during this time. It also identified some of the challenges around capacity, links with local churches and depth of engagement with justice-seeking. The committee noted evidence that one year in, the Justice-seeking Church strategy has seen progress in beginning to embed the principles, priorities and practices of the Methodist Conference report throughout the wider church and supports an increased capacity within the team to sustain this.

13 The committee received an update on Faith-rooted Community Organising (FRCO) and the next steps for the Methodist Church. The renewal of the *God for All* strategy included a commitment to employ a Connexional FRCO Officer funded through the *God for All* Strategy. The Committee was pleased that Deacon Kerry Scarlett took up the new role of Connexional Faith Rooted Community Organising Officer on 3 March 2025. One of her key priorities will be developing and implementing a Connexional FRCO training strategy, developing and sustaining a network of district officers, recruited as FRCO leads in each district. The role will advocate for and deliver faith-rooted community organising practices in the Methodist Church, to support organising for justice, to develop existing congregations and to begin new forms of Christian communities.

14 The committee received the annual report from the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), which reported on key activities undertaken in support of the team's main priorities over the last 12 months. The committee approved the JPIT partnership agreement on behalf of the Methodist Church. The partnership agreement was recently reviewed by the JPIT's Strategy and Policy Group, made up of senior representatives from each of the denominations in the partnership, and sets out the joint working arrangements between the partners in JPIT.

15 The committee received an update including a review of the key projects and orientations of the transitional year (2024-25) of the *God For All* work, held currently within *God For All report* adopted by the 2024 Conference, plus ongoing work of the Evangelism and Growth team and the planned-for further development and embedding as part of renewal of the *God For All strategy (2025–2032).* The committee had conversations about the connexionally-funded district leads for Faith-Rooted Community Organising and New Places for New People in every district from September 2025. These posts will provide bespoke support to embed FRCO practices aiming to develop teams and effective leaders of change in congregations and communities, and to support and build the NPNP movement across the district respectively.

16 The committee presented to the Council a discussion paper concerning measurement; the Council invited the Mission Committee to design and pilot a measurement rubric and system and to report back to the Council within 18 months the process, findings, and recommended application elsewhere in the Connexion.

17 The committee received a report from the Global Relationships Committee (GRC) outlining the work of the GRC in 2024-25. They recognised how the partnership coordinators had adapted their ways of working with overseas partners on the ground following changes to the mission partner programme. They noted a diverse delegation of British and Irish representatives and others had attended and participated in the World Methodist Conference in August 2024 and acknowledged the ongoing opportunities and challenges therein. The committee discussed the imminent strategic review for GRC relationships, stakeholders, policies, priorities, and programmes, which will reflect on the work of Global Relationships in response to the new terms of reference for the GRC and consider evolving priorities and strategies within Methodist Church in Britain. The committee offered reflective feedback and welcomed the process for a strategic review which promises a fruitful, theologically engaged, and searching reflection.

18 The committee was joined online by the Revd David Hardman, the Connexional Officer at the Methodist Liaison Office (MLO) in Jerusalem, and reflected on the current situation in the West Bank as the backdrop against which the MLO

operates, acknowledging the ongoing risk assessment that governs his travel and work plan. The committee discussed where the focus for the MLO lies in future, in the context of the volatile situation in the Gaza and how it and the Church could support the work of the MLO. The committee expressed its solidarity with David and the work of the MLO in the West Bank, Gaza and Israel, as he supports partners and continues to be a focus for advocacy in the MCB and MCI.

19 The committee received a report from the Justice Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) Committee, which provided an overview of ongoing work on the JDS strategy. The report highlighted work conducted throughout 2024, where the emphasis had been to reflect on what had been achieved in terms of JDS strategy implementation, and to embed and integrate the strategy throughout the work of the Connexional Team. In addition, priority was given to the capacity building of the District EDI Officers.

*****RESOLUTION**

3/15. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION H
METHODIST SCHOOLS COMMITTEE

The Council received the report of the Methodist Schools Committee which follows. It noted the question about the future funding of MAST that was raised and directed the Connexional Secretary to work with MAST on a structural review of its responsibilities to ensure that the Council can fulfil its statutory obligations in the most effective and efficient way and to report by March 2026.

Introduction

The new UK government, elected in May 2024, has brought fresh ideas and policies into the world of education and some significant challenges for all Methodist Schools. Independent schools are wrestling with the imposition of VAT, whilst state schools have had to get to grips with a new set of priorities, and a large change in the direction of travel. Less than three years ago the DfE indicated that all schools would become academies by 2030, but the new government, whilst not abandoning the idea of schools becoming academies, no longer promotes or prioritises academisation.

In the midst of regular educational policy changes, Methodist Schools continue to serve daily 25,000 children and young people, a large staff group and a wider community of

100,000. Methodist schools maintain a high standard in all forms of inspection and, equally importantly, provide a strong learning environment shot through with a confident Methodist ethos. These 83 schools are a significant part of our 'God for all' strategy, many serving communities facing significant hardship.

This year, as last, the main report from each part of the Methodist Schools network is set out under the strategic directions of development set out in ***Transforming Lives*** report in 2021.

- *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' network, therefore, reports its work under these headings. In year 4 of the strategy's expected 10-year life, we report significant progress, but also some disappointing news. The Executive Summary and Highlights are to guide the reader to some of the key points which are expanded elsewhere in the report.

Executive Summary and Highlights

- **Epworth** Education (Multi-Academy) Trust (EET) has grown in strength and numbers over the last year, now serving 11 academy schools and with plans for further growth in the coming years. It is highly regarded by the DfE and the regional directors for its ability to strengthen school performance and develop all staff serving in schools. Its weekly worship for all schools together, led by pupils and staff, is an outstanding development.
- Sadly, our second Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), the **Inspiring Lives Educational Trust (ILET**) has had to close before it could be launched. This is due to a variety of factors but principally because of delays and the changes in government policy. The committee is disappointed with this outcome, as the vision for a MAT serving the south of England, open to both Methodist and non-Methodist schools, was an ambitious and exciting one, and the work and cost of setting it up was considerable. We are especially grateful for the selfless time and energy given to this project by David Kershaw, Steve Colledge and Charlotte Taylor. The preparatory work is fully documented and will be kept in case there is a further change in government education policy.
- Last year, the committee reported that **MAST** was facing financial uncertainty and will not have the funds to continue to exercise its responsibilities as Religious Provider for 66 schools on behalf of the Methodist Church beyond 2026. We are

actively seeking funding for the next period in conversation with the Westminster College Oxford Trust, the Southlands Methodist Trust and the Executive Director of Finance and Resources in the Connexional Team. In order to ensure that this financial difficulty does not occur again, there will be a structural review undertaken in the next connexional year and reported to the next Conference.

- The Council's attention is drawn to the excellent work being undertaken by **MIST chaplains** set out in the MIST report under 'a confident Methodist ethos'. This year MIST has focused on highlighting and developing the work carried out by our chaplains.
- MAST will be sorry to lose Charlotte Taylor at the end of July. Charlotte has announced her retirement having been Head of Service for MAST for the last 2 years and before that Headteacher at Holly Hill Anglican-Methodist Primary school. She has navigated MAST through difficult times and represented Methodist schools in government forums and consultations. Work is underway to find a successor.
- Details of several changes in MIST personnel can be found at the beginning of the MIST Report.
- We are delighted to report that Dr David Kershaw, a Methodist local preacher, was awarded the 2024 Pearson Gold Lifetime Achievement Award for services to education. David has worked in education for 60 years. He supported four secondary schools to come out of OFSTED 'special measures' and overseen dramatic school improvement of schools within deprivation areas of Birmingham, Coventry, Leicester and Bradford. He is passionate about enabling excellent education opportunities for all. He has served Methodist Schools as Chair of Epworth Education Trust, in the groundwork done for Inspiring Lives Trust and as a member of the Methodist Schools Committee.

MAST (Methodist Academies and Schools Trust)

1. Growing Schools

Increasing the number of schools is largely not undertaken by MAST directly, though MAST remains open to schools which wish to join the Trust. The Epworth Education Trust (EET) has been growing as an Academy trust and hopes to receive non-Methodist community schools in the North West into its fold over the next few years. It is clear that several such schools are attracted by the values and ethos of the EET.

2. Offering excellent education

Our Methodist schools are thriving!

Evidenced through Ofsted inspections, 97% of our schools are judged good or better.

With a recruitment crisis and a shortage of headteachers nationally, all of our vacancies for September headteachers have been successfully filled, securing strong leadership for our schools.

Twenty-three of our 66 schools are presently academised, five are in process (with five different trusts) therefore 38 remain in the local authority. The increased number of non-Methodist trusts that MAST is working with continues to increase and stretch central resources. It would be our wish that all of our Methodist and joint Methodist schools would join a Methodist trust. However, there are many factors that influence a school's decision to join a particular trust. MAST works alongside the schools and trusts to ensure that Methodist ethos and high-quality education is promoted and protected into the future.

Schools in our Methodist Trust (EET) are well supported and benefit from working together and sharing good practice, and workload. They remain as part of the wider Methodist family and under the religious authority of MAST. Those schools that remain within the local authority continue to be supported through MAST and benefit from our school support team consisting of 11 Regional Leaders of Education (RLEs). All are experienced and knowledgeable headteachers in our schools. *'As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's Grace'* (1 Peter 4:10). Our dedicated RLEs visit schools, share best practice, support with inspections and foster a sense of belonging to the Methodist family of schools and church.

In addition to our school support team, schools benefit from our bespoke, high quality professional development programme. Our termly senior leadership briefings and biweekly newsletters ensure our leaders are abreast of national changes and requirements. They are signposted to the latest research highlighting best practice. Termly training for governors develops confidence and knowledge within this strategic role of holding headteachers to account.

3. A confident Methodist ethos

Dynamic partnerships reflect the school's deeply embedded Anglican and Methodist foundations. These collaborations enhance collective worship, enrich religious education (RE), empower wellbeing and develop pupils' understanding of diversity and justice.
(SIAMS report, November 2024, Hapton Primary)

SIAMS inspections demonstrate that 100% of our schools are flourishing.

Our professional development programme is distinctive to our Methodist schools. Building on the success of our spirituality trilogy, this year we are delivering a series of worship webinars entitled Looking Up, Looking Out, Looking In. In response to evaluating our SIAMS reports MAST has provided a session on Courageous Advocacy and Social

Justice and shared a bank of resources from Christian Aid with the opportunity to achieve accreditation in this area. Responding to Ofsted's research and RE subject report, the year started with a session on 'Outstanding Subject Leadership in RE'. Leaders reflected upon the progress and impact of RE within their schools and developed their knowledge to secure a strong account of their subject across their school. All of our 66 schools use the Methodist specific units to enhance their RE syllabus and underpin their strong Methodist ethos.

Our school support team receive high quality training from MAST and the SIAMS central team, ensuring they have the most relevant and up to date knowledge relating to effective practice within Anglican and Methodist church schools. They are kept abreast of any changes to inspection and are best placed to represent MAST as the religious authority.

As you enter our Methodist schools, they feel special. They are warm, inviting and compassionate. They offer sanctuary to families who are marginalised and disadvantaged in society, offering hope and aspiration for a generation who care for others and the world in which they live.

4. Working together

MAST continues to develop relationships both within and beyond Methodist education, contributing to the formation of national policy and practice through a number of key forums:

Faith Schools Policy group: This group is chaired by the Minister for Schools and Standards. The agenda is broad and responsive to national changes and developments. Examples of areas covered this year include: Ofsted accountability; an overview of the new government RISE team (Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence); Changes to school admissions; A briefing on Multi-agency Safeguarding; An update on Gender Equality guidance.

Ofsted Section 48 Inspectorate Group: Work in this group considers all things Ofsted and the implications for changes in policy and practice particularly from our faith perspective. We have completed a joined-up piece of work on agreeing a protocol for deferring inspections should scheduling between faith schools' inspections and Ofsted collide. Papers submitted on key characteristics of each of our faiths has been included in the training of inspectors to develop their understanding of, and sensitivities to, inspecting in faith schools. We have contributed to updating the School Inspection Handbook used by all inspectors and schools.

MAST has been invited to be part of the government's Curriculum and Assessment Review: The purpose of this roundtable is to engage directly with Professor Becky Francis

OBE, Chair of the review, and other members of the review panel on religious education (RE). The roundtable is attended by other key stakeholders across the RE sector.

Through academisation opportunities MAST is working closely with dioceses, DfE regional teams, local authorities and multi-academy trusts (MATs) across the country. With 40 joint Anglican/Methodist schools, partnership working is essential to ensure that those of our schools academising outside of the Methodist family are safeguarded into the future.

To support our children to become courageous advocates and challenge social injustice in our schools, MAST and Christian Aid have entered a formal partnership agreement. Through the Global Neighbours' accreditation scheme our schools receive a discounted rate for the scheme and have access to high-quality resources and advice.

Flourish: These meetings are attended by representatives from Flourish, Church at the Margins and Free Churches, recognising God's call to work with schools so that children and young people, communities and churches can be transformed and flourish in all aspects of life, both physical and spiritual.

Epworth Education Trust and MAST continue to work closely together to share expertise across the family so that all Methodist schools continue to thrive. Epworth is leading on Christian Leadership and working on updating Methodist resources for religious education.

Our wider Methodist family continues to seek opportunities for strengthening and advancing Methodist education. Southlands and MAST are committed to working together, exploring opportunities for joint working and sharing of resources. Methodist Independent Schools Trust and MAST focus on key areas of mutual benefit. A joint letter has been sent to districts and circuits thanking them for their wonderful work and commitment to our schools, encouraging responsibility for ensuring schools are compliant with foundation governor appointments. Our termly chaplaincy coffee mornings continue, focusing on key discussion points and sharing good practice in a safe space.

5. Prioritising areas of need

MAST has one over-arching priority at this point and that is to be sustainable into the future. Increased funding is being sought in order for MAST to continue to fulfil the Council's statutory duty beyond September 2025 as the religious provider as stated in Standing Order 272. It is hoped that a swift and sustainable resolution will be found to ensure our children continue to thrive through high-quality education underpinned by our Methodist ethos.

Academisation of our schools into our Methodist trusts, and non-Methodist trusts, remains high on the agenda to ensure that our Methodist ethos remains secure in time to come.

As EET continues to grow in the north, a review of the MAST academisation strategy, particularly in the south of the country is needed in response to there not being a Methodist trust. All Methodist only schools are required to join a Methodist trust. At present there are four Methodist schools in the south that do not have a Methodist trust option.

MAST has worked hard to support our schools and foster a deep sense of belonging to a wider Methodist family. We need to continue to engage and support our leaders ensure that all of our schools are flourishing educationally and spiritually and that this is externally validated through the inspection system.

Epworth Education Trust (EET)

1. Growing schools

Epworth Education Trust has experienced significant growth since the last conference report, with five additional schools—Bakewell, Leyland Infants, Leyland Juniors, Wheatley Lane, and Hey with Zion—joining in Summer 2024. This nearly doubled the size of the Trust, initiating a period of consolidation to strengthen internal organisation. The Trust's family of schools continues to work closely to support one another, exemplifying a unified commitment to educational excellence.

Two grants from the Department for Education (DfE) were successfully secured, enabling strategic staffing and organisational changes in anticipation of these new additions. These grants have also supported the implementation of a Trust-wide best-practice curriculum, ensuring alignment with the High-Quality Trust Descriptor.

Additionally, the opening of a SEND unit at Summerseat Methodist School has enabled the Trust to grow through different avenues. This has set a benchmark for excellence in providing tailored education for students with high-level needs as the unit has become a beacon of good practise within the Local Authority. Following this success, the Trust has submitted a proposal for a primary special free school in Bury.

Looking ahead, the Trust remains proactive in navigating the changing educational landscape under the newly elected government. Plans are underway to evaluate and enhance resilience and sustainability, ensuring adaptability to forthcoming reviews and reforms.

2. Offering excellent education

Epworth Education Trust remains committed to excellence, as evidenced by rising outcomes in national data and strong Ofsted ratings across the majority of its schools.

These achievements are complemented by recognition of strengths in pastoral care and staff well-being.

In September 2024, the Trust launched *Infinite Eight*, a flagship initiative offering all pupils access to enriching opportunities beyond the curriculum. These eight core experiences include be at one with nature, walk a while in someone's shoes, be inspired to aspire, be a helping hand, be a culture collector, be a heritage host, be part of a top team, marvel at the masters. This initiative aligns with the Trust's vision of holistic education, inspiring aspiration, collaboration, and creativity in every child.

The Trust has been proactive in developing the optimum opportunity for every child to be taught the best curriculum by excellent teachers. Professional development continues to be a cornerstone of the Trust's educational strategy, delivering to staff across the Trust high quality continuing professional development that is often created and delivered by Trust staff. The teaching and learning model continues to provide a strong exemplification to teaching staff of the key components of high quality teaching. The annual conference, themed 'Belonging', focused upon critical priorities such as attendance and effective habits for learning. Additionally, the successful Trust delivery of three National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) - Headteacher, Teaching and Learning, and Behaviour and Culture - as enhanced leadership capacity within the Trust. By 2025, the Trust plans to expand this offering to include the SEND course, further empowering staff to lead with expertise and compassion. The NPQs not only develop the leadership skills of those attending the courses but also provide wider opportunities for other colleagues as they have delivered the course or provided coaching.

3. A confident Methodist ethos

The Trust's vision, 'To be a family of schools working together so all within our communities flourish and succeed', is deeply rooted in its Methodist foundation. This ethos permeates every aspect of school life, from collective worship to strong relationships throughout the Trust.

Epworth Worship Together continues to unite the Trust family of schools, with children creating and delivering collective worship through engaging videos and resource sheets. This initiative not only fosters spiritual development but also strengthens a sense of shared purpose.

The recent SIAMs inspection at Rosehill affirmed the Trust's dedication to its Christian mission, highlighting the embodiment of the Methodist ethos. The report states:

> 'The three core values of compassion, friendship and forgiveness are embodied in the governors' shared aspirations for the school and their commitment to its

work. This vision is deeply rooted within the Methodist foundation of the Trust and are a golden thread throughout the school.'

'The school's overarching value of love ensures that there is a tangible culture of care both in the school and wider community',

'Collective worship is inspiring, engaging and provides the opportunity for spiritual development'.

4. Working together

The Trust is proactive in working with a wide range of Methodist partners through shared webinars and sharing of best practise. It is fully committed to developing partnerships further. Members of the Educational Team provide wider support to Methodist Schools through being a MAST Regional Leader of Education or delivering CPD through the MAST webinar programme.

EET is working with wider Methodist partners to establish a Christian Leadership course which will provide opportunities for leaders in Methodist schools to explore more fully what it means to lead a Methodist school.

The Trust has established wider links with new North West England District within which the majority of schools in the Trust sit and is looking at how these links can be strengthened going forward.

A teacher of RE in the Trust has been successful in gaining a Farmington Institute Scholarship and is currently exploring the use of music as a vehicle to teach RE and enhance spirituality. Building upon this work, the Trust will further develop the RE curriculum in the Trust, enhancing the 'Methodist Unit' which will be utilised wider.

5. Prioritising areas of need

The Trust continues to live out the Methodist ethos of inclusivity in its approach to education ensuring that all feel welcome and included and are given the opportunity to flourish. This is seen in the strong SEND offer across the Trust. We strive to be the answer rather than see a problem and have many stories of children unable to access education fully until joining an EET school and then through the strong ethos and bespoke offer are flourishing both within the SEND units and across the wider schools.

Beyond local impact, the Trust's partnership with EDUKID reflects its global outlook. By sponsoring children in Uganda and organising biannual visits, the Trust instils in its community a sense of responsibility to support those in need. The recent visit by

Tracy Beaty brought these connections to life through collective worship and Trust-wide activities, fostering empathy and global citizenship among students.

The Trust has partnered with an external charity 'AllChild' to improve life chances for pupils in a Wigan school through providing opportunities to develop a stronger sense of belonging and optimising their opportunities for a number of pupils. This has already seen pupils receive opportunities they may not have previously been able to access. The project will run for two years.

MIST (Methodist Independent Schools Trust)

At the end of last academic year, we said farewell with great gratitude to three MIST Trustees, Revd Dr Jonathan Pye, Mr Richard Thomas and Dr Neil Tunnicliffe. We also wished safe travels to Revd Dr Calvin Samuel as he embarked on a new stage of his spiritual mission and personal journey. We welcomed a new Chair, Mr Ian McCaig, a new Chair of Finance, Mr John Jefferson, and the Revd Dr Mark Wakelin to our Trustee family in September. In our schools, we welcomed Mr David Bailey and Mr Mike Gough as Chairs of Kent College, Canterbury and Queen's College, Taunton, respectively.

1. Growing Schools

These are challenging times for independent schools. The impact of government policy will be significant; the sector will shrink; schools will close. There will be a real and deeply felt human cost to the pupils currently educated within it. To sustain the unique ethos of Methodist independent schools educating over 10,000 children, we will need to face into these changes and make tough decisions on the road ahead.

The outcome of the imposition of VAT will be clearer by September 2025, but it will take another 2-3 years for the full impact to be known. The absolute priority for MIST and its schools will be to enable sustainability and plan for a different future.

Within Methodist Independent Schools, we continue to grow and develop our networks for staff:

- The Heads of RE had their first training day last June, inviting Lat Blaylock to run a session and based on its success will run the day again in 2025.
- The Leads for Equity Diversity and Inclusion in our schools had their first meeting in September 2024, sharing good practice, challenges and planning for an in-person day at one of our schools.
- The Designated Safeguarding Leads' group continues to meet annually and we have increased the support and training for our Safeguarding Governors, devising a

toolkit for use on conversations in schools and inviting them to a day of training and sharing of best practice.

2. Offering excellent education

Methodist Independent Schools provide an excellent all-round education infused with a strong Christian ethos.

The needs of our children and young adults have changed greatly in the past ten years and, with them, the role of the school in offering all-round support to our pupils and families. As local authority systems become ever stretched, schools nationally play an increasingly central role in society. It's no longer a village that raises a child; it is often a school.

At one MIST school, the objective is that each pupil grows to be the best that they can be, is fully prepared for the world they will encounter when they leave school, and develops strong levels of integrity, loyalty and commitment whilst upholding the school's values and Methodist heritage.

Pupil mental health wellbeing and pastoral issues continue to grow – our schools put time and resource into supporting our young people at a time when local authority support services are increasingly stretched.

Public Examination results in Summer 2024 were very much in line with the national picture, and it was most pleasing to note that the value added for the pupils in our schools supports the deeply held view that every child can grow and succeed in their own way and time. In this way, MIST schools continue to provide an education tailored to the needs and aspirations of all pupils and each pupil.

Governance at School and Trust level: an external, strategic review of governance at Trust and school level was completed in the winter and yielded recommendations that will strengthen our stewardship of the schools we serve. In challenging times, it is important that we are rigorous, robust and professional, and we must do that whilst remaining true to our ethos and values.

3. A confident Methodist ethos

This year we have a focus on Chaplaincy in our schools. Our chaplains seek to reach out into the school and local communities and circuits:

'Our school Chapel continues to be a wonderful part of the school daily diary. Over the last twelve months, we have seen Baptisms, a Wedding, a Golden Wedding

Anniversary and sadly, a funeral – all people who had or still have links with our school. It is a special place to be in. Roughly 27,000 pupils come through chapel each year, looking at themes as broad as Homelessness, Emotions, War Heroes, Fairtrade / Harvest, Honesty, Equality and many Bible stories teaching us about the simplicity of care and love for all.'

'I have begun to reach out to the wider Methodist family here, building relationships with the local Methodist Church, the District, the National Methodist Children & Youth Team, JPIT (Joint Public Issues Team) and Methodist Charities such as All We Can. I preach occasionally in various Methodist chapels to connect with the Methodist communities and seek ways of strengthening the Methodist links with the School.'

'I joined the Methodist circuit rota of ministers as a visiting minister to congregations, leading worship and talking about my role as Chaplain and attended Methodist synod meetings with clergy and lay people. I reconnected with our local church, and now have permission to use the church for services and activities with the students.'

'Our major piece of work this year has been our being awarded "School of Sanctuary" status, which means we are now able to explore, from a place of influence, how to respond to those seeking sanctuary in our country. We have begun by welcoming those who are seeking asylum into school, giving real life stories of war and homelessness – truly moving. We have also organised football matches at school alongside sports footwear donations for asylum seekers, supported by the Sports Department. We want to promote that 'all are welcome' at our school.'

"The Chaplain continues to be part of the local Circuit preaching once a month and taking a Sunday School class once a month in the Circuit. She continues to host a church staff lunch meeting in her home on a bimonthly basis.'

A (New) Chaplain's Charter: '*I decided to help myself navigate through the year by creating a Chaplain's Charter. This puts some shape and dimensions to my role, chaplaincy being a "ministry of presence". Throughout my first year here, my main priority has been to get to know pupils, staff and our wider school community, being present and available to them as much as possible. Four key areas of my work have evolved, as listed below, all rooted in our Methodist Ethos and School Values.*

1. *Encouraging a Methodist Ethos – affirming and embedding*
2. *Hearts Strangely Warmed – encouraging Spirituality*
3. *Accompanying on the Road – getting alongside others*
4. *Doing all the good we can – seeing beyond ourselves.'*

The Methodist Independent Schools' Annual Chaplains' Conference took place in October. Based at Charney Manor, Oxfordshire, the 3 days offered retreat and reflection. This year the focus was: *how we do what we do in service of our schools*. Other sessions on Wellbeing, Social Justice and International Partnerships (with All We Can) took place and the CEO of MIST delivered a session entitled: '*Walking The Path*' (Leading a Charity A Year on).

SERVE (Spiritual, Ethos, Relationships & Values Education) visits continue apace. By the end of this year, all our schools will have had an audit, and we can distil the learning from these and establish regular cycles of review. Some of the positive comments from the audits are below:

> '*The school's enduring Methodist ethos is powerfully reflected in the new school motto, 'Together, with Courage and Compassion'. Under the servant leadership of the head, the school has a strong, collaborative and inclusive culture that seeks to support pupils to be the best versions of themselves.'*
>
> *'The school epitomises what it means to be a Methodist School…. [They] live and breathe the ethos and values that successfully set them apart from other similar establishments in their local area. They are highly inclusive, with an authentic culture of openness and honesty that starts with the heads and flows through the community of staff, pupils and friends.'*

Our Pastoral Visitor: the Revd Aubin de Gruchy's work in the autumn term included visits to Kingswood School, Queen's College, The Leys and St Faiths, Culford and Truro Schools. He devised and led (with the other Chaplains) our service of thanksgiving at The Royal Foundation of St Katharine in September.

4. Working together

A Christian Leadership course with Southlands College and EET is under discussion.

We held our first Chaplains' Coffee mornings in early December, where our topic for discussion was: 'Who Is This Jesus Born of Mary?'. Chaplains from across MAST and MIST attended and the Pastoral Visitor led the session.

End of term reflections to mark holy days and holidays have taken place this year for all Methodist Schools. The Christmas Reflection was led by the Revd Dr Mark Wakelin taking the theme of 'Hush The Noise: Join the Love Song This Christmas!'. Chairs of Governors, Trustees, Heads, Chaplains and Methodist Schools' Staff all attended.

5. 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.

Partnerships work at our schools continue apace at home and abroad:

'*With the appointment of a new Chaplain, we have been able to reinvigorate our community links. For example, students have been volunteering at local church events various events Harvest Festival.*'

'We continue to support 'Candlelighters' as our 'global' school charity alongside, local foodbanks, a Hedgehog Sanctuary, St George's Crypt in Leeds, 'ZARACH' who supply beds for children who do not have a place to sleep.'

'We are also fortunate to have a long-term partnership with the school and community in Nankhufi, Malawi. Each year, a group of L6 students pitch their projects to the Rosetta Trust for funding. The projects the pupils supported and participated in this year included maintenance of rural water pumps, the Good News Children's Home, conservation and reforestation work.'

'The school has continued to work with Holding On Letting Go, a charity that supports bereaved children, benefitting from their expert advice as the school supported the friends of one student.

'As a number of staff have been directly affected by cancer during this academic year all our charity work has been directed to a number of cancer charities.'

'Over the last year we have developed a partnership with No Place Like Home (NPLH), a highly personalised companionship and care service for senior residents living in the local community, which especially welcomes people affected by dementia. Most recently, our Reception and Year 5 children welcomed a number of visitors from this organisation, and they all worked together on creative craft activities.'

'World Aims Days with a focus on Courage, embedded in the Truro School Festival, which has helped our school to grow community links, involving music and drama, with performances from three local state schools as well as our pupils.'

*****RESOLUTION**

3/16. The Conference receives the Report.

4. Report of the Presbyteral Session Business Committee

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

1. The Presbyteral Session Business Committee for 2025 comprises the Revds Gillian Newton, Kevin Highfield, Leigh Maydew, Bonni-Belle Pickard, Stephen Radford, and Mmasape Thathane-Tyolweni.

2. The Presbyteral Session proceeds for much of its business by way of conversation. Under Clause 23(m) of the Deed of Union, the Presbyteral Session may discuss any subject in the Agenda of the Representative Session or any subject within the jurisdiction of the Conference and communicate its views thereon to the Representative Session by resolution or otherwise.

3. Members of the Presbyteral Session of the Conference may submit Notices of Motion for the Conference to consider (see below for the procedures). They may also ask that the Session be able to confer from a presbyteral perspective about particular items in the published Agenda of the Conference. All such requests will be considered by the Business Committee and time found for them where possible.

4. So far the following have been identified by the Committee:
   Stationing Review;
   Healing Ministry and Neurodiversity;
   Discernment for senior leadership.

5. The Presbyteral Session of the Conference will meet in closed session at 15.15 on Friday 27 June, and this is expected to last for up to an hour. During this time the Vice-President will lead a session for those presbyters who are not voting members of the Session.

6. The Presbyteral Session defines by resolution who may normally be present at closed sessions. Attendance when it sits as a court of appeal is governed by Standing Order 1145(7).

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

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

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

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

8. **The Record**

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

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

9. **Notices of Motion**

The procedure for the submission of Notices of Motion is set out in SO 132, which can be found in the Rules of Procedure, printed at the beginning of Agenda Volume One. The deadline for submission of Notices of Motion is 17.15 on Thursday 26 June; however it would assist in the planning of the Session if Notices of Motion could be submitted to the Assistant Secretary by 16.00 on Wednesday 25 June.

*****RESOLUTION**

4/1. The Conference adopts the Report.

A. Future Conferences

The Conference Planning Executive (having made decisions under SO 140(3)(i)) reports to the Conference that arrangements are being made for the Conference to meet next year and the following year.

2026	Telford	25 June – 1 July
2027	Telford	24 – 30 June

*****RESOLUTION**

5/1. The Conference adopts the Report.

B Associate Members

*****RESOLUTION**

5/2. The Conference invites the following Conferences, Churches and Christian bodies to appoint associate members of the Conference in 2026:

The Church of England
The United Reformed Church
The Redeemed Christian Church of God
The Ecumenical Patriarchate

Africa
The United Church of Zambia
Free Methodist Church of Rwanda
Methodist Church Ghana

Asia and the Pacific
The Methodist Church in Malaysia
Church of Pakistan
Methodist Church of Samoa
The United Church in Solomon Islands

Europe
UMC Northern Europe, Baltic and Ukraine/Moldova
OPCEMI Italy
Igreja Evangelica Metodista Portuguesa

The Americas
Igreja Metodista Do Brasil (The Methodist Church of Brazil)
Iglesia Evangelical Metodista Unida del Ecuador (The United Evangelical Methodist Church of Ecuador)
La Iglesia Metodista en el Uruguay (The Methodist Church in Uruguay)
The Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas (MCCA)

C. Presbyteral Session

1. The Presbyteral Session defines by resolution who may normally be present at closed sessions. Attendance when it sits as a court of appeal is governed by Standing Order 1145(7).

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

*****RESOLUTIONS**

5/3. (Presbyteral Session) **The Presbyteral Session of the Conference resolves that whenever it goes into closed session its membership, except when Standing Order 1145(7) applies or the Conference otherwise resolves, shall be confined to presbyters who are entitled to vote on the business under consideration, with the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice in attendance as appropriate.**

5/4. (Presbyteral Session) **The Presbyteral Session of the Conference delegates to the Representative Session the adoption of the printed and written portions of the Daily Record for both days of its meeting.**

5/5. (Presbyteral Session) **The Conference directs that the total time available for the Presbyteral Session of the Conference of 2026 shall not be less than eight hours.**

5/6. (Presbyteral Session) **The Conference invites the Vice-President of the Conference of 2025/2026 to attend the Presbyteral Session of the 2026 Conference, apart from any closed sessions, with the right to speak but without a vote.**

5/7. In accordance with Standing Order 105(1A) the Conference directs that the following Districts shall each elect at least one deacon to be a member of the Conference of 2026:

Wales Synod Cymru, Chester and Stoke-on-Trent, Nottingham and Derby, Yorkshire West, Scotland, South East, South West Peninsula.

5/8. In accordance with Standing Order 105(1A) the Conference directs that the following Districts shall each elect at least two deacons to be members of the Conference of 2026:

North West England, West Midlands, London.

Contact name and details	Mrs Joanne Anderton Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice and Secretary to the Committee lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk

SECTION A
GENERAL REPORT

1. Standing Order 211 (previously Standing Order 338) sets out the functions of the committee, including the committee's responsibility to scrutinise all new legislation which is proposed to the Conference in order to ensure its coherence with existing usage and Methodist polity. The committee must also be consulted on all matters directly concerning Methodist law and polity which are presented to the Conference by other bodies, including the Connexional Council, or to the Connexional Council for decision under the council's own powers. Various members of the committee undertake this task and have commented upon all the proposals and other matters submitted to the committee by those bodies.

2. The committee appointed Miss Elizabeth Ovey as its representative to the 2025 Conference under Standing Order 102(1)(iv).

3. The committee appointed its 2025 Conference Sub-committee under Standing Order 211(6) as follows: the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice (Secretary and convener), the Secretary of the Conference, the Revds Andrew Charlesworth and Jennifer M Dyer, Mr David Gibson, the Revds Helen R Hollands and Kenneth G Howcroft, Miss Elizabeth Ovey, and the Revds Ian S Rutherford and Dr James N Tebbutt (Chair). Mrs Susan Howdle has been invited to act as a consultant and adviser to the Sub-committee if required.

4. In previous years, the committee has appointed its Complaints and Discipline Sub-committee for the year in accordance with the Sub-committee's terms of reference. However, given the committee's involvement in the work required to review the Church's Complaints and Discipline Process (the Part 11 Review), appointing a Complaints and Discipline Sub-committee for the connexional year 2024-25 was held in abeyance pending the outcome of that review. A report on the proposed Standing Order amendments required in connection with the Part 11 Review appears elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.

5. The Secretary of the committee meets with the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee from time to time to collaborate on matters in which both committees

have an interest. The committee has nominated the Revd Kenneth G Howcroft to attend the Faith and Order Committee's meetings as an observer on the committee's behalf.

6. The committee has had another very busy year, meeting four times in total: online in October and December 2024 and April 2025, and in person in March 2025. The committee has provided support and guidance to the Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Team on numerous matters and continues to assist with significant projects being undertaken by the Church, in particular:

   - the work of the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group;
   - the work of the Part 11 Review Implementation Group.

7. Other work undertaken by the committee this year includes:

   - assisting in the annual review of the Church Stewards', Circuit Stewards', Superintendents' and Property Stewards' Handbooks;
   - advising the Secretary of the Conference on the need for a Gifts Policy for ministers and also on the Law Commission's consultation on Burial Ground and Cremation law;
   - forming its own working group to consider matters relating to Data Protection legislation.

8. The Chair and Secretary of the committee are grateful to all the committee members for their continued support and willingness to assist with the committee's work.

*****RESOLUTION**

6/1. The Conference receives the General Report.

SECTION B
OVERSIGHT AND TRUSTEESHIP RESOLUTIONS OF THE 2024 CONFERENCE

The extensive work required to fulfil Resolutions 50/7 and 50/8 of the 2024 Conference (cited below) was completed during the CPD editing process immediately following that Conference. The committee now reports this work to the 2025 Conference and confirms that no further action is required.

(i) Resolution 50/7
The Conference directs the Law and Polity Committee to make such amendments of the numerical cross-references in Standing Orders generally as are necessary to accord with the changes made by the adoption of Resolutions 50/5 and 50/6.

[DR/7/7/5]

(ii) Resolution 50/8
The Conference further directs the Law and Polity Committee to amend, where necessary, the text of Books IV to VII of Constitutional Practice and Discipline for the same purpose.

[DR/7/7/6]

*****RESOLUTION**

6/2. The Conference receives Section B of the Report.

SECTION C
DISTRICT MISSION PLANS

In 2024, by Resolution 34/4, the Methodist Council agreed the requirement for all Districts to have an active and sustainable District Mission Plan that prioritises outward-focused action, and requested the committee to draft amendments to Standing Order 962 for recommendation to the 2024 Conference for approval.

In the event, those amendments were not available to be brought to the 2024 Conference and the committee therefore brings them to the Conference now.

The committee advises that, rather than amending Standing Order 962, Standing Order 400A is amended instead by adding a new clause (2) (in the place of a previously revoked clause (2)), as follows:

400A Nature and Purposes (1) …

(2) ~~*[revoked]*~~ ***Each District shall produce annually a District Mission Plan detailing the missional priorities of the District in supporting the Circuits and Churches in advancing the mission of the Church in its region. The Mission Plan shall incorporate the District Property Development Plan and shall be submitted by the Synod Secretary to the Conference Office***.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

6/3. The Conference receives Section C of the Report.

6/4. The Conference amends Standing Order 400A(2) as set out above.

SECTION D
AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The committee proposes the following Standing Order amendments arising from business previously discussed by the committee's Conference Sub-committee.

1. Standing Order 134A *En bloc* business [at the Conference]

There are occasions when the Conference Sub-committee, in the discharge of its responsibilities under Standing Order 211 during the Conference and in particular with a view to minimising the need to bring additional business in the exercise of its functions under Standing Order 131(25), is of the opinion that an item of *en bloc* business requires more specific attention and the possibility of debate. In practice the Business Committee and the Sub-committee work well together and there is no reason to doubt that a request by the Sub-committee that an item be withdrawn from the *en bloc* business would be agreed to, but as a matter of good governance the committee thinks it is preferable that the Standing Order should make clear that a request must be acted on.

The committee therefore recommends the following amendment to be made at the end of the current provision in Standing Order 134A(1)(*c*):

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

2. Standing Order 805 Retirement Benefits

In 2022 the Conference Sub-committee reported to the Conference [DR 8/47/7] that it would seek to establish the position relating to the anomaly under Standing Order 805(3)(*b*) that "it is only presbyters or presbyteral probationers who may apply to the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons in the circumstances there specified", and would bring any appropriate amendments to the 2023 Conference.

The committee was not in a position to report to the 2023 Conference, but does so now. The committee understands that there are numerous funds available to assist presbyters, deacons and probationers in a variety of circumstances, and the committee does not believe the details of these need to be enshrined in Standing Orders. Having reviewed Standing Order 805 in detail, and having been assured that applications may be made to the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons by presbyters, deacons and probationers in the circumstances set out in sub-clause (3) (among other circumstances), the committee recommends that sub-clauses (1) and (2) be retained, and that sub-clause (3) be deleted, as follows:

> **805 Retirement Benefits.** (1) (*a*) A minister or probationer may apply to become a member of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme according to the Rules for eligibility and application set by the Trustee of that Scheme.
>
> (*b*) The Conference may from time to time on the recommendation of the Trustee of the Scheme approve levels of contribution to the Scheme that are required from Circuits or other bodies providing the stipend for a minister or probationer, and from any minister or probationer who applies to be a member of the Scheme.
>
> (*c*) The Conference shall receive reports from the Trustee of the Scheme as to the level of pension and deferred pension to be paid by the Scheme to its members.
>
> (2) (*a*) A minister or probationer may apply to the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society for help with housing upon becoming a supernumerary, according to the Society's eligibility criteria.
>
> (*b*) Upon the death of a minister or probationer, their spouse or civil partner may apply to the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society for help with housing according to the Society's eligibility criteria.

~~(3) (*a*) A presbyter may apply for assistance from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons on becoming a supernumerary.~~

~~(*b*) Upon the death of a presbyter or presbyteral probationer their spouse or civil partner may apply for assistance from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons.~~

*****RESOLUTIONS**

6/5. The Conference receives Section D of the Report.

6/6. The Conference amends Standing Order 134A(1)(c) as set out above, and deletes Standing Order 805(3).

SECTION E
CONNEXIONAL FUNDS TREASURERS

Following the decision of the 2024 Conference to receive Section F of the Methodist Council Report (Part 2) ("the Report") in relation to the role of connexional funds treasurers in Circuits, the committee has considered what changes are required to Standing Order 505, along with any consequential changes, to effect that decision.

In its deliberations, the committee noted the statement in the Report that not all Circuits are in a position to appoint a connexional funds treasurer and surmised that the Council had intended that the requirement on Circuits to appoint one should be removed (meaning Standing Order 505 could be deleted in its entirety). However the Report did not say this; rather it stated: "The role of connexional funds treasurer will be retained…", and simply recommended that the reporting obligations in Standing Order 505(2) be removed.

The committee recognises, as did the Methodist Council, that many Circuits have made arrangements which enable connexional funds to be dealt with effectively and that the connexional funds treasurer may also be an effective advocate for connexional funds. Its reading of the report is that the Council did not intend to make changes where systems are working well and in such circumstances it is clearly sensible for the Circuit to continue to appoint an officer, or more than one officer, with those responsibilities. The committee is, however, concerned that Circuits finding it impossible to persuade anyone to take on the office of connexional funds treasurer should not be put in the position of being in breach of Standing Orders and believes that the Council shared that concern. In the committee's view, the way forward is to remove the obligation from Standing Orders

and so to leave Circuits and Local Churches free to make their own arrangements for dealing with connexional funds in whatever way works best in the particular situation. Since it has not been possible, as a result of the abolition of the Methodist Council, to seek clarification from the Council itself, the committee, while drawing the apparent departure from the Council's recommendation to the attention of the Conference, therefore recommends that the Conference resolves to delete Standing Order 505 in its entirety, thereby removing the requirement for every Circuit to have its own connexional funds treasurer. In making this recommendation, the committee advises that the removal of the absolute requirement under Standing Order 505 does not preclude a Circuit Meeting from choosing to appoint someone to an office with some or all of the former functions of a connexional funds treasurer under Standing Order 551 (Discretionary Appointments) if so desired.

If Standing Order 505 is deleted, Standing Order 584(2)(v) should also be deleted.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

6/7. The Conference receives Section E of the Report.

6/8. The Conference deletes Standing Order 505 and Standing Order 584(2)(v).

The following appointed Trustees, together with the Revd Dawn Saunders, the Chair of the Channel Islands District, and the Revd Howard Stringer, Superintendent Minister of the Bailiwick of Guernsey Circuit, served during the year:

Trustees: Mr N Lewis (until May 2024), Mr B Rees and Mr M Dorey
Mrs E Male, Mrs C Teed and Mrs W Le Tissier

Secretary: Mrs M Lewis

1 No property transactions were completed this year.

2 Aldersgate Manse remained on the local market for sale.

3 The Trustees continue to exercise their responsibilities according to The Methodist Church (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law, 1987.

*****RESOLUTION**

7/1. The Conference receives the Report.

8. The Trustees for Jersey Methodist Church Purposes

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

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

1. There were no property transactions in 2024.

2. There are currently no proposed property transactions in 2025.

3. The Trustees were pleased to note the care and maintenance of Methodist Church property in the Island and expressed their appreciation to those concerned.

4. The Trustees are discharging their duties under The Methodist (Jersey) Church Law, 1986.

*****RESOLUTION**

8/1. The Conference receives the Report.

Contact name and details	The Revd Kevin Highfield – Chair of the Methodist Forces Board SFB@methodistchurch.org.uk

1. Methodist Forces Chaplains continue to minister to the women and men of His Majesty's forces throughout the UK and around the world. This is a significant and enduring ministry for which the Methodist Church is held in high regard, due to the calibre of its chaplains.

2. In the light of the deteriorating international security situation, and hearing the voices of chaplains, the Forces Board considered a number of ways it can support chaplaincy during this period of high stress and activity, and help the Church to address a more unstable and dangerous world. The Board is of the view that further work needs to be undertaken in the area of the theology and ethics of conflict and peace-making, in providing resources for Methodists to engage in a supportive ministry towards the families of those serving in the armed forces, and to evaluate the Board's own recruitment protocols should the armed forces urgently require more reserve and regular chaplains (see paragraph 14 and Resolution 3 below).

Activity

3. At the end of October 2024, the President of the Conference enjoyed a visit to the Royal Navy in Portsmouth. This visit gave the President a good insight into the workings of the Royal Navy and helpfully an opportunity to see chaplains in their own context. This included accompanying chaplains at HMS Collingwood, a visit to the Submarine Museum in Gosport, and a chance to see HMS Prince of Wales arriving home. Each year this visit is timed to give the President a better understanding of the military prior to representing the Methodist Church at the National Act of Remembrance.

4. In time for Remembrance 2024, the MFB published a revised set of resources to support church leaders with Remembrance Sunday services. A number of chaplains spoke to video about their perspective on Remembrance; these have been extremely well received by churches and it was heartening for the Board and chaplains to see these so well used.

5. During the Tri-Service Chaplains' Conference at the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre in February 2025, the chaplains received an update on matters affecting the Connexion. The presence of the President of the Conference, the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Assistant Secretary of the Conference in the company was most appreciated. We said a fond farewell to the Revd David

Barrett and the Revd Stewart Young. Both have given long and distinguished service to the British Army.

6. It remains a priority for the Board to identify and support those with a potential calling to Armed Forces chaplaincy. Enquiries are relatively infrequent at this stage. The Board remains keen to work with colleagues who may wish to learn more about this dynamic ministry.

7. Forces chaplains were present at 3Generate, the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly. Their presence and ministry was appreciated, and plans are being made for forces chaplains to be present at 3Generate 2025.

8. The Armed Forces route to achieve Worship: Leading and Preaching status continues to have good engagement. The Board is extremely grateful to Cdr Mark Barton for continuing to oversee this work.

9. The Aldershot Methodist Military Trust (AMMT) continues to support the Hants-Surrey Border Circuit with its work in Aldershot Garrison. A new project has been approved for support in the Salisbury Circuit, where a deacon will be working with army families amongst others. Discussions are underway to support further applications from circuits seeking to work with military communities.

10. The Revd Dr Andrew Wood has settled well into the role of Secretary to the Forces Board (SFB). We have also been well served by the Chair of the Southampton District in supporting the chaplains. The chaplains deeply appreciate the support that they receive from the Connexion.

11. The role of Chair of the Forces Board has been very capably filled by the Revd Kevin Highfield, who brings with him a wealth of experience from the US military and a later-life calling to ministry in the Methodist Church in Britain.

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

Future plans

13. Partnership working between the MFB and the AMMT has built steadily throughout the year, with the release of significant resources to those Districts and Circuits who wish (further) to engage with the Armed Forces community.

Colleagues are requested to be proactive in registering an interest to access these resources by emailing SFB@methodistchurch.org.uk

14. In the near future, we believe church communities will need to understand what it is to be church in a time of conflict, and to be ready to speak and act in ways that are practically, pastorally and theologically rich. We plan for the Methodist Church to produce resources, rooted in scripture and teachings of the church, to help Methodists with theological reflections and practical tools for their ministry in a time of conflict. The Church's published statements on issues of war and peace should be reviewed in the light of the deteriorating security situation, with its associated challenges to the rules-based order of the international community. There is current ecumenical work being done with the Church of England on this. Reflections and tools might include:

- A brief theological approach to thinking about war, peace and conflict
- Theological concepts and scriptural passages that can be used in preaching and teaching
- Approaches and ideas to be used in speaking publicly in the wider community
- Pastoral approaches that should be considered in times of anxiety and conflict, doing justice to often contradictory convictions about issues of war and peace
- Practical resources that can be used in worship and in church buildings
- Practical suggestions for supporting military personnel and their families.

The aim of such resources would be to support Methodists to reflect on our calling to respond to the world as it is, rather than how we would like it to be. That may involve a significant mental shift from the long period of relative peace that Europe has experienced. The Forces Board will consider more flexible and adaptive processes to respond to a fast-moving defence and security situation. Our processes are currently designed for periods of stability and peace. As an example, it may become necessary to discern a call to chaplaincy from a wider range of ministerial experience than at present.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

9/1. The Conference receives the Report.

9/2. The Conference thanks the Aldershot Methodist Military Trust for its enduring support to maintain a strong Methodist presence in the military, ministering

to serving personnel and their families, civil servants and contractors, to the glory of God.

9/3. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee, in consultation with the Methodist Forces Board and others as appropriate, to review reports and statements of the Conference relating to issues of war and peace in the light of the current global context and to report to the Conference of 2026.

Contact name and details	Judith Davey-Cole, Chair of the Safeguarding Committee ChairSafeguarding@methodistchurch.org.uk

Throughout the connexional year, the Safeguarding Committee has made significant progress in following the direction of travel agreed at the Conference in 2024 and addressing the issues facing the Methodist Church in this important area.

An independent review of governance and practice of safeguarding across the Connexion was undertaken as part of the internal audit programme. While there were some recommendations for improvement, the report was positive and shows that a great deal of strong safeguarding practice takes place across the Connexion. The suggestions for improvement were welcomed by the Committee and the Connexional Safeguarding Team (CST), particularly the need to focus more on online and digital safeguarding.

Ensuring that survivors' perspectives are integrated into the governance of safeguarding and are embedded in the Church's policies and practice continues to be a primary focus for the committee. We are grateful to the survivors and the survivors' group that contribute to our discussions, policy development and training.

The programme of safeguarding audits continues and is a valuable way of understanding how well safeguarding is embedded in practice. Lessons-learned reviews continue to highlight areas for development and improvement. Actions from the audit programme and from the lessons-learned reviews are tracked, monitored and are reported back to the committee in a suitably anonymised and summarised form.

As regards the broader context for safeguarding in Christian churches, the Conference will recall that the committee undertook a piece of work last year on independence in safeguarding and key points arising were captured in the Conference's resolutions. Significant progress has been made, as set out below. In addition, the Chair of the Safeguarding Committee is the Methodist representative on the Church of England National Safeguarding Panel, and both the Chair of the Safeguarding Committee and the Director of Safeguarding are part of other groups and bodies active in this space, so we ensure that any learning is considered in our own decision-making and processes.

In its oversight role, the committee is pleased to see the progress with the move to connexional employment of District Safeguarding Officers as this will play a significant role in ensuring greater independence, more consistency, and an increased "joined-up" accountable approach. The committee is, however, very aware of the concerns that several people have expressed about the decision and the approach to implementation. The committee is encouraged to hear how concerns are being addressed while at the same time remaining committed to the way forward. The Chair of the Safeguarding Committee is now meeting with the District Safeguarding Group chairs quarterly as an

additional communications channel through which issues can be raised which the CST can take forward as appropriate.

The work to streamline the risk assessment and safeguarding panel processes and to make the necessary changes to Standing Orders to ensure that the Safeguarding Committee is restructured to be more efficient and effective (as proposed to the Conference in 2024) is underway in conjunction with the Law and Polity Committees. Recruiting new committee members has been put on hold pending the outcome of this work.

The work on a conflict of interest, duty and loyalty policy, which is essential for a healthy safeguarding culture, has been delayed. This is due to illness within the Connexional Team.

To help to ensure a healthy safeguarding culture and also appropriate training for line managers, lay and ordained, the committee has confirmed with the Ministries and Learning team that the current training provided for line managers is an expectation and not optional. This is a concern that was identified in a recent external review and as such the committee recommends that this expectation is confirmed by the Conference and has brought forward a resolution to this end.

Case statistics are included as an appendix to this report. There are no trends or issues arising from the data that the committee wishes to bring to the Conference's attention. The situation with outdated DBS/PVG checks remains a concern, as has been flagged to the Conference over the last three years. A great deal of work has been undertaken but the backlog remains stubbornly high. At times, the committee is asked why it remains concerned about the situation because DBS/PVG checks and training are only one element of ensuring that our churches and our activities are safer places. While it is correct that ensuring churches are safer places requires a multi-faceted joined-up approach and things like safeguarding audits play a key role, training, disclosure, vetting and barring remain important indicators. The backlog of outstanding checks remains a risk to the Methodist Church.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

10/1. The Conference receives the Report.

10/2. The Conference directs that all those who undertake line management responsibilities in the life of the Church be required to undertake the Church's Line Management training course within six months of taking on line management duties.

10/3. (if 10/2 is carried) **The Conference directs the Law and Polity Committee to consider if changes need to be made to SO 438A to reinforce the requirement for line management training.**

Appendix: Case statistics

Period	1/9/20 - 31/8/21	1/9/21- 31/8/22	1/9/22- 31/8/23	1/9/23-31/08/24	**Connexional Year (1st 6 months)** 1/09/24-28/02/2025
DBS/PVG cases open	28	79	48	54	38
DBS/PVG cases closed	50	56	39	72	25

Non DBS/PVG cases open	27	17	44	254	209
Non DBS/PVG cases closed	17	2	8	125	207

Non DBS/PVG cases open in the period of the connexional year of 1 September 2023 until 31 August 2024 were considerably higher due to MyConcern a new record keeping platform that shared access has been given to the connexional safeguarding team and the District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) for the ability for concerns that are raised within their districts.

An increase of Non DBS/PVG cases is also due to cases still in progress from previous years that have not been closed within their corresponding years.

Safeguarding Panels

	1/9/20 -31/8/21	1/9/20 -31/8/21	1/9/21-31/8/22	1/9/21-31/8/22	1/9/22-31/8/23	1/9/22-31/8/23	1/9/23-31/08/24	1/9/23-31/08/24	**Connexional Year (1st 6 months)** 1/9/24-28/02/25	**Connexional Year (1st 6 months)** 1/09/24-28/02/25
Outcome	**Number**	**Appeals**	**Number**	**Appeals**	**Number**	**Appeals**	**Number**	**Appeals**	**Number**	**Appeals**
Not cleared	1	1	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Restrictions on role and Safeguarding Contract	3	0	4	0	4	0	3	1	0	1
Restriction on role removed with conditions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Safeguarding Contract put in place	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cleared with conditions	0	0	5	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Cleared with no conditions	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
No changes to current Safeguarding Contract	1	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	0

Safeguarding Contract ended	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Safeguarding Contract ended with conditions	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Referred to complaints	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Thresholds for safeguarding measures not meet	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Resigned from Role	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Total	**10**	**1**	**16**	**1**	**9**	**0**	**9**	**3**	**4**	**3**

Name and contact details	Bea Hulme, Youth President youthpresident@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	11/1. The Conference receives the Report. 11/2. The Conference encourages churches to involve their children and young people in youth EDI training. 11/3. The Conference urges Circuit Local Preachers' Meetings to consider how they can involve children and young people in the planning and execution of acts of worship 11/4. The Conference recommends that Circuits and Districts bring together dispersed youth populations for activity-based sessions 11/5. The Conference encourages churches and worshipping communities to find ways to make their services more accessible and relevant by updating resources in order to better welcome those who are not familiar with church practice 11/6. The Conference encourages churches and worshipping communities to make full use of available resources to make worship inclusive of all abilities, particularly for those with neurodivergent conditions.

1. Introduction

Following the change of Standing Order 240 at the Methodist Conference 2024, this report will be the first to focus on the voices of children and young people in general as well as reporting on 3Generate. It is important to note that the resolutions and main concerns have arisen from consultation and input from children and young people across the Connexion.

2. 3Generate Summary

The Mission Committee received a report from the Youth President and the Children, Youth and Family team evaluating 3Generate 2024 against the aims it set in the previous year. What follows here is a very short summary.

3Generate 2024 was the largest held to date, with 1620 children and young people, 520 leaders, and 310 volunteers attending. Children aged four to seven attended their own mini-3Generate together with their parent or other significant adult; 70 children attended which again was an increase from previous years.

This year's venues were the Arena, the Art Station, the Chapel, the Discovery Centre, Eden, the Globe, the Great Outdoors, Health and Wellbeing, the Hope and Anchor, the Park, the Rec, the Tech Hub, the Theatre, the Town Hall, the Well, and Calm.

On site there was also the Action for Hope HQ, where children and young people could find out more about the Methodist Church's aspiration to be net zero by 2030. They discovered ways to contribute to their Church communities and discussed ways to be eco-friendly in their wider lives. There was also the Shoreline space, where children and young people were encouraged to write prayers on postcards to be posted online throughout the year. The Methodist Way of Life theme this year was 'wrapped up in God', and children and young people were given either a beanie hat or a blanket, and could go around the site earning sew-on patches for each MWOL station. The Youth President has seen several of these blankets and hats on their youth visits around the Connexion, and the children and young people take great pride in their achievements through collecting them.

The Youth Representatives were based in the Park. They facilitated questions and activities they devised on the Rep residential weekend in the summer before 3Generate. There were four questions, one for each of the areas we are called to be as Methodists: growing, inclusive, evangelistic, and justice-seeking. The responses from children and young people are discussed in section 5 of the report.

3. Youth Visits around the Connexion

An important aspect of the role of Youth President is travelling across the Connexion to hear the voices of children and young people first hand. These visits have been to District, Circuit, and Church events, in addition to 3Generate.

More such visits are planned. Between October 2024 and March 2025 the Youth President visited Bristol, Darlington on two occasions, Yorkshire (a weekend combining Yorkshire North and East, Yorkshire West, and Sheffield), Wales Synod Cymru, and North West England Districts. They have also visited Methodist communities in Germany, and attended the Methodist Church in Ireland's youth weekend 'Soulmates' for children and young people aged 9-13.

On each visit the Youth President asked questions about; 3Generate, their experience of church and faith, their faith community practice at their church and in the context of larger events they have attended, and what messages they would give the people running the Methodist Church. Many of the conversations children and young people got involved in were based around 3Generate, the responses from which are considered and included in section 5 and 6 of this report. The feedback around 3Generate has been included in the planning of 3Generate 2025.

Overall, as heard in these visits, the main things children and young people like, and would like to see more of, are:

- Shorter and more varied services
- Bean bags and spaces to relax
- Social events involving food
- Biscuits (they were mentioned at every visit!)
- Evening groups and services
- Interactive worship
- Large events, particularly for the ability to make more friends and do more interesting activities

There were many discussions that highlighted that children and young people feel that:

- Services are too dense and hard to understand
- Worship music needs updating
- Children and young people are not catered for or asked to be involved in worship
- Lunches and community events would encourage children and young people to build community
- Churches could be much more neurodivergent friendly
- There is nowhere for them to relax and spend time with friends: church could be that space
- It is hard to be active in church communities when travel is involved

4. Youth Representation

Youth President 2025/2026	Genesis Padgett
Methodist Conference Representative 2025	Alex Day

Methodist Youth Representatives	Isaac Amankwaah Dominic Bevan Kunashe Chidziya Joseph Cho Ming Cheung Hugo Hildred Isaac Nicholson Jamie Nyirenda-Scott Destiny Ogbonnaya Genesis Padgett* Reuben Peterson Gracie Silk Lewis Koji Tropman

New Youth Representatives:
Isaac Amankwaah, Kunashe Chidziya, Joseph Cho Ming Cheung, Isaac Nicholson, Destiny Ogbonnaya, Genesis Padgett, Lewis Koji Tropman.
*Genesis will serve as a Youth Rep until they begin their employment with the Connexional Team as Youth President 2025/2026 on 1 August 2025.

Youth Representatives who have finished their service:
Luca Barwick Plant, Bea Beard, Eleanor Dixon, Ailish Dooley, Matt Hayes, Daniel Onyett, Amos Rand, Hope Wild, Owen Wilkins, Joseph Zaccaria.

5. Hearing the Voices of Children and young people at 3Generate

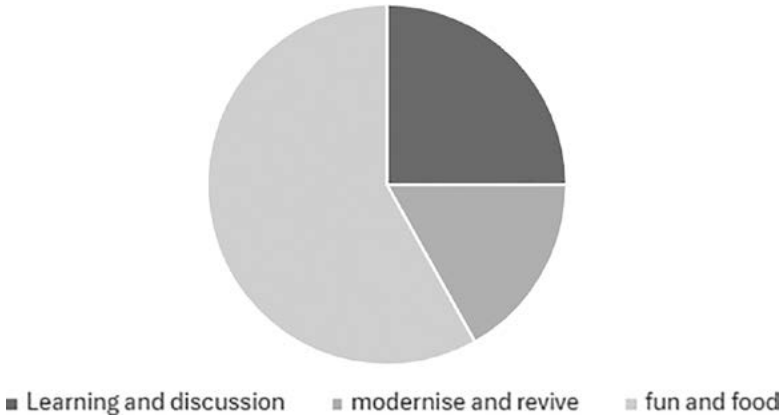
The responses to the questions asked by Youth Reps give an incredible source of data and are useful to analyse and to understand better what children and young people think. It is also worth looking at the questions themselves. Not only are the questions decided by young people with what they want to find out in mind, but they use the opportunity 3Generate provides to talk to children and young people while they are engaged with thinking about Methodism and their faith lives over the weekend.

<u>Growing</u>
QUESTION: What would encourage your friends to come to church?
METHOD: A large paper background was set on the fence in the park, and card outlines of flowers and trees were stuck on it. Petals and leaves were cut out, and children and young people wrote answers on them and blu-tacked them to the garden.

RESPONSES:
These can be split into three categories: learning and discussion, modernise and revive, and fun and food.

Learning and discussion	Modernise and revive	Fun and food
43 responses	29 responses	100 responses
25%	17%	58%

Total responses: 172.



It should be noted that food items on their own received 41 responses, making up 24% of the total responses.

It was clear when reading through each response that many children and young people had not considered inviting their friends to Church and thought it would be difficult to do so.

The main learning that can be taken from these responses is that children and young people would like to be valued and considered more in their Church communities. The responses in favour of modernising and reviving worship and groups were asking for their tastes and preferences to be considered. In some communities, change may have never been seen in their lifetime, which means they have never been catered to.

With the fun and food responses, it is clear that children and young people would appreciate being able to relax and have a space to feel safe and cared for. If their lives are spent at school or at home, both of which may be high pressure situations, church may be one of the only places they can go to be with their friends. Making sure they enjoy that space and want to come back is important.

When talking to children and young people about this question, the consensus has largely been that church is an inaccessible environment to which to invite new people with no experience of Christianity. The lack of enthusiasm to invite peers may also be due to current social etiquette. If someone is known to not have a Christian faith, it is seen as disrespectful to invite them to an explicitly religious context, and is seen as a breach of personal boundaries.

Inclusive
QUESTION: What can the church do to help those that feel excluded?
METHOD: Reps were given clipboards and went around the site talking to children and young people. This worked especially well where there were queues for popular venues and sessions.

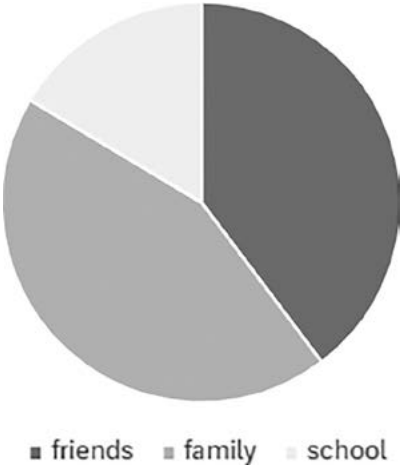
RESPONSES:
This question had 71 responses which were incredibly varied. The biggest groups of people that were identified as excluded were disabled people and those who are non-affiliated. There were suggestions to improve accessibility for different needs and to not assume any pre-held knowledge of Church practice when planning talks or activities.

While this question had fewer responses, the conversations it prompted were noted by the Youth Reps as being incredibly valuable and may have been capable of giving children and young people ideas of how to be inclusive in their own churches.

Evangelistic
QUESTION: How can we as the Church help you talk about God in different situations?
METHOD: Children and young people had a token to put in a game of Plinko, which had the different situations written at the bottom (school, friends, and family). It should be noted that this was just for guidance, and children and young people were encouraged to answer for any situation or multiple situations as they felt comfortable. Feedback was then recorded on flipchart paper.

RESPONSES:
This question was an interesting one to collate the answers from, as, out of the 73 responses, only around 14, or 19%, answered the question posed above directly. Friends and family received fairly equal attention, however school had 12 responses, meaning only 16% of children and young people had suggestions.

Friends	Family	School
29	32	12
40%	44%	16%



While talking to children and young people about this, it seems that many of them have not considered talking about their faith with their peers past a brief mention of their youth group or something similar. This follows the trend seen with the growing question, as few children and young people seemed eager to talk about God outside of their faith communities.

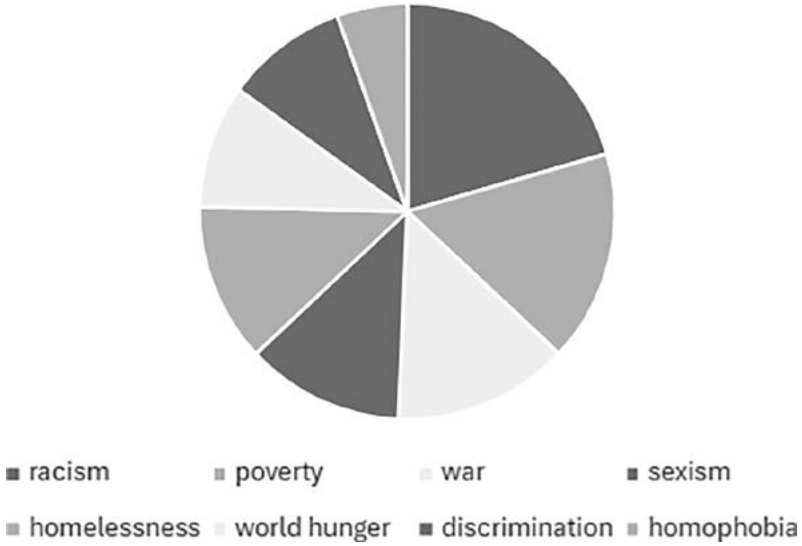
Justice-seeking
QUESTION: Do you feel supported challenging injustice in the wider world? What do you think is unfair in the world?
METHOD:
Do you feel supported to challenge injustice in the world - Two token spinners, one for yes one for no.
What do you think is unfair in the world – Children and young people were invited after using the token spinners to record their answers on a piece of fabric and tie it to a mesh wall against the fence.

RESPONSES:
Out of 188 responses for the first question, 153 said yes and 32 said no, so 83% of children and young people at 3Generate feel supported challenging injustice in the wider world. This is great to hear and gives us as the Church an opportunity to respond to the other part of the question.

For the second question 'what do you think is unfair in the world', the majority of answers were single words or short phrases that give a clear message of what children and young people think.

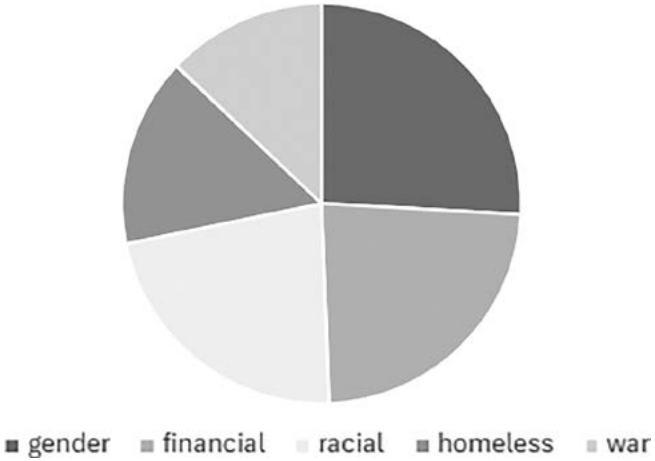
In terms of single words, this was the ranking of the most popular from the 121 responses:

Racism	Poverty	War	Sexism	Homelessness	World Hunger	Discrimination	Homophobia
15	12	10	9	9	7	7	4



When grouped into broader themes, a new picture emerged:

Gender inequality	Financial inequality	Racial and associated inequalities	Homelessness and associated inequalities	War and associated issues
22	20	19	13	11



Children and young people are aware of the world around them and, especially at 3Generate, of many social justice issues. It is therefore interesting to note the similarities in the top responses. The most popular four themes reflected in their answers are entirely inequality and discrimination based; children and young people care the most about the way people around them are treated. The most popular single word being 'racism' and the most popular theme being 'gender inequality', show what issues are at the forefront of children and young people's minds and lives.

It was noted as interesting in discussion with the Youth Reps that homophobia, usually a topical discussion choice within Church communities, was so low down on the list, and that despite attention to climate change at 3Generate each year, that also had very few entries.

6. Main concerns of Children and Young People

1 Discrimination
As seen with the Justice-Seeking question from the Youth Rep activities, children and young people are concerned with the amount of inequality in the world and the discrimination to which this leads.

The issues children and young people are concerned about here are things they are seeing and experiencing in their own contexts. They are recognising the ways people are being treated around them, and need a way to make a tangible difference.

In discussion with the Youth Reps, we decided that an achievable goal to help children and young people tackle these issues in their own spaces would be to give children and young people the tools to be educated and help educate others themselves. Therefore, the idea of youth EDI training was raised and is being brought as a resolution to the Conference. This training will need to be tailored towards children and young people and different from the current EDI training that is offered.

2 Youth involvement
Children and young people will be more interested in regularly attending worship if they can contribute to topics or be involved in its planning and leadership.

Involvement in services, especially if in an open and judgement-free environment, would increase their relevance to children and young people. As seen in the growing question, they are asking for their preferences and tastes to be catered for, and involvement is the best way of achieving this.

This will also address the issue seen in the evangelistic question of children and young people lacking enthusiasm when talking about their faith practices with their peers. Children and young people are natural evangelists when it comes to things that they are enthusiastic about and engaged with. If children and young people can feel like a valued part of the church and have their ideas welcomed and used, they will be more likely to engage in conversation about their faith practices with others.

3 Youth populations
Something that I have encountered many times on my visits across the Connexion and at 3Generate, is the issue of dispersed youth communities. Children and young people may be one of, or the only, youth in their Church, and feel undervalued and not catered for. This was seen predominantly in the Growing question. This is an issue seen particularly in rural areas where physical distance and travel accessibility can create more difficulties when bringing people together.

Children and young people have explicitly said on many occasions to me that they enjoy being brought together for larger events. This may mean anything from a few churches together to a district event. 3Generate creates the opportunity for many children and young people in the same districts to meet and form relationships, and the consensus is that they would like those kinds of environment to continue.

In addition to larger group activities benefiting children and young people, it has also been noted by youth leaders that joining together can decrease the workload they face in planning and executing events. There are also youth leaders who are unable to organise such events for themselves, but who are happy to join larger events.

Dispersed youth communities are very common in the Methodist Church. Children and young people in these groups feel undervalued and as though they are missing out on what larger youth groups may be able to do. The underlying theme throughout the growing question was that children and young people want to be catered for and valued, which can be achieved with these types of larger gatherings.

4 Accessibility
When asked the inclusive question, children and young people identified two groups for which the Church could improve accessibility: disabled people and people unfamiliar with Church practice.

The growing question also showed that children and young people do not even consider bringing friends to Church. Making Church more friendly to newcomers can change this.

Disabilities can be catered for in many ways, for example providing an order of service to all, pre-warning alternative worship styles to the usual plan, or offering space to listen while crafting, colouring in, or similar activities. Disability accessibility is more than simply installing a ramp, and reasonable adjustments need to be made to make sure each person can feel welcomed in a Church context. For example, making a service around the needs of an autistic person may make it inaccessible for an ADHD person and vice versa – checking in with people about what they need is always the best way to be accessible.

It can also be difficult to bring to church people with no experience of church practice. Changes can be made in the jargon used, by explaining when things are happening such as standing for worship or liturgy being read. Even assuming that the congregation knows certain songs or the words to the Grace can be alienating to those that do not. Church communities can also make intentional efforts to be welcoming and include new people, as insular communities and groups can be difficult to navigate.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

11/1. The Conference receives the Report.

11/2. The Conference encourages churches to involve their children and young people in youth EDI training.

11/3. The Conference urges Circuit Local Preachers' Meetings to consider how they can involve children and young people in the planning and execution of acts of worship.

11/4. The Conference recommends that Circuits and Districts bring together dispersed youth populations for activity-based sessions.

11/5. The Conference encourages churches and worshipping communities to find ways to make their services more accessible and relevant by updating resources in order better to welcome those who are not familiar with church practice.

11/6. The Conference encourages churches and worshipping communities to make full use of available resources to make worship inclusive of all abilities, particularly for those with neurodivergent conditions.

Contact name and details	David Martin, Company Secretary dmartin@methodistschools.org.uk

Summary of content

Subject and aims	Appointment of Methodist Independent Schools Trustees
Background context and relevant documents	The Conference is responsible for the appointment of the Methodist Independent Schools Trustees named in the resolutions

Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST)

Trustees of Methodist Independent Schools Trust are appointed by the Conference, normally for a three-year term. They may serve for up to three terms. Nominations are made by the Trust and the Connexional Council.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

12/1. The Conference adopts the re-nomination by the Connexional Council of Stephen Holliday as a Trustee of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2028.

12/2. The Conference adopts the re-nomination by the Connexional Council of Henrietta Mbeah-Bankas as a Trustee of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2028.

12/3. The Conference adopts the re-nomination by the Connexional Council of John Jefferson as a Trustee of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust for a period of three years concluding 31 August 2027.

Reasoned Statements

Stephen Holliday

Stephen is an education specialist with extensive experience as a Head Teacher, Advisor, and Independent Schools Reporting Inspector. Member of the Methodist Church and Lay

Preacher. Stephen is a serving Connexional Council Trustee and currently in his second term of office.

Henrietta Mbeah-Bankas

Henrietta is a health care professional with over twenty years' experience in the mental health and nursing fields. Experience in lecturing on Culture and Diversity Experience in commissioning higher educational resources via technology. Member of the Methodist Church. Henrietta is a serving Connexional Council Trustee and currently in her first term of office.

John Jefferson

John is an active member of the Methodist Church, having served in various roles within local Churches and Circuits. He is a Trustee and Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee for the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP). He also serves as Board Chair and Chair of the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee for Methodist Insurance PLC. John is a serving MIST Nominated Trustee and currently in his first term of office.

Contact name and details	Matt Tattersall Executive Director of Finance & Resources tattersallm@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	13/1. The Conference receives the Report as the summary accounts presented for information as required by Standing Order 204(1)(i) and 362(2)(ii).

Summary of content

Subject and aims	Summary extracts of the full consolidated accounts of the Methodist Church for 2023/2024 which were adopted by the Connexional Council are presented to the Conference.
Main points	These accounts consolidate figures for a wide variety of Methodist activities and entities.
Background context and relevant documents	The Methodist Church is registered with the Charity Commission and the accounts of the registered charity are those of the Connexional Council (previously Methodist Council). The full consolidated accounts were presented and adopted by the Council under SO 203(8). They are available for scrutiny on the Methodist Church website.

1. Link to the financial statements
The accounts can be viewed online at: methodist.org.uk/for-churches/finance/financial-accounts-trustees-report/

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

3. Public benefit requirement
The trustees of the Methodist Church had due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission in compliance with its duties

under section 17 of the Charities Act 2011. This guidance sets out two key principles:

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

The Church exists, inter alia, to:

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

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

4. Organisation of the work

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

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

5. Financial review

The activities covered in these consolidated financial statements are those that were under the oversight of the Methodist Council (until 31 August 2024). The Methodist Church in Great Britain is the registered charity, and the Charity Commission has agreed that these financial statements can properly serve as the financial statements of the charity.

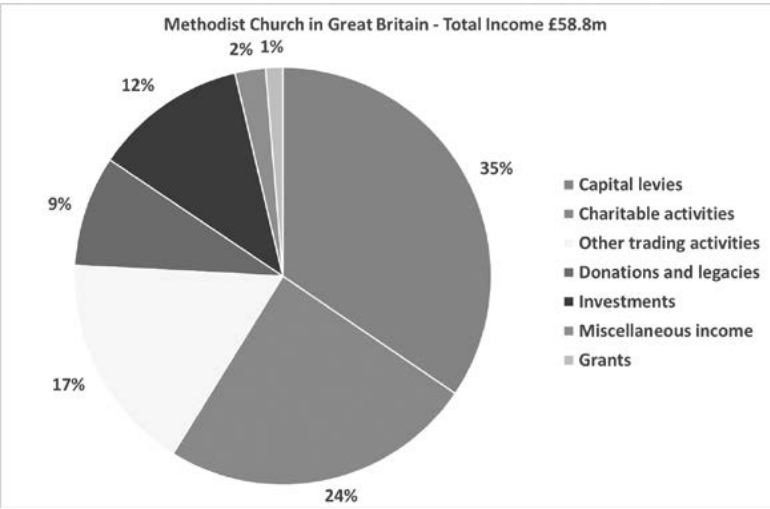
The net income for the year was a surplus of £5.8m (2023: £4.5m deficit), including net investment gains of £14.2m (2023: £5.6m loss). This investment gain largely reflected the improvement in the value of investments held by the Church in units invested by the Central Board of Finance of the Methodist Church. These increases reflected the market conditions in the wider economy.

Other recognised losses for the year were £1.7m (2023: £5.0m). A £1.2m loss (2023: £1.7m loss) arose from the actuarial revaluation of the Pension and Assurance Scheme for Lay Employees of The Methodist Church. A £0.5m loss (2023: £3.3m loss) resulted from the revaluation of the Church's charitable properties.

Income

The total income for the year was £58.0m (2023: £58.8m). The increase of £5.8m was mainly due to the following:

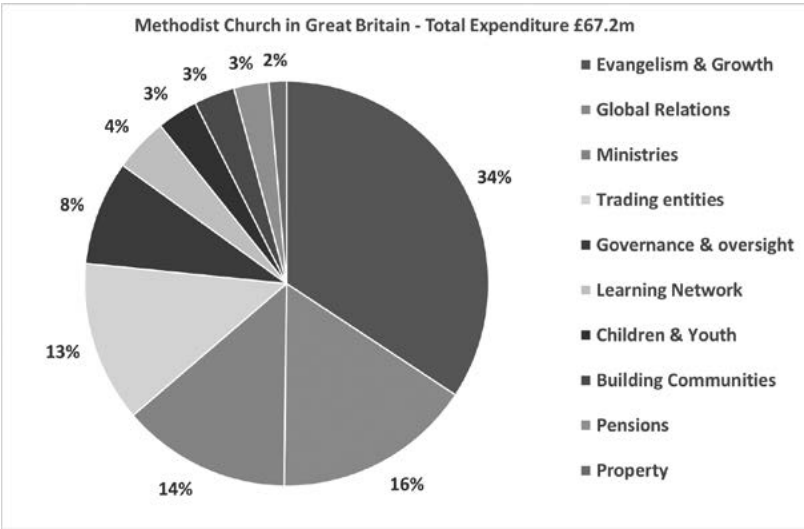
1. A £1.4m reduction in donations significantly due to: a reduced grant from the Benefact Trust, and reduced donations to Cliff College and Y Care International.
2. A £0.8m increase in District Assessment income.
3. A £1.0m increase in investment income.
4. A £0.5m increase in trading income as the activities at MICL continue to improve and there is a full year of trading at the new hotel in Camden.
5. A £4.8m increase in property levies as the average value of sales have increased.



Expenditure

Total expenditure increased to £67.2m (2023: £51.9m). Of this, £58.5m was spent on direct charitable activities (2023: £43.9m). This was mainly due to the following:

1. A £0.9m increase in the cost of raising funds due to increased trading activity at MICL.
2. A £15.3m increase in Evangelism and Growth expenditure as a result of: a £7.7m increase in grants to bodies that had previously donated to the pension reserve fund appeal in 2021/22; a £4.5m increase in grants to entities to support long term sustainability; a £1.7m increase in spending on the God For All strategy, and a £1.4m increase in contributions to the District Advance Funds as a result of the increase in property levy income received.
3. A £1.0m decrease in Global Relations spend reflecting the changes to grant making as the approach to supporting capacity development of our partners continued.
4. A £1.1m decrease in Ministries spend due to a reduction in grant expenditure.
5. A £0.5m increase in pension deficit payments.



6. Investments

As at 31 August 2024, the Church held fixed asset investments with a fair value of £176 million (2023: £186 million). The Finance Sub-Committee was responsible (Resourcing Committee now responsible from 1 September 2024) for reviewing the investment portfolio and performs an annual review of the investment policy. The Church's investment objective is to seek an optimal return from income and capital combined. The Finance Sub-Committee was satisfied with the overall performance of the investment portfolio against agreed benchmarks.

7. Consolidated statement of financial activities – see over

8. Consolidated balance sheet – see over

The Methodist Church in Great Britain
Consolidated statement of financial activities
For the year ended 31 August 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted £000	Restricted £000	Endowment £000	2024 Total £000	Unrestricted £000	Restricted £000	Endowment £000	2023 Total £000
Income and endowments from:									
Donations and legacies	**3a**	598	4,450	-	**5,048**	567	5,913	-	**6,480**
Charitable activities	**3e**	14,057	259	-	**14,316**	13,261	269	-	**13,530**
Investments	**4a**	3,486	3,508	-	**6,994**	2,322	3,714	-	**6,036**
Other trading activities	**5a**	8,150	1,835	-	**9,985**	7,816	1,555	-	**9,371**
Other									
Capital levies	**6a**	20,286	-	-	**20,286**	15,471	-	-	**15,471**
Grants	**6b**	3	776	-	**779**	2	864	-	**866**
Miscellaneous income	**3c**	624	462	-	**1,086**	608	428	-	**1,036**
Net gains/(losses) on the disposal of tangible fixed assets		311	-	-	**311**	139	46	-	**185**
Total income	**19a, 20a**	**47,515**	**11,290**	**-**	**58,805**	**40,186**	**12,789**	**-**	**52,975**
Expenditure on:									
Raising funds		7,540	1,098	6	**8,644**	6,952	1,066	6	**8,024**
Charitable activities									
Building communities	**7a**	1,466	728	-	**2,194**	1,456	957	-	**2,413**
Children & Youth	**7a**	2,198	1	-	**2,199**	1,505	1	-	**1,506**
Evangelism & Growth	**7a**	22,263	765	-	**23,028**	7,496	143	-	**7,639**
Global relations	**7a**	1,349	9,359	-	**10,708**	1,173	10,633	-	**11,806**
Learning Network	**7a**	2,899	2	-	**2,901**	3,019	2	-	**3,021**
Methodist Council & Governance	**7a**	5,603	2	-	**5,605**	5,168	19	-	**5,187**
Ministry	**7a**	4,040	5,056	-	**9,096**	3,404	6,772	-	**10,176**
Property	**7a**	742	200	-	**942**	681	146	-	**827**
Others - Pensions	**7a**	1,890	-	-	**1,890**	1,339	-	-	**1,339**
Total expenditure	**19a, 20a, 21a**	**49,990**	**17,211**	**6**	**67,207**	**32,193**	**19,739**	**6**	**51,938**
Net gains/(losses) on investments	**14a**	8,348	5,122	748	**14,218**	(2,162)	(2,839)	(579)	**(5,580)**
Net income		**5,873**	**(799)**	**742**	**5,816**	**5,831**	**(9,789)**	**(585)**	**(4,543)**
Transfers between funds	**22**	(1,261)	971	290	**-**	1,718	(1,985)	267	**-**
Net income after transfers		**4,612**	**172**	**1,032**	**5,816**	**7,549**	**(11,774)**	**(318)**	**(4,543)**
Other recognised gains and losses:									
Remeasurement of net defined benefit pension scheme liability	**28**	(1,150)	(86)	-	**(1,236)**	(1,813)	94	-	**(1,719)**
Gains(losses) on revaluation of charitable properties		(291)	(221)	-	**(512)**	74	(3,349)	-	**(3,275)**
Net movement in funds		**3,171**	**(135)**	**1,032**	**4,068**	**5,810**	**(15,029)**	**(318)**	**(9,537)**
Total funds at 1 September		127,442	122,880	19,266	**269,588**	121,632	137,909	19,584	**279,125**
Total funds at 31 August		**130,613**	**122,745**	**20,298**	**273,656**	**127,442**	**122,880**	**19,266**	**269,588**

The Methodist Church in Great Britain
Balance Sheets as at 31 August 2024

		The Methodist Church in Great Britain		The Connexional Funds	
	Notes	2024	2023	2024	2023
		£000	£000	£000	£000
Fixed assets					
Intangible assets	13c	153	178	81	106
Tangible fixed assets	13a&b	75,158	66,704	64,594	56,033
Investments	14a&b	175,730	186,469	174,311	173,482
		251,041	**253,351**	**238,986**	**229,621**
Current assets					
Stocks	17	35	42	21	30
Debtors	15	5,416	7,138	6,484	6,401
Short-term deposits		33,160	21,554	21,161	19,991
Cash at bank and in hand		6,287	7,539	3,968	4,657
Total current assets		**44,898**	**36,273**	**31,634**	**31,079**
Creditors					
Amounts falling due within one year	16a	(19,313)	(17,057)	(18,845)	(14,814)
Net current assets		**25,585**	**19,216**	**12,789**	**16,265**
Total assets less current liabilities		**276,626**	**272,567**	**251,775**	**245,886**
Creditors					
Amounts falling due after more than one year	16b	(759)	(1,748)	(606)	(1,472)
Net assets excluding pension liability		**275,867**	**270,819**	**251,169**	**244,414**
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	28	(2,211)	(1,231)	(2,211)	(1,231)
Net assets including pension liability	23	**273,656**	**269,588**	**248,958**	**243,183**
The funds of the charity					
Unrestricted funds					
General funds		58,368	55,585	54,944	51,866
Designated funds		73,180	71,857	71,291	70,423
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	28	(935)	-	(935)	-
Total unrestricted funds	19	**130,613**	**127,442**	**125,300**	**122,289**
Restricted funds	20	122,745	122,880	103,360	101,628
Endowment funds	21	20,298	19,266	20,298	19,266
Total funds		**273,656**	**269,588**	**248,958**	**243,183**

Total unrestricted funds include revaluation reserve of £7.0m (2023: £7.3m) for both The Methodist Church in Great Britain and the Connexional Funds. Total restricted funds include revaluation reserve of £44.9m (2023: £45.2m) for The Methodist Church in Great Britain and £39.3m (2023: £39.6m) for The Connexional Funds. (Note 24 Page 84)

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

Approved and authorised for issue by the Board of Trustees on 26 February 2025 and signed on their behalf by:



The Revd. Sonia Hicks
Chair of the Council

9. Statement of trustees' responsibilities

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

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

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

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

Auditor

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

*****RESOLUTION**

13/1. The Conference receives the Report as the summary accounts presented for information as required by Standing Order 204(1)(i) and 362(2)(ii).

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

Opinion
We have audited the financial statements of The Methodist Church in Great Britain (the 'parent charity') and its subsidiaries (the 'group') for the year ended 31 August 2024 which comprise the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities, the Connexional Funds Statement of Financial Activities, the Consolidated and Connexional Funds Balance Sheets, the Consolidated and Connexional Funds Cash Flow Statements and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and charity's affairs as at 31 August 2024 and of their incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception
We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Charities Act 2011 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

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

Responsibilities of trustees
As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' responsibilities set out on page 39, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees

determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RSM UK Audit LLP

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

Date: 20 March 2025

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

14. The Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment

Contact name and details	The Revd Rachel Parkinson (Chair) chair@wsmethodist.org.uk The Revd Dr Andrew Harper a.harper@epworthim.com
Action Required	To be received.
Resolution	14/1. The Conference receives the report of the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment for the year to 31 March 2025.

Summary of Content and Impact

Subject and aims	This report updates the Conference on the work of the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI).
Main points	JACEI has engaged with the ethical work of the Central Finance Board under its pillars of • Earth and Ecosystem • Fairness, Responsibility and Transparency • Conflict • Labour • Equality • Health and Wellbeing • Society and has judged that the CFB has managed the funds under its control in support of an ethical stance which is in accordance with the aims of the Methodist Church
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	For more detail on the issues contained within this Summary Report, and other matters considered by JACEI, we recommend referring to the full 2025 Report to Conference which can be found on the CFB website. www.cfbmethodistchurch.org.uk
Consultations	CFB/Epworth engages with a wide range of stakeholders including Methodists, companies and shareholder groups and reports on these to JACEI.
Impact	JACEI will continue its advisory role on the ethics of investment in accordance with the aims of the Methodist Church.

Chair's Foreword

When JACEI met in the spring of this year, I had a real sense of the world shifting beneath our feet. Just days earlier, more than 100 Labour MPs and peers had written an open letter urging banks and investment firms to relax their rules on investing in weapons companies. They wrote, 'We urge financial institutions immediately to sweep away ill-considered anti-defence rules which are acting as a barrier to "doing what is right".' Meanwhile, our agenda led us to reflect on new and intense pressures, particularly on US-based companies, to scale back programmes designed to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion following strong statements by President Trump.

JACEI's whole purpose is to help the CFB to discern "what is right" in terms of how Methodist money is invested. At a basic level, investing in a business actively helps it pursue its goals by making finance available to it. A successful investment is one that profits the investor. Therefore the stakes are high. To invest in a company is to risk being complicit in unethical behaviour, which may be outside the Church's control though crucially not always beyond its influence. In a complex, globalised world, where ethical purity is an objective which simply cannot be pursued, it is in this area of ethical influence that I continue to be deeply impressed by the work of CFB. We can be proud to be part of a Church where our Christian witness extends to boardrooms through the work that the CFB does on our behalf.

However, sometimes disinvestment remains a necessity for the Church. To work through the example on investments in the arms trade, church leaders, including from the Methodist Church, recently agreed that 'there is a case to be made for increasing defence spending to support Ukraine in resisting Russian aggression.' This was in the context of lamenting further cuts to international aid in order to increase the defence budget. Whilst there is a strong tradition of pacifism within the Methodist Church, many Methodists will hold the view that the manufacture of weapons and their acquisition by governments are necessary things to hold the balance of power in the world. However, to invest in this sector is to provide funding for weapons manufacture and to reap a profit on the back of it. Despite the fact that this sector is commonly referred to as the Defence Industry, a weapon once manufactured and traded may become a tool of defence or of aggression. We are not short of opportunity to witness the devastation that weaponised aggression wreaks upon the people and planet God loves. In the light of this, JACEI reconfirmed our advice to the CFB that Methodist money should not be invested in the arms trade.

I remain grateful for previous work done to develop a framework of ethical pillars which aim to ensure that all investment decisions are viewed through a theological lens and rooted in the ground of God's love for all of creation. This proves even more valuable in times of rapid change, such as the ones we are living through.

You will see that the pillars provide the structure for the annual report. This year, JACEI gave careful thought as to how a greater focus could be brought to the safeguarding of children in investment decisions. The pillars aim to safeguard the interests of both people and planet, but children are a particularly vulnerable constituency. JACEI considered this, for instance, when reviewing our policy on investment in the media earlier this year. Concerns raised then have been echoed by recent societal focus on the effects exposure to harmful social media content is having, on young boys as well as young girls. We intend to continue to support the CFB as they plan to strengthen corporate accountability for the effects of companies' activities upon young people.

This concludes my final year as Chair of JACEI before I move to pastures new. It has been a short tenure but I have learned a huge amount. I feel that my Christian discipleship is the richer for the deeper exposure I have had to the work of this committee, which is itself such a vital part of the Church's stated aim to be a Justice-Seeking Church. I commend the report to you.

The Revd Rachel Parkinson,
Chair of JACEI

Executive Summary

The Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) continued to focus on the CFB's engagement efforts throughout the year in review. It found the CFB's seven ethical "pillars", as listed below, an effective structure to examine the breadth of its ethical investment activities.

Earth and Ecosystem

JACEI welcomed the advancing of the CFB's environmental commitment by investing in EU carbon permits through the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) which covers 40% of EU greenhouse gas emissions. This system has reduced emissions from power plants and heavy industry by 43% since its inception, with proceeds funding green initiatives like renewable energy. Additionally, the CFB has taken action in response to the high environmental and ethical costs of gold mining—which typically emits 20 tonnes of CO2 per kilogram, while also endangering the local environment—by investing in responsibly sourced gold via the UK's Royal Mint. Using recycled gold offcuts, this approach cuts the carbon footprint to 10% of virgin-mined gold. As of writing, 55% of the gold in the scheme is recycled, with plans to further increase this share.

Year	Epworth UK Carbon Intensity % Below Benchmark	Epworth Global Carbon Intensity % Below Benchmark
2019	2.8	n/a
2020	13.0	61.0
2021	37.0	66.0
2022	19.0	70.0
2023	27.0	72.5
2024	44.4	78.4

Fairness, Responsibility, and Transparency

The CFB exercised its voting rights in 99.21% of opportunities in 2024. JACEI noted that the CFB focused its efforts on curbing excessive executive pay in the context of a 16% rise in remuneration in FTSE 100 companies in 2023, far outpacing average wage growth. The CFB quarterly voting summaries, reviewed by JACEI, underscore their ethical stance, particularly as inclusive practises across global governance are increasingly under threat.

Conflict

JACEI diligently reviewed the CFB's holdings in relation to the Israel-Hamas conflict. As the rapid progress of Large Language Models and AI capability in conflict were becoming apparent, a focus was placed on technology companies, and four came under particular scrutiny: Microsoft; Accenture; IBM; and Cisco. JACEI observed evidence that Microsoft's Azure platform was used to support the Israeli military's AI-driven operations, raising concerns about civilian harm and autonomous warfare ethics. Accenture's potential role in surveillance infrastructure, IBM's contributions to biometric and cybersecurity systems, and Cisco's networking apparatus for border monitoring compelled JACEI to support the CFB's demand for greater transparency and on-going engagement with these companies.

Labour

The Methodist Church has committed to pay the real Living Wage, which is calculated to ensure workers can afford basic necessities, but 3.5 million UK workers still earn below this level. JACEI welcomed the commitment of the CFB/ Epworth to continue to

advocate for fair wages. In one case of such engagement, JACEI was kept abreast of Epworth's contact with Next Plc to push for the company to adopt the real Living Wage. A meeting is set for later in 2025 with Next's CEO and senior management to directly address wage transparency, including for third-party contractors. All of this will serve as a solid foundation for future engagement.

Equality

The CFB is working with other investor groups to focus on Anglo American regarding its mining operations. The mining industry has been linked to both environmental harm and inadequate consultation with Indigenous communities. Poor mining practices are particularly acute in Brazil and Indonesia, with threats to Indigenous lands and cultures. Collaborating with Nature Action 100, the CFB is pushing for adherence to international standards, including free, prior, and informed consent, to promote equitable, sustainable, and mutually beneficial practices.

Health and Wellbeing

The CFB has reported to JACEI on its investment in BioGaia. BioGaia is a probiotics leader, supporting the growth of the preventative healthcare industry, with the company reporting a 12% sales increase in 2023. What made BioGaia stand out was its own efforts to improve public health— with the company actively engaging in crucial initiatives to fight against antibiotic resistance whilst helping to address healthcare inequality in underprivileged nations. The company is also targeting 100% recycled or biodegradable packaging by 2030.

Society

JACEI was pleased to see the CFB commencing an initiative that will add a greater focus on safeguarding children by centring them in the engagement processes. JACEI noted that 160 million children are engaged in child labour globally, and that digital risks affect one in three internet users under the age of eighteen. An in-depth analysis was conducted by CFB using data from the Global Child Forum and other sources was presented to JACEI. Revealing that while 70% of portfolio companies have child rights policies, a much lower percentage showed evidence of effective implementation. Key concerns include child labour in supply chains, environmental impacts on children's health, and digital safety. The CFB plans targeted engagements and collaborations to strengthen corporate accountability in these areas.

Committee membership

The Revd Rachel Parkinson is the Chair of the Committee. She assumed this position in October 2023.

The JACEI Chair is independent, usually nominated from among the membership of the District Chairs and appointed by Methodist Council.

Members appointed by the Methodist Council are:

- The Revd Dr Sheryl Anderson (ex-officio)
- The Revd Dr Vincent Jambawo
- Ms Rachel Lampard
- Mr Jonathan Cape
- The Revd Dr Mike Long

Members appointed by the Central Finance Board (CFB) are:

- Mr Bala Gnanapragasam
- The Revd Julian Blakemore
- The Revd Dr Andrew Harper

Mr David Hopley attends as a representative of the Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland, which has Permanent Observer status on JACEI.

In attendance from time to time to facilitate the workings of the Committee were: Mr David Palmer, Mr Miles Askew, Mr Steve Hucklesby, Ms Roz Amos and Mr Callum Hughes.

Mrs Sophie Forrest, the JACEI Secretary, was on maternity leave for some of the year. The Secretariat position was covered by the CFB.

Enquiries about the Committee's work are encouraged, with letters to be addressed to the Committee's Chair c/o Methodist Church House, 25 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9SF, or by email to: jaceichair@methodistchurch.org.uk.

The CFB may be contacted through the Revd Dr Andrew Harper at Methodist Church House, 25 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9SF. Telephone: 020 7 496 3636 or email a.harper@epworthim.com

Contact name and details	The Revd Dr Mark Rowland Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee rowlandm@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	15/1. The Conference receives the Report. 15/2. The Conference directs the Secretary of the Conference, in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee, relevant members of the Connexional Team and appropriate partner organisations, to establish a task group to review the Conference's position with regard to assisted dying and to report to the Conference not later than 2028.

Summary of Content and Impact

Subject and Aims	A general update on the work of the Faith and Order Committee. A proposal regarding a review of the Conference's position on assisted dying. An update regarding consideration of the pattern of ordination services.
Main Points	• Introduction • Ways of working • Assisted Dying • Pattern of Ordination Services • Other items of work

1 Introduction

1.1 The Faith and Order Committee is appointed by, and accountable to, the Methodist Conference. On behalf of the Conference it helps to ensure that what the Methodist Church in Britain says and does is true to its self-understanding, mission and purpose. It therefore seeks to encourage a deepening of theological understanding, engagement with the Methodist tradition, and shared critical reflection, in order to help to discern Methodist perspectives and responses in all aspects of the Church's life.

1.2 Under SO 210(11) the Faith and Order Committee has a specific role requiring it to be consulted on all matters directly concerning the faith and order of the Church presented to the Conference by other bodies, and now also on any matters directly concerning the faith and order of the Church to be decided by the Connexional Council under its own authority. The committee is conscious in the new structures and ways of working that work in the Ministries and Mission Committees, in particular, may fall into either of those categories and the Secretary of the Committee is glad to attend both as an observer. Considering such matters often requires consultation with the full committee, and potentially some collaborative working, and the committee is therefore grateful for early conversations to establish effective and constructive ways of working and reflecting as the work develops. Conversations as the group is set up and the process for developing the work is established are particularly appreciated. All reports, questions and communication to the committee should be sent in the first instance to the Secretary of the Committee.

2 The Work of the Committee

2.1 The committee is always deeply grateful to the many people who volunteer their time to enable its work. In this connexional year, we welcomed seven new members to the committee and two further nominations are being presented to this Conference. As well as bringing a broad range of experience and theological knowledge, these new members have helped to widen the diversity of the committee, a process to which we continue to be committed. The Revd Neil Stubbens is stepping down as Convener of the Liturgy and Worship Subcommittee (though remaining a member of the committee). The Revd Dr Judith Rossall and Mr Craig Price, who has also served as a member of the Faith and Order Executive, complete their terms of office at the end of this connexional year and the Revd Dr Adrian Burdon and the Revd Dr Simon Sutcliffe have resigned from the committee. The committee wishes to express its thanks to them all.

2.2 Each year the committee reflects on its ways of working and seeks to work as effectively as possible. The committee is aware that there are various expectations of what the committee does, what it is responsible for, and the kind of decisions it can make. The role and remit of the Faith and Order Committee is set out in Standing Order 210.

2.3 A common misassumption is about the role that the committee plays in the theological life of the Church. Although it does have a responsibility to "stimulate theological reflection and study throughout the Church" (SO 210(4)),

it is important to note that the Faith and Order Committee is just one part of the process of theological reflection. It does have a particular role to play in helping the Conference and the Connexional Council make decisions which have implications for the faith and order of the Church. This often involves both a broad theological understanding and particular (and often detailed) knowledge of Methodist theology, polity and the relevant theological subject areas, which are more than just academic expertise. In addition, much of the work of the committee requires the ability to read and process significant paperwork, too often at short notice, and with a careful attention to detail. Whilst not every member of the committee needs to be proficient in every area, these are the gifts and knowledge needed to be able to carry out the committee's work.

2.4 Given that the committee is not, and should not be, the only place where theological thinking happens, it therefore has a concern for the theological life of the Church and how theological thinking is facilitated in Local Churches, Circuits, Districts, the Connexional Team, and in connexional working parties, committees and other bodies. Its own desire to play a part in stimulating theological thinking has often been thwarted by a heavy workload and immediate demands. This is likely to be mirrored in many other contexts, and continues to be an issue of concern.

2.5 When the Conference directs the committee to undertake a piece of work on a specific topic the committee would usually work with other people, either through establishing a working group that draws on a variety of people with different experience and perspectives relevant to the subject, or through reflection days, conversations or different forms of consultation. For many of the reports it brings to the Conference, therefore, it has worked with people outside of the committee and from many parts of the Church's life.

2.6 In order for the committee to be able to fulfil its responsibilities it requires not only the skills and knowledge indicated above, but also a commitment of time and attention. As in many areas of the Methodist Church's life, committee members are volunteers. In a context when many people are already overloaded, finding people who have time and availability can be a challenge.

2.7 The committee also notes that, like many others, it undertakes much of its work under pressure in order to meet Conference and other deadlines. This affects the extent and nature of any consultation (which, if done well, always takes time, attention and resourcing), the opportunity to engage in more proactive and creative thinking, and the time and ability to develop skills for faith and order work. The committee has given thought to how it might help to develop the particular skills and expertise needed for its work and has explored and is

exploring various possibilities including mentoring, creating further opportunities for involvement in its work, training or study days or sessions in particular areas and paying attention to different ways of identifying people for particular pieces of work. It has been encouraged at the response to the recent advertisements, both for the committee itself and for the Liturgy and Worship Subcommittee. We continue to be keen to identify people with potential for faith and order work even if they do not have all the skills needed at present.

3 Assisted Dying

3.1 Members of the Conference will be aware of the current public debate regarding assisted dying, resulting from the introduction of a Private Member's Bill[1] to Parliament on the subject. The question of assisted dying is not new and the Methodist Church has had cause to consider it previously. A statement issued by the Secretary of the Conference set out this background.[2] At the time of writing this report, there is uncertainty relating to the timetable for the Bill and if or when it might be implemented.

3.2 The Conference in 1974 adopted a statement on Euthanasia[3] expressing its opposition to any steps which would intentionally end a patient's life. A debate in the Conference of 2015 included a variety of views and the two notices of motion[4] that had been submitted were referred to the Methodist Council. The Council resolved to make available resources to enable churches better to respond to the needs of patients and carers facing decisions and choices about end-of-life. These resources remain available on the Methodist Church website.[5] While these discussions and resources highlight that there is a wide range of perspectives on these matters among the Methodist people, no change was made to the position of the Conference.

3.3 The committee has considered these matters and attention has also been given to them within the Connexional Team. The committee is aware that, as well as the theological questions that are raised by the proposals, there are also questions of politics, justice, ethics, practicality and much more on which different teams and committees within the Church, as well as partner organisations, will have important perspectives to contribute. Whatever the result of the current

1 Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, available from https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3774
2 https://www.methodist.org.uk/about/news/assisted-dying/
3 https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/pi_euthanasia_74_bNiGJld.pdf
4 https://www.methodist.org.uk/documents/6674/conf-2015-daily-record-complete-0715_zZyxNHX.pdf
5 https://www.methodist.org.uk/faith/life-and-faith/death-and-dying/

parliamentary process, the questions will not go away and the formal position of the Church requires addressing. As consideration of the bill continues, it is important that the Church is resourced to speak with authority on the topic and, if the bill is passed, there will be a need to support those in pastoral ministry as they care for patients who may consider seeking an assisted death. If the bill is not passed this time, the subject is nevertheless likely to return to Parliament in the future and a well-considered and up-to-date expression of the Conference's view will help the Methodist Church to respond well at that time. Mindful of the wide range of perspectives and expertise needed to support this, the committee is proposing that a broad working group consider the matter and report to the Conference.

4 The Pattern of Ordination Services

4.1 The committee was asked by the Secretary of the Conference, following a discussion in the Conference Planning Executive (CPE), to explore where ordination services should be held. The CPE had been asked by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC) to determine that there be two services (one diaconal and one presbyteral) held in the Conference venue itself because of the increasing difficulty and costs (of money and carbon) incurred in using churches in the vicinity of the venue. The CPE had recognised that this immediate practical issue raised broader questions (eg, the nature of sacred space and the relationship of ordination to reception into Full Connexion) and that there were other possible solutions (eg, holding ordinations in Districts or at a greater distance from the Conference) that also merited consideration.

4.2 The committee discussed the matter and was unable to reach a consensus, other than that the current practice seemed appropriately to reflect our theology of orders, polity and ecclesiology. It noted that the Law and Polity Committee and Ministries Committee were also to be consulted, and understands that those committees will feed any conclusions they have reached to the Conference separately. It appears that there is at this stage no consensus for change, and therefore no substantive resolution is before the Conference. However, noting the response of the Law and Polity Committee – that there were no legal or constitutional issues about holding the services in the Conference venue but that it would need to consider any specific proposals for change – and recognising that the Ministries Committee will not be able to discuss the matter prior to the deadline for the Agenda, it suggests that the Conference reflects on the question, receiving any feedback from the Ministries Committee meeting in May, and making appropriate decisions. An additional report and any necessary resolutions will be brought on the Order Paper.

5 Other specific items of work

5.1 In addition to the work being reported to this year's Conference, the committee has several other items of work currently in progress, which include:

5.2 Anglican-Methodist Covenant: The committee is aware of the outstanding directions of the Conference and the Methodist Council in relation to this work. The focus on work on marriage and relationships (LLF) in the Church of England has made this challenging but some joint work is now beginning. The committee will report development to the Conference when it is able.

5.3 Online Church: This work is now being taken forward by a working group under the authority of the Secretary of the Conference in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee and due to be reported to the Conference of 2026.

5.4 Online Communion: The current period of discernment regarding online celebrations of Holy Communion was extended by the 2024 Conference until 2026. In partnership with the University of Roehampton, the committee is conducting a piece of theological action research on the practice on online communion in the Methodist Church in order that a well-informed recommendation as to the outcome of the period of discernment can be made to the Conference of 2026. This joint project has been made possible by the generous support of the Susanna Wesley Foundation and of the Southlands Methodist Trust and the committee wishes to express its deep thanks.

5.5 Criteria for the Transfer of Ministers: When Ministers of Other Churches and Conferences seek status with the Methodist Church in Britain (eg to transfer into Full Connexion, be recognised and regarded and so on), checks have to be made to ensure that their ordination is recognised by the Methodist Church. The Conference of 2024 directed these criteria be updated and work is in progress on this. Alongside this, we are contributing to the wider review of Section 73 of CPD (which governs these processes) overseen by the Ministerial Coordinator for the Oversight of Ordained Ministries, ensuring these distinct, but related, pieces of work are kept in step. The committee is aiming to report this work to the 2026 Conference.

5.6 Repentance and Reparations: At the request of the Connexional Team working party working on the response to M22 (2021), the committee is examining theological approaches to repentance and reparation in the context of the transatlantic slave trade. There are possibilities we are continuing to explore of doing this work in collaboration with faith and order colleagues from relevant partner churches.

5.7 In addition to the above items, the committee or its representatives are consulted about a wide range of issues in the life of the church. In particular, we have been pleased to support the review of the Conference statement *Hope in God's Future* (presented elsewhere in this Agenda) and to contribute to the review of probation processes.

5.8 The committee is planning to report to the Conference of 2026 on the following matters:

Online Church
Online celebrations of Holy Communion
Revision of the Criteria for the Transfer of Ministers
Response to the report of the Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission document *God in Christ Reconciling*

*****RESOLUTIONS**

15/1. The Conference receives the Report.

15/2. The Conference directs the Secretary of the Conference, in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee, relevant members of the Connexional Team and partner organisations, to establish a task group to review the Conference's position with regard to assisted dying and to report to the Conference not later than 2028.

Contact name and details	The Revd Dr Mark Rowland Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee rowlandm@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolution	16/1. The Conference receives the Report. 16/2. The Conference adopts recommendations 4.3.1 to 4.3.4 as its guidance in response to Notice of Motion 2022/201. 16/3. The Conference directs the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee 1. to consider how the Church might express appropriate repentance for the past exclusion of neurodivergent people in the life of the church; 2. to consider how the Church might be more inclusive of neurodivergent people in its communal and corporate life, its governance structures and pastoral care; and 3. to consider ways in which ableism in the Church might be further addressed; and to report to the Conference of 2027. 16/4. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to consider what further resources relating to the ministry of healing may be needed and to bring proposals to the Conference of 2027.

Summary of Content and Impact

Subject and aims	To consider questions of healing ministry and neurodiversity raised in Notice of Motion 2022/201 including considering whether prayers for the healing of neurodivergent conditions should be prohibited.
Main points	• The nature of neurodiversity • Models of disability • A theological approach to neurodiversity • Issues of neurodivergent inclusion and exclusion • Considerations relating to healing and neurodiversity • Conclusions and recommendations

16. Healing Ministry and Neurodiversity: Response to Notice of Motion 2022/201

Background context and relevant documents (with function)	Notice of Motion 2022/201 (see appendix 1 below) The Church and the Ministry of Healing (1977)
Consultations	Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee
Impact	Resolutions ask further work of the JDS Committee and the Faith and Order Committee – there could be costs involved if further resources are required.

1. Introduction

1.1 Origin and scope of the report

1.1.1 The 2022 Conference adopted Notice of Motion 201 entitled 'Healing Ministry and Neurodiverse Conditions' (see Appendix 1). This Notice of Motion encouraged all parts of the Methodist Church to reflect on how their environments might be made more supportive and accommodating for people with neurodivergent conditions and on how the gifts of people with neurodivergent conditions might better contribute to the local life of the church. It further invited consideration of whether and how to pray for those living with any condition, including lifelong neurodivergent conditions. It directed the Faith and Order Committee, in consultation with the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) Committee, to consider new guidance on healing ministry and within that to give specific consideration to 'whether prayers for healing for certain conditions should be prohibited.'

1.1.2 A working group of the Faith and Order Committee, together with a member nominated by the JDS Committee, have worked together in producing this report. A significant majority of that working group is neurodivergent and within the group there was a range of experience and perspectives, including on the central question regarding healing. The group has sought to reflect that diversity within this report. This report is offered not as theology done for neurodivergent people but as a group mainly of neurodivergent people reflecting theologically together.

1.1.3 Both healing ministry and neurodivergent conditions are broad subjects capable of detailed study in their own rights. In this report, the Faith and Order Committee has sought to engage with the breadth of neurodiversity and to offer some reflection on the nature of healing in this context: a reflection which is both corporate (as to the healing of the world, society and the church) and individual (as to the relief of the suffering which individuals face in their lives). It is not – and cannot be – an exploration of all aspects of healing ministry. Beginning from

an overview of neurodiversity and neurodivergent conditions it moves to reflect theologically on these ways of being. The wide variety of neurodiverse ways of being highlights the need for close and contextual attention: there will be no single answer to the question of healing ministry but a constant call for prayerful and attentive discernment. The report then sets these questions in the context of recent Methodist thinking in various areas of church life including the *Theology of Safeguarding* and the *Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity*.

1.1.4 Finally, the report offers recommendations which seek to recognise the power of prayer and the work of Holy Spirit while prioritising the agency of the person being prayed for and calling attention to the church's commitments and teaching in connection with the *Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity*, as well as policy and procedure in safeguarding. The report's recommendations are intended to inform good practice in the ministry of prayers for healing in relation to neurodivergence. This work highlights two areas that the Conference might wish to be considered further. First, the statement *The Church and the Ministry of Healing* dates from 1977 and was of limited use in preparing this report. Its status was removed by the Conference of 2024. Second, this report gives some consideration to the question of the capacity and agency of the neurodivergent person in connection with whom prayer may be being considered. However, this report does not explore healing ministry in detail in relation to cases where there are severe barriers to communication which, although inclusive of some neurodivergent people, cover a broader range of medical conditions and a wider set of questions.

1.2 Neurodiverse ways of being

1.2.1 As Nicole Baumer, a child neurologist/neurodevelopmental disabilities specialist who works as an instructor in neurology at Harvard Medical School notes 'The word neurodiversity refers to the diversity of all people.'[1] Another way of putting it is to say that neurodiversity is the concept that all humans vary in terms of our neurocognitive ability. Neurocognitive ability refers to the different ways we think, learn, interact and perceive the world. This recognition helps to support the inclusion of neurological variation in that, rather than isolating particular conditions, it recognises more than one way in which people differ from each other. As we all know, no two people are alike, whether they are neurodivergent or neurotypical. Nevertheless, it is important to be able to identify particular neurodivergent conditions in order to enable understanding and offer appropriate support.

1 https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/what-is-neurodiversity-202111232645

1.2.2 As understandings of neurodiversity have developed so has the terminology. The basic reality is that there is naturally occurring variation in the way humans think and process information and this terminology seeks to describe that variation. Four terms which it is necessary to understand for this report are 'neurodiverse', 'neurotypical', 'neurodivergent', and 'neurotype'. According to the Brain Charity:[2]

> *Neurodiversity* is the concept that brain differences are natural variations – not deficits, disorders or impairments.
>
> The terms *neurodivergent* and *neurodivergence* are now used to describe all people whose neurological conditions mean they do not consider themselves to be neurotypical.
>
> *Neurotypicality* is used to describe people whose brain functions, ways of processing information and behaviours are seen to be standard.

1.2.3 *Neurotype* refers to a particular person's expression of neurodivergence. It must be remembered that each person's expression of their neurotype will vary from another person with the same neurotype. Although the term neurodiversity includes neurotypical thinkers, it is commonly associated with a range of neurotypes. Some of these different ways of thinking, learning, interacting and perceiving the world have been given labels, such as: Specific Learning Differences, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) among others. While in many cases neurodivergence is present from birth, it can be acquired via a brain injury,[3] an illness or treatment of an illness that causes changes in cognition and behaviour, or mental ill-health conditions (eg PTSD).[4] Neurodiversity covers all of these.

1.2.4 Another term which it is important to understand in this context is 'ableism'. Bogart and Dunn[5] define ableism in this way: "Ableism is stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and social oppression toward people with disabilities." As well as the ableism that may be found in individual interactions, there is also *structural ableism* embedded within the way societies, organisations and communities

2 https://www.thebraincharity.org.uk/neurodivergent-neurodiversity-neurotypical-explained
3 https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/education/departments/disability-inclusion-special-needs/resources/understanding-neurodivergence
4 https://www.college.police.uk/support-forces/diversity-and-inclusion/neurodiversity-glossary-terms
5 Bogart, K.R. and Dunn, D.S. (2019), Ableism Special Issue Introduction. *Journal of Social Issues*, 75: 650-664. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12354

operate and *internalized ableism*, where the disabled person themselves has absorbed such attitudes from living within a structurally ableist context.

1.2.5 The language in this area continues to develop and it is likely that, in time, the terms used here will themselves be out-of-date. In pastoral contexts, priority should always be given to the way a person prefers to describe themselves. Some prefer to describe themselves as neurodiverse rather than neurodivergent while others may prefer not to be labelled. For clarity, this report will use the terms as set out above.

1.3 Models of disability

1.3.1 In considering the issues raised by the Notice of Motion, we have to be attentive to the intersection between neurodiversity and disability. Not all neurodivergent people consider themselves disabled; however, in considering neurodiversity, insights from disability are helpful. In particular, it is useful to examine how disability is understood. One way of doing this is to use 'models' of disability which give different ways of imagining disability conceptually. It is important to remember that a model is just that and the reality is always more complex.

1.3.2 Models of disability can be helpfully used to enable reflective practitioners to examine the perspective from which they are approaching disability and neurodiversity. Mamo Retief and Rantoa Letšosa offer insight into this question. They explain that someone's standpoint will affect their perceptions and the focus of their theological reflection.[6] This framing will shape whatever conclusions they reach. Therefore it is helpful, in approaching the issue of healing ministry and neurodiversity, to pay attention to one's own perspectives and intentionally to seek those of others. For example, it is possible to approach disability with pity, compassion or a range of other emotional responses. Pity may see a disabled person as experiencing tragedy, and may entail a degree of 'looking down' on them. This creates emotional distance between two human beings in a context where one is regarded and treated as 'other'. This may be an ableist response to levels of discomfort in the presence of disability. Compassion may see a disabled person as an equal, meeting them where they are. It tends to reduce the distance between the two people even if this experience is discomforting for either.

1.3.3 Four models of disability will be described in this report, although it is important to stress that these are not the only models. We will be using definitions from the

6 Retief, M & Letšosa, R, 2018, 'Models of disability: A brief overview', *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 74(1):1

article by Retief and Letšosa, explaining the medical model, the social model, the economic model and the limits model. The medical and social models are more widely understood and more prevalent in understanding disability. The economic and limits models are lesser-known models that offer different perspectives. The models are offered to assist in reflecting on attitudes to disability: they are not all examples to be followed.

1.3.4 The medical model understands disability as a dysfunction of a person's body and has a view to cure or treat the dysfunction. As such, it views disability negatively and as something that needs to be dealt with or eliminated. This model creates a binary opposition of able-bodied and disabled people with an understanding that the former is the better, desired state to be in. There is considerable power and authority given to professionals who treat disabled people (such as medical doctors or occupational therapists) and it assumes a requirement for disabled people to want the treatment to cure or treat the dysfunction.

1.3.5 In contrast to the medical model, the social model understands disability to be something that is a consequence of the way society works; that is, society's ways of functioning create limitations and disadvantages for some. The social model makes a distinction between impairment and disability. The former describes a person's variance (such as a particular neurotype). The latter draws attention to the way social groups, institutions or organisations do not consider how those with impairments may be adversely impacted by the way they operate, leading to exclusion and/or disadvantages. The social model would describe neurodivergent people as being disabled by society because society creates ways of operating that generate limitations to their participation (for example, creating spaces that are too overstimulating for those who may easily be overwhelmed by sensory stimuli).

1.3.6 The economic model is distinct from the previous two, as it understands a person's value in terms of their productivity. It primarily considers a person's ability within their work and employment, assessing how much value they can offer (such as increasing revenue for an organisation, how many hours they can work, how much they give versus how much they cost, and so on). Within this model, disabled people are still expected to receive respect, rights, and reasonable adjustments, but this is a secondary concern when it comes to what they can produce for the economy. It should be remembered at this point that the different models help us to identify and, where needed, challenge our attitudes to disability. For example, a challenge could be offered if economy/economic growth were to be considered in a church context. How do we see our lay workers, ministers and other church employees with regard to this model of

disability? Do we see them in terms of their productivity, how much they can do and how much they cost? When considering neurodivergent people, or indeed other disabled people, do we have an (unspoken) question about what 'value they can offer'? We may find we have attitudes within ourselves that call for self-examination and repentance.

1.3.7 The final model of disability is the limits model, which is a manifold approach that focuses on the lived/embodied experience. There is an understanding that limits are a part of the human experience and that these limits vary. The model considers any aspect of life that is relevant, such as the social, political and economic impact on a person. Therefore, disability is about a range of experiences rather than a binary of disabled or able-bodied. It is similar to the social model in that it understands disability to be rooted as a social construct. However, it departs from the social model as it does not understand that all limitations are necessarily positive or normative. A disabled person may wish to have some or all limitations removed or overcome.

1.3.8 A short survey was conducted as part of this work and in the responses, the overwhelming preference of the responders was towards a social model understanding of neurodiversity. At the same time, it is important to recognise that each person's experience is different: as is commonly said 'When you've met one autistic person, you've met one autistic person.' In pastoral work and especially when prayer for healing is being considered it is important to be attentive to the person's self-understanding and to prioritise their agency in determining the most appropriate form of spiritual care.

1.4 Prayer and Healing

1.4.1 The Faith and Order Committee recognises that there is a broad spectrum of opinion within the Methodist Church, and more widely, about what it means to pray for healing for neurodiverse conditions. It is therefore helpful to consider our current agreed statements about healing, recognising once again that it is some considerable time since we formally considered this matter via a Conference report. As noted above, the previous Conference Statement, dating from 1977, had its status removed by the 2024 Conference.

1.4.2 The *Methodist Worship Book* offers a series of healing and reconciliation services, including 'An Order of Service for Healing and Wholeness'. The Introduction to this service reminds us that 'Healing was central to the ministry of Jesus. It was a sign of God's kingdom, bringing renewal and wholeness of life to those who turned to God in their need…. In every act of worship, the Church celebrates the grace of God who desires wholeness of body, mind and spirit for all people'.

It presents a broad understanding of 'frailty and brokenness – felt not just in physical illness, but in guilt, anxiety and all the burdens which weigh us down'.

1.4.3 This sets a context for conversation about prayer for healing, recognising that it creates the opportunity to ask for relief from anything which burdens or harms us. In considering neurodivergence, it is vital to acknowledge that neurodivergent people experience their condition differently. For some, their different cognitive functioning is a blessing and they long for it to be recognised as gift to the church.[7] Others acknowledge their neurodivergence as holding blessing and gift, but may also face associated challenging or painful effects, such as, for example, depression, auto-immune diseases and social isolation, among many others. Still others long for freedom from a way of being which they experience as burden. In the light of the different approaches to disability and neurodiversity suggested by the models of disability discussed in the previous section, when considering healing prayer it will always be important to be reflective – and sometimes self-critical – about the models we are operating with, consciously and subconsciously, both for the person praying and the person being prayed for.

1.4.5 A broad understanding of healing embraces a sense of wholeness and flourishing in the fullest sense. In considering prayers for healing, it is important not only to consider immediate challenges and difficulties but to be attentive to the fullness of life that God wills for us all. Prayer for healing in this sense can celebrate a person's uniqueness – including because of their neurotype – and be directed toward their wholeness and flourishing.

2. A theological approach to neurodiversity

2.1 The image and likeness of God

2.1.1 Christian tradition draws on Genesis 1:26 to maintain that humanity is made in the image and likeness of God. Historically, the tradition has made a distinction between the 'image of God' and the 'likeness of God'. For instance, both Tertullian and Origen believed that human beings were made in the *image* of God which was distorted by sin but restored to the *likeness* of God through the work of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, Augustine believed that humanity, even though corrupted by the Fall, could be restored into relationship with God through grace at work in the human soul, which he understood as the seat of rationality.[8]

7 See Rapley, S. 2021 *Autistic Thinking in the Life of the Church,* London: SCM, pp.32-34
8 Augustine, *Confessions* 13:1

2.1.2 Aquinas, building on Augustine's understanding of rationality as the mark of the image of God, remained convinced that the rationality of the human creature was not based in anything biological and was the ability to know and to love. The capability for knowledge and love *is* the image of God in the human creature and cannot be rendered incapable of loving and knowing. This persists in the individual as it originates in God and continues in relationship with God.[9] For Aquinas and his predecessors, this is possible because of the rational faculties of human beings which mirror God's wisdom.

2.1.3 Later theologians articulate their understanding of image and likeness of God differently. Jürgen Moltmann for example writes of how the image of God develops in individuals through community in relationship and fellowship.[10] Central to all Christ's healing narratives found in scripture is the return of or relocation of an individual to the community.[11]

2.1.4 Thus all humanity, in bearing the image of God, has the capacity to know and love God and reveal God in relationship and community with others.

2.1.5 More recent writers in Christian anthropology, especially those writing in the field of disability theology,[12] have interrogated the attributes of rationality and relationality as signalling the image of God in humanity. This includes the work of disability theologians such as Amos Yong[13] and Brian Brock[14] considering Down Syndrome and autism, Grant Macaskill,[15] Naomi Lawson Jacobs and Emily Richardson,[16] and John Swinton who considers acquired neurological impairments. In summary, theological reflection on neurodevelopmental disabilities affirms strongly that neurodivergent people and in particular autistic people relate and image God in different but not lesser ways to neurotypical people.

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9 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 1.93
10 Moltmann, Jürgen. *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, London: SCM Press, 1985, pp.215-219
11 See, for example, Mark 5:21-43
12 Although neurodivergence and disability are not the same thing, the work on disability theology has strong relevance to the conversation and is a valuable resource.
13 Yong, A. 2011 *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans
14 Brock, B.2020 *Wondrously Wounded: Theology, Disability, and the Body of Christ* Baylor University Press
15 Macaskill, G 2021 *Autism and the Church: Bible, Theology, and Community* Baylor University Press
16 Lawson Jacobs N and Richardson E 2022 *At the Gates: Disability, Justice and the Churches* London: DLT

2.1.6 This position depends on an understanding of neurodivergence which draws from a difference model and is rooted in the social model of disability. Other models outlined in this report are also relevant.

In reflecting on the economic model, churches should challenge any approach to neurodivergence, or indeed disability more broadly, which values God's people solely or mainly in terms of their productivity. Disability theologians also engage with alternative approaches which draw on the medical model and tend to understand neurodivergence from a deficit perspective. In the context of the linkage between God's image and rationality or relationship outlined above, these approaches have led some theologians to query whether neurodivergence limits people's capacity to image God. This demonstrates poor understanding of autistic communication and relationship, especially in those with higher support needs. Neurotypical people often exhibit a severe impairment in their ability to communicate with neurodivergent people and place the 'blame' for this on the neurodivergent people for communicating differently. This unhelpful position might be nuanced by the limits model, which recognises that some limitations make life challenging for some people while affirming that limits are part of the human experience for everyone.

2.1.7 Methodists believe that 'God, as free gift, converts us by his grace … puts us right with himself, gives us new life in Christ and makes us his own holy people through the Holy Spirit.'[17] This sits within the tradition which holds that for all people, restoration into the *likeness* of God is entirely dependent on the action of God irrespective of any trait or ability held by a human being. It is not to say that disability in any way mars or impairs the image of God but simply that God's grace enables the *likeness* of God to be restored in all people.

2.2 Church: Christ-centred and inclusive

2.2.1 Our humanity, then, depends on God's initiative in reaching out towards us.[18] The presence or absence of any particular qualities does not determine our capacity to receive the gift of God's love in Christ, and human likeness to God cannot depend on how closely anyone fits some idea of 'normative' humanity.

2.2.2 This focus on grace sits readily alongside the Methodist attention to God's inclusive love for all, rooted in the Wesleys' Arminianism and restated in various

17 *A Catechism for the People Called Methodists* (b)9 p6
18 Reinders HS 2008 *Receiving the Gift of Friendship: Profound Disability, Theological Anthropology and Ethics* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, pp.23-24

expressions of our calling as a church. It is because neurodivergent people share the capacity to receive God's gift of grace that their particular insights contribute significantly to church life, rather than being special needs to be tolerated. That is not to say of course that the worth of any individual is defined by their utility but that it is the right of all to be part of a relational community centred on Christ without barriers to their involvement being placed by others.

2.2.3 The Bible reiterates this theme of open access many times. For example, Leviticus 19:14 reads 'You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling-block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.' 1 John 2:10 uses the same image to illustrate what it means to love a fellow-Christian. Isaiah 57:14 adds 'And it shall be said, "Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people's way.'"

2.2.4 How might the Methodist church enact these teachings? The blind theologian John Hull asked the question "Could a blind person have been a disciple of Jesus?" as this would have frequently caused people to question why Jesus who had healed others had not given sight to such a disciple. We could equally ask whether an autistic person could have been a disciple or one with Tourette's or Down Syndrome. The current direction of theological travel suggests that this is the wrong question to ask. Rather, the church needs to remove the 'stumbling blocks' by learning to ask different questions. How should the image of God in neurodivergent people be honoured? It is only by the healing of our church communities that these exclusionary questions will disappear.

2.2.5 The desire for such healing of our communities brings further questions. The image of God and the mission of God are bound together in the life and witness of the Methodist Church. The image and likeness of God in us connects us both to each other and to God whose mission is to bring all people to Godself. The Methodist church therefore needs to consider how to acknowledge neurodivergent people fully as fellow-subjects of the kingdom of God and members of the community of the church[19] and how to weave in the spiritual, pastoral and worship-focused insights of neurodivergent people as part of a wider and diverse community of faith. This demands rigorous reflection on our image of God, recognising the challenge which comes to us by way of disability theology of an image of God which contains disability.[20]

19 Williams C 2023 *Peculiar Discipleship: An Autistic Liberation Theology* London: SCM, p.140
20 Eiesland, Nancy L 1994 *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* Nashville: Abingdon, p.89

2.2.6 As noted above, prayer for healing should give priority to the agency of a person requesting prayer. This implies that any such request will be influenced by the individual's understanding of their condition and the way it affects their life, and any spiritual support offered will entail careful, compassionate attention to discerning this self-understanding and shaping a prayerful response appropriately It is likely too that an individual will hold a view on the balance they experience between the different models of disability, and this too should be considered in determining the focus of prayer for healing. Equally, the church needs to pray for its own collective healing as it follows God's summons to become a place where 'all are welcome' (StF 409). Most importantly, prayer needs to acknowledge the radical freedom of the Holy Spirit to transform individuals, the church and the world.

2.2.7 Finally, great care and attention needs to be given to how we talk about prayer for healing in relation to disability and neurodivergent conditions. Rapley identifies a number of reasons why autistic people can find prayer hard.[21] For example, autistic people can be quite literal in their thinking and dyslexic people sometimes struggle with the nuance and multiple meanings in language, both of which could lead to misunderstandings when they witness or hear of a neurodivergent person receiving prayer for healing. It is possible for the church to continue to perpetuate the narrative that the condition which makes people who they are is undesirable and by extension so are they.[22] All this needs to inform good pastoral practice.

Any prayer for healing for neurodivergent individuals must then include a focus on the healing of the whole church, both theologically and practically.

2.3 Now and not yet: neurodivergence and praying 'your kingdom come'.

2.3.1 In the quest for healing of Church and society, it remains true that neurodivergent people find many aspects of life hard, even traumatic. The sensitivities, characteristics, and features of various neurodivergent conditions, can cause difficulties and unpleasant, even harmful, effects for a neurodivergent individual existing in a world not designed to accommodate their needs. This can result in further anxiety and trauma and the conclusions to this report stress that where someone holding agency requests this, sensitive, compassionate prayer for healing and relief from anxiety and trauma is appropriate.[23]

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21 Rapley S 2021 *Autistic Thinking in the Life of the Church*, London: SCM, pp.82f
22 Kenny A 2022 *My Body is not a Prayer Request*
23 Neurodivergent conditions are many and varied and experienced differently based on the individual and the context in which they find themselves. For many neurodivergent individuals some

2.3.2 However, this position needs further nuance. Many disability theologians make the distinction between healing and cure, with healing having a broader and more nuanced scope, following the healing narratives of scripture which are centred on restoring individuals to community.[24] In such narratives the curing of ailments is secondary. This links to the thinking of modern scholars, who recognise that cure as the removal of a condition is very much based in the medical model of disability which locates the "problem" in the individual. This is particularly relevant in reflecting on healing of a neurodivergent condition. To "heal" the condition in terms of removing it altogether is strongly opposed by many disability theologians, particularly in the case of developmental conditions (which include many, but not all, neurodivergent conditions.) To remove the condition would remove a significant part of the person and invalidate their previous relationship with God which had been mediated through their condition.

2.3.3 There are wider problems resulting from the way society is structured around those perceived as 'normative'. The neurotypical majority holds privilege but often fails to recognise this, disadvantaging neurodivergent people by misunderstanding their communication and sensitivities. Claire Williams writes that autistic lives are traumatised because autistic people exist in an inhospitable world, leading to fracturing in their personal identities as they 'mask' and seek to fit in with what is expected. Their lives become uninhabitable and unwelcome.[25] The economic model of disability also points to the impact of neurodivergence on people's ability to thrive in the conditions of contemporary society, so that many face impoverishment. Williams's vision of healed humanity moves away from a focus on healing from neurodivergence, instead paying attention to healing into inclusivity and freedom. Many of the responses to the Working Group's questionnaire had a similar emphasis. Williams draws on the story of the gift of tongues at Pentecost (Acts 2), naming the work of the Holy Spirit as enabling people to hear (rather than speak) across boundaries. It is the listeners, not the speakers, who are healed.

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characteristics of their condition can be very positive or even beneficial, but in other circumstances can cause them problems. For example, an individual with ADHD may find the ability to hyperfocus on an essay to enable them to complete a great deal in a short time, however that same hyperfocus may, in other situations, divert their attention from what they need to do. This is because ADHD is not about an inability to focus but a difficulty in regulating focus and attention. (For further information try The Pocket Guide to Neurodiversity by Daniel Aherne, and the results of recent research into autism "sense-scapes" which looks at the sensory joys and difficulties experienced by autistic people in churches, and additional resources https://www.autismchurch.com/resources)

24 Lawson Jacobs & Richardson 2022:24

25 Williams 2023:19

2.3.4 This image of an integrated community provides a model for envisioning the work of Christ in making all things new (Revelation 21:5). It offers a framework for understanding salvation as a way of being in which all people are fully ourselves and fully united with God and one another in Christ, where the exclusionary barriers created by sin are destroyed because the image of God is fully restored in and for each of us, and where the work of the Holy Spirit enables us truly to hear each other. In the Kingdom of God conditions may persist but the disability of them will be no more. Heaven is accessible.[26]

2.3.5 In praying 'your kingdom come', the church trusts that one day, God will reconcile all things. Until then, all work towards a reconciled community is provisional, acknowledging that we cannot grasp the immensity of the love of God which awaits us. Yet, as disciples of Christ and children of the one God, we collaborate with God as we discern new ways in which the kingdom is coming into being among us. In this moment, God invites our diverse community of faith to reflect together on the nature of Christian hope as we learn to name neurodiversity and neurodivergence, and to respond through theological and practical engagement with these fresh ways of envisioning what it means to pray 'your kingdom come'.

3. Christian Community, Human Flourishing and Healing

3.1 Neurodivergent exclusion and inclusion

3.1.1 For a number of reasons neurodivergent people can be particularly likely to experience exclusion, loneliness and poor mental health. The need for community is basic to human experience, but for neurodivergent people feeling 'different' and not 'fitting in' are common experiences. Pathways to diagnosis are complex to access, and often have long waiting lists, meaning that people can go undiagnosed for many years. Efforts to 'mask' neurodivergent traits in order to fit with neurotypical expectations can take a significant toll on mental and physical wellbeing. The church can help or hinder flourishing in the way it welcomes and values, or not, the whole person as uniquely made in the image of God.

3.1.2 It is important to be clear that forms of neurodivergence are not in themselves mental health conditions, contrary to how they have sometimes been understood. However, some conditions are commonly associated, for example, with anxiety and depression. Wellbeing can be hindered when underlying neurodivergence goes undiagnosed, especially as neurodivergent people often respond to

26 Lawson Jacobs & Richardson 2022:121

medications very differently from neurotypical people, and standard treatments may make their mental health worse rather than better. Poor mental health for neurodivergent people can result from, or be exacerbated by, the experience of being stigmatised or rejected because of their neurodivergence. This can include being prayed for in ways that suggest neurodivergence is unacceptable, a problem to be 'cured', or that their neurodivergence makes them less valuable to society, in the church, or to God.

3.1.3 What might a church look like when it models neurodivergent inclusivity? Work on the spirituality of children with ADHD suggests, for example, that they value a 'richly aesthetic, embodied, and sensual experience of God', responding to the urgent now over against the distant hope, and to a 'more wholistic spirituality embracing the entirety of human experience'.[27] Insights from neurodivergent people can lead to far more embodied forms of worship, benefiting the whole church. The church should listen to a call to adapt more fluently to its context and to be truthful to the whole human experience in the context of a redeemed world.

3.1.4 A particular area for the church to consider is the way it supports neurodivergent ministers and lay employees and creates a context for ministry (of all kinds) that enables flourishing. Classic expectations around patterns of work, communication and organisation may be unhealthy and inappropriate for neurodivergent people, who at the same time have significant gifts to offer among the whole people of God. The gifts of neurodivergent people can challenge the imagination of the Christian community in ways that are transformative and prophetic.[28]

3.2 Towards a neurodivergent-inclusive church

3.2.1 The Methodist Church has already offered some helpful theological reflection on the nature of Christian community, human flourishing and the place of healing within the ministry of the church. The *Theology of Safeguarding* report insists that:

> The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. Its witness is in the sort of community that it is, including the welcome that it offers to others. It is the Methodist Church's intention to value every human being as part of God's creation and to be a place where the transformational love of God is embodied.[29]

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27 Mercer JA, 'Attending to Children, Attending to God: Children with ADHD and Christian Spirituality', *Journal of Childhood and Religion* Volume 2, Issue 7 (November 2011)
28 Fox BM 2019. *Disability and the Way of Jesus: Holistic healing in the gospels and the church* IVP
29 *Theology of Safeguarding*, 2021, 1.1

3.2.2 And that:

> The Church is a community called into being by God to participate in God's mission, witness to divine grace, and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. It is a sign, foretaste and instrument of God's Kingdom, called to love and praise God. The Church's witness to God through Jesus Christ involves it seeking to be a community marked by love and care for one another and for all whom it encounters. Christians believe that God wants human beings to flourish and grow in loving relationship with one another and with God. John's Gospel uses the image of abundant life for this: "I am come that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). The ways in which Christians relate to one another and others are therefore vital for both human flourishing, and the witness of the Church. Church communities are thus called to witness to the God who offers healing, hope and life in all its fullness. In this imperfect human community, the presence of the Holy Spirit makes such witness possible. The Methodist Church seeks to embody its affirmation of the dignity and worth of all people in its structures, processes, and patterns of relating.[30]

3.2.3 These statements reflect the desire of the Methodist Church to create community that is life-giving and inclusive of all people, which clearly includes people with neurodivergent conditions. Further, they indicate that this kind of Christian community flows from the love of God and enables us to participate and embody the Kingdom of God. A church that fully welcomes neurodivergent people is both a sign of God's kingdom and a witness to the world.

3.2.4 Clearly the Church can do more to support those with neurodivergent conditions so that 'the experiences of those who may joyfully embrace the gifts that their condition brings to their lives are heard.'[31] Particular attention needs to be given to three areas of the Church's life: the communal and corporate life of the local church; participation in the governance structures of the Church; and the pastoral care of those with neurodivergent conditions including requests for healing. The JDS committee is supporting work exploring further the experiences of neurodivergent people in church, and the Solidarity Circle for Disability is developing a web page containing advice in relation to neurodiversity, and links to organisations offering information, support and guidance.

30 *Theology of Safeguarding*, 2021, 2.2
31 Notice of Motion 2022/201

3.2.5 The Methodist Church Equality Impact Assessment[32] (EIA) is commended as a valuable tool for identifying and addressing disadvantage that may arise from our ways of working. The EIA sets out the characteristics that have protection under law; it does not explicitly name neurodivergence but can be used to give specific consideration to the impact our ways of working might have on neurodivergent people. As noted above, neurodivergence is not in itself a disability, but some traits of neurodivergent conditions can fall within the legal definition of disability and therefore carry legal protection against discrimination. However, 'the Methodist Church goes beyond legislation and is formed by values and theology'[33] and seeks to respond to the call of God to remove barriers that hinder people with neurodivergent conditions in expressing their vocation and using their gifts in mission and ministry at every level.

3.3 Healing and neurodiversity

3.3.1 The Methodist Church believes healing is a necessary ministry of the Church, a sign of God's Kingdom. For those who are sick, bodily healing is one of the ways in which barriers and burdens can be removed. However, healing can come in other forms, including healing of the contexts, attitudes and assumptions that create barriers and burdens. Any request for prayer for healing needs to be handled with sensitivity and careful discernment, respecting the agency of anyone involved whatever their circumstances. Even more care must be taken if offering to pray with a person who has not themselves explicitly requested prayer, and there must always be the option for that offer to be declined. It is never appropriate to suggest to someone that they *need* to be 'healed' of their neurodivergent identity, or to pray for such 'healing' without their consent. This denies the agency of the person prayed for. The assumption that healing is needed is an example of ableist thinking, and fails to recognise that neurodivergent differences also include strengths that can be greatly valued.

3.3.2 The more controversial circumstance is when a neurodivergent person *requests* prayer for healing from their condition. There are differences of opinion among neurodivergent Christians (including those within the working group) as to whether it is appropriate to offer such prayer in response to a request. Some might hold the opinion that the request stems from internalised ableism, and therefore ought to be sensitively questioned. However this carries a danger of paternalism, and again can become a denial of the agency of the person

32 https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/the-inclusive-methodist-church/resources-events-and-support/resources/equality-impact-assessment/ (Accessed 10/01/25)
33 *Justice, Dignity and Solidarity*, 2021, Appendix 3

seeking prayer. As noted above, the *Theology of Safeguarding* report highlights the complexities of pastoral care, and the need for 'deep listening' to people's experience. The moment of request may not be the time to enter into theological debate, but any response to such a request for prayer is best situated within a willingness to journey with the person, and an attitude of curiosity about how God may be at work in their situation.

3.3.3 A significant majority of those responding to the survey felt that praying for healing of neurodivergent conditions was not appropriate, with some describing it as potentially abusive. Several referred to their neurodivergence as a God-given aspect of their identity. And yet, there are other neurodivergent people who would value prayers for healing from the whole of their condition. As a result, this report will conclude that the Methodist Church should not prohibit prayers for healing from any particular neurodivergent conditions. However, we believe situations where prayer for the healing of the condition as such would be the appropriate response will be rare.

3.3.4 Particularly, given the range of views, it is vitally important that any prayer takes place within the context of curiosity and deep listening described in this report, with attentiveness to the power dynamics at work. Some people may seek healing for the whole condition, while others greatly value the gifts that are integral to their condition. For some, any gifts may feel obscured by the barriers they face. Therefore, prayers might be for relief from aspects or consequences of a condition (eg sleeplessness, anxiety) rather than for the whole condition to be taken away. Drawing on a social or limits model, rather than medical, it may be more appropriate to pray for change in external circumstances and experiences that are presenting challenges. It is also important to be aware that a person's own understanding of themselves and their condition may change over time, and therefore the prayer they request may change. Coming to a deeper understanding of who God has made them to be can in itself be an aspect of healing, and might appropriately be prayed for. Sensitive conversation and discernment will be needed to explore without pressure what it is that is sought, and the person prayed for must have the agency to choose and name the nature of the healing. In this we follow the example of Jesus who asked 'What do you want me to do for you?' (Mark 10:51)

3.3.5 Each person's situation and experience is unique, and all are made in the image of God. The commitment of the Church is to seek to be a flourishing, inclusive community in which all are truly valued as whole people. Through deep listening and prayer there is potential for God to transform not just the life of the person prayed for, but also those praying, the wider Church, and ultimately the world.

4. Conclusions

4.1 A response to the question of healing ministry and neurodiversity needs to situate itself in God's overall purpose for the salvation and healing of humanity and, indeed, of all creation. As the report has identified, neurodivergent people face a variety of challenges and understand these in a variety of ways. For some the key focus for healing would be towards a society and a church that does not yet understand neurodiversity well or respond inclusively. For others, the key focus would be on particular effects of their neurodivergence or even on their neurodivergent condition itself. This spectrum of understanding was present in the working group (which included a number of neurodivergent people) and we presume will be similarly found in the wider church.

4.2 Pastoral ministry may raise a whole variety of questions, which do not fall into neat categories. As has been outlined above, we have found some of the thinking in the *Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity* and in the *Theology of Safeguarding* helpful here. These matters overlap with each other but are not identical. Of course, those engaged in ministry should be attentive to whether any relevant issues arise and ensure that appropriate procedures are followed (for example, a neurodivergent person seeking healing prayer may be a vulnerable adult).

4.3 In light of this extended reflection on the nature, theology and experience of neurodivergence, this report responds to Notice of Motion 2022/201 by recommending that the Methodist Church does not prohibit prayers for healing from any particular neurodivergent condition. However, this recommendation is preceded by several others which call for unfailing attention to the agency and safety of the person concerned. We reiterate that no-one should be the object of unsolicited prayer for their neurodivergence. Every effort needs to be made to ensure that such prayer takes place in the context of an ongoing pastoral relationship, fully alert to the power dynamics inherent in this. This pastoral awareness may well lead to prayers focusing on changes to the local, national or global church, or to society at large, where neurodivergence needs to be further valued and respected. As stated previously, we believe situations where prayer for the healing of a neurodivergent condition as such would be the appropriate response will be rare.

Where requests are made by neurodivergent individuals, or where prayer has been offered and accepted in that context, we therefore recommend:

4.3.1 That any prayer fully acknowledges and prioritises the agency of the person being prayed with;

4.3.2 That any prayer is in a context where the safety and flourishing of the person being prayed with is appropriately ensured;

4.3.3 That any prayer seeks the radical potential for the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, for society, the church and the world, as well as the individual;

4.3.4 That the Methodist Church does not prohibit prayers for healing from any particular neurodivergent conditions, while constantly drawing attention to the pastoral context established by the foregoing recommendations;

4.3.5 That the Justice Dignity and Solidarity Committee be invited

1. to consider how the Church might express appropriate repentance for the past exclusion of neurodivergent people in the life of the church;
2. to consider how the Church might be more inclusive of neurodivergent people in its communal and corporate life, its governance structures and pastoral care; and
3. to consider ways in which ableism in the Church might be further addressed (see resolution 3 below); and

4.3.6 That further consideration is given to the commissioning of a more wide-ranging report on healing, following the statement on *The Church and the Ministry of Healing* of 1977 (see resolution 4 below).

*****RESOLUTIONS**

16/1. The Conference receives the Report.

16/2. The Conference adopts recommendations 4.3.1 to 4.3.4 as its guidance in response to Notice of Motion 2022/201.

16/3. The Conference directs the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee

1. **to consider how the Church might express appropriate repentance for the past exclusion of neurodivergent people in the life of the church;**
2. **to consider how the Church might be more inclusive of neurodivergent people in its communal and corporate life, its governance structures and pastoral care; and**
3. **to consider ways in which ableism in the Church might be further addressed**

and to report to the Conference of 2027.

16/4. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to consider what further resources relating to the ministry of healing may be needed and to bring proposals to the Conference of 2027.

Appendix 1

Notice of Motion 2022/201: Healing Ministry and Neurodiverse Conditions

Building on the success of the Justice, Dignity, and Solidarity strategies, the God for All initiative, and the Church's significant work on inclusivity, the Conference calls attention to the nature of healing ministry in relation to specific experiences of neurodiverse conditions.

Throughout all Christian denominations there are instances where individuals are offered (or churches are requested by family and friends of the individual) to conduct prayers aimed at curing them of many conditions including Autism or Attention Deficit [Hyperactive] Disorder (ADHD/ADD). It is acknowledged that this practice can be harmful to the individual and does not recognise the reality of the condition they live with. The last significant report on the nature of healing ministry is dated 1977 and the Conference acknowledges that fresh guidance on healing ministry would be welcome.

This request is informed by experiences of neurodiverse conditions, which commonly increase the individual's chances of social and mental ill health, and these can often affect the individuals' opportunities. By contrast, many individuals with neurodiverse conditions have positive skillsets such as creative thinking, problem solving and, mathematical skills. Prayers that a person be "healed" of their neurodiversity denies the value of these gifts and graces.

Therefore, the Conference asks for further work that can explore the nature of healing ministry in the life of the church. Particularly:

1. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee (in consultation with the Justice, Dignity, and Solidarity Committee) to consider new guidance on healing ministry, ensuring that the experiences of those who may joyfully embrace the gifts that their condition brings to their lives are heard.

2. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee (in consultation with the Justice, Dignity, and Solidarity Committee) specifically to consider whether prayers for healing for certain conditions should be prohibited.

3. The Conference calls on the Methodist people to continue to offer prayers for those living with any condition that impacts on their wellbeing, and to be aware that such prayers may be particularly relevant for those living with any diagnosable lifelong neurodivergent characteristic, or those exploring diagnosis, or their families, noting especially that the process of referral, diagnosis and treatment is often measured in years, and requires considerable resilience.

4. Within the continuing JDS work, the Conference asks Church Councils, Circuit Meetings, and District Synods to reflect collectively on a) how they can create supportive and accommodating environments for individuals with neurodiverse conditions and b) how their local situation can be improved with the particular gifts which individuals with neurodiverse conditions bring.

17. Presbyteral Session: Reviewing its nature and purpose

Contact name and details	The Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler Secretary of the Conference soc@methodistchurch.org.uk

The Presbyteral Session Business Committee wishes to ask the Presbyteral Session of the Conference to consider whether to instigate a review of the nature and purpose of the Session.

The last review of the Session took place as part of the Review of the Conference which reported to the 2006 Conference, with further reports coming in 2007 and 2008.

The 2006 report noted that the origins of the Conference lay in a series of meetings which John Wesley held with his Preachers, Helpers and Assistants, as the Methodist movement developed. 'Those who attended were the predecessors of those who became ordained Methodist ministers as the movement developed into a separate Church and later, Churches, after the death of Wesley. Yet as the movement grew into a Church and fragmented into a number of Churches, there were a series of gradual developments at different times in those various traditions in which lay persons came to share in the ultimate oversight of the Church in the Conference. Since Methodist Union in 1932 this trend has continued. In line with the Deed of Union it is the Representative Session of the Conference that has the final authority for establishing the Methodist understanding of faith and interpreting its doctrines, for creating the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church, and for setting the policies and overseeing the mission of the Church.' (para 68)

The Presbyteral Session (then known as the Ministerial Session) has particular responsibilities and powers. Almost all of these have to do with judgements about individual cases of fitness to belong to the presbyteral order of ministry. The Presbyteral Session adopts the final version of the text of obituaries for presbyters. It makes recommendations to the Representative Session concerning the granting of permission for presbyters to become supernumerary. It makes recommendations to the Representative Session concerning the acceptance of candidates for presbyteral ministry and of judging that people are ready to be received, reinstated or transferred into Full Connexion with the Conference and, where appropriate, ordained. The Representative Session cannot accept a candidate or someone for reception into Full Connexion who has not been recommended to it by the Presbyteral Session or the Conference Diaconal Committee as appropriate. The Presbyteral Sesson has exclusive jurisdiction in cases such as the continuance or discontinuance of student presbyters or presbyteral probationers, and the hearing of appeals to the Conference arising out of charges against a presbyter, student presbyter or presbyteral probationer.

The Deed of Union further sets out that the Presbyteral Session shall 'engage in pastoral consideration of the number and state of the Societies and in pastoral conversation on the Work of God and pastoral efficiency.' It may 'discuss any subject in the Agenda of the Representative Session or any other subject within the jurisdiction of the Conference and communicate its views thereon to the Representative session by resolution or otherwise' (DU 23)

The 2006 Review therefore identified the following three main purposes for a Presbyteral Session:

a. To confer about their presbyteral vocation and identity and to support, encourage and 'watch over one another in love' about their presbyteral practice.
b. To confer about the 'work of God' from their presbyteral perspective and to discern whether they have any collective presbyteral mind or particular insight to contribute to the Representative Session in its conferring.
c. To make decisions which have been delegated to it or are in its exclusive jurisdiction.

The Presbyteral Session Business Committee considered the purpose of the Session as it is presently constituted and felt that the time was right to ask the Presbyteral Session whether it wishes to review that, in the light of the reduction in the size of the Conference (and therefore of the Presbyteral Session), the changes in the governance arrangements for the Church and the length of time since it was last reviewed. It particularly noted that, while a number of presbyters attend the Session under their own arrangements, these tend to be drawn from a relatively small pool and that the number is affected by the location of the Conference. Members of the Committee were cognisant of the very small number of memorials and notices of motion that are brought to the Presbyteral Session. The Committee discussed the relationship of the Session to Presbyteral Sessions of the Synod, and how the business of the Synods relates to the business of the Conference.

The Conference is therefore invited to discuss, in its Presbyteral Session, the purpose of the Session. The Committee wishes to explore ensuring that the Session can provide a meaningful gathering for fellowship, renewal, and discussion. This could include considering the schedule so that, for example, 'business items' are confined to the first afternoon session with the remaining time focusing on collegiality and conferring. It might also want to think about the methods that are used for conferring and making its views known to the Representative Session (or the wider Connexion). For whom does the Conference seek to discern God's will and share perceptions?

Along with questions of 'what', 'how' and 'to what end', the Conference might also want to explore 'who confers'. Noting the earlier comments about the small and varying numbers of those attending under at their own expense, would the Conference wish to

encourage more presbyters to attend under their own arrangements? The committee noted that there are (smaller) Conferences and Connexions where all presbyters are (formally or informally) expected to attend the session. Alternatively, given that all presbyters are obliged to attend Synod, should the Conference introduce a formal way of referring to and hearing from the Presbyteral Sessions of the Synods on broader questions?

Should the mind of the Presbyteral Session be to review the Session, a resolution will be brought directing the Secretary to initiate the necessary process.

Contact name and details	Dr Garry Young, Chair of the Stationing Review Group stationingreview@methodistchurch.org.uk

Summary of Content

Main points	The Stationing Review Group (SRG) recommends changes to the processes related to the stationing of ministers in the Methodist Church. These recommendations follow a thorough review of existing processes and extensive consultation, taking account of the changing nature of ministry, the financial and environmental costs of our current way of working, and the need for the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) strategy to be embedded in all our ways of working. The review identified several areas of concern with existing practices and has established principles which should guide all processes regarding the stationing of ministers. The recommendations include changes to the committee structure that surrounds our stationing work and changes to the way in which presbyters and circuit appointments are matched.
Background context and relevant documents	2021 Conference Report 26, *Changing Patterns of Ministry* 1997 Conference Report 52, *Stationing Committee: Report of the Stationing Review Group*

At the April 2024 meeting of the Methodist Council, the Assistant Secretary of the Conference presented the Stationing Review Group Report [MC/24/42], alongside Dr Garry Young, chair of the review group. The Council felt that the work would benefit from being delayed so that wider consultation could be undertaken. It directed the Stationing Review Group (SRG) to undertake further consultations concerning the draft proposals and to bring recommendations to the Conference in 2025. In the light of this consultation the SRG brings the following resolutions:

*****RESOLUTIONS**

18/1. The Conference receives the Report.

18/2. The Conference adopts the recommendations on reinvitation processes contained in paragraphs 18.4.3, 18.4.5 and 18.5 of this Report.

18/3. The Conference adopts the recommendations in paragraph 19.2.

18/4. The Conference adopts the recommendations in paragraph 20.1 and directs the Stationing Committee to design circuit and presbyteral profile forms as described in that section.

18/5. The Conference directs that, with effect from 1 September 2025, the length of appointments be determined according to the approach outlined in paragraph 21.6.

18/6. The Conference adopts the recommendations in paragraph 22.2 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to prepare draft Standing Orders for the Stationing Strategy Committee.

18/7. The Conference adopts the recommendations at paragraph 23.7 of the Report.

18/8. The Conference adopts the recommendations in paragraph 25.1.

18/9. The Conference adopts the recommendations in paragraphs 26.1 to 26.4.

18/10. The Conference adopts the recommendation in paragraph 26.5.

18/11. The Conference directs the Law and Polity Committee to bring any necessary Standing Order revisions to the Conference of 2026, to enable the resolutions above to be enacted.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Ministries Committee at its meeting in February 2022 resolved that a thorough review of stationing processes be undertaken due to the number of concerns raised by the Ministries Committee, Stationing Committee, Stationing Matching Group, Chairs' Meeting, Connexional Leaders' Forum and gatherings of superintendent ministers in Districts and connexionally. The Methodist Council and the Conference concurred with this view.

1.2 This review has involved consultation with the Stationing Committee, Stationing Matching Group, circuit stewards, Chairs of District, the Warden of the Diaconal Order, lay stationing representatives, presbyters, deacons, and family members of those in ministry, as well as the Methodist Church in Ireland and ecumenical partners able to offer insights from different models of stationing practice. The terms of reference and membership of the review group were presented to the Methodist Council at its April 2022 meeting and can be found in Appendix 1.

2. Summary

2.1 The Stationing Review Group (SRG) recommends changes to the processes related to the stationing of ministers in the Methodist Church. These recommendations follow a thorough review of existing processes and extensive consultation, taking account of the changing nature of ministry, the financial and environmental costs of our current way of working, and the need for the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) strategy to be embedded in all our ways of working. The review identified several areas of concern with existing practices and has established principles which should guide all processes regarding the stationing of ministers. The recommendations include changes to the committee structure that surrounds our stationing work and extensive changes to the way in which presbyters and circuit appointments are matched.

2.2 In broad terms, the SRG recommends that presbyters are matched after expressing interest in available appointments that are first scrutinised connexionally. Deacons will continue to be directly stationed. Other recommendations relate to reinvitations and the work of Circuits. The aim of these recommendations is for our stationing methods to encourage both the flourishing of the work of God in circuits and the well-being of ministers and their families.

2.3 The recommendations take account of extensive consultation carried out throughout the review. This consultation has at various times included discussions with the Ministries Committee, the Stationing Committee, lay stationing representatives, the Methodist Council, District Chairs, and the Methodist Conference (in its Presbyteral Session). In 2023, the Stationing Review Group conducted a wide-ranging survey that gathered over 500 responses from members and ministers of the Church; its findings led to an initial report[1] which was presented to the Methodist Council in April 2024. The Methodist Council indicated that, whilst it was generally positive about the direction of travel of the recommendations in that report, further consultation should take place and that a final report be brought to the Methodist Conference in 2025.

2.4 The SRG invited comments on its preliminary recommendations by circulating a *Stationing Review Discussion Paper* in November 2024 to ministers, family members, circuit stewards, Chairs of District, lay stationing representatives, and others with responsibilities in the stationing process. Alongside the discussion paper, the SRG also sent a link to another survey. This second survey focused on

1 https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/counc_MC24-42_Stationing_Review_Group_JB_JRH_April_2024.pdf

specific sections of the initial report, which had been identified as needing more development. Over two hundred responses were received on this survey. Other feedback on the preliminary recommendations was collected in two meetings with District Chairs and a joint meeting with lay stationing representatives and members of the Stationing Committee. Detailed comments were also received from others in written submissions. While some of the SRG's recommendations have already come into effect through the Stationing Committee (e.g. the reduction in the number of stationing matching group meetings), overall the preliminary recommendations have been revised because of this extensive consultation.

2.5 The most significant revision to the initial recommendations is that the Stationing Matching Group (SMG) will continue with its current constitution, rather than becoming a smaller group made up of representatives of each stationing region. This change recognises the key oversight role of District Chairs and removes the need for an extra layer of processing in regional stationing groups. The Stationing Review Group remains of the view, however, that the role of lay stationing representatives within the Stationing Matching Group needs to be clearer and should allow full lay participation in decision making. The SRG continues to believe that decreasing numbers of presbyters and Circuits involved in matching raises serious questions about the costs, financial and environmental, of so many people being involved in the matching process, and therefore recommends that the constitution and ways of working of the SMG be reviewed by the Ministries Committee no later than 2030.

2.6 Members of the SRG believe that the recommended approach to stationing and matching best meets the need of the Methodist Church. Nevertheless, the feedback received has highlighted some challenges with the recommended approach. A Q&A section is included as an appendix which seeks to respond to the most frequently raised points. It is important to stress at the outset that no system of stationing and matching will solve the issue of a lack of available ministers for the number of appointments. With approximately 3000 Methodist churches and approximately 1200 active ministers, ten per cent of whom are in appointments outside the control of the Church, without appointment or with permission to study or serve in other churches and conferences, there is little doubt that our God-given human resource is stretched. If we note the number of ministers who are not well at any one time as well as those serving part time, we can see that the jam is even more thinly spread. Whilst we are a connexional Church, the authority to shape mission and ministry remains a local, circuit decision, which means the levers available to operate a strategic approach to appropriate deployment are limited.

2.7 One inevitable consequence of the shortage of available ministers is that, unless there is significant restructuring and reduction of circuit appointments, some

appointments will not be filled. This is true of the current system where almost 30 per cent of appointments submitted into the system were not able to be filled in the last connexional year. The proposals for enhanced district and connexional scrutiny and careful use of a small number of priority appointments can help with those areas that are geographically and missionally challenged when it comes to attracting ministers. However, most Circuits will need to be realistic that they, at some point, may have to manage with fewer than the desired number of ordained ministers. Early and strategic planning for such circumstances will enable a creative and healthy approach to the development of a range of ministries, lay and ordained, ecumenical and community based.

2.8 Our recommendations are also sensitive to the workload faced by both lay and ordained members of the church. Overall, we believe that our recommendations are for streamlined processes that redirect and reduce the workload of circuit stewards, for example in the establishment of a more streamlined reinvitation process.

3. Deployment of Ministry by Ecumenical Partners and other Methodist Churches

3.1 Models of stationing or deployment of ministers used in other parts of the Methodist family and by our ecumenical partners vary from that of the Methodist Church in Britain with a range from entirely direct stationing, such as the Methodist Church of Zimbabwe, to almost all posts being advertised, as with our siblings in the Church of England. The Methodist Church in Ireland (MCI) has a small group, made up of District Superintendents and lay members, who meet throughout the year to consider which ministers might best match appointments as and when they arise. There is flexibility in terms of timing of moves in the MCI model and the size of the Connexion allows an in-depth knowledge of both Circuits and ministers.

3.2 The United Reformed Church model involves guidance from Moderators and Synods, particularly around the scoping of appointments (how much ordained ministry a particular church might receive); however, posts are usually advertised and the invitation of a particular minister to a local church or group of churches is made by the local congregation(s). A small number of appointments are centrally deployed where a mission priority has been identified. Appointments may not be advertised until the previous minister has left the context; this creates vacancies, which are usually managed locally, often with support through ecumenical relationships.

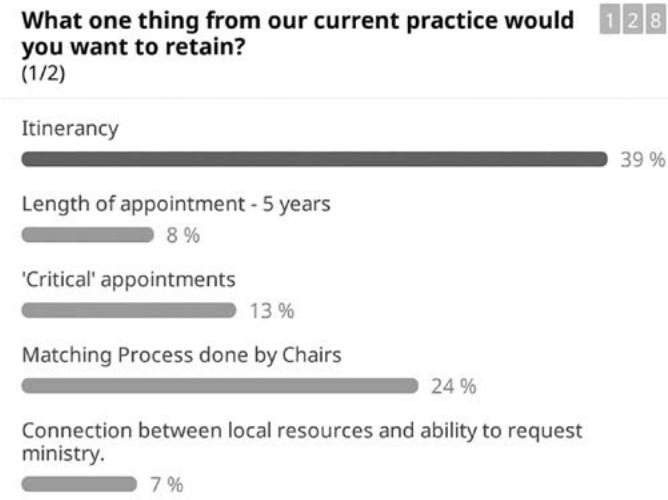
3.3 The Baptist Union model usually involves local churches advertising for ministers/pastors and, whilst churches may choose to appoint ministers recognised by the denomination, each church is a separate entity, free to appoint whomever they choose.

3.4 The responsibility for the stationing of ministers in the United Methodist Church usually rests with the Presiding Bishop of any particular Conference. Some bishops operate an 'Open List' policy where ministers and churches can see what appointments and ministers are available; others operate a 'Closed List', where such information is limited.

3.5 The closer a system is to 'direct stationing', the more likely it is that all moves take place at once and, in such cases, there is less 'agency' for ministers and those in local contexts as to the outcome of the process. 'Planned vacancies'[2] tend not to feature in these models, though, in situations of a scarcity of ministers, inevitably vacancies have to be managed. It seems this is often by sharing the work across those who remain in ministry (lay and ordained) in a given context, which is unsustainable in the long term.

4. The Presbyteral Session of the Conference and the 2023 Stationing Review Survey

4.1 Those present at the Presbyteral Session of the Conference 2022 were asked to participate in a number of polls. We include two tables from that event below and have quoted some of the findings in the body of this report.



2 We will avoid the terms '*interregna*' and '*interregnum*' in this report as it does not fit our ecclesiological understanding of the relationship between minister and congregation.

What one thing from the current practice would you want to change? (Showing the most common suggestions, ordered by frequency from a sample of 103 presbyters)

Break link of deployment of ministers with a circuit's ability to pay	14
Length of appointment	9
Remove Critical Appointments	8
Length of process – too long	7
Single move date – introduce flexibility	6
Profiles – not adequate, not honest	5
All appointments open to all in Full Connexion	4
Remove 'secrecy'/lack of transparency	4
Itinerancy	3
Profiles	3
Discrimination in system	2
Honesty in Profiles	2
Chairs' involvement in matching	2
Move to prioritising presbyters rather than Circuits	2
Matching Visits	2

4.2 The Stationing Survey of 2023, designed by the Stationing Review Group, consisted of 62 questions across a wide spectrum of topics related to the invitation and stationing process of the Methodist Church in Britain. To ensure a range of voices, lay and ordained Methodists in a variety of roles - ministers, circuit stewards, lay stationing representatives, and partners and family of ministers - were polled for their thoughts on the current stationing process and possible changes to this process – from tweaks to radical shifts in thinking.

The Survey received 491 responses, and, in addition to these, thirteen further responses were submitted separately, some from individuals and others from groups who had discussed the matter at the Conference.

5. Issues Identified



5.1 Attitudes to the current stationing process are summarised in the word cloud taken from opinions collected at the 2022 Methodist Conference. Many of the words used to describe participants' experience of stationing can be described as positive (indeed 'positive' is quite prominent), but many words point to negative experiences.

6. Geographical Limitations to Stationing

6.1 One of the factors that affects both diaconal and presbyteral stationing is that of geographical limitation. The survey found that both deacons and presbyters shared similar top reasons for not feeling that they could be fully itinerant. The top three are limitations due to the vocation or career of their partner or spouse (31% of deacons and 30.9% of presbyters said this was 'often' or 'always' a factor); the support of vulnerable family members (39.5% compared to 31.8%); or the educational needs of family members (22.4% compared to 32.1%).

6.2 In addition to these needs, it was also identified that geographical limitations were set by some ministers due to being a part of a ministerial couple (five respondents) or because of needs regarding their own wellbeing, eg the importance of being in close proximity to a friendship support network (16).

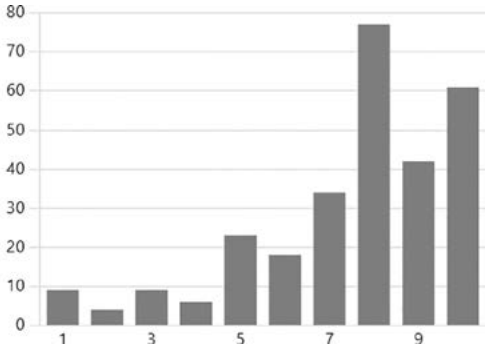
7. Discrimination

7.1 Four of the respondents referred to what they experienced as the bias of circuit officers against having a minister who was a member of the LGBTQIA+ community and two against those living with a disability. One respondent stated that 'Circuits that are disabled friendly are few and far between.' Other ministers expressed that they are afraid to be stationed in some Circuits due to fear of 'bullying by [certain] senior leaders.'

8. Training/Preparation for those involved in stationing processes

8.1 In Question 18 in the survey presbyters were asked: "In your most recent experience of stationing, how sufficiently equipped were you to play your part in the stationing process? On a scale from 1 - 10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest)."

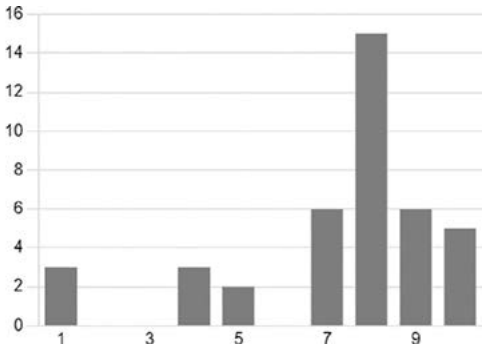
7.54
Average Rating



8.2 Of the 283 respondents (presbyters) to Q18, 230 also responded to the question of what they found helpful or unhelpful. Of those who were critical of the process, twenty participants had issues with church officers not following proper procedure or feeling unsupported in the process. Eighteen of the respondents highlighted a lack of transparency in the stationing process as being unhelpful in their appointment. Nine found it difficult due to feeling a total lack of control in the process. Circuit stewards were asked the same question and gave a 7.68 Average Rating.

8.3 Questions for deacons were designed to reflect the way in which their stationing process works, therefore deacons were asked: "In your most recent experience of stationing, on a scale of 1-10 (where 1 is the least helpful and 10 the most) how helpful was your conversation with the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee?" Forty deacons responded as below, giving a 7.28 average rating. The Warden of the Order will share this with the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee and consider the detailed feedback that was offered in follow up to this question.

7.28
Average Rating



9. Family Members

9.1 Respondents were asked (Q20) "Were members of your household invited to be included in conversations with the Chair and Lay Stationing Representative?" Two hundred and seventy-seven answered:

Yes	182
No	74
I'm not sure	21



9.2 Almost a third felt that there was not enough consideration of their needs during the process, while some of those who felt that their needs were considered, felt this only marginally. One minister commented that 'My husband's experience was not positive. He felt he was just following me round, not really able to ask questions, yet expected to move his life and business and no one was interested

in him only me.' There were some who were invited to be a part of the process, but who chose not to due to them feeling that it was a 'flawed' or 'confusing' process. Three were not invited to be a part of the process at all.

9.3 Six single ministers reported that an invitation was made to them to involve family in the process, while 11 reported that they were not offered a chance to bring someone else along with them, when that would have been helpful to them.

10. Circuit Stewards

10.1 Of the circuit stewards who responded to the question (24) asking what was helpful or unhelpful in equipping them for their role in the stationing process, many felt that the process was excessive, with much to be done by few workers in a short timescale. While those with prior experience had some confidence in what they were doing, others found the training poor. Many felt that longer forms would be required to explain fully their circuit's context and others wanted restructured profiles that would allow easier sifting of presbyters and circuits.

Helpful		**Unhelpful**	
Verbal instruction by church officer (Chair, LSR, etc.).	33	Poor training, excessive process.	15
Prior experience	30	Short timescale.	8
Written instruction (Code of Practice, training, MCB website, profile forms, etc.).	25	Too much work, not enough workers.	4
Competency and help of colleagues.	9	Code of Practice unwieldly.	3

11. Ministers of Other Churches and Conferences (MOCC)

11.1 Circuits have proved reluctant in accepting a minister of another Conference or Church (MOCC) with almost half of Circuits represented in the survey not even considering a MOCC appointment. Justice, Dignity and Solidarity issues are raised here as many unconscious biases and prejudices are reflected in these comments.

Q30 Please describe any barriers you believe prevent your Circuit from making such a request? *(65)*

Survey Comments	
Did not want a MOCC directly stationed. "Fear of the unknown" "Fearful that someone unsuitable would be directly stationed."	*4*
Lack of understanding of the process for MOCC appointments	*4*
We have a large circuit with many churches, it might be too overwhelming for a probationer (or a MOCC).	*4*
Time restraints for filling out paperwork	*4*
Bad previous experience	*2*
It was never given to us as an option	*2*
We don't have the people or the time to mentor a probationer or a MOCC	*2*
They cost more.	*1*
The assumption that MOCCs would prefer "an urban/more diverse" environment	*1*
Lack of probationers available.	*1*
Potential language barrier (English), perception of the community.	*1*

12. Profiles

12.1 Over a quarter of circuit stewards did not feel that they had enough information from ministers' profiles to be able to make a decision.



Of those who answered No, 25% felt that more specific questions were needed, eg preferred style of worship, views on same-sex marriage, particular personal strengths or hobbies and that moving geographical preference to the top of the form would save a lot of reading.

12.2 Ministers were not asked about circuit profiles, but during the SRG has identified issues with Circuits not being clear about their contexts and circumstances, for example, their financial stability and churches' theologies or particular styles of ministry (especially in terms of views on theology of human sexuality). A stark example of this can be seen in this comment: '*We have twice been matched with appointments which were Inclusive. 1) where we were informed of the match, then on the same day, told we could not visit as the Superintendent would not meet us because we were Gay. 2) we were matched, told the circuit were inclusive - moved - to find they were not at all and I was not allowed to preach, I was not included in meetings and no one in a LPs' meeting would shake my hand in the Peace.*'

12.3 The concerns here are around issues of Justice, Dignity and Solidarity, that, without clear circuit profiles, ministers could be sent to a circuit where contradictory convictions are not being appropriately managed and that this could impact their wellbeing and capacity to minister in that context.

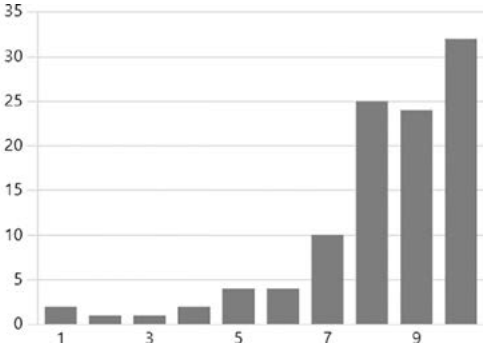
12.4 81% of circuit stewards who did not find profiles helpful wanted more space on the forms to describe their Circuit: Overall, 37% of circuit stewards who responded wanted more space to describe their Circuit.

12.5 Circuit stewards provided feedback on how circuit profile forms could be improved; their suggestions included having longer forms, perhaps something similar to the URC, eg, with the insertion of photos or video links. Another frequent suggestion was that the forms could be restructured, eg manse descriptions could be a separate document and geographical preference should be moved closer to the top of the form.

13. Circuit Visits

13.1 Circuit visits are generally thought of as helpful in discerning a match to an appointment.

8.24
Average Rating



However, there were suggestions that the visits were not always long enough and were planned at too short notice for lay volunteers. Furthermore, the SRG is aware that ministers do not all receive information in the same way. For some, a short visit, packed with meeting many people, might be the right way to discern God's will for the match. For others, a longer visit, with time for reflection and prayer (and rest) built into the programme, would be the best way of discerning the match.

14. Transparency and Discrimination

14.1 A perceived lack of transparency in the stationing process is raised by a broad spectrum of respondents in the Survey. We can see this specifically from circuit stewards (Q19), family members of ministers (Q38), and ministers in the reinvitation process (Q43, Q46) who all desired more transparency in the process. We can see this summed up by a comment from a presbyter: *'Remove the responsibility for reinvitation process from circuit stewards. Move to a trained group of district people who lead in partnership with circuit stewards. I don't like saying this as I think it sits with circuit stewards but again, again and again this is where I hear the most pain and no amount of training changes this. After four years in a difficult but life-giving appointment my four years of hard work were reduced to seven bullet points and 57 words by a senior circuit steward who was adamant they'd done everything by the book. They then gave me four pages of unedited ecumenical feedback to placate me.'*[3]

14.2 Another quote: *'Honesty to the process as background discussions among chairs and matching groups are shrouded in secrecy and impacts greatly to the results.'*[4]

14.3 There is a feeling amongst some within the Church that current *"Unconscious Bias training is insufficient to address discrimination."*[5]

15. Issues Identified from Other Sources

Stationing Matching Group 2023/24

15.1 The work of stationing was profoundly challenging for members of the Stationing Matching Group in 2023/24. At the beginning of the process in November 2023, it became clear that SMG faced two major challenges: firstly, the common

3 From the Presbyteral Session of the 2022 Conference.
4 From the Presbyteral Session of the 2022 Conference.
5 From the Presbyteral Session of the 2022 Conference.

occurrence that there was a disparity between the number of available presbyters and the number of circuit appointments submitted for stationing and, secondly, that there were not enough ministers with sufficient experience or resilience to fill complex superintendent appointments and appointments designated 'critical'.

15.2 These two challenges made the stationing matching process very difficult, and the Stationing Matching Group often found itself on the horns of a dilemma, as it sought to be faithful to the needs of the Church and at the same time, give sufficient regard to the proper flourishing of presbyters through careful matching. When the Stationing Matching Group met for SMG 3 in early January, there remained a total of forty-four unmatched appointments, five of which were designated as 'critical', with a total of just nine presbyters available to be stationed.

15.3 The challenges to the process were compounded yet further by the sober reality that there were a diminishing number of presbyters who were able to be fully itinerant because of personal circumstances, needs of partners and spouses, dependents, and social networks of support. The Stationing Matching Group sought to exercise care and consideration in the face of these personal concerns, but in the process, it made it difficult to fill appointments in disparate places and geographical extremities. Consequently, it is difficult to sustain the view that the present Stationing Matching process is fully meeting the needs of the Church.

15.4 The category of 'Critical' appointments was removed prior to the SMG meetings of 2024/25 which created greater flexibility for those involved in matching and reduced a log-jam which had occurred the previous year.

15.5 In 2023/24 the number of diaconal appointments was close to the number of deacons available in stationing, which is helpful to an extent but does not allow much flexibility in terms of making the best matches. In Diaconal matching 2024/25 there were more appointments than available deacons, which created helpful flexibility in terms of achieving good matches. It did however mean that some circuits were disappointed not to have had a deacon matched.

Wellbeing, Housing and Itinerancy

15.6 In March 2024, the Wellbeing staff in the Connexional Team were handling 77 active cases, ranging from quickly dealt with enquiries to ten ministers being on Recuperative Years. There is a concern that this may be the tip of the iceberg in terms of a full understanding of the health of many deacons and presbyters. We do not hold central records of every time a minister is off work, nor do we have central records on how many are in counselling or are continuing to work whilst being unwell. The work of the Wellbeing Team is highly regarded across

the Connexion and it may be that this has led to some cases which would have been handled locally being referred for expert help. The SRG is concerned that the wellbeing of many in ministry seems to be suffering.

15.7 Recent years have seen an increase in the number of ministers requesting part-time appointments, sometimes for their own wellbeing and sometimes to care for others. This has happened at the same time as an increase in the number of ministers offering significantly limited deployability due, in many cases, to caring for family members or for a need to be near particular friendship or cultural groups for their own support.

Time off

15.8 The SRG is interested in the possibility that, were it clear to both ministers and Circuits that arrangements for rest days are a *minimum* of 24 hours (as is clear in CPD), rather than 'one day off a week', fewer people would be looking for part-time appointments. Would ministers be willing to be stationed across larger geographies if they felt confident to ask for two days off a week, in order to visit friends and family further from the appointment? Would ministers enjoy better health if Circuit Leadership Teams were to advocate strongly for appropriate balance and time off? Would a clearly mandated 'two days off a week' move away from local interpretation and enable ministers to offer for full-time roles across a wider geography than seems to be the current trend? Survey results suggest a majority of people favour either a mandated two days a week off, or an emphasis on the flexibility that already allows for this to happen, as set out in Book VII part 3 of *CPD*.

Itinerancy

15.9 Until very recently the number of ministers requesting permission to live in their own home has been very small and permission has rarely been granted. The requirement to live in a manse is not just a matter of the tax status of ministers but is an embodiment of the principle of itinerancy that remains at the heart of our stationing system. In 2023/24 the Manses Sub-Committee of the Ministries Committee received twenty-six requests for ministers to live in their own home. Twenty permissions were granted, which is unprecedented. In most years the number of permissions granted is two or three.

15.10 In addition to these factors, increasing numbers of ministers are approaching the Stationing Advisory Committee to be without appointment, or to be in an appointment outside the control of the Church. Requests for permission to study or to reside abroad have not increased significantly.

15.11 As of April 2024, approximately 34 ministers had permission to be without appointment and 85 to be in an appointment outside the control of the Church.

Seven ministers had permission to serve another church or conference, and 28 (some of whom are supernumeraries) had permission to reside abroad. Whilst recognizing that many of those appointments (eg various chaplaincies, community projects and ecumenical appointments) are expressions of the mission and ministry of the Methodist church, in the light of the pressures on the stations, this is difficult to justify strategically.

15.12 A number of respondents to the surveys and consultations of the SRG raised the possibility of revisiting the Church's understanding of itinerancy. The 2021 Conference Report, '*Changing Patterns of Ministry*',[6] set out principles regarding itinerancy which were adopted by the Conference, and the SRG does not believe it necessary to revisit that work at this time.

16. Theological Reflection and Previous Reports

16.1 The Stationing Review and the Conference Report from 1997[7] set out the recommendations to the Church. In the opening paragraph of that report, the terms of reference are spelt out thus:

'Its terms of reference were to seek a system that is 'faithful to our traditions, serves the mission of the Church, is sensitive to the needs and aspirations of ministers and circuits, is easy to understand and operate, is economical in time and money and above all is felt to be sensible and fair.'[8]

16.2 In seeking to be '*faithful to our traditions*' particular attention is given to the 'connexional principle' as a significant part of our tradition and a fundamental descriptor of our theological identity as Methodists. At best our stationing procedures reflect the concept of ministers being in Full Connexion, and entering a covenant relationship with the Conference which creates a relationship of mutual interdependence. This covenant relationship brings mutual obligations, responsibilities, gifts, and commitments.

16.3 Part of a minister's obligation is to be available to be stationed by the Conference so that the mission and ministry needs of the Church can be met. Part of the Church's obligation is to provide a manse and a stipend for the minister to engage in ministry in a particular context.

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6 Conference 2021 Agenda Volume 2 *Changing Patterns of Ministry*.
7 *Report of the Stationing Review Group*, 1997, 585.
8 *Report of the Stationing Review Group*, 1997, 585

16.4 One of the perceived benefits of connexionalism, as a way of understanding how to be a Church, is the principle of itinerancy:

'The Church has a body of authorized and trained ministers whom, in theory, it can place in appropriate appointments, where their gifts can be used to advance the Church's work and mission.'[9]

16.5 The connexional principle is fully set out in the Conference statement of ecclesiology, *Called to Love and Praise* (1999).

'The connexional principle, as we have seen, has been intrinsic to Methodism since its origins. Although this principle has not always come to expression in a complete or balanced way in Methodist structures and practice, it enshrines a vital truth about the nature of the Church. It witnesses to a mutuality and interdependence which derive from the participation of all Christians through Christ in the very life of God himself. Whether the word 'connexion' is retained or not, the principle is fundamental.'[10]

16.6 In 2017, the Conference received a report from the Faith and Order Committee, entitled *The Gift of Connexionalism in the 21st Century* in which there is a reaffirmation of the gift of connexionalism, whilst recognising some of the evident pressures upon the principle. The report highlights that one of those pressures is the upholding of the discipline of stationing and the commitment to ministerial itinerancy. Despite these challenges, there is a bold assertion of the continuing vitality and significance of understanding ourselves in this way:

'For Methodists connexionalism is not an abstract principle or a piece of historical baggage, but a way of being Christian. The overall conclusions of the working party's investigation were that connexionalism is still fundamental to how Methodists understand the Church.'[11]

16.7 Finally, it is useful to consult the 2021 Conference Report, *Changing Patterns of Ministry*, which includes a section on stationing and itinerancy. There is a sober recognition in this report about the pressures upon the practice of itinerancy and the extent to which this is truly lived out by ministers in the Methodist Church:

'The 2018 Conference noted "the potential dissonance between the Methodist Church's understanding of itinerancy and experiences of the stationing processes.

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9 *Report of the Stationing Review Group*, 1997, 587.
10 *Called to Love and Praise*, 1999, para. 4.6.1.
11 Conference Report No. 37, *The Gift of Connexionalism in the 21sr Century*, 2017, para. 4.

In practice many ministers are not available to be stationed anywhere within the Connexion and this has prompted questions about the role and place of itinerancy in the Methodist Church today.'"[12]

16.8 The *Changing Patterns of Ministry* report sets out the challenges to itinerancy that the Church and its ministers are experiencing.[13] The present working group is aware of these factors, which have figured in our conversations thus far as can be seen in the section on 'Wellbeing, Housing and Itinerancy' above. Whilst recognising these challenges, *Changing Patterns of Ministry* continues to affirm the place and significance of itinerancy as part of the Methodist Church's understanding of ordained ministry and *'a pragmatic response to God's call to the Methodist Church for the sake of the world.'*[14] Itinerancy *'signifies that Methodist ministers are connexional people who are available to the Conference for deployment for mission according to the needs and priorities of the Methodist Church.'*

16.9 However, alongside this definition, *Changing Patterns* recognises that ministers' ability to be fully itinerant will be seasonal in nature: there will be times – due to personal circumstances, family pressures, geographical restrictions according to family need – that will mean a minister is less able to be freely available to be deployed across the Connexion.

16.10 Whilst not a comprehensive theology of stationing, this brief review does signify the significant work of Conference Reports that provide the theological context in which the SRG has considered the process of stationing and perhaps some of the points that need to be considered if we are to be 'faithful to our traditions' (in the words of the 1997 report). Key points seem to be the *connexional principle* and the mutually interdependent nature in which we engage in the life of the divine and relate to one another in the body of Christ and that *itinerancy* is an outworking and embodiment of this relational way of being Christian disciples together. These relationships enable the whole Body of Christ to participate in the mission of God and for the Church to engage with the needs of the world as servants of Christ.

17. Principles Underpinning the Invitation and Stationing Processes

The quality of our Christian relating and relationships is key to the Church's ability to deploy ministry in a way that allows everyone to flourish. Drawing on the theological reflection above, as well as the Church's commitment to Justice,

12 Conference Report No. 26, *Changing Patterns of Ministry*, 2021, 310.
13 *Changing Patterns of Ministry*, 2021, 311-312.
14 *Changing Patterns of Ministry*, 2021, 313.

Dignity and Solidarity, the SRG worked together to identify a number of principles which it believes are 'faithful to our traditions' and should apply whatever models of stationing we might adopt.

I. **Integrity, grace, care and prayer**
As a reflection of our gospel calling and the nature of Christian identity, our processes should be marked by integrity and grace, underpinned by prayer and a deep care for the people involved. Discernment should be careful in every sense of the word.

II. **Transparency**
Whilst some parts of the stationing and invitation processes require the careful handling of personal information which should remain confidential, the processes themselves should be transparent, enabling the confidence of all who take part. Particular attention should be paid to information disclosed about persons who are not present when information is shared and careful notes should be kept and be available to those persons referred to in conversations.

All processes should be open to independent (as in by someone outside the stationing process) scrutiny, paying particular attention to the Church's Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Strategy.

Language used should be clear and unambiguous. Issues relating to a person's ministry should emerge and be dealt with through one or more of: 1-2-1s with ministers in oversight (superintendents and district Chairs), staff meetings, circuit leadership teams, supervision, ministerial development reviews, etc.. Issues should not emerge as a surprise during the reinvitation process or by the sharing of information in the context of stationing matching.

III. **Safe and non-discriminatory processes and outcomes**
Training regarding unconscious bias and discrimination should continue to be mandatory for all involved in reinvitation and stationing processes. Any actions, decisions or statements that might be considered prejudicial against a particular individual should be reported and responded to, appropriate action taken and support offered to those harmed.[15] Likewise any matters that affect the safety of a child or vulnerable adult should be referred to the appropriate Safeguarding Officer.

15 Currently a process for dealing with such matters is set out in the Stationing Protocols and it is anticipated that this would be taken forward into a new process for stationing matching.

Processes should be based on best practice in discernment.

There should be open and equal access to all opportunities, for example, ministers of other conferences and churches accepted for transfer or to be Recognised and Regarded should be able to offer for appointments in the same way and at the same time as those in Full Connexion.

IV. **Agency for those participating**
Processes should enable presbyters (and deacons in terms of reinvitation consultations) to be fully engaged at every stage. In the case of the stationing of presbyters, the ability to offer to be matched to particular posts increases their agency and removes the sense of 'being done unto'.

Circuit stewards and invitation committees should have genuine agency in new processes, as currently the work of selecting a shortlist of 'preferences' offers a false sense of agency that bears little relation to the outcomes of stationing matching.

V. **Full lay participation**
There should be full and equal participation of lay people in the stationing matching process. Lay Stationing Representatives should have equal representation, freedom to speak and the right to vote, as that of Chairs of District on the Connexional Stationing Strategy Committee (SSC – see below) and likewise in Regional Stationing Groups (RSGs).

VI. **Appropriate subsidiarity**
Decision making needs to take place as close to the Circuit context as possible whilst not losing the connexional principle.

VII. **Ministry where it is 'Needed Most' – breaking the automatic link between a Circuit's ability to fund a post and a minister being stationed**

This particular principle was raised in a number of responses from the Survey. Both the Ministries Committee and the Mission Committee are also asking the question as to how resources might be shared in a way that reflects our connexional principle and enables ministry to be offered in places of greatest need.

'I'd want to see the stationing process encompass a much greater focus on need not ability to [pay a] stipend.' (Survey Q.39)"

'I think there is a deep need to review the link between allocation of ministry and local financial resources, so that ministers are stationed where there is greatest need, rather than necessarily most money.'[16]

The Conference of 2024 directed that an 'Economic Justice Task Group' be established to consider how funds might be released for mission and ministry in ways that reflect the Church's commitment to justice. That work is being overseen by the Ministries Committee and it is expected to report to the Conference of 2026.

18. Discernment

18.1 Where an Extension is Being Considered

The 2023 and 2024 Stationing Review Surveys demonstrated that the reinvitation process is almost universally disliked. Circuit stewards find it cumbersome and awkward and ministers find it a time of great stress and vulnerability. The SRG is clear that discernment about a person's ministry and the needs of a circuit should be an ongoing process and that supervision, 1-2-1s with ministers in oversight, circuit leadership meetings and Ministerial Development Review are the most appropriate places to raise matters pertaining to the length of time a minister might serve in an appointment. Whilst a process of consultation regarding reinvitation can be helpful, there was a general feeling that this should be streamlined and should never be the place for concerns and criticisms of an individual to be raised for the first time. Any concerns, issues or complaints regarding a minister should not come as a surprise to the minister or the circuit stewards. To that end, the SRG suggests a **staged vocational conversation** (explored further below) which would take place at the end of a minister's first year, in the middle year and in the penultimate year of an appointment, which would then connect with the reinvitation process. This leads to the question: How would staged vocational conversations fit in alongside MDR and Supervision?

18.2 Supervision

In 2015 the Methodist Church in Britain introduced a system of structured reflective supervision for all our clergy and selected lay people, the hope being to provide a regular space of supportive accountability for our ministers that would:

- support ministers in their vocation and practice of ministry,

16 From the Presbyteral Session of the 2022 Conference.

- safeguard the interest of those amongst whom ministry is exercised, including children and vulnerable adults and
- ensure that ministry offered in the name of the church is collegially and accountably reflected upon in the light of God's mission and the purposes of the Methodist Church.[17]

The research conducted, which was reported to the 2021 Conference, indicated that the result of such an investment includes the following:

- Increased clergy wellbeing
- Reduced clergy anxiety
- Increased trust within the life of the church
- Strengthened boundaries and role clarity for ministers and those in oversight
- Increased clergy capability around dealing with conflict, change and other complex dynamics
- Emboldened clergy ready to take appropriate risks in mission
- Clergy who are encouraged to intervene at an early stage around challenging practices that cause harm.

Supervision, as outlined in the Supervision Policy of the Church (2021-26), offers an ongoing, dedicated space for a minister to reflect on experiences in their ministry and to formulate responses to them. The intention of such regular and focused reflection is to support a change of culture in the life of the Church – from one in which practice is often isolated and vulnerable to one of accountability, support and increased safety.

18.3 Ministerial Development Review (MDR)

MDR focuses more closely on specific aspects of ministry in context. It considers areas of ministry where a closer look can be taken at a particular element of the work. Ministers can often be embedded in a context for several years, and MDR offers the opportunity to look at aspects of the work over a period of time – with a different focus at each review. The elements of ministry that are selected for review should be carefully drawn from themes discussed during supervision (or indeed those noticeably not discussed) and/or expectations outlined in the Ministerial Covenant, the Competencies for Ministry and those arising from the JDS Strategy.

17 *Supervision Policy*, 2017, Policy paragraph 1.3

MDR applies to all ministers (deacons and presbyters) in a circuit appointment or district appointment, and to all District Chairs. It also applies to every minister who has entered into an agreement with a circuit to undertake pastoral responsibility in one or more local church.

A key feature of MDR is the annual review meeting where each minister is supported by a lay contributor and an ordained contributor as they reflect on their ministry. This provides an important opportunity for ministers to share their reflections, insights and hopes with others who have a responsibility for their wellbeing and for their growth in ministry. They will often work with others to obtain feedback from local church members and circuit post holders around aspects of ministry and consider the responses together in the meeting.

Supervision and MDR, then, are interwoven, with subject areas and ideas for development passing between the two. Together they offer a springboard to new thinking and approaches to ministry. They ensure that the needs of the minister and those of the Church are met in a way that offers support and accountability.

Supervision and MDR – example process

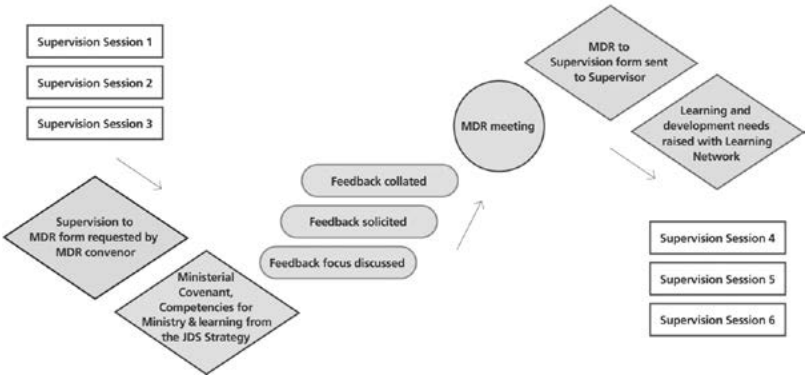


Diagram taken from Ministerial Development Review: A Simple Guide[18]

18 Available at https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/ministerialdevelopmentreview_final_Bc1IxRw.pdf

18.4 Staged Vocational Conversation (VC)

18.4.1 Staged vocational conversations (which might take place within the Ministerial Development Review process or separately from it) between the minister, their minister in oversight and at least one circuit steward are the appropriate way of enabling discernment for both ministers and Circuits. The SRG originally proposed an annual vocational conversation but having heard feedback, suggests that conversations take place at the end of the first year of an invitation, in the middle year and in the penultimate year, linking at this point into the reinvitation process. These conversations would provide an opportunity to share joys, hopes and aspirations. They would also provide space for ministers to offload any anxieties, difficulties and frustrations they are experiencing. Similarly, the minister could be made aware of positive comments and any issues arising about their ministry from around the Circuit. A mutually agreed record of the vocational conversation, confidential to those involved (in addition to the Chair of District, who would be sent a copy), should be retained by the parties to the conversation, for use in future stationing discernment.

18.4.2 Whilst it is recognised that some of these aspects of vocation might be explored by the minister within their Supervision or as suggested above as part of their MDR, the vocational conversation in this context is intended to be an opportunity for mutual exploration of mission and ministry in the local context.

18.4.3 Because decisions on reinvitations are ultimately made by the Circuit Meeting, it is crucial that members of the Circuit Meeting are informed of and trust the process by which discernment would take place through Vocational Conversations. If desired, they could then feed in their views to those involved. The themes of the VCs would be brought to the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) early in the penultimate year of a current period of invitation, for careful consideration alongside the needs of the Circuit and the minister and their family/ friends' situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS
With effect from 1 September 2025, Circuit Leadership Teams should review annually the provision of ministry across the Circuit, linked to the Circuit Mission Plan, and offer space for ministers to reflect on their ministry.

With effect from 1 September 2026, a vocational conversation shall take place between each minister, their minister in oversight and at least one circuit steward, as described in this report. A mutually agreed record of the

conversation, confidential to those involved (in addition to the District Chair and in the case of a deacon, the Warden of the Order, who should be sent a copy), should be retained by the parties to the conversation, for use in future stationing discernment.

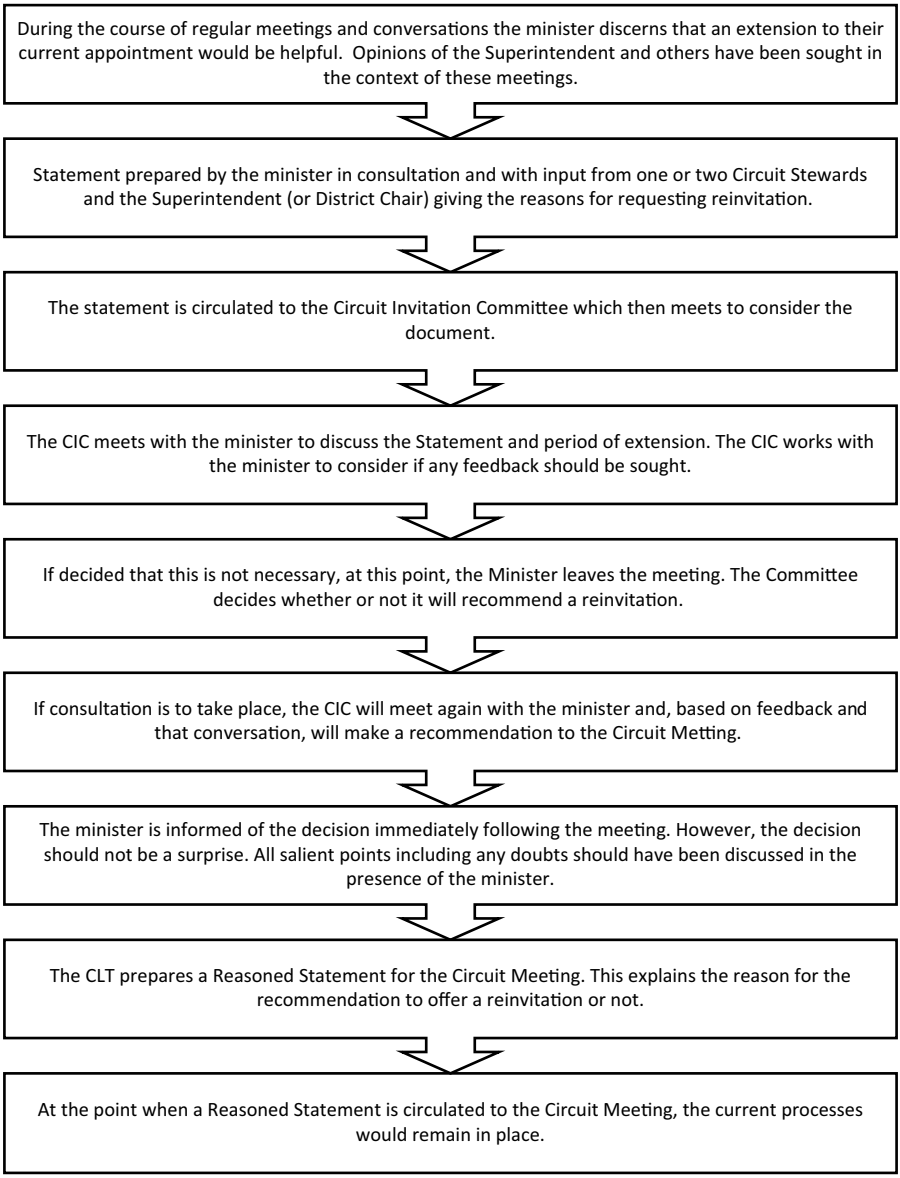
18.4.4 The CLT and/or the minister might wish, when considering a reinvitation, to seek perspectives from others in the Circuit and beyond the life of the Church (eg community groups, ecumenical partners) through a mutually agreed process of consultation.

18.4.5 The SRG recommends that should a consultation take place, feedback given in the reinvitation process should be attributable. Feedback offered anonymously can be greatly damaging to a minister, as they have no way to have a helpful conversation with the person who has raised it, to understand better the effect of their own actions or to explain a misunderstanding. A sign of Christian maturity is to 'own' our point of view, particularly if we offer it to others. If people have significant concerns about the actions or inactions of a minister, they should be raised in a timely fashion, not through a process that may only happen every four or so years. Attributable feedback can be challenged, which enables an iterative process with the potential for transformation and the clearing up of misunderstandings. On a more positive note, to know who has found a minister helpful in their faith journey allows a flourishing and deepening of relationships. Whilst some circuit stewards are very wise in what they share with a minister following a consultation process, some feel duty bound to share everything and such a lack of filtering (enabled through anonymity) can be devastating to an individual's ministry.

RECOMMENDATION
With effect from 1 September 2025, where a consultation takes place regarding an extension to the length of an appointment, all feedback given should be attributable.

18.5 Suggested Simplified Reinvitation Process

The diagram below offers a simplified reinvitation process, which is not reliant on a once in four-year conversation, rather on regular oversight conversations between stewards and minister, and staged vocational conversations. Wider consultation should only be undertaken if both parties agree that it would be helpful. The model and scope of consultation should be mutually agreed.


During the course of regular meetings and conversations the minister discerns that an extension to their current appointment would be helpful. Opinions of the Superintendent and others have been sought in the context of these meetings.
Statement prepared by the minister in consultation and with input from one or two Circuit Stewards and the Superintendent (or District Chair) giving the reasons for requesting reinvitation.
The statement is circulated to the Circuit Invitation Committee which then meets to consider the document.
The CIC meets with the minister to discuss the Statement and period of extension. The CIC works with the minister to consider if any feedback should be sought.
If decided that this is not necessary, at this point, the Minister leaves the meeting. The Committee decides whether or not it will recommend a reinvitation.
If consultation is to take place, the CIC will meet again with the minister and, based on feedback and that conversation, will make a recommendation to the Circuit Metting.
The minister is informed of the decision immediately following the meeting. However, the decision should not be a surprise. All salient points including any doubts should have been discussed in the presence of the minister.
The CLT prepares a Reasoned Statement for the Circuit Meeting. This explains the reason for the recommendation to offer a reinvitation or not.
At the point when a Reasoned Statement is circulated to the Circuit Meeting, the current processes would remain in place.

RECOMMENDATION
The model of discernment and reinvitation described in the flowchart be adopted from the stationing year 2026/27.

19. Where an Appointment is Required

19.1 When a Circuit has decided that an appointment is required it will need to draw up a profile for the appointment setting out the role and the desired length of the appointment, in consultation with the District Chair and Lay Stationing Representative and, in the case of diaconal appointments, with the Warden of the Order. The appointment will need to be agreed by the District Policy Committee (DPC), which will have a view on where ministry is most needed in the District. Once it has been agreed by the DPC, the profile will be submitted to a newly formed Connexional Stationing Strategy Committee (SSC) for matching. DPCs will have the option to delegate this scrutiny to a specific group (eg a 'District Stationing Strategy Group').

19.2 Whilst the term *interregnum* does not fit with our Methodist understanding of the leadership of the Local Church and Circuit, the SRG acknowledges the number of correspondents who have used the term to suggest that a system of planned vacancies will reduce pressure on the stationing matching process. *Interregna* cannot take place in our Methodist polity, because because pastoral charge is exercised by presbyters in the active work who are appointed to a circuit (SO 700(7)). However, the day-to-day pastoral and missional work of a church can be held by a range of lay staff or volunteers, operating under the oversight of an identified presbyter. When an appointment comes to an end, rather than a Circuit automatically re-entering a profile for the same appointment in the same Circuit, discernment needs to take place to decide whether a vacancy should be filled immediately. Circuits should work with their District Policy Committee and representatives to the Regional Stationing Group in working out their own needs and how these fit strategically with ministerial deployment across a group of Circuits, a District or region. Such an approach could ease some of the pressure between the number of appointments and available ministry resources and would encourage Circuits to take the time properly to review ministry needs, to think about future staffing, and to think critically about what kind of ministry is needed. Such vacancies are common features in our sister Churches (the URC and CofE particularly) and the Churches concerned have become accustomed to this feature. At the present time this happens by accident or necessity not by design in our Methodist system of stationing.

RECOMMENDATION
With effect from 1 September 2026, a reasoned statement supporting the submission of a circuit profile into stationing be submitted to the relevant District Policy Committee (or their designated body). Only if the DPC agrees will that appointment enter stationing. A copy of the reasoned statement should be sent to the Stationing Strategy Committee and relevant Regional Stationing Group.

20. Circuit Profile

20.1 It is crucial that profiles accurately describe the appointments. This is both to help the SSC to prioritise appointments and to assist presbyters in making well-informed judgements about where they can best be deployed. The profiles should be accurate in the way that they describe and reflect the churches, the local community, and the vision for the appointment. Profiles should include a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats/challenges identified). Profiles should also include factual information on membership and attendance trends, and describe how the churches in the appointment are living out or working towards the Methodist Church's commitment to being an evangelistic, growing, inclusive and justice-seeking church.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The Conference directs the Stationing Committee to design circuit and presbyteral profile forms as described in paragraph 21.1 of this report.

Circuits are encouraged to use modern technology in describing themselves and their contexts, using links in profiles to videos and within information packs sent to ministers prior to a visit.

21. Length of Appointments

21.1 The SRG recommends that the length of appointments be flexibly determined to reflect the needs of Circuits and presbyters. *Changing Patterns of Ministry* 5.2.5.b identified a need for '…greater flexibility in the length of appointments within the stationing matching process…'[19] including the possibility of ministers indicating that they are willing to offer, for example, three, five or seven years in a particular appointment (instead of the current five) before there is a reinvitation process. This suggestion led to a change in SO 543(1) with the addition of the word "normally" when referencing the five year initial term. The SRG recommends a further development of this approach.

19 *Changing Patterns* 5.2.5b.

21.2 A number of factors inform this perspective. *Changing Patterns of Ministry* describes how church growth theory (which pertains to the study of the nature, function, and wellbeing of the Church, specifically in its efforts to fulfil Christ's commandment to 'go, and make disciples of all the nations' (Matthew 28:19)) suggests that the minimum time for consistent leadership to enable change and lasting growth within a church community is seven years. 'Some researchers in other denominations have proposed that…church growth is likely to happen best somewhere between the fifth and twelfth years of a ministry.'[20] Of course, growth and culture change are not only the work of the ordained in the life of the Church, but there can be significant benefits in a period of sustained and consistent leadership.

21.3 The survey highlighted similar perspectives, with the view that five years is too long if things are not working out but simply too short to embed sufficient culture change where that is needed.

'Five years is too short, less stability for Circuits/only really working on mission for two years (two years getting your feet in, two years working on mission, and one year winding down).'

21.4 The costs of ministers moving between manses has increased dramatically in the last few years, averaging at over £4,000. Ministers often bear personal expenses when moving, beyond the £600 grant available, and there are environmental costs involved in moving house which speak against our commitment to achieve Net Zero by 2030. In addition to this, disruption to family life, partners' careers and the need to support grandchildren or aging parents all speak against too frequent moves in ministry. The first Stationing Review Survey offered a mixed picture of people's perspectives on the length of a 'standard appointment' which suggests that Methodist ministers are still committed to itinerancy, at least in terms of the length of an appointment.

21.5 Longer appointments may lead to an increase in the number of curtailments: however, it can be hoped that greater flexibility in recognising the needs of ministers and families might mitigate against this. The word 'curtailment' retains an element of stigma about it, which is unfortunate, as appointments are curtailed for a number of reasons. Discernment as to whether a minister remains in an appointment until the end of the current invitation should be an ongoing matter as considered in the reinvitation section of this report.

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20 *Changing Patterns*: 5.1.3.

'Flexibility would address a minister's (and their family's) needs (desire to sit down, education) and the finances or needs of the Circuit/the need of other Circuits.'

'Some appointments don't work, flexible approach would eliminate the need for (negatively viewed) curtailment and waiting for re-stationing.'

'Flexibility would allow a minister/circuit to say let's give this a go and see or alternatively it would allow longer appts. - especially helpful where there are children in education etc.'

'With the fragility of Circuit Finances, I think we need more flexibility. Clearly, this has to work for presbyters (and especially those with dependents, eg children at schools), before shorter than 5 years are offered. But, the possibility of a shorter appointment (for a presbyter who is content with this) may help Circuits apply for a presbyter who will, for example, take on a new Missional-based project, and to be bold, and help ensure finance is less of an obstacle.'[21]

21.6 The SRG proposes the following approach:

- That an appointment can be up to seven years in the first instance.
- That a circuit states on its appointment profile the length of the appointment they are looking to be filled and declares that the appointment can be funded for that period.
- That presbyters and deacons indicate the length of appointment they are looking for at that stage in their ministry (e.g. three years until they wish to sit down, seven years to give stability to their children's education, flexible between four and six years, etc.).
- Matches may still be made when there is not a direct correlation between the lengths of time offered.
- In the case of presbyters, the matching visit will include a conversation about the length of appointment prior to an invitation being offered. For presbyters and deacons an agreed length of appointment will be stated in the Letter of Understanding.
- Subsequent appointment periods would normally not exceed a further five years. In any case where a minister would be in an appointment for more than 10 years, the current requirement for a 75% vote in favour at the Circuit Meeting (in cases where a vote is required) should be retained.

21 Quotes taken from the 2023 Survey, Q51.

RECOMMENDATION
With effect from 1 September 2025, the length of appointments be determined according to the approach outlined in paragraph 21.6 of the report.

22. Stationing Strategy Committee (SSC)

22.1 Once appointment profiles have been agreed by DPCs they should be submitted to a newly formed Stationing Strategy Committee. The SSC will replace the Stationing Committee and will have a strategic overview of stationing across the Connexion, with all the necessary data available to it to make informed decisions. It will also take on the responsibilities of the Stationing Advisory Committee (SAC) in setting up panels to consider applications from presbyters and deacons in Full Connexion and probationers for full-time service in chaplaincies and appointments not within the control of the Church, and to make recommendations to the Conference or to the President, ensuring that decisions regarding permissions given to presbyters and deacons will be made with a strategic overview of the stationing needs of the Church.

22.2 Current Standing Orders describe work of the SAC in broad strategic terms. In reality most of the work of the SAC has been in carefully working with ministers to help them discern vocational direction, whilst the Stationing Committee has been the place for the broad strategic thinking. The SRG believe that the new SSC is the appropriate place to hold a strategic overview of all stationing matters and that, through a panel convenor, reporting to the SSC, the essential work currently done by the SAC can be carried out.

Terms of Reference for the Stationing Strategy Committee
(1) There shall be a connexional Stationing Strategy Committee appointed annually by the Conference, which shall consist of: (i) a lay chair, being the person for the time being appointed to that office in accordance with clause (2) below; (ii) a lay deputy chair, being appointed by the Ministries Committee (iii) the Secretary of the Conference, and the Assistant Secretary of the Conference who shall act as convener; (iv) seven district Chairs, appointed with a view to the representation of suitable regional groupings of Districts; one of whom shall be the district Chair appointed under Standing Order 286 to be a member of the Forces Board, and one of whom shall be Chair of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-committee; (v) seven district Lay Stationing Representatives appointed with a view to the representation of suitable regional groupings of Districts;

(vi) the Ministerial Coordinator for the Oversight of Ordained Ministry (MCOOM)
(vii) the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
(viii) a lay member of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-committee;
(ix) the chair of the group responsible on behalf of the Stationing Strategy Committee for overseeing the matching of particular presbyters to appointments (Stationing Matching Group);
(x) The Convenor of panels which offer vocational discernment support for ministers in accordance with clause (8) below.

(2) A lay person shall be appointed by the Conference as chair of the committee. The chair shall be appointed for a period not exceeding three years in the first instance and may be appointed for further periods of one or more years thereafter. Any nomination for appointment beyond six years shall require a resolution of the Ministries Committee carried by a majority of 75% of those present and voting and reported, with a reasoned statement, to the Conference. No person shall hold office as chair for more than nine years consecutively.

(3) The chair of the committee and the Assistant Secretary of the Conference shall attend the committee only in their official character as specially charged with the general interests of the whole Church and shall not be eligible for appointment in any other capacity.

(4) The committee shall, as prescribed in Section 78, recommend to the Conference the stations for the ensuing year of presbyters, deacons and probationers to the several Districts and Circuits, including presbyters and deacons in chaplaincies and appointments not within the control of the Church. Reporting to the Ministries Committee as provided in Standing Order 311 it shall advise on stationing policy, and in particular shall assess priorities for the appointments to be made by the Conference of the next connexional year and, after appropriate consultation, for the appointment of additional presbyters and deacons in the Circuits and Districts. It shall obtain and consider information and opinions offered by district Policy Committees and the Connexional Team. It shall keep under review the stationing code of practice and shall determine the number of stations available to ministers of other Conferences and Churches not already serving the Church.

As to the appointment of additional presbyters and deacons to Circuits, see S.O. 529, 438(1).

(5) Discussion in the committee about particular ministers and appointments shall be absolutely confidential.

(6) The committee shall appoint a Diaconal Stationing Sub-committee to advise the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order upon the recommendations to be made for diaconal stationing under Standing Order 783 and related matters.
(7) The committee shall appoint an Action Group to deal with stationing difficulties and emergencies as they arise.
(8) The Committee shall appoint panels to consider applications from presbyters and deacons in Full Connexion and probationers for full-time service in chaplaincies and appointments not within the control of the Church
(10) The committee shall have power to appoint other sub-committees to carry out aspects of its work. All actions of such sub-committees shall be subject to the approval of the committee.
(11) The committee shall decide which appointments submitted into the stationing matching process, fall into particular categories (for example Priority, Probationer, Diaconal, 'too small').
(12) The committee shall:
  (i) perform the functions prescribed by Standing Order 802 in relation to part-time appointments;
  (ii) perform the functions prescribed by Standing Orders 790(3) and 793(1) in relation to applications to become a supernumerary or to return to the active work;
  (iii) advise the President or the Vice-President on behalf of the President on recommendations which would involve a presbyter's or deacon's moving during the course of the connexional year;
  (iv) perform such other functions as may be required from time to time by Standing Orders

RECOMMENDATIONS
With effect from 1 September 2026, a Stationing Strategy Committee should be established according to the Terms of Reference set out above.

With effect from 1 September 2026, the Stationing Advisory Committee will cease to meet.

With effect from 1 September 2026, the Stationing Committee will cease to meet.

22.3 The SRG proposes that the SSC meet in early October to decide which appointments fall into the following categories:

- Priority appointments based on agreed criteria and expected to be no more than ten per cent of appointments. Criteria as to which appointments are to

be priority appointments will be determined by the Ministries Committee and are likely to include island and other traditionally hard to fill appointments.

- Diaconal appointments (in consultation with the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee): Circuits may submit profiles specifically for diaconal appointments, presbyteral appointments, or open profiles – open to both. Deacons will continue to be directly stationed.
- Standard presbyteral appointments which will be open to those in stationing in a particular year, including Ministers of Other Churches and Conferences.
- Presbyteral probationer appointments (all diaconal appointments can be deemed to be suitable for probationer deacons).
- 'Too small' appointments. These may be sent back for reshaping, recommendations to be part time, included in the next round of matching or rejected. The number of members in a particular appointment will not be the only criterion when considering this category. The Ministries Committee will agree what factors need to be taken into account in this category, in consultation with the Chair of SSC (who will be a member of the Ministries Committee as per SO310).

22.4 Regional Stationing Representatives and the Ministerial Coordinator for the Oversight of Ordained Ministries will engage with District Chairs and/or circuit stewards regarding the appropriateness of appointments identified as probationer appointments. Once agreed, those profiles go forward into Initial Stationing.

Accepted presbyters from other Conferences and Churches will be able to offer for any standard presbyteral appointment in the same ways as any other presbyter in the stationing system from the point of their acceptance by a transfer panel. Such acceptance remains, as is currently the case, dependent on a successful match being made.

23. Presbyteral Expressions of Interest and Profiles

23.1 Once the SSC has categorised them, profiles describing the requirements of circuit presbyteral appointments (of either type – priority or standard) will be published and visible to all presbyters currently in stationing. Priority appointments would be published and visible to all presbyters in Full Connexion.

23.2 This approach encourages presbyters to identify and express interest in the appointments where they believe they are most likely to flourish. They will then be matched to a single appointment by the Stationing Matching Group working in accordance with the principles set out earlier.

23.3 It is anticipated that presbyters would be attracted to priority appointments as places where they could best be used. As well as those in stationing, expressions of interest in ***priority*** appointments would also be welcomed from all presbyters, regardless of whether they would normally be moving in a particular year. If such presbyters were matched in this way then their existing appointment would be eligible to enter the stationing process in a subsequent round.

23.4 Presbyters 'in stationing' would be invited to express interest in up to three appointments where they believe they best match what the circuit is looking for. This information would be used by Circuit Invitation Committees in considering presbyters interested in their appointments.

23.5 The SRG recommends that presbyters offering to be stationed submit three-part profile forms. The first part would consist of an expression of interest for each appointment where they would like to be stationed. Such expressions of interest should state why they are attracted to the appointment and describe how their skills and experience match any specific requirements of the appointment. The second part would be similar to existing presbyteral profiles and list their skills and experience. The third part would be for the use only of those representing the minister in matching. This would contain further information which would be useful to be shared with SSC but does not need to be available to all (eg training and development needs that have been identified, reasonable adjustments that may be required (both in the appointment and in any stationing visit), pertinent family and personal matters and matters pertaining to why a particular geography or context may be helpful, with anything else that the minister believes is relevant to their stationing process).

23.6 The Stationing Review Survey offered a range of perspectives as to the appropriate length of profiles.[22] The SRG recommends that presbyter and presbyteral appointment profiles be in electronic format, each section having a word limit (rather than a two sides of A4 restriction as now) enabling those discerning what are appropriate matches to have more information available to them.

23.7 The idea of 'live' profiles, held in a safe online format and updated regularly by ministers, was discussed by the SRG. The Group is aware that this concept was considered previously by the Ministries Committee and understands that complexity and cost prevented implementation. Whilst the SRG does not, at this time, recommend a centralised approach to the storage and use of profiles, it

22 NB diaconal profile forms differ in length from those of presbyters.

does recommend that each minister review their own profile each year, as part of their Ministerial Development Review, and update it accordingly.

RECOMMENDATIONS
That the Stationing Committee prepare Profile forms for presbyters as described in paragraphs 23.5 to 23.6 of this report.

That Diaconal and Presbyteral Appointment Profiles should be available in a suitable electronic format.

24. Matching Presbyters to Appointments

24.1 Having carried out a review of the ecumenical information, the SRG considered a number of different approaches to stationing. These ranged from direct stationing at one extreme to an entirely free market approach at the other.

24.2 Among the reasons for rejecting the direct stationing approach were, firstly, the survey results. Circuit stewards did not favour direct stationing, 72% against with 38% of those polled arguing that the possibility of either the Circuit or the presbyter to be able to say yes or no based on a variety of factors including visits, is paramount to successful stationing. Secondly, direct stationing contradicts some of the principles we have identified, particularly giving agency to presbyters and Circuits. Thirdly, we doubt that any group could be sufficiently well informed to match successfully so many presbyters and appointments.

24.3 In terms of the Diaconal Order, the expectation is that deacons will continue to be directly stationed by the Conference on the recommendation of the Warden, following discernment by the Diaconal Stationing Sub Committee. This complementary approach regarding stationing processes for both orders of ministry can be seen to honour the distinctive nature of diaconal ministry and the commitment to membership of a religious order which deacons enter when received into full connexion.

24.4 Whilst some may be drawn to the idea of an entirely free market in terms of advertising appointments in the way that many Church of England appointments are dealt with, this speaks against our connexional approach. Indeed, the 1997 Report of a previous Stationing Review Group reported that when a similar free market approach was used 'it has become an undignified stampede, a free-for-all based on competition'.

24.5 The SRG's recommended approach is one where presbyters express interest in appointments that are first scrutinised connexionally, then are matched by a connexional matching group, prior to a visit to a circuit, which continues to be the body that issues the invitation. The recommended approach differs from the current approach to stationing in that it uses information more efficiently and reduces work for circuit stewards in that they do not need to engage with many pages of profiles of those who are unlikely (for various reasons) to be matched with them. Rather than providing indicative lists, presbyters explain why they are well matched to particular appointments, Circuits are then invited to review only the presbyters who have expressed an interest in their appointments.

24.6 Initial Screening by SSC

Once all presbyteral appointments have been published and expressions of interest received from presbyters, the SSC would check that connexional priorities could be achieved. In particular, whether sufficient expressions of interest had been received to fill priority appointments. If this was not the case SSC would liaise with Regional Stationing Groups to see if presbyters who were well matched to hard-to-fill priority appointments could be encouraged to express interest. The SSC should also check that expressions of interest are not weighted in favour of particular regions. If that were the case SSC could recommend that disadvantaged regions are prioritised in the matching process.

24.7 Views of Circuit Invitation Committees Sought

Once this initial screening had taken place, Circuit Invitation Committees would be asked to review the profiles of those presbyters who had expressed interest in their appointments and provide perspectives through Chairs and Lay Stationing Representatives (LSRs) to SSC on their suitability as a key component of the matching process. An important role for the Chairs and LSRs here would be to ensure that choices are non-discriminatory and that personal information is protected. CICs would not see any information about presbyters who had not expressed interest in their appointments. No conversation about a minister should take place without their knowledge and careful notes should be kept of such a conversation.

24.8 Matches are Made

24.8.1 The SMG would match presbyters to appointments by following agreed and transparent protocols.

24.8.2 It is important to be aware that, when presbyters are able to express interest in more than one appointment and several presbyters are interested in the same appointment, the protocols used in the matching process will influence the matches that are made. In particular, the matches made will depend upon the order in which appointments are considered: appointments that are considered early in the matching process are more likely to be matched.

24.8.3 When completing 'Part three' of their profile form, presbyters should state if they are willing to be matched to appointments other than those in which they have expressed interest in a particular matching round. This gives a Chair of District/LSR discretion when making matches, should a minister not be matched with one of their three expressions of interest. Some presbyters may choose to decline this possibility and wait until a subsequent round, when they will be able to express interest in remaining appointments.

24.8.4 What follows is an approach to matching that embeds the principles set out earlier. Appendix 3 contains a stylised example of how the approach would work.

24.8.5 To encourage ministry where it is most needed, Priority appointments would be considered first. Following the initial screening by SSG, some standard appointments could also be prioritised to ensure that regions that had received few expressions of interest are not left with too few presbyters. It is hoped that there are sufficient expressions of interest from presbyters that all Priority and prioritised appointments can be matched. Assuming this is the case, then the recommended protocol is to match the appointment with the lowest number of expressions of interest first. If more than one presbyter has offered for this appointment, then the match would be made with the presbyter preferred by that appointment's CIC but taking into account any particular pastoral needs or limited deployability of those offering for particular appointments. Once the first match is made, the Priority appointment with the next lowest number of expressions of interest would be matched next using the same procedure. This process would continue until all Priority and prioritised appointments are matched.

24.8.6 If some Priority and prioritised appointments remain unmatched at this stage then the SMG could propose that well-matched presbyters are stationed to such appointments even if they have not offered for them. It would clearly not be desirable for Priority and prioritised appointments not to be filled and for well-matched presbyters to be stationed elsewhere without good reason.

24.8.7 Once all Priority and prioritised appointments are matched, the SMG would turn to matching Standard appointments. Given the likely continuing shortfall

of presbyters, some of these appointments will not be matched in this round. These will include appointments that received no interest as well as appointments to which presbyters had expressed interest but who were matched to other appointments earlier in the matching process.

24.8.8 The recommended protocol is the same as for Priority and prioritised appointments - in other words, to start matching from the appointments where only one presbyter has expressed an interest. It is possible that SMG may also wish to prioritise certain types of presbyteral appointments, such as superintendencies, in which case they could be considered first, but otherwise all appointments at this stage should be treated as of equal priority and none more favoured than others.

24.8.9 As stated earlier the SRG is clear that no system of matching will address the shortfall of ministers to appointments. It is hoped that careful prioritisation will enable key appointments to be matched. The possibility of planned vacancies (within our understanding of oversight) and flexibility in the length of appointments would also help in sharing scarcity across the Connexion in a fair and missionally focussed way. It is hoped that opening Priority appointments to all presbyters in Full Connexion will create a fluidity in the system that allows people to respond vocationally.

24.8.10 Nevertheless, it will be important for SMG to check that the matches generated by this approach result in a distribution of unfilled appointments that is equitable across the Connexion. If this is not the case, then it should re-examine the suggested matches.

24.8.11 Unmatched appointments will be re-published once the first round of matching visits has taken place and those presbyters remaining in the system will be able to express interest in those.

24.8.12 Appendix 3 contains a worked example of how the recommended matching process would work. In the case considered, there is a built-in shortage of presbyters and expressions of interest are well spread across appointments. This means that not all appointments can be matched though all presbyters are.

24.8.13 In practice, some presbyters who express interest in only the more popular appointments may find themselves unmatched at first. In that case those presbyters would be invited to express interest in unfilled appointments. This process would continue until all are matched.

24.8.14 There is potentially an issue with this approach for presbyters with geographical limitations. While the SRG's preferred system gives presbyters 'agency' in where they offer to go, and so should be helpful to presbyters with geographical limitations, they could face challenges when too many presbyters offer in the same geographical area and the circuits prefer presbyters who would like to be there rather than those that need to be there. In cases like this it would be important for SMG to consider whether it would be beneficial from a connexional perspective to prioritise presbyters with geographical limitations over those who are fully itinerant. If SMG judged that this was the case then it could intervene in the matching process by prioritising presbyters with geographical limitations over those who might have been preferred by Circuit Invitation Committees. Given the ongoing shortage of ministers throughout the Connexion, it should be quite rare for presbyters not to be able to find an appointment in the vicinity of their preferred geographical area, so this issue should not arise very often.

24.8.15 As in current practice, presbyters and Circuits will be asked to complete feedback forms where a match has not stuck. These are to be sent to the relevant Chair of District, lay stationing representatives, Assistant Secretary of the Conference, Chair of SMG and Chair of the Stationing Strategy Committee.

25. Ministers of Other Churches and Conferences (MOCC)

25.1 The Methodist Church has been greatly enriched and blessed by the ministries of those who have been granted Recognised and Regarded status or transferred into Full Connexion, from other Churches and Conferences. The Stationing Committee, supported by the Ministerial Coordinator for the Oversight of Ordained Ministries, has carefully considered the number of ministers of other conferences and churches that might be stationed each year – currently agreeing a maximum of twelve such appointments in addition to a Global Communities Chaplain. Matters around the costs of visas for those wishing to transfer who do not have the automatic right to work in Britain have been complex, as has the status of the Church as a sponsoring body for such visa holders. A pause on the MOCC transfer process was put in place for the connexional years 2020-2023 to enable time to consider further the complexities and costs of the current system. The Stationing and Ministries Committees, on hearing the significant number of those offering to transfer and recognising both the backlog this created and the severe shortage of ministers available to fill circuit appointments, agreed that MOCC applicants who had the right to work in Britain should be able to apply for transfer and stationing in 2024. The whole process has now reopened (with the cap on the number

of appointments retained) for stationing in 2025. The costs of visas and questions of how many members of a minister's family and what other costs the MCB should pay for remain unresolved. A question remains as to what we can afford as a Church (recognising that other Churches and Conferences will have paid for the training of the applicants and so overall costs may not be preventative).

RECOMMENDATIONS
With effect from 1 September 2026, an annual conversation should take place between representatives of the Resourcing Committee and the Stationing Strategy Committee (SSC) to agree what is affordable for the subsequent year's stationing of MOCCs requiring visa support.

The SSC will establish the number of MOCC appointments to be accepted based on the projected stationing needs for the year concerned and taking affordability into account.

26. Stationing Visits

26.1 Stationing visits take place once the matches have been made. These would generally be expected to 'stick' because both presbyters and CICs had 'agency' in the matching process.

26.2 Nevertheless, in practice there may need to be additional rounds of matching if visits do not result in a match sticking, or other eventualities, such as when the existing appointments of not-in-stationing presbyters matched to priority appointments are entered into the process.

26.3 Guidance for those arranging visits should include awareness that people differ in what works for them; therefore, remembering to ask ministers what will help them to discern and be comfortable whilst on a visit is important. Matters of accessibility, personality preferences (eg for a busy visit with lots of people, or a longer visit with space to reflect), neurodiversity and the possibility of family/ friends being part of the visit, all need to be carefully considered.

26.4 An agreed deadline will apply as to when reports of matches are sent to the Stationing Strategy Committee. The SSC will meet to review what appointments remain unfilled and what ministers remain available. They will agree at which point to publish to those remaining in stationing the posts as yet unfilled. Once a second round of matching and visits has taken place, the SSC will then meet monthly to agree matches of any remaining ministers and appointments (as the Stationing Action Group currently undertakes).

26.5 The SRG recommends that a Stationing Newsletter be circulated connexionally after the first round of matches has been agreed. This should include statistics on the number and type of appointments, the number of presbyters in the process, and the number of appointments remaining unfilled, as well as reflections on the process. This is intended to inform the Connexion of the challenges in stationing and assist with planning for future appointments.

RECOMMENDATION
That from the stationing year 2027/28, the matching of ministers to appointments takes place using the process described in paragraphs 26.1 to 26.4 above.

27. Overall Approach

27.1 The recommended approach in this report aligns with the principles set out earlier. It is fully transparent in that all presbyters in stationing can see the details of any appointment, all in Full Connexion can see the details of Priority appointments and offer for them if they wish, and all will know the process by which decisions are made. The matching process itself is open to external scrutiny and personal information will be circulated only to those who need to see it. Lay participation is fully part of the process. Connexional oversight can help ensure non-discriminatory practices are adhered to. The identification of a limited number of Priority appointments helps ensure that ministry is where it is needed most. Decisions about the timing of particular recommendations coming into effect depend on the amount of work that needs to be done in preparation. For example, District Policy Committees will need guidance in helping them review all appointments and time will be needed to write such guidance and offer training where needed.

27.2 Many of the recommendations in this report do not require Standing Order changes, but a number do. Therefore, the SRG asks the Conference to direct the Law and Polity Committee to bring any necessary Standing Order revisions to the Conference of 2026.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

18/1. The Conference receives the Report.

18/2. The Conference adopts the recommendations on reinvitation processes contained in paragraphs 18.4.3, 18.4.5 and 18.5 of this Report.

18/3. The Conference adopts the recommendations in paragraph 19.2.

18/4. The Conference adopts the recommendations in paragraph 20.1 and directs the Stationing Committee to design circuit and presbyteral profile forms as described in that section.

18/5. The Conference directs that, with effect from 1 September 2025, the length of appointments be determined according to the approach outlined in paragraph 21.6.

18/6. The Conference adopts the recommendations in paragraph 22.2 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to prepare draft Standing Orders for the Stationing Strategy Committee.

18/7. The Conference adopts the recommendations at paragraph 23.7 of the Report.

18/8. The Conference adopts the recommendations in paragraph 25.1.

18/9. The Conference adopts the recommendations in paragraphs 26.1 to 26.4.

18/10. The Conference adopts the recommendation in paragraph 26.5.

18/11. The Conference directs the Law and Polity Committee to bring any necessary Standing Order revisions to the Conference of 2026, to enable the resolutions above to be enacted.

Appendix 1 - Terms of Reference

The Council in April 2022 adopted the following terms of reference for the review:

1. *The Ministries Committee at its meeting in February 2022 resolved that a thorough review of stationing processes be undertaken due to the number of concerns raised by the Ministries Committee, Stationing Committee, Stationing Matching Group, Chairs' Meeting, Connexional Leaders' Forum and gatherings of superintendent ministers in districts and connexionally.*

2. *This review will report to the Methodist Conference in 2023 and will involve consultation with the Stationing Committee, Stationing Matching Group, Circuit Stewards, Chairs of District, The Warden of the Diaconal Order, Lay-Stationing Representatives, ministers with recent experience of being stationed; as well as the Methodist Church in Ireland and ecumenical partners able to offer insights from different models of stationing practice.*

Task

3. *To undertake a root and branch review of all processes related to the stationing of ministers in the Methodist Church.*

4. *To report to the 2023 Conference with recommendations for changes to those processes and the necessary changes to Standing Orders.*

To Take into Account

5. *The review group will address a number of concerns that have arisen in recent years that affect the Church's ability to offer ministry effectively and fairly. These include:*

5.1 *Ministers retiring, resigning, curtailing and transferring to other churches.*

5.2 *A rising number of ministers (both lay and ordained) taking recuperative years.*

5.3 *A reduction in the number of those candidating for ministry; the shortage of ministers available for the number of appointments submitted to stationing; changing roles and responsibilities for those in ministry (lay and ordained). Particular notice to be taken of factors affecting diaconal stationing, which seems less impacted by numbers candidating and at times has seen insufficient appointments available for the number of deacons in stationing.*

5.4 *How our stationing processes can best meet the needs of mission and ministry on the ground, without a skewing of allocated resources to only those places that can afford them.*

6. *The 2021 Conference Report 'Changing Patterns of Ministry' is a key resource for the stationing review process, as the Review Group explores:*

6.1 *The decrease in the commitment to itinerancy amongst those in active work, possibly due to an increase in pressure around the support of family members. An apparent unwillingness of many of those being stationed to take up ministry in rural, island, 'outlying' (e.g. North of Scotland, Cornwall) areas.*

6.2 *The decrease of a physical presence in churches due to the ongoing pandemic and the increase of virtual worship.*

7. *The Review Group will also review the stationing process for Ministers of Other Churches and Conferences (MOCCs) for, while there is an increase in ministers*

wishing to be stationed, this is not matched by enthusiasm of a number of circuits to receive such ministry. This process has been further complicated by immigration policies and our responsibility as a sponsoring body.

7.1 This review will also explore the reluctance of some circuits to receive probationary ministers.

7.2 The review group will explore how the implementation of the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) Strategy; the adoption by the Conference of the Connexional Safeguarding policies and the God In Love Unites Us report impacts on our stationing process.

Outcomes and Ways of Working

8. *The Stationing Review Group will propose revisions to the stationing matching process that take into account the changing nature of ministry, the costs both financial and environmental of our current way of working and the need for the JDS strategy to be embedded in all our ways of working.*

8.1 The group will consider the length of a standard appointment and offer recommendations for changes as appropriate.

9. The Review Group is encouraged to consult widely, as described in paragraph 2 above; to be willing to think creatively and to co-opt or consult with those persons most able to assist it in its work.

Membership of the Stationing Review Group

Chair of the Review Group: (The Revd David Emison until 2023)	Dr Garry Young
Convener:	The Revd Michaela Youngson (ASC)
Head of Ministries and Learning:	Mr Richard Armiger
Warden of the Diaconal Order:	Deacon Karen McBride
A current or former Circuit Steward:	Mrs Ann Lyons
Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee: The Revd Delyth Liddell (until Aug 2024)	The Revd Naomi Kaiga (from Sept 2024)
Chair of District: The Revd Dr Julian Pursehouse	The Revd Dr David Hinchliffe (from Sept 2024) (until Aug 2024)
Former or current District Lay Stationing Rep:	Dr Garry Young
Minister with experience of being stationed:	The Revd Manoa Ratubalavu

Appendix 2 - Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

The SRG has analysed the feedback that was collected on its preliminary recommendations. In this section we respond to many of the challenges that have been identified, including how we have revised our recommendations in the light of this feedback.

Q1: In what ways is the recommended system of stationing and matching better than the current approach?

A1: The Stationing Review Group fully recognises that no system of matching ministers with appointments can change the fundamental arithmetic that at present there are more appointments to be filled than presbyters or deacons to fill them. The proposals contained in this report cannot change that. So how do the recommendations seek to improve on the present system of stationing matching for presbyters?

- Increased agency to presbyters. Presbyters are able to identify and apply for appointments which seem to resonate with their gifts and skills.
- Priority appointments will be open to all presbyters to apply for, whether they are presently in stationing or not – increasing the potential pool of ministers able to apply for a priority appointment.
- Reduced frustration for circuit stewards. Circuit stewards have often fed back their feelings of frustration that they have to read all the stationing profiles, yet feel disempowered by the process because very often presbyters are not willing or able to serve in their area, and that even those presbyters highlighted on the circuit's indicative list are often not matched with them. This new system will mean that unnecessary work can be dispensed with, and circuits can ultimately focus on presbyters who have expressed a direct interest in their circuit.
- The District Policy Committee will play a significant role in robustly scrutinising draft appointments – nearer to source, rather than later down the line.
- The new model continues to highly value the close working of Chairs and Lay Stationing Reps. This will be reflected in numerous ways: as now, in briefing the circuits and ministers each year, in engaging in pastoral and discernment conversations with ministers and those close to them, and circuits, as they reflect on the future.
- It acknowledges that sometimes, circuits are not clear whether an appointment would be best filled by a presbyter, deacon, MOCC or probationer presbyter. The new process enables that discernment to carry on through the stationing process.
- It streamlines the stationing process more generally.

Q2: What is the difference between the recommended Vocational Conversations and existing Ministerial Development Review and supervision?

A2: A more complete answer can be found to this question in paragraph XX above, however we can note that while the three processes appear similar in some ways, they serve different purposes and can occur at different times. Supervision is an ongoing oversight of a minister's whole appointment, the MDR is an annual conversation in which various foci of the minister's development of skills are discussed. While the Vocational Conversations are recommended to occur three times in a minister's appointment (and may be incorporated into the MDR) and are connected with receiving feedback from the community. The VCs are also connected with the reinvitation process.

Q3: Won't the recommendations mean more work for circuit stewards?

A3: Circuit stewards will not be required to do more work. The significant workload engendered by the current Consultation process will be replaced by the Staged Vocational Conversations that will take place at the end of the first year, during the middle year and during the penultimate year of a Minister's appointment.

Reinvitation
Survey results show that the current process of reinvitation is overwhelmingly disliked by ministers and circuit stewards. The Consultation process is lengthy, time-consuming and creates an inordinate amount of work for circuit stewards especially when more than one minister is involved in a particular year.

Staged Vocational Conversations throughout a minister's appointment are a more appropriate, sensitive and helpful way of enabling discernment for both Ministers and Circuits. Circuit stewards will be responsible for organising and conducting these conversations. Not all circuit stewards will feel able to do this but, as with all circuit stewards' duties, responsibilities are shared out according to gifts, skills and inclination.

Stationing
From a circuit steward's perspective, the recommended stationing process will mean less work. Those on the Circuit Invitation Committee will not have to read through all the Presbyter Profiles to make an indicative list, time will not be wasted in making plans for a visit that might not happen and more time has been made available for visits so that arrangements need only to be made when a match is confirmed.

Q4: The proposed approach appears to prioritise the needs of presbyters over circuits. Is this correct?

A4: The short answer is 'No.' The intention remains for the system to serve the mission of the church while being 'sensitive to the needs and aspirations of ministers and circuits'. This is reflected in the principle that ministry should be where it is needed most. Districts, circuits, churches and presbyters all have a role to play in prayerfully discerning where ministry is most needed and for the most appropriate ministers to serve there. The proposed approach scrutinises and prioritises appointments and gives agency to presbyters in offering for appointments where they believe they can flourish as ministers. It also gives agency to circuits in choosing among the presbyters that might be available to them. While it will not be possible to satisfy everyone, in our view this approach has a better chance than the current system of achieving matches that best meet the needs of the Church.

The SRG is also acutely aware of the shortage of ministers relative to the number of available appointments. It also recognises that the well-being of many in ministry has been suffering and that this has negatively affected the mission of the church. For both reasons the needs of presbyters must be taken extremely seriously, and a priority will be for ministers to be stationed to appointments where they can flourish.

The recommended approach will have failed if it only meets the needs of presbyters and not circuits. If the proposed approach is implemented, it is important that there is regular monitoring of stationing to ensure that it is serving the mission of the church.

Q5: What about Circuits that will struggle to attract interest from ministers under the new system?

A5: With an ongoing shortage of ministers relative to the number of appointments, there are bound to be Circuits that will be disappointed. This also happens under the current system. Nevertheless, it is important that appointments where ministry can flourish are not unfairly disadvantaged by geographical remoteness or shortage of funding. This is reflected in the principle that ministry should be where it is needed most. By scrutinising and prioritising appointments, it is to be hoped that presbyters will express interest in priority appointments. If this does not happen then SMG will propose that well-matched presbyters are stationed to priority appointments even if they have not expressed interest in them. It would clearly not be desirable for priority appointments not to be filled and for well-matched presbyters to be stationed elsewhere without good reason.

Q6: Is there really greater agency for presbyters in the proposed system? Aren't decisions being transferred from a Connexional context to non-transparent Circuit Invitation Committees?

A6: There is greater agency for presbyters in the proposed system in that they are encouraged to express interest in up to three appointments, and to explain why they have the skills and experience to flourish in those appointments. Every effort will be made to match them to one of these appointments if they have the right skills and experience. Nevertheless this will depend on who else has expressed interest in the appointment and on the views of circuit invitation committees. Circuit Invitation Committees may prefer others and ultimately, as in the current system, following a visit, they will be able to discern whether a match is right.

Q7: How can the connexional principle be upheld if the principle of subsidiarity is to be the primary consideration in stationing of ministers?

A7: The principle of subsidiarity means that tasks should only be undertaken centrally if they cannot be performed at a more local level. In our Church the principle of subsidiarity cannot be the primary consideration in stationing of ministers. This is because decisions about the appropriate allocation of ministerial resources across alternative priorities need to be made at a Connexional level that is not constrained by regional boundaries. This is why the SRG did not advocate stationing ministers to districts (or regions) and leaving regions to station them to circuits. The principle of subsidiarity justifies reinvitations being decided at a circuit level and the new strategic role for DPCs in scrutinising and submitting circuit profiles

Q8: Have you tested out the proposed approach to stationing?

A8: The most convincing test of the proposed approach is to run it for a year or two and rigorously evaluate the outcomes. The best practical alternative is to use available evidence to assess how the proposed system would have worked had it been in operation in a recent stationing year. Appendix 4 below reports an exercise that did this for SMG2 in January 2025. It highlights that better information for matching would be available under the proposed system. While it is not possible to know exactly how the proposed method of matching would have worked in practice, a trial using indicative lists available at SMG2 suggests it would have proposed alternative matches that would be considered as good as or better than the actual ones proposed at SMG2.

Q9: Is the proposed approach to stationing and matching more efficient than the current approach?

A9: We hope so. There is a lot of wasted time and effort in the current system. Examples include the current 'one size fits all' approach to reinvitations that recommends a detailed consultation in every case and circuit stewards trawling through presbyteral profiles even though only a small number are likely to be interested in their appointments.

Q10 Because of the risk of discrimination, should profiles be anonymised?

A10: This was a question that the SRG carefully considered as the results of the surveys indicated that bias of Circuit officers was perceived from ministers of the LGBTQIA+ community, some living with disabilities and others with names that suggested a 'not-traditional' British name. Therefore, it was considered that profiles become anonymised in the hope that those who are involved in the process would pay more attention to the profiles themselves rather than the personality.

The conclusion by the Group was that profiles should remain non-anonymised for two reasons. Firstly, due to our proposed principle of transparency it was felt that a profile cannot be fully transparent and anonymous. Secondly, due to the shrinking size of the Church, Circuits and RSGs could quite easily figure out the identity of the minister who had expressed interest in the Circuit.

What was proposed instead is:

- That all processes will be open to independent scrutiny, paying particular attention to the Church's Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy.
- The training regarding unconscious bias and discrimination should continue to be mandatory for all involved in the reinvitation and stationing processes.
- The members chosen for the Regional Stationing Groups should represent the make-up of the Church.

Q11: Should deacons be stationed in the same way as presbyters?

A11: This is related to the Church's wider understanding which upholds diaconal ministry, the loving service modelled by Jesus, to be the pattern and calling of every disciple and that of the whole Church.

All deacons are under the discipline of direct stationing and commit to being itinerant through their period of 'active' service in order to serve where they are needed. The Order's Rule of Life states that deacons as members of the MDO

commit to 'offer a lifetime of service which typically includes the discipline of itinerancy and direct stationing'.[23] Although, within this discipline it is recognised there may be some particular circumstances which may arise and these are born in mind within the stationing process for deacons.

Deacons, probationers and ordained alike, are matched to their appointments after a period of discernment by the Warden supported by the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee. These matches are recommended to The Conference who stations all the Church's ministers.

Appendix 3 - An example of the recommended matching protocol

The recommended matching protocol is to match Priority appointments first by proceeding in the following steps:

Step 1 The Priority appointment that received the least number of expressions of interest would be matched first to the interested presbyter preferred by the appointment's CIC. Any expressions of interest for other appointments by the matched presbyter would be withdrawn. If more than one Priority appointment had received the least number of expressions of interest, the order of matching would be determined by SMG.

Step 2 The Priority appointment that received the next lowest number of expressions of interest would then be matched to the presbyter preferred by that appointment's CIC. Any expressions of interest for other appointments by the matched presbyter would be withdrawn. If there is more than one Priority appointment with the same number of expressions of interest, the order of matching would be determined by SPMC.

Steps 3 on This process would continue until all Priority appointments have been considered.

If there are unfilled priority appointments at this stage, SMG should consider whether a different allocation ordering would have delivered an outcome where all priority appointments are filled.
Standard appointments would then be matched.

Step 1 Those Standard appointments that received one expression of interest only would be matched first to those interested presbyters. Any other

23 "Rule of Life of the Methodist Diaconal Order," *CPD 2024* Part 5 p: 781-784.

expressions of interest by these matched presbyters would be withdrawn. In the case that the same presbyter had offered for more than one of these Standard appointments with only one expression of interest, the choice of which appointment to match them to would be made by SMG.

Step 2 Any standard appointments with two expressions of interest would then be matched to the presbyter preferred by that appointment's CIC. Any other expressions of interest by these matched applicants would be withdrawn.

Steps 3 on Continues until all presbyters are allocated.

As an example of how this process would work, Table A sets out in a highly stylised form the type of information that would be available to SMG assuming 12 appointments in 4 equal sized regional groups and 10 available presbyters who have each offered for 3 appointments. The priority appointments are indicated by *s. The expressions of interest made by each presbyter are indicated by √s (these have been generated randomly). For the purpose of this example, it is assumed that when more than one presbyter is available for an appointment, the appointment is filled with the lowest-numbered presbyter. In practice it would be filled in line with the preferences of the appointment's CIC.

Table A Stylised Example of Distribution of Expressions of Interest and Matching

Appointments:	**Region A**			**Region B**			**Region C**			**Region D**		
Presbyters:	1	2*	3	4	5	6	7	8*	9	10	11	12
1		√			√				√			
2				√				√				√
3					√			√	√			
4										√	√	√
5					√		√				√	
6	√							√			√	
7						√	√			√		
8	√							√				√
9						√				√	√	
10				√					√		√	
Total expressions of interest	2	1	0	2	3	2	2	4	3	3	5	3

According to the matching approach set out in the paper appointment 2 would be matched first as it is the priority appointment with only one expression of interest and it would be matched to presbyter 1. Appointment 8, with 4 expressions of interest, would then be matched to presbyter 2 (since lower numbered presbyters are assumed to be preferred). So both priority appointments would be matched in this case.

Turning to the standard (non-priority) appointments, the first to be matched would be appointment 4, as it has only one remaining interested presbyter (presbyter 10) once presbyter 2 has been matched to appointment 8.

The next appointments to be considered would be those with two remaining expressions of interest. These are appointments 1, 6, 7. Matching these in numerical order (lowest first) would result in presbyter 6 being matched with appointment 1, 7 with 6, and 5 with 7.

Continuing in this manner would result in presbyter 3 being matched with appointment 5, 4 with 10, 8 with 12 and 9 with 11.

Appointment 9 would be unmatched even though it originally received three applications because the presbyters interested in the appointment had already been matched by the time it was considered.

One appointment (3) had received no expressions of interest so it would also be unmatched.

Appendix 4 - Evidence from Stationing and Matching 2024-25

This appendix uses some statistics collected at SMG1 and SMG2 to assess how the proposed method of matching might work in practice. It highlights that many of the challenges raised about the proposed method are also relevant to the current method. It also highlights that better information for matching would be available under the proposed system. While it is not possible to know exactly how the proposed method of matching would have worked in practice, a trial using indicative lists available at SMG2 suggests it would have resulted in alternative matches that would be considered as good as or better than the actual ones proposed at SMG2.

Indicative lists
Under the current system of stationing and matching presbyters provide indicative lists of the appointments that they are most interested in and similarly circuits provide indicative lists of the presbyters that they think would best suit their appointments. This information is then used in guiding the matches proposed by SMG.

SMG1
At SMG1 in 2024 there were 107 appointments and 79 presbyters available for matching. The shortage of presbyters inevitably meant that only around three-quarters of all appointments would be offered a match at SMG1.

The chances of being offered a match and that match being agreed following the visit were much higher for appointments that appeared on the indicative lists of several presbyters. Only two out of the 13 appointments (15 per cent) that were on no presbyter's list and nine out of the 23 appointments (39 per cent) that were on one presbyter's list received a match that stuck. Whereas 76 per cent of the circuits that were named on two or more presbyters' lists received matches that stuck.

Of the 64 agreed matches at SMG1, 45 per cent were 'double' matches where both parties to the match had appeared on the other's indicative list, and a further 37 per cent had appeared on presbyters' lists only. Only 17 per cent of matched appointments had not been on the indicative lists of the presbyters they were matched with.

Twelve of the matches proposed at SMG1 were declined following the visits. Of the declined matches, 50 per cent were where neither party to the match had appeared on the other's indicative list.

These statistics tell us that under the current system agreed matches are primarily driven by the preferences of presbyters as revealed by their indicative lists. This means that a lot of time is currently wasted by CICs in trawling through the profiles of presbyters that they never get the opportunity to meet. The proposal to send CICs the profiles of only those presbyters that are interested in their appointment would save circuit stewards a lot of time, as well as reducing the amount of information that is circulated. In addition, the question that is often asked about the current proposal of what happens to those circuits that receive no interest from presbyters is also relevant to the current system.

SMG2
At SMG2 in 2025 there were 48 appointments and 14 presbyters available for matching. 33 of the appointments appeared on at least one presbyter's list and 11 of the presbyters appeared on at least one circuit's indicative list. Some of the presbyters appeared on multiple circuit lists (one was on 29 circuit lists) and several appointments were listed by more than one presbyter (12 were listed by two presbyters and two by three presbyters).

There was at least one double match available for ten of the presbyters and for 21 of the appointments. Four presbyters and 27 appointments did not have a double match available.

SMG2 proposed 14 matches, being constrained by the number of presbyters available. Eight presbyters were allocated to appointments where there was a double match, three

presbyters were allocated to appointments that were on their list but not on the list of the receiving circuits and three were allocated to appointments that were on neither's list.

Overall, six of the proposed matches were to circuits that had not included the matched presbyters on their indicative lists (two of the presbyters could have instead been allocated to circuits that had listed them and were ultimately not matched).

One disadvantage of the current system is that there is no information at SMG about how circuits viewed presbyters who were not on their list. Were they people that were not acceptable to them or people they did not know and had not considered? The proposed system would not suffer from this lack of information to the same extent as circuits would have reflected on all presbyters who were interested in their appointments.

What outcome would the proposed system have delivered at SMG2?

It is not possible to know precisely what outcome would have been delivered had the proposed system been in operation instead. This is because different information would have been collected in that case. Rather than indicative lists, presbyters would have expressed interest in appointments and explained why they suited them, and circuits would have said which of the presbyters who had expressed an interest in their appointment were acceptable to them. It is our opinion that the proposed system would provide better information for matching.

We also do not know if any appointments would have been designated as priority appointments under the proposed system.

Nevertheless, we can carry out a trial to try to answer the question of how the proposed system would have worked at SMG2 by using the indicative lists as a guide to presbyter and circuit preferences. In this trial we also use the three 'round 0 calls' at SMG2 to indicate which appointments would have been considered as priority appointments.

As it happens, the three round 0 appointments at SMG2 all had one distinct double match available to them. The presbyters in these distinct double matches were the ones 'called' by the district chairs. The proposed approach would have chosen exactly the same presbyters for these three appointments.

In addition, three appointments had unique double matches in that neither the circuit nor the presbyter had another double match available to them. In this case too, the proposed approach would have chosen exactly the same presbyters for these three appointments.

So these six presbyters would have been allocated to the same appointments by the proposed system had it been in operation. Having allocated six presbyters in this way,

there would have remained 42 appointments with only eight presbyters available. How would the remaining eight presbyters have been allocated under the proposed approach?

There would have been double matches available for eight out of the 42 remaining appointments (two of these appointments had two double matches available), involving four out of the eight remaining presbyters (one of whom was double matched with five appointments). This meant that there were several ways in which the presbyters could be allocated across the appointments.

Using the approach suggested in the paper, we would have first considered matching the six appointments with a single double match. Because there were only four double-matched presbyters available the order in which the appointments were considered would matter. In a trial exercise, the first appointment to be matched was chosen at random and this resulted in the presbyter with five double matches being allocated. Once this person was allocated there were only five appointments with single double matches to be filled. These were matched sequentially using the same process.

The remaining four presbyters who did not have a double match available could have been allocated at the discretion of SMG2. They could each have been allocated as they were in fact allocated at SMG2.

This trial approach resulted in four different matches to those proposed at SMG2. These all involved presbyters who were included on multiple indicative lists. It is not easy to judge whether these matches suggested by a trial run of the proposed new method were better or worse than those proposed by SMG2. But a case can be made that these would have been at least as good as the matches made at SMG2 as all four were double matches whereas only two of the matches made for these presbyters at SMG2 were double matches.

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SECTION I
MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

1 The Ministries Committee reported to the Council that it had reviewed its work coming from the 2024, 2023 and 2022 Conferences and discussed its Workplan for 2024-2025.

2 The committee reported on the need for a significant review of all of the processes relating to ministers seeking to transfer into the British Methodist Church (the Methodist Council in April 2024 had delegated to the Committee the responsibility for appointing members of a task group to carry out a full review of the ministerial transfer scheme). The committee broadly agreed the membership, terms of reference, suggested consultants, and timetable for the small task group to lead the review, consulting widely as appropriate. Proposed changes will be presented for consideration by the 2026 Conference and enacted over the following connexional year.

3 Supervision Research Project and 2021-2026 policy extension

The current Reflective Supervision Policy was adopted by the 2021 Conference, to be reviewed in 2026; to inform any changes to the policy, a significant piece of research into the efficacy of supervision for those involved in lay and ordained ministry would be undertaken. The research would give both quantitative and qualitative insights which would inform the new policy. The Ministries Committee, in February 2023, approved the proposed approach to the research project, to be carried out under the oversight of the Supervision Reference Group (SRG).

After a recruitment process, a highly qualified researcher was appointed, and the following timeline agreed:

Spring 2024	Research process designed
Summer 2024	Research undertaken
Early 2025	Initial findings presented
Summer 2025	Final outcomes of research

Autumn 2025	Draft Supervision Policy 2026 → incorporating research findings; scrutinised by Committees
June 2026	Supervision Policy 2026 → presented to the Conference

Unfortunately, the research has been unavoidably delayed: whilst some quantitative research has been undertaken, the research will not be completed within the above timeline. On the recommendation of the Ministries Committee, the Council therefore endorsed the proposal for the research process to be extended by one year and for the findings to be reported to the 2027 Conference. The intrinsic link between the research and a new supervision policy means that this delay will entail a year's extension to the current *Reflective Supervision Policy* so that it runs until the 2027 Conference. The Council approved this extension.

4 The Ministries Committee co-opted the Revd Matt Sheard and Mr Dan Bishop onto the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation for 2025, under the terms of SO 250(2).

5 The committee has worked jointly with the Mission Committee to convene the Connexional Economic Justice Working Group.

6 The Ministries Committee received a Year Three Update from the Deliverance Ministry Panel. This highlighted where the work is currently, offered future direction, and informed the Ministries Committee of the intention of the Chair of the Connexional Panel for Deliverance Ministry, the Revd Kate Strange, to stand down. As this ministry moves into its next phase, Ms Strange suggests that protecting the most vulnerable should remain its core value. The committee thanked her for this comprehensive piece of work and the very significant amount of progress that had been achieved in a few years. A process for reflecting on the matters raised and recruiting a new lead for this work will be set in train.

7 The Assistant Secretary of the Conference reported to the committee regarding the need for a supplementary report to accompany the 2008 Conference Report *With Integrity and Skill* (guidance around pastoral care and confidentiality in the Methodist Church). The Ministries Committee recommended that a Task Group be established to prepare the supplementary report to be presented to the 2026 Conference.

9 The Ministries Committee received an update on its membership and recruitment and noted that interviews would be taking place in the very near future for two new lay members and for new Chairs of the committee. The committee expressed its grateful thanks to the Chair of the Committee, the Revd Gill Newton and the Deputy Chair, Mr Keith Norman, for whom this is their last year in office.

10 The Ministries Committee received the Annual Report from Cliff College and expressed its thanks to the Revd Ashley Cooper, in this his last year, for his work in nurturing the college as Principal. The College's strategic vision is to be 'A Global Centre for Evangelism and Missiology', a community formed by God's Spirit and centred on God's Word, equipping people for practical ministry and engaging in mission. It was recognised that the last year had been a very challenging and that there is further work to be done on in relation to the future work of the College.

11 The Ministries Committee received the annual report from the Queen's Foundation. The committee also welcomed the new Principal, Bishop Anne Hollinghurst, to its meetings this year. In its partnership with the Methodist Church in Britain, Queen's continues to receive all those candidates accepted by the Conference for initial ministerial training. In September 2023 Queen's had a total of 39 student ministers. Of these, 25 were full-time and 14 part-time; nine were student deacons and 30 student presbyters. Among the full-time students were seven students on the Circuit-based Learning Pathway (CBLP). The new cohort for 2024-25 comprised 25 student ministers, 12 allocated to the full-time pathway and 13 to part-time, with one (presbyter) provisionally allocated to CBLP for later in their training. Of the new cohort, four are student deacons and 21 student presbyters; 17 are women and 8 men; six are of Global Majority Heritage. As well as the standard credit-bearing and other courses which prepare student ministers to build on the knowledge, experience and skills they bring with them, and move towards readiness for stationing, Queen's has made changes over the last two to three years in the ways in which it engages with the expectations of the Methodist Church more generally in, for instance, EDI training, safeguarding training, and making Mental Health First Aid training available to student ministers. In 2023-24, Queen's worked with 51 probationers on the programme of probation studies designed to build on their pre-ordination training. The work is led by the Revd Dr Catrin Harland-Davies. Queen's continues to provide additional support for those writing dissertations or completing other modules beyond probation studies, to help them complete their programme.

Methodist staff appointed to Queen's continue to make wider contributions to the life of the Connexion beyond initial ministerial training and probation studies. During 2023-2024, two Methodist tutors have also been members of the Faith and Order Committee, one is on the New Places for New People Guiding Team, and another on the *Holiness* editorial board. Three tutors have roles in the various stages of Discerning Ordained Vocation (DOV 1 and DOV2). Tutors also continue to lead worship, study days and other events around the connexion.

12 In its reply to Memorial M25 (2019), the Conference 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. The Ministries 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. It directed the Ministries Team to explore a revised form of oversight for the work of governance and oversight of the training process for local preachers and worship leaders.

The annual report presented the following statistics:
As of December 2024 there were 4,526 active local preachers recorded on the connexional database, a decline of 12% from 5,145 the previous year. Of those in training, 309 had a Note to Preach (2023: 280), and there were 342 persons On Trial (2023: 456) as local preachers. Taken alone, these numbers are broadly as expected, and align with declines in membership and attendance, together with the assumed demographic profile of local preachers and worship leaders.

The number of local preachers who died and were included in the Remembrance Book in 2023 was 254. The list for 2024 is in preparation and will be presented at the 2025 Conference.

Regarding initial training, 94 portfolios were successfully completed on the Worship: Leading & Preaching course in 2024, compared with 68 the previous year. Of these, five were from Worship Leaders (2023: 7), who have successfully completed modules 1-4. Forty-one were Portfolio LPA (2023: 34) and 47 were Portfolio LPB (2023: 28), indicating completion of LP training. These numbers represent a significant increase over the previous year and have returned to levels from previous years. This suggests that the dip in numbers in 2023 was due at least in part to factors associated with the COVID pandemic and the introduction of the new candidating process for presbyteral ministry, which removed the need for applicants to be local preachers.

Regarding new enrolments and admissions, the number of people starting and completing training continues to be encouraging:

Role	**2024**	**2023**	**2022**
Worship Leaders starting training	97	70	54
Worship Leaders completing training - Gold Level	5	7	3
Local Preachers starting training	134	123	152
Local Preachers Admitted	56	33	83

The number embarking on training as worship leaders remains very encouraging, and probably reflects the opportunity presented by Local Arrangements for new people to become involved in leading worship. It may also reflect the progressive adoption of flexible training for worship leaders (authorised in 2019) which is facilitated locally using WLP resources. The number of new LP admissions has varied considerably over the last five years. The 2024 total of 56 is encouraging. Particularly encouraging is the continuing number of those seeking a Note to Preach, with 134 starting their formation in 2024 (up 9% from 2023).

District Local Preachers' Secretaries and Tutors provide valuable support to circuits, particularly in training provision and through times of change but there has been a decline in the number of Districts making these appointments. Districts will be contacted directly during 2025 to emphasise the value of District LP Officer roles in encouraging and equipping lay leadership.

Work has proceeded to provide more course materials in Welsh, and the Worship: Foundations booklet is now available for use. The same material is also now available in Traditional Chinese, to help the growing Cantonese fellowships and the significant numbers coming forward as leaders and preachers.

A significant development in 2024/5 has been the introduction of a new accessibility toolset for the Worship: Leading and Preaching course, called ReciteMe. This provides state-of-the-art tools allowing adaptation of screen presentation (colour, contrast, text spacing etc) together with audio transcription of textual content and specialist tools such as screen masks, magnifiers and focus aids. In addition, ReciteMe provides a real-time translation facility in some 200 languages. This is proving helpful for trainees for whom English is not their heart language.

Feedback from students studying with Worship: Leading and Preaching continues to be positive, the major source of concern being the availability of Mentors and Tutors for those wishing to study. The Connexional Team continues to provide a comprehensive package of training for WLP students, tutors and mentors, which is largely delivered online. Quarterly Explore Online weekends are provided for students. For 2025, there will also be a pilot series of four WLP Explore Weekends, hosted by circuits and districts around the connexion, combining intensive Explore sessions for students, and a training day for local preachers and worship leaders to develop their skills.

14 The Ministries Committee received a report proposing that the Local Preachers' Meeting be relaunched as a more inclusive learning community of all those involved in leadership of public worship in the Circuit, including worship leaders,

local preachers, presbyters and deacons, and others such as musicians and artists as appropriate. A suggested name for the new meeting is the Circuit Worship and Preaching Community (CWPC). The community would become the focus of training and development for local preachers, worship leaders and those leading Local Arrangements, as well as leaders of other worshipping communities such as New Places for New People. The Community would provide an accessible and welcoming way for people to explore worship and preaching as part of their discipleship. Some of the key roles and responsibilities of the Local Preachers' Meeting would remain, such as the responsibility for discerning in community a person's call to preach.

The report proposed that the community would take over the responsibilities of the Local Preachers' Meeting, but under revised and simplified Standing Orders. The priorities of Worship, Learning, Support and Accountability will be embedded in new resources and guidelines. Careful work would be required to ensure that the current responsibilities for discernment, formation and decision-making are clearly elucidated in the Standing Orders, supported by logical and coherent guidance where required.

The Ministries Committee felt that further work was needed in this area and directed the Ministries Team to establish a working group to do further work.

15 The Ministries Committee received for information a report on the **Discerning Ordained Vocation Committee** and noted the detailed statistics. DOV1 applicants are matched with an accompanist at the earliest opportunity after they apply. The Accompanists have now formed a community of practice and meet three times a year for training and preparation. They regard their work as vocational and a privilege to be walking with people as they discern God's call. The elements of the process are gradually being honed and there is increasing development of continuity of practice around the completion of the structured conversation between applicants and accompanists and other parts of the process. There is scope for more people to become accompanists. The Retreat Team has now established a mutually trusting community and runs the retreat itself. It has a pool of people from whom the actual retreat team is drawn each year, depending on the numbers of applicants, and to ensure there is appropriate balance on the team. However the team members all train and plan together. The Advisory Group operates in teams of three who meet with each applicant online in June. There is scope for more people to join this group.

The report also referenced the fact that we now refer to a psychosocial adviser rather than a psychologist in relation to candidating and MOCC applicants. Therefore the Standing Orders which identify the role of the 'Connexional

Psychologist' need to be amended. The Council agreed to recommend to the Conference that, in SO 713(4) and SO 730(4)(vi), the words 'connexional psychologist' be replaced by 'connexionally-appointed psychosocial practitioner'. Currently the DOV documents refer to the 'psycho-social adviser', but when the documents are updated for the following year, these will be brought in line with the Standing Orders.

16 The number of candidates has reduced in this second year of the new candidating process which is not unexpected as many people were waiting for the new scheme to start, thus inflating the numbers in 2023-2024. The DOV2 Committee is seeking to address the fact that some candidates are attending DOV2 committee with insufficient preparation or awareness. The DOV2 Committee Co-chairs are proposing some adaptations and a review of the processes. As the Conference agreed the revised criteria for candidates in June 2024, these are being used from the start of the 2025-2026 candidating year. The documents for DOV1 and DOV2 are all made available on the website from the start of January for the following year.

17 The Ministries Committee received a general report from the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC). The Committee accepted a recommendation from the MCPOC Task Group concerning the implementation of Standing Order 723(3) where a candidate offers for specific context, as follows:

a. If this is a defined specific context (eg a particular pioneering community or a particular employer), representatives of the other institution will need to complete an additional section of the C2 form to declare their support for the eventual appointment, their understanding of it, and their willingness to release the probationer to undertake the necessary elements of probation. This needs to be based on the clauses of the standing order.
b. If it is not a defined specific context (eg a candidate feels a general call to a form of full time chaplaincy but this is not in a particular named institution), then the candidate will be advised not to apply for specific context while candidating. However this may be explored by such candidates during their placements while at Queen's and they can express a wish on their stationing profile for this context to be part of their first appointment. The committee notes that there is often flexibility in circuit appointments for other elements of ministry to be explored within the appointment.

The Law and Polity Committee has reviewed the Standing Orders to ensure they reflect the decision and the proposed amendments are presented in resolution 19/3 (below).

18 The Ministries Committee received a report from MCPOC's Implementation Group on Developments in the Stationing of Probationers. The Committee approved the proposal from MCPOC: that from September 2026 all presbyteral probationers will normally have one un-planned Sunday per month (excluding holiday Sundays) in which to learn their craft of worship leading and preaching, learning from, and working alongside others (adapted pro rata for those in part time appointments). Diaconal probationers will have the equivalent time in which to learn their craft in these areas as appropriate to their context. Guidance will be provided, and this will be monitored and reported on through the Worship Development Groups. This will be a flexible arrangement depending on the prior experience of the probationer. The Ministries Committee also approved the proposal from MCPOC that work be carried out to strengthen, empower and train the Worship Development Groups for probationers. The Ministries Team is developing this work.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

19/1. The Conference receives the Report.

19/2. The Conference amends Standing Orders SO 713(4) and SO 730(4)(vi) as follows:

713 (4) A candidate shall meet with the ~~connexional psychologist~~***connexionally-appointed psychosocial practitioner*** who shall produce a resilience assessment report which the candidate will be invited to sign before it is submitted.

730 (4)(vi) a resilience assessment report on the applicant provided by a ~~connexional psychologist~~***connexionally-appointed psychosocial practitioner*** in accordance with connexional guidelines, which the applicant will be invited to sign before it is submitted.

19/3. The Conference amends Standing Orders as follows:

713 Discernment of Ordained Vocation: Stage Two. . . .

(6) (*a*) . . .
(*b*) The Superintendent shall also make a preliminary assessment on a connexional proforma of what might reasonably be expected of the candidate's future availability for stationing in circuit or other appointments and the terms and conditions of service under which the candidate might serve. ***In the case of a candidate offering for presbyteral ministry and applying to serve in an appointment that is not within the control of the church or in a pioneering or other appointment that is within the***

control of the Church but does not involve being appointed to a circuit, the preliminary assessment shall include a report of conversations with the other institutions and parties involved in the specified context regarding the feasibility of the criteria for probation being fulfilled and assessed in the type of appointment envisaged.

723 Probationers' Appointments. . . .

(3) (*a*) Where a presbyteral probationer is to be stationed in an appointment ***in a defined specific context*** that is not within the control of the Church ***or in a pioneering or other appointment that is within the control of the Church but does not involve being appointed to a circuit,*** the Connexional Team member responsible for probationers shall arrange for consultations to be held ~~between the~~ ***with the other institution and other*** relevant parties ***involved in that context*** to ascertain the way in which the probationer will exercise ~~his or her~~ ministry within the particular appointment and link it with the worship and mission of the wider Church, and how ~~his or her~~ ***the probationer's*** character, work and general fitness for the presbyterate will be assessed. ***If the other institution or relevant party is not able at this point to make the required commitments the Connexional Team member shall arrange for consultations to be held about how the student minister concerned may serve as a probationer in other ways.***

(*b*) From such consultations the Connexional Team member responsible for probationers shall ensure that an agreement ***with the other parties*** is formulated as to the nature of probation in the appointment. This proposed agreement shall be in accordance with connexional guidelines issued on behalf of the Stationing Committee. It shall be reviewed by members of the district Probationers Committee appointed by the committee for that purpose and forwarded by the Chair to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee for approval.

783 Stationing Procedures: diaconal. (1) The Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall be responsible for deciding upon the recommendations to be made as to the stationing of the deacons in the available diaconal stations, recognising the specialised ministry needs of the Circuits involved***, and in the light of the current discipline, policies and practices of the Order in stationing***.

SECTION J
ASSESSING OF PROBATION

The Ministries Committee, in April 2024, asked the Methodist Council to consider recommending a revised process for the assessment of probation. The aim of this is to reduce the workload for district officers and committees and to streamline the process.

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 and to report regarding the consultation together with any revised proposals to the Connexional Council not before April 2025. The Ministries Committee held those further consultations with: Chairs of District and the Warden of the MDO, recent ordinands, Faith and Order, District Probationer Secretaries and presented revised proposals to the Council in March 2025. The Council agreed to recommend these revised processes to the Conference. It further referred them to the Law and Polity Committee for consideration of the constitutional implications, and the Law and Polity Committee will report separately on that aspect.

First year probationers will be assessed later in the year with the Religious Order Advisory Committee (ROAC) meeting in March rather than January and District Probationers' Committees meeting in May rather than March. This takes the pressure off committees and probationers and allows assessment to be based on a longer period of ministry.

The Conference Diaconal Committee and the Presbyteral Session of the Conference will still receive the names of probationer ministers with their expected dates to be received into Full Connexion. District Probationers' Committees will hold panel interviews for any first year probationers for whom there are any concerns. The Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee (MCPOC) will receive detailed reports on first year probationers in July each year. The timetable for second year probationers (and those in subsequent years) remains the same as in the current processes. Some changes to the reporting processes and forms were also agreed.

It is additionally suggested that District Probationers' Committees hold panel interviews with any first or second year probationers for whom they have concerns that may need additional attention. These panels can be called on the agreement of the District Chair, District Probationers' Secretary and Warden (for diaconal probationers). The recommendations of such a panel could be a referral to MCPOC, an additional meeting of the whole DPC, an additional meeting of ROAC or an intervention such as occupational health assessment. It is strongly recommended that prayer for all probationers (presbyteral and diaconal) is offered at the spring Representative Synod. Chairs are asked to exercise sensitivity in the way they do this, since it could be a difficult time for some probationers.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

19/4. The Conference receives the Report.

19/5. The Conference adopts the principles for revised processes for the assessment of probation and directs the Law and Polity Committee to bring the necessary changes to Standing Orders to the 2026 Conference.

SECTION K
DISCERNMENT FOR SENIOR LEADERSHIP

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. The 2024 Conference received a report from the Methodist Council which reported the work undertaken so far, including pilot schemes for new and incoming District Chairs.

The Council received an update report from the Ministries Committee, which indicated further developments in this area as set out below.

Key background information

1. 'Senior posts' has been defined as leadership roles in *Districts* (Chairs, Deputy/Assistant Chairs, Synod Secretaries/senior lay roles in District leadership teams) and *the Connexion* (Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Committees, the Conference Secretariat, and senior leadership roles within the Connexional Team).

2. There are three key drivers underpinning this discernment work:

    a. Ensuring that attention is given to individuals' strengths in the discernment process which allows them to lead in 'liminality': agility, thriving in complex and uncertain times, team builders, effective at learning from experience.
    b. A clear need for a more diverse senior leadership within the Church.
    c. The need for a carefully planned leadership development programme and pathways, beginning from initial formation in ministry for the ordained and from circuit stewards (for example) for lay people – although there is clearly greater complexity in developing lay leadership pathways.

3. Conversations with twenty-five current senior leaders were carried out in Jan/Feb 2024. From these conversations with senior leaders, five key qualities of leaders who thrive in senior roles were identified:

    a. Spirituality
    b. Self-awareness
    c. Working with others/ leading teams
    d. Leadership models (moving away from the solitary 'hero' leader)/ awareness of diversity
    e. Strategic understanding/ Connexional ways of working

4. The group was then asked to carry out further work on the following:

    a. Paying attention to the characteristics of senior leaders (above) and how these can best be reflected in the processes for appointing senior leaders.
    b. Defining the process of discernment: for this to be clearly identified with some flexibility and freedom.
    c. Reviewing defined selection processes and suggesting appropriate changes.
    d. Linking this work with The Methodist Church's *God For All, Justice-Seeking Church*, and *JDS* strategy to ensure that processes enable a truly diverse and inclusive senior leadership and that senior leaders operate within this culture.
    e. Liaising with the Faith and Order Committee around its work on 'The Role of a District Chair'.
    f. Undertaking a review of related Standing Orders as appropriate.
    g. Drawing various strands of leadership work together to bring proposals to the 2025 Conference.

5. Additionally, a Pilot Support Development Programme for New District Chairs in their first three years, to take place in 2024/5, was proposed and agreed by the Ministries Committee.

Proposals for Senior Leaders' Discernment/ leadership pathways development trial, 2025-6

The 'Senior Leaders' Discernment task group' met in January 2025. Following that meeting, the group proposes a trial and review of the following leadership pathways development approach in the Connexional year 2025/6:

1. A Senior Leaders' Discernment and Leadership Programme (ordained and lay as appropriate)

2. A Superintendent Ministers' Discernment and Leadership Programme
3. A bespoke package of ongoing leadership learning with experienced District Chairs

The points below expand on the three proposals and refer specifically to the development of new leadership discernment programmes which prepare colleagues for their future roles, and not to existing programmes such as the New Supers' or Chairs' Induction. The suggested approaches below build on various work undertaken around the role of leadership in recent years, noting the recommendations of The Faith and Order Committee's work on *What Is A District Chair*?, the research undertaken with 25 senior leaders, and review and reflection of the experience of the District Chairs' Pilot Programme of 2024/5.

Implementation of proposals

The following information sets out in more detail how the proposals above would work in practice.

1. Key leadership characteristics and qualities

a. Adopt the key qualities/characteristics of Senior Leaders identified in the 2024 research project as those for which we aspire for leaders both lay and ordained to model appropriately at all levels within the life of the Church. Spirituality is clearly identified as the first and most important of these, providing the foundation for all other qualities.
b. Refine and develop these, with the potential need for more theological reflection and input in the trial year.

2. Leadership Development Pathway model (see Appendix 2)

The Methodist Church trials a leadership development pathway model for leaders within The Methodist Church. This seeks to:

a. Identify gaps in leadership provision at different stages of ordained ministers' and lay employees'/volunteers' 'journeys' and develop programmes and provision to fill those gaps. For ordained ministers, this is preparation for superintendency before being appointed as Superintendents, preparation for Senior Leadership roles before being appointed to them, and

ongoing leadership development for experienced District and Committee Chairs and vice-Chairs.

b. Integrate all of the current leadership provision offered by the Methodist Church into a holistic model.
c. Offer a model of progression to develop the leadership qualities outlined above as the 'golden threads' which run through all leadership in the Methodist Church.
d. Offer a range of approaches for leadership learning and development, ensuring that best practice from other organisations and sectors is utilised, whilst remaining faithful to the Christian and Methodist ethos of leadership.
e. As an overarching aim, equip leaders at all levels for high quality leadership in the current 'liminal' context in which the Methodist Church finds itself.

Some key points to note:

a. The task group felt that any sense of 'career progression' or implied linearity in leadership pathways was not appropriate. The model therefore seeks to identify those points where leadership discernment and support are most appropriately offered, and this is in line with the broad stages outlined in the ministerial competencies.
b. The orange boxes identify provision already in place for leadership development for ordained ministers (almost entirely for presbyters). It is recommended that this provision continues and some (e.g. Pilot New District Chairs' Programme) could be developed to include lay leaders within the church.
c. The green boxes detail the current provision available to both lay and ordained leaders within The Methodist Church.
d. The key questions seek to identify those factors which are critical for the success of the leadership pathways approach; some initial solutions for discussion are then offered.
e. The pathways (especially for lay colleagues and volunteers) will need refinement.

The Process of Discernment of Senior Leaders (and others)

There are broadly speaking two extremes of approach in discernment for senior leaders (and other roles): the 'talent spotting' approach, or the self-selecting approach. For the Methodist Church, it seems proportionate and appropriate to develop a 'blended' approach, which contains elements of the two.

The discernment process recommended here for senior leaders and others has two distinct stages:

Stage 1: Discernment for joining a leadership pathway programme. Suggested approach:

a. **Experience:** Appropriate level of experience (e.g. Superintendent or equivalent for potential senior leaders' development programme). Somebody appointed to a post via a different mechanism (for example, a Chair of a Connexional Committee) would automatically be enrolled onto a senior leaders' development programme, if appropriate and proportionate given their prior leadership experience.
b. **Application:** Ability to reflect critically on the five leadership qualities via a short (500 word) application. There will be a particular emphasis on knowledge and self-awareness in relation to issues of spirituality and diversity.
c. **Scrutiny of application**: By a representative group, including members of the Ministries Team, a member of the JDS Committee and, for senior posts, the Secretary or Assistant Secretary of the Conference, with consultation with the District Chair where needed.
d. **Mechanism for identification of gifted leaders:** The approach includes the mechanism for recommendation by existing District Chairs or those of an appropriate level. An application (see b.) would still be needed.

Stage 2: Ongoing discernment during leadership development programme

a. The leadership development programme, in and of itself, offers a space for discernment. It is recommended that criteria are developed to aid this process (such as engagement, ability to reflect critically through work with a mentor, a short written reflection of no more than 1000 words, applying the learning in context).
b. Care will need to be taken to ensure that the facilitation group (coaches, mentors, those delivering aspects of the programme) represents the diversity of those within the Church in line with, for example, *the JDS* strategy.

3. Normative expectations

a. There will be a normative expectation that those who discern that they are called to a Senior Leadership role within the life of the Church (such as a Chair of District) will be able to show that they have engaged with at least one aspect of leadership development within the range of the Church's

offering or with high-quality leadership support and development outside of the Church.

b. Care will be needed to think about how this applies to those preparing to become Superintendents, given the shortage of those we currently have. There will need to be a normative expectation that Superintendents engage with the New Supers' Induction programme. However, it might be that a trial group for Superintendents' discernment or leadership preparation gives participants the confidence to offer for superintendency.

4. Linking with other processes within the Church

a. We believe that the suggestions above can be implemented without revision to the Standing Orders. Currently, there is nothing specific in the Standing Orders about the qualities of those who thrive in Senior Leaders' roles (see, for example, SO 200(2)(b), SO 290 and SO 360). Thus, following a trial, it might be that a revision to Standing Orders is sought – but this is not necessary to be able to develop a trial.
b. Nonetheless, it will be important to liaise with the Secretary of the Conference so that the work on discernment of Senior Leaders and the appointment of District Chairs is linked.

5. Ongoing evaluation of discernment trial

The task group acknowledges and notes the following will be needed as the leadership development pathway approach is trialled:

a. Ongoing work to address the systemic barriers to those marginalised and traditionally under-represented in leadership roles.
b. Ensuring that there is synergy with the leadership development trial, and ministerial competencies, the 'ministerial covenant' and MDR. The group notes that MDR, if offered more systematically across Districts, could form a helpful part of the discernment and encouragement process.
c. The need to liaise with interview panels, especially related to District Chair panels, to ensure that they are fully aware of this work.
d. Ensuring that there is encouragement, and space, for ongoing leadership, learning and development for ordained ministers and lay employees.
e. Working with selected autumn synods for refinement and review of these proposals.

6. Next steps

The suggested next steps for implementation are as follows:

a. Recruit two small trial groups (around eight people in each) for the two discernment programmes, using the process above (but with more liaison with District Chairs at this point): this could be a mix of ordained and lay colleagues.
b. Work with experienced District Chairs at an individual level to develop a bespoke programme. This will also aid the future transition of the New District Chairs.
c. Ensure relevant finance is in place, either through the MVW budget and/or seeking other internal/external funding for this work.
d. Review the current New District Chairs' Pilot Programme to see how this work might be built into discernment programmes.
e. Review and ensure capacity for this work and set out a project management plan and evaluation process
f. Develop discernment programmes, using both internal and external expertise (eg from other religious institutions and third-sector organisations). Ensure that discernment programme content is mapped against characteristics drawn out from twenty-five leadership conversations in 2024.

*****RESOLUTION**

19/6. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION L
REVIEW OF LEARNING FOR MINISTRY

1 Background

At the 2024 Conference, a review of the learning that constitutes preparation for lay and ordained ministry was approved. Terms of reference were subsequently agreed by the Ministries Committee. The review was conceived as having two stages: a period of consultation resulting in an interim report to the 2025 Conference and a second stage considering a set of broader questions to follow.

In the first stage, the review objectives focused on

1. the efficacy of work at Cliff College and the Queen's Foundation
2. agreements with any other institutions
3. collaboration between the institutions and the Connexional Team

and to be noted were

A. the criteria and competencies for ministry agreed by Conference
B. changes in the HE and TEI landscapes
C. the priorities set for training by the Conference
D. the circumstances in which ministry will be exercised in the mid-21st century
E. the role of the Connexional Learning and Development Forum.

The initial output of the first stage of the review was to be an interim report to the Ministries Committee by 31 January 2025, followed by subsequent reporting to the Connexional Council and the 2025 Conference.

2 Approach to the review

Based upon the exploratory nature of the objectives outlined above, the review is being approached in an open and collegiate manner, framed as an opportunity for the MCB, the institutions that provide learning and a wider set of stakeholders. The review will be assessing the efficacy of learning being offered and the underpinning viability in the medium to long term, with a deliberate future-focus. Predefined targets have not been set by the Conference for the outcomes and recommendations of the review. Any short-term opportunities that present themselves during the review period will be considered carefully. However, short-term solutions are not the focus of the review.

3 Summary of activities to date

The review is being overseen by Richard Armiger, Head of Ministries and Learning, on behalf of the Connexional Team. The recruitment process for a reviewer began in August 2024. In October 2024, an independent consultant, Susan Martin, was recruited and started work on the review in November 2024. Susan Martin and Richard Armiger have met fortnightly to discuss planning for the review and to monitor progress.

In the period to Christmas 2024, the review activities focused on desk-based background research, including a thorough reading of *The Fruitful Field Project* (Conference Agenda, 2012) and the *Summary of the Outcomes of the Training Review* (Conference Agenda 2017) papers and reports summarising the programmes of learning delivered via the institutions. This desk-based work was accompanied by initial meetings with members of the Connexional Team.

In January 2025, a series of online introductory meetings was held with a selection of key stakeholders from the following institutions: Cliff College, The Queen's Foundation, and Southlands College. As well as an opportunity for the stakeholders to meet the reviewer, the meetings also provided parties time to discuss the themes of the review. Within the two main themes of the review, efficacy and viability, five supporting areas were considered. These are as follows:

Efficacy	Training priorities (as set by the Conference)
	Criteria and competencies for lay and ordained ministry
	Current circumstances of ministry
Viability	Position of HE sector
	Budget/financial pressures

Additionally, and to support the open and future-focused nature of the discussions, a series of prompts were shared with stakeholders, as follows:

- Overview of institution
- Specific aspects of ecumenical context to highlight
- Strategic changes due to take place that may be of interest to review
- Opportunities that the review may present
- Anything else?
- Wish list for outcomes of review
- Recommendations for who else the reviewer should meet

Some meetings covered all topics, others focussed on a few areas of particular interest to the stakeholder(s). Preliminary observations based on notes of those conversations are summarised in section 7.

The observations outlined in section 7 have been identified using thematic analysis. Themes were recorded if they emerged in comments across multiple stakeholders. However, it should be noted that the observations are not definitive, due to both the limited number of stakeholder meetings and the time available following completion of the first round of meetings (24 January) and the drafting of the report (26 January). A comprehensive analysis of the data will be completed in the coming months and themes will be updated accordingly.

A summary of the review timeline can be found in Appendix C and a list of stakeholders who engaged in stakeholder meetings up to 24 January 2025 can be found in Appendix D.

4 Timing of papers

The timing of the interim report to Ministries Committee in relation to the commencement of the review was noted by several stakeholders. One stakeholder expressed some

concern that, due to the timing of the paper deadlines for committees, the preliminary observations in the 2025 interim report to Ministries Committee, which were based on very early discussions, would 'stick'/be in place until 2026 and potentially all the way up to the 2026 Conference. Another highlighted that the combination of the tight turnaround from the review start date to production of the initial report and the significance of work of the review along with the decisions that need to be taken should be noted by the committee: 'The outcomes of the review will have an impact on the lifeblood of the Church for a decade to come.' Another commented that although the review had been 'thought about for a long time' within the MCB, it had only just started in practice and the 'sensemaking' that will come from the discussions with stakeholders takes some time. Members of, and attendees at, the Ministries Committee in February 2025 mirrored these concerns about the timing of the interim report in relation to the stage of the review. However, it was recognised that there is sufficient time for the necessary in depth consultation to take place over the coming months and leading to the final report and recommendations in 2026.

5 Topics out of scope of the review

Adopting an open approach to the review, and allowing stakeholders to focus on areas of their own interest and concern, meant that some topics raised fell outside of the scope of the review. One key topic that arose during the introductory conversations was the fundamental question of what the MCB wants and needs from its ministers. This question emerged in two ways: whether there was clarity of thinking and whether there was clarity of articulation.

The focus of the review is clearly linked to this question, as the answers will determine what education and training are required to equip an individual for the role of lay or ordained minister. However, it is beyond the scope of the review, and the expertise of the reviewer, to seek to answer this question directly. Instead, the reviewer will note when these questions and points are raised and seek to establish whether responses relate to current or legacy criteria and competencies. If sufficient evidence emerges across the wider group of stakeholders that the existing competencies are viewed as not 'fit for purpose', the review reports will highlight those observations for consideration elsewhere in the governance structure.

6 Legacy of Fruitful Field and the Training Review Group (TRG)

A number of stakeholders raised the continuing influence of 'The Fruitful Field' on the MCB and the institutions. The resulting changes, more so than the review and report itself, were seen as divisive, and the degree of compromise necessary to deliver change was the focus of criticism. One stakeholder commented that there were many positives to be found in the intent of Fruitful Field, with the main issue being the compromised implementation. There was a less positive view of the TRG and it was felt to have been an unproductive exercise.

The legacy of these two reviews is important to the current review both as the source of the architecture of the current learning portfolio and as a factor in how individuals may respond to a review of learning being undertaken. Colleagues affected by restructures resulting from the implementation of Fruitful Field and the TRG still hold posts in the MCB and the institutions. Along with the factors outlined in section 2 above, an open and collegiate approach to the review has been adopted to alleviate some of the concerns that this review could mirror those that have taken place previously. Although change will result from the review, a collaborative and transparent approach accompanied by regular communication will enable colleagues to input to discussions and to feedback on recommendations.

7 Preliminary observations

Although early in the review, a number of important themes emerged from initial discussions with stakeholders. These are:

1. *Lack of a connected and collaborative approach to learning*

   Stakeholders noted that the current approach to education and training for lay and ordained learning has a number of shortcomings and one that routinely emerged from the discussions was a lack of connectedness. The term 'silos' was repeatedly used by a number of stakeholders and one stakeholder pointed out that current structures were inhibiting innovation. Several stakeholders noted that a more collaborative approach to designing learning would help resolve such issues and ensure that the MCB does not miss opportunities. In fact, one stakeholder commented that being more joined up will actually create opportunities for the Church. A collaborative and connected approach was seen as a positive way of resolving existing inadequacies in the extant structures.

2. *Equity between lay and ordained training and education*

   The importance of equity of opportunity for lay and ordained in learning for ministry was raised by many of the stakeholders. One noted that, 'Until the recent past, the ordained took precedence. The policy position and rhetoric has now changed.' However, stakeholders commented either directly or indirectly that resourcing, access to resources and budgets did not align with policy and that learning for ordained ministry was still taking precedence. Indeed, one stakeholder had assumed that the review was only concerned with ordained ministry.

3. *Separation/gap between 'the centre' and local structures*

   This theme of a divide also manifested itself with regard to a separation or gap between the central teams and the local church structures and came up in all of

the institutional discussions to a greater or lesser degree. The institutions did not appear to have clear visibility of the work happening in and with the Learning Network and other parts of the Connexional Team, particularly at a local level, leading to a perception that there was not adequate 'connection' between the Learning Network and local structures (churches/districts etc). One stakeholder wondered how the MCB could more effectively capitalise on the work of the Learning Network and whether a 'better'/alternative resourcing model may help improve interaction.

4. Models of learning

Various questions about where, when and how individuals were engaging in learning were raised by many of the stakeholders. A few examples include:

The majority of stakeholders touched on the potential, and in some cases the imperative, of contextual/contextualised learning. The importance of learning relevant to, and happening in, local, in-circuit and community contexts was repeatedly stated. One stakeholder commented that they wanted to see 'learning for ministry plunged into the community', adding that 'ordination training should be outward-based and context-based.'

Two stakeholders expressed the view that a 'cell' or 'semi-monastic' model of training is no longer extant or, in the opinion of one stakeholder, appropriate for a 21st-century church. Several others queried whether the proportion of residential learning would, or should, be as high as current levels in the future.

There were a number of comments around the relative appropriateness of the extant models of learning. Stakeholders questioned whether a degree was the most relevant route to ministry and several queried whether lifelong learning opportunities were sufficient, accessible or prominent enough in the learning patterns available to ministers.

The potential for a hybrid model of in person and online learning was raised by many of the stakeholders, both from the point of view of learner experience and meeting the more varied needs of today's learners, and also from a financial perspective, seeking ways to reduce the overall cost of educating people for ministry. Stakeholders noted that significant advancements have been made in both the design of hybrid and online models of learning and the technology that supports those models. Some stakeholders encouraged greater utilisation of digital education.

Regardless of the particular perspective a stakeholder brought to the table, there was a general consensus that a different or new model was needed. This model

had a few common characteristics: it was more agile and facilitated flexibility; it was 'bigger' and more ambitious; it was looser (to help with finance) and gave agency to institutions; it was less traditional and was willing to embrace new models of learning being seen within the education sector. One stakeholder noted, 'Shaping learning for changing patterns of ministry needs changing patterns of learning.'

5. Education, training or learning

The review has been titled 'Review of Learning for Ministry', locating the focus of the review firmly on the experience of the learner. However, there was a question from a couple of stakeholders about whether there is a clear, well-articulated distinction between education, training and learning. Clarifying how and when both the MCB and the institutions are using these terms and how each relates to the 'learning' available for ministers was seen as a potentially valuable exercise.

6. Ecumenism and a broader environment

The majority of stakeholders explicitly and firmly supported the value to be gained from learning within environments that included people with different backgrounds and perspectives. They consistently felt that these environments more accurately represented the contexts in which lay and ordained ministers will find themselves working.

The value of the ecumenical context within which learning currently takes place was a strong theme in the discussions. However, several stakeholders noted that targeting an Anglican-only alliance should not be the focus. A broad ecumenical position was preferred as minimum, with two stakeholders emphasising the importance of exposure to either multi-faith or inter-faith communities during learning At the Ministries Committee, it was felt that an ecumenical foundation was vital, with multi-faith/inter-faith exposure as a supplementary rather than core component.

The concept of a broad and inclusive approach to learning was expanded by several stakeholders to include an international context. A globalised perspective and the opportunities presented by resourcing learning from a much wider pool were seen by several stakeholders as beneficial to both the learners and the MCB.

7. Governance and oversight

The importance of appropriate governance was raised by several stakeholders. Routes into decision-making were felt to be critical for institutions. Stakeholders perceived that there was currently no clearly identified governance path for

institutions to secure engagement with key issues. This route to decision-makers differed from access to individuals within the Connexional Team, who sometimes did not have the authority or capacity to effect change.

There was also the associated point of the nature of oversight. Stakeholders viewed the relationship with the MCB as often being 'transactional'. For example, annual reports did not prompt a follow up planning conversation or there was not an infrastructure within which to explore opportunities for innovation. Several stakeholders commented that they did not feel that the Church was benefitting from the breadth of institutional activities because there was not a good enough understanding of the potential contributions that institutions could make to the intellectual life of the MCB. Clarity of purpose, on requirements for outcomes, in relationships and of opportunity were all identified as ways to move from transacting to collaborating.

8. 'Future-focused', 'innovative' and 'opportunities'

During stakeholder meetings, there was an overarching consensus that what is currently in place is not fully working and is not agile and responsive to the changing needs of MCB, the changing circumstances for ministry and the changing profile of the Church's members. Stakeholders identified that a long-term, future-focused solution requires adaptable organisations that recognise the need for change and are ready to make the necessary changes. A number of stakeholders felt that there was an opportunity to be innovative in creating a solution and that there was an appetite to radically rethink learning for ministry. However, there was equally concern that the type and degree of change that will be required was going to be extremely challenging to achieve.

8 Next steps

This report does not contain conclusions and nor does it offer an analysis of findings. It is currently too early in the review to do either. However, the preliminary themes highlighted above indicate that the review, and the methodology adopted for the review, will need to provide sufficient and relevant evidence to assess the efficacy and viability of the current learning portfolio and facilitate the identification of a guiding set of principles for framing a future-focused learning offer for lay and ordained ministers.

Over the coming months, the review will seek to expand on, test and re-evaluate observations made to date. In order to achieve this outcome, the review consultant will continue to hold introductory and follow-up meetings with stakeholders and groups of stakeholders, as well as undertaking site visits, where possible, to facilitate face-to-face small group discussions. These meetings will be with a broad range of stakeholders,

including those from various institutions, Districts, circuits and local churches, members of the Connexional Team and representatives of external organisations, such as the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Church of England, and universities. Supplementary desk-based reviews of relevant reports will also be carried out. Up to this stage, the review has largely been focused on qualitative data. However, there will be some basic analysis of quantitative data in later stages of the review, for example student numbers, learner profiles, and completion rates.

Alongside the above review activities, the following actions approved by Ministries Committee:

1. *Steering Group*

   The review can offer a mechanism for addressing some of the governance concerns identified by stakeholders. A review Steering Group should be constituted of representatives from the institutional contributors to ministry learning, current/recent learners, members of the Connexional Team, those who supervise or have oversight of ministers and members of local churches/circuits. To avoid constituting a group that is too large to function effectively, members who represent multiple stakes in the review should be prioritised.

   The creation of a Steering Group to facilitate an open and collegiate review was approved at Ministries Committee and details of the group's purpose and composition will be agreed by members prior to convening the group.

2. *Communication*

   An important action that suggests itself based on the interim report is the need to regularly and accurately communicate with the wider body of stakeholders about the focus and the progress of the review. Confirmation of the scope, timescales and progress of the review will provide stakeholders with valuable understanding of its purpose and potential impact.

   The Ministries Committee approved the establishment of a communications plan for the period of the review and its implementation. The Head of Ministries and Learning will work with the Review Consultant and the Director of Communications to devise and roll out the plan.

3. *Investigation of models for learning*

   An important set of observations outlined in section 7 were related to the potential options for a new model of learning. As such a core aspect of the

review, this topic requires further, focused consideration by stakeholders. It was proposed that a two-stage meeting cycle is set up to facilitate consideration of options:

1. An initial meeting with institutional representatives and key members of the Connexional Team, facilitated by the review consultant, to consider future-focussed learning for ministry and to outline desired characteristics of a model for learning. This group would act as a 'non-threatening, creative, intellectual' community that has a mandate to broadly discuss what learning is needed and how it might be delivered. (May/June 2025)

2. A dedicated meeting of the Connexional Learning and Development Forum tasked with reflecting on the proposed model and characteristics identified in the initial stakeholder meeting and to articulate more fully potential components for the model. Membership of the CLDF to be expanded to ensure representation from all institutional partners. (Sept/Oct 2025)

The outputs from both meetings will inform the review's final report and recommendations submitted to Conference 2026.

The Ministries Committee approved the creation of an institutional stakeholder group to facilitate a collaborative approach to identifying an innovative and future-focused model of learning for ministry and the subsequent embedding of the initial proposals made by the institutional stakeholder group into the work of the Connexional Learning and Development Forum.

*****RESOLUTION**

19/7. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION M
APPEALS PROCESSES

1 In October 2021 the Methodist Council agreed to a proposal from the Ministries Committee that in the light of changing selection procedures and patterns of oversight the Committee establish a Task Group to review the Appeals processes concerning candidates for the ministry, student ministers, probationers and others. The summary paper presented to the Council can be found at https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/counc_oct-21_mc21-85-appeals-processes.pdf.

2 The terms of reference for the Task Group were:

- To explore the relationship between the Church's understanding of discernment and the 'right' to appeal decisions;
- To review the current Standing Orders on appeals/reviews for candidates and ministers in training and to consider if these might be clarified and simplified;
- To review the timescales of appeal processes;
- To consider the implications of ministers in training returning to the context in which an original (but overturned) decision for discontinuance was made;
- To ensure that processes include the principles of justice, dignity and solidarity and compliance legislation;
- To review the protocols for the hearings of appeals.

3 The Task Group made an Interim Report to the Ministries Committee in May 2022. In the light of comments received it produced a revised version of the report in January 2023 and made a second Interim Report to the Committee in February 2023.

4 That second report explained that the Task Group was looking to make as coherent and consistent as possible all the Appeal processes relating to decisions about what might be termed initial ministry with the Methodist Church in Britain (ie cases of the acceptance or not of candidates for the ministry, the continuance or discontinuance of students, the continuance or discontinuance of probationers, decisions about the transfer of ministers of other conferences or churches or the reinstatement of former ministers into Full Connexion, and matters of competence dealt with under Standing Order 042 'Inability to Fulfil Requirements'). Amongst that range of cases, for example, a decision to discontinue a student or probationer is very similar to a decision to remove a minister from Full Connexion after the minister has been ordained. There should therefore be some coherence and consistency between the processes for appeal in both cases. It was recognised that coherence and consistency do not require absolute similarity between all appeals, but any divergences should be rationally defensible as being due to the requirements of the particular context in each case.

5 However, at the time of that second report a major review of the Complaints and Discipline system as set out in Part 11 of Standing Orders was being conducted. The work of the Task Group was therefore paused until the outcomes of that review were clear.

The Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders eventually reported to the Conference of 2024 (Agenda item 32). It started that 'There are no recommended changes to appeals following a discipline hearing.' (Agenda p 414). The work could therefore

proceed, and the Ministries Committee now presents the following report and recommendations.

General Considerations

6 Candidating; the training of student ministers; probation; and the procedures for assessing the applications of Ministers of Other Churches to transfer to the British Conference: all of these are about the discernment of ministerial vocation. Sight of that should not be lost, especially when appeals concern technical breaches of procedural rules or narrow construal of particular facts. Alongside that priority, however, the procedures of the Church need to be fair and, where appropriate, open to challenge. Knowing where and when it is appropriate to challenge a recommendation is another form of discernment, but in a connexional church clashes of discernment about ministerial vocation should lead to a moment of deeper reflection and, in some cases, the check and balance of a review of the initial judgement.

7 Trust between those with oversight and those they oversee is an essential element in discernment and ministerial formation. Ideally, all the processes during candidating, training and probation, and indeed beyond in ordained ministry, should meet both the needs outlined above. All too easily, however, appeal procedures can be perceived as judicial and adversarial, with "winners" and "losers". One result of some appeal processes in recent years has been an erosion of trust in the Church's processes when different bodies make contradictory decisions. Those bodies whose decisions or recommendations are overturned can be distressed and demotivated. Those individuals who "succeed" on appeal can be tempted to an unhealthy feeling that they have 'got one over' on the Church's authorities. Social media can enable this kind of unhelpful attitude to be widely broadcast.

8 So far as recommendations of discontinuance from training or probation are concerned one very unsatisfactory result of some successful appeals is that student ministers and probationers return to the oversight of people who are known to have made the initial recommendation to discontinue. Whereas a probationer can sometimes be re-stationed in a different District, that may entail a huge disruption to family life. No such remedy is available for student ministers now that we have just the one training institution. Although it should still be possible to appeal successfully against a recommendation, those hearing any appeal should exercise careful discernment about the judgements of those who have worked most closely with the student minister or probationer concerned, and also about the implications of any decisions they might make.

9 Similarly, the multiple layers of appeal available in relation to recommendations of discontinuance leave student ministers and probationers in a state of limbo for extended periods before a final outcome is determined. Can they continue with their studies and, in the case of probationers, with day-to-day ministry while the possibility of discontinuance hangs over them? Can they reasonably be expected to do so with the pressures of pending appeals, and with important relationships in question?

10 All of these considerations lead us to question the current lengthy and elaborate appeal procedures. Many of those concerning candidating were developed before the introduction of forms of selection based on evidence-based discernment. Those concerning students were developed when there were multiple training institutions, some with local oversight committees and others where MCPOC had to act as the local oversight committee. In a church much smaller than it was when these procedures were developed, and with far fewer candidates, student ministers and probationers, we believe that a significant streamlining of the avenues of appeal is needed.

Outline Proposals: Principles

11 The appeals processes shall be clearly evidence-based.

12 Those sitting on appeals committees shall be trained and fully conversant with the procedures that have led to the decision which is being appealed. Where required, they shall have available to them expertise and advice on matters of neurodiversity, occupational health and other policies relating to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

13 Candidates, students and probationers and ministers of other churches are at different stages on a single trajectory of discernment, formation and development. Appeals procedures therefore need to take account of the different circumstances applying to each, but also need to ensure consistency between the stages as well as across the whole Connexion. This particularly applies where the appeal is made because an Occupational Health report has led to the overturning of an initial recommendation by the Committee for Discernment of Ordained Vocation that a candidate should be accepted; or against an allocation of a student minister to a particular training pathway.

14 Appeals may only be submitted by the candidate, student minister, probationer or minister from another church, supported where desired by submissions from other interested parties.

15 Appeals shall not be complete re-hearings of the original case, but only possible on stated grounds, such as

i. that there was a material procedural irregularity in how the matter was dealt with by the original body;
ii. that the original body failed to take into account all relevant matters or took into account irrelevant ones;
iii. that in the light of events occurring since the decision, or of evidence of which the person appealing could not reasonably be expected to have been aware at the time, substantial doubt has been cast upon the correctness of the decision.

16 Appeals shall be submitted to clearly established 'gatekeepers' who shall in each case judge whether the criteria for proceeding to the hearing of an appeal have been met. It is proposed that the Chair and Convenor of the Connexional Appeal Committee (see para 18 below) shall be designated to fulfil this function.

17 There shall be one main point of decision-making in the initial processes leading to the appeal (although various streams may feed in to the making of that decision), and a single possibility and place of appeal.

18 A Connexional Appeal Committee shall be appointed by the Ministries Committee to deal with appeals by candidates, student ministers, probationers and minister of other churches in all the above categories. This shall replace the panel currently appointed by the Ministries Committee under Standing Order 251 and widen its brief. It shall also replace both the Connexional Review Committee provided under Standing Order 031 for cases of Continuance in Training and Probation and also the committee hearing any appeal against the decision of that Review Committee under Standing Order 032, merging and fulfilling the functions of both without the possibility of further review.

19 Panels shall be drawn from the Connexional Appeal Committee to hear particular cases. Members of the Committee shall be fully trained in the processes of candidature and probation that are relevant to the panels on which they sit. They shall not have current involvement in those processes of selection, training and formation about which they hear appeals.

Proposed Procedures

20 In summary, the following processes shall apply:

In the case of ***candidates***

- the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation shall make a decision (see Section 71 of Standing Orders, especially SO 714)
- if the candidate appeals, the Chair and Convenor of the Connexional Appeal Committee shall decide whether the appeal satisfies the established criteria for appeals (see para 15 above)
- a Panel of the Connexional Appeal Committee shall hear and resolve any eligible appeal.

In the case of candidates appealing against a ***decision made in the light of an Occupational Health assessment***

- the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC) shall make the initial decision as set out in Standing Order 715 (4) to (6)
- if the candidate appeals, the Chair and Convenor of the Connexional Appeal Committee shall decide whether the appeal satisfies the established criteria for appeals (see para 15 above)
- a Panel of the Connexional Appeal Committee shall hear and resolve any eligible appeal.

In the case of candidates or student ministers appealing against an ***allocation to a training pathway***

- a connexional allocations panel, acting under the oversight of MCPOC, shall make the initial decision about allocation under Standing Order 722 (3)
- if the candidate or student appeals, the Chair and Convenor of the Connexional Appeal Committee shall decide whether the appeal satisfies the established criteria for appeals (see para 15 above)
- a Panel of MCPOC shall hear and resolve any eligible appeal. *[This will require an amendment to SO 722(3) If an appeal against allocation is to the same body as the other cases in this list (a) it raises the importance of allocation and (b) it makes it harder to say that there cannot be appeals against initial stationing.]*.

In the case of ***ministers of other churches applying to transfer***

- the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation shall make a decision (see Section 73 of Standing Orders)
- if the applicant appeals, the Chair and Convenor of the Connexional Appeal Committee shall decide whether the appeal satisfies the established criteria for appeals (see para 15 above)

- a Panel of the Connexional Appeal Committee shall hear and resolve any eligible appeal.
  NB, this procedure shall not apply to decisions about whether someone shall be recognised and regarded as a minister in Full Connexion with the Conference, as that is primarily a technical judgement about eligibility.

In the case of ***student ministers***

- The Queen's Oversight Committee (QOC) shall make a recommendation
- a panel of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC) shall hear the whole case and make a decision
- if the student minister appeals, the Chair and Convenor of the Connexional Appeal Committee shall decide whether the appeal satisfies the established criteria for appeals (see para 15 above)
- A Panel of the Connexional Appeal Committee shall hear and resolve any eligible appeal (see SO 031).
  NB, there shall no longer be a right of appeal against the decision of the Connexional Appeal Committee as currently set out in SO 032, or further appeal as set out in SO 035.

In the case of ***probationers***

- a District Probationers Committee (and, where appropriate, the relevant district Presbyteral Synod) shall make a recommendation
- a MCPOC panel shall hear the whole case and make a decision
- if the probationer appeals, the Chair and Convenor of the Connexional Appeal Committee shall decide whether the appeal satisfies the established criteria for appeals (see para 15 above)
- a Panel of the Connexional Appeal Committee shall hear and resolve any eligible appeal (see SO 031).
  NB, there shall no longer be a right of appeal against the decision of the Connexional Appeal Committee as currently set out in SO 032, or further appeal as set out in SO 035.

21 At any hearing of an appeal the appellant shall present their case and answer any questions, supported by one other person who shall have the right to speak. The relevant connexional officer or officer of the committee making the decision being appealed shall present the case of that committee and answer any questions, supported if appropriate by one other person with close knowledge of what happened in the processes of that committee.

22 In dealing with cases concerning candidates, the Connexional Appeals Committee shall have the power not just to accept fully or to reject completely a candidate's offer, but also to recommend that where appropriate the candidate be dispensed from repeating those requirements of the earlier stages of the process of candidating, should they choose to offer again in a future year.

23 In dealing with cases of appeals against discontinuance by student ministers or probationers, the Connexional Appeals Committee shall have the power to recommend that the oversight or other arrangements for the student minister or probationer be altered if the decision is that she or he is not to be discontinued.

Reporting to the Conference

24 The Connexional Appeals Committee shall report the outcomes of its work to the Conference (in the first instance in the Presbyteral Session or Conference Diaconal Committee as appropriate). The decisions of its Panels shall become effective from the date stated in the notification of the decision.

25 As noted in paragraph 4, there are similarities between decisions about (a) the acceptance or not of candidates for the ministry and of minister of other churches applying to transfer, (b) the continuance or discontinuance of student ministers and probationers, and (c) the removal of ministers from Full Connexion and reinstatement of former ministers in it. There should therefore be some coherence and consistency between the processes for reporting these matters to the Conference.

26 There are, however, discrepancies which point to systemic problems. In our discipline procedures, a charge is found to be established and the penalty judged to be one of removing a minister from being in Full Connexion is in essence treated as a final decision made on behalf of the Conference and takes effect immediately or at a date decided by the Discipline Committee dealing with the case. The result is reported to the Conference, which is not asked to approve or amend it.

27 The only exception is if a formal appeal is made on particular stated grounds. Such an appeal can be made by the Presenting Officer in the case or by the Respondent, or if the matter is one of the leniency or severity of the sentence, by the President. Procedures are laid down for how such an appeal is heard and adjudicated.

28 Beyond that Appeal Hearing there is the possibility of a further appeal by one of the parties to the Conference, but again on restricted grounds. If the issue is a matter of interpretation of doctrine, it is heard (in the type of case outlined above) by the full Presbyteral Session. If it is concerned with other matters, it is heard by a committee of 15 acting on behalf of the Conference.

29 Only in the case of such a Further Appeal on a matter of doctrine does the full session of the Conference make a decision about an individual case (and there it is a matter of a decision about the interpretation of a particular doctrine more than about the particular individual – although admittedly the decision about the doctrine may have consequences for that individual).

30 Both an Appeal and a Further Appeal to the Conference are treated as judicial procedures reviewing other judicial procedures. The Presenting Officer and the Respondent may be present, heard, supported, and legally represented at both. The procedures mainly deal with matters of report: new evidence can only be introduced in very particular circumstances.

31 There are some similarities between the above and the processes for making decisions about (a) the acceptance or not both of candidates for the ministry and of minister of other churches applying to transfer to the Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain; (b) the continuance or discontinuance of student ministers and probationers; and (c) the reception or not of presbyters and deacons into Full Connexion. As proposed in the earlier sections of this report in each of these cases there are in general terms procedures leading to an initial decision and then the possibility of appeals on stated grounds. Those appeals are heard in courts of the church that are formally constituted and consist of a range of people who are carefully chosen and trained in what they are doing.

32 The results of these processes, including appeals, are then reported to the Conference. Over the last 30 years we have moved to a position where the Conference formally adopts the results but is not expected to resist or amend them, although members of the Conference still have the right to do so. But it is increasingly accepted that the point of the matter being before the full Conference, including in closed sessions, is not to deal with individual cases but so that trends can be recognised and general principles decided which will influence the way that the procedures work in the future.

33 Other cases such as reinstatements, however, are not always treated in the same way. The Conference has been known to debate and at times reject or vary recommendations about individuals. Members of the Conference have intervened

who happen to have been party to earlier parts of the process, or who profess to have knowledge of some aspects of a case, but who have not been present in the most recent process which has reviewed and balanced all factors in the case. The person who is at the centre of the case is not present or represented and so cannot respond to anything that is said. There is therefore a strong possibility that the process in the Conference will not be fair, just or discerning.

34 To ensure that there are better processes at the Conference and consistency about all the cases that are dealt with in this report, any report to the Conference about a case could be circulated in confidence to the members of the particular Session of the Conference in advance, rather than being made orally for the first time at the point of decision-making in that Session. Anyone seeking to amend the proposed resolution attached to that report would then have to indicate that intention in advance. A Committee of Reference under Standing Order 137 could then be appointed to act on behalf of the Conference and hear the matter. Anyone wishing to raise matters could present their case to the Committee of Reference and the subject of the case or a representative together with an officer of the body making the recommendation to the Conference could reply. The decision of the Committee of Reference would then be formally reported to the Conference.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

19/8. The Conference receives the Report.

19/9. The Conference amends Standing Orders as follows:

251 Appeals. ***(1)*** The Ministries Committee shall appoint an Appeals Panel consisting of persons who are not members of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation ***or other committee against whose decision an appeal has been submitted*** to deal with appeals under Standing Order ***033, 040(11),*** 716**,** ~~or~~ 722(3) ***or 730(10)***. ***Members shall be drawn from the Appeals Panel to form committees to hear each particular case.*** The Ministries Committee shall also appoint ***a chair of the Appeals Panel and*** a convener of Appeals Committees.

(2) Members of each Appeal Committee shall be trained and fully conversant with the procedures that have led to the decision that is being appealed.

(3) Appeals Committees shall undertake their tasks in accordance with principles and procedures approved and published by the Ministries Committee.

716 Appeals. (1) The candidate~~, or with the candidate's consent the candidate's Superintendent or Chair,~~ may, by notice given in writing to the secretary of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation, or in the case of an appeal against a recommendation of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee in accordance with Standing Order 715(5) above to the secretary of that committee, within fourteen days of notification to the candidate in writing of the decision of the committee, appeal against the recommendation of the committee, on one or more of the following grounds:

(i) that the procedural provisions of this Section ***or the guidelines issued by the Ministries Committee*** have not been correctly followed ***to such an extent as to make the recommendation inappropriate***;
(ii) that ~~there are facts which were not available to~~ the committee ***failed to take into account all relevant matters or took into account irrelevant ones to such an extent*** ~~and which are such~~ as to make its recommendation inappropriate;
(iii) that ~~the judgment of the committee, as conveyed to the candidate in the official letter informing the candidate that the offer made has been declined, is questioned in writing by both the Superintendent and the Chair of the candidate.~~ ***in the light of events occurring since the decision, or of evidence of which the appellant could not reasonably be expected to have been aware at the time, substantial doubt has been cast upon the correctness of the decision.***

The notice of appeal must specify the grounds of appeal and a reasoned statement to support the appeal shall be supplied by the appellant.

(1A) The chair of the Appeals Panel and convener of the Appeals Committees shall judge whether the grounds of appeal have been sufficiently established for the case to proceed to a hearing by a committee.

(2) Every ~~such~~ case ***that is to be heard*** shall be considered by an Appeals Committee of eight persons, of whom seven shall be a quorum. In the case of an appeal by ~~or on behalf of~~ a candidate for the diaconate the committee shall always include at least two deacons. The members of the committee shall be selected by the convener from the panel appointed by the Ministries Committee under Standing Order 251. The convener shall be present throughout the meeting of the committee in order to advise on procedure and practice but shall not speak on the substance of the case and shall have no vote.

(3) The Appeals Committee shall be supplied at its meeting with copies of all papers from Stage One and Stage Two of the appellant's Discernment of Ordained Vocation process in the case of every appeal and, where the appeal is under Standing Order

715(7) above, the Occupational Health assessment, whether that appeal is against the recommendation of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee~~, and the secretary of the relevant committee shall expound its case for its recommendation~~.

(4) ~~The candidate and any other appellant specified in clause (1) above shall have the right to attend the committee, to be present for the presentation of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation's case or that of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, as the case may be, and to reply. The candidate may be accompanied by a presbyter or deacon of the candidate's own choice.~~ ***The hearing of the appeal shall be conducted under the provisions of this Standing Order and in accordance with the principles and procedures approved by the Ministries Committee under Standing Order 251(3).***

(5) The candidate may be questioned about the grounds of the appeal and, where the appeal is under heads (ii) or (iii) of clause (1) above, the issues cited in the judgment of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee but there shall be no general rehearing of the case or repetition of the assessment procedures, as the case may be, of the relevant ~~Committee~~***committee***.

(6) ***At the end of the hearing,*** ~~A~~***a***fter the ~~candidate (if present), any other~~ appellant and the secretary of the relevant committee have withdrawn, the Appeals Committee shall decide whether or not to uphold the appeal.

(7) Subject to the above the Appeals Committee shall regulate its own procedure.

(8) The Appeals Committee shall report to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may be, with the number of votes cast for and against its recommendation, no neutrals being allowed. Any recommendation at variance with that of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (as appropriate) shall require not less than six votes in favour.

722 Pre-ordination Training. . . .

. . . (3) The connexional allocations panel, acting under the oversight of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall have the responsibility for:

(i) allocating each candidate to full-time or part-time pre-ordination training and to the appropriate training institution; and

(ii) determining which candidates are to receive financial assistance towards the cost of such training in the form of bursaries (and if so, at what level).

Any appeal made against a decision upon the matters covered by (i) or (ii) above shall be ~~dealt with by the Appeals Panel appointed under Standing Order 251.~~ ***made on the grounds set out in Standing Order 716(1). Where the chair of the Appeals Panel and convener of the Appeals Committees appointed under Standing Order 251(1) judge that the grounds of appeal have been sufficiently established for the case to proceed to a hearing it shall be dealt with by an Appeal Committee appointed by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee for that purpose. The hearing of the appeal shall be conducted under the provisions of this Standing Order and in accordance with the principles and procedures approved by the Ministries Committee under Standing Order 251(3).***

730 Ministerial Transfer between Churches.

. . .(10) The applicant may, by notice in writing to the appropriate Team member responsible for candidates for the presbyterate or the diaconate, apply for a review of the recommendation of the committee, specifying ***under which of*** the grounds of appeal ***set out in Standing Order 716(1) it is being made***. The notice shall be given so as to reach the Team member within fourteen days of notification in writing to the applicant of the decision of the committee. The appeal shall be dealt with under Standing Order 716~~(2)~~ ***(1A)*** to (8) substituting "applicant" for "candidate" throughout, except that:

~~(i) there shall be no other appellant than the applicant;~~
(ii) the phrase "Stage One and Stage Two of" should be omitted in Standing Order 716(3), and "relevant connexional officer" substituted for "Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee";
~~(iii) the phrase "and any other appellant specified in clause (1) above" in Standing Order 716(4) should be omitted;~~
(iv) the phrase "relevant connexional officer" should be substituted for "Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee" in Standing Order 716(8).

Section 03 Continuance in Training and Probation

030 Scope of Section. (1) The provisions of this Section relate to students and probationers in training or on trial for the presbyterate or the diaconate and in this Section 'student' and 'probationer' shall be construed accordingly.

(2) The provisions of Standing Orders 031 to 034 shall apply when ~~either of~~ the oversight committee concerned recommends discontinuance (that is to say that a student cease

training or that a probationer be not continued on trial or be not recommended for ordination, as the case may be) but there is no charge which would, if established, put in question ~~his or her~~***the*** standing ***of the relevant student or probationer*** as a member of the Church or as a local preacher.

(2A) . . .

(3) For the purposes of this Section the oversight committees concerned are:

(i) for presbyteral and diaconal students the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee and the local oversight committee appointed under Standing Order 252(11);
(ii) *[deleted]*
(iii) for presbyteral and diaconal probationers, including those who are in part-time circuit appointments, the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee and the district Probationers Committee.

(4) If during the annual review of the progress of students and probationers the question of discontinuance of a student or probationer arises for the first time at some stage later than ***regular meetings of the bodies concerned allow*** ~~that referred to in clause (2) above~~ then so much of the procedure prescribed in Standing Orders 031 to 034, or an analogous procedure, shall be followed, and with such adaptations, as the church courts considering the case think fit.

(5) . . .

031 Initial Committee. (1) When ~~this Standing Order applies~~ ***the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee in consultation with a student oversight committee or district Probationers Committee as appropriate has confirmed a recommendation of discontinuance and the student or probationer concerned wishes to appeal, the case shall be dealt with by*** a connexional ~~Review~~***Appeal*** ~~Committee, consisting of five persons, shall be appointed by the Secretary of the Conference, who shall also appoint an additional person to be its secretary, and that committee shall be convened by its secretary to consider and make a decision upon the question of discontinuance~~ ***under Standing Order 251 in accordance with the provisions of this Section and the principles and procedures approved by the Ministries Committee under Standing Order 251(3)***.

(1A) The student or probationer concerned shall submit any appeal within fourteen days of being sent notification in writing of the decision of the oversight committee, on one or more of the following grounds:

(i) that the procedural provisions of this Section or the guidelines issued by the Ministries Committee have not been correctly followed;
(ii) that the committee failed to take into account all relevant matters or took into account irrelevant ones to such an extent as to make its recommendation inappropriate;
(iii) that in the light of events occurring since the decision, or of evidence of which the appellant could not reasonably be expected to have been aware at the time, substantial doubt has been cast upon the correctness of the decision.

(1B) The chair of the Appeals Panel and convener of the Appeals Committees appointed under Standing Order 251 shall judge whether the grounds of appeal have been sufficiently established for the case to proceed to a hearing by a committee.

(1C) The member of the Connexional Team responsible for student presbyters, student deacons, presbyteral probationers or diaconal probationers, as the case may be, shall be responsible with the officers of the relevant oversight committee for collating and presenting a statement of the grounds for recommending discontinuance and any reports or other documents which it is intended to place before the ~~connexional Review~~ ***Appeal*** Committee. These shall be submitted to the ~~secretary~~ ***convener*** of the committee who shall immediately supply a copy to the student or probationer concerned. The committee shall not meet until at least fourteen days after the copy or, as the case may require, the last of the copies, has been supplied.

~~(1B)~~***(1D)*** The student or probationer concerned shall send to the ~~secretary~~ ***convener*** of the committee any material which he or she wishes to be put before the ~~connexional Review~~ ***Appeal*** Committee not less than seven days before the date fixed for its meeting, unless the person appointed to chair the meeting permits a late submission of such material upon being satisfied that such material could not have been sent earlier.

~~(1C)~~***(1E)*** If, after making further inquiries in respect of the material supplied by the student or probationer under clause (1~~B~~***D***) above, the person presenting the case for discontinuance (as determined by clause (2) below) wishes to put before the meeting the result of those inquiries, the committee shall not meet until at least seven days after the student or probationer has been informed of such result and sent any additional documents intended to be relied on. The date of the meeting shall, if necessary, be adjourned for this purpose. It may also be adjourned at the request of the person presenting the case where the chair of the committee has permitted a late submission of material by the student or probationer under clause (1~~B~~***D***) above.

~~(1D) The secretary of the connexional Review Committee shall ensure that students and probationers are aware of their right to be accompanied each by a friend and shall encourage and assist them to avail themselves of that right. To that end the President shall maintain a list of persons, including senior presbyters and deacons, willing to act as friends.~~

(2) At the meeting of the committee the case for discontinuance shall be presented by the appropriate member of the Connexional Team or officer of the oversight committee concerned, as may be agreed with the person appointed to chair the meeting. The student or probationer shall have the right to attend and respond and to be accompanied by a friend, who shall also have the right to speak.

~~(3) Members of the committee who wish to raise any matter not referred to in the written statement of grounds shall do so before the student or probationer leaves the meeting and both the person presenting the case for discontinuance and the student or probationer shall be given an opportunity to deal with it (for which purpose the meeting shall be adjourned if necessary); no fresh matter shall be raised after the student or probationer has left.~~

~~(3A) The secretary of the Review Committee shall make the student or probationer aware of the importance of attending the meeting. If he or she then refuses or fails to attend, the committee must consider the reason for his or her absence and may adjourn for that purpose. The committee may then, if it thinks fit, hear the case for discontinuance and reach a decision in the absence of the student or probationer.~~

(4) The committee shall decide whether to accept the recommendation of discontinuance made by the relevant oversight committee, solely on the basis of the documents supplied in accordance with this Standing Order, the submissions presented at the meeting and any other documents which both the person presenting the case for discontinuance and the student or probationer agree that the committee may consider, and shall record its reasons for its decision. Where the committee decides to accept the recommendation, the ***date at which it*** ~~decision~~ shall take effect ***shall be stated*** ~~as soon as the period within which an appeal can be made has expired without the giving of a notice of appeal~~.

~~(4A) The secretary shall take notes of the proceedings which, together with the original written statement of grounds, any documents brought in evidence and the committee's decision and reasons for it, shall form the basis of the committee's report in the case of an appeal.~~

(5) The decision of the committee shall be communicated to the student or probationer in writing. ***There shall be no possibility of further appeal.***

DELETE STANDING ORDERS 032 (Right of Appeal) AND 033 (Procedure on Appeals)

034 Reports upon Decisions. The ~~secretary of the Review Committee or, if there has been an appeal, the~~ reporting officer of the Appeal Committee shall report to the next ensuing Conference in its Presbyteral Session, or to the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may require, any decisions made under this Section.

DELETE STANDING ORDER 035 (Further Appeal)

Section 04 Ministerial Competence

040 Failure to Fulfil Obligations . . .

(11) The person concerned may within two weeks of receiving the written communication under clause (6) above appeal against the action of the committee to the President in writing, setting out the reasons for the appeal. The President or the Vice-President on ~~his or her~~***the President's*** behalf shall ~~consider the documentary evidence before the committee including any notes of meetings and the committee's record of its decision and the reasons for it, or may~~ appoint a committee of not more than three persons from the ~~connexional~~ ***Appeals*** Panel established under Standing Order ***251*** ~~290~~ to consider the appeal on ~~his or her~~ ***the President's*** behalf (holding a hearing for the purpose if the committee thinks it necessary) and advise on a reply. The reply of the President or Vice-President upon the appeal shall be final.

19/10. The Conference directs the Ministries Committee to consult further and bring detailed proposals to the Conference of 2026 about the proposal in paragraphs 26-35 of the report

SECTION N
UPDATE ON THE JDS STRATEGY

The Council received a report from the officers within the Connexional Team concerning the progress made in developing and implementing the JDS strategy recommendations during the connexional year 2024/25. The Conference adopted the strategy in 2021, and this included ten main recommendations.

The emphasis in 2024 had been to reflect on what had been achieved in terms of JDS strategy implementation, and to embed and integrate the strategy throughout the work

of the Connexional Team. In addition, priority was given to the capacity building of the District EDI Officers. A focus has been on encouraging Connexional Team members to complete Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) for any major change and significant decision-making processes. In addition the Connexional Team has been encouraged to engage with members of the Solidarity Circles as part of the process.

District EDI Officers

District EDI Officers have been appointed in most Districts and in addition there is a growing number of Circuit EDI Officers. The aim is for every District and Circuit to appoint one or more EDI officers. Significant effort was made to build the capacity of these officers, by providing a number of online workshops through the year.

Solidarity Circles

Solidarity Circles were established to help the Methodist Church to understand the challenges and barriers faced by people from diverse backgrounds within the Church which have prevented full participation in the life of the Church. Solidarity Circles have been established as safe spaces for individuals within the Church to share their experiences, support one another, and communicate concerns to the Connexional Team and wider Church, for opportunities to resolve issues. Each Circle focuses on a specific aspect of diversity, aiming to promote understanding and inclusion within the Methodist community.

Equality Impact Assessment

The Methodist Church Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is designed to help the Connexional Team, Local Churches, Circuits and individuals ensure that policies, practices and decision-making processes are fair, inclusive and transparent. The EIA is intended to ensure that individual members of the Church are not inadvertently disadvantaged or discriminated against as a result of new policies or major change.

Discrimination and Abuse Response Service (DARS)

The Discrimination and Abuse Response Service is pivotal in addressing issues of discrimination and abuse within the Church. Initially piloted in two Districts, DARS expanded to ten Districts and has supported a number of individuals throughout 2024. Full implementation across all Districts is scheduled for spring 2026.

Truth and Reconciliation

The Truth and Reconciliation project has entered a critical consultation phase to ensure shared expectations and understanding of the process. Key developments from the steering group, formed in summer 2024, included the decision to host Roundtables in 2025 with core stakeholders within the Methodist Church (including JDS committee, former Presidents and Vice-Presidents, senior leaders in the Connexional Team, District Chairs, Cliff College leaders) and key partners (including HE learning centres, Place for Hope, other identified specialists and practitioners in truth and reconciliation work). The Susanna Wesley Foundation continues to support and to help to shape this important work. This consultation is scheduled to be completed by the end of the current connexional year.

The Council has planned a conversation with representatives of the JDS Committee at its meeting in June 2025, which will take place after the submission of items for the Conference Agenda.

*****RESOLUTION**

19/11. The Conference receives the Report.

20. Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland

Contact name and details	Mrs Janet Bryer (Fund Treasurer) districtadmin@methodistchurchinscotland.net

Legal

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

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

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

1. Administration

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

1.2 The Trustees are:

OFFICIAL: The Revd S Mark Slaney – Chair of the Scotland District; Mr Peter Mills (to 31 August 2024), Mrs Janet Bryer (from 1 September 2024) - Treasurer of the Scotland District; the Revd Adam J Stevenson –Superintendents' Representative; Vacancy – District Grants Officer.

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

The General Committee consists of the Scotland District Policy Committee.

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

Fund Treasurer – Mrs Janet Bryer
Acting Lay General Secretary – District Administrator

2. Financial

2.1 The accounts for 2024 were presented by the fund treasurer to the Trustees and General Committee in March 2025 and these were accepted for presentation to Synod and completion of the OSCR return.

2.2 The incoming resources of the Fund for the year ended 31 December 2024 was £22,831 (2023 £15,562). The change over the previous year was due to repayments of grants totalling £6,470 after the sale of the relevant properties and higher interest received from the CFB account offset by repayments in one loan. The Circuit subscriptions under SO 476 remain suspended.

2.3 The net of incoming resources for the year after deducting grants paid and expenses was an increase of £5,943 (2023 £14,839) with CFB capitalised surplus funds of £168,814 (2023 £155,954) and investments valued at £280,260 (2023 £265,525).

2.4 Balances at 31 December 2024

General Fund £5,349 (2023 £10,657)
Grant fund £105,960 (2023 £99,193), recoverable grants £366,018 (2023 £350,488)
Loan Account £62,633 (2023 £58,149), outstanding loans £4,375 (2023 £5,325)
The overall Fund value at 31 December 2024 was £454,203 (2023 £433,525)

3. Grants

Grants previously approved paid totalling £Nil (2023 £Nil).
Grants approved and paid out this year totalled £16,000 (2023 £6,000)

- Aberdeen Methodist Church £10,000
- Girvan Methodist Church £6,000

- During the year two recoverable grants were repaid £6,470 (2023 £Nil).
- Partick Methodist Church £2,450
- Findochty Methodist Church £4,020

4. Loans

Loan instalments are collected half-yearly in May and November. No loans were approved and paid during the year. (2023 £Nil).

5. General

The trustees and general committee recommend a further extension to the current suspension of circuit subscriptions to the fund during the connexional year 2025/26.

6. Changes to the Fund – Future Changes

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

7. After consideration by the Trustees and General Committee the Synod was asked to note their proposal in respect of the allocation of the 2024 General Receipts balance (£5,349) as at 31 December 2024 to the Grants Fund. This proposal requires the consent of the Conference.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

20/1. The Conference receives the Report.

20/2. The Conference approves the actions proposed in paragraph 7 of the Report.

Contact name and details	Mr Ian White Chair of the Board ian.alsager@gmail.com Anne Goodman Chief Executive anne.goodman@tmcp.org.uk
Subject and aims	This report provides a brief overview of the service and work undertaken by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) in its role as Custodian Trustee and in support of Managing Trustees across the Connexion.
Subject and aims	To be read in conjunction with this Report please see TMCP's website: www.tmcp.org.uk/about/publications for a full copy of the Trustees Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2024.

SECTION A: GENERAL REPORT

1. Mission Statement, Governance and Key Roles

1.1 Mission Statement and Governance

The purpose of the Board (TMCP) is to serve the Methodist Church in the advancement of the Christian faith in accordance with its doctrinal standards and discipline, and any charitable purpose of the Methodist Church or Church organisation.

Our mission is to serve the Methodist Church

Our mission is to support and strengthen the Methodist Church, both by providing practical support to Managing Trustees and by working closely and effectively with our colleagues in the Connexional Team.

We aim at all times to:

- Work within an ethical and Christian framework.
- Perform our role to the highest standard.
- Act with integrity and patience.
- Listen carefully and communicate effectively.

- Value and nurture the talents of those within the organisation.
- Work efficiently and effectively within the confines of available resources.

1.2 Our Vision and Goals:

Our Vision is:

- To continue to fulfil our principal duty to act as Custodian Trustee of all properties held on model trusts of the Methodist Church Act 1976, to better support the Methodist Church in achieving its mission.
- To provide a comprehensive role as the corporate body of the Church.
- To continue with our specific areas of specialism such as sharing agreements, trusts and data protection (GDPR).
- To ensure that the TMCP team is utilised in the most effective and efficient way, while still maintaining clarity about TMCP's particular role within the Connexion.

Our Goals are:

- To streamline all processes through collaboration with our colleagues across the Connexion and their advisers.
- To fulfil our responsibility to Managing Trustees through ongoing guidance and training.
- To provide appropriate and adequate assistance to the Methodist Connexion.
- To ensure that resources match the need now and on an ongoing basis.
- To support our staff in their ongoing training and development

In partnership we seek to help and support Managing Trustees across the Connexion to build a sustainable mission-led future.

1.3 Structure

The Board is a corporate body and was incorporated by the Methodist Church Act 1939. Our governing documents are the 1939 Act, our Trust Deed of 1939 and the Methodist Church Act 1976. The Board is served by four sub-committees: the Executive, Audit and Risk Committee, Grants Committee and Investment Committee.

1.4 Board members

Our Board members are members of the Methodist Church, appointed by the Conference on the nomination of the Board. As far as possible the Board comprises equal lay and ministerial members. Nominations are assessed in

terms of experience, skills and expertise. A skills audit is performed annually by the Chair in consultation with all Board members. Board members represent a cross-section of Church Officers and Church members. A list of current Board members is available from TMCP's website: https://www.tmcp.org.uk/meet-the-team and can also be found in Section B of this report.

1.5 Working together with Managing Trustees

There are a number of different aspects to our work at TMCP, but a key part is guiding the Managing Trustees through the potential pitfalls of Charity Law, Methodist Law and other legislation. We also have oversight of the General Data Processing Regulations (GDPR) across the Connexion.

One of our primary aims is to guide and assist Local Churches so that they can engage more fully, and safely, in resourcing mission and ministry.

TMCP are the custodian trustees for all property held on the Model Trusts of the Methodist Church Act 1976 (except for that in the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man which are held by their own boards of trustees) and this includes nearly all of the property held by over 3,600 Local Churches, 324 Circuits and 29 Districts (as at 31 August 2024).

The Board is also custodian of the funds held in 5,262 trusts, a small number of which are under the direct management of the Board. Discretionary grants are given from these in accordance with the terms of the trusts.

It is important to distinguish our role as custodian trustees from that of Managing Trustees**:**

TMCP as Custodian Trustee:	**Role of Managing Trustees:**
• We hold legal title. • We have a duty to ensure Managing Trustees do not act in breach of trust. • We do not get involved in the day-to-day management.	• Managing Trustees are responsible for the day to day management of the property. • Managing Trustees exercise power or discretion in respect of the property in accordance with charity and Methodist law.

The activities of the Board include, but are not limited to:

- Effecting all sales, purchases and leases of property by Church bodies, checking legal documents before signature by Managing Trustees.

- Investing funds received from sales or bequests and transmitting funds for purchases or to meet the cost of projects as instructed by Managing Trustees
- Fulfilling any other duties or responsibilities required of, or appropriate for, the corporate body acting on behalf of the Methodist Church.

Partnership working remains at the heart of what TMCP does.

1.6 Working together with the Connexional Council (previously Methodist Council)

The Service Level Partnership Agreement, originally finalised and signed by the Methodist Council and the TMCP Board in July 2020, continues to underpin and maintain transparency and accountability in respect of the services TMCP provides across the Connexion.

Under Standing Order 931(3) the Connexional Council has delegated to TMCP the role of inspecting and approving contracts. In addition, the Connexional Council may instruct TMCP to undertake additional work.

The Service Level Partnership Agreement guides the relationship between the Board and the Connexional Council, outlining the protocols and parameters within which both will work. The intention is to promote collaboration and maintain efficient and effective working relationships. The Agreement helps optimise the support offered to Managing Trustees, ensuring a high quality of service which is outcome-focused.

The Connexional Secretary and the Executive Director of Finance and Resources, together with the Chair and Chief Executive of TMCP, continue to hold half-yearly meetings, primarily to complete the necessary periodic review and monitoring.

1.7 TMCP as a Corporate Body

TMCP has corporate status, and it has been found to be useful as a vehicle beyond trusteeship as such, where certain legal functions need to be vested in a corporate person, rather than a group of individuals. Examples of where TMCP's corporate role has been of benefit to the Methodist Church include holding shares in Methodist controlled trading subsidiaries, entering into the Framework Agreement and management of the Panel of Solicitors on behalf of the Methodist Church.

1.8 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

TMCP continues to act as the Data Controller for all Local Churches, Circuits and Districts (who are deemed to be the "Data Processors" ie the people who deal with data/information on behalf of the Methodist Church).

Under a separate registration the Connexional Team is responsible for all data protection matters concerning safeguarding, complaints and discipline issues for the whole Methodist Church.

TMCP and the Connexional Team work together to provide data protection resources to the wider Connexion, including precedent documents, policies, practical guidance and frequently asked questions. TMCP continues to hold online forums with District Data Champions to keep them fully informed on current developments in Data Protection and to provide support and guidance as needed.

As Data Controller, TMCP and its auditors require assurance from the Local Churches, Circuits and Districts that all necessary GDPR processes are being adhered to. In order to obtain such assurances, and on the recommendation of its Internal Auditors, TMCP introduced an Annual Checklist. This is completed by local Managing Trustees each year, with a deadline for submission being 31 May. The Annual Checklist is reported back via the Circuit and District who collate the returns to confirm that the Managing Trustees are fulfilling their responsibilities under Data Protection legislation.

1.9 Working Together with the Methodist Church and Partners

TMCP puts Managing Trustees at the centre of all it does and it has close working relationships with many parts of the Methodist Church and its partners to achieve this aim.

Key stakeholders include:

- Managing Trustees, including the Connexional Council
- District Chairs
- District Property Secretaries
- Circuit Superintendents
- District, Circuit and Church Treasurers
- Connexional Conference Office and Property Support Team
- Panel Solicitors
- External Solicitors and Surveyors
- Central Finance Board (CFB)
- Other Methodist Church related organisations such as MIC Ltd

1.10 News Hub Articles

Articles are regularly published on the TMCP website 'News Hub', providing information to Managing Trustees and their professional advisers on updates

to the website, guidance on changes in legislation, training events, availability of trust statements and other relevant information. During the year there have been 17 articles published, providing guidance on topics including Charity Commission updates, Car Park licences, Trust training, Panel of Solicitors updates, Data Protection updates and more recently the Renters' Rights Bill. Managing Trustees are encouraged to sign up for the News Hub emails to be kept informed of current developments. The number of subscribers is currently in excess of 1,050.

1.11 Grants

TMCP continues to encourage grant applications to be made in respect of the discretionary funds for which the Board has responsibility. The protocols and details of how to apply are on the website.

The Board is pleased that, due to increased publicity across the Connexion, it paid grants totalling £459,282 for property and other projects from these trusts during the last financial year.

As well as overseeing the discretionary trusts as full trustee, the Board had sought specialist legal advice and has agreed a new trust deed for an all-encompassing trust with general charitable purposes aligned with those of the Methodist Church. The Board is now moving towards registering the trust at the Charity Commission and once registered it will be a vehicle to encourage the making of bequests which would be used for missional purposes of the Church.

1.12 Monitoring of Panel of Solicitors

The Framework Agreement between TMCP and the Panel firms sets out the overarching principles for the performance and management of the Panel. In its capacity as the Church's corporate body TMCP is party to the Framework Agreement meaning we have responsibility for ensuring the terms of the Framework Agreement are complied with.

Feedback questionnaires continue to be sent at the end of a transaction to all Managing Trustees who use the Panel. Feedback is an important part of the monitoring process and ensures that Managing Trustees receive a high level of service and advice. TMCP summarise statistics relating to use of the Panel for monitoring, reporting, management and addressing feedback and complaints.

TMCP hold quarterly face to face monitoring meetings with each firm on the Panel and training events regularly take place.

Following the successful re-tender of the Panel in 2023, TMCP led a new rollout of training to the Firms; Anthony Collins, Blake Morgan, Harrison Clark Rickerbys (HCR) and Sintons in Summer 2024. As part of this rollout representatives from each of the firms were invited to attend the Conference. All firms were in attendance over the duration of the six days promoting their services and encouraging the use of the Panel in wider areas of the Connexion.

Following the successful implementation of streamlining procedures for sales the team have been working hard to devise similar processes for both leases and purchases to assist with the streamlining of more types of transactions for the benefit of Managing Trustees. These processes are in their final stages and will be rolled out in the Connexional Year (2024/25). The streamlining procedure and the introduction of precedent documents for these types of matters are helping to make sure that TMCP can limit its involvement in transactions at time critical stages and ultimately transactions proceed much quicker.

2. Outcomes and achievements

2.1 The Finance Team

The Team supports the Board's role by planning and performing all financial operations relating to the receipts and payments of Model Trust monies as well as the investment of funds on behalf of Managing Trustees.

The Trust Information System (TIS) provides online access to trust statements, balances and other information. There were 3,088 users of the TIS at the end of 2023/24.

Key achievements 2024/2025 and ongoing strategies include:

- The average number of payments requested per month is 228 including Consents Payments.
- The average total value of payments is £6.9m per month.
- Payments are actioned within three working days of receiving the application (provided the application has been completed correctly).
- The average instructions outstanding at the end of each working month equate to 10 of all instructions received - these are primarily instructions received in the final two days of the month or items that are ongoing due to scheduled requested future payments.
- The relationship between TMCP Finance, Central Finance Board and the Connexional Team continues to flourish and we work collaboratively wherever appropriate to improve the overall service delivered to the wider Methodist Church.

2.2 The Legal Team

During the connexional year 2024/2025 Managing Trustees were assisted with guidance on new major redevelopment projects, property sales and purchases of new property as well as trust matters, bequests, ecumenical issues and other queries. The Team continues to enable Managing Trustees across the Connexion to secure income from their property to fund mission, including granting non-residential leases, residential tenancies, entering into licences and one-off booking forms.

Key achievements in 2024/2025 and since include:

- Phase 4 of the digitisation project is being implemented to make further improvements to the Matter Management System (MMS).
- The MMS integrates agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for timescales and performance and the team have daily targets to maintain.
- Each matter has a unique reference number which, when used ensures that correspondence reaches the correct legal officer and can be dealt with effectively and efficiently.
- There will be a revised way of contacting TMCP for new enquires and matters which is being developed following the implementation of the MMS. As part of this work, it has been identified that some enquiries need to go directly to the Connexional Team rather than TMCP. To facilitate this and provide for a more collaborative way of working between TMCP and the Connexional Team, the contact page on the TMCP website will be updated with clearer signposting. Alongside this if Managing Trustees submit an enquiry through the TMCP website it will be automatically redirected to the correct team, whether that is to a team within TMCP itself or to the relevant sections of the Connexional Team, such as Property Support, Evangelism and Growth, or Legal & Constitutional Practice.
- A live connection between the connexional database and TMCP's new MMS is being reviewed. The timeline is dependent upon the work the Connexional Team is undertaking to the connexional database but will mean that in due course TMCP will have instant access to the database and subsequently the consents system.

3. Key Strategies

3.1 Key strategies continue to be implemented. Delivery of these strategies has resulted in the streamlining of all internal processes and continues to lead to

efficiencies which will positively impact performance. The current status of these strategies is outlined below:

IT Strategy (Fully Delivered)

- Configuration and implementation of the Matter Management System
- Implementation of new telephone systems using 365 Platform
- Procurement and implementation of a new Managed Service Provider for on-going IT Support

IT Strategy (In Progress)

- Migration of files to new digital platform and integrating agreed KPIs
- Review alternative Finance Systems, and plan for replacement software

Legal Strategy

In the main all items listed below have been successfully introduced and embedded in processes and are now continuing to be developed as part of this ongoing strategy.

- Introduction and increased use of KPIs in certain areas in line with the Service Level Partnership Agreement
- Streamlining – This is being extended across more types of legal work including development projects
- Continuing ways of improving ways of communication with Managing Trustees (MTs) with the feedback form being extended to include the work of TMCP.
- Introduction of more precedent documents and guidance for development transactions in conjunction with Property Support
- Continued training for Data Champions and a programme for Managing Trustees across the Connexion on what data protection means in the context of the Methodist Church
- More training and detailed guidance on bequests and trusts for Managing Trustees

Finance Strategy

- There is a continued review of processes. Streamlining and automating processes are being considered and will be implemented where appropriate. In the meantime, the team is maintaining high levels of performance.
- The introduction of KPIs is ensuring continued high levels of service delivery.

- There are regular meetings with Connexional partners to develop new ways of working.

Workforce Strategy

- As the new systems continue to be integrated, internal processes are being monitored to ensure adequate streamlining and automation is taking place.
- As a consequence of improvements now implemented a progressive team review is being undertaken to ensure the team continues to be fit for purpose moving forward and that resources are appropriately matched to needs.

4. Moving Forward

4.1 Development of a sustainable model providing support to the Connexion in future years

TMCP has continued to review its funding model currently based on a charge calculated as a percentage of the assets TMCP holds under its management. The current model raises a number of concerns, as well as unintended consequences, and the Board was mindful to move to a more dynamic and responsive system of income generation which relates to volume of work and ensures that on an ongoing basis services are adequately resourced to support the mission of the Church.

On reviewing options for a renewed funding model, the Board recognised that the simpler and more transparent a solution the better. It felt that there needed to be an alignment between the management charge we make and the costs of overseeing and administering Model Trust Funds.

TMCP has implemented many of the recommendations highlighted within the 2018 Working Party Report and the new Matter Management System is providing information which has greatly helped this review of funding.

In summary, rather than charge for all the work TMCP performs primarily via its management charge the Board wishes to split the costs down into three key charges as follows:

- In respect of the Legal Team cost element of time spent as custodian trustee on property matters – claim an amount from the CPF Levy.
- In respect of Legal work delegated by the Connexional Council under Standing Order 931(3), continue to be funded by the connexional budget ie the Methodist Church Fund (no change to the current model).

- In respect of the Finance Team, Central Team and Other Legal Team costs – revise the management charge made annually against Model Trust Funds.

The proposal above is included in the Connexional Central Service Budget paper elsewhere in the Conference Agenda (see Agenda item 23). Both the Council and TMCP recognise the need to ensure the long-term sustainability of any funding model. TMCP is committed to continue the discussions with the Council to ensure a fair and sustainable approach to funding over the longer-term.

4.2 Communication Strategy

TMCP is developing a Communication Strategy, its key purposes being to ensure stakeholders fully understand what TMCP does, to manage perceptions and expectations, engage more effectively with stakeholders and demonstrate the success of TMCP's work in assisting Local Churches so they engage more fully and safely in resourcing mission and ministry.

TMCP hopes to bring the Church up to date on how the organisation works whilst also recognising that many who work in the life of the Church do so in a voluntary capacity.

Over the next year TMCP intends to work through its strategy and

- Provide clarity on our role and gain a mutual understanding regarding Managing Trustees duties and responsibilities
- Review guidance notes to ensure these are clear, concise, accurate and clearly signposted
- Review the language the team uses to ensure explanations are easy to understand
- Instigate a feedback process which will assess on an ongoing basis the quality of service and communications

This list is not definitive but provides a flavour of the various ways TMCP will be implementing this strategy.

4.3 Board Recruitment

TMCP successfully recruited five new Board members to supplement the skills and experience of our Board, these were formally appointed at the Conference of 2024. The Board continues to oversee the work of TMCP and one of its key roles as helping to share more widely with Managing Trustees the role of TMCP and the positive impact it can have on the ability of Managing Trustees to engage with mission.

SECTION B
Membership of the Board

The Board is required to report to the Conference if any members have resigned, died, become bankrupt or made an assignment with their creditors, resided outside the United Kingdom for more than twelve months, refused or become unfit to act or ceased to be members of the Methodist Church so that new appointments can be made by the Conference on the nomination of the remaining members of the Board.

Changes in Office

1. Resignations

Mr Gerry Davis OBE resigned from the Board with effect from 10th May 2024. The Board recognises and appreciates his contributions to the Board and its sub-committees.

2. Board Membership as at 28 February 2025

The Revd Rosemarie E G Clarke
The Revd Paul Davis (Vice Chair)
The Revd Rodney Hill
The Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler
The Revd Gill Newton
The Revd Jennifer Pathmarajah
The Revd Philip Wagstaff
Mr Peter Baffoe
Mr Christophe Borysiewicz
Mr David James
Mr John Jefferson
Mr Thomas Rattigan
Mr Ian White (Chair)

SECTION C
Declarations under the Methodist Church Trust Deed 1939

From time to time property is bequeathed to the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes where no express or special trusts are declared by the legatee or where those terms are uncertain or are wishes only. In such cases clause 2 of the Trust Deed of 1939 adopted by the Conference further to section 11 of the Methodist Church Act 1939 empowers the Conference to declare the trusts upon which the Board is to hold the property. One such case is as follows:

1. George Grainger Deceased

George Grainger, by his Will, bequeathed 1/9th share of his residue estate to "*The Trustees for Methodist Church Services of 1 Oldham Street Manchester M1 1JQ (registered charity number 1136358"*

First, because no trusts have been declared this is a case where it falls to the Conference to declare the trusts further to the Deed of 1939.

Second, it has always been policy to reflect, as far as possible, the wish of the legatee in any Directions which the Conference gives to the Board. In this case, following enquiries, the Board has ascertained from the solicitors who administered the estate who have confirmed that it was George Grainger's intention that the bequest be held for the Methodist Mission in Britain Fund.

The Board therefore proposes Resolution 21/2 for adoption by the Conference.

2. Ruth Mary Hayton Deceased

Ruth Mary Hayton, by her Will, bequeathed £2,500 to "*Upon Trust to pay the sum of Two Thousand Five Hundred Pounds (£2,500) to the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (charity number 1136358) of the Methodist Church 1 Central Buildings Oldham Street Manchester M1 1JQ and I DECLARE that the receipt of the Treasurer or other authorised office shall be a sufficient discharge for my Trustees"*

First, because no trusts have been declared this is a case where it falls to the Conference to declare the trusts further to the Deed of 1939.

Second, it has always been policy to reflect, as far as possible, the wish of the legatee in any Directions which the Conference gives to the Board. In this case, following enquiries, the Board has ascertained from the Executor and the Superintendent Minister that Ruth Mary Hayton wished the bequest monies to be applied for the general purposes of the of the Middlesbrough & Easton Circuit.

The Board therefore proposes Resolution 21/3 for adoption by the Conference.

3. Harry Jerrard Deceased

Harry Jerrard, by his Will, bequeathed a 1/6th share of his residue estate to "*The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, Central Buildings, Oldham Street, Manchester, M1 1JQ AND I FURTHER DECLARE (**without imposing any obligation or trust**) that the benefit from my Residuary Estate received by the above Churches shall be used as far as possible for Bible teaching and Bible instruction among the young"*

First, because no trusts were declared, this is a case where it fell to the Conference to declare the trusts further to the Deed of 1939 and second it has always been policy to reflect, as far as possible, the wish of the legatee in any Directions which the Conference gives to the Board.

The Conference directed in 1997:

"*The Conference hereby declares that the bequest from the late Harry Jerrard shall be held by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes ('the Board') upon trusts as to both capital and income for Bible teaching and Bible instruction among the young and in the execution, exercise or operation of these trusts the Board shall be at liberty, at its sole discretion, to apply the whole or any part or parts of the capital and income for the time being held upon these trusts to such charity or charities having purposes similar to the trusts hereby declared as the Board may determine*"

The Board would like to apply the capital and income to a wider age demographic and therefore proposes Resolution 21/4 for adoption by the Conference.

4. Elizabeth Wood Deceased

Elizabeth Wood, by her Will, bequeathed £2,000 to "*The Methodist Church of Methodist Property Office Central Buildings Oldham Street Manchester M1 1JQ the sum of Two Thousand Pounds"*

First, because no trusts have been declared this is a case where it falls to the Conference to declare the trusts further to the Deed of 1939.

Second, it has always been policy to reflect, as far as possible, the wish of the legatee in any Directions which the Conference gives to the Board. In this case, following enquiries, the Board has ascertained from the family of the late Elizabeth Wood that she had no association with the Methodist Church following the closure of the Barnham Methodist Church. Her Will is dated 4 years after the church closed.

Previous advice from the Connexional Solicitors has confirmed that gifts to the former Property Office were deemed to be gifts to the TMCP Board, as the correct custodian trustee.

The Board therefore proposes Resolution 21/5 for adoption by the Conference.

5. Gordon Barry Stunt Deceased

Gordon Barry Stunt, by his Will, bequeathed 25% of his residue estate to "*The Trustees for Methodist Church Services of Oldham Street Manchester M1 1JQ"*

First, because no trusts have been declared this is a case where it falls to the Conference to declare the trusts further to the Deed of 1939.

Second, it has always been policy to reflect, as far as possible, the wish of the legatee in any Directions which the Conference gives to the Board. In this case, following enquiries, the Board has ascertained from the solicitors who administered the estate and the Managing Trustees of the Bourne Methodist Church in the Stamford Circuit that Gordon Barry Stunt was an active member of Bourne Methodist Church prior to his death.

The Board therefore proposes Resolution 21/6 for adoption by the Conference.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

21/1. The Conference receives the Report.

21/2. The Conference hereby directs that the bequest of George Grainger shall be held by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes on the Model Trusts for the benefit of the Methodist Mission in Britain Fund.

21/3. The Conference hereby directs that the bequest of Ruth Mary Hayton shall be held by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes on the Model Trusts for the benefit of the Managing Trustees of the Middlesbrough & Easton Methodist Circuit.

21/4. The Conference hereby directs that the bequest of Harry Jerrard shall be held by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes *('the Board') upon trusts as to both capital and income for Bible teaching and Bible instruction and in the execution, exercise or operation of these trusts the Board shall be at liberty, at its sole discretion, to apply the whole or any part or parts of the capital and income for the time being held upon these trusts to such charity or charities having purposes similar to the trusts hereby declared as the Board may determine*.

21/5. The Conference hereby directs that the bequest of Elizabeth Wood shall be held by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes on the Model Trusts for its administrative purposes.

21/6. The Conference hereby directs that the bequest of Gordon Barry Stunt shall be held by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes on the Model Trusts for the benefit of the Managing Trustees of the Bourne Methodist Church.

22. John Wesley's New Room

Contact name and details	Clifford Friend, Chair of Trustees Clifford.friend@btinternet.com

Mission

To be a globally significant Methodist heritage centre where people come in and go out renewed.

Vision

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

A Snapshot of our Year

As the oldest Methodist building in the world, John Wesley's New Room (JWNR) occupies a unique position which continues to attract visitors locally, nationally, and internationally. It remains the most visited Methodist heritage site in the UK.

In 2024/25 our mission to reach out to visitors from the community in Bristol and nationally and internationally, resulted in over 40,000 visits - the highest number since records began, with the special place that is the New Room touching the lives of individuals with Methodist, as well as other churched and unchurched backgrounds.

The global significance of the New Room's heritage continues to be recognised with visitor numbers from Methodist communities across the globe returning to pre-pandemic levels, with particularly significant numbers from the USA and South Korea.

Successes in 2024-25 also included welcoming a range of temporary exhibitions, the ongoing provision of a range of educational activities and a continuing seasonal programme of community and other events to engage new audiences.

JWNR Trustees have taken necessary steps to reduce the operational financial deficit highlighted in our last report to the Conference. Increasing the levels of income generation continues to be our vital aim to enable us to move forward as a thriving centre of Methodist heritage.

The Trustees are grateful to the Methodist Church for their one-off grant funding which has allowed the JWNR to look forward with more confidence and confirm that we remain a going concern for the near future. However, the Trustees remain vigilant to the fact

that the level of expenditure already committed and potentially required to maintain the property will utilise current reserves over the next five years.

Our Trustees recognise their responsibility to the Methodist Church for operations of the JWNR but believe that this responsibility now needs to be shared more proactively by the wider Methodist Church to enable this globally unique piece of Methodist heritage to thrive.

Mission and Outreach

Our dedicated executive staff and volunteers continued to deliver the previously agreed Activity Plan for the Methodist Church until 2025. This included educational outreach, community engagement, museum, library, archive research and learning opportunities, and volunteering skill development in hospitality and retail.

The breadth of such activities can be seen at https://www.newroombristol.org.uk

During 2024/5 we continued to provide a regular space for worship at our Friday Communion services organised by our chaplains. In addition, we held special events, such as carol services, and a special service for Wesley Day. Having registered as a place where same-sex couples can be celebrated, we are available to hold weddings and the blessing of same-sex couples and to host the annual Christians at Pride service supported by the LGBTQI+ community in Bristol and partner churches from across the ecumenical spectrum.

John Wesley's New Room remains a space open to all and often engages in providing pastoral care for those seeking comfort or spiritual direction. In addition, we increasingly provide a place where sister churches can inspire their own congregations for worship and evangelism.

Staffing

Over the past year the JWNR's Directors led the organisation through a period of significant consolidation following the staff reductions highlighted in previous reports to the Conference.

Following this consolidation, further changes are in train. This has enabled a further focusing of staff responsibilities for the future, and JWNR has been blessed in its ability to recruit very experienced individuals to lead activities forward in the areas of Collections and Education & Community.

Our dedicated staff and volunteers were led throughout most of the year by Louise Wratton – JWNR's now sole Executive Director.

Heritage Site and Property Development

Within the last year we have undertaken a significant amount of property-related maintenance.

We have addressed significant legacy problems with our visitor centre build. This unexpected maintenance has required rather more attention than would normally be expected for a new build, such as temperature, humidity and ventilation control within our collections space. Indications are that further maintenance work could be required in the short term.

The JWNR unitary Operations Committee continues to meet monthly to address the financial implications of sustaining publicly accessible operations within our grade listed historic buildings, which inevitably require regular and unpredictable repairs, such as recent water damage to Charles Wesley's House. These costs are potentially significant when they arise.

The quinquennial inspection carried out at the end of 2023 also revealed a number of less urgent works requiring attention which are gradually being worked through.

Challenges

JWNR's Directors have led the organisation through a period of significant change seeking to address the balance between prioritising commercial activity whilst remaining true to our vision to offer a welcoming space of community.

The challenge moving forward continues to be ensuring that the achievements following the end of financial support from a National Lottery Heritage Fund Grant in August 2021 can be sustained.

Our vision and mission are fundamental in providing a focus and motivation when navigating through the pressures of such uncertainty.

However, the Trustees are aware of significant future challenges JWNR faces, including:

- Operating within a listed heritage site inevitably requires regular and unpredictable repairs alongside the costs of maintaining Charles Wesley's house and its

neighbouring investment property. These costs are potentially significant when they arise.
- Less expected has been maintenance costs for the new visitor centre which has required rather more attention than would normally be expected for a new build, with indications that such costs could continue in the short term.
- The nature of the Broadmead area of Bristol surrounding the New Room is also in the process of changing dramatically, with a demographic shift from retail to residential presenting potential financial challenges to the Trustees, as well as opportunities if we can respond appropriately.

Financial Resilience

JWNR has taken necessary steps to reduce its financial deficits. However, we need to improve our financial resilience.

The Trustees and our dedicated executive staff and volunteers have taken significant steps to control costs whilst striving hard to attract more visitors. It is recognised that as the oldest Methodist building in the world, JWNR occupies a unique position that will continue to attract visitors locally, nationally, and internationally. However, existing funding streams need to generate more income, and new income streams need to be identified and secured alongside the control of overall salary costs, including re-organisation of staff roles to maximise the impact of their areas of activity. Support from Friends of the New Room, donations, and legacies have also been promoted to support JWNR.

It is recognised that we will need to be more pro-active in developing such income streams both commercially and through grants and donations.

We have highlighted the challenge of maintaining all aspects of our premises whilst the assets are owned by the Methodist Church through the Conference, and the impact this has on management of our reserves. As a result of representations on this issue, the connexional Methodist Church awarded the New Room an immediate grant of £20K followed by a further grant of £271K.

The Trustees are grateful to the Methodist Church for this one-off grant funding which has allowed the JWNR to look forward with more confidence.

However, our long-term sustainability continues to be somewhat precarious and close monitoring of all aspects of our operation will be needed to ensure we remain responsive.

The Trustees recognise that this is a big responsibility and believe that it will have to be shared with the wider Methodist Church if it is to be successful.

Governance Changes

At its meeting on 26 February 2025 the Board of Trustees of JWNR agreed to recommend changes to the constitution of the Board of Trustees.

Excluding trustees nominated by three external bodies, the new Board constitution proposes the appointment of up to seven 'independent' Trustees compared to 20 under current arrangements.

This change would bring the Trustee Board into line with contemporary charitable/ corporate good governance.

The proposed changes to the Standing Order are shown at resolution 22/2 below.

The requirement for the Conference to agree the amended constitution of the JWNR Trustee Board and annually appoint named trustees, creates a short-term governance issue in terms of the phasing of appointment of trustees under any new constitution.

To avoid any interregnum, the Conference is therefore requested to appoint formally, in the first instance, the existing JWNR trustees set out in the Appointments paper elsewhere in the Agenda, recognising that there will be changes if the Conference is minded to agree the new JWNR Trustee Board constitution.

This interim position can be regularised following any change to a new Trustee Board constitution, and new named trustees brought to the Conference for formal appointment in 2026.

An implication of following such good governance and operating with a smaller trustee board is the potential to lose informal stakeholder engagement which takes place around a larger board.

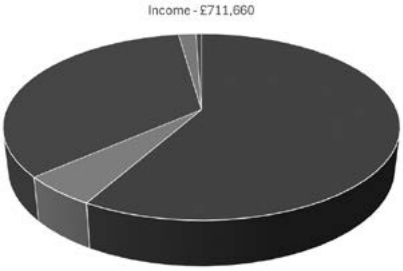
Should the Conference be minded to agree the recommended changes to membership of the JWNR Trustee Board, we will then establish a larger Advisory Council of friends and stakeholders to offer views on proposed developments, and act as champions for JWNR.

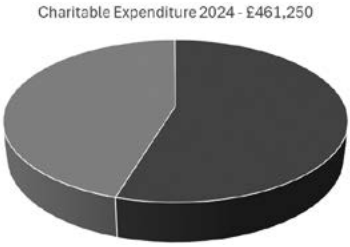
This Advisory Council would be solely advisory and have no decision-making responsibility.

As well as wider stakeholder engagement, such an Advisory Council will also allow the JWNR to continue to draw on the knowledge and experience of trustees stepping down from the Board at the end of their formal appointment and also build a pipeline of future trustees.

Financial Activities for Year ended 31 August 2024

The Statement of Financial Activity for the year to 31 August 2024 submitted to the Charity Commission is summarised below.





	2024 (£)	2023 (£)
Income	711,660	381,878
Charitable Expenditure	461,250	550,932
Gains on Investments	20,136	2,789
Net Income (Expenditure)	270,546	(166,265)

Total Funds Brought Forward	£ 357,047
Net Movement in Funds	£ 270,546
Total Funds Carried Forward	£ 627,593

The above suggests a major turnround in the financial performance of JWNR, however underlying activities are masked by a large exceptional item.

For accounting purposes, the significant grant from the Methodist Church of £291K falls wholly into the year's income which overstates **underlying** financial performance by the whole of the stated surplus.

A more realistic assessment of underlying performance is that the JWNR continues to move towards a break-even position operationally, with this trajectory aided by modest improvements in income from 'trading' such as commercial events and venue hire, alongside tight expenditure control.

The operational position for 2024 is therefore similar to the **underlying** performance in 2023, where the financial outturn was masked by a one-off exceptional item; in that case capital expenditure for development of our investment property at 5 Charles Street to significantly improve its rental potential. This one-off investment resulted almost wholly in the stated deficit.

The latter illustrates an ongoing issue for JWNR's financial position. As all property is owned by the Methodist Church, the significant capital expenditure on these heritage assets must be written off within the year it is incurred, rather than over the useful life of the asset. This inevitably results in significant fluctuations in year-end position and a challenge for management of the JWNR's General Reserves.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

22/1. The Conference receives the Report.

22/2. The Conference amends SO 280 as follows:

280 The New Room, Bristol

. . .

(2) The trustees shall be:

(i) ***a nominee of*** the Secretary of the Conference;
(ii) ***a nominee from the Synod*** ~~the Chair~~ of the Bristol District***, appointed by the District Policy Committee*;**
(iii) ***a nominee from*** ~~*the Superintendent of*~~ the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit***, appointed by the Circuit Meeting****;*
~~(iv) the warden of the New Room;~~
(v) not more than ~~twenty~~ ***seven*** other persons.

Contact name and details	Matt Tattersall – Executive Director of Finance and Resources tattersallm@methodistchurch.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Resolutions	23/1. The Conference receives the Report. 23/2. The Conference approves the use of the Connexional Priority Fund to cover TMCP's costs of property sales work for 2025/26 to 2027/28. 23/3. The Conference approves the budget for 2025/26. 23/4. The Conference approves the district allocations of the Methodist Church Fund Assessment for 2025/26 as set out in the Report.

Summary of impact

Financial	All parts of the Connexion are affected by the use of Connexional Funds.
Potential impact on local churches, circuits and districts	Allocation of funds to Action for Hope and God For All support local mission.
Carbon/environmental impact	The allocation of funds to support Action for Hope will help reduce the Church's environmental impact.
Risk	Budget assumptions contain inherent risk which is mitigated by taking a balanced approach to setting of both income and expenditure budgets. The allocation of the budget should address the key risks identified in the risk register. The overall level of reserve in the key funds protects the Church against unexpected financial shocks.

Background

1 The context for the 2025/26 Connexional Central Services Budget (CCSB) is a continuation of the strategy set by the Conference in 2023. The plan responds to the growing affordability challenge with the District Assessment and the need to 'right size' the Connexional Team in the light of the available resources. Another key component is the use of resources from the Connexional Priority Fund following the reduction in risks associated with the pension schemes.

2 In recommending this budget to the Council, the Resourcing Committee recognised the need to allocate monies from reserves to support the Church at this time of transition. However, it was also aware that the Church is not always able to make use of the monies made available (for example, the slow uptake of God For All and Action For Hope monies by Districts). This particularly reflects the lack of people in the Church to plan and take forward new initiatives. The Resourcing Committee and Council were also mindful of the need to be a good and effective steward of the resources available, which meant planning the release of reserves over a number of years as new strategic objectives emerge and plans for the Church develop.

3 The Council gave particular support for the use of the Digital Church allocation to invest in IT transformation. Whilst 'Digital Church' is more than just IT (and indeed more than just online worship), there are numerous IT system implementations (eg Supervision Records; Complaints & Discipline) that are beyond the capacity of the current Connexional IT Team, and significant investment will be required as the digital agenda develops.

Scenario Planning

4 The wider context in which this budget is proposed reflects the work undertaken by the former Strategy and Resources Committee on the range of scenarios that could face the Church in the run up to the centenary of Methodist Union in 2032. These scenarios will continue to be refined by the Connexional Council as it reflects on how to respond to Our Calling.

5 In line with previous budgets, the longer-term objective is to ensure that the core work of the Connexional Team can be appropriately funded through the District Assessment. Additional strategies and initiatives would need to be funded from other sources such as the Mission in Britain Fund and the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF).

6 The improved funding position of the pension schemes means that for at least the next three years the Connexional Priority Fund has additional funding available to cover the key workstreams already approved by the Conference. Whilst this funding is non-recurrent (as it comes from a levy on the sale of Methodist property) it does provide significant funds in the short term.

Reserves Policy

7 Having undertaken a detailed analysis of the Methodist Church Fund reserve policy in 2023, no changes are proposed in 2025.

8 It is noted that positive investment performance contributed to increases in many fund balances last year. These increases give greater confidence that the extension to the God For All strategy and other priorities agreed by the Conference can be funded over the medium term.

District Assessment

9 The District Assessment continues to fall in real terms by 3% each year. This is to respond to the affordability issues experienced by many churches and circuits. With CPI inflation at 2.6% at the time the budget parameters were set, this means the net reduction to the Assessment has been set at 0.4%.

10 However, in 2024 the Conference agreed that the District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) were to be transferred to the employment of the Connexional Team. This requires a shift in funding from Districts to the CCSB of £1m plus inflation of c£0.1m. This additional inflation (to pay for pay increases and the increase in NI contributions) adds 0.4% to the Assessment. Therefore, the net change in the Assessment is amended to 0%.

11 The District Assessment is apportioned among the Districts using stationing and staffing numbers (with presbyters/deacons equivalent to 1.5 times that of a lay worker), with the annual change per District being restricted to a maximum increase of 3% above and 4% below the average uplift. The provisional figures based on the 0% average change were agreed by the District Treasurers in January 2025.

12 These figures are as set out in the tables below:

Table 1: Calculation of the MCF Assessment

£'m	2024/25	Inflation	2025/26
District Assessment	14.7	- 0.1	14.6
DSO funding	1.0	+0.1	1.1
Total	**15.7**	**0.0**	**15.7**

Table 2: 2025/26 MCF Assessment by District

	District	£
1	North West England	1,958,818
2	Wales Synod Cymru	570,768
3	West Midlands	1,259,898
7	Bristol	687,649
10	Channel Islands	109,373
11	Chester and Stoke	583,791
13	Darlington	396,519
14	East Anglia	574,510
15	Isle of Man	72,673
17	Lincolnshire	319,594
20	Newcastle	605,820
22	Nottingham and Derby	683,270
23	Northampton	892,771

	District	£
25	Sheffield	517,362
26	Southampton	677,454
27	Yorkshire West	851,930
29	Yorkshire North & East	681,146
31	Scotland	178,960
32	Shetland	20,780
34	Bedfordshire, Essex & Herts	628,688
35	London	1,575,558
36	South East	821,283
37	South West Peninsula	1,013,699
	TOTAL	**15,682,314**

Financial Balance

13 It is necessary for the Methodist Church Fund (MCF) budget to achieve financial balance in the medium term. The use of reserves will allow a deficit budget to be set over the next 3 years. However, significant expenditure reductions will need to be implemented prior to the start of 2028/29 unless additional funding can be allocated (such as an increase in the Assessment).

14 Consultation is underway with districts to establish those core functions that can be best provided connexionally, what functions will need to be provided elsewhere, which functions will need to cease, and what new work may be needed from the Connexional Team. This will feed into the budget process for 2026/27 and be reported to the 2026 Conference.

15 In the short term, the MCF deficit has increased from what was projected last year. This is as a result of a fall in donations, less MCF management levy and increases in National Insurance costs. Despite this growing deficit, the MCF does not fall below its reserve level over the three-year period to 2027/28.

16 However, it has meant that expenditure that was previously funded from the core MCF budget is now being funded from restricted funds. This represents good stewardship of resources but further highlights the pressure on core funding and what can be afforded over the longer term.

Inflationary Pressures

17 The inflation to be used in the 2025/26 budget is based on the September 2024 CPI/(H) figures published in October 2024:

- Pay inflation: (50% x Average earnings 4.43%) + (50% x CPIH 2.6%) = 3.51%
- Stipend inflation: (50% x Average earnings 4.43%) + (50% x CPI 1.7%) = 3.06%

18 In addition to the cost of pay awards, the changes to National Insurance have added £0.3m to the budget. It is unclear what the impact might be on the costs charged by suppliers as a result of their increased costs. However, it is anticipated these will be covered by an allowance for other inflation of 2%.

Methodist Church House (MCH)

19 Following the successful completion of the refurbishment of the new MCH, a small surplus of c£0.4m was generated. The Council has allocated these monies to reserves for future expenditure on the property.

20 The proposed CCSB includes the reinstatement of budgets that had been removed during the period when the Connexional Team were renting space at Church House Westminster (such as a Facilities Manager). There may be further adjustments to the budget next year once a full 12 months of operation at MCH have been completed.

Connexional Priority Fund (CPF)

21 Funding for the CPF is largely from the receipt of property levies. Whilst this money can only be spent once, it does provide significant resources to fund the Conference's key priorities. The various commitments made in relation to the use of the CPF are to:

- support the ongoing real terms reduction in the District Assessment;
- fund the next phase of the God For All strategy;
- support delivery of the Justice Dignity & Solidarity (JDS) strategy;
- support the Church's ambition to achieve net zero carbon by 2030;
- support Heritage work;
- fund ministerial training;
- fund the additional costs of the District Safeguarding changes for three years;
- support the development of a digitally enabled Church (the scope of this requiring further work but recognising that 'digital' will become a more significant tool for delivering Our Calling in the years ahead);
- fund the additional resources needed for the Church to effectively divest itself of surplus buildings;
- fund the costs associated with developing a transformation plan eg, project management; and
- fund the consequences of any such plan (eg redundancies).

22 Allocations against each area above are outlined in table 2 below:

Table 3: CPF Allocations

Priority area	Comments	24/25 £'m	25/26 £'m	26/27 £'m	27/28 £'m
Net zero	There remains £3.1m unspent from the 23/24 & 24/25 allocations	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.1

Priority area	Comments	24/25 £'m	25/26 £'m	26/27 £'m	27/28 £'m
Subsidising the assessment	This has been agreed until the end of 27/28	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
God For All	The figures reflect what Conference approved in 2024.	2.6	4.6	5.1	5.2
JDS		0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Heritage	This is a long-standing commitment to the four heritage sites	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Ministerial Training		1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
District Safeguarding		0.1	0.3	0.3	0.3
Digital Church	This work stream has not yet been developed and there is unlikely to be any spend in 24/25	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0
Property sales support	Additional Property Team support is currently funded from the Property Fund	-	-	-	-
District transformation		0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Transformation		0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
TOTAL		**9.2**	**11.9**	**12.4**	**12.5**

Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) funding

23 The TMCP approached the Council with a proposal to address its long-standing concern about its funding model. It is currently funded through a management charge on the Model Trust Funds (MTFs), despite most of its work being on legal and property matters unrelated to the balances held in the MTFs. The disparity between the work undertaken and the income earned means TMCP struggles to meet the growth in property sales work. The funding mechanism is also poorly understood within the Church which causes difficulties for TMCP.

24 In order to allow a fuller review of the way in which TMCP supports the Connexion, and the opportunity for further streamlining connexional processes, it is proposed that a new funding mechanism is established for the next three years (2025/26 – 2027/28). Whilst TMCP's work to support the MTFs and its other legal and governance work will continue to be funded by the management charge, the property sales work (£332k) will be funded from the CPF. This will allow a reduction in the management charge whilst allowing the Council to respond to TMCP's budget pressures linked to additional property sales activity. Using the CPF for this purpose is particularly appropriate given the funding for the CPF comes from the levy on property sales.

Mission in Britain Fund (MIB)

25 The original God For All strategy included £7.5m of funding from MIB. The slower than anticipated take up of grants means that there is approximately £5.4m still to be allocated in 2025/26 and 2026/27. This is in addition to the new tranche of funding from the CPF for God For All agreed by the 2024 Conference (covering 2025/26 – 2031/32).

26 The MIB already funds Methodist Action on Poverty & Justice and the Conference previously approved its use for Justice Dignity and Solidarity and Action for Hope (the Church's commitment to zero carbon by 2030). It is now proposed that the fund also be used to meet the costs of the Justice Seeking Church work and also the Methodist Modern Art Collection. Both of these are areas of mission, and this cost transfer relieves some of the pressure on the core MCF budget.

World Mission Fund (WMF)

27 The Global Relationships Committee continue to spend down to reserve levels and future ongoing expenditure will be restricted to the level of ongoing income. The sale of WMF properties remains a complex process and until these are complete, the availability of the resulting funds is uncertain.

Epworth Fund

28 The Epworth Fund still has a sufficient balance to meet the cost of One Programme Participants (OPPs) and to fund the costs of the Connexional IT strategy.

Pension Reserve Fund (PRF)

29 Payments into the PRF from the CPF have been suspended due to the improved funding position of both pension schemes. The remaining fund balance will be used:

- to fund the insurance buy-out of the PASLEMC,
- to provide security to the MMPS trustee,
- to fund future deficit recovery plans (if required), and
- to fund any professional advice that may be required to support the Conference in fulfilling its responsibilities.

30 In addition to these purposes, payments into the fund are being made by circuits at 4.4% of stipend to build a reserve to mitigate against future increases in pension contribution levels. These payments are ring fenced for this purpose.

Budget Proposal

31 The total budget can be seen in the table below:

Table 4 Connexional Central Services Budget: overall income and expenditure

Activity	2024/25 Forecast £'000	2025/26 Budget £'000	2026/27 Budget £'000	2027/28 Budget £'000
Income				
Central Income	30,157	30,076	30,118	30,086
Income Generating Centre	2,008	2,100	2,100	2,100
Others - Pensions	2,377	2,348	2,245	2,153
Evangelism & Growth	1,350	1,918	1,769	1,640

Activity	2024/25 Forecast £'000	2025/26 Budget £'000	2026/27 Budget £'000	2027/28 Budget £'000
Global relations	1,762	1,914	1,781	1,685
Governance	146	1,227	1,227	1,226
Ministries	833	1,168	1,135	1,116
Central Functions	795	826	778	760
Property	529	581	572	564
Children & Youth	164	186	196	206
Learning Network	5	7	7	6
	40,126	**42,351**	**41,928**	**41,542**
Expenditure				
Evangelism & Growth	10,954	18,308	15,421	13,955
Central Functions	8,825	8,588	8,439	8,546
Ministries	6,029	6,771	6,869	6,968
Governance	4,773	6,301	6,337	6,454
Children & Youth	2,199	2,752	2,936	3,058
Learning Network	2,515	2,537	2,581	2,625
Global relations	2,426	2,421	2,344	2,238
Others - Pensions	2,210	1,810	210	210
Building communities	1,590	1,642	1,787	1,824
Property	985	1,113	1,126	1,152
Total	**42,506**	**52,243**	**48,050**	**47,030**
Net deficit	**(2,380)**	**(9,892)**	**(6,122)**	**(5,488)**

* "Activity" descriptions can be found in appendix 1

32 The increase in income in 2025/26 reflects the transfer of the DSOs into the Connexional Team and additional investment income.

33 The increases in expenditure in 2025/26 are largely attributable to the second phase of the God For All programme starting whilst significant allocations from phase one are still to be made. It also reflects the impact of inflation partly offset by reduced costs associated with the pension schemes.

34 The deficit in each year largely reflects the decision of previous Conferences to reduce the reserve levels of the main Connexional Funds and thereby demonstrate the effective use of resources.

35 The Methodist Church Fund (MCF) budget can be seen in the table below:

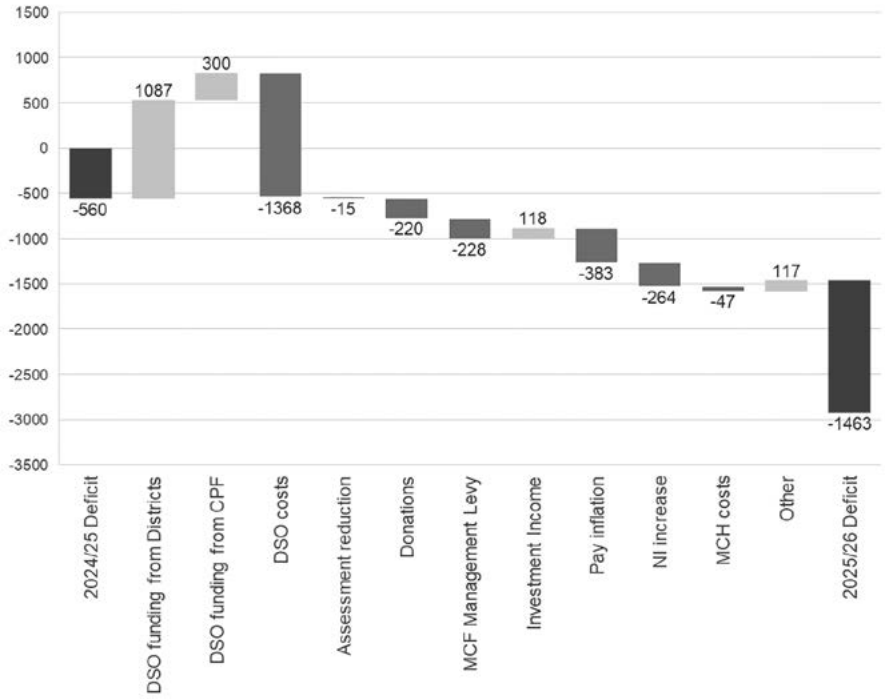
Table 5 Methodist Church Fund Budget: income and expenditure

Activity	2024/25 Forecast £'000	2025/26 Budget £'000	2026/27 Budget £'000	2027/28 Budget £'000
Income				
Central Income	18,941	19,073	19,003	18,937
Governance	146	1,227	1,227	1,226
Central Functions	682	672	627	611
Property	185	209	205	201
Children & Youth	164	186	196	206
Evangelism & Growth	6	18	13	14
Ministries	2	2	2	2
	20,126	**21,387**	**21,273**	**21,197**
Expenditure				
Central Functions	6,065	6,259	6,331	6,427
Governance	4,553	6,075	6,105	6,216
Learning Network	2,515	2,537	2,581	2,625
Children & Youth	2,033	2,340	2,524	2,645
Ministries	1,732	1,963	2,029	2,100
Evangelism & Growth	1,360	1,248	1,261	1,278
Building communities	1,239	1,144	1,162	1,187
Property	697	752	766	792
Global relations	492	532	542	552
Total	**20,686**	**22,850**	**23,301**	**23,822**
Net deficit	**(560)**	**(1,463)**	**(2,028)**	**(2,625)**

36 The growing deficit from 2025/26 is largely consequent of the transitional support provided from the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF) being insufficient to fully cover the impact of inflation. A fall in donations and increase in National insurance is also impacting the deficit.

37 The main movements in the MCF from 2024/25 to 2025/26 can be seen in the waterfall chart below:

Chart 1: Change in the MCF Deficit from 2024/25 to 2025/26



Funds

38 The budgeted fund balances can be found at appendix 2. It remains the aim to reduce balances in restricted funds where possible before allocating budgets against unrestricted funds. Progress has been made with identifying how some historic funds can be used and work continues to free up further resources in future.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

23/1. The Conference receives the Report.

23/2. The Conference approves the use of the Connexional Priority Fund to cover TMCP's costs of property sales work for 2025/26 to 2027/28.

23/3. The Conference approves the budget for 2025/26.

23/4. The Conference approves the district allocations of the Methodist Church Fund Assessment for 2025/26 as set out in the report.

Appendix 1: Resource Activities

Activity	**Areas covered**
Building communities	Ecumenical, Interfaith, Joint Public Issues Team, Forces Board, Communications
Children, youth and families	Children, youth, families, education, 3Generate
Evangelism and Growth	Evangelism and Growth, Heritage, Action for Hope
Global relations	World Church, World Meth Council; Mission Partners
Learning Network	The work of the Learning Network regions across the Connexion
Governance	The Conference, Presidency, Secretary of Conference, Council, Faith & Order, District Chairs, Law & Polity, Legal, Safeguarding, Justice, Dignity and Solidarity
Ministries	Initial ministerial training, ministerial development, ministerial oversight, ministerial grants, Diaconal order
Central Functions	Finance; IT; Procurement; Human Resources; Facilities/ Front of House; Corporate; Connexional Secretary
Property	Property team, Connexional manses, property projects, property grants

Appendix 2: Fund Balances

Fund	Opening balance Sep 2024 £'000	2024/25 Forecast £'000	2025/26 Budget £'000	2026/27 Budget £'000	2027/28 Budget £'000	Closing balance Aug 2028 £'000
MCF General	31,280	**(560)**	**(1,463)**	**(2,028)**	**(2,625)**	24,604
Defined Pension Liability	**(935)**	0	0	0	0	**(935)**
Auxiliary Special Purposes	541	**(40)**	**(36)**	**(38)**	**(39)**	388
Trinity Hal Trust	1,117	**(6)**	4	2	**(2)**	1,115
Lefroy Yorke Trust - Endowment	1,090	**(1)**	**(1)**	**(1)**	**(1)**	1,086
Barratt Memorial	1,369	**(5)**	**(6)**	**(6)**	**(6)**	1,346
Rank - Endowment	8,564	**(8)**	**(10)**	**(10)**	**(10)**	8,526
Marshal Scholarship - Endowment	3	0	0	0	0	3
Necessitous Local Preachers - Endowment	240	0	0	0	0	240
Strawson Gift - Endowment	7	0	0	0	0	7
Wiliam Leech Charities - Endowment	10,402	210	209	209	209	11,239
Aspinal Robinson Trust	688	7	13	11	8	727
MDO Surplus Funds	643	3	8	5	3	662
Archives Revenue Fund	26	**(9)**	**(4)**	1	1	15
Connexional Priority Fund	19,118	11,452	**(2,246)**	**(4,298)**	**(2,930)**	21,096
Epworth Fund	6,091	**(994)**	**(1,033)**	**(892)**	**(912)**	2,260
Pension Reserves Fund	45,687	**(12,495)**	480	1,978	1,886	37,536
Beckley Trust	4	0	0	0	0	4
Necessitous Local Preachers - Income	9	5	7	7	6	34
Southdown Project Fund	17	0	1	1	0	19
Borries Bequest - Endowment	31	0	0	0	0	31
Modem Christian Art- Development	33	**(10)**	**(4)**	**(1)**	**(1)**	17

Fund	Opening balance Sep 2024 £'000	2024/25 Forecast £'000	2025/26 Budget £'000	2026/27 Budget £'000	2027/28 Budget £'000	Closing balance Aug 2028 £'000
Forces Chaplaincy Revenue	489	**(188)**	**(89)**	**(102)**	**(92)**	18
Methodist Heritage	2	0	0	0	0	2
Mission in Britain Fund	6,885	**(834)**	**(4,951)**	**(65)**	**(94)**	941
Mission in Business Industries and Commerce	503	9	16	15	13	556
Lay Mission Superannuation	348	**(22)**	**(18)**	**(24)**	**(29)**	255
Sabbatical Fund	94	2	12	12	12	132
Fund for the Support of Presbyters & Deacons	8,163	1,815	**(1,086)**	**(1,107)**	**(1,128)**	6,657
Medical Benevolent Fund	2,491	8	24	12	12	2,547
Listed Buildings	23	0	1	1	1	26
Fund for Property	1,270	630	587	581	579	3,647
Special Extension Fund	2,598	78	100	94	88	2,958
Fund for Training	2,779	**(77)**	142	125	133	3,102
Long Term Renewal Fund	466	112	18	16	15	627
Overseas Student Work	371	7	11	9	8	406
Centenary Hall Trust	28,126	0	131	131	131	28,519
World Mission Fund	7,436	**(830)**	**(511)**	**(578)**	**(533)**	4,984
Benevolent Fund	442	8	14	12	11	487
MIC Trust	21,848	**(649)**	**(186)**	**(197)**	**(132)**	20,684
Oxford Institute	59	0	**(15)**	**(20)**	**(24)**	0
Designated Training Fund	43	0	**(14)**	20	**(49)**	0
Langley House Trust	96	2	3	3	3	107
Total	**210,557**	**(2,380)**	**(9,892)**	**(6,122)**	**(5,488)**	186,675

Contact name and details	Sam Monaghan Chief Executive Officer sam.monaghan@mha.org.uk

Thank you to our Methodist family for your continued generosity and partnership. Your commitment to Methodist Homes' (MHA) mission – to help people live later life well is rooted in a shared calling to justice, dignity, and compassion. Your support strengthens our work and helps ensure that older people are valued, heard, and supported with love and respect.

1 General Report

1.1 At MHA, we exist to help older people live later life well. Founded by the Methodist Church in 1943, our roots lie in a vision of social justice where every person is seen, valued, and supported. Through creating communities of care, we offer older people support, belonging, dignity, and meaning.

1.2 In this year's report, we share how we are navigating a time of change – rooted in our Methodist values, responsive to the complex needs of our time, and preparing faithfully for the future.

1.3 A key part of this preparation has been the launch of our new Strategy for 2025–30, "People, Places and Processes: Together as One MHA". This strategy is both a continuation of our journey and a renewed commitment to inclusive, person-centred care across all that we do.

1.4 Over the past two years, we have developed blueprints to shape the future of our care homes, retirement living schemes, community services and central support teams. They form the foundation of our new strategy, bringing our purpose to life by creating environments that support people physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They respond to today's challenges while opening up space for growth and innovation. Whether reimagining what it means to live in a care home or retirement living setting, or deepening sustainable community connections, the Blueprints are a vital expression of our mission to enable older people to live later life well.

1.5 This new strategy also leads us forward, after what has been an unprecedented period of challenge, not only for social care for older people, but for the nation as a whole. The long shadow of the pandemic has taken an immense human and financial toll on our sector, followed by the energy, workforce and cost of living crises. The ongoing worsening of public funding for adult social care also continues to play its part.

1.6 As a consequence, measures taken by MHA since the pandemic, to ensure its financial sustainability, are also embedded within this strategy and will crucially inform our plans for growth and sustainability, currently being developed.

2 Governance and accounts

2.1 Effective leadership has been essential in helping MHA navigate this recent period of change. As we continue to adapt and grow, the role of our Board of Trustees remains vital in providing oversight and direction.

2.2 All of MHA's Trustees are appointed for a three-year term and can serve up to three terms. Last year, the Methodist Conference appointed the Revd Derek McLean to the Board of Trustees, replacing the Revd Ruth Gee who served for five years.

2.3 We also welcomed Frances Beves, Richard Humphries, Archana Srivatsa and Cathy Kerr as new trustees for MHA. We very much look forward to working with them and benefitting from the expertise they bring to the Board.

2.4 They replace Lisa Commane (who served for six years), Martin Burkitt (nine years), and Bala Gnanapragasam (nine years). We thank them for their wisdom and guidance during their time as trustees.

2.5 The latest annual report and accounts are available from our website www.mha.org.uk or are available on request from Epworth House.

3 Chaplaincy Feedback from Residents and Relatives

3.1 In 2025, as part of our annual care home resident and relative survey, we received truly affirming feedback about the support our chaplains provide. The survey received 4,000 responses, representing 70 percent of residents and relatives.

3.2 Key results included:

- 97% of residents agreed that the chaplain contributes positively to the life of their home or scheme.
- 95% of relatives said that the chaplain helps provide spiritual and emotional reassurance to their loved one.

3.3 Individual responses from both residents and relatives also suggest an intrinsic link between speaking with a chaplain and feeling safe, part of a community and comforted when unwell or approaching end of life.

4 Changes in Chaplaincy

4.1 The survey affirms both the strong value placed on chaplaincy and the need to sustain it into the future. To support MHA's financial sustainability, we restructured the chaplaincy leadership and central support model, while preserving the amount of time chaplains spend with residents, relatives and colleagues.

4.2 The most significant change is that chaplaincy support is now aligned with MHA's nine care home regions, rather than with Methodist Districts. This is intended to support clearer communication and more consistent operational oversight. Each District, however, continues to have a named point of contact within the Chaplaincy Support Team.

4.3 Leadership of the department now rests with the Revd Sam Cowling-Green, our Head of Chaplaincy, who joined us a year ago. He reports directly to the Chief Executive. We were also delighted to appoint Abigail Ogier to the new role of Deputy Head of Chaplaincy. This role has been introduced to strengthen leadership capacity and provide additional support to the national team of over 100 chaplains. As part of the broader review of chaplaincy, the decision was taken not to recruit to the role of Director of Chaplaincy and Spirituality.

4.4 Engagement with local Methodist churches continues to play an important role in sustaining chaplaincy across MHA. If you would like to explore how to support older people in your community, whether through prayer, volunteering, partnership, charitable giving, or by inviting an MHA chaplain to speak, please contact us at chaplaincy@mha.org.uk.

5 Ongoing Engagement with the Methodist Church

5.1 Our relationship with the Methodist Church remains a vital and valued part of MHA's identity. Sam Monaghan, our Chief Executive, continues to meet regularly with the Secretary of the Conference, the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler.

5.2 In 2025, we have also begun meeting with Jo Hibbard, the connexional Director of Engagement, to explore new ways of deepening our connection with the wider Church. These conversations are helping us to explore how MHA's work can resonate more fully with the life of the Methodist Church.

5.3 Looking ahead, we are keen to renew and strengthen our relationships with District Chairs across the Connexion. We recognise the pivotal role they play in shaping local mission and ministry, and hope to create more opportunities

for meaningful partnership – rooted in our shared commitment to dignity, compassion, and community in later life.

5.4 We're grateful that 59 of our care homes and retirement living schemes are supported by their local Methodist church through regular acts of worship. If your church would like to explore how you can support older people in your area – through worship, volunteering, or partnership – please get in touch with us.

6 MHA Sunday 2025

6.1 MHA Sunday 2025 takes place on 8 June although churches are, of course, able to choose their own date to celebrate. This year's theme focused on supporting people living with dementia, rooted in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). Through the story of Irene, an MHA resident, we explore the importance of mutual care and belonging in later life. As 8 June falls on Pentecost, churches are welcome to mark MHA Sunday on an alternative date, such as 13 July, when the parable appears in the lectionary.

6.2 MHA Sunday offers churches a timely opportunity to reflect on how we respond, both as individuals and as Christian communities, to the needs of those living with dementia, and to consider what it means to be a good neighbour in later life.

6.3 A full set of free worship resources is available, including an order of service and sermon outline, a short video of Irene's story, and prayers, hymns and content suitable for all-age worship. Download them at mha.org.uk/get-involved/fundraise/mha-sunday

7 Organisational changes

7.1 In the past year we completed the sale of ten of our care homes announced in 2023. Sadly, we had to close one of the homes, but eight successfully transferred to new owners, and one remains with MHA.

7.2 In May 2024, we announced the closure of a further two care homes which, due to high levels of publicly funded places, were loss-making and MHA could not continue to subsidise them.

7.3 As part of the strategic review which led to the sale of the care homes, we also looked at the types of retirement living we currently offer and the future needs and wishes of older people. We examined the different types of leases and rental arrangements we have and where we would like to create a more consistent approach in the future. The work led to the announcement of plans to sell 14

of our retirement living schemes and remove care from six of these along with another two schemes.

7.4 These decisions were taken with deep regret, but out of necessity for us to best steward our resources responsibly, and shape MHA for the future, so that we can continue offering care to those who need it most.

7.5 Organisational changes also affected our MHA Communities and Central Support services.

7.6 MHA Communities schemes play a vital role in our charitable mission, but delivering these requires significant and ongoing financial investment, especially with grants to support this vital work being harder to secure. In the past year we have had to sadly close three schemes due to us no longer being able to financially support them.

7.7 With the contraction of our operational services, we also looked at our Central Support functions. As a result, a number of teams have been restructured, resulting in the loss of some roles.

7.8 At the time of reporting, MHA now has 75 care homes, 59 retirement living schemes and 39 MHA Communities schemes. We currently support more than 16,000 older people and remain the country's largest charitable care provider.

8 Looking forward

8.1 As we look to the future with our new strategy, our charitable calling remains the same: to enable older people to live later life well in body, mind and spirit. We do this in close partnership with the Methodist Church, drawing on our shared heritage and the enduring values that first gave rise to MHA. Inspired by the vision of the Rev. Walter Hall, and sustained by the prayers, presence and support of local churches, we continue to respond to the needs of our time with compassion and conviction. In all that lies ahead, we remain committed to building inclusive communities of care and to pursuing justice for older people – so that every life is valued.

Thank you for standing with us as we build communities of care, rooted in justice, where every older person can live later life with dignity and purpose.

*****RESOLUTION**

24/1. The Conference receives the Report.

25. Methodist Schools Property Company (MSPC): Revision to Articles of Association

Contact name and details	David Martin, Company Secretary dmartin@methodistschools.org.uk

The Methodist Schools Property Company (MSPC) propose revisions to its Articles of Association so that governance improvements are delivered. The changes are administrative in nature. Approval for these changes has been obtained from the Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) which is the sole corporate member of MSPC.

Meeting arrangements

The main reason for the change is that Articles 4.3 previously required one in-person meeting per annum. Given the geographical spread of MIST directors and the nature of business to be transacted, this is easily undertaken through online meetings.

Conduct of business

To facilitate the efficient discharge of routine business, Article 4.5 has been amended so that trustee written resolutions are approved by simple majority. This reflects the same decision-making and quorum threshold as that of decisions taken in a meeting.

The amendment to Article 14.1 adopts the connexional Legal Team's helpful advice on evidencing Conference resolutions.

List of schools

The Articles needs to be updated to reflect:

a) The Acquired Schools descriptive grouping is no longer required,
b) Shebbear College, Kingsley School are no longer in the group, and
c) Moorlands School and Lorenden Preparatory School can be reclassified as trust schools.

General

Housekeeping updates will be made for any consequential renumbering that is required. Any superseded clauses and definitions will be deleted.

REVISED ARTICLES

The following table sets out:

a) the revised articles, and
b) the draft special resolution that will be put to the Trustee Board of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust, which is the sole corporate member of MSPC, on receipt of approval from the Conference.

Clause	Provision
4.3	A meeting of the Trustees may be held either in person or by suitable electronic

Clause	Provision
	means agreed by the Trustees in which all participants may communicate with all the other participants.
4.5	Any issue may be determined by:
4.5.1	A simple majority of the votes cast at a meeting (other than any Conflicted Trustee who has not been authorised to vote), or
4.5.2	A resolution in writing agreed by a simple majority of the Trustees (excluding any Conflicted Trustee who has not been authorised to vote) provided at least one of the Trustees voting in favour is an Independent Trustee. For this purpose the resolution may be contained in more than one document.
14.1	The following matters shall require the consent of the Conference whose consent shall be evidenced by either (a) a resolution signed by the President of the Conference, or (b) a certificate signed by a properly authorised officer of the Methodist Church:
14.1.1	any alteration or variation to the Articles of Association; and
14.1.2	the consideration of any resolution for the Charity's winding up or seeking the appointment of an administrator (unless the Charity shall have become insolvent).
Sch 1	Reclassification of Lorenden Preparatory School and Moorlands School to the 'Part 1 – The Schools' category. Deletion of Kingsley School and Shebbear College. Deletion of 'Part 3 – The Acquired Schools'.
The changes will incorporate consequential renumbering of clauses and the deletion of superseded clauses and defined terms.	

A copy of the Articles, showing these amendments, is available on request.

SPECIAL RESOLUTION TO BE PROPOSED FOLLOWING CONFERENCE APPROVAL

SPECIAL RESOLUTION - That the attached Articles of Association be adopted as the Articles of Association of the Company in substitution for, and to the exclusion of, the existing Articles of Association.

In accordance with Company Law, the updated Articles will be filed at Companies House and the Charity Commission.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

25/1. The Conference receives the Report.

25/2. The Conference approves the revisions to the Articles of Association for the Methodist Schools Property Company as set out in the Report.

Contact name and details	David Martin, Company Secretary dmartin@methodistschools.org.uk

The Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) proposes revisions to its Articles of Association so that governance improvements are delivered. This follows an Independent Governance Review undertaken by DCO Partners which made useful recommendations to continuously improve MIST's governance and effectiveness. The development actions are already being progressed. The constitutional recommendations are reflected in this report. The changes are administrative in nature and do not require any prior Charity Commission consent.

The Articles have been reviewed by Farrer & Co. They have confirmed the proposed amendments are in order, and appropriate from a legal perspective.

Trustee Board composition

In pursuance of best practice, the Independent Governance Review recommended that the Trustee Board composition be changed so that conflicts of interest are removed. This related to Chairs of Governors ceasing to be Trustees, and School Heads attending MIST governance meetings by invitation only.

The removal of Chair of Governor Trustees means that there are three gaps on the Trustee Board. To ensure that the Board remains strong and effective, these three places will be redistributed to the Nominated Trustee grouping. For the avoidance of doubt, the Trustee Board will continue to incorporate:

a) One-third of its membership as Methodist Church Members, Connexional Council Trustees, and/or Methodist Church Ministers / Officers, and
b) The continuing commitment in Article 3.2 for all Trustees to support MIST's charitable Objects of advancing education in accordance with the Methodist Church Principles.

These changes are reflected by:

c) replacing Articles 3.2, 3.4, 3.6, 4.7 and 5 as set out below, and
d) deleting the existing Articles 3.7 and 4.8 regarding Chair Trustee status and School Heads attendance rights.

To ensure good communications moving forward, MIST has refocused its governance and engagement programme. Furthermore, the Trustee Board retains the right under existing Article 4.10 to invite individuals to attend and contribute to Trustee meetings.

This will include Chairs of Governors, School Heads and other personnel when it is prudent to draw on their advice and experience.

Conduct of business

To facilitate the efficient discharge of routine business, Article 4.5 has been amended so that trustee written resolutions are approved by simple majority. This reflects the same decision making and quorum threshold as that of decisions taken in a meeting.

The new Governance Framework improves MIST's conduct of business which supersedes the existing Instruments of Government and associated procedures. The Framework delivers several Governance Review recommendations and actions.

The amendment to Article 15.1 adopts the Connexional Legal Team's helpful advice on evidencing Conference resolutions.

Housekeeping updates will be made for any consequential renumbering that is required. Any superseded clauses and definitions will be deleted.

REVISED ARTICLES

The following table sets out:

a) the revised articles, and
b) the draft special resolution that will be put to the Members of MIST on receipt of approval from the Conference.

Clause	Provision
3.2	The Trustees, when complete, consist of at least eleven and not more than 17 individuals over the age of 18, all of whom must support the Objects and of whom at least one third shall be members of the Methodist Church, officers or ministers of the Methodist Church and/or Connexional Council Trustees.
3.4 3.4.1 3.4.2 3.4.3 3.4.4	The Trustees shall be appointed by the Conference and shall consist of the following: the Chair; no more than six Connexional Council Trustees; one person nominated by the District Chairs; and no more than nine Nominated Trustees.

Clause	Provision
3.6	The Chair, the Connexional Council Trustees, the one person nominated by the District Chairs and the Nominated Trustees may be reappointed at the expiry of their terms of offices provided that no such Trustee may serve more than three consecutive terms other than in exceptional circumstances.
4.5	Any issue may be determined by a simple majority of the votes cast at a meeting, or a resolution in writing agreed by a simple majority of the Trustees (other than any Conflicted Trustee who has not been authorised to vote) is as valid as a resolution passed at a meeting. For this purpose the resolution may be contained in more than one document.
4.7	The Chief Executive Officer, Executive Director(s) and Company Secretary shall be entitled to attend and speak (but not vote) at meetings of the Trustees but may be required to withdraw from any such meeting at the request of the Chair.
5	Trustees' powers
5.1	The Trustees have the following powers in the administration of the Charity in their capacity as Trustees:
5.2	to appoint (and remove) any person (who may be a Trustee) to act as Secretary in accordance with the Companies Act;
5.3	to appoint a Deputy Chair and other honorary officers from among their number;
5.4	to delegate any of their functions to committees consisting of two or more individuals appointed by them including, without limitation, a Governance Committee;
5.5	to delegate any of their functions in relation to each School to a Committee of Governors for each School, pursuant to the Governance Framework;
5.6	to establish and support Heads Meetings, and Chairs Meetings and Bursars Meetings and any other meetings the Trustees consider necessary to inform and enhance the Charity's work;
5.7	to make standing orders consistent with the Articles and the Companies Act to govern proceedings at general meetings;
5.8	to make rules consistent with the Articles and the Companies Act to govern their proceedings and proceedings of committees;

Clause	Provision
5.9	to make regulations consistent with the Articles and the Companies Act to govern the administration of the Charity and the use of its seal (if any);
5.10	to establish procedures to assist the resolution of disputes or differences within the Charity; and to exercise in their capacity as Trustees any powers of the Charity which are not reserved to the Members or to Conference under these Articles or the Companies Act.
15.1	The following matters shall require the consent of the Conference whose consent shall be evidenced by either (a) a resolution signed by the President of the Conference, or (b) a certificate signed by a properly authorised officer of the Methodist Church:
15.1.1	any alteration or variation to the Articles of Association; and
15.1.2	the consideration of any resolution for the Charity's winding up or seeking the appointment of an administrator (unless the Charity shall have become insolvent).
16	**Interpretation and Definitions** **Bursars** mean the bursars of the Schools. **Bursars Meeting** means meetings of the Bursars held in accordance with the terms of reference for Bursars Meetings promulgated by the Charity, and as amended from time to time. **Chairs of Governors** means the chairs of the governing bodies of the Schools. **Governance Framework** means the Governance Framework protocol (incorporating any Instrument of Government matters) from time to time promulgated by the Charity specifying the powers and duties delegated to the respective administrative governing bodies for each of the Schools. **People & Governance Committee** means the governance and nominations committee which meets in accordance with the terms of reference for the Governance Committee promulgated by the Charity and as from time to time amended.
The changes will incorporate consequential renumbering of clauses and the deletion of superseded clauses and defined terms.	

A copy of the Articles, showing these amendments, is available on request.

SPECIAL RESOLUTION TO BE PROPOSED FOLLOWING CONFERENCE APPROVAL

SPECIAL RESOLUTION - That the attached Articles of Association be adopted as the Articles of Association of the Company in substitution for, and to the exclusion of, the existing Articles of Association.

In accordance with Company Law, the updated Articles will be filed at Companies House and the Charity Commission.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

26/1. The Conference receives the Report.

26/2. The Conference approves the revisions to the Articles of Association for the Methodist Independent Schools Trust as set out in the Report.

27. Referred Memorials and Notices of Motion

Below appears a list of Memorials and Notices of Motion from previous Conferences that have not yet received a final reply or are not reported on elsewhere in the Agenda. In September 2024 the Connexional Council received an update on work arising from the 2024 Conference.

In the final column of the list below, under the heading 'current situation', a report is given on how the items of business have been dealt with at this Conference, or what recommendations are being made about how they are dealt with in the future.

Memorials from the 2018 Conference

MEMORIALS	Work to be undertaken by (eg committee or team)	Deadline for report to the Conference	Current situation
M10: Membership of Church Councils by presbyters	Methodist Council	N/A	Ongoing work. Forming part of the work on ministerial wellbeing.

Memorials from the 2022 Conference

MEMORIALS	Work to be undertaken by (eg committee or team)	Deadline for report to the Conference	Current situation
M12: Energy Efficiency Rating of Methodist Buildings and SO 973	The Council		This is being considered as part of the Action for Hope project.
M13: Climate Change and Energy Efficiency of Manses	Ministries Committee		
M17: Ecumenical appointments of ministers	Ministries and Stationing Committees		This is on the Ministries Committee's agenda.

Memorials from the 2023 Conference

MEMORIALS	Work to be undertaken by (eg committee or team)	Deadline for report to the Conference	Current situation
M23: Data Protection	The Council	2024	The Connexional Team is exploring options to report to the Council.

Memorials from the 2024 Conference

MEMORIALS	Work to be undertaken by (eg committee or team)	Deadline for report to the Conference	Current situation
M1: The Theology of Artificial Intelligence	Secretary of the Conference, in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee	2026	A task group has been established and has begun its work.
M21, M22: Modified Constitutions	Law and Polity Committee	2026	

*****RESOLUTION**

27/1. The Conference adopts the Report.

Contact name and details	The Revd Michaela Youngson, Assistant Secretary of the Conference. ASC@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	28/1. The Conference receives the Report. 28/2. The Conference directs the Law and Polity Committee to undertake further work on Recommendation Seven from the Review of Part 11 adopted by the 2024 Conference.

Summary of impact

Financial	None beyond already budgeted expenditure
Potential impact on local churches, circuits and districts	Greater confidence in the efficiency and effectiveness of the Part 11 processes around complaints and discipline.
Risk including safeguarding implications	Reduction in risk because of increased information sharing between Complaints and Discipline, Safeguarding and DARS

Background to the work

Background references or documents	32. Part 11 review report to the Conference of 2024 (https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/32._Part_11_review.pdf)

Introduction

1. The Conference of 2024 received the report 'Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders' and adopted the eighteen recommendations therein. Those recommendations are listed within this report, including details of how they have been or are in the process of being implemented. The supporting Resolutions from the Conference of 2024 are included in italic type.

2. Following the Conference a Part 11 Implementation Group was convened by the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and consisted of members of the Connexional Team with responsibilities for complaints and discipline, safeguarding, IT development, EDI matters, legal and constitutional practice,

the Learning Network and the Ministries Team. Also part of the group was Miss Elizabeth Ovey representing the Law and Polity Committee and Mr David Orford, independent consultant. This group has met on at least a monthly basis to implement the resolutions of the Conference.

3. It is expected that members of the Implementation Group will continue to meet as necessary into the next Connexional year to ensure the establishment of systems, the development of guidance and training for those involved in the Part 11 processes and the embedding of the new ways of working within the life of the Church.

Update on Recommendations

4. **Recommendation One -** The current definition of a "complaint" in Standing Order 1101(i) should be improved. Part 11 should be amended to clarify what Part 11 may not be used for, or to indicate alternative procedures for certain complaints

   Resolution 32/2: The Conference adopts Recommendation 1 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to draft wording for the definition of a complaint to ensure that it covers the behaviour of a respondent and is limited as in Appendix C.

   The Law and Polity Committee has drafted the wording for the definition of a complaint and this is included in its separate report to the Conference on the draft Standing Orders required.

5. **Recommendation Two** - Guidance should be drafted to assist the identification of alternative resolution approaches where reconciliation may not be appropriate. The guidance to include suggested timescales, and pathways for support that may be available to any member with specific needs or vulnerabilities.

   Resolution 32/3: The Conference adopts Recommendation 2 and directs the Connexional Team in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee to produce guidance.

   This guidance is being drafted and will be published as soon as it is available.

6. **Recommendation Three** – The title and role of "Local Complaints Officer" should be changed to "Local Resolution Officer" with other appropriate amendments to Standing Orders and guidance where required

   Resolution 32/4: The Conference adopts Recommendation 3 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to draft the necessary Standing Orders.

Following consultation with Chairs of District and others involved in Complaints and Discipline processes, what was envisaged to be the title and role of Local Resolution Officers will become 'District Resolution Officers' (DROs). Districts will be able to appoint more than one DRO according to need. This moves away from the need for such an officer in each Circuit and from the default of superintendents taking on the role when others are not willing or able. A smaller group of Resolution Officers allows for the development of expertise in case handling and reduces the number of people who will require training for a role which in many cases may never be needed. This approach also allows for a reduced number of people to require access to the reporting section of the proposed Connexional Case Management System. At present a default provision is included in the proposed Standing Orders whereby if no DRO is available a superintendent will take on the role in their own Circuit. Need for this provision will be kept under review.

A Person Specification and a Role Description for District Resolution Officers have been developed and, subject to the Conference agreeing to the Standing Order changes presented by the Law and Polity Committee, these will be sent to Districts following the Conference to allow recruitment to those voluntary roles.

7. **Recommendation Four** - All complaints should be categorised and recorded at connexional level to assist with oversight, scrutiny, and improvement. This has already commenced following a request from the Assistant Secretary to Districts in December 2024.

   The new system to be supported by changes to Standing Orders will support this way of working, whilst retaining the focus on local resolution wherever possible.

8. **Recommendation Five** - The Church should adopt a records management system for storing all complaints data in line with the Church's overall records management strategy.

   The current review of records management across the Connexional Team includes the implementation of appropriate retention schedules, data storage and access of and to complaints records.

9. **Recommendation Six** - The Church should adopt an appropriate case management system (CMS) for recording complaints, including a formal process for review, oversight and scrutiny.

   Since the appointment of the new Connexional Complaints Support Manager, case details have been migrated to a safe interim storage and management

system, pending the development of a new system. The specification for the new CMS has been developed and it is hoped that this will be set up and tested in time for implementation in the new connexional year. This work has taken longer than was originally hoped for due to a lack of IT capacity and the complex nature of system development.

Ongoing quality assurance is provided by an independent, external reviewer, who is also able to offer in-depth scrutiny of particular cases where learning may inform future practice.

Fortnightly meetings of the Complaints and Safeguarding Strategy (CASS) group, made up of Connexional Team members representing the Secretary of the Conference, Safeguarding, Complaints, Legal and Constitutional Practice and Communications, contribute to the review, oversight and scrutiny of this work.

10. **Recommendation Seven** - The Church should adopt a holistic anonymous reporting system to capture concerns from all individuals who wish to raise them.

The opportunity for concerns to be raised in a way that protects individuals who feel vulnerable for whatever reason is important and requires great care, and further work is needed to consider how a system of anonymous reporting can relate to the Church's Complaints and Discipline processes which are built on the basis of natural justice, where all parties are aware of the nature of a complaint and able to answer for their role in that. Some provisions for anonymous reporting are already included in the proposed Standing Orders, but the Law and Polity Committee proposes to undertake further work to address the principles of this Recommendation in consultation with the connexional Safeguarding team and the Connexional Complaints Support Manager, and to report back to the Conference of 2026.

Resolution 32/5: The Conference adopts Recommendations 4, 5, 6, and 7, and directs the Connexional Council to oversee implementation.

11. **Recommendation Eight** - The Church should adopt a simplified three tier model for addressing complaints which better aligns with safeguarding practices.

Resolution 32/6: The Conference adopts Recommendation 8 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to draft the necessary Standing Orders.

The Standing Order revisions in the separate Law and Polity Committee report adopt this model of working.

12. **Recommendation Nine** - The Church should ensure that these recommendations are adequately resourced to ensure that capability matches anticipated future demand.

    The increase of resources devoted to this work includes the appointment of a full time Connexional Complaints Support Manager, ongoing investment in IT support, the work of the Part 11 Implementation Group and use of an independent consultant for quality assurance and occasional case review. The Learning Network is also resourcing the work, through the development of a matrix of training and development resources to support those involved in processes at any point in the Complaints and Discipline system. These resources include existing training modules as well as bespoke elements to help those with particular roles understand their responsibilities and feel confident in carrying them out.

13. **Recommendation Ten** - The Church should introduce a post of "Connexional Complaints Support Manager" to replace the current post of Connexional Complaints Worker. Standing Orders should be amended to give the post appropriate decision-making powers related to the management of complaints.

    Resolution 32/7: The Conference adopts Recommendations 9 and 10 and directs the Connexional Council to oversee implementation.

    Ms Rachel Settatree was appointed to the new role of Connexional Complaints Support Manager in October 2024.The Standing Order revisions contained in the separate report of the Law and Polity Committee provide the Connexional Complaints Support Manager with appropriate decision-making powers related to the management of complaints, as envisaged in the 2024 report.

14. **Recommendation Eleven** - The Church should ensure that there is an independent review capability to ensure confidence in the system for all parties.

    Resolution 32/8: The Conference adopts Recommendation 11 and directs the Connexional Council in conjunction with the Law and Polity Committee to oversee implementation.

    Mr David Orford, independent consultant to the original Part 11 Review, has been contracted to offer quality assurance in regard to cases managed by the new system and to offer independent in-depth scrutiny of particular cases. This arrangement continues until the end of April 2026, prior to this a sub-group of the Implementation Group will review the way of working and consider if this approach meets the aspiration of confidence in the system for all parties. There

has been no need to involve the Law and Polity Committee in the implementation of this Recommendation.

15. **Recommendation Twelve** - Standing Orders should be amended to align the rights of appeal for complaints to ensure proportionality, including altering the rights of appeal for certain complaints at appropriate levels.

    The Standing Order changes to be brought by the Law and Polity Committee in their separate report make provision for amendments to rights of appeal.

16. **Recommendation Thirteen** - The act of "Suspension" should be amended to describe more adequately the temporary duties to be carried out by members who are respondents to a complaint. Suspension should only be used in circumstances where the respondent is required to temporarily cease and desist from any and all activities associated with the Church and may not in any capacity exercise their role.

    Resolution 32/9: The Conference adopts Recommendation 12 and 13 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to draft the necessary Standing Orders.

    The word "suspension" should only apply in cases where the respondent is required to temporarily cease and desist from any and all activities associated with the Church. The Report envisaged that in all other cases restrictions may be placed on some activities undertaken by the respondent but this should not be described as suspension.

    Existing Standing Orders have been amended to reflect this change in terminology. Members of the Chairs and Warden of the Order Meeting and others involved in Complaints and Discipline and Safeguarding will have met in May 2025 to consider what guidance needs to be developed to support those making decisions about restricted activities and suspensions. It is anticipated that this guidance will be drawn up early in the connexional year 2025/26.

17. **Recommendation Fourteen** – The Church should formalise the risk and information sharing conversations that take place between complaints and safeguarding staff. It is recommended that this is undertaken through regular strategy meetings.

    Resolution 32/10: The Conference adopts Recommendation 14 and directs the Connexional Council to oversee implementation.

Prior to the Conference of 2024 some case conferencing did take place between complaints and safeguarding staff. Since the Conference, the Secretariat has instigated fortnightly meetings of what is now called the Complaints and Safeguarding Strategy group (CASS). In addition to this, protocols are being developed to ensure appropriate information sharing at the point when a concern or complaint is raised and this also links with reports which come through the Discrimination and Abuse Response Service (DARS).

18. **Recommendation Fifteen** – Standing Orders should be amended to remove the requirement for the Safeguarding Committee to act as a Local Complaint Officer.

Recommendation Sixteen – The Conference should recognise that through shared decision making processes there may be occasions where complaints and safeguarding processes take place in parallel and direct that Standing Orders enable this to happen

Resolution 32/11: The Conference adopts Recommendation 15 and 16 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to draft the necessary Standing Orders.

Recommendations Fifteen and Sixteen have both been addressed in the proposed Standing Order amendments contained in the separate report of the Law and Polity Committee.

19. **Recommendation Seventeen** – The Church should maximise the use of its current Learning Network to assist with developing the best skills in all members who may be required to undertake roles within the Complaints and Discipline process.

As noted at paragraph 12 above, the Learning Network is developing a matrix of training and guidance resources to support those who undertake roles within the Complaints and Discipline processes.

20. **Recommendation Eighteen** – The Church increase the involvement of its Communications function within the Complaints and Discipline processes in order to provide advice, guidance and assistance with internal and external communications.

The Director of Communications attends the CASS meetings and is in regular contact with the CCSM.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

28/1. The Conference receives the Report.

28/2. The Conference directs the Law and Polity Committee to undertake further work on Recommendation Seven from the Review of Part 11 adopted by the 2024 Conference.

29. Complaints and Discipline: amendments to Part 11 of Standing Orders

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1. The Conference of 2024 received the report of the Part 11 review group ("the Report") and directed the Law and Polity committee to amend Standing Orders to give effect to the following recommendations (in summary):

1.1. Recommendation 1: the definition of "complaint" should be amended to exclude certain matters from its scope, as suggested in Appendix C;

1.2. Recommendation 3: local complaints officers should become local resolution officers, with consequential amendments;

1.3. Recommendation 8: the Church should adopt a simplified three tier model for addressing complaints which better aligns with safeguarding practices;

1.4. Recommendation 12: the rights of appeal for complaints should be aligned to ensure proportionality, including altering the rights of appeal for certain complaints;

1.5. Recommendation 13: the term "suspension" should only be used where a person is suspended from the exercise of all functions relating to the Church or the exercise of office within the Church. Restrictions on the exercise of functions or office should be differently described;

1.6. Recommendation 15: the requirement for the Safeguarding Committee to act as a local complaints officer should be removed;

1.7. Recommendation 16: Standing Orders should enable complaints and safeguarding processes to take place in parallel.

2. The draft amendments in the Appendix to this report are brought to the Conference pursuant to the directions given to the committee by the Conference of 2024. In carrying out its drafting work, the committee has become conscious of a number of points of detail which were not fully explored in the Report and is grateful to Mr David Orford for a number of conversations which have led to a greater understanding on the part of the committee of the intentions underlying some of the recommendations. The committee has attempted to give effect to

the spirit of the recommendations while proposing some variations, as explained below.

3. The committee has also benefited from engagement with the Implementation Group, which has been dealing with other aspects of implementation and a report from which appears elsewhere in the Agenda.

4. In addition the committee proposes amendments to introduce gender-neutral language throughout Part 11 and has taken the opportunity to tidy up some minor points.

5. Conversations are still continuing in some respects but the committee took the view that the better course would be to include this version of the amended Standing Orders in volume 2 of the Agenda rather than to delay circulation of the draft in case further amendments are required. If there are any further amendments, they will be put before the Conference on the Order Paper. In this connection, the committee is particularly conscious that some revision of parts of the Standing Orders relating to safeguarding is being undertaken and it may be that that leads to some amendments to this draft.

6. In what follows the committee draws the attention of the Conference to the salient points arising in relation to each recommendation.

Recommendation 1: definition of "complaint"

7. SO 1101(2) has been revised to reflect what was said in Appendix C about complaints which ought not to fall within the definition of "complaint" for the purposes of Part 11 in the light of some discussion of the rationale. The committee is of the view that the proposed exclusion of "complaints about the conduct or behaviour of employees of the Church" needs some expansion. We understand that the rationale is that such complaints are better dealt with, and ought to be dealt with, as employment matters under the terms of the employment contract. We therefore think that the exclusion should be limited to cases in which the conduct complained of related to conduct or behaviour connected with the employment in circumstances where the complainant would be able to invoke any grievance or discipline procedure. It is not clear to the committee that that would always be the case. We also think that the exclusion should be extended to cover the possibility of complaints against persons stationed as chaplains or in an employment not in the direct control of the Church.

Recommendation 3: local resolution officers

8. The committee was informed that a decision had been taken to use the term "district resolution officers" rather than "local resolution officers". The draft proceeds on that basis and the relevant provisions are primarily in SO 1110 and SO 1121. There is in general no requirement that Superintendents should become district resolution officers, but SO 1110 does make provision for the Superintendent to be the district resolution officer in a particular case if there is no appointed district resolution officer available to perform that function. This provision is included to ensure that there will always be a district resolution officer even if the District is having difficulty in making the necessary appointments or the appointed district resolution officers are unable for any reason to act in the particular case. Experience may show that such a default provision is not required but at this very early stage the committee thought it preferable to include one.

9. This section of the Report includes a proposal that a complaint against a member who is not an office holder should only be capable of being dealt with at Tier 1, on the ground that it is disproportionate to take such complaints beyond an attempt at reconciliation and resolution. The committee has reflected this proposal in SO 1120A but has included exceptions to cover the case where (i) the respondent is a former office holder and the complaint relates to conduct while the respondent held the office, (ii) the complaint is an abuse complaint, an employment complaint or a criminal complaint, any of which may involve special considerations, and (iii) the Connexional Complaints Support Manager considers that the conduct alleged is so serious that the complaint should be allocated to Tier 2. We take the view that, particularly while the Church is becoming familiar with the new system, a degree of flexibility is desirable to ensure that the complainant does not receive the impression that serious matters of conduct are regarded as unimportant.

10. The Report also recommends that complaints against a member who is not an office holder should only carry a right of appeal to the District Chair. The committee has found this recommendation difficult, since ex hypothesi the complaint has been dealt with under Tier 1, which makes no provision for the imposition of sanctions, so it is not clear what is being appealed against. The flow chart in Appendix 4 of the Report envisages that it is only the complainant who would have a right of appeal to the District Chair and it may be that the intention was to provide a right of appeal to a complainant who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Tier 1 procedure, but the flow chart then goes on to provide that if the appeal is upheld the Chair will determine findings. This does not seem consistent with the recommendation that Tier 1 should not be a fact-finding process. We understand from Mr Orford that the review group was proceeding on the basis that the Chair could remove the status of membership, but:

10.1. That understanding was mistaken, given the terms of clause 10 of the Deed of Union, which refers to the power of a competent church court to remove a person from membership upon finding a charge proved in disciplinary proceedings;

10.2. If this approach were to be taken, it would be necessary to introduce an investigatory and fact-finding mechanism into Tier 1 at the appeal stage and probably to amend clause 10 of the Deed of Union.

11. The committee has therefore taken a somewhat different approach. Under the draft Standing Orders, if reconciliation or resolution cannot be achieved in relation to such a complaint, the district resolution officer, although not the complainant, may request the Connexional Complaints Support Manager to exercise the power of reallocating the complaint to Tier 2. If the conduct alleged is sufficiently serious to warrant removal of the status of member if proved, the Connexional Complaints Support Manager might wish to take that course so that an investigation could take place and, if appropriate, charges could be brought. The committee recognises the resource implications and therefore proposes that a discipline committee dealing with such a case might have three members only and that any further appeals should be excluded. We should add that the members of the committee with experience in dealing with complaints and discipline cases take the view that it is very rare indeed for a matter involving a member who is not, and was not at the material time, an office holder to come to a discipline committee, so that in practice the resource implications are very limited.

Recommendation 8: three-tier model

12. The three tiers are outlined in SO 1101A, which includes a description of the Tier 2 procedure which reflects the emphasis in the Report on investigation rather than reconciliation, although reconciliation or resolution by an alternative procedure are both still possible outcomes. SO 1127(3) makes specific provision for working closely with those engaged in safeguarding and minimising repeated interviews.

13. The draft makes provision for the Connexional Complaints Support Manager to select whether a Tier 2 investigation should be carried out by a complaints team chair, a complaints team, a Methodist Church specialist case worker or an external person or organisation, as recommended in the Report. It also includes the option of another person or body as part of an alternative resolution procedure. The committee understands that there are at present no specialist case workers and no use is made of external persons or organisations, but the intention was that those possibilities should be included in case they became

of use in the future. In those circumstances, the draft deals briefly only with the appropriate procedure, in SO 1124A.

14. As the committee now understands the flow chart in Appendix 4, the proposal was that the person or body given the task of carrying out the Tier 2 investigation should recommend an outcome to the Connexional Complaints Support Manager, including that a charge should be brought, but that the final decision whether or not a charge should be brought rested with the Connexional Complaints Support Manager, who would then draft the charge, which would be subject to independent review. Only after the charge had been agreed would a Connexional Advocate be appointed as Presenting Officer. This would be a significant change from the present system, under which a complaints team decides whether or not a charge should be brought and the charge is then drafted by the person who will have the responsibility of presenting it. The committee understands the importance of consistency of outcome, but, apart from that, did not see in the Report the rationale for the change.

15. It is the committee's view that as a matter of polity it would be preferable for the significant decision of whether or not a charge should be brought to be taken by a complaints team, which will necessarily be composed of three Methodist members, but subject to an express requirement of consultation with the Connexional Complaints Support Manager. SO 1124 provides for such an approach. The committee has also taken the view that it would be preferable for the Presenting Officer to continue to draft the charge, although again in consultation with the Connexional Complaints Support Manager. SO 1130 provides for this approach. It also introduces a new express power for the Presenting Officer to explore with the respondent or the respondent's representative whether the respondent would be willing, in effect, to admit a charge in a particular form, thus reducing the scope of the discipline committee's task. This was not raised by the Report, but appears to us to be within its spirit.

16. A difficult area under the present system is the case where a complaint is met by a counter-complaint. The draft provides in SO 1120A that where a new complaint seems to relate to the same facts and circumstances as form the subject matter of an existing complaint, the case records of both complaints should be noted accordingly and the Connexional Complaints Support Manager should consider the desirability of their being dealt with together. Again this point was not raised by the Report, but appears to us to be within its spirit.

17. Another difficult area which was raised by the Report is the area of anonymous complaints. SO 1120A also makes provision for anonymous complaints to be received and recorded and makes available the Connexional Complaints Support

Manager's powers of allocation, but recognises the difficulty of engaging in a Tier 1 process of reconciliation or resolution where the complainant is unknown and the further difficulty for the respondent in mounting an effective defence in a Tier 2 investigation against an anonymous complainant. We agree with the Report's assessment that it is highly unlikely that any investigation would commence solely on the basis of an anonymous report. A further issue, however, is that if the person against whom the anonymous complaint is recorded is unaware of that fact, that person may lose the opportunity of rebutting it at a time when events are likely to be comparatively recent and evidence is more likely to be available. The draft therefore requires the Connexional Complaints Support Manager to consider whether the respondent ought to be informed of the complaint with a view to a response being made by the respondent and recorded.

18. The committee is aware that the question of anonymous complaints is a very sensitive matter from the safeguarding point of view and further discussions are likely to take place about this subject.

Recommendation 12: rights of appeal

19. We have already considered in paragraphs 10 and 11 above the issue of rights of appeal where the complaint is about the conduct of a member who does not hold office.

20. The other recommended change is the introduction of a right of appeal to the President for "a member" who feels that the Connexional Complaints Support Manager wrongly refused to record the complaint as a complaint under Part 11 or that the complaint was inappropriately managed under the Tier 2 procedure. We understand that the Report does not always use the term "member" to mean lay person as opposed to minister and that the intention was not to give a right of appeal to members which was not available to ministers. These rights of appeal are to be found in SO 1120A. It is not clear from the Report why such an appeal was to be open to complainants only if it concerned the recording of a matter as a complaint for the purposes of Part 11 and the draft proposes that the right of appeal is given to both the complainant and the respondent.

Recommendation 13: suspension

21. SO1105 has been amended to reflect this recommendation. The Report envisaged that at this stage at least, Standing Orders might provide for a distinction between suspension and the imposition of restrictions on the exercise of functions or of an office and further discussions might take place elsewhere. The committee has followed this approach.

22. The committee has also included amendments to incorporate the recommendation that any breach of suspension or a restriction should trigger a review and might also constitute a matter for a separate complaint. Experience suggests that if a complaint has already reached the stage of being referred for the preparation of a charge, there might be advantages if the issue of the alleged breach could be dealt with by the discipline committee hearing the charge, rather than by starting from the beginning of a new process. The draft provides for that and also for the possibility of referring the breach to the person or body already dealing with the Tier 2 procedure if the complaint has not reached the stage of a charge. We understand from Mr Orford that this does not conflict with the intention behind the Report.

23. The committee recognises that if this approach is adopted in Part 11, it may be appropriate to reconsider the terms of the power to suspend in Standing Order 013 and possibly the terms of the power to give directions as to the exercise of office in Standing Order 013C. This is a matter for the future and of course, as respects Standing Order 013C, would need to be carried on in consultation with those responsible for safeguarding matters.

Recommendation 15: Safeguarding Committee acting as local complaints officer

24. This requirement has been removed.

Recommendation 16: complaints and safeguarding processes in parallel

25. As noted in paragraph 12 above, specific provision is made for this in SO1127. It may well be that further provisions can be included if this proves insufficient, but at present the committee is uncertain what more might be required.

Consequential amendments

26. Work is being done to identify any consequential amendments which would be required if the Conference were to make the amendments set out in the Appendix. Any such amendments will be brought on the Order Paper.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

29/1. The Conference receives the report.

29/2. The Conference amends the Standing Orders in Part 11 as set out in the Appendix to the Report.

APPENDIX

Section 110 General

1100 Principles. (1) The need of the Methodist Church for a complaints and discipline process stems from the imperfect nature of human beings. The Church is a fallible community and its members on occasion behave in ways which are damaging to themselves and others and which undermine the credibility of the Church's witness. A complaints and discipline process is one of the means by which the Church recognises that all human beings are made in the image of God and are entitled to be treated as such, and by which it maintains its witness to the new life to which we are called through Christ.

(2) Through the complaints and discipline process members of the Methodist Church are accountable to the Church in matters of faith and behaviour. The Church seeks to enable healing and reconciliation to take place through that accountability whenever possible. The Church also responds to the call through Christ for justice, openness and honesty, and to the need for each of us to accept responsibility for our own acts.

(3) The complaints and discipline process therefore seeks to embody the following principles:

(i) the initiation of complaints should not be limited to members of the Church;
(ii) there should be no difference of principle between ordained and lay people in the way in which complaints against them are dealt with;
(iii) the possibility of reconciliation ***or an alternative form of early resolution*** should be explored carefully in every case in which that is appropriate;
(iv) help and support should be offered both to the person making the complaint and to the person complained against at every stage during the process;
(v) the process should be fair;
(vi) the person or body making the decision at each stage should be competent to do so;
(vii) there should be a means of correcting any errors which may be made;
(viii) there should be a means of ensuring compliance with any decision;
(ix) there should be appropriate requirements relating to confidentiality and record-keeping.

1101 Interpretation. (1) In this Section and in other provisions of these Standing

Orders relating to complaints and discipline:

(i) 'complaint' means***, subject to the provisions of clause (2) below,*** a statement (whether or not in writing) by any person to a member of the Church (whether ordained or lay):

(a) objecting to the words, acts or omissions of another member of or person holding office in the Church and requesting that action be taken as a consequence~~, but subject to clause (2) below~~; or

(b) asserting that the respondent has a conviction or has received a simple or conditional police caution which, whether or not previously known, would be a bar to appointment to office under Standing Order 010(2)(ii);

(ii) 'complainant' means the person making the complaint;

(iii) 'recipient' means the person to whom the complainant first makes the complaint;

(iv) 'respondent' means the person against whom the complaint is made and (if applicable) any other person so referred to in Standing Order 1130(8);

(v) '~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer' means the person who has the functions given by Standing Order 1110 in relation to that complaint;

(vi) '~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~' means the Secretary of the Conference or the member of the Connexional Team to whom the Secretary has delegated responsibility for discipline matters in relation to the Church generally;

(vii) 'complaints team' means a team convened from the connexional Complaints Panel established under Standing Order 1112;

(viiA) 'complaints team chair' means a member of the connexional Complaints Panel appointed under Standing Order 1112(2A);

(viii) 'charge' means a complaint falling within Standing Order 1130(3) in respect of which a complaints team has decided a discipline charge should be formulated and heard by a church court;

(ix) 'parties', in relation to an appeal, means the parties as defined by Standing Order 1140(1).

(x) 'Tier 1 procedure', 'Tier 2 procedure' and 'Tier 3 procedure' mean the procedures set out in Standing Orders 1121, 1122 to 1127 and Sections 113 and 114 below respectively.

(2) A statement is not a complaint within clause (1)(i)(a) above if***:***

(i) the respondent's standing in relation to the Church could not reasonably be regarded as of any significance in connection with the words, acts or omissions complained of;

(ii) the complaint concerns:

(a) the conduct or behaviour of an employee of the Church or a presbyter, deacon or probationer stationed as a chaplain or in an employment not in the direct control of the Church and:

(A) the complaint relates to conduct or behaviour in that capacity; and

(B) it is being or could be dealt with by a disciplinary or grievance process under the employee's contract of employment which the complainant is able to use;

(b) the application by the respondent of Church policies or procedures in respect of which there is an appeals process by which the subject matter of the complaint could be addressed;

(c) the words, acts or omissions of the respondent as a member of a Church committee, panel, task group or other similar body who has supported or concurred in a decision or the outcome of the work of that body;

(d) the exercise by the respondent of an official role where an existing body has statutory oversight or professional accountability and relates to that professional function and not to membership of the Church.

1101A Procedures Under This Part and Alternative Procedures. (1) This Part sets out the following three procedural tiers:

(i) Tier 1: early resolution. The Tier 1 procedure is directed towards achieving reconciliation or other resolution. Investigation of the facts relating to the substance of the complaint is limited to investigating the facts required to determine whether the Tier 1 procedure is the appropriate procedure and whether other steps outside the Part 11 process should be taken;

(ii) Tier 2: investigation. The Tier 2 procedure is directed towards investigating and obtaining evidence relating to the substance of the complaint and towards making recommendations for or deciding upon further action to be taken, including reallocation of the complaint to the Tier 1 procedure. The outcome of the Tier 2 procedure may alternatively be a decision that the Tier 3 procedure should be followed.

(iii) Tier 3: formal hearing. The Tier 3 procedure is directed towards the formal determination by a church court of charges brought by the Church against the respondent. The church court has power to impose sanctions on the respondent.

(2) References in this Part to alternative procedures are references to the procedures specified in Standing Order 1123(6) or to any other alternative procedure which the Connexional Complaints Support Manager decides should be adopted in the particular case.

1101B Time Limit

(1) Subject to clause (2) below, a complaint must be made within six months of the conduct which forms the subject matter of the complaint, or of the most recent words, act or omission if the complaint relates to a course of conduct.

(2) In exceptional circumstances, the time limit for making a complaint may be extended by the Connexional Complaints Support Manager, who must consult or take advice as appears appropriate in the particular case.

1102 General Matters. (1) The principle of fairness set out in Standing Order 1100(3)(v) above means that all persons exercising functions in relation to complaints and discipline must at all times have regard to the further principles that a respondent should:

(i) have an adequate opportunity of responding to the complaint, meeting any charge and dealing with the evidence;
(ii) be treated fairly by any ***complaints team chair or*** complaints team dealing with the complaint;
and
(iii) receive a fair hearing from any church court which is to decide whether any charge is established.

(2) (*a*) Subject to sub-clause (*b*)(ii) and (iii) below, but notwithstanding anything contained elsewhere in these Standing Orders no person may ***act as a complaints team chair,*** form part of a complaints team or sit as a member of any church court deciding a discipline charge or appeal if that person:

(i) is or has been a complainant or respondent in relation to that complaint or any connected complaint;
(ii) has ***acted as a complaints team chair,*** formed part of a complaints team or been a member of any other inquiry which has considered that complaint or any connected complaint;
(iii) has sat on any church court at an earlier hearing of any other charge arising from that complaint or any connected complaint;
(iv) has any personal interest in the outcome;
(v) has received in confidence information relevant to the complaint;
(vi) has sat on a Pastoral Committee under Standing Order 013 concerning the complainant or respondent; or
(vii) because of a close friendship or relationship with the complainant or respondent or otherwise might or might reasonably be supposed to be open to partiality or embarrassment in carrying out the responsibilities of ***a complaints team chair,*** a member of the complaints team or sitting on the church court.

(b) (i) If, because of the operation of sub-clause (*a*) above or otherwise, any church court would have fewer than three members for the hearing of a case, the President or the Vice-President on ~~his or her~~ behalf ***of the President*** must

appoint additional members for the purpose of the hearing to bring the court to a membership of at least three.

(ii) If but for this provision full compliance with Standing Order 1131(3) to (5) and sub-clause (*a*) above would make it impossible to convene a court of at least three members the President or Vice-President shall nevertheless exercise ~~his or her~~ ***the*** powers ***given*** under head (i) of this sub-clause, fulfilling the requirement of clause (1)(iii) above by the appointment of a person or persons not on the connexional Panel or by such other means as, in ~~his or her~~ ***the*** absolute discretion ***of the President or the Vice-President, may be judged***~~, he or she judges~~ necessary and sufficient and having regard as far as possible to the requirements of Standing Order 1131(3) to (5) and sub-clause (*a*) above.

(iii) If but for this provision full compliance with sub-clause (*a*) above would make it impossible to appoint a complaints team of three members the President or the Vice-President on ~~his or her~~ ***the President's*** behalf must make such appointments as may be necessary to establish a team of three members ***including a complaints team chair***, fulfilling the requirement of clause (1)(iii) above by the appointment of a person or persons not on the connexional Complaints Panel.

(*c)* Provided that a court has three members, or, in the case of a committee of the Conference constituted under Standing Order 1145(2) below, 11 members, no proceeding or decision of the court will be invalid because it consists, in any particular case, of fewer members than is specified in these Standing Orders.

(d) No person under 18 years of age may ***act as a complaints team chair,*** form part of a complaints team or sit as a member of a church court deciding a discipline charge or appeal.

(e) No person may ***act as a complaints team chair,*** form part of a complaints team or sit as a member of a church court (except the Conference) who is not a member of the Methodist Church.

(3) Except as otherwise specifically provided in these Standing Orders every ***complaints team chair, every*** complaints team and every church court hearing a discipline charge or appeal has power to regulate ~~its own~~ ***the*** procedure ***to be followed*** in the light of the principles set out in Standing Order 1100 and clause (1) above and having regard to guidelines approved from time to time by the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity appointed under Standing Order 211.

(4) Except where otherwise expressly provided or where all those affected agree, all time limits specified in this Part must be strictly observed. Where a provision specifies a time

before which a hearing must not begin, that period may not be abridged except with the consent of all those affected. All persons with responsibility for taking steps under this Part for which no time limit is specified must take those steps as soon as is reasonably practicable in all the circumstances of the case.

(5) Where provision is made in this Part for an appeal to be brought to a person falling within Standing Order 290(3), the appeal will normally be dealt with on the basis of written materials without a hearing. The person determining the appeal must give written reasons for ~~his or her~~ ***the*** decision. No further appeal lies against that decision.

(6) Any person or body acting under this Part must have regard at all times to the provisions of any relevant code of practice and any relevant guidance issued in the name of the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity appointed under Standing Order 211. The ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must keep a list of codes of practice and guidance falling within this clause.

(7) Any person or body acting under this Part in relation to a complaint or charge raising issues of sexual or racial harassment or abuse, or abuse of a person with a disability, must consider***, in consultation with the Connexional Complaints Support Manager,*** whether it is appropriate to obtain specialist advice in order to deal fairly with the matter. The Secretary of the Conference may direct that the expenses of obtaining such advice shall be reimbursed from the Methodist Church Fund. (This provision is without prejudice to Standing Order 376(6).)

(8) A complaint based on the existence of a conviction or police caution which would be a bar to office under Standing Order 010(2)(ii) and a complaint made in performance of the duty imposed by Standing Order 985(3) must not be dealt with by way of resolution, whether informal or formal, or reconciliation.

(9) (a) If at any stage in the ***discharge by the Connexional Complaints Support Manager of the responsibilities of that office in relation to a particular complaint or charge*** ~~investigation of a complaint or the pursuit of a charge~~ issues emerge which raise safeguarding concerns, whether the concerns are as set out in clauses (7) and (8) above or of a more general nature, and whether ~~or not~~ the concern relates to the complainant or the respondent ***or any other person***, then the ~~person or body then dealing with the complaint or charge~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must immediately refer the matter of concern for consideration by the safeguarding officer (as defined in Standing Order 230(3)(ii)), who may offer advice or refer the matter to the Safeguarding Committee for its advice and recommendations.

(b) If at any stage in the discharge by a complaints team chair or a complaints team of the relevant functions under this Part or in the pursuit of a charge issues of the nature set out in sub-clause (a) above emerge of which the Connexional Complaints Support Manager is unaware, then the person or body then dealing with the complaint or charge must immediately inform the Connexional Complaints Support Manager, who must follow the requirements of sub-clause (a). ~~The relevant Connexional Team member must be informed of the referral.~~

(10) The Safeguarding Committee, on a referral to it of any matter under clause (9)above ~~or in the fulfilment of its functions under Standing Order 230, and without prejudice to those functions,~~ may investigate any such matter as if it were a ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer with all the powers and responsibilities of such an officer but following its own procedures as set out in Standing Orders.

(11) Where clause (9) above applies, the ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager, in consultation with any other*** person or body ~~making the referral~~ ***then dealing with the complaint or charge,*** shall determine, having received the advice of the safeguarding officer or the Safeguarding Committee on the point, as the case may be, whether the investigation of the complaint or the pursuit of the charge can continue while the matter is under consideration or investigation by the safeguarding officer or the committee or whether the investigation or pursuit must cease for the time being. In the latter case, the time limits contained in this Part shall, to the extent necessary, be suspended.

1103 Special Cases. (1) If:

(i) the recipient of a complaint is a district Chair;
(ii) the complaint is made in writing; and
(iii) the complainant requests that the complaint should be dealt with under the provisions of Standing Order 040

the complaint must be ~~treated as a complaint~~ ***dealt with*** under that Standing Order and not under this Part unless clause (2) below applies. If a Chair takes steps under Standing Order 040 on ~~his or her~~ ***the Chair's*** own initiative the provisions of that Standing Order shall similarly apply.

(2) If the ~~relevant local complaints officer has already referred the complaint to the connexional Complaints Panel~~ ***complaint has already been notified to the Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** by the time a request of the kind referred to in clause (1) above is received, this Part applies and no steps shall be taken under Standing Order 040 except after a further referral to a Chair.

(3) If charges or appeals arising out of the same or similar facts or connected with the same subject matter are pending against two or more persons before more than one church court, the courts concerned may, subject to Standing Order 1102(1) and (2) above, sit jointly to hear some or all of the evidence or reports and of the arguments, and may consult together. Each court must reach its own decisions separately on the evidence relevant to the charge or appeal before it.

(4) If a complaint is made by or against, or a charge is brought against, a person under the age of 18, the provisions of this Part apply, but ~~he or she~~ ***such a person*** has the right at all times to be accompanied by an adult ~~of his or her choosing~~ ***chosen by that person***. Any person or body acting under this Part in relation to such a complaint or charge must have regard at all times to the age of the person concerned in giving effect to the requirements of Standing Order 1102(1) above.

(5) If a complaint is made by or against, or a charge is brought against, a person with a disability, the provisions of this Part apply, but ~~he or she~~ ***such a person*** shall have the right at all times to such assistance as may reasonably be required to enable ~~him or her~~ ***that person*** to participate effectively in the relevant processes. Any person or body acting under this Part in relation to such a complaint or charge must have regard at all times to the disability of the person concerned in giving effect to the requirements of Standing Order 1102(1) above.

(6) No action may be taken on a complaint against a person carrying out the responsibilities of a ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer***, a complaints team chair*** or a member of a complaints team***,*** or a person falling within Standing Order 290(3) or sitting as a member of any church court***,*** in respect of the performance of those responsibilities, or against the Secretary of the Conference***, the Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** or a***ny other*** member of the Connexional Team in respect of acts or omissions in the performance of the duties of ~~his or her~~ ***that person's*** office or employment relating to complaints or discipline, unless:

(i) the complaint is made on the ground that the person concerned acted in bad faith or that ~~his or her~~ ***the relevant*** conduct constituted sexual or racial harassment or abuse, or abuse of a person with a disability; and

(ii) the Secretary of the Conference or, in the case of a complaint against the Secretary, the President or a person appointed for the purpose by the President, after making such inquiries of the person proposing to make the complaint and the person against whom the complaint is proposed to be made as ~~he or she~~ ***the relevant person*** may think fit, has agreed in writing that the complaint may be made.

(7) If a complaint is made against the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~, whether or not the complaint relates to the performance of ~~his or her~~ ***that person's*** duties, the Secretary of the Conference must appoint another member of the Connexional Team to perform the functions of the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ in the particular case, unless the complaint cannot proceed without the agreement in writing of the Secretary of the Conference in accordance with clause (6) above and that agreement is not given.

1104 Record-keeping, Confidentiality and Related Matters. (1) The records specified in heads (iA) to (iv) below shall be deposited with the Secretary of the Conference for safe custody, shall be retained by the Secretary for the period specified in the relevant head or, where any of clauses (1A) to (3B) below applies, for the longer period there provided for, and shall then be destroyed:

(i) each record of a formal disposition of a complaint by a district resolution officer, for two years;

(iA) each record of a decision of a ***complaints team chair or a*** complaints team to ~~summarily~~ dismiss ***summarily*** a complaint under Standing Order 1123(7) or to deal with a complaint under an alternative procedure set out in Standing Order 1123(6), for two years;

(iB) each record of a decision of a ***complaints team chair or a*** complaints team to dismiss a complaint under SO 1124(10), for two years;

(iC) each record of a decision of a ***complaints team chair or a*** complaints team to follow a course of action under Standing Order 1124(11), for five years;

(iD) each record of a decision on an appeal under Standing Order 1126(1), for two years;

(iE) each record of a decision on an appeal under Standing Order 1126(3), for five years;

(ii) copies of all reports prepared at the conclusion of inquiries held under Standing Order 111(2A), for ten years;

(iii) all records of hearings before discipline committees, appeal committees and other connexional courts under this Part or Section 03 or Section 04, for ten years;

(iv) all records relating to the resignation, discontinuance or discipline of ministers and probationers and those in training for the presbyterate or the diaconate, for ten years.

(1A) The Secretary of the Conference shall have the authority to retain records for a longer period than that specified in clause (1) if ~~he or she~~ ***the Secretary*** considers that to be in the best interests of the Church. All parties to the record that is to be retained for an

extended period under this clause shall, so far as reasonably possible, be informed of the decision.

(2) If any records deposited with the Secretary under clause (1) above contain an allegation of a criminal offence, or relate to a safeguarding concern, that record shall be retained for fifty years.

(2A) Clauses (1) and (2) above shall be applied as closely as possible to all records deposited with the Secretary under previous Standing Orders relating to complaints and discipline.

(3) *[revoked]*

(3A) Any record that a minister or probationer resigned, was discontinued or was removed from Full Connexion, or of the reason for any such action, shall be retained until the death of that minister or probationer.

(3B) Any record that a local preacher or member of the Church lost the status of a local preacher or ceased to be a member, or of the reason for any such loss or cessation, shall be retained until the death of that local preacher or member.

(4) Both the complainant and the respondent are entitled upon request to a copy of any record to which clause (1) or (2A) above applies, but must treat any document supplied following such a request as confidential.

(4A) The nature and extent of the record to be retained by the Secretary of the Conference under clause (1) above shall be in accordance with guidance adopted by the Conference.

(5) The Secretary of the Conference must permit the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ to have access to the records kept pursuant to this Standing Order for the purpose of carrying out a search required to be made under Standing Order 1153(1).

(6) Any person who:

(i) is or has been a member of any church court, complaints team or team convened from a former district Complaints Panel; or
(ii) is or has been a local complaints officer***, a district resolution officer or a complaints team chair***; or

(iii) has acted as a district Complaints Officer or appropriate responsible person under previous Standing Orders relating to complaints and discipline

and in that capacity has dealt with a charge or complaint under this Part or such previous provisions must observe at all times the confidentiality of those proceedings. This does not prevent the communication of material in the course of any discipline process whether relating to the particular complaint or to any other complaint involving either the complainant or the respondent.

(7) The complainant and the respondent and any person who has brought a complaint under previous Standing Orders relating to complaints and discipline or ~~had~~ ***has been the subject of*** such a complaint ~~made against him or her~~ must observe at all times the confidentiality of those proceedings. The provisions of Standing Order 1157 apply if there is any breach of this obligation.

(8) Subject to clause~~s~~ (9) ~~and (10)~~ below, the Chair of the District and the Superintendent of the Circuit in which a respondent resides for the purposes of the stations (if a minister or probationer) or is a member or office-holder (if a lay person) must be informed of the decision made at each stage of the complaints and discipline process by the person responsible under this Part for recording the decision, whether or not ~~he or she~~ ***that Chair or Superintendent*** would otherwise be entitled to be so informed under any provision of this Part.

(9) Clause (8) above does not apply in respect of a ~~decision by a local complaints officer not to refer a complaint to the connexional Complaints Panel~~ ***complaint which is dealt with under the Tier 1 procedure alone*** if the relevant Chair or (as the case may be) the relevant Superintendent is not aware that a complaint has been made.

(10) *[revoked]*

(11) Any person retaining a record or copy of a record under the provisions of this Part must within 90 days of the date of the document send it to the Secretary of

the Conference for safe custody in accordance with clause (1) with all the relevant records relating to the complaint in question. Any person holding records under the provisions of this Part must destroy any duplicate records or other documentation, including correspondence, once the records have been passed to the Secretary of the Conference.

(12) For the purposes of this Standing Order "record" does not include the Journal as defined in clause 36 of the Deed of Union or any document included within Standing Order 125(2).

1105 Suspension *and restriction*. (1) When a ~~local complaints officer has referred a~~ complaint ***has been allocated to the Tier 2 procedure*** ~~to the connexional Complaints Panel~~ under Standing Order 1121(5), the responsible person as defined in clause (2) below has power to suspend the respondent from all ~~or any of his or her~~ ***the respondent's*** functions as a presbyter, deacon, local preacher, member, probationer or student or from the exercise of any or every office in the Church, ***to impose restrictions in connection with the exercise by the respondent of those functions or any office held*** and to lift or vary any such suspension ***or restriction***.

(1A) In this Standing Order "restriction" means a requirement that the respondent must not exercise some function or functions as a presbyter, deacon, local preacher, member, probationer or student or must not exercise that function or those functions in specified ways or must not exercise an office in specified ways. A restriction may be imposed after discussion and with the agreement of the respondent or without agreement.

(2) The responsible person means:

(i) in the case of a complaint which might form the subject matter of a ministerial charge under Standing Order 1130, the Chair or other person to whom that Standing Order requires a copy of any charge to be sent; and
(ii) in any other case, the Superintendent.

(3) Where criminal charges are pending against a person within the scope of clause (1) above of such a kind that in the event of conviction that person's standing in relation to the Church might require to be reviewed or where a formal investigation is taking place which might lead to the preferring of such charges, but (in either case) no complaint has yet been ~~referred to the connexional Complaints Panel~~ ***notified to the Connexional Complaints Support Manager***, the person who would be the responsible person if a complaint had been made has powers similar to those given by that clause.

(4) Where a person exercises the powers given by clause (1) or clause (3) above and the Deed of Union and Standing Orders contain no provision for securing the continued performance of some or all of the functions to which the suspension ***or restriction*** relates, ~~he or she~~ ***that person*** must also make interim arrangements for such continued exercise, in consultation with those affected as far as is reasonably possible in the circumstances. For that purpose the person so acting may appoint another person to exercise any of the relevant functions, other than those expressly given by the Deed of Union to the office-holder concerned, until the suspension ***or restriction*** is lifted or such interim arrangements otherwise cease to be necessary.

(5) The powers given under this Standing Order are additional and without prejudice to any power of suspension which may arise or have arisen under Standing Order 013. A suspension ***or restriction*** validly in force under any of these provisions may continue notwithstanding the termination of a suspension ***or restriction*** imposed under another provision.

(6) The power given by clause (1) above and any suspension ***or restriction*** in force under it continues until:

(i) a ~~complaints team~~ ***competent person or body*** has declined to refer the complaint to a connexional Presenting Officer for the preparation of a charge (whether or not ~~the team~~ ***that person or body*** decides to take any form of alternative action) and, if relevant:
  (a) the time for bringing an appeal under Standing Order 1126(1) has expired and no appeal has been brought; or
  (b) the appeal under that Standing Order has been dismissed; or

(ii) a competent church court has dismissed the charge, either at first instance or on appeal, and leave to appeal against that dismissal has been refused or the time for appeal has expired without any appeal being brought; or

(iii) any judgment reached has taken effect.

(7) The power given by clause (3) above and any suspension ***or restriction*** in force under it ceases if:

(i) the person concerned is prosecuted and acquitted or is notified that criminal charges will not be preferred or proceeded with; or

(ii) after the person has been convicted, a decision is taken in accordance with the provisions of this Part not to proceed with any charge.

If the person is convicted but paragraph (ii) does not apply, any suspension ***or restriction*** then in force continues after conviction as if imposed under clause (1) above and the provisions of that clause and clause (6) above apply accordingly.

(8) (*a*) A person suspended***, or on whom a restriction or restrictions have been imposed,*** under the provisions of this Standing Order may at any time while ~~he or she remains~~ suspended ***or subject to a restriction*** appeal in accordance with the provisions of this clause to a person falling within Standing Order 290(3), appointed by the President or the Vice-President on ~~his or her~~ behalf ***of the President***, who may uphold, lift or vary the suspension ***or restriction***.

(b) An appeal must be brought by notice in writing to the Secretary of the Conference stating the grounds on which the appeal is brought.

(c) The Secretary must give notice of an appeal to the person who imposed the suspension ***or restriction***, who must be given an opportunity to respond to the grounds of appeal. The person appealing must then be given an opportunity to reply.

(d) No appeal may be brought within three months after the determination of a previous appeal and the grounds of appeal may not include any grounds relating to the merits of any complaint or of any criminal charges which are pending or which might be preferred and which are the reason for a suspension ***or restriction*** under clause (3) above.

(9) When a person within the scope of Standing Order 801(1) is suspended ***or subject to a restriction*** 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 ***or the period of restriction***) until:

(i) the suspension ***or restriction*** 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~~ ***competent person or body*** decides not to bring a charge

whichever is the earlier. The person suspended ***or subject to a restriction*** is entitled to continue residing in the manse for the same period.

(10) When such a person is or may be suspended or ***subject to a restriction*** and a charge has been brought by a ~~complaints team~~ ***competent person or body***, 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 ***or restriction*** 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 376(5), 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 376(6), including for reimbursement of the costs of supplying ministry in place of the ~~suspended~~ minister or probationer ***who is suspended or subject to a restriction.***.

(11) Whenever the power given under clause (1) above is exercised in relation to a minister or a probationer in a Circuit appointment, the person exercising the power and all those thereafter involved in the complaints and discipline process must at all times

have regard to the immediate and likely future effects of the suspension ***or restriction*** on the affected Local Church or Churches and Circuit while the process continues. The person exercising the power should ensure that appropriate steps are taken to provide interim pastoral care and to monitor the situation and revise the interim arrangements as necessary, in particular if the suspension ***or period of restriction*** becomes lengthy.

(12) The responsible person must consider any alleged breach of suspension or a restriction by the respondent and decide whether the suspension should continue or, as the case may be, whether any restriction or further restriction should be imposed or any existing restriction should be varied or lifted. The responsible person may also notify the Connexional Complaints Support Manager of the allegation of breach and request the Connexional Complaints Support Manager:

- ***(i) to treat the notification as a notification of a complaint under Standing Order 1120A(2) below;***
- ***(ii) to allocate to the person or body dealing with the existing complaint under the Tier 2 procedure the additional responsibility of dealing with the subject matter of the notification as part of the investigation being undertaken;***
- ***(iii) if the original complaint has been passed to the Connexional Advocate for the preparation of a charge, to pass the notification to the Connexional Advocate for consideration of whether the subject matter of the notification should be treated as further evidence relevant to the charge or charges or proposed charge or charges or whether a further charge should be brought in the light of that material. If the reporting officer, acting under Standing Order 1131, has already chosen the chair of the discipline committee which will hear the charge or charges, no further charge resulting from the notification may be brought without the agreement of the chair.***

(13) If a Connexional Advocate to whom a notification has been passed under clause (12)(iii) above decides that the subject matter of the notification should not be treated as further evidence and no further charge should be brought, or if the chair of the relevant discipline committee does not agree to the bringing of a further charge, the Connexional Complaints Support Manager must treat the notification as set out in clause (12)(i) above.

Section 111 Appointments

1110 Local Complaints *District Resolution* Officers. (1) ***Each District must appoint annually, by the procedure determined by the district Policy Committee, one or more persons to act as district resolution officers for the purposes of this Part in relation to any complaint to which clauses (3) to (8) do not apply.***

(1A) If no person so appointed is able to fulfil the functions of the district resolution officer in relation to a particular complaint falling within clause (1) above, then, ~~Unless one of clauses (3) to (8) below applies, and~~ subject to clause (8A), the ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer in relation to ~~any~~ ***that*** complaint is the Superintendent of the Circuit in which the respondent:

(i) resides for the purposes of the stations, if ~~he or she~~ ***the respondent*** is a minister or probationer; or
(ii) is a member or office-holder, in any other case.

~~(2) The Superintendent may delegate his or her functions as the local complaints officer to another person who resides for the purposes of the stations or is a member in the same Circuit by an agreement in writing approved by the Circuit Meeting. The Superintendent must inform the relevant Connexional Team member and the Chair of the District of any such delegation.~~

(3) Where the complaint is against the President, a Chair or a minister or probationer in connexional appointment (whether full-time or part-time), or against a lay connexional officer (including, for the purposes of this Standing Order, a lay member of the Connexional Team) in respect of conduct in the discharge of ~~his or her~~ ***the respondent's*** office, the ~~local complaints officer is~~ ***functions of the district resolution officer shall be performed by*** the Secretary of the Conference (or the President in the case of a complaint against the Secretary). The Secretary or the President may delegate ~~his or her~~***those*** functions ~~as the local complaints officer~~ to a former President or Vice-President or such other member of the Church as ~~he or she~~ ***the Secretary or the President*** deems appropriate. For the purposes of this clause 'connexional appointment' includes an appointment under Standing Order 312(1) or (2) if made by or on behalf of the Conference.

(4) Where the complaint is:

(i) against a Superintendent, or
(ii) against any other minister or probationer not falling within clause (3) above and is of conduct of a nature sufficiently serious to warrant consideration whether a charge or charges should be brought the ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer is the Chair of the District in which the respondent resides for the purposes of the stations, unless clause (6) applies.

(5) Where the complaint is against a ministerial student, the ***functions of the district resolution officer shall be performed by*** ~~local complaints officer is~~ the oversight tutor appointed with overall responsibility for the training institution to which the student has been allocated under Standing Order 722.

(6) Where the complaint is against a minister or probationer who is appointed or permitted to serve or reside outside the home Districts and who either:

(i) is not a member of a Synod under the Conference or under the Irish or another autonomous Conference nor subject to the discipline of another church; or
(ii) is complained against in relation to matters alleged to have arisen in the home Districts; or
(iii) is not, and is not expected to be, the subject of a complaint entertained by a competent church court or other appropriate body outside the home Districts, or in respect of whom such a court or body has referred the case to the Church or has declined to reach a decision as to whether the matters complained of are established or as to the action to be taken or both

the ~~local complaints officer is~~ ***functions of the district resolution officer shall be performed by*** the Secretary of the Conference.

(7) Where the complaint is against a person whose membership is not in one of the home Districts or who is an office-holder who is not a member of the Methodist Church, the ~~local complaints officer is~~ ***functions of the district resolution officer shall be performed by*** ~~the Superintendent~~ ***a district resolution officer from the District*** of ***which*** the Circuit including the Local Church which ~~he or she~~ ***the person concerned*** most frequently attends or with which ***that person*** has the closest involvement ***forms part*** ~~or the person to whom the Superintendent has delegated his or her functions under clause (2) above~~.

(8) Where the complainant has requested the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ to nominate an alternative ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 1120(5) and such a nomination is made, the person so nominated is the ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer in relation to the relevant complaint.

(8A) Unless the ~~local complaints officer has referred the complaint to the connexional Complaints Panel, the relevant~~ ***complaint has already been allocated to the Tier 2 procedure, the*** Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ may at any time, at the request of ~~the local complaints officer~~ ***a person constituted as the district resolution officer by clause (1A) above*** or otherwise in order better to give effect to the principles set out in Standing Order 1100, nominate an alternative ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer to act thereafter in place of the original or any previous alternative ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer, and if such a nomination is made,

the person so nominated is thereafter the ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer in relation to the relevant complaint.

(9) The duties and responsibilities of a ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer are those set out in Standing Order 1121.

1111 District Reconciliation Group and Complaints Support Group. (1) Each Synod must appoint annually:

(iii) a Reconciliation Group of at least two people with skills appropriate for discharging the functions of the Reconciliation Group under the provisions of this Part; and
(iv) a Complaints Support Group of at least 10 persons with pastoral skills (including in particular sensitivity to harassment and abuse issues) and with understanding of Methodist procedures. One member of the Support Group is to be appointed as convener and one as deputy convener. The deputy convener may exercise any power or fulfil any duty conferred on the convener by any Standing Order.

(2) Each Synod may make its appointments under clause (1) above in co-operation with the Synod of another District or other Districts, so that the total number of persons appointed by the Districts in question taken together is not less than the requisite number.

(3) If a casual vacancy occurs in the office of convener or deputy convener of a Complaints Support Group the vacancy is to be filled by the Chair of the District (or, where appointments under clause (1)(ii) above are made in co-operation by more than one District, by any of the Chairs of those Districts) until a Synod is able to make the necessary appointment. The person appointed by the Chair must satisfy the requirements set out in that clause.

(4) The functions of the district Reconciliation Group are:

(i) to provide a resource within the relevant District offering assistance (including assistance by way of the provision of information) in achieving reconciliation between persons in dispute; and
(ii) to respond to requests for assistance from that resource made in accordance with these Standing Orders and in such additional circumstances as the relevant District may decide.

The manner in which a district Reconciliation Group is to discharge its functions is to be decided by the relevant District, which may appoint such officers of the group, including a convener or conveners, as it thinks fit.

(5) The duties and responsibilities of the convener and members of the district Complaints Support Group are those set out in Standing Orders 1123 and 760(5).

(6) The Synod must encourage all persons appointed as members of the Complaints Support Group to participate in training relevant to the appointment.

(7) Conversations between members of a district Complaints Support Group acting in that capacity and a complainant or respondent are confidential, but confidentiality does not extend to admissions or to the disclosure of material evidence.

(8) References in this Part to the 'relevant' district Reconciliation Group or Complaints Support Group are references to that group in the home District in which the respondent resides for the purposes of the stations or is a member or office-holder. If there is no such District, the recipient may ask the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** to nominate a home District the groups in which will become the relevant groups for the purposes of this Section. If the recipient has not made such a request and the complaint is passed on to the ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer, ~~he or she~~ ***that officer*** must do so. The ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must make a nomination if so requested and in doing so must have regard in particular to where the respondent is carrying out the duties of any office in the Church or is living.

1112 Connexional Complaints Panel*, Complaints Team Chairs* and Connexional Advocates. (1) The Conference must appoint annually a panel of persons, to be known as the connexional Complaints Panel, from which members may from time to time be chosen to serve on complaints teams. All members of the panel must be members of the Methodist Church.

(2) In appointing the panel, the Conference must have regard to the need for expertise amongst its members in law, accountancy, harassment and disability issues, marriage guidance, medicine and theology. The Conference must also seek to ensure that there is a geographical spread of panel members, for which purpose Districts are encouraged to make nominations to the panel.

(2A) The panel shall include an appropriate number of persons selected for their qualifications or experience to act as complaints team chairs and identified as such in the resolution for their appointment.

(3) The Conference must also appoint an appropriate number of persons, to be known as Connexional Advocates, with the skills necessary to act as connexional Presenting Officers in relation to discipline charges brought under the provisions of this Part and, when not so acting, as the representative for a respondent in relation to a discipline charge at the respondent's request. All Connexional Advocates must be members of the Methodist Church and aged 18 or over.

1113 Connexional Reconciliation Group. (1) The Conference must appoint annually a panel of persons, to be known as the connexional Reconciliation Group, from which members may from time to time be chosen to carry out the duties and responsibilities set out in Standing Order 1155. All members of the panel must be members of the Methodist Church.

(2) With the exception of persons falling within Standing Order 290(3), no person may be appointed a member of the connexional Reconciliation Group who holds an office or is a member of a group (other than a district Reconciliation Group) or panel appointed under this Section or under Standing Order 290.

(3) One member of the panel must be appointed as the convener and at least one as a deputy convener of the panel. The deputy convener may exercise any power or fulfil any duty conferred on the convener by any Standing Order.

1114 Connexional Complaints Officers. The Conference must further appoint a connexional Complaints Officer and at least one deputy, whose duties and responsibilities are to offer advice and assistance, upon request, to ***the Connexional Complaints Support Manager,*** ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officers, ***complaints team chairs,*** members of complaints teams and Connexional Advocates in the performance of their duties and responsibilities under this Part.

Section 112 Complaints procedure

1120 Initiation of Complaints. (1) The provisions of this Standing Order apply when a complainant makes a complaint to a recipient.

(2) Unless one of clauses (4), (7) or (8) below or Standing Order 1102(8) applies, the recipient (whether or not ~~he or she~~ ***the recipient*** is also ~~the local complaints officer~~ ***a district resolution officer or a person performing the functions of the district resolution officer in the particular case***) is encouraged to try to resolve the complaint informally if possible and for that purpose will usually seek a reply from the respondent. If ~~he or she~~ ***the recipient*** cannot deal with the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant, it must be referred to ~~the local complaints~~ ***a district resolution*** officer ***appointed under***

Standing Order 1110(1) or, where that clause does not apply, such other person as, under that Standing Order, is the district resolution officer or is responsible for performing the functions of the district resolution officer in the particular case if that is a person other than the recipient.

(3) When trying or considering whether to try to resolve the complaint in accordance with clause (2) above, the recipient, if ~~he or she is~~ not the ~~local complaints~~ ***relevant district resolution*** officer, may consult ~~that~~ ***such an*** officer about what steps to take. In any event ~~he or she~~ ***the recipient*** may consult the district Reconciliation Group.

(4) If a recipient receives a complaint involving allegations of sexual, homophobic or racial harassment or abuse, or of the harassment or abuse of a person with a disability (in this Part called 'an abuse complaint') or allegations of matters which in the opinion of the recipient amount or might amount to a criminal offence (in this Part called 'a criminal complaint'), ~~he or she~~ ***the recipient*** must inform the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ before taking any other step.

(5) Unless clause (6) below applies ***and without prejudice to the Connexional Complaints Support Manager's responsibilities under Standing Order 1120A below***, in a case falling within clause (4) above, the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must consult the complainant and may then:

(i) nominate a person other than the person who would otherwise be the ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer to carry out the functions of the ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer in the particular case; or

(ii) treat the matter as having been ~~referred directly to the connexional Complaints Panel~~ ***allocated to the Tier 2 procedure*** in accordance with Standing Order 1121(5), in which event also the ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer shall cease to perform ~~his or her~~ functions as such in connection with that case.

The ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must inform the recipient and the complainant of ~~his or her~~ ***the*** decision and if ~~he or she does not exercise~~ the power given by paragraph (ii) above ***is not exercised***, clause (2) above will apply, whether or not an alternative ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer has been nominated. Before exercising ~~his or her~~ ***the*** power under paragraph (ii), the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must usually seek a reply from the respondent.

(6) This clause applies in the case of a criminal complaint if:

(i) the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~, after taking any necessary legal advice, shares the view of the recipient that the matters alleged amount or might amount to a criminal offence; and
(ii) the matters in question appear not yet to have been reported to the police or, although they have been reported, it is not reasonably possible to seek a reply from the respondent without prejudicing a police inquiry.

In such circumstances the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must treat the complaint as having been allocated to the Tier 2 procedure ~~referred directly to the connexional Complaints Panel~~.

(7) (*a*) If:

(i) a recipient receives a complaint against a local lay-pastor appointed under Section 56A of Standing Orders, whether that person is employed or serves in a voluntary capacity, and
(ii) that complaint relates to that person's conduct as a local lay- pastor ***and clause 1101(2)(ii)(a) does not apply***,

all subsequent processes to be followed under this Part 11 shall be dealt with by the persons and bodies having the relevant responsibilities in relation to where the appointment is located irrespective of where the membership of the local lay-pastor is held.

(*b)* If a recipient receives a complaint against a lay person (including an employed local lay-pastor) employed under a contract of employment ***and clause 1101(2)(ii)(a) does not apply*** (in this Part called 'an employment complaint'), ~~he or she~~ ***the recipient*** must seek the advice of the relevant district Lay Employment Sub-committee (if the respondent is employed by a District, Circuit or Local Church) or a member of the Connexional Team responsible for employment matters under Standing Order 382(3) and (4) (in any other case) before taking any other step. The recipient must, with the approval of the relevant Chair or the Secretary of the Conference (if there is no relevant Chair or the Chair is the recipient) seek legal advice if ~~he or she~~ ***the recipient*** thinks it necessary. The recipient must act in accordance with the advice received. Any costs incurred in obtaining advice are to be borne by the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order 376(5).

(7A) A recipient who receives a complaint concerning the condition of premises must, with the approval of the relevant Chair or the Secretary of the Conference (if there is no relevant Chair or the Chair is the recipient) seek the advice of a surveyor if the~~y~~ ***recipient*** think***s*** it necessary. The recipient must act in accordance with the advice received. Any

costs incurred in obtaining advice are to be borne by the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order 376(5).

(8) If the recipient***, not being the relevant district resolution officer,*** receives a complaint alleging matters so serious that the interests of the church require that it be formally investigated ~~and he or she is not the local complaints officer~~, the recipient must pass the complaint to ~~that~~ ***such an*** officer. ~~He or she~~ ***The recipient*** may consult ~~the local complaints~~ ***the relevant district resolution*** officer on the question whether or not this clause applies.

(9) If the recipient receives a complaint against the relevant ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer, whether or not the complaint relates to the performance of ~~his or her~~ ***that officer's*** duties as ~~a local complaints officer~~ ***such***, the recipient must inform the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ before taking any further steps. The ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must then nominate another person to carry out the functions of the ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer in the particular case, unless the complaint cannot proceed without the agreement in writing of the Secretary of the Conference or the President in accordance with Standing Order 1103(6) and that agreement is not given.

(10) No formality is required for resolution under the provisions of this Standing Order and no record of any complaint so resolved is to be kept.

(11) The recipient is under no obligation to keep copies of documents or notes of conversations when acting under the provisions of this Standing Order, but if ~~he or she~~ ***the recipient*** does so and clause (10) does not apply, the documents and notes should be passed on to the person who will be responsible for dealing with the complaint after the recipient ceases to act as such.

(12) ~~Local complaints officers holding that office in a~~ ***The Superintendent of each*** Circuit ~~are~~ ***is*** encouraged to take appropriate steps to make ministers, lay employees, members and office-holders within the Circuit aware of the role and responsibilities of a recipient and a ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer.

(13) No action may be taken on a complaint against a recipient for failing to comply with a provision of this Standing Order if the recipient was not aware of the relevant provision and acted reasonably in the circumstances of the case.

(14) Where ~~a local complaints~~ ***the relevant district resolution*** officer becomes aware that a complaint has been made but that the provisions of this Standing Order have not been complied with, ~~he or she~~ ***that officer*** must encourage the recipient thereafter to comply

with those provisions as far as possible or, at ~~his or her~~ ***the officer's*** discretion, act thereafter as far as possible as ~~if he or she had been~~ the recipient.

1120A Formal Complaints: initial steps and allocation

(1) The provisions of this Standing Order apply when:

- ***(i) a recipient who is not a district resolution officer passes a complaint to the relevant district resolution officer; or***
- ***(ii) a recipient who is the relevant district resolution officer decides that the complaint cannot be resolved informally to the satisfaction of the complainant in accordance with Standing Order 1120(2).***

(2) The district resolution officer must:

- ***(i) note in writing the date on which the complaint was received or the decision made;***
- ***(ii) obtain a written statement of the complaint from the complainant if such a statement has not yet been made; and***
- ***(iii) notify the Connexional Complaints Support Manager that the complaint has been made.***

The notification must be accompanied by a copy of the complaint (if in writing), the note of the date, the statement and any other documentary material already obtained.

(3) On receipt of a notification under clause (2) above, the Connexional Complaints Support Manager must:

- ***(i) consider whether the complaint is a complaint as defined for the purposes of this Part and if satisfied that it is, open a case record in respect of the complaint;***
- ***(ii) subject to clause (4) below, allocate the complaint to the Tier 1 procedure or the Tier 2 procedure.***

(4) A complaint against a respondent who, at the time the complaint is made, does not hold any office within the Church must be allocated to the Tier 1 procedure unless:

- ***(i) the complaint relates (in whole or in part) to words, acts or omissions of the respondent at a time when the respondent did hold an office within the Church;***

(ii) the complaint is an abuse complaint, a criminal complaint or an employment complaint; or

(iii) in the view of the Connexional Complaints Support Manager the conduct alleged by the complaint is so serious that the Tier 1 procedure is inappropriate.

In case (i) the complaint may and in cases (ii) and (iii) the complaint must be allocated to the Tier 2 procedure.

(5) The case record of any complaint must constitute a record of the initial allocation of the complaint and of all material subsequently produced or created in the course of following the provisions of this Part in relation to that complaint.

(6) The Connexional Complaints Support Manager must keep an allocation under clause (3) under review and may at any time allocate a complaint to which the Tier 1 procedure applies to the Tier 2 procedure or vice versa or to such alternative procedure as the Connexional Complaints Support Manager thinks fit. The Connexional Complaints Support Manager must also keep under review any decision as to the application of clause (4)(iii) above and may at any time alter that decision and, if appropriate, change the allocation of the complaint accordingly. If the Connexional Complaints Support Manager becomes aware that the respondent to a complaint allocated to the Tier 1 procedure in accordance with clause (4) above has become the holder of an office within the Church, the Connexional Complaints Support Manager must consider whether the complaint should continue to be allocated to that procedure or should instead be allocated to the Tier 2 procedure.

(7) Any person or body engaged in dealing with a complaint under either the Tier 1 procedure or the Tier 2 procedure may at any time request the Connexional Complaints Support Manager to exercise the power given by clause (6) above.

(8) In allocating a complaint in accordance with clause (3) or clause (6) above the Connexional Complaints Support Manager must take into account the provisions of clause (1) of Standing Order 1101A as to the nature of the Tier 1 procedure and the Tier 2 procedure.

(9) If it appears to the Connexional Complaints Support Manager on receiving a notification under clause (3) above that the complaint relates, in whole or in part, to the same facts and circumstances as form the subject matter of a complaint previously notified or more than one such complaint, the Connexional Complaints Support Manager must add a note to that effect to the case record of both or all the complaints and in allocating the new complaint must take into account the desirability of both or all the

complaints being considered together, reviewing the allocation of the previous complaint or complaints as necessary.

(10) Either the complainant or the respondent may appeal to the President against the decision of the Connexional Complaints Support Manager as to whether or not a notification received under clause (3) above is notification of a complaint as defined for the purposes of this Part or as to allocation under that clause or under clause (6). Any such appeal must be made by notice in writing sent to the Connexional Complaints Support Manager within 14 days of notification of the relevant decision to the complainant or respondent, as the case may require, setting out the reasons for appealing against that decision.

(11) On being informed of an appeal under clause (10) above, the President or the Vice-President on behalf of the President must examine the appropriateness of the decision taken and may substitute a different decision for the decision of the Connexional Complaints Support Manager.

(12) (a) The Connexional Complaints Support Manager may also receive from an anonymous person a statement which would constitute a complaint for the purposes of this Part if it were made by an identified complainant and may decide to treat the statement as a complaint notified under clause (2) above or to retain a case record of the complaint but to take no further action except as provided in sub-clause (d) below.

(b) In making the decision referred to in sub-clause (a) above, the Connexional Complaints Support Manager must have regard to the difficulty of seeking reconciliation or resolution through the Tier 1 process and the importance of enabling the respondent effectively to participate in an investigation under the Tier 2 process if the complainant wishes to remain anonymous.

(c) Any person or body to whom such a complaint is allocated under clause (3) or (4) above must apply the Tier 1 procedure or the Tier 2 procedure, as the case may require, as closely as possible in the circumstances of the case and in consultation with the Connexional Complaints Support Manager.

(d) If the Connexional Complaints Support Manager decides not to treat the complaint as a complaint notified under clause (2) above, the Connexional Complaints Support Manager must consider whether the respondent ought to be informed of the complaint and given the opportunity to make a response contemporaneously. If the respondent is so informed and makes a response, the response must be added to the case record.

1121 First Formal Complaint Stage*The Tier 1 Procedure*. (1) The provisions of this Standing Order apply when ***a district resolution officer has notified the Connexional***

Complaints Support Manager of a complaint in accordance with clause (2) of Standing Order 1120A~~:~~

~~(i) a recipient who is not a local complaints officer passes a complaint to the relevant local complaints officer; or~~
~~(ii) a recipient who is a local complaints officer decides that the complaint cannot be resolved informally to the satisfaction of the complainant in accordance with Standing Order 1120(2).~~

(2) ***The officer must follow the procedure set out in this Standing Order, which constitutes the Tier 1 procedure, unless and until notified by the Connexional Complaints Support Manager that the complaint has been allocated to the Tier 2 procedure or that it has been determined that the complaint is not a complaint for the purposes of this Part.***

(2A) The officer must ~~When a local complaints officer receives a complaint passed on by a recipient or decides that the complaint cannot be resolved informally, he or she must:~~

~~(i) note in writing the date on which the complaint was received or the decision made;~~
~~(ii) obtain a written statement of the complaint from the complainant if such a statement has not yet been made; and~~
~~(iii)~~ consult the district Reconciliation Group in order to explore the possibility of resolving the complaint by a more formal means (whether or not the group has already been consulted in relation to the complaint), unless clause (11) below applies and the ~~local complaints~~ officer is advised not to do so. If the ~~local complaints~~ officer is not also the recipient, ***the recipient should be involved*** ~~he or she should involve the recipient~~ in the consultation if possible and appropriate.

(3) Where clause (2***A***)~~(iii)~~ above applies, the ~~local complaints~~ officer must make every reasonable effort to resolve the complaint formally, subject to clauses (9) and (11) below. For this purpose, the ~~local complaints~~ officer must inform the respondent that the complaint has been made, if the respondent is not aware of that fact, and supply ~~him or her~~ ***the respondent*** with the written statement of complaint if ~~he or she~~ ***the respondent*** does not have it. Formal resolution means that the complainant and the respondent agree to a form of resolution and sign a written record of what is agreed.

(3A) The officer may at any time explore alternative methods of achieving reconciliation or a form of resolution not falling within clause (3) above.

(4) The complainant may at any time withdraw the complaint by notifying the ~~local complaints~~ officer in writing ~~that he or she wishes~~ ***of a wish*** to do so.

(5) ***Subject to clause (5A) below, if*** ~~If~~ the complaint cannot be resolved formally ***or dealt with by an alternative method in accordance with clause (3A) above*** and is not withdrawn, the ~~local complaints~~ officer may either:

(i) ~~refer the complaint to the connexional Complaints Panel~~ ***request the Connexional Complaints Support Manager to exercise the power given by clause (6) of Standing Order 1120A;*** or
(ii) decline ~~so to refer the complaint~~ ***to make such a request***.

If the ~~local complaints~~ officer declines to ~~refer the complaint he or she~~ ***make such a request, the officer*** must give the complainant the information necessary to enable the complainant to do so if ~~he or she~~ ***the complainant*** wishes. The complainant must make such a ***request*** within 21 days of receiving notice from the ~~local complaints~~ officer.

(5A) No request may be made to the Connexional Complaints Support Manager under clause (5) above if the complaint was allocated to the Tier 1 procedure in accordance with clause (4) of Standing Order 1120A.

(6) A ~~reference to the connexional Complaints Panel~~ ***request under clause (5) above must be*** ~~is~~ made ~~by notice of intention to refer the complaint given~~ in writing to the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~. The person ~~referring the complaint~~ ***making the request*** must send the written statement of complaint and any reply by the respondent either with the ~~notice~~ ***request*** or as soon as possible afterwards and may also send any other documents ~~he or she~~ ***the person*** believes are relevant.

(7) (*a*) Upon making a decision under clause (5) above, the ~~local complaints~~ officer must write a brief record of the steps taken to seek resolution and, if ~~he or she~~ ***the officer*** declines to ~~refer the complaint~~ ***make a request to the Connexional Complaints Support Manager***, of the reasons for that decision.

(b) A copy of the record must be sent to the ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager and the*** complainant***. A copy must also be sent*** ~~and~~ to the respondent, unless the respondent is unaware of the complaint. If the ~~local complaints~~ officer declines to ~~refer the complaint he or she~~ ***make a request, the officer*** should retain a copy of the record and other documents, in accordance with guidance adopted by the Council, for two years from the date of the decision. Thereafter the ~~local complaints~~ officer may retain a record of the outcome only, in accordance with guidance adopted by the Council, until five years after the decision.

~~(c) If the local complaints officer decides to refer the complaint to the panel then~~

~~(i) the record must be sent to the relevant Connexional Team member for transmission to the relevant complaints team;~~
~~(ii) a copy of the record must be deposited with the Secretary of the Conference, to be retained in accordance with Standing Order 1104(1); and~~
~~(iii) the local complaints officer must within 90 days of the date of referral under Standing Order 1121(5)(i) destroy any record or documentation retained.~~
Upon receipt of a request under clause (5) above the Connexional Complaints Support Manager must decide what further steps, if any, should be taken in relation to the complaint.

(8) If a complaint is formally resolved or withdrawn, the ~~local complaints~~ officer must record in writing the outcome of the complaint and annex the relevant written document and the written statement of complaint to the record ***and must send a copy of the record to the Connexional Complaints Support Manager***. The ~~local complaints~~ officer ~~shall~~ ***must*** retain the record with relevant documents and statements for two years from the date of resolution or withdrawal. The ~~local complaints~~ officer may after two years retain a record of the outcome only, in accordance with guidance approved by the Council, for a further three years. The record of the outcome may be consulted if a dispute arises as to the resolution or the withdrawal.

(9) Where the complaint is an abuse complaint or a criminal complaint and is not treated as having been ~~referred directly to the connexional Complaints Panel~~ ***allocated to the Tier 2 procedure*** in accordance with Standing Order 1120(5)(ii) or (6), the ~~local complaints~~ officer must inform the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ of any steps proposed to be taken to seek formal resolution after consulting the district Reconciliation Group but before taking such steps. The ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must then consult the complainant and ~~may treat the complaint as having been referred directly to the panel~~ ***consider whether to exercise the power under clause (6) of Standing Order 1120A to allocate the complaint to the Tier 2 procedure*** without those steps being taken.

(10) [*not used*]

(11) Where the complaint is an employment complaint, the ~~local complaints~~ officer must continue to take and to act upon advice when taking steps in relation to the complaint.

(12) Subject to the preceding provisions of this Standing Order and to the principles and general matters set out in Standing Orders 1100 and 1102, the ~~local complaints~~ officer may decide on ~~his or her own~~ ***the*** procedure for dealing with the complaint. In particular, the ~~local complaints~~ officer may meet either of or both the complainant and the

respondent and if ~~he or she~~ ***the officer*** thinks fit may be accompanied in doing so by an observer. Any observer is bound by the same principles of confidentiality as is the ~~local complaints~~ officer. It is not part of the responsibility of the ~~local complaints~~ officer to reach a conclusion on the merits of a complaint or on any facts in issue, or to investigate the complaint except to the extent necessary properly to perform ~~his or her~~ ***the*** duties under this Standing Order.

(13) If a ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer wishes to make a complaint ~~in his or her own right~~ ***under this Part***, the officer must inform the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~, who must then nominate another person to perform the functions of the ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer in the particular case. That person is also to be treated as the recipient of the complaint.

(14) Where as a result of:

(i) legal proceedings (criminal, civil, matrimonial or otherwise);
(ii) a caution given by the police; or
(iii) a matter of public knowledge

~~the local complaints~~ ***a district resolution*** officer considers that a person's standing in relation to the Church should be reviewed, but no complaint has been made, the ~~local complaints~~ officer must ~~refer the matter to the connexional Complaints Panel~~ ***notify the Connexional Complaints Support Manager of the matter***. The matter must then be treated as if the ~~local complaints~~ officer had ~~made a complaint against the person concerned and that complaint had been referred to the panel in accordance with clause (5) (i) above~~ ***notified the Connexional Complaints Support Manager under clause (2) of Standing Order 1120A***.

(15) Where a complaint made or passed to a ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer has subsequently been withdrawn but the ~~local complaints~~ officer considers that, in the light of information including the matters raised in the complaint, the standing of the respondent in relation to the Church should be reviewed, ~~he or she~~ ***the officer*** may ~~refer the matter to the connexional Complaints Panel~~ ***request the Connexional Complaints Support Manager to treat the complaint as falling within clause (4)(iii) of Standing Order 1120A, if the complaint was allocated to the Tier 1 procedure in accordance with that clause (4), and in any case to exercise the power in clause (6) of Standing Order 1120A*** ~~and clause (14) above will apply~~. Before ~~referring a matter~~ ***making a request*** under this clause, the ~~local complaints~~ officer must inform the complainant of ~~his or her~~ ***the officer's*** intention to do so and invite the complainant to make any objections in writing within a week of being so informed. If the complainant does object, the ~~local complaints~~ officer must take the objection into account and if ~~he or she~~ ***the officer*** decides nevertheless to refer the matter, a copy of the objection must be included with

the papers sent to the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~, together with a statement by the ~~local complaints~~ officer of the reasons for referring the complaint which ~~he or she~~ ***the officer*** believed outweighed the complainant's objection.

(16) The ~~local complaints~~ officer must keep copies of documents and notes of conversations while acting in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order. Such documents and notes, together with any documents or notes passed on by the recipient, should be retained with the record of any formal resolution. If no formal resolution is reached, they should be passed with the record to the ~~person who will be responsible for dealing with the complaint after the local complaints officer ceases to act~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager***.

(17) ~~The local complaints~~ ***A district resolution*** officer may seek the advice of the connexional Complaints Officer ***or the Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** at any time in carrying out ~~his or her~~ responsibilities under this and the ***two*** preceding Standing Order***s***.

(18) As set out in clause (12) above, the Tier 1 procedure does not involve a fact-finding exercise and makes no provision for the imposition of sanctions. The complainant has no right of appeal against the outcome of the Tier 1 procedure where the complaint has been allocated to the Tier 1 procedure In accordance with clause (4) of Standing Order 1120A.

(19) The Tier 1 procedure must be completed within one month from the date on which the district resolution officer notified the Connexional Complaints Support Manager of the complaint under clause (2) of Standing Order 1120A or as soon thereafter as possible.

1122 Reference to the Connexional Complaints Panel ***The Tier 2 procedure: triage***. (1) On ~~receiving a complaint referred under the provisions of this Section~~ ***allocating a complaint to the Tier 2 procedure***, the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ~~Team member~~ ***Complaints Support Manager*** must, as soon as reasonably possible ***select by which of the following persons or bodies the complaint is to be investigated***:

~~(i) except where Standing Order 1102(2)(*b*)(iii) applies, appoint a complaints team consisting of three members selected from the connexional Complaints Panel to consider the complaint;~~
~~(ii) designate one of the team members as the lead member;~~
~~(iii) provide all the members of the complaints team with the documents so far received in connection with the complaint;~~

~~(iv) inform the complainant and the respondent (unless the respondent is unaware that the complaint has been made) of the identity of the lead member and the other team members.~~

(i) a complaints team chair selected from the connexional Complaints Panel acting alone;

(ii) a connexional complaints team consisting of three members selected from the connexional Complaints Panel, one of whom must be a complaints team chair;

(iii) a connexional case officer;

(iv) an external body;

(v) another person or body in accordance with an alternative procedure

and make the appointments or take the other steps necessary to enable the investigation or alternative procedure to begin.

(2) ~~The person appointed as lead member~~ ***A complaints team chair appointed under clause (1)(i) or (ii) above*** must, whenever possible, have undergone relevant training in the last two years ~~and must additionally, if possible, have had experience under the present or a previous church complaints and discipline process~~. ~~The o~~ ***Other*** team members ***appointed under clause (1)(ii) above*** must be selected having regard to their skills in matters relevant to the particular complaint, the need for balance within the complaints team (including in particular any need which may arise in connection with issues of gender, race or disability or status within the Church) and the geographical location of all concerned.

(2A) A connexional case officer or external body appointed under clause 1(iii) or (iv) above may only be appointed if in the view of the Connexional Complaints Support Manager the necessary investigation requires particular skills or experience which can be provided better by a connexional case officer or external body than by a complaints team chair or a complaints team.

(3) If a complaint is ~~referred to a complaints team~~ ***notified to the Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** but the respondent is not aware that the complaint has been made, the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ~~Team member~~ ***Complaints Support Manager*** must inform ~~him or her~~ ***the respondent*** of that fact as soon as is possible thereafter without prejudicing a police inquiry. The ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must then also inform the respondent of the identity of the ~~lead member and the other members of the complaints team~~ ***person or body appointed under clause (1) above*** and must inform the ~~lead member~~ ***complaints team chair, connexional case worker, external body or other person or body, as the case may require,*** that the respondent is now aware of the complaint.

1123 ***The Tier 2 Procedure:*** **Initial Steps by Complaints Team** ***Chair or Complaints Team*****.** (1) ***Where a complaints team chair is appointed under clause (1)(i) of Standing Order 1122 or a complaints team is appointed under clause (1)(ii) of that Standing Order,*** ~~O~~***o***n receiving the documents relating to ~~a~~ complaint, the ~~lead member~~ ***complaints team chair*** must:

(i) inform the convener of the relevant district Complaints Support Group that the complaint has been made and has been referred to a ***complaints team chair or a*** complaints team, stating whether or not the respondent is aware of the complaint;
(ii) note the date of receipt of the documents and make an initial assessment in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order.

(2) On being informed that a complaint has been referred to a ***complaints team chair or a*** complaints team, the convener of the relevant district Complaints Support Group must offer two members of the group to the complainant as advisers and friends (but not representatives) during and after the complaints and discipline process. The convener must make a similar offer to the respondent unless the respondent is not aware that the complaint has been made. If there is more than one complainant or respondent in relation to the complaint, the offer must be made individually to each person concerned. The offer may be taken up at any time even if it is not initially accepted.

(3) If the respondent was not aware that the complaint had been made when the ~~lead member~~ ***complaints team chair*** received the documents, the ~~lead member~~ ***complaints team chair*** must notify the convener as soon as ***possible when*** ~~he or she is~~ informed by the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ that the respondent is now aware of the complaint. The convener must then offer support to the respondent in accordance with clause (2) above.

(4) The ~~lead member~~ ***complaints team chair*** must also keep under review at all times while dealing with the complaint whether support should be offered to a Local Church or Churches or to the Circuit or to any other body. If the ~~lead member~~ ***complaints team chair*** decides that such support should be offered, ~~he or she~~ ***the chair*** must inform the convener of the relevant district Complaints Support Group, who must offer such support (to be given by at least two people) as may seem appropriate in the circumstances of the case.

(5) The initial assessment to be made by the ~~lead member~~ ***complaints team chair*** is an assessment of whether or not the complaint:

(i) ought to be dealt with under an alternative procedure specified in clause below instead of under the complaints and discipline process; or
(ii) ought to be summarily dismissed on a ground specified in clause (7) below.

No complaint ~~referred to the connexional Complaints Panel by a local complaints officer~~ ***allocated to the Tier 2 procedure by the Connexional Complaints Support Manager by an exercise of the power given by clause (6) of Standing Order 1120A at the request of a district resolution officer*** may be dismissed summarily. In other cases, no complaint may be dismissed summarily without consideration of whether or not any reconciliation between the complainant and the respondent is or might be possible.

(6) The following are alternative procedures for the purposes of clause (5) above:

(i) requesting the appointment of a committee under Standing Order 388 or 544;
(ii) referring the case to a Chair under Standing Order 040(4);
(iii) where the respondent is a student minister or probationer, referring the case to a connexional Review Committee with a request to consider discontinuance under the provisions of Standing Order 030(2A);
(iv) requesting the President to inquire into a relevant Circuit;
(v) requesting the relevant employer to make use of any applicable disciplinary procedure in a contract of employment of a lay employee;
(vi) requesting the complainant to make use of any grievance procedure available to the complainant and relevant to the subject matter of the complaint.

(7) The following are grounds for summary dismissal under clause (5) above:

(i) that the complaint should not have been treated as a complaint within the definition contained in Standing Order 1101(1)(i) above;
(ii) that the matters complained of are so trivial that further steps would be inappropriate;
(iii) that the matters complained of occurred so long ago that, considering the nature of the complaint, further steps would be inappropriate;
(iv) that the matters complained of have been considered previously and dealt with (whether under this Part or under any other existing or previous procedure) or found to fall under this clause or a previous clause in Standing Orders permitting a complaint to be disposed of in a summary manner;
(v) that:
  (a) there has been a breakdown in a relationship between the respondent and complainant which existed primarily outside the context of the

Church and the complainant appears to be making the complaint as a result of hurt or anger connected with that breakdown; and

(b) the interests of the Church (taking into account in particular the risk of damage to the Church's mission and witness if no action is taken) do not appear to require further formal investigation of the complaint;

(vi) that it cannot reasonably be contended that the reasons for which the Church has established its complaints and discipline process as set out in Standing Order 1100(1) and (2) mean that further formal investigation of the complaint is required (taking into account in particular the risk of damage to the Church's mission and witness if no action is taken).

(8) (a) If the ~~lead member~~ ***complaints team chair has been appointed under clause (1)(i) of Standing Order 1122 and*** is of the opinion, after making the initial assessment, that the complaint ought to be dealt with under paragraph (i) or (ii) of clause (5) above, ***the chair must prepare a brief record of that decision and the reasons for it and send the record to the Connexional Complaints Support Manager for safe custody.***

(b) If the complaints team chair has been appointed under clause (1)(ii) of Standing Order 1122 and is of the opinion referred to in sub-clause (a) above, after making the initial assessment, ~~he or she~~ ***the chair*** must inform the other team members of that opinion and seek their views (whether by post, telephone or electronic communication). If the other members agree, the ~~lead member~~ ***complaints team chair*** must prepare a brief record of the complaints team's decision and the reasons for it and send the record to the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ on behalf of the Secretary of the Conference for safe custody.

(9) (*a*) On receiving a record prepared under clause (8) above, the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must send a copy of the record to the complainant and to the respondent, unless the respondent remains unaware of the fact that the complaint has been made.

(b) Where the ***complaints team chair or the*** complaints team has decided that the complaint should be dealt with by an alternative procedure, the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must also give the complainant and the respondent (if ~~he or she is~~ aware of the complaint) appropriate information about the alternative procedure and any steps to be taken by that person. The ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must take any other steps required to initiate the alternative procedure.

(c) The ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must also inform the complainant in writing of ~~his or her~~ ***the complainant's*** right of appeal and how it may be exercised.

(10) If, after making the initial assessment, the ~~lead member~~ ***complaints team chair*** is of the opinion that the complaint should be fully considered or if, ***where a complaints team has been appointed,*** the other team members do not both agree with the ~~lead member's~~ ***the complaints team chair's*** opinion that the complaint should be dealt with under clause (5) above after the initial assessment, the provisions of Standing Order 1124 apply.

(11) The ~~lead member's~~ ***complaints team chair's*** initial assessment and, if clause (8) ***(b)*** above applies, the decision of the other team members must be made within three weeks of the date on which the ~~lead member~~ ***complaints team chair*** receives the documents or as soon as possible thereafter.

(12) In taking the initial steps provided for by this Standing Order, the complaints team ***chair or, as the case may be, the complaints team,*** must not come to any conclusion on the facts or merits of the complaint except to the extent necessary to reach the decisions required.

(13) The complaints team ***chair or, as the case may be, the complaints team*** may seek the advice of the connexional Complaints Officer at any time in carrying out ~~its~~ ***the*** responsibilities under this and the following Standing Order.

1124 ***Tier 2:*** **Full Consideration by Complaints Team *Chair or Complaints Team*.**
(1) As soon as possible after it becomes clear that the complaint is to be fully considered, the complaints team ***chair must decide or, as the case may require, the complaints team*** must agree what further steps are to be taken to investigate the complaint. They ***chair or the complaints team*** may subsequently ***decide or*** agree that additional steps must be taken or that certain steps are no longer required.

(2) (*a*) The steps to be taken must include at least one separate meeting with both the complainant and the respondent, attended by at least two members of the complaints team ***if a complaints team has been appointed***, unless it is not reasonably practicable to hold such a meeting. If the respondent remains unaware of the complaint, the process must be halted until ~~he or she~~ ***the respondent*** can be informed.

(*b*) The complainant and the respondent have the right to be accompanied by a friend at any meeting with ***the complaints team chair or*** members of the complaints team and to be represented.

(3) The steps to be taken may include a meeting with any other person whom the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team*** believes it relevant to meet. The complaints team ***chair or the complaints team*** may also request any person to provide documents which the ***chair or the*** team believes it relevant to see.

(3A) The meetings referred to in clauses (2)(a) and (3) above may, if not physically face-to-face, be by any telephonic, video or other means which in the circumstances enables everyone involved to participate orally or, where necessary, in sign language, and the words 'attended', 'accompanied' and 'represented' shall be construed accordingly.

(4) The steps to be taken may also include an investigation of the conduct of a person other than the respondent (including the complainant) if the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team*** believes that such an investigation is relevant.

(5) Notes must be taken of all meetings held by ***the complaints team chair or*** members of the complaints team and may be used as the basis of a statement which the person in question may be invited to sign, with any alterations or amendments which ~~he or she~~ ***that person*** may wish to make. A written statement must be obtained from both the complainant and the respondent, unless either of them refuses to give a statement.

(6) Both the complainant and the respondent must be informed that they might wish to obtain legal advice before signing a statement or producing documents requested by the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team***. They must each be given a fair opportunity to comment on statements made or documents produced by the other.

(7) When the complaints team ***chair or, as the case may require, the complaints team,*** is satisfied that ~~it~~ ***the chair or the team*** has taken all necessary and proper steps, the ***chair must consider or the*** members must meet and consider (as far as necessary and subject to the provisions of clause (8) of Standing Order 1102) the following questions in the following order:

(i) whether or not there is merit in the complaint, could the situation be helped by some form of reconciliation?
(ii) if not, should the complaint be dismissed on one of the grounds specified in clause (10) below?
(iii) if not, so that further action is required, which of the courses specified in clause (11) below should be followed?

(8) If the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team*** is of the opinion that a form of reconciliation agreed by the complainant and the respondent would help the situation, the ***chair or*** team must consider with them whether a form of reconciliation which the ***chair or*** team believes is suitable in all the circumstances can be agreed. A suitable form of reconciliation may, but need not, include any of the following:

(i) an acceptance by the complainant and the respondent that the other person has honestly interpreted admitted facts differently;
(ii) an admission of fault by any person;

(iii) an acknowledgment by the complainant or the respondent of hurt inflicted on or loss suffered by the other;
(iv) a commitment by the complainant or the respondent not to repeat conduct which has caused hurt or loss;
(v) a commitment by the complainant or the respondent to take or not to take certain action;
(vi) an offer of appropriate restitution by the respondent, where possible;
(vii) an agreement by the complainant and the respondent to meet face to face;
(viii) an agreement by the complainant and the respondent to participate in a formal act of forgiveness and reconciliation.

(9) If the complainant and the respondent agree to a form of reconciliation but thereafter:

(i) either of them fails to act in the manner then agreed;
(ii) either of them becomes aware for the first time of a material fact or material facts which:
(a) ~~he or she~~ ***that person*** did not know and could not reasonably be expected to have known before agreeing to the form of reconciliation; and
(b) might reasonably have affected ~~his or her~~ ***that person's*** decision whether or not to reach agreement; or
(iii) either of them becomes aware for the first time of a procedural error in the course of the ~~complaints team's~~ consideration of the complaint which:
(a) might reasonably have affected the ~~complaints team's~~ decision that the agreed form of reconciliation was suitable; or
(b) might reasonably have affected ~~his or her~~ ***that person's*** decision whether or not to reach agreement

then the person aggrieved by the failure (where paragraph (i) applies) or becoming aware for the first time of the fact or error (where paragraph (ii) or (iii) applies) may apply for reconsideration of the complaint under Standing Order 1126 within three weeks of becoming aware of the relevant matter.

(10) If in the opinion of the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team*** the situation could not be helped by a form of reconciliation or no suitable form of reconciliation is agreed, the ~~complaints~~ ***chair or*** team may decide to dismiss the complaint on either of the following grounds:

(i) that after full consideration of the complaint the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team, as the case may be,*** has decided that any of the possible grounds for summary dismissal set out in clause (7) of Standing Order 1123, with any necessary modifications, applies;

(ii) that there is no reasonable prospect of establishing that the conduct forming the substance of the complaint took place.

(11) If the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team*** decides that the complaint should not be dismissed, the courses open to ~~it~~ ***the chair or team*** are the following:

(i) subject to clause (11A) below, to decide to refer the complaint to a Connexional Advocate for the preparation of a charge so that the matter can be dealt with by a discipline committee; or

(ii) to decide that one of the alternative procedures specified in clause (6) of Standing Order 1123 should be followed;
or, if neither (i) or (ii) is adopted, one or more of the following:-

(iii) to make a ruling on any point of dispute between the complainant and the respondent (including a point of dispute relating to the conduct of the complainant) as to:
  (a) the interpretation of the 1976 Act, the Deed of Union, the Model Trusts or Standing Orders;
  (b) the usage of the Church; or
  (c) the responsibilities and obligations generally associated with a particular office within the Church;

(iv) to issue advice to the complainant or the respondent relating to matters raised by the complaint or emerging from the complaints team ***chair***'s ***or the complaints team's*** consideration of the complaint (including advice about training, mentoring and supervision);

(v) to give directions to the complainant or the respondent about how to conduct the relationship between them in the church context (including directions about how responsibilities are to be allocated for the time being or duties discharged).

(11A) A decision to refer a complaint to a Connexional Advocate for the preparation of a charge may only be made by a complaints team. If a complaints team chair is of the view that a complaint should be referred for the preparation of a charge, the Connexional Complaints Support Manager must appoint two further members from the Connexional Complaints Panel to consider, together with the complaints team chair and in the light of the investigation conducted so far, whether such a course should be followed.

(11B) (a) In deciding which of the courses set out in clause (11) above should be adopted, the complaints team chair or the complaints team, as the case may require, must consult with the Connexional Complaints Support Manager at such time or times as may be appropriate with a view to ensuring consistency in the outcome of complaints dealt with under the Tier 2 procedure.

(b) In deciding whether or not the complaint should be dealt with by a discipline committee, the complaints team must have regard to the definition of a charge contained in Standing Order 1130(3) below.

(c) If the respondent is a member who is not an office holder and was not an office holder on the occasion or at any time during the period when the conduct the subject matter of the complaint took place, the complaints team must also be satisfied before deciding that the complaint should be dealt with by a discipline committee that the conduct alleged is so serious that it is appropriate that it should be considered by a discipline committee in spite of the limited sanctions which are available.

(12) Any ruling made, directions given or advice issued by the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team*** must be formulated in consultation with the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ and the relevant District Chair and Superintendent. The complaints team ***chair or the complaints team*** may also direct that notice is given of the direction, ruling or advice to such persons or bodies and in such terms as the ***chair or*** team considers appropriate and helpful.

(13) If the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team*** decides that the complaint should be dealt with by a discipline committee, the ***chair or*** team may also, subject to the requirements of clause (14) below, decide that the conduct relating to the subject matter of the complaint of any other person should be considered by a discipline committee and refer that conduct to the same Connexional Advocate for the preparation of a charge. In such circumstances the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team*** may recommend that the charges should be heard together.

(14) If the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team*** is considering exercising the power given by clause (13) above~~, it~~ ***the chair or team*** must:

(i) give the person concerned written notice that that is the case, stating the reasons for which ~~it is considering~~ ***the*** exercising ***of*** the power ***is being considered*** and inviting ~~him or her~~ ***that person*** to make representations in response by a specified date;
(ii) ensure that the person concerned has the documents and information necessary to enable ~~him or her~~ ***that person*** to understand the ***chair's or the*** team's reasons and has sufficient time to respond in all the circumstances of the case;
(iii) take into account any response received from the person concerned in deciding whether or not to exercise the power.

(15) When the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team*** has decided how the complaint is to be dealt with, the ~~lead member~~ ***complaints team chair*** must prepare a report on the decision making process and of the ~~complaints team's~~ decision and the reasons for it and send the report to the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ on behalf of the Secretary of the Conference for safe custody. The ~~lead member~~ ***complaints team chair*** must retain a copy.

(16) (*a*)On receiving a report prepared under clause (15) above, the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must send a copy of the report to the complainant and the respondent. ~~He or she~~ ***The Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must also send a copy to the ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer if the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team*** has made a ruling, issued advice or given directions.

(b) Where the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team*** has decided that the complaint should be dealt with by an alternative procedure, the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must also give the complainant and the respondent appropriate information about the alternative procedure and any steps to be taken by that person. The ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must also take any other steps required to initiate the alternative procedure.

(c) If the complainant or the respondent has a right of appeal against the complaints team ***chair's or the complaints team's*** decision under Standing Order 1126 below, the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must also inform the complainant in writing of that right and how it may be exercised.

(17) The complaints team ***chair's or the complaints team's*** full consideration of the complaint must be completed within ~~two~~ ***three*** months of the date on which the ~~lead member~~ ***complaints team chair*** receives the documents or as soon as possible thereafter.

(18) In taking the steps provided by this Standing Order, the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team, as the case may require,*** must not come to any conclusion on the facts or merits of the complaint except to the extent necessary to reach the decisions required.

1124A Tier 2 : Investigation by a Connexional Case Worker or an External Body. (1) Where a connexional case worker or an external body is appointed under clause (1)(iii) or (iv) of Standing Order 1122, the Connexional Complaints Support Worker must at the time of making the appointment identify in writing the reasons for such an appointment and the particular issues which the case worker or external body is to investigate.

(2) The connexional case worker or external body must determine, in consultation with the Connexional Complaints Support Manager, the procedure for the investigation, which must as far as possible give effect to the principles set out in Standing Order 1100.

(3) At the conclusion of the investigation the connexional case worker or external body, as the case may require, must prepare a report setting out:

- ***(i) whether or not further action is recommended;***
- ***(ii) if so, what that further action is;***
- ***(iii) in any case, the reasons for the conclusion reached.***

(4) The forms of further action which may be recommended by the connexional case worker or the external body are:

- ***(i) the appointment by the Connexional Complaints Support Manager of a complaints team to consider whether or not the complaint should be referred to a Connexional Advocate for the preparation of a charge;***
- ***(ii) the appointment by the Connexional Complaints Support Manager of a complaints team chair or a complaints team to consider whether or not one of the courses specified in clause (11)(i) to (vi) of Standing Order 1124 should be followed;***
- ***(iii) the allocation of the complaint by the Connexional Complaints Support Manager to the Tier 1 procedure;***
- ***(iv) reference of the complaint by the Connexional Support Manager to the Safeguarding Committee or to any other process, whether within or external to the Church.***

(5) The connexional case worker or external body may at any time during the process of the investigation recommend to the Connexional Complaints Support Manager that the investigation should cease and that one of the forms of further action specified in clause (4) above should be adopted. Any such recommendation must be made in writing and give the reasons for the recommendation.

(6) The connexional case worker or external body must consult with the Connexional Complaints Support Manager before making any recommendation under clause (4) or clause (5) above with a view to ensuring consistency in the outcome of complaints dealt with under the Tier 2 procedure.

(7) If the Connexional Complaints Support Manager accepts a recommendation under clause (4)(i), (ii) or (iii) above, the relevant complaints team, complaints team chair or district resolution officer must follow the provisions of Standing Order 1124 or 1122, as appropriate, as nearly as possible in the circumstances of the case.

(8) The Connexional Complaints Support Manager is not obliged to accept a recommendation under clause (4) or (5) above but if the Connexional Complaints Support Manager does not do so that decision must be recorded in writing in the case record together with the reasons for the decision and a statement of how the complaint is to be dealt with thereafter.

1125 Possible Criminal Offences. (1) This Standing Order applies in the case of a criminal complaint as defined in Standing Order 1120(4) which is ~~referred to the connexional Complaints Panel~~ ***treated as allocated to Tier 2*** under Standing Order 1120(6) on the ground that the matter has not been reported to the police.

(2) If in the view of the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ~~Team member~~ ***Complaints Support Manager*** the criminal offence to which the matters alleged amount or may amount is an offence mentioned in the First Schedule to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 as currently in force or is one which is included in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 or Schedule 15 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and (in any such case) the offence if committed is against a person under 18 or a vulnerable adult, the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must report the matter to the police. If the matters alleged relate to a minister or office holder (paid or voluntary) working with children or young people a report of the matter must be made by the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ to the Local Authority Designated Officer or, if no such officer or equivalent office or body is appointed, to the local children's services in addition to being reported to the police.

(2A) Clause (2) above shall have effect in relation to persons in any jurisdiction within the home Districts other than England and Wales as if, in any such jurisdiction in which any of the legislative provisions there mentioned does not have effect, there were substituted a reference to the legislation, if any, of similar substance in force in that jurisdiction from time to time.

(3) In any other case, the ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ may report the matter to the police.

(4) Before reporting a matter to the police under this Standing Order, the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must inform ~~lead member~~ ***any complaints team chair appointed under clause (1)(i) or (ii) of Standing Order 1122, any connexional case worker appointed under clause (1)(iii) of that Standing Order or any external body appointed under clause (1)(iv) of that Standing Order*** ~~of the complaints team~~ and the complainant of ~~his or her~~ ***the*** intention to do so and, if clause (3) above applies, must invite the complainant to make any objections in writing within a week of being so informed. The ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team~~

~~member~~ must then take any objections received into account in reaching a final decision whether or not to report the matter.

(5) (*a*) The ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must inform ~~the lead member and the complainant~~ ***any person or body informed as required by clause (4) above*** of any report made under this Standing Order immediately upon making it.

(*b*) The ~~relevant~~ Connexional ***Complaints Support Manager*** ~~Team member~~ must inform the respondent of any report made under this Standing Order as soon as is reasonably possible without prejudicing any police inquiry.

(6) Where a report is made under this Standing Order but the complaints and discipline process has not been halted under Standing Order 1124(2)(*a*), the ~~lead member~~ ***complaints team chair*** may decide that ~~the complaints team should suspend~~ any proceedings in connection with the complaint ***should be suspended*** to await the result of any such report and any criminal proceedings which may follow, but is not obliged to do so.

(7) If at any time a ***complaints team chair or a*** complaints team considering a complaint becomes aware that matters alleged in the complaint are under investigation by the police or form the subject matter of criminal proceedings, although no report has been made under this Standing Order and the complaints and discipline process has not been halted under Standing Order 1124(2)(*a*), the ***chair or the*** team***, as the case may be,*** may decide to suspend any proceedings in connection with the complaint to await the outcome of the investigation and any criminal proceedings which may follow or of the criminal proceedings, but is not obliged to do so.

1126 Appeals and Reconsiderations. (1) The complainant has a right of appeal against a decision of a ***complaints team chair or a*** complaints team that the complaint should be dismissed, whether made summarily or after full consideration, unless clause (2) below applies.

(2) No appeal may be brought against a decision that a complaint should be dismissed if the complaint was ~~referred to the connexional Complaints Panel by the complainant rather than having been referred by the local complaints officer or being treated under Standing Order 1120(6) as having been referred directly to that panel~~ ***allocated to Tier 2 following a request by the complainant under Standing Order 1121(5)***.

(3) Both the complainant and the respondent have a right of appeal against a decision of a ***complaints team chair or a*** complaints team to make a ruling under Standing Order 1124(11)(iii).

(4) (*a*) An appeal must be brought by notice in writing to the Secretary of the Conference stating the grounds on which the appeal is brought. The person appealing must bring the appeal within two weeks after receiving notice of the decision.

(*b*) The Secretary must give notice of an appeal to the respondent or the complainant (as the case may require), who must then be given an opportunity to respond to the grounds of appeal. The person appealing must then be given an opportunity to reply.

(5) (*a*) The appeal will be considered by a person falling within Standing Order 290(3) appointed for the purpose by the President or the Vice-President on ~~his or her~~ ***the President's*** behalf.

(b) ~~He or she~~***The person appointed*** must consider the documentary material before the complaints team (including notes of any meeting between members of the complaints team and any other person) and the team's record of its decision and the reasons for it.

(c) ~~He or she~~***The person*** has power either to uphold the decision of the complaints team or to refer the complaint or any part of it back to that team or another team convened from the connexional Complaints Panel for further consideration and must give reasons for ~~his or her~~ ***the*** decision ***reached***.

(6) The procedure set out in clauses (4) and (5) above applies equally to an application for reconsideration made under Standing Order 1124(9), except that the person deciding the appeal may not refer back for further consideration part only of a complaint.

(7) The decision of the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team*** when reconsideration has been directed under this Standing Order must be notified to the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** in the same manner as an original decision. ~~He or she~~***The Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must then act as if receiving notice of an original decision, subject to clause (8) below.

(8) Only one appeal may be brought in respect of any complaint, except that if on reconsideration a complaints team ***chair or a complaints team*** makes a ruling on a different point in dispute which was not raised on a previous appeal, either the complainant or the respondent may bring a further appeal in respect of the new ruling.

1127 Supplemental provisions. (1) The Connexional Complaints Support Manager must keep any complaints which have been allocated to the Tier 2 procedure under review at all times and in particular may at any time request a summary of the position currently reached from the person or body taking any investigative steps under the Tier 2 procedure or from any person or body engaged in an alternative procedure.

(2) The Connexional Complaints Support Manager may at any time change the selection made under Standing Order 1122(1), whether in the light of further information or otherwise, but must consult with any person or body then already taking steps in relation to the complaint.

(3) The Connexional Complaints Support Manager must at all times work closely with the Safeguarding Committee and in particular the safeguarding officer (as defined in Standing Order 230(3)(ii)) to ensure that where a complaint has given rise to or is connected with a safeguarding concern all necessary processes are carried out in parallel as far as possible and in a manner which avoids unnecessary duplication of investigative steps.

(4) (a) ***If the respondent to a complaint is a minister or probationer who is stationed in an appointment in respect of which a grievance procedure is available to the complainant and the complainant, whether at the request of a district resolution officer, a complaints team chair, a complaints team or otherwise, has used the grievance process, the complainant may, at the conclusion of the process, request the Connexional Complaints Support Manager to take further action on the ground that the outcome of the grievance procedure is that the matter is not capable of being resolved by a grievance procedure because the conduct alleged would have led to the initiation of a disciplinary procedure if the respondent had been a lay person employed under a contract of employment.***

(b) ***The Connexional Complaints Support Manager must consider such a request in consultation with the connexional Complaints Officer and may then appoint a complaints team to take such further investigatory steps as it may think necessary, if any, and to decide how the complaint should then be dealt with. A complaints team appointed in such circumstances may decide, in the light of the material already gathered, that the matter should be referred to a Connexional Advocate for the preparation of a charge without further investigation.***

(c) ***If the Connexional Complaints Support Manager decides not to appoint a complaints team in accordance with sub-clause*** (b) ***above, the Connexional Complaints Support Manager must record the decision, with reasons, in writing, and notify the complainant and the respondent accordingly.***

(d) ***The provisions of Standing Order 1126(1) apply to such a decision as if it were a decision to dismiss a complaint.***

(5) On the conclusion of any action taken under the Tier 2 procedure in relation to a complaint and any alternative processes which may have been undertaken in relation to that complaint, the Connexional Complaints Support Manager must review the matter

and consider whether there are any lessons to be learned from that matter or that matter in conjunction with others.

Section 113 Charges: First Hearing

1130 Referrals to a Connexional Presenting Officer. (1) Upon receiving notice of a decision by a complaints team to refer the matter to a Connexional Advocate for the preparation of a charge, the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must select an Advocate for the purpose who will act as the connexional Presenting Officer in relation to the charge, and must supply ~~him or her~~ ***the Presenting Officer*** with all the documentary material before the complaints team and with the record of the team's decision and its reasons.

(2) The Presenting Officer***, in consultation with the Connexional Complaints Support Manager,*** must prepare such charge or charges as ~~he or she~~ ***the Presenting Officer*** thinks appropriate in the light of the material received.

(3) For the purposes of this Part, a charge is an allegation that the respondent:

(i) has committed a serious breach of the discipline of the Church as contained in the 1976 Act, the Deed of Union, the Model Trusts or Standing Orders;
(ii) has shown serious disregard of a resolution of the Conference or the usage of the Church as generally understood;
(iii) has or might have seriously impaired the mission, witness or integrity of the Church by ~~his or her~~ words, acts or omissions (including words, acts or omissions in situations of confidentiality or pastoral care), having regard to ~~his or her~~ ***the respondent's*** office or standing in relation to the Church.

(4) A charge must state the nature of the allegation made by reference to the sub-paragraphs of clause (3) above and must summarise the particulars which it is contended will establish the allegation, giving sufficient detail for the respondent to understand the nature of the case ~~he or she~~ ***to be met***.

(5) In preparing the charge or charges, the Presenting Officer:

(i) must act in liaison with the ~~lead member~~ ***chair*** of the relevant complaints team;
(ii) must have in mind the importance of ensuring that all conduct necessary to be examined comes before the discipline committee, using alternative charges where appropriate for that purpose; and
(iii) may, if ***the Presenting Officer*** thinks fit, meet the complainant and any witnesses
whom ***the Presenting Officer*** may wish to call at the hearing.

(5A) The Presenting Officer may also send a copy of the draft charge or charges to the respondent or the respondent's representative, if any, for the purpose of ascertaining whether the respondent agrees that a draft charge is established or would be willing so to agree if the draft charge were amended, on the understanding that the issues before the discipline committee would then be limited to the question of penalty and any disputes of fact relevant to the question of penalty.

(6) (*a*) Once preparation of the charge or charges is complete, the Presenting Officer must send a copy to the ~~relevant Connexional Team Member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager***.

(b) On receiving a copy of a charge or charges, the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must notify the convener of the connexional Panel responsible for Discipline Committees that a charge or charges is or are to be brought and must send ~~him or her~~ ***the convener*** a copy. The ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must also send a copy of the charge or charges to the complainant, the respondent and, except as provided in ~~paragraph~~ ***sub-clause*** (*c*) below, the Chair of the District containing the respondent's Circuit.

(c) The exceptions to ~~paragraph~~ ***sub-clause*** (*b*) above are:

(i) where Standing Order 1110(3) applies, the copy must be sent to the Secretary of the Conference (or the President in the case of a charge against the Secretary);
(ii) where Standing Order 1110(5) applies, the copy must be sent to the relevant oversight tutor;
(iii) where Standing Order 1110(6) applies, the copy must be sent to the Secretary of the Conference.

(7) The connexional Presenting Officer may seek the advice of the connexional Complaints Officer at any time when carrying out ~~his or her~~ responsibilities under this Part.

(8) In this Standing Order and in the subsequent provisions of this Part, 'respondent' includes a person other than the original respondent whose conduct has been referred to a discipline committee under Standing Order 1124(13).

1131 Preparation for Hearing by a Connexional Discipline Committee. (1) Upon receiving notice that a charge is to be brought, the convener of the Panel responsible for connexional Discipline Committees becomes the reporting officer in relation to that charge.

(2) The reporting officer, acting with the Secretary of the Conference as necessary, must as soon as possible choose the members of the connexional discipline committee which is to hear the charge. The composition of the discipline committee must satisfy the requirements of clauses (3) to (7***A***) below.

(3) Subject to the provisions of clause (7A), the discipline committee is to consist of five members. Except where Standing Order 1102(2)(*b*)(ii) or 1110(6) applies, the members of the committee are to be chosen from the connexional Panel. Where Standing Order 1110(6) applies, three members
are to be chosen from that Panel and two are to be chosen by the Secretary of the Conference. Account must be taken of any known disqualifications under Standing Order 1102(2).

(4) The members chosen from the connexional Panel must include:

(i) a person appointed under Standing Order 290(3), who will be the chair of the committee;
(ii) (if not already appointed under that clause) an ex-President or ex-Vice-President.

The members must be chosen with regard to the need to achieve a fair ethnic and gender balance.

(5) The composition of the committee must reflect the status of the respondent, so that, subject to clause (6) below:

(i) if the respondent is a presbyter, presbyteral probationer or presbyteral student, the committee must include three presbyters;
(ii) if the respondent is a deacon, diaconal probationer or diaconal student, the committee must include three deacons;
(iii) if the respondent is a local preacher, the committee must include three local preachers;
(iv) if the respondent does not fall within any of the preceding heads, the committee must include three lay members.

(6) If in accordance with any provision of this Part the committee is hearing charges against more than one respondent and the respondents are of different status, the reporting officer must seek and follow the direction of the chair of the committee as to the membership of the Committee.

(7) No person may serve on a discipline committee who resides for the purposes of the stations in, or is a member in, the District in which the person charged resides or is a member or office-holder.

(7A) If the respondent is a lay member who is not an office holder and was not an office holder on the occasion or at any time during the period when the conduct the subject matter of the complaint took place, the reporting officer may, with the agreement of the chair of the committee, appoint a committee complying with the requirements of clause (4) above but consisting of three members only, of whom two must be lay members.

(8) When the members of the discipline committee have been chosen, the reporting officer must inform the Presenting Officer, the complainant and the respondent of the membership of the committee and of their rights under clause (9) below.

(9) (*a*) If the Presenting Officer, the complainant or the respondent objects under Standing Order 1102(2) to any member of the committee, ~~he or she~~ ***the person concerned*** may, not later than seven days before the hearing to be held pursuant to Standing Order 1132(5) below, make that objection in writing and with reasons to the reporting officer.

(b) The reporting officer must pass any such objection to the chair of the committee. The chair may make such inquiries as ~~he or she~~ ***the chair*** thinks fit and must rule on the objection at the hearing.

(c) If the chair does not uphold the objection, the objector may renew the objection before the committee when it first meets if ~~he or she~~ ***the objector*** has given the reporting officer notice at least seven days beforehand of ~~his or her~~ ***the*** intention to do so. A decision by the committee is final and may not be the subject of an appeal.

(d) Subject to ~~paragraph~~ ***sub-clause*** (*e*) below, if the Presenting Officer, the complainant or the respondent knows of facts amounting to a ground of objection under Standing Order 1102(2) but does not object within the time specified in ~~paragraph~~***sub-clause*** (*a*) above ~~he or she~~ ***the person concerned*** may not afterwards object on that ground.

(e) If, as a result of a previous objection to a member of the committee or the withdrawal of a member of the committee or otherwise, the Presenting Officer, the complainant or the respondent is informed of a proposed member of the committee at such a time that it is not reasonably practicable for any objection to be made in

accordance with ~~paragraph~~ ***sub-clause*** (*a*) above, ~~he or she~~ ***the person concerned*** must make the objection as soon as is reasonably possible and the chair must deal with the objection fairly having regard to all the circumstances.

(10) Further on receiving notice that a charge is to be brought, the reporting officer must obtain from the Presenting Officer and supply to the respondent:

(i) a copy of any documents which the Presenting Officer intends to place before the committee;
(ii) a statement of the facts relevant to the charge which the Presenting Officer believes to have been agreed between the complainant and the respondent during the complaints process so far and of the facts which remain in dispute;
(iii) any further particulars of the charge which the reporting officer thinks, or the chair of the Committee, exercising the powers given by Standing Order 1132(2) directs, are necessary to enable the respondent to be aware of the substance of the case alleged.

(11) The reporting officer must supply to the complainant such of the papers referred to in clause (10) above as ~~he or she~~ ***the reporting officer***, in consultation with the chair of the committee, from time to time thinks appropriate in all the circumstances of the case.

(12) The reporting officer must ensure that the respondent is aware of the importance of attending the hearing and of the right to be represented in accordance with the provisions of this Part. ***T***he reporting officer ***must, where*** necessary, ~~he or she must~~ encourage and assist the respondent to make use of that right. If so requested by the respondent, the President or the Vice-President on ~~his or her~~ behalf ***of the President*** must suggest the names of three persons willing to act as representatives in the case, one of whom may be a Connexional Advocate.

(13) (*a*) After complying with the provisions of this Standing Order, the reporting officer must convene the committee.

(b) The hearing must not begin earlier than 21 days after the reporting officer has supplied the respondent with the papers referred to in clause (10) above. If following the hearing held in accordance with Standing Order 1132(5) or as a result of any direction given by the chair of the committee the Presenting Officer intends to place additional documents before the committee, the hearing must not begin earlier than such date as the chair of the committee decides is reasonable in all the circumstances.

(c) The hearing must begin within three months of the date on which the reporting officer is notified that a charge is to be brought, unless the chair at ~~his or her~~ ***the chair's*** sole discretion grants an extension. The grounds on which an extension may be granted are:

(i) that the respondent, the complainant, the Presenting Officer involved in the matter or a key witness:
  (a) is ill;
  (b) is affected by family bereavement or illness;
  (c) is unavoidably and legitimately absent from Britain;
(ii) that there will be unavoidable delay in securing vital evidence, including the evidence of the outcome of civil or criminal proceedings; or
(iii) that for some other good reason the extension is necessary to enable the charge to be dealt with fairly.

1132 Case Management and Preliminary Hearing. (1) As soon as the reporting officer has chosen the chair of the committee, ~~he or she must supply the chair with copies of the documents he or she~~ ***the chair must be supplied with copies of the documents the reporting officer*** then has to enable the chair to consider the exercise of preliminary case management powers. The reporting officer must pass on copies of all relevant documents subsequently received to the chair as soon as possible.

(2) The chair's preliminary case management powers are to give directions:

(i) that obvious gaps in the evidence be filled as far as possible;
(ii) about the participation of the complainant in the preliminary hearing to be held as provided in clause (5) below;
(iii) about the supply of documents to the complainant;
(iv) that charges against more than one respondent (including charges where conduct has been referred by the complaints team under Standing Order 1124(13)) be heard together;
(v) that the charges should be heard by a specially constituted committee if the conduct of more than one person is in issue and differently constituted committees would otherwise be required because the respondents are of different status;
(vi) that such other steps be taken as appears to the chair suited to ensuring that the committee is able to give full and fair consideration to the charges before it.

(3) The chair may exercise ~~his or her~~ ***the*** powers of preliminary case management from time to time as ~~he or she~~ ***the chair*** thinks fit, but must always observe the principles of

natural justice in doing so. The Presenting Officer and the respondent may, through the reporting officer, refer case management matters to the chair for decision.

(4) If the Presenting Officer or the respondent objects to any decision made by the chair in the exercise of preliminary case management powers, ~~he or she~~ ***the person concerned*** shall inform the chair of the objection in writing as soon as possible, giving reasons. If the chair does not alter ~~his or her~~ ***the*** decision or the objector remains dissatisfied with any revised decision, ~~he or she may renew~~ the objection ***may be renewed*** at the preliminary hearing to be held as provided in clause (5) below.

(5) The reporting officer must convene a preliminary hearing to be conducted by the chair of the committee at a convenient date prior to the hearing in front of the committee. The hearing may take the form of a meeting or a conference call.

(6) Those participating in the preliminary hearing are to be the Presenting Officer and the respondent. The complainant may also participate in the preliminary hearing if and to the extent that the chair permits.

(7) The purpose of the preliminary hearing is:

(i) to deal with any objections to the membership of the committee which either party is at that stage in a position to make;
(ii) to deal with any objections to the chair's preliminary case management directions;
(iii) to determine any outstanding procedural matters; and
(iv) generally, to ensure that***, taking into account any admissions made by the respondent under Standing Order 1130(5A) or otherwise,*** the matter is ready to be heard by the full committee.

No discussion of the merits of the charge is to take place at the preliminary hearing.

(8) The provisions of Standing Order 1133 as to the rights of the respondent, the Presenting Officer and the complainant to be represented or accompanied by a friend apply to the preliminary hearing except that the respondent is not required to give 21 days' advance notice of ~~his or her~~ ***an*** intention to be legally represented. Notice of such an intention should be given as soon as possible.

(9) A decision of the chair made at the preliminary hearing may not be challenged at the full hearing unless the chair consents, but for the purposes of the provisions of this Part relating to appeals from a discipline committee it is to be treated as a decision of the full committee made at the time of the hearing.

(10) (*a*) The chair may permit the Presenting Officer to withdraw a charge at the preliminary hearing if in all the circumstances of the case it appears just to the chair to allow ~~him or her~~ ***the Presenting Officer*** to do so.

(b) The chair must record in writing any decision to permit withdrawal and the reasons for that decision, but no appeal may be brought against the decision.

(c) If a charge is withdrawn, it cannot be reinstated subsequently.

(11) Following the preliminary hearing the chair may give such further directions for the management of the case as may appear to ~~him or her~~ ***the chair*** to be necessary to achieve a fair and proper hearing. The provisions of clause (9) above apply to such further directions.

1133 Hearing by a Connexional Discipline Committee. (1) The Presenting Officer will be responsible for presenting the charge or charges at the hearing. The ~~lead member~~ ***chair*** of the relevant complaints team may give evidence relating to the investigation of the complaint and may be present throughout the hearing to answer any questions which members of the committee may have about the investigation.

(2) The respondent has the right both to be represented and to be accompanied by a friend. If ~~he or she~~ ***the respondent*** chooses to be represented by a legally qualified person ~~he or she~~, notice of that decision ***must be given*** to the reporting officer not less than 21 days before the date of the hearing. The reporting officer must then immediately give notice of that fact to the Presenting Officer and to the complainant.

(3) If the respondent has chosen to be represented by a legally qualified person the Presenting Officer may, through the reporting officer, ask the chair to agree that ***t***he ***Presenting Officer*** ~~or she~~ should be similarly represented. The chair will only agree to such a request in exceptional circumstances. If the chair does agree, the reporting officer must then immediately give notice of that fact to the respondent and the complainant. The reasonable costs of legal representation for the Presenting Officer are to be borne by the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order 376(5).

(4) (*a*) Subject to ~~paragraph~~ ***sub-clause*** (*b*) below, the complainant has the right to attend the hearing and to be accompanied by a friend. The complainant may be represented if the chair of the committee so permits.

(*b*) The chair may exclude the complainant from such part of the hearing as ~~he or she~~ ***the chair*** thinks fit, if it appears necessary to do so in order to deal fairly with the charge.

(5) If the respondent, after being made aware of the importance of attending the hearing, refuses or fails to attend, the committee must consider the reason for ~~his or her~~ absence and may adjourn for that purpose. The committee may then, if it thinks fit, hear the charge and reach a decision in the absence of the respondent.

(6) If the respondent is represented, ~~he or she may be called~~ the representative ***may call the respondent*** to give evidence and ~~must~~ ***to*** answer questions from members of the committee, but may not normally otherwise intervene in the proceedings. If witnesses called by the Presenting Officer are to be cross-examined, the representative must do so.

(7) If the complainant is represented, the role of ~~his or her~~ ***the*** representative is to watch over ~~his or her~~ ***the complainant's*** interests. The representative may not assume responsibility for presenting the charge.

(8) (*a*) The committee must investigate every charge properly before it and reach a decision both as to whether the charge is established and, if so, as to any action to be taken.

(b) The committee's decisions must be reached solely on the charge brought and on evidence before the committee and available to both the Presenting Officer and the respondent. The evidence must include in all cases the written report prepared by the complaints team under Standing Order 1124(15).

(c) The standard of proof required to establish a charge is the balance of probability.

(9) (*a*) The chair of the committee at ~~his or her~~ ***the chair's*** sole discretion may adjourn a hearing from time to time for a period not exceeding one month, unless the grounds of the application for the adjournment are such that, if an adjournment is granted, it should be for a longer period. The date and time when the hearing is to be resumed must always be stated.

(b) More than one adjournment may be granted in any case.

(c) If the committee finds the charge is established, the chair must consider whether to exercise the power of adjournment so that the committee can receive expert evidence to assist it in deciding upon the appropriate action to be taken.

(10) The chair of the court may permit the Presenting Officer to withdraw a charge at the hearing before the committee on the terms and conditions set out in Standing Order 1132(9).

(11) The chair of the court has discretion to allow the Presenting Officer to amend the wording of the charge but must exercise the discretion against the amendment or adjourn the hearing if to allow the amendment without adjournment would be unfairly prejudicial to the respondent.

(12) If in the course of legal proceedings (whether criminal, civil, matrimonial or otherwise) a court of competent jurisdiction has made a finding of fact in relation to a matter which is in dispute at the hearing, the committee is bound by those findings unless it is satisfied by further evidence that it should reach a different conclusion. Evidence may not be called for that purpose unless:

(i) the evidence was not before the court which made the formal finding of fact; and
(ii) the person seeking to call the evidence could not with reasonable diligence have placed it before the court, or had some other reasonable justification for not having done so; and
(iii) the evidence would have been likely materially to affect the view of the court on a matter of significance to its decision.

(13) The reporting officer must take notes of the oral evidence heard by the committee and of its findings on that evidence and the other material before it. Those notes, together with any documents in evidence before the committee and the committee's decisions and reasons, will form the basis of the report referred to in Standing Order 1142(4) in the case of an appeal.

1134 Decisions by a Connexional Discipline Committee. (1) If the committee finds a charge is established, it may, as the case permits, decide that the person charged:

(i) if a minister, probationer or student:
  (a) shall cease to be a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion;
  (b) shall not continue on probation or in training;
  (c) shall be without appointment at ~~his or her~~ ***the person's*** own charges or become a supernumerary;
  (d) shall not resume or shall lose the status of a local preacher;
  (e) shall cease to be a member;
  (f) shall pay such sum of money as may be appropriate to remedy any loss suffered;
(ii) if a local preacher, shall lose that status;
(iii) if a local preacher or member, shall or shall also be removed:
  (a) from any connexional, district, circuit or local office;
  (b) from membership; or
(iv) in any of such cases, shall suffer some lesser penalty specified by the committee.

(2) It is open to the committee to decide that the finding that the charge is established is a sufficient penalty in the circumstances of the case.

(3) If the committee decides that the respondent shall cease to be a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion, or shall not continue on probation or in training, it must make a declaration as to the status of the respondent as a local preacher and member.

(4) If the committee decides that the respondent shall cease to be a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion, it must consider whether or not to specify the earliest date at which ~~he or she~~ ***the respondent*** may apply for reinstatement and must specify such a date if it thinks fit to do so. The respondent will not thereby acquire a right to, or legitimate expectation of, reinstatement after that date.

(5) If the committee decides that the respondent shall be without appointment at ~~his or her~~ ***the respondent's*** own charges, the committee must inform the Stationing Advisory Committee of its decision. If the respondent subsequently seeks to return to the active work ~~he or she~~, ***the respondent*** must apply to the President. In that case the application must be considered and determined as set out in Standing Order 761(1) to (10) with any necessary changes.

(5A) If the committee decides that the respondent shall pay a sum of money it must decide by what date that money shall be paid, and to whom it shall be paid. It may also decide that the money shall be paid by deduction from the minister's stipend, in which event it must decide how much is to be deducted from the ~~said~~ stipend each month. The Connexional Team with responsibility for payment of the stipend shall pay any sum deducted from the stipend to such person ***as may be*** identified by the committee to receive such sum.

(6) The decision of the committee must be communicated immediately to the Presenting Officer, the respondent and the complainant and additionally:

(i) if the respondent is a minister or probationer, the President of the Conference and ~~his or her~~ ***the respondent's*** Chair and Superintendent (if any);
(ii) if the respondent is a student, the President and the oversight tutor with overall responsibility for the relevant training institution;
(iii) if the respondent is a deacon, diaconal probationer or diaconal student, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
(iv) if the respondent is a local preacher, the secretary of the relevant Local Preachers' Meeting and any other body which needs to know for the proper performance of its duties;
(v) if the respondent is a lay person who is not a local preacher, any body which needs to know for the proper performance of its duties.

(7) (*a*) The communication of the committee's decision to the Presenting Officer, the respondent and the complainant must be made orally at the end of the hearing if they are present. In any case it must be confirmed or made (as the case requires) in writing by the reporting officer.

(b) The written communication to the Presenting Officer and the respondent must be accompanied by the relevant information about their entitlement to appeal under these Standing Orders.

(c) A body which receives a notice under clause (6) above must take all necessary steps to give effect to the decision.

(8) Without prejudice to Standing Order 376(6) the committee may at its discretion direct that expenses incurred by the respondent and the complainant in connection with the hearing and notified to the committee before it disperses are to be reimbursed in whole or in part from the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order 376(5).

(9) (*a*) In every case the committee must determine, before it disperses, whether or not to direct that the outcome be officially announced.

(b) The committee will normally direct an official announcement where the respondent has been suspended or where it is a matter of public knowledge that a charge has been brought.

(c) The committee must determine the terms and manner of any announcement which it directs and the persons to whom it is to be made. Those persons will normally include the members of the Circuit Meeting in the case of a person appointed to or holding office in a Circuit.

(d) The reporting officer is responsible for ensuring that the announcement is duly made when the time for appeal has expired.

(10) In all cases the committee must also deal with the matters specified in Standing Order 150.

Section 114 Charges: Appeal and Reports

1140 Appeal to a Connexional Appeal Committee. (1) ***Subject to clause (1A) below, e**ithe**r** the Presenting Officer or the respondent (called 'the parties' in this Standing Order and in the subsequent provisions of this Section) may appeal against the decision of a connexional Discipline Committee on one of the grounds set out in clause (2) below.

(1A) No appeal may be brought by either party against the decision of a committee appointed in accordance with Standing Order 1131(7A).

(2) The grounds of appeal for the purposes of this Standing Order are that:

(i) there was a material procedural irregularity in the initial hearing;
(ii) the initial committee made a mistake about a relevant point of law or of the constitution or discipline of the Church;
(iii) the initial committee erred in its conclusion on the question whether such of the words, acts or omissions complained of as it found to have been established:
(a) amounted to a serious breach of the discipline of the Church or disregard of a resolution of the Conference or the usage of the Church as generally understood; or
(b) seriously impaired or might seriously have impaired the mission, witness or integrity of the Church, having regard to the respondent's office or standing in relation to the Church;
(iv) the initial committee erred in its interpretation of the doctrines of the Church;
(v) the penalty imposed was too severe or too lenient, as being either disproportionate to the gravity of the charge as found established, or unjustly inconsistent with that previously imposed in similar cases, or was not available;
(vi) in the light of events occurring since the decision, or of evidence of which the person appealing could not reasonably be expected to have been aware at that time, substantial doubt has been cast upon the correctness of the decision.

(3) The appeal will be by way of report and there will be no rehearing or further evidence, except evidence admitted under clause (2)(vi) above.

(4) (*a*) An appeal must be brought by notice in writing to the Secretary of the Conference stating the grounds on which the appeal is brought. The person appealing must bring the appeal within two weeks after receiving the written communication of the decision.

(b) When the person appealing gives notice or within two weeks afterwards ~~he or she~~ ***that person*** must supply to the Secretary of the Conference a written statement indicating on which of the grounds specified in clause (2) above the appeal is brought and the specific nature of the error, omission or other matter relied on in relation to each ground.

(c) When the Secretary has received the statement, ~~he or she~~ ***the Secretary*** must send the notice and statement to the convener of the connexional Panel responsible for Appeal Committees.

(d) If a notice or statement is received outside the specified time limit, the Secretary must nevertheless send the documents to the convener, together with a note of the date on which the delayed document was received and any explanation given for the delay. The convener, taking into account all the circumstances, may either deal with the appeal as if the document had been provided in time or refer the matter to the President of the Conference, the Vice-President and the Secretary, who must then decide whether the appeal should be allowed to proceed.

(5) If neither party appeals but the President, having consulted with the Vice- President and the Secretary, considers that the penalty imposed should be reconsidered on the ground set out in clause (2)(v) above, ~~he or she~~ ***the President*** may, within three weeks of receiving the written communication of the initial committee's decision, refer the matter to the convener. The reference must be in writing, setting out the reasons for seeking reconsideration.

(6) If a matter is referred to the convener under clause (5) above, ~~he or she~~ ***the convener*** must arrange for it to be dealt with by a connexional Appeal Committee as if an appeal had been made by one of the parties on that ground, but no person is to be regarded as the person appealing.

(7) If the initial committee heard charges against more than one respondent and more than one appeal is brought arising out of the initial committee's decisions, both or all the appeals must be heard by a single Appeal Committee.

1141 Preparation for Hearing by a Connexional Appeal Committee. (1) Upon receiving notice of an appeal, or, if the appeal is made late, when it is decided that the appeal may proceed, the convener of the Panel responsible for connexional Appeal Committees becomes the reporting officer in relation to that appeal and must notify the respondent to the appeal and the complainant that an appeal has been brought.

(2) The reporting officer, acting with the Secretary of the Conference as necessary, must as soon as possible choose the members of the connexional Appeal Committee which is to hear the appeal. The composition of the Appeal Committee must satisfy the requirements of Standing Order 1131(3) to (7) with the substitution of references to the appeal for reference to the charge or charges.

(3) When the members of the Appeal Committee have been chosen, the reporting officer must inform the parties of the membership of the committee and of their rights

under clause (4) below. The reporting officer must also inform the complainant of the membership of the committee, but the complainant has no right to object to any member of the committee unless additional evidence is being admitted under Standing Order 1140(2)(vi). In that case, clause (4) below applies as if the complainant were a party.

(4) (*a*) If a party objects under Standing Order 1102(2) to any member of the committee, ~~he or she~~ ***the person concerned*** may, within seven days of being informed that that person will be a member of the committee, make that objection in writing and with reasons to the reporting officer.

(b) The reporting officer must pass any such objection to the chair of the committee. The chair may make such inquiries as ~~he or she~~ ***the chair*** thinks fit and must then rule on the objection.

(c) If the chair does not uphold the objection, the objector may renew the objection before the committee when it first meets if ~~he or she~~ ***the objector*** has given the reporting officer notice at least seven days beforehand of ~~his or her~~ ***the*** intention to do so. A decision by the chair upholding an objection is final.

(d) Subject to ~~paragraph~~ ***sub-clause*** (e) below, if a party knows of facts amounting to a ground of objection under Standing Order 1102(2) but does not object within the time specified in paragraph ***sub-clause*** (*a*) above ~~he or she~~ ***the person concerned*** may not afterwards object on that ground.

(e) If, as a result of a previous objection to a member of the committee or the withdrawal of a member of the committee or otherwise, a party is informed of a proposed member of the committee at such a time that it is not reasonably practicable for any objection to be made in accordance with ~~paragraph~~ ***sub-clause*** (*a*) above, ~~he or she~~ ***the person concerned*** must make the objection as soon as is reasonably possible and the chair must deal with the objection fairly having regard to all the circumstances.

(5) Further on receiving notice that an appeal is to be brought, the reporting officer must obtain from the reporting officer of the initial committee and supply to the parties a copy of the report prepared by that reporting officer under Standing Order 1133(13).

(6) (*a*) After complying with the preceding provisions of this Standing Order, the reporting officer must convene the committee.

(b) The hearing must not begin earlier than 21 days after the reporting officer has supplied the parties with the papers referred to in clause (5) above.

(c) The hearing must begin within two months of the date on which the reporting officer is notified that an appeal is to be brought, unless the chair at ~~his or her~~ ***the chair's*** sole discretion grants an extension. The grounds on which an extension may be granted are those set out in Standing Order 1131(13)(*c*).

(7) The reporting officer, if so requested by the chair, must convene a preliminary hearing to be conducted by the chair of the committee at a convenient date prior to the hearing in front of the committee. The hearing may take the form of a meeting or a conference call.

(8) The purpose of any preliminary hearing is:

(i) to deal with any objections to the membership of the committee (if not otherwise dealt with);
(ii) to determine any outstanding procedural matters; and
(iii) generally, to ensure that the matter is ready to be heard by the full committee.

No discussion of the merits of the appeal is to take place at the preliminary hearing.

(9) A decision of the chair made at the preliminary hearing may not be challenged at the full hearing unless the chair consents, but for the purposes of the provisions of this Section relating to appeals from an Appeal Committee it is to be treated as a decision of the full committee made at the time of the hearing.

(10) Whether or not a preliminary hearing is convened, the chair may give such directions to ensure that the matter is ready to be heard by the full committee as ~~he or she~~ ***the chair*** may think fit. Clause (8) above applies to such directions as it applies to decisions of the chair made at a preliminary hearing.

(11) (*a*) The chair may permit the person appealing to withdraw an appeal if in all the circumstances of the case it appears just to the chair to allow ~~him or her~~ ***that person*** to do so.

(b) The chair must record in writing any decision to permit withdrawal and the reasons for that decision, but no appeal may be brought against the decision.

(c) If an appeal is withdrawn, it cannot be reinstated subsequently.

1142 Hearing by a Connexional Appeal Committee. (1)(*a*) The parties have the right to attend and be heard. The respondent at the initial hearing has the right to be

represented and accompanied by a friend. The Presenting Officer has the right to be legally represented if ~~he or she~~ legally represented at the initial hearing or if the respondent at the initial hearing is legally represented and, in exceptional circumstances, the chair agrees to such representation.

(*b*) The complainant may attend the hearing if ~~he or she~~ ***the complainant*** so requests, but the chair may exclude the complainant from such part of the hearing as ~~he or she~~ ***the chair*** thinks fit, if it appears necessary to do so in order to deal fairly with the appeal. The reporting officer must supply the complainant with such additional papers as ~~he or she~~ ***the reporting officer***, in conjunction with the chair of the committee, from time to time thinks appropriate in all the circumstances of the case.

(2) (*a*) If the respondent at the initial hearing, not then having been legally represented, chooses to be represented by a legally qualified person on the appeal, ~~he or she~~ ***the respondent*** must give notice of that decision to the reporting officer not less than 21 days before the date of the hearing. The reporting officer must then immediately give notice of that fact to the Presenting Officer.

(b) If the chair agrees that the Presenting Officer, not having been legally represented at the initial hearing, may be represented by a legally qualified person on the appeal, the reporting officer must immediately give notice of that fact to the respondent. Notice must be given not less than 21 days before the date of the hearing unless the Presenting Officer sought legal representation in response to a notice given under ~~Paragraph~~ ***sub-clause*** (*a*) above.

(c) The reasonable costs of legal representation for the Presenting Officer are to be borne by the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order 376(5).

(3) If neither the person appealing nor ~~his or her~~ ***that person's*** representative is present at the hearing of the appeal, the committee must consider the reason for the absence, adjourning for the purpose if necessary, and may dismiss the appeal.

(4) (*a*) Unless the appeal is dismissed under clause (3) above, the reporting officer of the initial committee must first summarise the evidence and report the findings and decision of that committee.

(b) The person appealing and ~~his or her~~ ***that person's*** representative (if any) may then address the committee and call any evidence which may be admitted under Standing Order 1140(2)(vi), followed by the other party and ~~his or her~~ ***the other party's*** representative (if any). The person appealing or ~~his or her~~ ***that person's*** representative may then reply, but in doing so may only answer points made by the other party.

(c) The committee must then proceed to consider its decision in the absence of all other persons except the reporting officer. The chair must remind the committee that:

(i) it is acting in a judicial capacity;
(ii) its decision must be taken solely on the material already presented; and
(iii) an appeal may be allowed only upon one of the grounds set out in Standing Order 1140(2).

(5) If the hearing is upon a reference under Standing Order 1140(5) above, the committee must adapt the procedure set out in clause (4) above as appropriate. The convener of the connexional Panel responsible for Discipline Committees, if not the reporting officer of the initial committee, must attend in addition to that reporting officer, in order to provide information relevant to the grounds upon which the written reference is made.

(6) (*a*) The chair of the committee at ~~his or her~~ ***the chair's*** sole discretion may adjourn a hearing from time to time for a period not exceeding one month, unless the grounds of the application for the adjournment are such that, if an adjournment is granted, it should be for a longer period. The date and time when the hearing is to be resumed must always be stated.

(b) More than one adjournment may be granted in any case.

(c) If the committee allows an appeal against a decision that the charge is not established, the chair must consider whether to exercise the power of adjournment so that the committee can receive expert evidence to assist it in deciding upon the appropriate action to be taken.

(7) The reporting officer must take notes of any oral evidence heard by the committee which is admitted under Standing Order 1140(2)(vi) and of its findings on that evidence and the other material before it. Those notes, together with any documents in evidence before the committee and the committee's decisions and reasons, will form the basis of the report referred to in Standing Order 1145(11)(*a*) in the case of a further appeal.

1143 Decisions by a Connexional Appeal Committee. (1) The committee may decide to dismiss the appeal or to uphold it wholly or in part.

(2) If the committee decides to uphold the appeal, it may either substitute its own decision as to:

(i) whether or not the charge is found to be established;
(ii) the penalty imposed

or both, or, if the committee thinks it more appropriate, refer the matter back to a newly constituted Discipline Committee for a rehearing.

(3) The provisions of Standing Order 1134(3) to (9) apply to decisions under this Standing Order as they apply to decisions under that Standing Order.

(4) If the committee refers the matter back for a rehearing, the reporting officer must also communicate the decision to the convener of the connexional Panel responsible for Discipline Committees, who must then arrange for the rehearing.

(5) When a rehearing is held under clause (4) above, the provisions of Standing Orders 1131 to 1134 apply and the Presenting Officer will continue to be responsible for presenting the charge. If ~~he or she~~ ***that Presenting Officer*** is no longer available, the relevant Connexional Team member must nominate another Presenting Officer. The decision of the committee hearing the case must be treated as an initial decision for the purposes of an appeal under Standing Order 1140.

1144 Further Appeal to the Conference. (1) Except as provided in clauses (4) and (5) below, either the Presenting Officer or the respondent may appeal against the decision of a connexional Appeal Committee in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order.

(1A) An appeal under clause (1) above may be made on any of the grounds set out in Standing Order 1140(2), but so that references to the initial hearing are to be understood as including additionally or alternatively the appeal hearing.

(2) Before bringing an appeal, the Presenting Officer or the respondent, as the case may be, must obtain permission from the committee to appeal against its decision. The committee may only give permission if one of the conditions set out in clause (3) below is satisfied.

(3) The conditions on which permission to appeal may be given are that:

(i) the committee was evenly divided or reached its decision by a margin of one vote;
(ii) the interpretation of the Church's doctrine is in dispute;
(iii) the interpretation of Standing Orders or resolutions of the Conference is in dispute;
(iv) the committee in its discretion considers that there is some other substantial matter to be resolved.

(4) If the decision of the committee was made after the matter was referred under Standing Order 1140(5), there is no appeal.

(5) If the committee decided to refer the matter back for a rehearing, there is no appeal.

(6) The appeal will be by way of report and there will be no rehearing or further evidence, except evidence admitted under Standing Order 1140(2)(vi).

(7) Unless clause (8) applies, the party wishing to appeal must apply for the permission of the committee before it disperses after the hearing. The committee must state its reasons for granting or refusing the application by reference to the conditions set out in clause (3) above.

(8) (*a*) This clause applies if at the hearing a party informs the committee that ~~he or she~~ ***the party*** wishes to take time to consider whether to bring an appeal.

(b) The relevant party may then make a written application for permission to appeal to the chair of the committee within seven days of receipt of written communication of the decision, setting out in the application the matters relied on to support it.

(c) The chair of the committee must make a written decision on the application within seven days from receiving it, stating ~~his or her~~ ***the*** reasons for granting or refusing the application by reference to the conditions set out in clause (3) above. The chair must also notify the decision to the relevant party and the reporting officer of the committee, who must in turn notify the other party.

(9) (*a*) An appeal must be brought by notice in writing to the Secretary of the Conference stating the grounds on which the appeal is brought. The person appealing must bring the appeal within two weeks after receiving notice of the decision, except that if ~~he or she~~ ***the person*** is appealing after permission has been granted in accordance with clause (8) above, the time for bringing the appeal is extended to seven days after ~~he or she~~ ***the person*** receives notice of the grant, if that would be a longer period.

(b) When the person appealing gives notice ~~he or she~~ ***that person*** must ***also*** supply to the Secretary of the Conference a written statement indicating on which of the grounds specified in Standing Order 1140(2) the appeal is brought and the specific nature of the error, omission or other matter relied on in relation to each ground.

(c) If a notice or statement is received outside the specified time limit, the Secretary must consult the President and Vice-President of the Conference and the convener of the

Appeal Committee which made the decision, and must then decide whether the appeal should be allowed to proceed.

1145 Proceedings on a Further Appeal. (1) (*a*) If the grounds of appeal include the ground specified in Standing Order 1140(2)(iv) or permission is given because the condition specified in Standing Order 1144(3)(ii) is satisfied and the case is not a case against a deacon, diaconal probationer or diaconal student, the appeal must be heard by:

(i) the Presbyteral Session in cases against presbyters, presbyteral probationers and presbyteral students;
(ii) *[deleted]*
(iii) the Representative Session in other cases.

(b) If the decision appealed against is made later than three weeks before the opening of the relevant session of the next or current Conference, the appeal must be dealt with by the following Conference.

(c) At a hearing by the Presbyteral Session, the President must preside unless ~~he or she is~~ disqualified from sitting under Standing Order 1102(2). In that case, the former President who has most recently held the office and who is present and willing to act and is not so disqualified must act as President. At a hearing by the Representative Session either the President or the Vice-President must preside, unless both are so disqualified, in which case the ex-President or ex-Vice-President who has most recently held office and who is present and willing to act and is not so disqualified must act as President. When two persons are equally qualified and entitled or obliged to preside, they must agree between themselves who is to preside and in the absence of agreement the question must be determined by the Secretary.

(d) Any suspension imposed under Standing Order 1105 and any directions given under clause (10) of that Standing Order will continue, subject to any directions made by the President by virtue of the powers conferred by clause 29(*b*) of the Deed of Union and Standing Order 774(9), until the appeal has been heard.

(2) (*a*) All other appeals must be heard by a committee of 15 persons (in this Standing Order referred to as 'the committee') appointed by the President or the Vice- President in accordance with sub-clause (*b*) below.

(b) The committee shall comprise:

(i) in cases against presbyters, presbyteral probationers and presbyteral students, 15 persons appointed by the President from among the members of the Presbyteral Session of the preceding Conference, and, if it proves

impractical to find 15 such persons qualified and able to hear the appeal, from among the members of the Representative Session;

(ii) in cases against deacons, diaconal probationers and diaconal students, the Conference Diaconal Committee constituted in accordance with clause 25A(b) of the Deed of Union, supplemented, if the number of members of this body qualified and able to hear the appeal is fewer than 15, by persons appointed by the President or the Vice-President from among the members of the Representative Session of the preceding Conference;

(iii) in other cases, 15 persons appointed by the President or the Vice- President from among the members of the Representative Session of the preceding Conference.

(c) The persons appointed must, in the judgment of the President or Vice-President, as the case may be, represent the diversity of the Conference and will include such of the officers specified in Standing Order 101 as ~~he or she~~ ***the President or Vice-President*** determines.

(d) The committee must include as the person presiding the President or a former President or (in the case of an appeal to which sub-clause (*b*)(ii) or (iii) above applies) the Vice-President or a former Vice-President. Any former President or Vice-President presiding must if possible be a member of the preceding Conference~~, who is to preside~~.

(e) The committee will meet at a time determined by the President or Vice-President making the appointment.

(f) The provisions of Standing Order 1102(2) apply and the Secretary of the Conference must draw it to the attention of the members of the committee.

(g) The findings of the committee have the effect of findings of the Conference and must be recorded in the Journal.

(3) When the members of a committee under clause (2) above have been chosen or otherwise identified, the Secretary must inform the parties of the membership of the committee and of their rights under clause (4) below.

(4) (*a*) If a party objects under Standing Order 1102(2) to any member of the committee, ~~he or she~~ ***the party*** may, within seven days of being informed that that person will be a member of the committee, make that objection in writing and with reasons to the President.

(b) The President or Vice-President, as the case may require, may make such inquiries as ~~he or she~~ ***the President or Vice-President*** thinks fit and must then rule on the objection.

(c) If the President or Vice-President does not uphold the objection, the objector may renew the objection before the committee when it first meets if ~~he or she~~ ***the objector*** has given the President notice at least seven days beforehand of ~~his or her~~ ***the*** intention to do so (but subject to ~~paragraph~~ ***sub-clause*** (cA) below).

(c*A*) If, as a result of a previous objection to a member of the committee or the withdrawal of a member of the committee or otherwise, a party is informed of a proposed member of the committee at such a time that it is not reasonably practicable for any objection to be made in accordance with ~~paragraph~~ ***sub-clause*** (*a*) above or for its renewal to be notified in accordance with ~~paragraph~~***sub-clause*** (*c*) above, ~~he or she~~ ***the party*** must make the objection or notify the President as soon as is reasonably possible and the President or the Vice-President, as the case may require, must deal with the objection fairly having regard to all the circumstances.

(d) A decision by the President or Vice-President upholding an objection is final. ~~He or she~~ ***The President or Vice-President*** must then appoint a substitute, qualified in accordance with clause (2)(*b*) above, and inform the parties of the identity of the new member.

(e) If a party knows of facts amounting to a ground of objection under Standing Order 1102(2) but does not object within the time specified in ~~paragraph~~ ***sub-clause*** (*a*) above ~~he or she~~ ***the party*** may not afterwards object on that ground.

(5) *[revoked]*

(6) The Secretary is responsible for providing the parties (so far as necessary) and all those hearing the appeal with the documents which were before the connexional Appeal Committee and any documents produced in connection with the appeal.

(6*A*) (*a*) The Secretary, if so requested by the person who is to preside at the full hearing in accordance with sub-clauses (1)(*c*) or (2)(*d*) above, must convene a preliminary hearing to be conducted by that person, with the assistance of such person or persons as the person presiding may require as advisers, at a convenient date prior to the hearing of the appeal. The hearing may take the form of a meeting or a conference call.

(b) The purpose of any preliminary hearing is to deal with such matters as the President may think fit (which may include any objections to the membership of the committee,

if the appeal is to be heard by a committee) and generally to ensure that the appeal is ready to be heard.

(c) A decision of the President at the preliminary hearing may be challenged at the hearing of the appeal provided that the party making the challenge has given the Secretary at least two days' prior notice in writing of ~~his or her~~ ***the*** intention to challenge the decision.

(d) No discussion of the merits of the appeal is to take place at the preliminary hearing.

(7) The appeal must be heard in closed session if it is being heard by the full Conference. Whether it is heard by the full Conference or by a committee, no one may be present except:

(i) members of the Conference entitled to vote on the business under consideration and not disqualified under Standing Order 1102(2) or (as the case requires) members of the committee;
(ii) in accordance with clause (8) below, the parties, their representatives and any accompanying friend;
(iii) the reporting officer of the relevant Appeal Committee;
(iv) any persons whom the Conference or committee may require to be present as advisers; and
(v) the Secretary, who is entitled to be present throughout in order to advise upon matters of procedure and practice, even if ~~he or she~~ ***the Secretary*** has a previous involvement with the case which would preclude ~~him or her from~~ speaking on the substance of the case or voting on the appeal.

(8) The parties have the right to attend and be heard. The respondent at the initial hearing has the right to be represented and accompanied by a friend. The Presenting Officer has the right to be legally represented if ~~he or she was~~ legally represented at the appeal to the connexional Appeal Committee or if the respondent at the initial hearing is legally represented and, in exceptional circumstances, the person presiding agrees to such representation.

(9) (*a*) If the respondent at the initial hearing, not previously having been legally represented, chooses to be represented by a legally qualified person on the appeal, ~~he or she~~ ***the respondent*** must give notice of that decision to the Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the hearing. The Secretary must then immediately give notice of that fact to the Presenting Officer.

(b) If the person presiding agrees that the Presenting Officer, not having been legally represented at the initial hearing, may be represented by a legally qualified person on the appeal, the reporting officer must immediately give notice of that fact to the respondent. Notice must be given not less than 21 days before the date of the hearing unless the Presenting Officer sought legal representation in response to a notice given under ~~paragraph~~ ***sub-clause*** (*a*) above.

(c) The reasonable costs of legal representation for the Presenting Officer are to be borne by the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order 376(5).

(10) If neither the person appealing nor ~~his or her~~ ***that person's*** representative is present at the hearing of the appeal, the Conference or committee must consider the reason for the absence, adjourning for the purpose if necessary, and may dismiss the appeal.

(11) (*a*) Unless the appeal is dismissed under clause (10) above, the reporting officer of the Appeal Committee must first summarise the evidence and report the findings and decision of that committee.

(b) The person appealing and ~~his or~~ her ***that person's*** representative (if any) may then address the Conference or committee, followed by the other party and representative (if any). The person appealing or ~~his~~ ***that person's*** representative may then reply, but in doing so may only answer points made by the other party.

(c) The Conference or committee must then proceed to consider its decision. The person presiding must remind the Conference or committee that:

(i) it is acting in a judicial capacity;
(ii) its decision must be taken solely on the material already presented; and
(iii) an appeal may be allowed only upon one of the grounds set out in Standing Order 1140(2).

If the appeal is being heard by the full Conference, ~~he or she~~ ***the person presiding*** must also remind the members of the requirements of Standing Order 1102(2).

(12) The Conference or committee may decide to dismiss the appeal or to uphold it wholly or in part.

(13) If the Conference or committee decides to uphold the appeal, it may substitute its own decision either as to:

(i) whether or not the charge is found to be established; or
(ii) the penalty imposed

or both.

(14) The provisions of Standing Order 1134(3) to (9) apply to decisions under this Standing Order as they apply to decisions under that Standing Order, with the substitution of references to the Conference for references to the committee where required.

(15) Unless the Conference or committee exercises its power of reconsideration under Standing Order 1151(4) or the case is later reopened under Standing Order 1146, its decision is final. This does not prevent the exercise of powers under Standing Orders 761 and 053(1).

(16) (*a*) Subject to ~~paragraph~~ ***sub-clause*** (*b*) below, the person presiding may grant an adjournment of the hearing in exceptional circumstances if the interests of justice so require. Any such adjournment must be for such period as is necessary in all the circumstances of the case.

(b) There may be no adjournment of any issue raised by the appeal which involves the interpretation of the Church's doctrine, except an adjournment from the close of business or (as the case requires) proceedings on one day to the commencement of business or proceedings on the next.

(c) Where the appeal is being heard by the full Conference, the person presiding may direct that any issue not involving the interpretation of the Church's doctrine is to be determined by a committee appointed under clause (2) above.

(17) (*a*) The person presiding may permit the person appealing to withdraw an appeal if in all the circumstances of the case it appears just to the person presiding to allow ~~him or her~~ ***the person appealing*** to do so.

(b) The person presiding must record in writing any decision to permit withdrawal and the reasons for that decision.

(c) If an appeal is withdrawn, it cannot be reinstated subsequently.

1146 Applications for Reconsideration. (1) If a charge is found to be established and the respondent did not appeal in time, or did appeal but the appeal (whether under Standing Order 1143 or 1144) was wholly or partly dismissed, ~~he or she~~ ***the respondent*** may subsequently apply to the convener of the connexional Panel responsible for Appeal Committees for the case to be reopened. The application must be made in writing and must set out the reasons for the application, having regard to clause (2) below.

(2) An application under clause (1) above may be granted only on the ground that, in the light of events occurring since the case was disposed of, or of evidence of which the applicant could not reasonably be expected to have been aware at that time, substantial doubt has been cast upon the decision disposing of the case.

(3) Upon receiving such an application, the convener must arrange for three members of the panel not previously involved with the case to hear and consider the application. The group may determine its own procedure.

(4) If the group decides that the applicant has established the ground set out in clause (2) above, it must so inform the convener. The convener must then arrange through the relevant convener a hearing by an appeal committee constituted for the purpose. The provisions of Standing Order 1142 apply to any such hearing.

(5) There is no appeal against the decision of the group.

1147 Reports. (1) (*a*) A decision by a connexional discipline committee or connexional appeal committee takes effect as soon as the time for appeal or further appeal has expired without the giving of a notice of appeal.

(b) A decision by the Conference or a committee of the Conference hearing an appeal under this Section takes effect immediately.

(c) If a late appeal is allowed to proceed, such steps as may be practicable must be taken to undo any effect given to the decision.

(2) All decisions referred to in clause (1) above must be reported:

(i) in the case of presbyters, presbyteral probationers and presbyteral students, to the Presbyteral and Representative Sessions;
(ii) in the case of deacons, diaconal probationers and diaconal students, to the Conference Diaconal Committee and the Representative Session;
(iii) in other cases, to the Representative Session,

except that a decision made by the full Conference need not be reported to the Session making the decision.

(3) Any report made under clause (2) above or under clause 23(e) or 25A*(f)* of the Deed of Union in the case of the Representative Session must be made in closed session. A report to the Representative Session under clause (2) above must be confined to:

(i) the number of charges and appeals heard and determined during the year, the numbers of charges ultimately dismissed and found established, in whole or in part, and the nature of the orders made in the case of charges being established;
(ii) the names of persons who have ceased to be presbyters, deacons, probationers or students, or who have become supernumeraries, as the result of such orders; and
(iii) the substance of any interpretation of or ruling as to doctrine involved in the determination of a doctrinal charge, whether dismissed or found established.

(4) In addition to any reports under clause (2) above, a general report must be made to the Conference in both sessions and to the Conference Diaconal Committee (as constituted by clause 25A of the Deed of Union) by a convener of the connexional Panel at least once every three years. The general report must deal with any questions of principle raised in the cases dealt with, but without reference to any personal details. It will be open to either session and to that committee to debate those questions.

(5) Nothing said or resolved in any debate on a report under clause (2) or clause (4) above may be used as grounds, under Standing Order 1146 or otherwise, on which further steps may be taken under this Part by or against a person with regard to a case which has already been disposed of in the ordinary course.

Section 115 Other Matters

1150 Decisions, Supervision and Pastoral Care. (1) In this Standing Order references to 'the committee' include references to the full Conference where required in respect of an appeal under Standing Order 1144 and references to 'the reporting officer' or 'the relevant reporting officer' are to be read as references to the Secretary of the Conference in respect of such an appeal.

(2) If the committee finds that a charge brought under this Part is established and directs any course of action to be taken as a result, the committee must also name a person or persons who is or are to be responsible (in the absence of any appeal) for ensuring that the directions are followed and for reporting on that within a specified time to the relevant reporting officer.

(3) If the reporting officer, on receiving a report under clause (2) above, is not satisfied that a direction is being properly complied with, ~~he or she~~ ***the reporting officer*** must

reconvene the committee, or as many members of it as are still available, for the purpose of reconsidering the question of penalty.

(3A) (*a*) If a committee so reconvened would have fewer than three members, the reporting officer must appoint additional members to make the number of members up to five in such a manner that the composition of the committee complies with Standing Order 1131(4) and (5).

(b) If a committee so reconvened would have at least three members but the original chair is not available, the reporting officer must appoint another person appointed under Standing Order 290(3) to chair the committee.

(c) If additional members are appointed under this clause to a reconvened committee, the reporting officer must inform the respondent of the new members and the respondent has the right to object under Standing Order 1102(2) to any member by giving notice of objection to the reporting officer in writing and with reasons. The chair, whether original or newly appointed, must deal with the objection fairly having regard to all the circumstances.

(4) If the committee is reconvened under clause (3) above:

(i) the respondent, any other person to whom the direction was given and the person responsible for its being followed have the right to address the committee. The relevant Presenting Officer has the right to attend and may address the committee at the committee's discretion;
(ii) the committee may:
  (a) give directions for the purpose of ensuring fulfilment of its original decision; or
  (b) substitute for its original decision as to penalty any other decision which it could originally have reached.

(5) If the committee substitutes a new decision under clause (4)(i)(*b*) above, it may do so either unconditionally or conditionally upon non-compliance with its original decision by a specified date or time.

(6) The decision of the committee made after being reconvened under clause (3) must be communicated in the same way, as far as possible, as the original decision.

(7) A new decision given under clause 4(i)(*b*) above is subject to appeal as if it had been the original decision. The time for appealing runs from the date of written communication of the committee's decision.

(8) In a case in which the respondent is a minister or probationer and the charge is found to be established either wholly or in part, the committee must give appropriate directions for ensuring that on each occasion when the respondent takes up a new appointment the terms of the committee's decision are communicated to any person then becoming ~~his or her~~ ***the respondent's*** Chair and Superintendent.

(9) It is the responsibility of:

(i) the Secretary of the Conference, in the case of a minister, probationer or ministerial student; or
(ii) the Superintendent of the Circuit, in the case of a local preacher or member to ensure, whenever discipline charges are being dealt with, that the respondent and, where relevant, the complainant, and those connected with them, are entrusted to appropriate local pastoral care both during the process and at its conclusion.

(10) Clause (9) above does not affect the responsibilities of the district Complaints Support Group under this Section and in carrying out ~~his or her~~ ***the*** responsibilities under that clause the Secretary or Superintendent, as the case may be, must take account of the support given by that group.

1151 Ministerial Complaints and Charges: Special Cases. (1) If it is proposed that a charge be brought against the President, all functions under this Part which would otherwise be performed by the President must be performed by the Vice-President or ~~if~~ ***if*** ~~he or she~~ ***the Vice-President*** is disqualified from acting or unwilling to act by the former President who most recently held office as such and is able and willing to act.

(2) If it is proposed that a charge be brought against a Chair all functions under this Part which would otherwise be performed by the Chair must be performed by the President.

(3) The provisions of this Part are modified as set out in clauses (4) to (7) below where the respondent is for the time being:

(i) recognised and regarded as a presbyter of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion by virtue of clause 43(b), 44(b) or 45(a) of the Deed of Union; or
(ii) recognised and regarded as a deacon of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion by virtue of clause 45A of the Deed of Union.

(4) Complaints and charges may be investigated and heard only if they relate to matters alleged to have arisen in the home Districts or, subject to clause (5) below, an overseas District and, in the case of ministers of the Irish Conference, only if the

minister concerned is appointed to a station in one of the home Districts or an overseas District. All other cases must be referred to the appropriate authority of the person's own conference or church.

(5) If the complaint or charge relates to matters all or most of which are alleged to have arisen in an overseas District, it may be investigated and heard only if:

(i) the circumstances set out in Standing Order 1110(6)(iii) exist;
(ii) the respondent is expected to be present in the home Districts for the greater part of the period of six months beginning with the date on which the complaint is made; and
(iii) the Secretary of the Conference is satisfied that the complaint can fairly be investigated in the home Districts.

(6) If a committee or the Conference finds a charge to be established, it may:

(i) administer an admonishment;
(ii) recommend a change of station, if the respondent is available for stationing elsewhere;
(iii) determine that the respondent be removed from the stations and so cease to be recognised and regarded as a presbyter or (as the case may be) a deacon of the Methodist Church;
(iv) in the case of a respondent serving on the stations by virtue of an arrangement with a conference or church overseas, recommend to the appropriate authority of the conference or church that the person be recalled;
(v) make recommendations to the respondent's own conference or church concerning further action which it judges should be taken.

(7) When the Secretary of the Conference or, as the case may be, the President receives a report of a decision of a complaints team or of a committee or the Conference made under this Part, ~~he or she~~ ***the Secretary or President*** must send a report of the case to the appropriate authority of the respondent's own conference or church, including any recommendations for further action which the complaints team, committee or the Conference may have made.

(8) The provisions of clause (9) below apply to cases concerning ministers, probationers and ministerial students.

(9) (*a*) If at any time the respondent gives notice of wishing to resign from Full Connexion or to withdraw from probation or training under Standing Order 760, the proceedings under this Part must be adjourned until a decision is made by the person or body with authority to do so under that Standing Order, unless that person or body or the respondent requires that the complaint or charge be disposed of first under this Part.

(b) If the resignation or withdrawal is accepted, no further steps may be taken under this Part by any person in relation to the matters forming the basis of the complaint or charge.

(c) If the resignation or withdrawal is not accepted, the proceedings under this Part continue. The person or body making that decision must supply to the ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** ~~complaints team (if a complaint has been referred to the connexional Complaints Panel but no charge has been brought) or relevant committee or the Conference (if a charge has been brought~~) a formal statement of the reasons together with any documentary evidence upon which the decision was based. The ~~person responsible at the relevant stage under this Part for supplying documents~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must ***then*** ensure that copies are provided to ~~those entitled to receive documents~~ ***the appropriate person or persons having regard to the stage reached by the proceedings under this Part***.

1152 Complaints and Charges against Local Preachers, Members and Office-Holders: Special Cases. (1) Where a complaint is ~~referred to the connexional Complaints Panel~~ ***allocated to the Tier 2 procedure***:

(i) relating to matters alleged to have arisen outside the home Districts; and
(ii) made against a local preacher or member appointed to serve overseas in accordance with arrangements for overseas appointments as regulated by the Connexional Council whose membership has remained in or been transferred back to a Circuit in a home District

the ~~complaints team~~ ***person or persons responsible for investigating the complaint*** must consult the Secretary of the Conference in performing ~~its~~ functions under this Part.

(2) If a complaint to which clause (1) applies proceeds to a charge, the Secretary must ensure that the respondent is able to be present for the hearing of the charge and any subsequent appeal.

(3) If, when a charge is brought against a local preacher or member, there are grounds for believing that a complaint has been or may be made about a minister, or ministerial

probationer or student arising out of the same or similar facts, the reporting officer must consult the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** and, where applicable, the complaints team dealing with that complaint.

(4) After consultation in accordance with clause (3) above, the reporting officer may decide to delay the hearing of the charge:

(i) for the purpose of enabling that charge to be heard together with any charge arising out of that other complaint; or
(ii) pending the outcome of any ~~consideration~~ ***investigation*** of the material facts or complaint ***under the Tier 2 procedure*** ~~by a complaints team~~ or the hearing of any charge arising out of that other complaint.

(5) If the reporting officer exercises the power given by clause (4) above, there is no appeal against the decision and any resulting delay will not be a ground for any complaint or appeal.

(6) If a charge is proposed relating to matters alleged to have arisen in a home District against a person who has the status of or equivalent to a local preacher, or is a member, in an overseas District or another conference or church overseas and who has not been admitted into membership of the Church under Standing Order 051(2), the reporting officer must consult the Secretary of the Conference and clauses (7) to (10) apply.

(7) If the appropriate authority overseas requests the Conference to deal with the charge the Secretary must arrange for it to be dealt with in accordance with this Part.

(8) If a committee or the Conference acting under this Part considers that any decision should be reached on the charge other than its dismissal or rehearing, it may not give effect to that decision, but must refer it to the President. The President must send the decision forthwith to the referring authority overseas.

(9) If clause (8) does not apply, the reporting officer in relation to any connexional Discipline Committee or Appeal Committee hearing the charge or an appeal must send a report of the decision to the Secretary, who must communicate its contents to the referring authority overseas.

(10) If the appropriate authority overseas does not request the Conference to deal with the charge, no further steps may be taken under this Part.

(11) When an appeal is brought against a decision depriving a local preacher of status as a local preacher or removing a local preacher from membership or tenure of office

(whether at an initial hearing or on appeal), that status, membership or tenure of office is or remains suspended until the appeal is determined.

(12) The decision on any appeal involving a local preacher or member (whether or not falling within clause (11) above) must be communicated to the Secretary of the Conference in addition to any other person or body to whom this Section may require it to be communicated.

(13) Members of other communions who are not members of the Methodist Church but who hold office in it or are members of its church courts, and persons who are members both of the Methodist Church and of another communion are subject to discipline in accordance with this Part, but any decision may only affect their standing in relation to the Methodist Church, unless any further effect is given to decisions taken under this Part by virtue of the constitution of any other communion or of any local ecumenical partnership or ecumenical area.

1153 Previous Complaints and Charges. (1) When a complaint is passed to ~~the lead member of~~ a complaints team ***chair***, the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must make a search of the records kept under Standing Order 1104(1) to discover whether any previous complaint has been made or charge brought against the respondent.

(2) No record of any previous complaint or charge which may be found on such a search may be disclosed to the ***complaints team chair or the other*** members of ~~the~~ ***a*** complaints team unless:

(i) the respondent expressly asserts that ~~he or she~~ ***the respondent*** has not been the subject of a previous complaint or charge; or
(ii) the complaint under investigation is in the opinion of the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** and the connexional Complaints Officer appointed under Standing Order 1114 so similar in general nature and in specific matters of fact to a previous complaint or charge that the existence of that previous complaint or charge is a material fact to be taken into account by the complaints team ***chair or the complaints team, as the case may be,*** in determining how to dispose of the present complaint.

(3) (*a*) Where the condition specified in clause (2)(i) is satisfied, the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must disclose all previous complaints and charges against the respondent to the ***complaints team chair and, if applicable, other*** members of the complaints team.

(*b*) Where the condition specified in clause (2)(ii) above is satisfied but sub-clause (*a*) does not apply, the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must disclose only such previous complaints and charges as cause the condition to be satisfied.

(4) When the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** sends a copy of a charge to a reporting officer under Standing Order 1130(6) and the material required to be supplied to that officer does not disclose any previous complaint or charge, the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must also send, under separate cover, a statement of the result of the search conducted under clause (1) above and particulars of any previous complaint or charge discovered.

(5) The record of any previous complaint or charge must not be disclosed to the members of the committee hearing a charge before it has decided whether or not the present charge is established, unless:

(i) paragraph (i) of clause (2) above is now satisfied; or
(ii) in the opinion of the reporting officer and of a person falling within Standing Order 290(3), other than the proposed chair of the committee, the existence of a previous complaint or charge is a material fact to be taken into account by the committee on the grounds set out in paragraph (ii) of clause (2) above.

(6) (*a*) Where the condition specified in clause (5)(i) is satisfied, the reporting officer must disclose all previous complaints and charges against the respondent to the members of the committee.

(*b*) Where the condition specified in clause (5)(ii) above is satisfied but sub-clause (*a*) does not apply, the reporting officer must disclose only such previous complaints and charges as cause the condition to be satisfied.

(7) If a committee hearing a charge finds it to be established, the reporting officer must then disclose to the committee any record previously undisclosed in order to assist the committee in deciding upon the appropriate action to be taken.

(8) If the existence of a previous complaint or charge which is not a matter of public knowledge becomes known to ***a complaints team chair,*** members of a complaints team or a connexional Discipline Committee otherwise than through the operation of this Standing Order, it must not be further disclosed except in accordance with the provisions set out above. Those ~~members of the team or committee~~ ***persons*** who have become

aware of its existence may continue to act as such members only with the consent of the respondent.

(9) If any person involved in the complaints and discipline process becomes aware that the complainant has knowledge of the existence of a previous complaint or charge, ~~he or she~~ ***that person*** must inform the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** (if a charge has not been brought) or the reporting officer (if a charge has been brought). The person informed must bring the provisions of this Standing Order to the attention of the complainant and require ~~him or her~~ ***the complainant*** not to refer to the previous complaint or charge in the course of the process unless it has already been disclosed in accordance with those provisions.

1154 Provision of Information. (1) At each stage of the complaints and discipline process as it applies to a particular complaint, the person responsible for preparing the record or report relating to that stage must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the outcome is communicated orally to any ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer, convener of a Complaints Support Group***, complaints team chair*** and member of a complaints team, Complaints Support Group or committee which has been involved in the process relating to that complaint, if the outcome would not otherwise be communicated to that person.

(2) Any communication under clause (1) above is confidential.

(3) A ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer to whom an outcome is communicated under clause (1) above is entitled on request to a copy of the relevant record or report held by the Secretary of the Conference, but must treat any document supplied following such a request as confidential.

1155 Complaints about the Process. (1) In this Standing Order:

(i) 'the aggrieved person' means a person who has been involved in the complaints and discipline process in any way who makes repeated complaints to the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** about the manner in which the process has been carried out or about any related matter;

(ii) 'a persistent complainant' means an aggrieved person in respect of whom it has been decided in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order that any future complaint by ~~him or her~~ ***that person*** should in all cases be dealt with immediately by a team convened from the connexional Complaints Panel which would be required before taking any further steps to consider whether in all the circumstances of the case, including the apparent merits of the particular complaint, that complaint should or should not be allowed to proceed;

(iii) 'the referee' means the person to whom a matter has been referred under clause (9) below.

(2) Subject to clause (3) below, if the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** is unable to resolve the aggrieved person's complaints, ~~he or she may refer~~ the aggrieved person ***may be referred*** to the connexional Reconciliation Group and the subsequent provisions of this Standing Order will apply.

(3) Clause (2) above does not apply if the complaints are made during the course of the complaints and discipline process and could be raised on an appeal.

(4) If the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** refers an aggrieved person to the connexional Reconciliation Group, ~~he or she~~ ***the Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must inform the aggrieved person that the reference has been made, that the Group will contact the aggrieved person to discuss ~~his or her~~ ***that person's*** concerns and that until the Group has carried out its work the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** will not communicate further with the aggrieved person in relation to the complaints made.

(5) The ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** makes a reference under clause (4) above by writing to the convener of the connexional Reconciliation Group setting out the reasons for which the reference is being made and supplying the convener with the relevant documents. A copy of the reference must be sent to the aggrieved person, together with a list of the documents supplied.

(6) (*a*) On receiving a reference under this Standing Order the convener must appoint a team of three members of the Group, one of whom must be a person falling within Standing Order 290(3), to act in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order and must appoint one member of the team as the contact member.

(b) The convener must inform the aggrieved person that the team has been appointed, stating the names of the team members, and that the contact member will contact the aggrieved person.

(c) The convener must further inform that aggrieved person that the duties and responsibilities of a team convened from the connexional Reconciliation Group are:

(i) to listen to the concerns expressed by the aggrieved person;
(ii) to make any inquiries the team thinks fit of any other person;
(iii) to explore with the aggrieved person whether there is any means of resolving ~~his or her~~ ***that person's*** concerns, including achieving resolution by a form of reconciliation with a person or persons involved in the complaints and discipline process; and

(iv) to make any recommendations for the improvement of the process which the team thinks appropriate.

The convener must also state expressly that the duties and responsibilities of the team do not extend to making any decision on the merits of the complaint or charge in relation to which the complaints of the aggrieved person have been made.

(7) When a team is appointed under Standing Order 1155(6) above, the contact member must invite the aggrieved person to an initial meeting with the team to enable the aggrieved person to explain ~~his or her~~ ***the*** concerns face to face. The team may otherwise carry out its duties and responsibilities as set out in clause (6)(*c*) above as it thinks fit.

(8) When the team has completed its work as far as is possible in the circumstances, the contact member must prepare a brief report of the steps taken and the outcome of the team's work. The report must state whether or not the aggrieved person's concerns have been resolved and any recommendations made by the team and must be sent to the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager***, who must take appropriate steps to give effect to any recommendations.

(9) If the aggrieved person's concerns have not been resolved and ~~he or she~~ ***the person*** is not willing to agree not to pursue them further, the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must refer the matter to a person falling within Standing Order 290(3) for consideration whether the aggrieved person should be declared to be a persistent complainant.

(10) (*a*) The ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** makes a reference under clause (9) above by writing to the referee setting out the reasons for which the reference is being made and supplying ~~him or her~~ ***the referee*** with the relevant documents.

(b) If the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** refers a matter to a referee, ~~he or she~~ ***the Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must inform the aggrieved person that the reference has been made and what would be the effect if the aggrieved person is declared to be a persistent complainant. A copy of the reference must be sent to the aggrieved person, together with a list of the documents supplied. The ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must also state that ~~he or she will not~~ in future ***the Connexional Complaints Support Manager will not*** communicate further with the aggrieved person in relation to the complaints made.

(c) The ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must further inform the aggrieved person that if ~~he or she~~ ***the person*** wishes to make representations to the referee, those representations must be sent in writing to the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** within 14 days from the day on which the aggrieved person is so informed.

(d) The ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must pass any representations received to the referee, who must not make a decision until the time for making representations has expired.

(11) The referee must consider the documentary material supplied ~~to him or her~~ and decide whether there is such a risk that the aggrieved person will make complaints of a repetitive nature in relation either to the respondent or to some or all of the subject matter identified in the reference that fairness requires that all future complaints by the aggrieved person should be considered at a connexional level by a team which is aware of the history of the aggrieved person as respects the complaints and discipline process. The referee must record ~~his or her~~ ***the*** decision ***made*** in writing, giving reasons, and send the record to the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** for safe custody.

(12) The ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must inform the aggrieved person of the decision of the referee. If the decision is that the aggrieved person should be declared a persistent complainant, the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must also inform the Chair of the District and the Superintendent ~~or other person who is the local complaints officer~~ of the Circuit in which the aggrieved person is stationed or a member or with which ~~he or she~~ ***that person*** (if not a member of the Methodist Church) appears to have the closest connection.

(13) Any person who becomes aware that a persistent complainant is making a complaint under this Part must take all necessary steps to ensure that the complaint is dealt with in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order.

(14) No appeal lies against a decision that an aggrieved person is a persistent complainant.

1155A Repetitive Complainants. (1) In this Standing Order:

(i) "a repeated complaint" means a complaint which is the same or substantially similar to another complaint made by the same

complainant against the same person or a different person or persons in respect of which consideration is being given or has been given in accordance with this Part and which is not a complaint of the type referred to in Standing Order 1155;

(ii) "a multiple complainant" means a person who has made two or more repeated complaints;

(iii) "a repetitive complainant" means a multiple complainant in respect of whom a declaration has been made under clause (6) below to the effect set out in that clause;

(iv) "the referee" means the person to whom a matter has been referred under clause (4) below.

(2) This Standing Order shall apply when the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** is aware or is informed that a person is or may be a multiple complainant.

(3) Any person receiving a complaint which ~~he or she~~ ***that person*** believes may be a repeated complaint shall, before taking any steps in respect of such complaint, inform the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** of the details of the complaint and the grounds ~~on which he or she believes it to be~~ ***for the belief that it is*** a repeated complaint.

(4) If the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** considers that the complainant may be a multiple complainant ~~he or she may refer~~ the matter ***may be referred*** to a person falling within Standing Order 290(3) for consideration whether the complainant should be declared to be a repetitive complainant.

(5) (a) The ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** makes a reference under clause (4) above by writing to the referee setting out the reasons for which the reference is being made and supplying ~~him or her~~ ***the referee*** with the relevant documents;

(b) If the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** refers a matter to a referee, ~~he or she~~ ***the Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must inform the complainant that the reference has been made and what would be the effect (as set out in clause (8) below) if the complainant is declared to be a repetitive complainant. A copy of the reference must be sent to the complainant, together with a list of the documents supplied. The ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must also state that until the referee has reached a decision ~~he or she~~ ***the Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** will not communicate further with the complainant in relation to the complaints made;

(c) The ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must further inform the complainant that if ~~he or she~~ ***the complainant*** wishes to make representations to the referee, those representations must be sent in writing to the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** within 14 days from the day on which the complainant is so informed;

(d) The ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must pass any representations received to the referee, who must not make a decision until the time for making representations has expired.

(6) The referee must consider the documentary material supplied ~~to him or her~~ and decide whether to make a declaration that the complainant is a repetitive complainant. Any such declaration must be made on the ground specified in clause (7) below and will have the effect set out in clause (8) below. The referee must record the decision in writing, giving reasons, and send the record to the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** for safe custody.

(7) The ground on which it may be declared that a complainant is a repetitive complainant is that the referee is satisfied that there is such a risk that the complainant will make one or more further repeated complaints that fairness requires that all ~~his or her~~ ***the complainant's*** future complaints must be referred immediately to a team, convened from the connexional Complaints Panel, which is aware of the history of the complainant as respects the complaints and discipline process and which must, before taking any further steps, consider whether in all the circumstances of the case, including the apparent merits of the particular complaint, that complaint should or should not be allowed to proceed and must give a direction accordingly.

(8) The effect of a declaration that the complainant is a repetitive complainant is that:

(i) ~~a team must be convened~~ ***the Connexional Complaints Support Manager must allocate*** ~~from the Complaints Panel to consider~~ the complaint referred to in clause (3) ***to the Tier 2 procedure*** and ***appoint a complaints team*** to direct~~-~~ whether or not the complaint should be allowed to proceed. If the complaint does proceed, the provisions of this Part apply as if the ~~complainant had referred the complaint to the connexional Complaints Panel and the team convened from the Complaints Panel had decided that the complaint was to be fully considered~~ ***decision of the complaints team constituted notification of a complaint to the Connexional Complaints Support Manager under Standing Order 1120A(2)***;

(ii) any future complaint by the complainant must be ~~referred immediately to a team convened from the Complaints Panel to act as set out in paragraph (i) above~~ ***dealt with similarly***.

(9) The ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must inform the complainant of the decision of the referee made under clause (6) above. If the decision is that the complainant should be declared a repetitive complainant, the ~~relevant Connexional Team member~~ ***Connexional Complaints Support Manager*** must also inform the Chair of the District and the Superintendent ~~or other person who is the local complaints officer~~ of the Circuit in which the complainant is stationed or a member or with which ~~he or she~~ ***the complainant*** (if not a member) appears to have the closest connection.

(10) Any person who becomes aware that a repetitive complainant is making a complaint under this Part must take all necessary steps to ensure that the complaint is dealt with in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order.

(11) No appeal lies against a decision under clause (6) above to declare that a complainant is a repetitive complainant or a direction of a complaints team given under clause (8) above.

1156 Notice Provisions. (1) Where under any provision of this Part a person is required to inform another person of a decision, then unless the relevant provision expressly provides otherwise the obligation is performed if written notice is sent by first class post or recorded delivery to the last known ordinary postal address of the second person or to such other address as ~~he or she~~ ***that person*** has requested in writing should be used for the purpose of giving notice.

(2) A person will be taken to have received a notice sent by first class post or recorded delivery on the second day after the day on which the notice was sent unless ~~he or she~~ ***the person*** can show that it was received later.

(3) Clause (1) does not exclude the use of any other means of informing a person of a decision which is not excluded by the provision imposing the obligation.

1157 Breaches of Confidentiality. (1) In this Standing Order, "the conducting officer" means the person who most recently became responsible, with respect to a particular complaint or charge, for exercising the functions of:

(i) a ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer;
(ii) ~~the lead member of~~ a complaints team ***chair***;
(iii) the chair of a discipline committee;

(iv) the chair of an appeal committee;
(v) the person presiding or intended to preside at the hearing of an appeal to the Conference.

(2) If a complainant is in breach of the obligation of confidentiality imposed by Standing Order 1104(7) in relation to a particular complaint or charge, the provisions of clause (3) apply.

(3) Subject to clause (4) below, where this clause applies the conducting officer may:

(i) decline to provide the complainant with copies of further documents or further information in connection with the relevant complaint or charge until the complainant has provided a written acknowledgment that all documents and information already received or hereafter received in connection with that complaint or charge are confidential and a written undertaking to comply with Standing Order 1104(7) at all times;
(ii) decline to provide the complainant with copies of further documents or further information in connection with that complaint or charge at all;
(iii) determine that the complainant shall be excluded from further participation in the complaints and discipline process relating to that complaint or charge either altogether or as set out in the determination.

(4) The powers given by clause (3) above may be exercised more than once in relation to the same process and either by the same conducting officer or by different conducting officers and either on the same occasion or different occasions but so that:

(i) any exercise of the powers must be in writing and must identify the breach of the obligation of confidentiality which is the ground for the exercise of the power;
(ii) the powers may not be exercised more than once as a result of the same breach, but the conducting officer from time to time may take account of any and all previous breaches in deciding whether and if so in what manner to exercise the powers under clause (3) if there is a subsequent breach;
(iii) when a new person becomes the conducting officer, ~~he or she~~ ***that person*** may decide to vary any exercise of the powers by a previous conducting officer, but may not do so in a way adverse to the complainant;
(iv) no power under clause (3) may be exercised while a determination that the complainant is excluded from further participation in the complaints and discipline process altogether remains in force;
(v) the power under clause (3) (i) or (ii) may not be exercised on an occasion on which a determination that the complainant is excluded from further participation in the complaints and discipline process altogether is made;

(vi) the powers under clause (3) (i) and (ii) may not both be exercised on the same occasion and the power under clause (3) (i) may not be exercised while an exercise of the power under clause (3)(ii) above remains in force;
(vii) if the conducting officer is a ~~local complaints~~ ***district resolution*** officer, ***t***he ***conducting officer*** may not exercise the power under clause (3)(iii).

(5) If a respondent is in breach of the obligation of confidentiality imposed by Standing Order 1104(7) in relation to a particular complaint or charge, the provisions of clause (6) apply.

(6) Subject to clause (7) below, where this clause applies the conducting officer may:

(i) decline to provide the respondent with copies of further documents or further information in connection with the relevant complaint or charge until the respondent has provided a written acknowledgment that all documents and information already received or hereafter received in connection with that complaint or charge are confidential and a written undertaking to comply with Standing Order 1104(7) at all times;
(ii) determine that the complaint or charge shall hereafter be dealt with as if it included a complaint by the complainant or charge prepared by the Presenting Officer on a referral in accordance with Standing Order 1130(1) (as the case may require) relating to that breach.

(7) The powers given by clause (6) above may be exercised more than once in relation to the same process and either by the same conducting officer or by different conducting officers and either on the same occasion or different occasions but so that:

(i) any exercise of the powers must be in writing and must identify the breach of the obligation of confidentiality which is the ground for the exercise of the power;
(ii) the powers may not be exercised more than once as a result of the same breach, but the conducting officer from time to time may take account of any and all previous breaches in deciding whether and if so in what manner to exercise the powers under clause (6) if there is a subsequent breach;
(iii) when a new person becomes the conducting officer, ~~he or she~~ ***that person*** may decide to vary any exercise of the powers by a previous conducting officer, but may not do so in a way adverse to the complainant;
(iv) when a conducting officer makes a determination under clause (6)(ii) at any time after a referral under Standing Order 1130(1), ~~he or she~~ ***the conducting officer*** must also direct the relevant Presenting Officer to prepare a charge in relation to the breach of the obligation of confidentiality on the basis of the

material contained or referred to in the determination (copies of which must be supplied to the Presenting Officer for the purpose).

(8) A conducting officer who becomes aware of a breach of the obligation of confidentiality but does not exercise ~~his or her~~ ***the*** powers under clause (3) or, as the case may be, clause (6) in relation to that breach must pass to the person who next becomes the conducting officer all the information which ~~he or she~~ ***the preceding conducting officer*** has in relation to that breach.

(9) The powers given by this Standing Order:

(i) are exercisable without prejudice to the exercise by any person of any right or power, whether under this Part 11, any other Standing Orders or arising in any other way;
(ii) are exercisable by a conducting officer although a previous conducting officer, being aware of a breach of the obligation of confidentiality, has not exercised any of those powers, unless that conducting officer formally considered the exercise of those powers and gave notice in writing to the person in breach of the obligation of ~~his or her~~ ***the*** decision not to do so, stating the reasons for that decision;
(iii) override any other provision of this Part 11, in the case of conflict.

(10) There is no right of appeal against the exercise of the powers given by clause (3) and (6) above, but if the complainant or respondent (as the case may be) satisfies the conducting officer (whether the conducting officer who exercised the power or another conducting officer) that the apparent breach of confidence on the basis of which such a power was exercised did not in fact occur, the relevant exercise is to be treated as if it had not taken place and all necessary steps must be taken to put the complainant or respondent in the position in which ~~he or she~~ ***the respondent*** would have been but for the exercise, so far as reasonably practicable.

(11) For the avoidance of doubt, a person does not commit a breach of the obligation of confidentiality by:

(i) disclosing confidential material to a person acting as a friend or representative for the purposes of the provisions of this Part or to a member of the relevant district Complaints Support Group;
(ii) disclosing confidential material to another person or persons for the purpose of obtaining pastoral support, provided that if the complaint has gone beyond the informal complaint stage the requirements of clause (12) below are satisfied.

(12) The requirements referred to in clause (11)(ii) above are that:

(i) the name of the person or persons to whom disclosure is to be made must be given to the conducting officer in advance of disclosure; and
(ii) any person to whom disclosure is to be made must agree to treat the disclosed material as confidential.

Contact name and details	Hamish Leese, Director of Environmental Engagement leeseh@methodistchurch.org.uk Daniel Bishop, Director of Ministry Development bishopd@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	30/1. The Conference receives the Report. 30/2. The Conference directs the Resource Group to continue its work on this issue and to present a revised draft Conference Statement to the Conference in 2027 for commendation to the Connexion. 30/3. The Conference directs the Connexional Council to appoint members to the Resource Group as necessary.

1. Introduction

1.1 *Hope in God's Future: Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change* is a report which helps individuals and groups to understand the position of the Methodist Church on climate change: in essence, it contains the theological and scientific underpinnings which inform the Church's response to this issue. The 2011 Statement has served its purpose well, but since it was first published in 2011, scientific and theological understandings of climate change have developed considerably, as has the Methodist Church's response. Thus, fourteen years later, it is necessary to re-visit and update the text.

1.2 *Hope in God's Future* was produced initially by an ecumenical working group, comprising representatives from the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church in Britain and the United Reformed Church. The main text of *Hope in God's Future* (not including summaries, activities for reflection in the study guide, or Part 5) was adopted as a Conference Statement.

1.3 In 2023, the Conference (by Resolution 22/24) directed the Methodist Council to appoint a Resource Group to review the Conference Statement and report to the Conference no later than 2025.

Work undertaken by the Resource Group

2. Scope

The Resource Group has scrutinised carefully the Conference Statement. To date, it has focused only on the Conference Statement, in line with the remit given to

it by the 2023 Conference, and Part 5 of *Hope in God's Future* (not part of the Conference Statement) to ensure a coherence and flow within the Statement. The Resource Group notes the need to consider and revise the resources that sit alongside and complement the Conference Statement.

3. Consultation

3.1 The Resource Group noted the ecumenical context in which the document was written; thus, the Joint Public Issues Team has communicated with ecumenical partners that this work is underway. Additionally, it is worth noting that, whilst *Hope in God's Future* is a Conference Statement, it remains, in essence, an ecumenical statement; those looking for distinctively Methodist theological insights are invited to explore a variety of Methodist literature alongside *Hope in God's Future*.

3.2 Additionally, the Resource Group has consulted with the Faith and Order Committee which has scrutinised the revisions made to the Conference Statement by the Resource Group, and was supportive of the work undertaken to date.

4. Key areas of change

The Resource Group has made agreed changes which encompass:

- the current scientific understanding of climate change;
- Methodist actions since 2011, including the commitment made by the 2021 Conference to work towards net zero by 2030;
- reference to emerging theological insights and awareness of the intersections between colonialism and climate change, the greater impact on the global poor and marginalised, and a greater range of theological voices.

Appendix 1 is included to demonstrate the revisions that have taken place, as of March 2025; this is not the revised Conference Statement, which it is planned will be brought in 2027.

5. Suggested next steps

5.1 The Resource Group suggests that more time is taken to develop further changes to the Conference Statement. The 2011 Statement has served its purpose well, and the Resource Group suggests that this should remain a Conference Statement to demonstrate the importance that the Methodist Church affords this issue. Nonetheless, it does need significant revision. As part of this work, it

will be necessary to ensure more wide-ranging changes in relation to emerging theological insights and approaches; greater reference to, and alignment with, the Church's net zero strategy as we approach 2030; and ongoing liaison with, and input as appropriate from, ecumenical partners. In addition, because a two-year period of wide consultation is needed following the presentation of a Conference Statement, it will be important to develop a new bibliography, study and worship resources which sit alongside the Conference Statement itself, to facilitate effective consultation and engagement.

5.2 Thus the Resource Group asks the Conference for permission to continue with its work with a view to presenting a new draft Conference Statement to the Conference in 2027 and to commend it to the Connexion for study, discussion and response.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

30/1. The Conference receives the Report.

30/2. The Conference directs the Resource Group to continue its work on this issue and to present a draft Conference Statement to the Conference in 2027 for commendation to the Connexion.

30/3. The Conference directs the Connexional Council to appoint members to the Resource Group as necessary.

Appendix 1: Version including work done on the *Hope in God's Future* Conference Statement (March 2025).

PART 1: Approaching God in the context of climate change

1.1 The Christian doctrine of creation

The foundation of the Christian doctrine of creation, and therefore the starting point for theological reflection on the issue of climate change, is the great affirmation of Genesis 1:31: 'God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.' By this statement we understand the fundamental biblical affirmation that the universe, our solar system and all life on earth are entirely dependent on God for their origin and continuing existence, and that all these things are declared good by their creator. The opening of John's gospel identifies this creative work with the Word of God, incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, showing that the reconciliation of all things to God in the life, death and resurrection of

Jesus cannot be separated from God's act of creation (Colossians 1:15–20; Ephesians 1:9–10). Creative and redemptive work also belongs to the work of the Spirit, recognised by Christian interpreters as sweeping over the face of the waters in the beginning (Genesis 1:2) and inspiring a groaning creation as it awaits redemption (Romans 8). God, Creator and Redeemer, Father, Son and Spirit[1] is the transcendent and immanent source, sustenance and salvation of all creation.[2]

The church has always celebrated the beauty of creation in praise and thanksgiving as a sign of God's gracious goodness, just as Jesus appreciated the splendour of the lilies of the field in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:28–29). The Psalms also delight in God's created order and call on all parts of creation to rejoice in God's goodness to them (Psalms 97, 98, 100, 148). Christian interpreters have followed Scripture in seeing God's good purposes manifested in creation. The whole of creation shouts out in gladness at God's presence: the sea roars, the floods clap their hands and the hills sing together for joy (Psalm 98:7–9).

1.2 The scientific understanding of climate change

In this theological context, we approach the current scientific understandings of recent and future changes in the earth's climate. In the second half of the twentieth century it was recognised that 'global atmospheric concentrations of CO_2, methane (CH_4) and nitrous oxide (N_20) have increased markedly as a result of human activities since 1750 and now far exceed pre-industrial values determined from ice cores spanning many thousands of years'.[3] The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is tasked with drawing together observations and climate modelling studies, together with assessing potential impacts of future climate change resulting from human activity. Its Sixth Assessment Report published in 2021 concluded that "it is unequivocal that 'human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land'[4] and that 'widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and

1 In this report we avoid using masculine pronouns for God, but for scriptural and ecumenical reasons retain, alongside other names, the traditional Trinitarian formula which includes masculine referents.
2 While the working group compiling this report has reflected on the teachings of other faiths as part of its work, it has not been possible to rehearse these within the scope of this report without the risk of failing to attend to the particularity of different faith traditions.
3 IPCC, 'Summary for Policymakers of the Synthesis Report of the IPCC Fourth Assessment', (2007), 5.
4 IPCC, 'Summary for Policy Makers of the Sixth Assessment Report of the IPCC Working Group 1 - Climate Change 2021- The Physical Science Basis Summary for Policymakers of Working Group 1 - The Physical Basis of Climate change', (2021), 4.

biosphere have occurred.'[5] In predicting future climatic changes, the IPCC set out several scenarios for levels of greenhouse gases through the twenty-first century, from high emissions business as usual, to reducing to net-zero by 2050. These lead to estimated warming by 2100 of 4°C or more, to a more limited 1.5°C. The 2015 Paris Climate Agreement agreed a goal to keep global surface temperature well below 2°C while pursuing efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C.[6]

Even at 1.5°C of global warming 'there will be an increasing occurrence of some extreme events unprecedented in the observational record; these extremes become larger for higher levels of global warming: 'every additional 0.5°C of global warming causes clearly discernible increases in the intensity and frequency of hot extremes, including heatwaves (very likely), and heavy precipitation (high confidence), as well as agricultural and ecological droughts in some regions (high confidence).'[7] Even with the lowest predicted levels of global warming, the 'Arctic is likely to be practically sea ice free in September at least once before 2050 . . . with more frequent occurrences for higher warming levels.'[8] 'The proportion of intense tropical cyclones (categories 4-5) and peak wind speeds of the most intense tropical cyclones are projected to increase at the global scale with increasing global warming (high confidence).'[9] Sea level rises of between 0.5 and 2m are expected by 2100 affecting low lying coast land and river estuaries as well as low lying islands. Already this is impacting upon communities across the Pacific. Further gradual sea level rise of seven metres might be expected over the coming 2000 years.[10]

All of these changes are having significant impacts upon all human populations and the wider ecosystem of the earth. In 2006 the Stern Review noted that 'the poorest developing countries would be hit earliest and hardest by climate change, even though they have contributed little to causing the problem'.[11] In Africa, for example, increased temperature, weather variability and extreme weather events have already impacted agricultural production, with significantly reduced cereal yields in North and East Africa.[12] At warming of around 3°C virtually all of the present maize, millet, and sorghum cropping areas will become unviable for present

5 IPCC, 'Policy Makers' Summary', 15.
6 IPCC, 'Policy Makers' Summary', 15.
7 IPCC, 'Policy Makers' Summary', 15.
8 IPCC, 'Policy Makers' Summary', 16.
9 IPCC, 'Policy Makers' Summary', 16.
10 IPCC, 'Synthesis Report Summary, 13
11 Stern Review Report on The Economics of Climate Change (London: Cabinet Office – H. M. Treasury, 2005), URL: < http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/sternreview_index.htm>, xxvi.
12 African Union Commission and Africa Policy Centre of United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2022) 'State of the Climate in Africa 2022'

crop varieties, and rates of undernourishment in Sub-Saharan African population are projected to increase 25-90% if temperatures rise by 1.5°C by 2050.[13] Progress toward achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals is thus being impeded. Without mitigation, it is estimated that up to 216 million people could be displaced as a result of climate impacts by 2050[14]. For global warming as low as 1.5°C, it is estimated that 30% of species face an increased risk of extinction, while for warming of 3.5°C, 40–70% of species may become extinct.[15]

While there was some legitimate debate during the early stages of the development of scientific models of climate change regarding their accuracy, there is now an overwhelming scientific consensus that the analysis provided in the IPCC reports are robust and reliable.[16] A small minority of scientists and some parts of the media remain sceptical, but the vast majority of experts are persuaded that climate change is taking place and that greenhouse gas emissions from human activity are playing a significant part in causing the changes. Even in the most optimistic scenario identified in the Sixth IPCC report where there is international action to bring rapid and significant cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, the associated rise in global temperatures of 1.5°C by the end of the twenty-first century will make many areas of human population uninhabitable and cause the extinction of many plant and animal species. While scientific views of climate change will continue to be refined, the conclusions of the current IPCC report are sufficiently robust to suggest that it has been clear for some time that it is morally irresponsible to fail to act on this analysis of our current situation.

PART 2: Encountering the Word of God

2.1 Theological approach

The remainder of our report tackles the question of how these theological and scientific accounts bear upon each other as we work out a theological response to climate change. The approach we have adopted is to:

13 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2014) 'Loss and Damage in Africa
14 World Bank (2021) 'Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration' https://hdl.handle.net/10986/36248
15 IPCC, 'Synthesis Report Summary', 13–14.
16 See the DEFRA position on climate change (http://www.defra.gov.uk/ENVIRONMENT/climatechange/index.htm); The United Nations Framework Commission on Climate Change (http://unfccc.int/2860.php); the United Nations Environment Programme Global Environment Outlook Report (http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/); The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change (http://www.occ.gov.uk/activities/stern.htm); and the Royal Society guide to climate change controversies (http://royalsociety.org/page.asp?id=6229).

- recognise the situation we find ourselves in, and the questions our faith provokes in this context;
- bring these questions into dialogue with the Bible and Christian theological traditions; and
- seek to discern the implications of this encounter for changed practice.

Our report also seeks to reflect our practice as Christians, and is structured to reflect many Christian liturgies. We seek to bring the situation of the church, as part of a world facing threats of climate change, into encounter with God's word in the Bible in order to inform and motivate a response by the church and the world.

2.2 Christian hope in the context of climate change

We consider it crucial to begin our theological response to climate change by reflecting upon our situation in relation to the over-arching biblical narrative: God creating the universe, God in Christ bringing reconciliation to a world gone astray (eg Genesis 3, 4, 6), and God's promised redemption of all things in Christ and through the Spirit. This understanding of the place in which the church finds itself crucially shapes theological thinking about climate change. First, and most importantly, followers of Christ must hope in these days and not despair. If we affirm the goodness of God's creation, God's incarnation in Jesus Christ, and God's promise of redemption, we cannot despair of what will be, because we are called to have faith in God and hope in God's promises. God's creatures do not have the power ultimately to frustrate the purposes of the almighty God we worship; God's self-giving in Christ was a once-for-all effective action to defeat the sin of God's creatures and to refuse to allow it the final word. In these days between the resurrection of Christ and Christ's return, we are part of a creation groaning in labour pains for the new creation on its way (Romans 8). These are testing times, but faithfulness means not weakening our grip on the hope that has been set before us (Hebrews 6:18). It would be contradictory to our faith to imagine a future in which God has abandoned the project of creation and redemption, in which climate change destroys all that God has established or in which human irresponsibility overwhelms God's ability to bring redemption to creation. The basis for Christian responses to climate change is hope in the realisation of the reign of God over a renewed creation.

This affirmation of Christian hope in the face of climate change is subject to misunderstanding. From the early Church onwards Christians have been tempted to view redemption as an escape from the created order rather than its renewal. This view of the end-times leads to a lack of concern for what happens on earth, for it considers material creation as unimportant in comparison with the higher

spiritual reality to which some human beings are destined. This has obvious relevance to debates about climate change. Such a theological view would suggest that actions to mitigate global warming are unimportant. However, the church has consistently rejected any view which separates creation from redemption. It is inconsistent with the Christian understanding of the incarnation of God in Christ, as stated in the Apostles' Creed, in which God affirms all God has made, the promise of the resurrection of the body (1 Corinthians 15) and faith that God will make all things new (Revelation 21:1–8).[17] Christian hope means hope for what God is doing in this world, not that spiritual beings will escape the destruction of the material.

A second possible misunderstanding is that we need not act in relation to the threat of climate change because God will sort out the problem for us. In creation God has given creatures freedom, and human beings bear weighty responsibility. Their good and bad actions have real and serious consequences for others. Hope in God's future does not mean a naïve confidence that bad things will not happen. The biblical stories of Adam and Eve in Eden and Cain's murder of his brother (Genesis 3–4) express the reality of human disobedience to God and its consequences, as we have seen rehearsed in a catalogue of human atrocities throughout history and continuing to this day. Hope in God's future is, therefore, not an alternative to wise and moral actions in response to the situations that confront us (Romans 6:1–2).

Christian hope guarantees that such faithful actions will not finally prove to be meaningless and ineffective but will find a place in God's purpose for the redeeming of the world. Hope is thus a reason for bold action in the world in accordance with God's will for creation, not an excuse for inaction.

2.3 The human vocation to love and do justice

The Bible provides no shortage of counsel for how humankind should live in accordance with God's will, bearing significantly on the question of climate change. Jesus summarises God's law in the commandments to love God and love the neighbour (Mark 12:29–31). Our love of God is demonstrated in our response to the seventh day of creation, echoing the Sabbath commitment to worship and interruption of our daily work. This love can be seen as a response to the covenant God made with all living creatures as told in the story of the flood (Genesis 9), and cannot wholly be distinguished from the second call to love of neighbour: Luke's gospel follows this two-fold commandment with the parable of

17 Tom Wright makes this point in his book, *Surprised By Hope* (London: SPCK, 2007).

the Good Samaritan as an example of neighbourly love (Luke 10:25–37). This love is linked in Matthew's shocking identification of Christ with those in need in his image of God's judgement of those who fed the hungry, gave water to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, cared for the sick and visited those in prison – and of those who did not (Matthew 25:31–46). In this account those in need are particularly identified with Christ. Priority claims of those in need are echoed in Jesus' 'Nazareth manifesto' where he declares he has been anointed by the Spirit to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Luke 4:18–19). The beatitudes similarly announce God's blessing on the poor, the mourning, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, peacemakers and the persecuted. Luke follows this with a catalogue of the woes to fall on those who are rich, full, laughing, and well-regarded by others (Matthew 5:3–12; Luke 6:20–26). There is no doubt that Christ's disciples should show particular concern for the poor and vulnerable.

The New Testament call to 'love your neighbour', with particular attention to the poor, is in continuity with the emphasis in Jewish law and prophetic writings, which made particular provision for those in need, as well as establishing economic structures such as the Jubilee to prevent differences between rich and poor becoming too great (Leviticus 25:8–17). The prophets protested against oppression of the poor by the rich: the book of Isaiah opens with a vision of cities desolated because of evildoing. God calls Israel to cease doing evil, learn to do good, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan and plead for the widow (Isaiah 1:16–17). Amos declares that because Israel has trampled on the poor and taken their grain they will lose their houses and vineyards (Amos 5:11) and Deuteronomy associates departing from God's law with agricultural catastrophe (Deuteronomy 28:38–40). The judgement Jeremiah prophesies has an ecological dimension in which the mountains quake, the birds flee and the fruitful land becomes a desert (Jeremiah 4:24–26). God speaks these warnings through the prophets to call God's people back to the acts of love and justice required by their relationship with God: this is a call for changed living to transform Israel's future, rather than the fatalistic living out of a future fixed by God. The words of the prophets remind us that concern for the poor and vulnerable is not only a matter of love and charity, but of what is due to them under God's law: it is a matter of justice.

2.4 Hearing our neighbour as a test of discipleship

In the context of this biblical demand for love and justice, encountering those whose communities are imperilled by climate change is especially striking. In September 2007 the Pacific Conference of Churches issued a statement from their General Assembly concerning climate change. They understand themselves

to be guardians of the Pacific Ocean or Moana, and 'deplore the actions of industrialised countries that pollute and desecrate our Moana'. They declare 'the urgency of the threat of human induced effects of climate change to the lives, livelihoods, societies, cultures and eco- systems of the Pacific Islands' and call on 'our sisters and brothers in Christ throughout the world to act in solidarity with us to reduce the causes of human-induced climate change. We issue this call especially to churches in the highly industrialised nations whose societies are historically responsible for the majority of polluting emissions. We further urge these countries to take responsibility for the ecological damage that they have caused by paying for the costs of adaptation to the anticipated impacts.[18] In a following statement the Pacific Conference of Churches identify that 'the ecological crisis threatening Pacific livelihoods derives from a pathological old narrative of onefication that, first and foremost, extracts all abundance to serve the civilisation of the human. For colonisation to function, a powerful narrative had to be created to justify the elevation of one life or one culture above others',[19] going on to note that 'where we are today in the Pacific is the continuation of the colonial project of onefication. This has resulted...in a destructive and unsustainable lifestyle—the commodification of life, the increased exploitation of extractive activities, the market-pushed consumerism that nourishes a few, increased poverty and violence, and a single-strandic way of understanding reality'. In these statements from the Pacific Conference of Churches, we can hear echoes of the anger of the prophets. The Pacific Islanders face grave threats to their way of life as a result of the burning of fossil fuels by industrialised nations: we cannot fail to recognise this as the trampling of the poor by the rich criticised by Amos. The demands of justice and love for these neighbours are even stronger than the claim of the man cared for by the Good Samaritan: here are nations left wounded by our negligence in the past, whose injuries we continue to worsen through our irresponsibility in the present. Closing our ears to this call would be nothing less than giving up our claim to be Christ's disciples.

Being able to hear the voice of these communities already threatened by climate change is a blessing to us in shaping a theological response, especially as many who are not able to make themselves heard are also threatened. Among these are communities in sub-Saharan Africa for whom changes in climate have already brought increasingly frequent famines and droughts, as well as those in India, the

18 Pacific Conference of Churches, 'Statement From the PCC 9th General Assembly on Climate Change', (2007)

19 Pacific Conference of Churches, Reweaving the Ecological Mat Framework, 2020 https://pacificconferenceofchurches.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Reweaving-the-Ecological-Mat-Framework-final-Web-version.pdf

Americas and Europe who have suffered heat waves and storms that have been intensified by global warming.

There is also a much larger group of human beings threatened by climate change who have no chance of making themselves heard: those not yet born. As well as alerting ourselves to the demand of love and justice to our present neighbours, we need to understand what it means to treat as neighbours those in following generations. The covenant God made after the flood was with all the creatures in every generation descended from those saved in the ark (Genesis 9): we must not make the mistake of thinking that those alive today have any superiority under the covenant over those to follow us. For some, thinking of children and grandchildren helps to give faces to those who will inherit the earth we leave (cf. Malachi 4:6), but this must be only a first step in appreciating the enormity of the moral demand of future generations. The requirement to develop our moral imaginations in this direction is particularly crucial given that the worst effects of failing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions now will be felt by those alive one hundred years and more from now. Christians should resist market-based economic analyses that discount the well-being of future generations in relation to those alive today, and thereby portray as unattractive actions that will benefit future generations but which incur immediate costs.

2.5 Attending to non-human neighbours

Attending to biblical depictions of human obedience to God's will also directs our attention to non-human creation. The creatures of each day of the first Genesis creation narrative are declared good (Genesis 1) and the whole of creation in all its diversity is declared 'very good' at the end of the sixth day (Genesis 1:31). After the great flood, God makes a covenant not only with Noah and his family but with every living creature that came out of the ark (Genesis 9:9–10). The law of Israel protects not only human beings, but the animals they keep, who must not be made to work on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:10) or muzzled while they are treading grain (Deuteronomy 25:4).

The Sabbath year is to rest the land and benefit both livestock and wild animals alongside the Israelites and their hired workers (Leviticus 25:5–7). When Job questions God's treatment of him he is reminded of the majesty of God's careful provision for every creature, and of God's creation even of creatures like Behemoth and Leviathan who are threatening to humanity (Job 38–41). This attention to creation beyond the human is echoed in the New Testament: where Jesus reminds his disciples of God's concern for birds and lilies of the field (Matthew 6:25–34); the letters to the Colossians and Ephesians emphasise the union of all things in Christ (Colossians 1:15–20; Ephesians 1:9–10) and the letter

to the Romans pictures the whole of creation awaiting its share in the freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:18–23). This biblical vision of solidarity among God's creatures accords with modern scientific discoveries relating to both the genetic affinity between human and other animals and the radical interdependence of all life on earth.

This biblical regard for creation beyond the human has often been overlooked in interpretations of God's injunction to 'subdue the earth' and 'have dominion' over other animals (Genesis 1:28). This instruction has been seen as giving human beings license to use other animals as they will, although there is no allowance in these verses for killing animals for food. Many biblical commentators on Genesis are now agreed that identifying human beings as the image of God does not name a particular capacity as God-like, but gives them a particular role in relation to other creatures. Our dominion should therefore be exercised in a way that it images and reflects God's care for creation. This kind of care, made more explicit in the instruction to Adam to till and keep the soil of Eden (Genesis 2:15), has often been described as 'stewardship' of creation, rooted in the image of a person placed in a position of responsibility to manage somebody else's property, finances, or household. This picture of a human role on behalf of the rest of creation can help us recognise our responsibility to care for other life, although it is important to recognise its limitations. God is present and active in sustaining creation from moment to moment. We are not, therefore, stewards acting in place of an absent landlord, but servants called to play our part in response to God's care for creation. This responsibility has obvious relevance to climate change, suggesting that the potential mass extinctions of other species on the planet caused by human activities represent our abdication from a divinely-entrusted duty. Biblical texts testifying to God's concern for creatures beyond the human, together with Israelite law defending them, demand that we should be motivated by love and justice to protect all life threatened by climate change, not just human life. The language of 'stewardship' can foster an unhelpful sense of human separation from the rest of creation, rather than understanding ourselves to be an integral part of the community of creation.

2.6 Bringing God's judgement upon us

Alongside hope in the future that God is bringing, therefore, comes an urgency to cooperate with God's purposes. Where human beings have neglected their responsibilities before God, both Old and New Testament texts proclaim God's judgement: Jeremiah prophesies that the rich will not get to enjoy their wealth and Jesus warns those who fail to care for him, embodied in those in need, are not fit for eternal life (Mathew 25:31-46). The Bible repeatedly tells of a world turned upside-down when God's reign is inaugurated, with those now well-off going hungry and those now first finding themselves last (Matthew 10:30; Mark

10:31). In encountering biblical warnings about the consequences of failing to love and deal justly with those in need, it is hard to escape the conclusion that in continuing to emit carbon at rates that threaten our neighbours, present and future, human and other than human, we are bringing God's judgement upon us. Humans are not equally placed in relation to this judgement. Those living in industrialised countries in the Global North, such as the UK, that have emitted the vast majority of the carbon precipitating climate change, have particular reasons to be attentive to their responsibility. Legacies of slavery and colonialism are part of the reason that those who are most exposed to the effects of climate change are disproportionately those who are least responsible for causing it. Those who stand under judgement should not despair: that God judges rather than abandons us is a sign of God's grace and continuing love for us. But in our encounter with God's word in the context of climate change we should be clear that, while we have grounds for hope in the future God will bring if we act in accordance with God's love for all creation, we also have grounds for fear of God's judgement if we continue to fail to respond to the urgent needs of our neighbours. A belief that God is our judge does not mean that we can assume that bad things that happen, such as climatic change, should be understood as punishments from God. Nonetheless, climatic change reminds us that the effects of our actions often rebound on ourselves, as well as others. When the rich man, who had ignored Lazarus begging at his gate, asked to be allowed out of hell to warn his brothers, Abraham replied they already had Moses and the prophets (Luke 16:27–28). Neither can we say we have not heard.

PART 3: Responding to God's Word

3.1 Encountering God's hope

In encountering God's word in the context of climate change we have received a vision of hope in God's faithfulness to creation, a call to practise love and justice to our neighbours, and a warning of God's judgement of those who fail to do so. In response our first action must be confession: acknowledging what we have done wrong is the first and necessary step towards the change of direction repentance requires. We must confess that we: are heirs to the riches of an industrialised economy that has been instrumental in causing the climatic change already placing our neighbours in peril; are so addicted to the fruits of this economy that we find it hard even to want to live lives that do not threaten the future of life on planet earth; and know much of the good we should do to live within sustainable boundaries, but struggle to summon the moral will to change. Christians recognise that we sin through a combination of ignorance, weakness and deliberate fault. In a time before we knew about the consequences of our consuming of fossil fuels we were sinning in ignorance, but to continue to do

so now is either weakness or deliberate immorality. Our wrongdoing in relation to climate change is best understood as complicity in structural sin, a socially-embedded and continuing pattern where the rich and powerful exploit those who are poor and powerless, just as they did in the days of the prophets. South African theologian, Ernst Conradie, has argued that the need for white South Africans to confess their involvement in the structures of apartheid is a good analogy for the confession necessary in relation to climate change.[20] Just as most white South Africans had no direct responsibility for the establishment or maintenance of apartheid but were guilty in benefiting from it and failing to challenge its injustice, so we did not originate the industrialised economies that resulted in climate change but are now guilty of enjoying the fruits of systems that threaten the future of God's creatures. Drawing on Barth's work, Conradie notes that our confession is only possible because of our knowledge of God's grace: it is our encounter with God's mercy that enables us to recognise our guilt. Conradie recognises, however, that for most of us confession is still some way off, because we are not sure that we can envisage or want to live the renewed and reordered lives that would result from being forgiven. Like the rich man who could not bear Jesus' command to be separated from his possessions and sadly turned away (Mark 10:17–22), we look at the prospect of lives within levels of greenhouse gas emissions that the earth can sustain, and decide we prefer our lives of sin. Here, then, is the first challenge to the church: receive God's grace, come to desire a forgiven life, and thus be enabled to confess current wrongdoing.

3.2 Repentance and forgiveness

Authentic confession leads to repentance: a turning from past sin to the way God would have us live. As individuals, churches and nations, we need to work towards this about turn, which is the only hope for the kind of societal changes that will avoid our greenhouse gas emissions resulting in catastrophic climate change. If we think of this task of repentance only as an individual matter we are likely to fail in our attempts to bring about the change necessary even in our own lives: repentance of structural sin must have a corporate dimension in which, as churches, we take action collectively and turn our practice around at institutional and individual levels. Beyond this, we need to consider what role we can play as churches and citizens in contributing to a similar turning about of our communities, our nations and our world, by entering the political arena to make the case for strong action based on our moral duties to our neighbours. Even to sinners like

20 Ernst Conradie, *The Church and Climate Change* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2008). Conradie's work needs to be read in the context of a growing range of postcolonial theological engagements with climate change. See, for example, A. M. Ranawana, *Liberation for the Earth: Climate, Race and Cross* (London: SCM, 2022).

us, God promises forgiveness (Romans 5:6), and in God's name the church offers absolution from sin. Before us, therefore, is the great and joyous prospect of being welcomed home with open arms by our God (Luke 15:20), released from our burden of guilt and despair into lives as God's forgiven children. It may be that desire for this newness of life, for lives washed clean of the stain of our sin (Psalm 51), is the strongest motivation for the change of life to which God calls us.

3.3 Intercession

One response of those forgiven by God must be intercession for those threatened by climate change. In confidence in God's good purposes for creation we ask God to:

- protect human populations made vulnerable by changes in climate;
- protect those in generations to come who will inherit the problems we have created; and
- protect those plant and animal species whose habitats will be eradicated by global warming.

As our prayers in this area become more detailed, however, they also become more uncomfortable: we pray for: nations to recognise the urgency of action in response to climate change; politicians to be bold in setting out strategy to achieve the goals that need to be reached; and the citizens of nations – and especially nations like ours – to be motivated to support costly action to cut greenhouse gas emissions and seek to ameliorate its effects for those it threatens.

Our prayers of intercession, therefore, lead us to pray for continuing change in our hearts and minds, allowing us to play a part in changing the hearts and minds of others, and becoming part of the answer to our intercessions.

PART 4: The body of Christ

4.1 United as Christ's body

As participants in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, enacted in the sacrament of holy communion, the church is united in its Saviour Jesus Christ and nourished to live in holiness as Christ's body on earth. In responding to Jesus' command to eat bread and drink wine as his body and blood in remembrance of him, the material stuff of creation, in the form of grain and grapes, becomes a sign and sacrament of God's presence with us. Through participation in Christ, we are made capable of lives we could not otherwise live. We are transformed from individual disciples into members of his one body, no longer dependent on

ourselves but bound together in the life of our Lord. Together we are equipped and enabled to act as God's people in the world, witnessing to what God is doing and serving God and neighbour. Just as the humble bread and wine become sacraments of God's presence with us, so our small acts in response to God's call become signs of God's presence in the world.

4.2 Judging what repentance requires

Before we can identify what actions are necessary at ecclesial, individual and national levels, we must determine what reductions in our greenhouse gas emissions are necessary in order to avoid the worst effects of climate change. The IPCC 6th Assessment Report notes that: "Without a strengthening of policies, global warming of 3.2 [2.2 to 3.5]°C is projected by 2100"[21] and that even with the implementation of pathways set out in countries' Nationally Determined Contributions global warming of between 2.1 and 3.4°C is predicted.[22] In common with many other interpreters of the IPCC report, the UK Committee on Climate Change judges that 'in the best case scenario, of warming limited to 1.5 to 2°C', there are likely to be significant national as well as global impacts beyond those already observed'.[23]

The UK has committed to reducing emissions in 2030 by 68% compared to 1990 levels, but it is currently not on track to meet this target. The Climate Change committee estimates that 'only a third of the emissions reduction required to achieve the 2030 target are currently covered by credible plans. Action is needed across all sectors of the economy, with low-carbon technologies becoming the norm'.[24] A 2°C rise in global temperatures will make areas uninhabitable by humans, lead to droughts, food shortages and large numbers of environmental refugees, as well as the probable extinction of a third of species on earth.[25] While it would be good to do more than this we cannot aim to do less, even if other nations are not yet ready to take similar action. In recognition of the damage we have already done, and in response to our encounter with God's word and with the voiced and unvoiced claims of our neighbours, we must reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to levels that the earth can sustain. It is incumbent on those who

21 IPCC, 'Policy Makers' Summary', 11.
22 IPCC, 'Policy Makers' Summary'
23 UK Climate Change Committee, 2024 Progress Report to Parliament. Progress in reducing emissions https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/progress-in-reducing-emissions-2024-report-to-parliament/
24 UK Climate Change Committee, 'Progress Report to Parliament'
25 Baptist Union of Great Britain, The Methodist Church, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and the United Reformed Church, 'A response to the draft climate change bill consultation of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)'. (July 2007), http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/jpit_climatebilldefraresponse_0707.pdf.

have generated the most greenhouse gas emissions and derived the greatest benefit from relatively cheap and accessible fossil fuels to pioneer the path towards alternative energy futures.

4.3 Enabling repentance and redeemed living in the church

In the remainder of this section we set out some practical initiatives at the ecclesial, individual and national level that would be both signs of repentance and first steps toward the forgiven and redeemed lives to which we are called. As noted in 2.6, above, churches in the UK have a particular responsibility to acknowledge their location in a country that has profited from slavery, colonialism, and the industrialisation that has caused the climate crisis. These legacies give our churches particular responsibilities to repent and take practical steps that follow from that repentance. We have argued that confession is the first step towards repentance and changed life and that that is only possible alongside the hope of a good and God-given future in which we can live forgiven lives before God. As churches we must first seek to enable and equip this change of heart, mind and will through prayer, preaching, bible study, discussion and reflection, leading to corporate liturgical acts of confession. On this change of heart all else depends. These actions are the church's preparation for joining in the redemptive mission of God in this area of life. They lead the church to where its members may hear God's universal call to changed lives in response to the threat of climate change.[26] They are a precondition to the church recognising that a commitment to living within sustainable levels of greenhouse gas emissions is central to Christian discipleship in our days. Through our common worship and common life we are transformed, and become a people capable of transforming the life of our local communities and our nation. In this way we participate with joy in nothing less than God's redeeming of the world.

4.4 Reducing the carbon footprint[27] of the church

As churches, we must address the carbon footprint of our own activities. We must first move quickly to discover the current level of our greenhouse

26 The Eco Church initiative in England and Wales (https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk) and Eco Congregation in Scotland (https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org) both take a range of environmental concerns into account.

27 It is acknowledged that whilst the term has its origins in the concept of the ecological footprint, developed in the 1990s, the term 'carbon footprint' was popularised by the petroleum industry campaign of the early 2000s which sought to move the responsibility for combatting climate change to the individual, rather than through systematic and structural change (see: https://www.clf.org/blog/the-truth-about-carbon-footprints/ for a discussion of this). The report authors note the need for both structural and individual action to combat climate change.

gas emissions and identify a strategy to enable an audit of greenhouse gas emissions at all levels of the church, so that local churches, regional structures, and national church institutions become aware of the starting point for action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Alongside this we must establish a way of supporting church structures at all levels in making reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Methodist Conference's aspirational target of becoming a net zero Church by 2030, with the urgent and immediate interim steps this requires. National churches will need to provide support and incentives for local and regional structures to meet this challenge. We do not underestimate the magnitude of this task but consider it the minimum adequate response to the situation we face, as well as the only morally authentic basis for calling on church members and the nation at large to make similar changes. We recognise the structural factors, internal and external to the churches that impede progress towards these goals, and the need for churches to work in partnership with local and national government to overcome the barriers to change. Church policy in many areas will need to be reviewed in the light of this commitment. This has begun through the Action for Hope process, notably through 'Faith Consistent Use of Assets'.

4.5 Helping members of congregations to reduce emissions

Alongside actions to address the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the corporate life of our churches, we need to identify ways of enabling members of congregations to make changes in their carbon footprint, to move towards net zero, together with appropriate interim goals. Again, the first task is to encourage and facilitate an audit of current greenhouse gas emissions, followed by supporting individuals in church or small group contexts to commit to reducing their carbon footprint and identifying strategies to do so. We believe that many will respond to the offer of exchanging a general consciousness of guilt for addressing the topic responsibly and realistically in a group context. The early church began as a movement of small groups of Christians who agreed to be accountable to one another. It may be that, if we can recover this sense of accountability which small groups can foster, many may be enabled to make changes that seemed impossible in isolation. If congregations were able to see the net impact of both corporate and individual commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, this might be a significant encouragement and motivation for further action. The Action for Hope Faith Plan includes an aim to reduce the average carbon footprint of Methodist members and adherents, and guidance and support for low-carbon lifestyles are currently being produced.

4.6 Engaging politically to work for national and international change

Finally, alongside movement towards these changes in the corporate life of the church, we need, as churches, to be prepared to contribute to public political debate about appropriate responses to climate change. Our churches supported the UK government in setting a national target to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions before 2050, and should be impressing upon the government the urgency of this task, and challenging it to develop credible and transformative plans to enable all parts of society to play their role in reaching it. Churches in the devolved nations and at regional and local levels need to work towards action with devolved and local governments. It is crucial that this transition - which will encompass significant changes to our economy, energy, infrastructure, housing, agriculture and transport systems - is managed in a just way. As debates occur about the different routes to net zero, the churches must speak prophetically to challenge politics bound by party interest and the horizon of the election cycle, and economic orthodoxies; they must also act to build grassroots coalitions so that politicians offering wise and responsible long-term action in response to climate change will find electoral support. Cuts must come from real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from the UK: while support to assist poorer nations in sustainable energy development is crucial, it would be irresponsible for the UK to buy out its responsibility to reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions. High on the list of political priorities must be advocacy in support of those poorer nations most exposed to the threats of climate change through no fault of their own, where help is owed not only on grounds of charity but also justice, through restitution and reparation for loss and damage caused by the activities of industrialised nations. At every level, the corporate commitments of our churches to act in relation to their own greenhouse gas emissions will significantly enhance their contribution to this public debate. Effective political initiatives will often come from joint projects with other churches, other faith groups or non-religious groups sharing similar goals, and action to improve understanding between such potential allies and networks is important.

4.7 Alertness to disproportionate impact on the vulnerable and poor

In making these proposals for the kinds of action churches should engage in as signs of repentance and sacramental living, we recognise that, for many members of church communities, action in response to these issues will seem confusing, threatening and unwelcome. Alongside making the case for substantial change, our churches must keep alert to the pastoral implications of the proposed changes for church members. In particular, we must avoid strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions that have a disproportionate impact on the poor and vulnerable.

The importance of Climate Justice within our environmental considerations was highlighted as a priority area within the *Justice Seeking Church* report. Work within the priority area 'Enabling a flourishing environment: right relationship between people, planet and God' seeks to alert the Church to the disproportionate impact of climate change.

4.8 The need for action in relation to other environmental issues

In addressing the issue of climate change, we must also recognise that it is only one of many environmental issues requiring attention by our churches. Related issues include concern for:

- threats to biodiversity;
- deforestation
- water shortages;
- impacts of exporting plastic, waste and other forms of pollution;
- depletion of non-renewable resources

Climate change is but one manifestation of the impact of a global industrialised economy. Action in response to climate change will ameliorate the impact of some of these environmental challenges, but it is also required in these other areas. Appreciation of the complex interrelationships of environmental issues and other justice concerns is also necessary, such as balancing the economic advantages to poor communities of fairly traded goods from overseas against the carbon costs of such imports. Attention to the challenge of climate change should not be at the expense of concern for other justice issues affecting the poor.

PART 5: Sending out

5.1 A call to action

We call on our churches to respond to the challenge of climate change:

- as those affirming the hope of God's continued faithfulness to creation;
- as those who have received the call to show love and justice to neighbours present and future, human and other than human; and
- as those who have heard the warning of God's judgement of those who hear and do not act.

We call on our churches to confess their guilt in relation to the causes of climate change, to show signs of repentance and redeemed living and to be a prophetic

voice in the life of our communities, through promoting a change of heart among congregations; urgently reducing church carbon footprints at every level in line with the Methodist Conference target of net zero by 2030; enabling members of our congregations to make similar changes towards sustainable lifestyles; and engaging politically with local and national governments.

5.2 The way ahead

We are aware that the responses to the challenge of climate change we call for in this report require our churches to make a considerable journey from where we find ourselves at the moment. This is a journey unlike any other that most of us have taken, and which has a destination only future generations will reach and benefit from. The destination is a promise rather than a recognisable place and the route has not been mapped out. The costs of the journey are to be borne now but the benefits will not be felt in our time. While we live in an age of individuality and immediacy, this is a journey not of individuals but of a community: the people of God and the people of the earth, which requires us to build for the future rather than for immediate returns. Such a journey changed the children of Israel from a disorganised group of refugees into a nation. The beginning of their journey involved giving up the comfort and apparent security of one lifestyle and moving to a more dangerous and uncomfortable way of living. But they gained freedom. The most difficult part of such a journey is the exodus, the leaving without looking back. The Israelites' guide was a God who loved justice and hated oppression, who cared for the humble and opposed exploitation: we believe in the same God who loves those who are exploited and oppressed today. We too set out on a journey of freedom in response to the challenge of climate change, blessed by God's peace, sent by our Saviour and going our way in the company of the Holy Spirit (John 20:21–22).

Membership of the Resource Group

Prof David Clough
Prof Judith Lieu
The Revd Dr Mark Rowland
The Revd Dr Simon Topping

Convened and supported by members of the Connexional Team: Dan Bishop, Dr Hamish Leese, Simeon Mitchell.

Contact name and details	The Revd Dr Mark Rowland Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee rowlandm@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	31/1. The Conference receives the Report. 31/2. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to produce a report on 'Living Well with Contradictory Convictions' in the light of the 2006 report Living with Contradictory Convictions and the principles of good relating set out in God in Love Unites Us and to report to the 2027 Conference. 31/3. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to explore the possibility of further work regarding childlessness and being child-free, including by whom such work might be done, and to bring appropriate proposals to the Conference of 2026. 31/4. The Conference directs that, for the purposes of their placement in CPD, the 1993 resolutions be classified as historic texts. *Resolution 31/5 will only be put if resolution 31/4 is not carried.* 31/5. The Conference resolves that the 1993 resolutions no longer be published in CPD.

Summary of content and impact

Subject and aims	To consider potential further work relating to marriage and relationships.
Main points	• Introduction • General reflection • The family • Marriage • Cohabitation • Childlessness and being child-free • Gender Identity • Polygamy and Polyamory • Healthy Sexual Expression • New Statement on Marriage and Relationships • Status of the 1993 resolutions

Background context and relevant documents	God in Love Unites Us (2019) The Response of the Faith and Order Committee to the God in Love Unites Us report (2021) Marriage and Relationships (2022)
Impact	Resolutions ask further work of the Faith and Order Committee and possibly of other people/groups to be identified.

1. Introduction

1.1 Following the major decisions relating to marriage and relationships made in 2021 as a result of *God in Love Unites Us*,[1] the Faith and Order Committee reported to the Conference of 2022 about a number of areas where further theological work would be possible and invited the Conference's view as to what, if anything, ought to be taken forward at that time. The Conference directed work on singleness, which was reported to the Conference of 2024, and in addition directed the committee 'to keep marriage and relationships on its agenda and to bring a report to the 2025 Conference that enables the Conference to decide whether any further work is required' (resolution 27/3). The committee accordingly presents this report to the Conference, which discusses a number of areas in which further work would be possible and invites the Conference to form a view as to what would be appropriate at this time.

1.2 In addition, the committee has reflected further on the reality of being a church 'living with contradictory convictions' (including in the context of the annual affirmations made in the presbyteral sessions of the Synod and in the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order as well as in the Conference) and on the place of the 1993 resolutions. The Conference of 2022 removed the status of the 1992 Statement on *A Christian Understanding of Family Life, the Single Person and Marriage*[2] and the committee has also considered the question of whether a new Statement of the Conference ought to be prepared.

1.3 Underlying much of this reflection is an overall theological question about the use of (personal) experience in the theological process. This is, of course, not a new question but questions that are, of their nature, as personal as those considered

1 https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/resources/seasons-and-themes/themes/god-in-love-unites-us/
2 https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/meth-statement-family-life-single-person-marriage-1992-0714.pdf

here put it in sharp relief. Methodists are well used to seeing experience as a theological resource: something which aids in our interpretation of scripture, a context in which we may discern the work of God and much more. The committee has on its agenda to continue to consider the theological use of experience and notes here the importance of being appropriately reflective as to our personal and corporate experience.

1.4 The committee is also aware that life and experience continues to develop and however much is said or written about any of these topics, there will always be more that could be said. We have also sought to be discerning about what is ours to do and what might be done that would be of help to the Methodist Church and the Methodist people. In considering this report, we ask the Conference to hold those questions in mind. In each case, the committee has offered its recommendation, and the resolutions below reflect those recommendations. Nevertheless, it is for the Conference to determine the way forward by accepting, amending or rejecting the committee's recommendations.

2. General reflection

2.1 The committee's members reflected on their experience since the Conference confirmed the resolutions of *God in Love Unites Us*. Experience was varied but there were similar themes which emerged from different contexts. Some churches have been keen to agree to hold same-sex marriages on their premises and have done so. Some churches have not engaged with the conversation at all. Some have discerned that there should be no change to their practice. There has been some experience of members leaving and of ministerial resignations. Some churches have welcomed new members or attendees attracted by a more 'inclusive' stance and in a number of places across the Connexion new churches and communities have been formed with an explicitly inclusive identity. In some places, the new reality has created challenges in ecumenical relationships while for others (eg LEPs with the URC) the changes enable closer working. We noted a general perception that conversations are 'finished', and little appetite for further discussion, with some fears of potential divisiveness. At the same time, some churches have been energised by the changes in missional ways, with opportunities to begin or deepen outreach to their local LGBTQ+ communities and to engage with local Prides.

2.2 In adopting the resolutions of *God in Love Unites Us*, the Conference explicitly approved two understandings of marriage within the Methodist Church, on an equal basis, with provision to be made for each. The committee noted some perception of minority status for the understanding that marriage is only between one man and one woman and that some feel unable to be open about holding

that perspective. At the same time, discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards LGBTQ+ people in the church are still present and there are still instances of unacceptable conduct that have to be addressed. We are aware that there can be challenges in everyday circuit life and in the stationing process, including when ministers' views and the views in Circuits or churches do not align.

2.3 The committee reflected theologically on these experiences in the light of the Methodist Church's aspiration to 'live with contradictory convictions'. The way in which we 'live with' this is both the opportunity and the challenge: there is a danger we 'live with' contradictory convictions by not talking about them. This can lead to people feeling their perspective is silenced and does not help the Church to deepen its theological conversation. Meanwhile, the Church lives and engages in mission within a broader culture – globally and nationally – that arguably pushes people towards polarized positions and may be taken to suggest that to live with contradictory convictions is not possible or simply an unhappy compromise. There is importance for the Church to own that it does live with contradictory convictions and not to be afraid of it. In some ways this has been the reality – in relation to various issues – at least since the writing of Romans 14.

2.4 The committee's reflection wondered what the consequence might be of drawing more intentionally together a theology of 'good relating' with a theology of 'living with contradictory convictions'. How might this enable the Church to engage in a prophetic and counter-cultural witness in an increasingly polarized world? The committee is also aware that other denominations are continuing their conversations about questions relating to marriage and relationships and there may be a benefit to giving greater clarity to the theological basis for living with contradictory convictions. It may also be helpful to give some attention to the limits of this approach: when must we say 'Here we stand, we can do no other'?

2.5 In 2006, the Conference received the committee's original report on *Living with Contradictory Convictions* and commended it 'for prayerful and constructive discussion and use in relation to all areas of the Church's life in which diversity and disagreement appear.' This report itself emerged from discussions relating to sexuality and to debate as to the use of scripture in that light. Nearly twenty years later, the committee sees value in returning to the thinking in this report considering the Church's experience and the developments in our life since then. We recommend the production of an updated version of this report, with reference to the concept of good relating: in essence, seeking to address the question of what living *well* with contradictory convictions might look like and how we might do that in practice. The committee noted the potential synergy of

this thinking with existing work on *Positive Working Together*[3] and the importance of taking a holistic view: our thinking and practice on marriage and relationships is not done in isolation from the rest of the life of the Church. An updated version of this report could be significant for the Methodist Church's own life, in what we could contribute to the conversations of our ecumenical partners, and for our mission and witness to the nation and the world at large.

3 The Family

3.1 The committee noted the removal of status from the 1992 statement and the ways in which that report may no longer be helpful. We are, and need to be, more attentive to the complexity of 'family' which takes multiple forms and of which there are multiple experiences. Scripturally, there is a diverse portrayal of 'family' and the cultural significance of 'family' is varied in the many cultures represented within the Methodist Church. Family does not necessarily imply children but there is a common association: for example, if someone is asked "Do you have family?" it may be intended or taken to mean "Do you have children?" Family traditionally refers to blood relations as well as to those who join a family by marriage. There are also broader concepts within particular communities as well as the notion of 'chosen family'.

3.2 It may be helpful for the Church to say something further about the nature of family. Rather than speaking of 'the family', as if it were a single experience, we feel it would be better to speak of family in general, recognising a wide range of patterns, experiences and understandings. It would need to be modest, humble and exploratory in tone, rather than dogmatic or prescriptive. The qualities of good relating that were outlined in *God in Love Unites Us* may provide a helpful starting point for further reflection on the nature of family. In addition, we noted the interconnectedness of questions of family with other questions within this report (and indeed beyond it). At the same time, it would be important to be attentive to experiences and contexts where family is not a model of 'good relating' and to experiences of family that are constraining, unsafe or where family bonds are non-existent.

3.3 While the committee could see that there were areas that could be explored further, it did not feel that such work was a priority at this time.

3 https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/introducing-positive-working-together/

4. Marriage

4.1 Similarly to its reflection on family, the committee noted diverse perspectives and experiences of the nature of marriage itself. The Methodist Church's understanding of marriage is best expressed in its authorised liturgy. The authorised services[4] for the marriage of one man and one woman and for any two persons share a considerable core of material. In this way, the different understandings that the Conference has recognised in the Methodist Church are both expressed as well as our core understanding of the nature of marriage as a relationship.

4.2 The committee noted that the decisions of *God in Love Unites Us* are still relatively recent and feels that it is not yet time to do further theological work on the nature of marriage. We believe it would be wise to allow time for the Church to continue to reflect on the changes that have been made, engage in further dialogue with our ecumenical partners, and enable a broader process of reception within the Church community. It may in due course be helpful to re-examine questions as to the nature of marriage and there may be some matters to attend to if significant revision of the marriage liturgies is proposed as part of the work on *The Methodist Worship Book*.

5. Cohabitation

5.1 The committee noted the decision made by the Conference regarding an understanding of cohabitation and the reality that within British society cohabitation has become entirely unremarkable. For many couples, the commitment of cohabitating is the same as those who are married. Cohabitation is not simply a question regarding younger people: many older people may cohabit, particularly in a new relationship following the death of their spouse. There may also be financial or other considerations that influence this choice. The committee noted that the legal rights available to cohabiting couples are significantly less than those for married couples but felt this was not primarily a matter for the committee.

5.2 While accepting that a variety of perspectives remain in the Methodist Church about cohabitation, in the context of the understanding of cohabitation already approved by the Conference, the committee does not recommend undertaking further work at this time.

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4 https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/resources/leading-worship/methodist-liturgies/marriage-and-the-blessing-of-a-marriage/

6. Childlessness and being child-free

6.1 The committee reflected that there is a wide range of situations in which people, for many and varied reasons, do not have children. For some this is a deliberate choice, for others a painful reality, for still others a more complicated set of circumstances. Miscarriage is a reality that many couples will have faced but for many remains unspoken. Others will have experience of the death of infants or children. Still others will have experienced the termination of a pregnancy. While all of this will affect many people within the Methodist Church, the committee observes that it is not significantly discussed. The trend for marriage to move later in life may lead to increased challenges for childbearing for those who want children (although at the same time changing patterns of marriage and cohabitation may mean that marriage comes after children not before them). The committee also reflected that there are important intersections here with other aspects of life. For example, the availability of fertility treatments and support (eg IVF) may be linked to economic status. There are notable currents in public discourse around childbearing – both 'for and against' – that may invite comment from the Church.

6.2 The language that might be used carries assumptions and implications. To speak of being 'childless' may seem to make child-bearing normative. Some who choose not to have children prefer to speak of being 'child-free'. There is not an easily available broad term that can embrace the range of experiences that not having children may entail.

6.3 The committee's reflection led it to conclude that some broad theological reflection on cultural perspectives relating to procreation and childlessness may be of value, with attention to how we might be of pastoral help to people and enable contexts in which experiences and choices need not be left unspoken. At the same time, it recognises that careful consideration of how this work is framed and constructed will be essential. It therefore recommends that further consideration be given to what could be done in this area, in collaboration with the JDS Committee and other appropriate groups.

7. Gender Identity

7.1 Gender identity is named here as it was in the list of questions previously identified in the report to the Conference of 2022. However, the committee noted that gender identity is not the same as sexuality and raises different questions. If further work were to be done, the committee believe it should be separated from the work on marriage and relationships, and may benefit from a pause to reinforce that they are separate issues.

7.2 The committee notes that political and governmental decisions regarding trans people have created a context of significant fear and that there is a toxicity to public discourse and debate in this area. Attentive to the inherent dignity of all people made in the image and likeness of God, mindful of the vulnerability the political context creates, and wishing to stand in solidarity with trans people, the committee believes now is not the time to initiate a theological debate as to the nature of gender identity.

7.3 There may be work which could helpfully be done including ongoing updating of the EDI toolkit and consideration of appropriate pastoral resources for supporting trans and gender non-conforming people in the life of the church.

8. Polygamy and Polyamory

8.1 The committee reflected on questions of polygamy and polyamory. These arise both in the UK and considering a broader range of cultural contexts. Awareness of forms of relationship involving multiple partners is becoming more widespread and there is more (but still not significant levels) of representation in television and film. The committee did not believe it would be of assistance to the Church to engage in further work on this at this time. It may, in due course, be helpful to return to these questions.

9. Healthy Sexual Expression

9.1 The committee reflected on this question and noted that the guidance for the Methodist Church on marriage and relationships[5] includes a number of broad principles including the building of relationships on self-giving love, commitment, fidelity, loyalty, honesty, mutual respect, equality and the desire for the mutual flourishing of the people involved. The guidance (following the earlier 1993 resolutions) rejects all relationships which are promiscuous, exploitative or demeaning. The committee's reflection is that these broad principles provide an appropriate context within which Methodists can consider healthy sexual expression and that it would not be helpful to seek to define that more precisely. The committee therefore does not recommend further work in this area.

10. New Statement on Marriage and Relationships

10.1 In the light of the committee's reflections on family and marriage (above), as well as some of the other considerations in this report, the committee concluded

5 *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*, p. 850.

that it would not be appropriate to propose the drafting of a new Statement on Marriage and Relationships at this stage.

11. Status of the 1993 Resolutions

11.1 The 1993 resolutions currently appear in the guidance section of CPD.[6] The Conference in 2022 resolved not to put a resolution that they be deleted. In considering the matters raised in this report, the committee felt it important to highlight this issue once more. In 2022, the committee felt that the 1993 resolutions were in tension with the more recent decisions of the Conference. Elements of them have been incorporated into the consolidated guidance now found in Book VII, Part 8 of CPD.[7]

11.2 The committee considers that the 1993 resolutions represent an important part of the history of these questions in the life of the Methodist Church. For a generation, they governed our position and provided a framework within which the Church lived together on these matters. Their witness to the dignity and worth of each person and against practices of sexuality which are promiscuous, exploitative or demeaning stands. For these reasons, the committee feels that the 1993 resolutions should be moved to the historic texts section of CPD. Should the Conference not wish to do this, an alternative resolution offers the possibility of deleting the 1993 resolutions from CPD. If the Conference is minded to preserve the status quo, then both resolutions could be rejected.

12. Concluding remarks

12.1 Of necessity, this report has treated a wide range of questions in very brief terms. It should never be forgotten that in each case these are matters not simply of theology or church discipline but of people's lives. The committee keeps before it the scriptural truth that all people are made in God's image and likeness and our Lord's command that we love our neighbour as ourselves. In our work in this report, as elsewhere, we pray that we may be faithful to that witness.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

31/1. The Conference receives the Report.

6 *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*, p. 860.
7 *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*, p. 850.

31/2. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to produce a report on 'Living Well with Contradictory Convictions' in the light of the 2006 report *Living with Contradictory Convictions* and the principles of good relating set out in *God in Love Unites Us* and to report to the 2027 Conference.

31/3. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to explore the possibility of further work regarding childlessness and being child-free, including by whom such work might be done, and to bring appropriate proposals to the Conference of 2026.

31/4. The Conference directs that, for the purposes of their placement in CPD, the 1993 resolutions be classified as historic texts.

Resolution 31/5 will only be put if resolution 31/4 is not carried.

31/5. The Conference resolves that the 1993 resolutions no longer be published in CPD.

Contact name and details	The Revd Dr Mark Rowland Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee rowlandm@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	32/1. The Conference receives the Report. 32/2. The Conference adopts the proposal to revise The Methodist Worship Book as set out in paragraph 3.1. 32/3. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to report to the Conference of 2026 on: a. liturgical style and language, including the theology relating to them, and offering principles to guide liturgical revision; b. proposals regarding areas for which authorised liturgical resources should be provided; and c. a proposed order of work for the revision and publication of authorised liturgies, including the level of revision proposed in each case and consideration of the format(s) in which new resources might be published. 32/4. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to consider the questions of de-authorisation and withdrawal of liturgical resources and to report to the Conference of 2027.

Summary of content and impact

Subject and aims	To set out proposals for revision of *The Methodist Worship Book*
Main points	• Introduction • Authorised liturgy in the Methodist Church • Outline of the proposal • Authorisation and De-authorisation
Background context and relevant documents	*The Methodist Worship Book* (1999) Inclusive Language and Imagery about God (1992)
Impact	This is a major project and will require significant work by the Faith and Order Committee.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Faith and Order Committee was asked by the Secretary of the Conference to consider whether the time had come for a fundamental revision of *The Methodist Worship Book*. As reported to the Conference in 2023, the committee agreed that it was. However, the construction of an appropriate proposal regarding revision of *The Methodist Worship Book* has proved challenging. It is clear from discussions in both the Faith and Order Committee and Liturgy and Worship Sub-Committee as well as conversations held with the Survivors' Group and Solidarity Circles for Disability and for Women, that there is a wide range of hope and expectation relating to this work. At the same time, it is very clear that the needs and patterns of the Methodist Church are changing and are likely to change yet further during the time of any project. We are also conscious of the need to use resources well and ensure that anything that is proposed is manageable, deliverable and appropriate.

1.2 The Church and society in general are in a time of transition as to how published resources are accessed and used. Printed books have dominated the life of protestant churches since the Reformation, which might be argued to have been made possible by the advent of the printing press. Books have had a significant place in public worship and in private devotion alike. They are symbolically as well as practically important: consider in how many churches an open Bible is prominently displayed. For Methodists, the hymn book has long been an important personal devotional resource as well as something to be used during public worship.

1.3. The availability of liturgical and worship resources online has been changing this pattern for a considerable time now. Like the printing press in its day, this is an historic trajectory which is changing, and will continue to change, our worship, our personal devotion and how we function as a church. This consideration of the revision of *The Methodist Worship Book* takes place in the midst of this transitional time. Ongoing reflection will be needed throughout this process not just on how the Church supports public worship but how liturgical resources support private devotion, the development of discipleship and our formation as God's people.

1.4 The general approach connexionally in terms of published resources is now 'digital first'. Feedback in the recent consultation about reprinting the booklet versions of *The Methodist Worship Book* demonstrated a significant preference for electronic provision. The committee does not believe that the production of a new book would be the right way forward in the context of the Methodist Church of today, let alone of the future. Nevertheless, there is a demonstrable

need for revision to our authorised texts, for reasons including taking account of developments in our life since 1999 and attending to questions of inclusive and expansive language.

1.5 This proposal has been developed having regard to those considerations. The Faith and Order Committee offers it to the Conference as a way forward which is both constructive and manageable. The Ministries and Mission Committees were consulted about this proposal and both were in favour of the direction of travel set out.

2. Authorised liturgy in the Methodist Church

2.1 Authorisation of liturgy in Methodist Church is a significant process, beginning with commendation of the new resource by the Conference for a period of experimental use. At the conclusion of this period, the resource, amended if need be, is presented to the Conference for authorisation.[1] By contrast to some ecumenical partners, there is no requirement for authorised liturgy to be used in Methodist worship but it stands as a 'norm for guidance'[2] and represents a statement of Methodist teaching and belief as well as an example of best practice. Alongside authorised liturgy, the Methodist Church makes available a wide range of other liturgical resources which follow more streamlined approval processes.[3] Until now, the Methodist Church's authorised liturgies have generally been published together in a particular book.

3. Outline of the proposal

3.1 The key elements of the proposal are as follows:

1. That the Conference adopt a principle that authorised liturgy is defined simply as that which has been authorised by the Conference, rather than as that which is contained in a particular book
2. That these resources can then be produced in appropriate formats, digital and print, according to need which may vary through the life of the resource. Given that all the resources will be available online, a single book containing everything is not required.

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1 This process is mandated by SO 210(10).
2 Preface to the Methodist Service Book (1975) and quoted in preface to *The Methodist Worship Book* (1999).
3 These are known as *approved* and *recommended*. Approved resources have been considered by the full Faith and Order Committee while recommended resources are scrutinised by a single person on its behalf.

3. That a rolling programme be instituted of adding to and/or renewing existing authorised liturgy. An order of work will need to be determined and agreed.
4. That consideration is given to what actually needs to be resourced with authorised liturgy and what can be appropriately resourced in other ways (including by approved and recommended resources).

3.2 It is intended that this provision should be flexible and allow those preaching and leading worship as well as Methodists more generally (and others who are interested) to access our authorised liturgies. All resources will be made available online in (a) format(s) appropriate to their use, for example powerpoint presentations, word documents and ready-to-print pdfs. It is intended to work in a way which will seek to ensure that the resources can be produced in alternative formats to attend to changing needs or that were not available at the time of initial publication. At the same time, many contexts will still appreciate the convenience and simplicity of easily accessible printed versions that can be purchased. While not proposing the production of a single book containing everything, it is intended that booklet versions be produced containing liturgies regularly used in Local Churches or where it may be convenient for ministers and others engaged in pastoral ministry to be able to carry a copy with them. Similarly, this flexibility allows for different approaches for personal devotional use which could include anything from resources easily accessible via smartphones to pocket-sized booklets.

3.3 As part of this process it will be necessary to give further and more detailed attention to specific areas of the work. The first of these is about liturgical style and language. There are a number of areas where current liturgical style and language (and the theology embedded within them) needs attention. These include, for example, but are not limited to:

- Gendered language, for people and God
- Language relating to ability and disability
- Power language
- Language of light and darkness
- Themes relating to safeguarding and the experience of survivors of abuse

At the same time, it will be important to ensure the possibility of a wide range of imagery and poetic usage so that worship is richly resourced.

3.4 As the work progresses, it is likely that further areas requiring consideration will be identified. As a first stage in the revision process, the Faith and Order Committee would propose to bring a report to the Conference of 2026 regarding

liturgical style and language seeking to set out some principles for adoption in these areas, in order to enable a consistent approach to subsequent liturgical writing and revision. The committee is also aware that there is a wider conversation – and some concerns – about liturgical language used in our worship more generally, and it is hoped that this report might be a useful resource to encourage conversations (for example, in Local Preachers' meetings) about practice in this area.

3.5 In planning the order of work there will be several stages to consider:

- What needs to be resourced with *authorised* liturgy? There may be currently authorised liturgy that no longer needs to be resourced in that way. Equally, there may be new areas where it would be appropriate that an authorised liturgy be created.
- For what areas would it be appropriate to produce completely new liturgy? For which areas might a more modest updating of the existing provision be adequate? Are there areas where the existing provision continues to be appropriate? In considering these questions, attention will also need to be given to the resource available: it will probably not be possible to produce completely new liturgy for too many different areas.

3.6 Alongside the work on style and language, the committee would also intend to bring to the Conference of 2026 an outline of the plan of work and level of revision proposed for the different areas to be resourced by authorised liturgy.

3.7 Assuming the Conference of 2026 were to adopt the report and plan of work presented to it, work could begin on new liturgies in the connexional year 2026/7 with the expectation that the first new liturgies to be commended for experimental use would be brought to the Conference of 2028, with subsequent authorisation in 2030, in order to allow for a sufficient period in which they could be used and feedback could be received. Subsequent stages of revision would follow in the ensuing years. The report to the 2026 Conference with the plan of work will set this out in more detail.

4. Authorisation and de-authorisation

4.1 It has not up to now been the Conference's custom to remove status from superseded liturgies. In the past, when authorised liturgies were contained in books, the publication of a new one tended to mean that the older (gradually!) fell out of use. If liturgical texts are being made available in a variety of forms, including digital, then the question arises as to how to deal with older versions.

4.2 In the light of the proposed rolling programme of updating our authorised liturgy, the question arises as to whether the Conference should start de-authorising liturgies? If so, an appropriate process for that would need to be created. Alternatively, it may be that a simpler process by which older resources are 'withdrawn' and no longer published or made available on the website would be sufficient. As well as the question of the most suitable resources being available for public worship, there is also the question of appropriate access to historic resources for archival and academic purposes.

4.3 Coupled to this there are also questions about when an official text becomes inappropriate for some reason: for example, perhaps there are safeguarding concerns relating to its author or perhaps it expresses sentiments that we would now challenge. How should the Methodist Church handle authorised texts about which such questions arise?

4.4. In the same way that there is no requirement on those leading worship in Methodist churches to use authorised resources, de-authorisation or withdrawal would not imply that Methodists would be forbidden to use those resources. A decision to forbid the use of a particular resource would be a very striking one in the context of the Methodist tradition of worship which places considerable emphasis on the responsibility of the person appointed to preach or lead worship to ensure that what takes place is not contrary to our doctrines and is fitting for the public worship of God. One way of thinking of it may be that to de-authorise a resource would be to say it no longer represented one or more of a 'norm for guidance', the teaching of the Methodist Church or best practice in our worship.

4.5 These questions are complex and require further consideration. The committee proposes that a policy setting out how they might be dealt with should be brought to the Conference of 2027. This would still be well in advance of the time the first new liturgies would be authorised.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The Conference resolved in 1992 to begin the work that led to the publication of *The Methodist Worship Book* in 1999. While, at one level, the proposal here is more modest than what came before it, to embark upon a revision of our authorised liturgy is a significant task. It is for the Conference to determine if the time for that is indeed now. It is the committee's hope that the way forward proposed here provides a suitable way in which we may serve the present (and future) age and fulfil our calling.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

32/1. The Conference receives the Report.

32/2. The Conference adopts the proposal to revise *The Methodist Worship Book* as set out in paragraph 3.1.

32/3. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to report to the Conference of 2026 on:

- **a. liturgical style and language, including the theology relating to them, and offering principles to guide liturgical revision;**
- **b. proposals regarding areas for which authorised liturgical resources should be provided; and**
- **c. a proposed order of work for the revision and publication of authorised liturgies, including the level of revision proposed in each case and consideration of the format(s) in which new resources might be published.**

32/4. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to consider the questions of de-authorisation and withdrawal of liturgical resources and to report to the Conference of 2027.

Contact name and details	The Revd Dr Mark Rowland Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee rowlandm@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	33/1. The Conference receives the Report.

Summary of content and impact

Subject and aims	To consider widening the practice of Extended Communion in the Methodist Church
Main points	• Introduction • Extended Communion in the Methodist Church • Relevant Ecumenical Practices • Conclusion
Background context and relevant documents	Extending Communion (1984) Extended Communion, *The Methodist Worship Book* (1999), p. 229 Authorisations to Preside (2023)

1. Introduction

1.1 The Conference of 2023 directed the Faith and Order Committee[1] to explore whether the practice of Extended Communion in the Methodist Church might be widened. At present, the Methodist Church only provides formally for Extended Communion – ie an act of worship during which the participants receive elements previously set apart at a service of Holy Communion – for persons in homes (including nursing and retirement homes) or in a hospital or hospice.[2] What is being explored is whether the possibility of receiving elements previously set apart at a service of Holy Communion might be applied to the context of a congregation gathered for public worship (when an actual celebration of Holy Communion is not possible due to the unavailability of an ordained presbyter or other person authorised to celebrate Holy Communion). The question has sometimes arisen in the Methodist Church in relation to special occasions, such as when all the churches in an area want to have their own communion service at the same time on Easter Day, for example.

1 Resolution 29/6
2 SO 609(1)

2. Extended Communion in the Methodist Church

2.1 Provision for Extended Communion in the Methodist Church was originally made by the Conference in 1984[3] and a service of Extended Communion is included in *The Methodist Worship Book*. This report noted that Extended Communion is an ancient custom and cited the First Apology of Justin Martyr (c. AD 150) which described deacons carrying the elements "to those who are absent." It continued by highlighting the support for the practice among Lutherans and Anglicans, and by Calvin as well as some earlier Methodist precedent. The report recognised a justification for the practice from widespread tradition and from theological justification: pointing to an emphasis on one church sharing at one table.

2.2 The report also drew attention to the need for Methodists to be aware that the Eucharist is a whole and is not simply the act of receiving Holy Communion. The full celebration of the Eucharist includes the Ministry of the Word and the Ministry of the Sacrament. The Ministry of the Sacrament customarily includes the setting apart of the elements in the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving which recounts God's great acts throughout salvation history as well as in the incarnation, life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Upper Room becomes a lens for the celebration of all that God has done. As the 1984 report noted 'it is vital for our people to understand that **communion** is but a part of the Eucharist[ic] action and that it needs to be place[d] in the context of the work of God in Christ which the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist "brings to every thankful mind.""[4] In the context of considering the wider use of Extended Communion during public worship, the loss of this broader context of the Eucharist would be substantial.

2.3 Intrinsic to any question relating to the Eucharist is how we understand the Eucharist itself. The committee offered some reflection relating to this in the report *Holy Communion and Online Worship*.[5] The committee noted:

> There are also issues around the nature of Holy Communion itself and the fact that different Methodists understand this differently. It is possible to group such understandings very roughly under three approaches, whilst recognising that the Eucharist is a mystery and people's faith experience cannot always be categorised. Some Christians speak of the 'real presence' and see Christ's presence as being in some way embodied in the bread and

3 Methodist Conference, 1984, *Extending Communion*; available from https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/fo-statement-extending-communion-1984_fjRwaWu.pdf
4 *Extending Communion*, p. 191
5 Methodist Conference, 2021, *Holy Communion and Online Worship*, available from https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf-2021-39-holy-communion-and-online-worship_JOTB7Rq.pdf

wine. For others, the presence of Christ is understood more broadly and the emphasis falls on Christ's presence among the congregation and in the reception of the elements: Christ is understood faithfully to feed the believer who receives the bread and wine. The third heading is that of 'memorialism', in which the emphasis falls on the congregation's act of remembering Christ's sacrifice.

There is no single Methodist position about how Christ is present in Holy Communion; indeed the liturgies authorised by the Conference are carefully written so that the various understandings of Christ's presence may be heard, thus enabling those who understand Holy Communion differently still to worship together. Ultimately, the Lord's Supper is a mystery which is greater than our attempts to explain it.[6]

2.4 While for those who emphasise Christ's real presence embodied in the bread and wine set apart, a wider practice of Extended Communion may be theologically justified, for others their separation from their context within the congregation's worship may be theologically problematic. In a memorialist understanding, it would be hard to justify the practice at all, but for its antiquity. In the committee's view, the mystery of the Lord's Supper is best served by maintaining practices which allow for this breadth of understanding.

3. Relevant ecumenical practices

3.1 Among some other British churches, authorised provision exists for the distribution of communion elements set apart during an earlier celebration of Holy Communion, in the context of the congregation's public worship. This occurs in (and only in) the Anglican churches (Church of England, Church in Wales, Scottish Episcopal Church) and in the Roman Catholic Church. The liturgical forms used are available as follows:

- Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales (2013) (and the same essential form as would be used, where permitted, in the Catholic Church in Scotland): https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/CWC/CWAC.pdf
- Church of England (2001): https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/public-worship-with-communion-by-extension.pdf
- Church in Wales (2006): https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/publications/liturgy/Holy_Communion_Outside_The_Eucharist/

6 *Holy Communion and Online Worship*, paras. 2.11 and 2.12

- Scottish Episcopal Church (1997): https://www.scotland.anglican.org/who-we-are/publications/liturgies/communion-from-the-reserved-sacrament-1997/

3.2 The key thing these churches have in common is that for them, Holy Communion can ***only*** be celebrated by an ordained presbyter: there is categorically no provision for lay or diaconal presidency at communion. The use of communion by extension in public worship has, therefore, in those churches, been provided for as one response to the situation of lack of availability of presbyteral ministry. It should be noted that these are also churches for whom it is customary, on the whole, for their congregations to celebrate Holy Communion *every Sunday* – if, indeed, not more frequently still.

3.3 While it may be thought that the practice of Extended Communion in public worship is commonplace among our ecumenical partners, it should be noted that in the words of Phillip Tovey (whose 2006 PhD thesis examined this):

> These services were received with great criticism in the liturgical literature and in the case of the Church of England passed through General Synod with the closest of margins. They continue to be of controversy, particularly in the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. [. . .] A key point of debate has been the validity of these services.[7]

In the Church of England, Church in Wales, and the Catholic Church, heavy emphasis is given in the rubrics to the services that they can only be used in exceptional situations and with the express permission of the bishop. The notes to the Church of England provision state, "Explicit permission must be obtained from the bishop for the use of this rite. This permission should relate to specific pastoral circumstances, thus emphasizing the exceptional nature of this ministry." In the Catholic Church in England and Wales, although liturgical provision exists, the practice is prohibited outright in some dioceses by their diocesan bishops. By contrast, the Scottish Episcopal Church is more freely permissive of the practice – but stands apart in this respect from its British Anglican and Catholic siblings.

3.4 One thing which is given great emphasis in all of these churches' liturgies for communion by extension is the link with the particular celebration of Holy Communion from which the elements have been taken. This underlines what it *is not* by drawing attention to the fact that the 'main' celebration, from which those present are absent, is the celebration of Holy Communion itself. To quote from

7 Phillip Tovey, *The Theory and Practice of Extended Communion* (Routledge, 2016), p. 173

the introduction to the Scottish Episcopal liturgy, "Whatever the circumstances, whenever this service is used, the relationship of the Administration of Holy Communion to the Eucharistic celebration of which it is an extension needs to be explained and made clear, so that it is not experienced as either a pale imitation of the Eucharist or as a kind of 'lay-led alternative' to it."

3.5 Intrinsic, then, to these liturgical forms is the sense that, notwithstanding that communion by extension is being permitted, absolutely preferable to this would be an actual celebration of Holy Communion. It is only due to the impossibility of this (due to the constraints of their tradition with regard to presidency) that communion by extension is being employed. Other traditions, such as the United Reformed Church (URC), make no authorised provision for communion by extension in public worship. The URC provides, as the Methodist Church does, for individuals other than presbyters to be authorised to preside at Holy Communion.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The practice of Extended Communion separates out one aspect of the Eucharist (the reception of Holy Communion) from the wider context of the Eucharistic liturgy. In its use in homes and hospitals, there is nevertheless a strong connection to this wider context through the bond of the pastoral ministry that is being offered. The witness it provides to the unity of the church may be seen to outweigh the loss of an immediately broader liturgical context. However, in the context of public worship, where congregations will generally be used to their worship being complete of itself, the broader context is in danger of being lost.

4.2 Where other (non-Methodist) churches practice communion by extension for public worship, it is generally only in exceptional cases, and is only used as a remedy for what we would call Eucharistic deprivation. Its purpose is not to enable an 'extra' holy communion for some special occasion (e.g. when all the churches want to have their own communion service at the same time on Easter Day), but rather to provide for a congregation – whose normal tradition would be to have communion every Sunday – to receive communion with that regularity when that would otherwise not be possible. It is used in that way to address the same problem that in the Methodist Church we address by the granting of authorisations for persons other than presbyters to preside.

4.3 The Committee concludes that the practice of communion by extension for public worship, by those other churches that provide for that, does not represent a precedent that is applicable to the Methodist Church's situation: for Eucharistic deprivation, we have provision for the authorisation by the Conference of persons other than presbyters to preside; for one-off 'special' communion services, that is not

what other churches use communion-by-extension for. The precedents of all those churches all point very strongly to the priority to be given to sharing in an actual celebration of Holy Communion over communion by extension, wherever possible.

4.4 The Committee therefore recommends that the practice of Extended Communion in the Methodist Church should not be widened beyond what is currently permitted by Standing Orders. This is in keeping with the original 1984 report which noted "it is doubtful if extended communion is a satisfactory way of dealing with deprivation, or one which would commend itself to the majority of Methodists."[8]

*****RESOLUTION**

33/1. The Conference receives the Report.

Appendix: further reading

Public Worship and Communion by Extension: Some Pastoral and Theological Issues: No. 53 (Joint Liturgical Studies) by Alex Hughes (Grove Books, 2002)

Public Worship with Communion by Extension: A Revised and Updated Commentary by Phillip Tovey (Grove Books, 2021)

The Theory and Practice of Extended Communion by Philip Tovey (Routledge, 2016) - nb this is a slightly cut-down version of what was originally his PhD thesis "The Theory and Practice of Extended Communion with particular reference to parishes within the Anglican Diocese of Oxford" (2006), available at https://radar.brookes.ac.uk/radar/file/2099a75e-9861-408b-9329-e2bac8986503/1/tovey2006theory.pdf

The Roman Catholic *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (Vatican, 1988), available at https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/CWC/Directory-SCAP.pdf - this is the principal Vatican document, from the Congregation for Divine Worship, that explains the basis and gives the underlying authority for the practice of communion by extension in public worship in the Catholic Church.

8 *Extending Communion*, p. 191

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1. Introduction

1.1. The report of the Stationing Committee to the 2024 Conference described the breadth of work and its challenges and the responsibilities that confront our connexional Church under the auspices of the Stationing Committee. Since then, the Committee has continued to work apace, seeking to 'smarten' processes without introducing significant new work.

1.2. In April, the committee received the recommendations of the Stationing Review Group (SRG) to this Conference, with plans to recommend significant changes to matching processes, to take effect from September 2027. At least 15 months is required to work through our current stationing process, culminating when the stations are called at the Conference. The recommendations put before Conference this year will presumably result in changes to Standing Orders in the future.

1.3. The Stationing Committee has sought to honour proposals shared thus far with us by the SRG and has introduced changes and 'tidied' aspects of stationing processes, alongside those required by the Conference.

1.4. The committee's work is governed by Standing Orders, specifically SO 260 and SO 780, together with a Code of Practice for invitations and matching, which is reviewed and revised as necessary, annually. The Code of Practice provides structure, detail and direction to circuits and ministers entering into stationing, guiding them through the process to be followed. Revisions to the Code this year were undertaken by Sue Marshall Jennings, Lay Stationing Representative (LSR) for Scotland. She has also revised the resource made available to support briefing sessions in the districts and we are grateful for her work. If the recommendations of the SRG are accepted, the Code of Practice (last issued in April 2025), will require further significant change.

1.5. As planned last year, and noted below, the number of Stationing Matching Groups has reduced from three to two a year with one additional Stationing Action Group necessary to manage the matching process that remains active until the Conference, each year. The Stationing Committee recognises that the timing of both SMG and SAG meetings has impacted on some presbyters and circuits and is grateful for the additional support provided to them by the Chairs of District and district Lay Stationing Representatives.

1.6. The Stationing Committee expresses thanks to the Revd Jenny Impey, who has continued to guide the work of the Stationing Matching Group and to the Revd Dr David Hinchliffe, who has chaired the work of the Stationing Action Group. Deacon Karen McBride, Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order with the Revd Dr David Hinchliffe and Steve Cooper, a Lay Stationing Representative, have worked as a team, sharing responsibility for guiding the work of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee. Each in their own roles support specific aspects of the stationing of ministers.

1.7. The Revd Dr Claire Potter, Ministerial Coordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries has continued to work carefully and prayerfully with MCPOC, the academic staff at Queens Foundation, members of the Initial Stationing Sub Committees, and all candidates, students and probationer ministers. The Revd Dr Jongikaya Zihle has chaired the Stationing Advisory Committee, and the work of this committee is currently under review. At the end of this connexional year, the Revds David Hinchliffe, Claire Potter and Jongikaya Zihle will return to circuit appointments. The Stationing Committee is grateful to each for their careful work.

1.8. By the end of this year, the Stationing Committee hopes to have a complete list of all policies and protocols to underpin the work of the various groups and committees involved in aspects of stationing, ensuring that together ministry is supported in its widest sense, and that the limited resource of people in ministry is deployed, to where ministry is needed most.

1.9. To further support the work of the Stationing Committee, a Deputy Chair has been recruited. Christopher Beckett, Lay Stationing Representative for the Bristol District, has been nominated for this voluntary role. If appointed by the Conference, he will specifically focus on all aspects of work involving those preparing to enter their first circuit appointment, currently student ministers becoming Probationers, and ministers entering first appointments as ministers of other Churches or Conferences (MOCCs). The 'deputy' role requires a change to SO 260 which is noted below. The Conference is asked to accept this change. Mr Beckett already serves as a member of the Stationing Committee but was nominated following an open recruitment process.

1.10 Noting the reduction in the number of districts across the Connexion,the importance of equipping both Chair of District and Lay Stationing Representative (LSR) effectively has resulted in some internal (district) restructuring. Each district is required to have one LSR under our Standing Orders, who can deputise for the Chair of District in all stationing matters including Stationing Matching. Just as the continuing work of stationing in districts might be supported by

presbyters in addition to the District Chair, the district LSR in the newer and larger districts is increasingly supported by a small LSR team, covering distinct 'geographical areas' within the wider (and larger) district. This intentionally reduces the burden on one Chair and one LSR for a bigger area, however, ultimate responsibility for representing ministers and circuits during Stationing Matching, remains with the District Chair or LSR.

2. SO 260 Stationing Committee – amendments to allow for a deputy chair

2.1. The Stationing Committee has agreed that there should be a deputy chair of the committee, who shall be a lay person appointed by the Conference in the same way as the chair of the committee.

2.2. The proposed amendments to Standing Order 260 to provide for a lay deputy chair and to correct a cross-referencing error are set out below.

260 Stationing Committee. (1) There shall be a connexional Stationing Committee appointed annually by the Conference, which shall consist of:

(i) a lay chair ***and a lay deputy chair***, being the person***s*** for the time being appointed to ~~that~~ ***those*** office***s*** in accordance with clause***s*** ~~(1A)~~***(2) and 2A, respectively,*** below;

(ii) the Secretary of the Conference who shall act as convener, and the assistant secretary of the Conference;

(iii) seven district Chairs***,*** one of whom shall be the district Chair appointed under Standing Order 286 to be a member of the Forces Board, and seven district Lay Stationing Representatives appointed with a view to the representation of suitable regional groupings of Districts;

(iv) no more than two Team members with responsibility for presbyteral and diaconal selection and training and for the stationing of probationers;

(v) the chair of the Stationing Advisory Committee;

(vi) the Warden or deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;

(vii) the chair and a lay member of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-committee;

(viii) the chair of the group responsible on behalf of the Stationing Committee for overseeing the matching of particular presbyters to appointments;

(ix) the convener of the Stationing Action Group appointed in accordance with clause ~~(8)~~***(7)*** below.

(2) A lay person shall be appointed by the Conference as chair of the committee. The chair shall be appointed for a period not exceeding six years in the first instance and may be appointed for further periods of one or more years

thereafter. Any nomination for appointment beyond six years shall require a resolution of the Ministries Committee carried by a majority of 75% of those present and voting and reported, with a reasoned statement, to the Conference. No person shall hold office as chair for more than nine years consecutively.

(2A) A lay person shall be appointed by the Conference as deputy chair of the committee on such terms as the committee shall agree, but within the principles relating to terms of service set out in (2) above.

(3) The chair of the committee and the Secretary and assistant secretary of the Conference shall attend the committee only in their official character as specially charged with the general interests of the whole Church and shall not be eligible for appointment in any other capacity.

. . .

(7) The committee shall appoint an Action Group to deal with stationing difficulties and emergencies as they arise.

(8) The committee shall have power to appoint other sub-committees to carry out aspects of its work, but all actions of such sub-committees shall be subject to the approval of the committee.

3. Report of the Initial Stationing Sub-Committee (ISSC)

3.1. **Scrutiny**

- Fifteen profiles for **presbyteral probationer appointments** were submitted by Circuits;
- Four were not approved by the scrutiny group;
- Eleven were approved. All of these were for full time appointments;
- In December a further three probationer appointments were submitted and approved so a total of 14 were available for the Initial Stationing Subcommittee 1 (ISSC1).
- Five profiles for Ministers of other Churches and Conferences (**MOCC appointments)** were submitted by Circuits, two of which were for a probationer or a MOCC;
- All five were approved. One of these was for a part time circuit appointment and a Fellowship Chaplaincy;
- In January, two further appointments for MOCCs were submitted and approved;

- In February seven further appointments for MOCCs were submitted and approved, so a total of 14 appointments were available for the Initial Stationing Subcommittee 2. Three of these new appointments were reshaped from probationer appointments following ISSC1.
- For all of the approved appointments, a satisfactory district manse report was received and checked, a Chair's reference for the Minister in Oversight and the Supervisor was received and checked, and, where necessary, an ecumenical agreement and reasoned statements were received and checked.

3.2. **Stationing – Presbyteral Probationers**

- Eleven presbyteral probationers were available for initial stationing;
- All 11 were matched at ISSC1 in January;
- All of the matches were confirmed;
- Three profiles were unmatched.

3.3. **Stationing – Diaconal Probationers**

- Four diaconal probationers were in stationing;
- There were several diaconal appointment profiles which could have been suitable for a probationer. All four were matched at Diaconal Stationing in January which were confirmed;
- Confirmation that the Chair's reference for Minister in Oversight and Supervisor and the district manse report had been received by the MDO was provided to the Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee.

3.4 **Stationing – Ministers of other Churches and Conferences**

- Eighteen MOCCs were recommended (or conditionally recommended) through the transfer panels in November, one of whom was transferring as a supernumerary and was therefore not available to the stations.
- One MOCC was nominated by their home church to become a fellowship group chaplain. They attended a reduced discernment panel with members of the transfer panel in November online and were recommended.
- Eighteen MOCC ministers were therefore available to be stationed. Two are transferring into Full Connexion, one is to be an ordained probationer for two years before being received into full connexion and fifteen are to become Recognised and Regarded.
- The Stationing Committee in January confirmed the cap on MOCC appointments at 12, with an additional one permitted for a Fellowship Group chaplain.

- At ISSC2 on 6 February, thirteen ministers were matched with appointments. One of these was to a part time appointment in circuit and part time to a profile for a fellowship group chaplain/coordinator. All matches were confirmed.
- The remaining appointment submitted for a MOCC was matched with a probationer, who it is expected will be ordained at the 2025 Conference.
- So all appointments were matched.
- Five MOCC minsters recommended to be Recognised and Regarded were not matched to appointments. They will have the right to re-enter stationing in 2026.
- Four MOCC ministers currently serving the Methodist Church in Britain attended changing status panels in October (3 from R&R to Full Connexion, one to extend R&R). Three were recommended. The fourth was advised to reapply in 2025-2026.

3.5 **Induction**

- An induction day in person was held for two members of each Circuit Leadership Team for Circuits who will be receiving probationers, in Nottingham on 27 February. Thirteen of the fifteen Circuits were represented. It was a helpful day of sharing information and good practice. The leadership team comprised: two recent ordinands, a superintendent and a circuit steward who have wide experience of welcoming probationers, the Queen's Foundation Director for Continuing Ministerial Development and the Ministerial Coordinator in the Connexional Team.
- The Ministerial Coordinator visited one of the Circuits who had not been able to attend and went through the induction with the Circuit Leadership Team. They also went through the induction in an online meeting with the acting superintendent of the other Circuit who had not been able to attend.
- Further meetings will be held later in the summer at the Queen's Foundation between ministers in oversight, superintendents and probationers.
- An induction day on Zoom was held on 3 April for two members of each Circuit Leadership Team for Circuits who will be receiving MOCCs. Each Circuit was represented.
- The MOCCs themselves will engage with induction events at various points throughout their first year. The MOCC Handbook has been updated and has been provided for all of them. It can also be found on the Methodist Church website here: https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/ministries/ministers-of-other-churches/induction-handbook/.

4. Report of Diaconal Stationing

4.1. The diaconal stationing process began with eight ordained deacons, four diaconal probationers and 20 circuit profiles. Following the start of the matching process one deacon was matched to a connexional post, and one circuit profile identified a level of instability that made it difficult to match anyone to it.

4.2. The Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee (DSSC), working with the Warden, took extreme care to seek to understand and honour both the hopes and needs of all those in matching process, whether it be a deacon or a Circuit, and sought to make the matches which, through prayer they discerned would best enable the Church to join in with the service of God to the world.

4.3. All circuit and deacon profiles were carefully scrutinised, with 'in person' visits by the Warden to circuits continuing to be an essential part of the diaconal direct stationing process. In November, the DSSC met in person with the ordained deacons and those to be stationed as probationers and their households, for stationing conversations.

4.4. In January, the DSSC2 matched all ordained and diaconal probationers to 11 of the 19 Circuit profiles available. Due to the high number of circuit profiles the DSSC was aware as it worked that a number of appointments would not be filled for SMG2. As a consequence they identified the following areas as guidance for their work in assisting the Warden in matching: diaconal probationers, appointments where the deacon was part of a small team of two ordained staff, and appointments with significant specialisms. The matches were called at SMG2. At the end of January, all these matches were confirmed.

4.5. Following on from DSSC2/SMG2 in January, the DSSC has continued to work in collaboration with the Stationing Action Group, with Circuits and with members of the Order. This ongoing work has enabled two further appointments to receive a match, which will start mid-year in March 2026. We are grateful to the deacons who have agreed to move early and to the circuits who will be holding a six month vacancy for part of the year. At the time of writing, one profile has been withdrawn and five circuit profiles remain unfilled. However, the prayerful work of discernment continues between these circuits, Deacons and DSSC, and we are hopeful of at least one further match.

4.6. The DSSC recognises and appreciates that its work has been enabled by the willingness of Circuits to discern diaconal appointments. In addition, the DSSC is thankful for the faithfulness of deacons and their households in living out the diaconal principles of itinerancy and direct stationing, and their generosity in

embracing the invitations and opportunities these bring to join in with the work of God in the world.

4.7. The DSSC membership will see substantial change in the coming year, as three members finish their appointments. Each member has brought unique gifts to the work of the DSSC and we record our thanks to each of them.

4.8. The Revd Dr David Hinchliffe has served as the Chair of DSSC for six years. David's discerning leadership, wise counsel and gentle humour have been appreciated and have enabled the DSSC to work prayerfully, faithfully and with joy.

4.9. Deacon Janet Heys has served for three years, the DSSC has greatly benefited in its work from Janet's deep listening and insightful understanding.

4.10. The Revd Dr Claire Potter has supported the DSSC work especially in the matching of diaconal students to their first appointment. Her diligent care to ensure the flourishing of others, has brought much to the work of DSSC.

4.11. The fulfilling of DSSC membership is in the process of being discerned. The Convocation will discern a further diaconal representative in May and report to the stationing committee in June. The Revd Gill Newton as the incoming Coordinator for the Oversight of Ordained Ministries will also join DSSC.

4.12. The Warden has had the privilege of being able to journey with and be a part of the Stationing Review Group. Much of the group's work and recommendations focus around the presbyteral matching/stationing process. Therefore, except for matters related to the reinvitation process, no significant change is anticipated in the SRG to the diaconal matching/stationing process. The Conference in 2019 continued to uphold the need for a commitment to the discipline of direct stationing and itinerancy for deacons and all candidates for ordained diaconal ministry. However, the Stationing Review Group has expressed its gratitude to the members of the MDO who have engaged with and who continue to pray for its work.

5. Stationing Matching Group (SMG)

5.1. Stationing matching is a process in which the Church attempts to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to the circuits and presbyters. This year the Group was able to meet in person for both rounds which enhanced the sense of the whole Connexion being present in one place, with each minister and circuit known. The work was, as always, conducted carefully and prayerfully with time being taken to consider each presbyter and circuit as the group sought to make matches

which would enable presbyters and circuits to flourish in mission and ministry and ensure ministry was spread across the Connexion in response to the greatest need.

5.2. **Changes to the process for this connexional year**

A number of changes were implemented as a result of the Stationing Committee's own reflections on the progress and the feedback from the responses to the Stationing Review Group:

- There was an earlier deadline for receipt of profiles to be considered at any round of matching, enabling necessary checks to be undertaken and the profiles to be circulated to all who needed to see and consider them. Unfortunately, IT issues prevented some individuals from seeing them in a timely manner. Assurances have been given that these issues will be addressed before next year.
- There were only two meetings of the Matching Group rather than three. SMG 2 felt like SMG 3 in terms of a lack of flexibility as to where the remaining presbyters could be stationed and therefore the group faced some challenges in making matches for some of the appointments that the Districts had identified as being key appointments. Care will need to be taken moving forward to ensure that the fewer rounds do not result in the group being reluctant to make challenging matches which might stretch presbyters in round 1 to ensure that ministry is deployed where it is needed rather than where it is comfortable. The possibility of flexible patterns of ministry is being highlighted in the Code of Practice this year.
- The removal of the critical designation for selected appointments was seen to be fairer and helpful to the work of the group, allowing Districts to prioritise for themselves which appointments were called.
- The need for reasoned statements and connexional scrutiny for all appointments that had fewer than 150 members and/or could be considered to be less challenging than those that could be accepted for Initial MOCC stationing led to a smaller mismatch between the number of presbyters and number of appointments, enabling more circuits to make alternative arrangements earlier in the process and greater ability to match to greater need. It also resulted in a greater number of part-time appointments, matching an increased number of presbyters offering for part-time appointments. Thirty appointments fell into this category. Of these, 17 were accepted and 13 were invited to consider revising their profile to part time, MOCC or probationer appointments or looking at developing the work in other ways. It is important to note that membership is not the only, nor even prime, criteria used by the Scrutiny Group.

5.3. **Matching of Members of SMG**

Two members of SMG were matched to appointments via the agreed process in advance of SMG1. It is worth observing that far from giving them any advantage there were only a very limited number of circuit profiles submitted for consideration which severely limited their capacity to offer indicative lists.

SMG1

5.4. During the first meeting of the Stationing Matching Group (SMG1) at Yarnfield Park, at the beginning of November, there were 107 Circuits seeking presbyters and 86 presbyters of whom 81 were available for matching. Seventy-seven matches were made and 66 of the visits made resulted in invitations being issued and accepted. Of the eleven that were declined, three were declined only by the presbyter and six only by the circuit, two by both. Overall 86% (last year 75%) of the visits resulted in invitations being issued and accepted.

5.5. All report forms were received for matches which did not stick and issues contained within them taken up with presbyters and Circuits.

5.6. Once again we can see from the figures the matching group seems to give priority to those matches identified by the presbyter or both. Whether or not the presbyter identified it also seems to greatly influence whether a match is agreed.

	Total	*Agreed*	*Dec Presbyter*	*Circuit Dec*	*Declined both*	*% agreed*
Total matches	*77*	*66*	*3*	*6*	*2*	*86%*
Double match	*33*	*29*	*2*	*2*	*0*	*88%*
Identified presbyter only	*25*	*24*	*0*	*1*	*0*	*96%*
Identified circuit only	*7*	*6*	*0*	*1*	*0*	*86%*
Identified neither	*11*	*5*	*1*	*3*	*2*	*45%*

5.7. To support the work of the Stationing Review Group, the indicative lists were reviewed to see how many presbyters indicated each appointment on their indicative lists of up to five appointments. Whilst they only offer a snapshot of one particular year, and would vary from year the year, the following tables offers some insights of the situation for SMG1 this year.

SMG1 Indicative lists

# of presbyters indicating	How many circuits	Agreed matches of a particular circuit
0	13	2
1	23	9
2	14	12
3	19	14
4	14	12
5	9	6
6	3	1
7	3	1
8	4	3
9	4	4
10	0	0
11	0	0
12	1	1

District	Number of distinct presbyters who expressed an interest	Average per appointment
NW England	30	1.76
Wales Synod Cymru	7	3.5
Birmingham	22	2.2
Bristol	2	1
Channel Islands	2	2
Chester and Stoke	4	2
Darlington	0	0
East Anglia	15	2.5
Lincolnshire	6	3

District	Number of distinct presbyters who expressed an interest	Average per appointment
Newcastle upon Tyne	8	2.7
Nottingham and Derby	19	3.8
Northampton	10	1.7
Sheffield	5	2.5
Southampton	11	1.6
Yorkshire West	14	2
Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury	12	2.4
Yorkshire North and East	10	2.5
Scotland	3	3
Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire	4	1.3
London	17	2.1
South East	17	3.4
SW Peninsula	6	1

SMG2

5.8. At the beginning of January, the SMG met at the Kents Hill Park Conference Centre, Milton Keynes. There were 48 circuit profiles to be considered and, in theory, 26 presbyters available. However, six of these had indicated in advance that they would not be available as they were exploring other options. A further three became unavailable for matching owing to other processes needing to be undertaken, which left 17 presbyters available for matching. Fourteen matches were made, of which nine were agreed and five declined. One presbyter could not be matching owing to their being married to a diaconal student and the outcome of diaconal stationing needing to be confirmed. No matches could be made for the other two presbyters as they had very limited geographical restrictions.

5.9. There was a large change in membership of SMG this year with six new Chairs around the table and two new Districts. Training was offered by the Chairs of the Stationing Committee and Stationing Matching Group. The timing of appointments meant that two Chairs had not been able to shadow the process. The Lay Stationing Reps for the new Districts and new Chairs were encouraged to be present for SMG 1 to support the new members.

5.10. The Stationing Matching Group is grateful for the engagement of presbyters and Circuits in exploring the matches, all those who prepared profiles, drew up lists to indicate the kinds of presbyters and circuits they could see themselves working with and flourishing in, prepared for visits and travelled out of their comfort zones to engage prayerfully in discernment conversations. The final recommendations to the Conference come not from the SMG but from the presbyters and circuits who say yes to one another and begin the journey of discovering gifts and opportunities for mission and who will commit themselves at welcome services to "join together in the work to which God has called us." (*Methodist Worship Book* page 361).

6. The Stationing Action Group

6.1. The Stationing Action Group (SAG) commenced its work on 10 February 2025 and will continue its work through to the meeting of the Unmatched Ministers Group which meets in June, prior to the Conference. In February, there were 37 unmatched presbyteral and eight unmatched diaconal appointments. There were at that point eleven ordained presbyters and one probationer presbyter available to be stationed.

6.2. Stationing Action Group 1 was able to match ten ordained and one probationer presbyter, of which all but one ordained appointment held.

6.3. Stationing Action Group 2 matched one presbyteral appointment and two diaconal appointments. The presbyteral appointment held as did the diaconal appointments – the latter are directly stationed.

6.4. Stationing Action Group 3 matched four presbyteral appointments and the outcome of those visits is awaited at the time of writing.

6.5. At the meeting of SAG 3, eight Circuits applied for permission to withdraw their profiles from stationing; six were given permission.

6.6. Since the work of the Stationing Action Group commenced, SAG has so far accepted four new circuit profiles for presbyters, four new profiles for presbyters, and two new profiles for deacons.

6.7. At the time of writing there are 19 presbyteral appointments remaining unfilled including seven superintendencies and five diaconal appointments, with one presbyter available to be stationed.

6.8. The Stationing Action Group will meet for a final time on 12 May.

7. Stationing Code of Practice

7.1. Amendments have been made to the Stationing Code of Practice for 2026 that reflect changes in Standing Orders and other matters which the Stationing Committee wish to emphasise in the light of experience from year to year. Particular attention is directed to the need for advanced mission planning and consideration of the changing needs for ministry within circuits, holding in mind the impact of decisions made which reduce the numbers of presbyteral appointments. This year, wording has been amended to reflect the nomenclature in Standing Orders, particularly those concerned with Invitation Committees and Lay Stationing Representatives. Whilst acknowledging the impact on family members, their employment and schooling, affirmation has been made of centrality of itinerancy in presbyteral ministry. Changes in the templates for the Letters of Understanding have also been made to provide greater clarity.

8. Projections

8.1 Number of Methodist presbyters and probationers in the active work

Connexional Year	Actual 2021/2022	Actual 2022/2023	Actual 2023/2024	Estimate 2024/2025	Estimate 2025/2026
Start of Year	1228	1167	1122	1062	1016
Normal Retirements	74	65	74	60	60
Early Retirements	7	4	7	5	5
Resignations	7	6	5	5	5
Other Losses	2	1	4	1	1
TOTAL LOSSES	90	76	90	71	71
New Probationers	23	21	17	20	20

Connexional Year	Actual 2021/2022	Actual 2022/2023	Actual 2023/2024	Estimate 2024/2025	Estimate 2025/2026
Other Gains	6	11	13	5	5
TOTAL GAINS	29	31	30	25	25
END OF YEAR	1167	1122	1062	1016	970

8.2 Number of Methodist deacons and probationers in the active work

Connexional Year	Actual 2021/2022	Actual 2022/2023	Actual 2023/2024	Estimate 2024/2025	Estimate 2025/2026
Start of Year	134	139	132	120	121
Retirements	3	11	13	4	5
Resignations	0	0	0	0	0
Other Losses	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL LOSSES	3	11	13	4	5
New Probationers	7	4	1	5	3
Other Gains	1	0	0	0	0
TOTAL GAINS	8	4	1	5	3
END OF YEAR	139	132	120	121	119

9. Going Forward

9.1. In conclusion, the Stationing Committee recognises with appreciation lay and ordained colleagues in circuits and Districts who already regularly review local ministry requirements, reconfiguring appointments and encouraging alternative expressions of ministry. This continuing review of mission and ministry in the local area is vital and enables ministry to remain alive and fluid.

9.2. Likewise, membership of the various structures overseeing stationing changes annually, and we note with thanks, members of each committee and group, recognising the years of service offered by members. This year, some will pass responsibility for their current work to new colleagues. In addition to committee meetings, the majority of which are now held online, many additional hours of work are undertaken, as lay and ordained members work in partnership, together.

The Stationing Committee is appreciative of the many hours of dedicated work undertaken by many people.

9.3. As we move into the connexional year 2025/26, Conference will note all existing processes already underway for matching will continue as now, however, it will be necessary to begin implementation of any additional recommendations proposed by the Stationing Review Group, if these result in changes to Standing Orders in 2026.

9.4. The Stationing Committee is grateful to all ministers, presbyters and deacons and their families for their commitment to furthering the work of the church. The Stationing Committee will endeavour to ensure that they are supported as far as possible through the transition period, valuing the work of all ministers and the needs of circuits, across the connexion equally.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

34/1. The Conference receives the Report.

34/2. The Conference amends Standing Order 260 as set out in paragraph 2.2 above.

Contact name and details	David Thomson, Chief Executive, All We Can Tel: 020 3758 7700 info@allwecan.org.uk
Subject and aims	This report summarises the activities and achievements of All We Can in the time since September 2023 to present
Resolution	35/1. The Conference receives the Report
Main points	The work of the All We Can movement through its long term development partners has had a transformational and measurable impact on the lives of more than 1,193,469 people. All We Can is partnered with 28 local organisations in six priority countries.
Background context and relevant documents	Full version of Trustees Report for the year ended 31 August 2024 – available from the All We Can website (https://www.allwecan.org.uk/about-us/our-annual-review/)

At the heart of All We Can is our commitment to being locally-led and doing development differently in a way that sees power being put back into the hands of communities. We intentionally model a very different approach from other charities. Having worked in several humanitarian and social justice organisations over the past 30 years, I have a personal commitment to leading change and seeing progress in the sector, which is why I was delighted to step into the role of CEO in September 2024.

Over the past year, we have realised that our mission is more relevant than ever. We live in a world impacted by increasing conflict, rising costs of living, growing prevalence of hunger, and the continuing climate emergency. In addition, the bolstered support of nationalist and populist governments and the ever-shrinking civic space means that recent progress in upholding human rights and freedoms is being rolled back, further deepening inequality and destabilising our planet.

We have held firm to the core principles of our locally-led partnering model and approach, whilst continuing to learn, and to evolve it. This involves ongoing capacity strengthening, focusing on partnerships not projects, and relationships not contracts. Securing unrestricted funding is critical for allowing partners to more closely meet the priorities of communities, and flexible funding allows greater responsiveness to changing community needs. Trust remains the bedrock of these partnerships. Local

Country Representatives have stepped into a stronger partnership management role, importantly placing support and decision-making closer to partners and the point of impact.

David Thomson, CEO

1. Achievements & Performance

The number of people reached indirectly through partners' long-term development programmes is 1,193,469.

1.1. All We Can continued long-term development partnerships with 28 local NGO partners in our 6 priority countries; Ethiopia, Liberia, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zimbabwe, including providing seed grants to 8 newer partners in Sierra Leone (3), Liberia (4) and Uganda (1).

1.2. This year also marked graduation for one of our church partners, supported in collaboration with the Methodist Church of Britain's ChurchCAN Programme.

1.2.1. Methodist Church Sierra Leone (MCSL) was supported to carry out an evaluation and learning review as well as develop a new 5-year Strategic Plan for 2024-2029 before graduating partnership.

1.3. All We Can continues to walk alongside our three remaining ChurchCAN partners, Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas (MCCA), Methodist Church of Southern Africa, and Church of North India.

1.3.1. A conference of ChurchCAN participants was held in Johannesburg from 13 to 19 October 2024. The purpose of this conference was to strengthen the capacity of selected Global Methodist Partner Churches to fulfil their mission and become effective agents of change in their local contexts by providing organisational and leadership support and resources

1.4. Recognising the protracted nature of the Syrian and Rohingya refugee crises, our support for partners working in Jordan and Bangladesh respectively continued with a focus on longer-term support.

1.5. Our emergency response work remains a critical part of our organisational impact. By providing grants to use specialist responders and undertaking situational analysis, we responded to various disasters and emergencies in the past year. Our decision to act is based on the premise of added value.

1.5.1. Our joint Ukraine emergency appeal response with the Methodist Church in Britain (MCB) has to date supported several humanitarian partners to provide vital housing, medicine, mental health, cash assistance and psychosocial support either within Ukraine or a surrounding country supporting Ukrainian refugees. As of the end of the 2023/24 financial year, £500,000 has been committed and used by our partners.

1.5.2. A joint appeal with the Methodist Church in Britain and the United Reformed Church to meet the humanitarian need resulting from the crisis in Gaza and Lebanon was launched, raising money for partners whose work on the front lines of the crisis is making a difference to the survival and dignity of those most affected. An emergency appeal was launched for the Myanmar Earthquake response, providing Food Basket/Cash assistance, Family hygiene kits, Other Non-Food Items (NFIs), and Dignity kits for women and girls to affected households.

2. Agile, efficient and relational funding and grant making

2.1. All We Can understands that the current aid system is broken because the priorities of donors and international organisations often override the priorities of communities. Unrestricted flexible funding remains a cornerstone of our partnership approach. While donor funds meet needs in communities, these do not always align with the needs that communities themselves prioritise; needs that are internally generated and owned. Local organisations are often caught in the middle – understanding local priorities, but hamstrung by the demands and priorities of their donors. Unrestricted funds allow partners to meet more closely the priorities of communities.

2.2. Whatever priorities partners and their communities choose to focus on, All We Can holds our partners accountable through comprehensive reporting, monitoring and auditing processes. Partners can use All We Can funding to cover their core costs. Unfortunately, other donor grants often do not provide enough money for running costs, which is unsustainable. This means our grants often have to subsidise overheads and staff salaries. Our grants are also used as the local contribution which leverage larger donor grants. Further, as the needs in communities change due to unforeseen circumstances, partners are able to negotiate changes with All We Can, facilitating greater responsiveness to the reality of shifting community needs.

2.3. All We Can's grant making in 2023/24 has however been challenging. Following a decline in our own legacy income, and a sector heavily impacted by the cost-

of-living crisis, All We Can was forced to decrease the amount of grant funding we had committed to partners midway through the year. We are extremely appreciative of all our partners who have shown us the true meaning of partnership, responding with empathy, grace and prayers. We supported partners to adjust their operations plans, encouraging partners to, as always, use All We Can funding strategically to leverage other donors funding and cover staff and core costs as needed.

2.4. Based on feedback All We Can received from partners during our midterm review last year, the Programmes team and partner representatives nominated by colleagues from each country formed a working group tasked with co-creating a new and simplified annual planning and reporting process as well as new templates to ensure these are improved based on partners' feedback. This streamlined the process while still serving as a tool for partners to plan and report around their strategic objectives, not just All We Can's funding. A new process and templates will be piloted by partners during the upcoming annual planning and reporting cycle between November and December 2024.

3. Supporting local churches to improve their effectiveness as agents of change in their local contexts

3.1. The Global Relationships Team (GRT) of the Methodist Church in Britain (MCB) and All We Can are collaborating through the ChurchCAN programme to strengthen selected global Methodist partner churches' capacity to fulfil their God-given mission and effectiveness as agents of change in their local contexts. The ChurchCAN programme seeks to provide partner churches with organisational and leadership support and resources that help them become resilient and increasingly self-sufficient. The programme is financed by the World Mission Fund of the MCB, with oversight by the GRT, designed and executed by All We Can, adopting our organisation development approach. Notably, this year was the first year since one of the four ChurchCAN partners, Methodist Church in Sierra Leone, graduated partnership (in August 2023).

3.2. The All We Can team is working with members of the Connexional Team at a number of events running stalls, workshops, and speaking at key places including the 3Generate youth event, Wholehearted conference, the Methodist Women in Britain conference, Cliff Festival, Superintendents' conferences, the Methodist Conference and the World Methodist Conference.

4. Informing, inspiring and engaging supporters

4.1. 2023/24 has been a busy year for All We Can's public engagement, with the team both improving existing offerings and developing new routes of engagement.

4.2. The change of calendar year saw the transition from our 'Communities in the Driving Seat' campaign highlighting stories from EAGLES in Malawi, to our 'Charity Begins at Home' theme focusing on Self-Help Initiative for Sustainable Development (SHIFSD) in Liberia. Charity Begins at Home has challenged people to see this common phrase in a new light – not as an encouragement to ignore poverty outside the UK, but to trust local communities to lead when we engage with them. This has reflected our continued commitment to centre our partnership approach as our unique selling point across our output.

4.3. The end of 2023 saw hundreds of churches using All We Can's Harvest resources which for the first time featured a sermon based on community members' own reflections on a passage, and a harvest meal resource developed alongside the Evangelism and Growth Team of the Methodist Church.

4.4. January 2024 saw the first edition of the 'All We Canuary' fundraising challenge. This invited supporters to do all the ____ they can in the month of January, raising for money for All We Can as they went. The blank space reflected the fact All We Can do not tell our partners how to fulfil their potential, so we do not tell supporters how to fulfil theirs. It was great to see the commitment and creativity of All We Can supporters, with the challenges people took on including cycling, singing, and cooking.

4.5. In addition to Harvest, a number of new resources were published to enable more churches to engage with All We Can's work without the need for a visiting speaker. These included a Christingle service, a small service segment introducing Charity Begins at Home, a potato-planting Easter resource, a Lent personal devotional, and a Refugee Week service segment.

4.6. A resource called 'Moving the Dial' was produced, which has been endorsed by the Methodist Church as a key resource for Methodist churches to engage with the Practices of a 'Justice-Seeking Church'.

5. Management of Y Care International

5.1. Following three and a half years of formal partnership with All We Can, Y Care International will return to its original home at YMCA.

5.2. The collaboration back in 2021 between All We Can and Y Care International was groundbreaking for both charities, through an operating model of administration where both brand identities would be maintained by a single staff team.

5.3. The two charities were brought together by a shared strategic vision, rooted in the Christian faith. The commitment of both organisations to fulfil the potential of

countless people all over the world remains the same, but with an ever-changing fundraising landscape, the time has come to recognise the different direction All We Can and Y Care must take to fulfil obligations to those we serve, and both sets of supporters and partner organisations.

5.4. The transition commenced on the 1 April 2025, with legal responsibility handed to YMCA England & Wales. All We Can and YMCA are committed to making this transition as smooth as possible for everyone involved. While the work to transition has begun, the move is expected to be fully completed by June 2025.

6. Income and Expenditure

6.1. 83p in every pound is spent on our charitable objectives. 17p in every pound spent on fundraising activities.

Total income decreased by £0.7m (121%) to £2.5m (2023: £3.2m)

Total expenditure increased by £1m (26%) to £3m (2023: £4m).

Expenditure on charitable activities decreased by 26% to £2.5m (2023: £3.3m). This represents 82.7% of total expenditure (2023: 83.2%), which compares very favourably with similar organisations of size and focus across the sector.

7. Reserves policy

7.1. As at 31 August 2024, the charity held total funds of £1,978k, £770k of these fund balances were restricted funds and the remaining £1,208k were unrestricted funds. The unrestricted funds are made up of minimum general reserves of £793k and £415k of designated funds which are unrestricted monies that the Board has designated for specific purposes, as detailed in Note 18 of the financial statements.

8. Plans for the future

8.1. As we embark on our next financial year, All We Can remains committed to its mission of enabling flourishing and resilient communities through partnership. Reflecting on the challenges and achievements of the past year, we are more determined than ever to deepen our impact and continue our journey of doing development differently.

8.2. Strategic Focus Areas:

8.2.1. Strengthening Partnerships: We will continue to build and nurture relationships with our long-term local partners, ensuring that they are resilient and capable of

meeting the needs of communities. Our focus will be on providing unrestricted and flexible funding to allow partners to address their priorities effectively.

8.2.2. Capacity Development: Supporting our partners' capacity development remains a cornerstone of our approach. We will enhance our efforts in strategic planning and financial sustainability, helping partners to develop robust strategies and diversify their income sources.

8.2.3. Innovative Funding Models: In response to the financial challenges faced by us and our partners, we will explore and implement innovative funding models. This includes producing restricted funding applications on behalf of our partners and identifying in-country funding opportunities.

8.2.4. Organisational Culture: We are committed to modelling a healthy organisational culture where our people thrive and live out our values. This involves ongoing efforts to strengthen our internal operations, adapt to changing circumstances, and support the wellbeing of our team.

8.2.5. Humanitarian Response: Our emergency response work will continue to be a critical part of our impact. We will utilise specialist responders and situational analysis to address various disasters and emergencies, ensuring that our interventions add value to the affected communities and build up local organisations.

8.3. We are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and are confident that our strategic focus areas will enable us to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve. As we embark on this journey, we are also in the process of setting a comprehensive strategy for the next five years, informed by a thorough review of our achievements and learnings from the past five years. With the support of our dedicated team/people, partners, and supporters, we look forward to a year of growth, learning, and delivering lasting change.

9. We are deeply grateful for the ongoing support of the Methodist people and our wider Methodist family and endeavour to continue to serve as the Methodist relief and development agency in all the ways we can.

*****RESOLUTION**

35/1. The Conference receives the Report.

36. Methodist Ministers' Housing Society (MMHS)

Contact name and details	Mairi Johnstone CEO mjohnstone@mmhs.org.uk

1. Introduction

This report covers the period **1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024**, but we also comment on matters of note from 1 September 2024 to date.

Our vision adopts words found in Acts 4:34, 'There was not a single person in need among them'.

Our mission is to meet the housing and housing-related needs of retired Methodist ministers of limited means, their spouses, widows and widowers, and to offer support for their wellbeing in the key areas of mobility and independence.

Our core values are underpinned by a Christian ethos of which we are proud. Our concern is to show high standards of care in all we do, and to be professional both as individuals and as an organisation.

2. Overview of the period

We had the great pleasure of celebrating our 75th anniversary in 2023. We enjoyed commemorating the year in many ways, from the commissioning of a contemporary hymn, *Christ is the Cornerstone*, to the hosting of a dinner for an inspiring gathering of people who, one way or another, were connected to our charity and its work.

We made good progress against our targets, in yet another challenging geo-political and economic environment. We faced many challenges – continued supply chain problems, the effects of inflation, and recruitment struggles to name but three. Each presented an opportunity to learn from our experiences, focus on our long-term financial resilience, and upskill and develop our people.

3. Housing provision during the period

At year-end, 31 August 2024, we had 874 properties. Of that number, 672 were occupied by our ministerial residents, 101 by market tenants and 101 (also) were unoccupied. The number of unoccupied properties was unusually high due to implementation of our plan to sell our market-rented portfolio.

We were pleased to provide housing for 18 new ministerial residents during the period. We also transferred six ministerial residents to alternative properties.

Our Equity Sharing Scheme enables our ministerial residents to acquire a financial interest in their property. At year-end, 31 August 2024, 375 ministerial residents had equity interests with a total fair value of £17.739m.

During the year, we provided housing through a mix of newly purchased properties and ones identified from within our existing portfolio. One key consideration we have is the suitability of properties for long-term independent living.

4. Rent and finances for the period

Our standard charitable rent is the same for all our ministerial residents; for 2023-24, the rent was £344pcm (£4,128pa). Some of our ministerial residents pay a higher rent if their income in retirement is above the upper-limit figure set for our standard charitable rent.

We continued to cross-subsidise those less able to pay using our designated Wellbeing Fund. We are pleased that we can maintain a standard charitable rent which is well below those set by social housing providers, and substantially below market level rents.

Rental income from ministerial residents amounted to £2.555m for the year. A further £1.765m of rental income was generated from market tenancies, £574k from interest and dividends, £1.208m from legacies and bequests, and £66k in grants from Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons (FSPD) . Donations amounting to £45k were also received from individuals, churches and Circuits within the Methodist family. The net surplus derived from the sale of surplus properties amounted to £1.655m.

Total expenditure in the year was £7.603m. The main components of our cost base were property maintenance, refurbishment, office-based operating costs, depreciation and salaries. The year finished with an operating surplus of £265k and an overall surplus of £1.475m after taking into consideration, an unrecognised gain on fixed asset investments.

MMHS's closing year balance sheet net assets were £190.215m.

5. Management of our properties and our wellbeing initiatives

We maintain and repair our properties regularly. More than 975 jobs were completed. These included 18 bathrooms, 31 driveway repairs and 90 external decorations. We also refurbished seven kitchens and replaced 48 boilers and 16 sets of windows and doors.

In addition to maintaining and repairing our properties, we routinely inspect them to ensure compliance with electrical and gas safety standards. Electrical inspections and associated remedial works are administered and undertaken by HES Fire Protection Limited. Gas-Elec Group are our national supplier for annual gas compliance checks.

We delivered three refurbishment projects. This number is significantly less than previous years and reflects our move to buying for new ministerial residents.

A key part of our strategy is enabling our ministerial residents to remain in their own homes for as long as possible, if this is what they wish to do. We were able to deliver this part of our strategy, in part through the provision of direct grants for building adaptations such as grab handles, handrails, and external ramps. These items are usually put in a property following a request from a ministerial resident or a member of their family or community.

During the year, a total of 13 mobility improvements were carried out at a cost of just over £66k. The new post of *Housing and Wellbeing Officer* (HWO) has transformed what MMHS is able to offer by way of wellbeing support. We are already evidencing benefits, not only in terms of emotional and practical outcomes for applicants, ministerial residents and their families, but in terms of greater efficiencies and effectiveness. We are also focused on the new opportunities we have, to strategically – and practically – link our wellbeing initiatives to our safeguarding responsibilities.

We developed our Wellbeing Fund under five categories of support – general expenditure, IT, maintenance and repair, rent subsidising and mobility. This demonstrates the width of coverage, and, in time, the fund will grow to enable yet more support.

6. Board of Trustees

At year-end, 31 August 2024, MMHS had nine trustees. The Chair and the CEO worked closely together to manage the business of the board, the effective stewardship of MMHS's assets, and the sound governance of its operations.

Trustees are expected to keep themselves up to date with legislative and regulatory developments and take part in the MMHS Trustee Learning and Development programme which has been developed to equip them to perform well in their trustee roles.

7. Staff

During the reporting period, the Senior Management Team comprised the CEO and three executive Directors, two for part only of the year. The CEO is responsible for the implementation of the decisions of the trustees and the day-to-day management of the affairs of MMHS. The CEO is also the Company Secretary. The CEO is responsible for effective management systems to ensure all staff have clarity about their roles and objectives and have the appropriate appraisals and training to enable them to fulfil their roles and contribute to MMHS's strategic objectives.

8. Plans for the future

We are now well into the third year of our Strategy for 2022-2027. We are pleased with the progress we are making in expanding our present mission. We were delighted to appoint the HWO, to help us crystallise our ambitions to put wellbeing at the heart of our mission. We are planning for yet more growth in this area.

In furtherance of our commitment to look after both our properties and the people in them, we were pleased to hire a firm of surveyors and energy advisors to undertake a multi-faceted survey on our behalf. They were undaunted by our geographical spread. We added a 'people' section to the survey, addressing mobility and access issues on the part of our ministerial residents. This survey will inform our strategic planning for many years to come and will equip us to deliver our mission even more effectively.

We are embracing technological change to drive digital transformation. We know digital transformation will benefit MMHS immensely. As a digital enterprise – our aspiration – we know our mission will be delivered better and we expect the experience of our beneficiaries to improve.

Despite all our efforts to widen and deepen our present mission, we are acutely aware of the impact of the declining number of Methodist Ministers in active service. We expect the need for our services to decline markedly from the late 2020s onwards. Mindful of our stewardship responsibilities, we are pushing ahead with our plans to establish a new mission for MMHS, to run in parallel with our present mission. We will be able to share details in due course.

9. Conclusion

Thankfulness is the word that springs to mind when thinking of a conclusion to this report – for what has been and for what is to come. We have been greatly blessed as an organisation and our expectation is that blessings will continue to flow.

*****RESOLUTION**

36/1. The Conference receives the Report.

Contact name and details	Mrs Joanne Anderton Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice and Secretary to the Committee lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk

SECTION F
SPECIAL RESOLUTION 24/6 (2024): MODEL TRUST 26 MEMORANDUM OF CONSENT PROCESS

In 2023 the committee brought a proposal to the Conference to remove the memorandum of consent process in Model Trust 26, as modern-day legislation governing disposals of charity land in England and Wales means that purchasers of Model Trust property no longer need the additional assurance of a memorandum of consent to protect them.

The 2023 Conference therefore agreed (by Special Resolution 42/5) to amend Model Trust 26 by deleting the definition of 'memorandum of consent' in sub-paragraph (1) and deleting sub-paragraphs (3) and (4).

The intention was that after appropriate consultation the proposed amendments to Model Trust 26 would be brought back to the Conference for confirmation (again by Special Resolution) in 2024.

Unfortunately, the proposed amendments to Model Trust 26 were not submitted to the relevant Synods for consideration, meaning the 2024 Conference was not able to confirm the Special Resolution. The process therefore needed to begin again and the 2024 Conference duly re-adopted the Special Resolution (as Resolution 24/6) to enable the appropriate consultation to take place before being brought for confirmation or otherwise in 2025.

The appropriate consultation has now taken place with the Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Scotland and Shetland Synods as required by Standing Order 126(1)(*a*), and also with the Connexional Council under Standing Order 126(1)(*c*).

The Connexional Council welcomed the opportunity to remove the burdensome memorandum of consent process in England and Wales and voted to approve the Special Resolution.

However, during the course of the consultation the committee was advised that Scotland's charity legislation does not offer the same protection for purchasers as that of England and Wales. This means that the memorandum of consent provisions in Model

Trust 26 are still relevant for sales and other disposals of Model Trust property in the Scotland and Shetland Districts.

On that basis, the Scotland and Shetland Synods were advised to reject the Special Resolution.

The Isle of Man Synod also voted to reject the Special Resolution, but the Synod is taking advice on its legal position and will report back to the committee in due course.

The outcome of the consultation with the Channel Islands Synod will be reported in the Order Paper.

As required under SO 126(1)(*d*) and SO 122(3), the committee now submits Special Resolution 24/6 to the Conference again with advice on how to proceed. The Conference is reminded that approval of a special resolution requires a majority of 75% of those present and voting.

However, since it has become evident during the consultation process that Scotland and Shetland still require the protection of Model Trust 26, the committee advises that the proposed amendments to Model Trust 26 should not be made and therefore invites the Conference **not** to confirm the Special Resolution, ie to vote against it.

In 2024, pending the outcome of the consultation process and on the advice of the Law and Polity sub-committee [[1]DR/5/7/1 at paragraph 5], the Conference also passed Resolution 24/4 to disapply the memorandum of consent process in England and Wales.

Assuming that the Conference declines to confirm Special Resolution 24/6 to amend Model Trust 26, the committee advises the Conference to re-confirm Resolution 24/4 of 2024 and direct that no memoranda of consent shall be executed in England and Wales from now on, notwithstanding the (unamended) provisions of Model Trust 26.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

37/1. The Conference receives the Report.

37/2. (Special Majority) The Conference confirms Special Resolution 24/6 of 2024 to amend Model Trust 26 by deleting the definition of 'memorandum of consent' in sub-paragraph (1) and deleting sub-paragraphs (3) and (4).

1 https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf-2024-daily-record-complete.pdf

37/3. The Conference, noting that the execution of a memorandum of consent under paragraph 26 of the Model Trusts no longer serves a useful purpose in England and Wales and that in practice the preparation and execution of such memoranda is burdensome and time-consuming, directs that no further such memoranda in respect of property in England and Wales shall be executed.

SECTION G
STANDING ORDERS 110 AND 110A – ELECTIONS FOR THE PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE

The Conference of 2024 adopted a revised policy for electing the President and Vice President and directed the committee to prepare new Standing Orders to give effect to this. Details of the revisions to the current process are contained in Section H of the Methodist Council's report to the 2024 Conference,[2] for which the committee proposes the following amendments to Standing Orders:

110 President and Vice-President.

. . .

(4) They shall work in conjunction with the Secretary of the Conference and support ~~his or her~~ ***the Secretary's*** ministry of strategic management and the development of the Church's vision. Through their membership of the Connexional Leaders' Forum they shall offer support and encouragement to its members in the exercise of their responsibilities and contribute to its discussions concerning the well-being and calling of the Church.

. . .

110A Designation and Election. (1) ***The Connexional Council shall consider annually a role description and person specification for the offices of President and Vice-President prepared by the Business Committee and shall approve each description, with such amendments, if any, as the Business Committee may agree, no later than the last day of February in each year. After approval, the Secretary of the Conference shall ensure that the role descriptions and person specifications are available to any persons interested in being nominated to either office.***

(1A) No later than the last day of February in each year, ~~Before the opening of the Conference~~ the Secretary of the Conference shall in writing invite members to submit

2 https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf-24-pc-22-methodist-council-2.pdf

nominations, on a form provided, for the designation of the President and Vice-President in accordance with clauses 26 and 27 of the Deed of Union. ***The invitation shall specify the date by which nomination forms should be submitted to the Secretary, that date being no later than 15 May. Public notice shall be given that the invitation has been sent.***

(2) Each nomination shall be signed by five ministerial and five other members of the Representative Session of the Conference. No person shall sign more than one nomination for the designation of the President nor more than one nomination for the designation of the Vice-President. ***The invitation referred to in clause (1) shall specify the forms of signature which will be acceptable for the purposes of this clause.***

(3) Each nomination, in addition to specifying the name and District and Circuit in which the person nominated is stationed or is a member, shall contain a reasoned statement ***written in consultation with the nominee and with reference to the criteria in the person specification*** ~~up to 200 words~~ in support of the nomination.

(4) ~~Clause (3) above is directory only, and omission of or inaccuracy in any or all of the information given shall not invalidate an otherwise valid nomination.~~

(4A) The Secretary shall obtain in respect of each nominee two letters of support written by suitable persons with knowledge of the nominee's background, experience and ministry. The council shall issue guidance for the purposes of this clause, but in the case of a nomination for President at least one letter shall be from a ministerial colleague or District Chair.

(4B) Subject to clause (4C) below, after receiving the letters of support referred to in clause (4A) above, the Secretary of the Conference shall ensure that each nominee for the post of President or Vice-President is invited for a discernment conversation with the President, Vice-President or Secretary or with one of their predecessors.

(4C) A person considering nomination but in respect of whom no nomination form has yet been received may request the Secretary of the Conference to invite that person to such a discernment conversation before 1 May in the relevant year. If a discernment conversation takes place in such circumstances and the relevant person subsequently becomes a nominee, the Secretary of the Conference may decide that no further discernment conversation is required.

(4D) No nomination shall be presented to the Conference without a discernment conversation in accordance with clause (4B) or clause (4C) having taken place.

(4E) The names of those nominated and the nominators, the reasoned statements and an assurance that the discernment conversation has taken place shall be published in the printed Agenda of the Conference.

(5) ~~Nomination papers shall be collected during the first three days of the Representative Session, unless the Conference otherwise determines, and shall be displayed for 24 hours before a vote is taken. Before the vote is taken, the Secretary of the Conference shall seek from each nominee an assurance of willingness to serve, if elected, and shall report the outcome to the Conference.~~

(6) Voting shall be by single transferable vote and the chair of the Business Committee or ~~his or her~~ ***the chair's*** representative shall be the returning officer.

(7) Subject to clause (8) below the Conference shall at each annual meeting vote on the resolution that the President-designate be elected President, and similarly as to the Vice-President-designate.

(8) If such a resolution is not carried, or if the President-designate or Vice-President-designate has died, or ceased to be qualified for the office, or is incapable of acting or unfit to act or unwilling to be elected, then the Conference shall by ballot elect some other qualified person to be the President or Vice-President, and clauses (1) to (6) above shall apply to that election as to a designation, with such variations in procedure as may, in the judgment of the Conference, be required by the circumstances.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

37/4. The Conference receives the Report.

37/5. The Conference amends Standing Orders 110(4) and 110A as set out above.

SECTION H
DATA PROTECTION STANDING ORDERS

The committee proposes the following Standing Order amendments in relation to Data Protection matters.

1. Standing Order 015(3A) Archives

A small amendment to Standing Order 015(3A) is recommended to enable records of deceased persons, which are not subject to the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), to be made available earlier than the current restriction of seventy-five years in circumstances where the records do not contain sensitive material about other persons who may still be alive. The amendment is as follows:

(3A) A restriction on access of seventy five years from the date of the last entry in the relevant document shall apply to records of a confidential nature, including correspondence, papers and machine-readable records containing personal details of a sensitive nature relating to individuals ***who are still alive*** in respect of complaints, disciplinary procedures, interviews, invitations, stationing, pastoral matters, case-studies and assessment files, and the responsible supervisor shall inform the depositee accordingly in writing whenever such records are deposited.

2. Standing Order 054 Oversight

In consultation with the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee, the committee's Data Protection working group has undertaken a thorough review of Standing Order 054 to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR. The committee's proposed amendments to Standing Order 054 are set out below. Connexional guidance for managing trustees on the application of this Standing Order is being prepared and will be published as soon as it is available.

During the course of the review, it became apparent that Standing Orders 055 (Transfers) and 056 (Appeals) also require amendment to comply with Data Protection legislation, but this work will involve changes to policy and practice before any draft amendments can be proposed. The committee therefore asks the Conference to direct the Faith and Order Committee to consider the policy issues involved and to work with the committee to draft the Standing Order revisions that may be required.

054 Oversight – *Registers and Records* (1) The names of all persons, whether children or adults, who have been baptized shall be entered into a baptism register kept for the purpose in each Local Church or Circuit.

(2) A ~~roll~~ ***record*** of baptized children ~~shall~~ ***may*** be kept and ~~periodically~~ ***if kept should be*** reviewed ***annually*** by the Church Council of each Local Church~~.~~ ***for the purpose of ensuring appropriate oversight of those who have been baptized and to ensure that suitable opportunities are offered to support their*** ~~The council shall satisfy itself that all~~

~~possible oversight of such children is maintained and suitable instruction given, as they are able to receive it, to prepare them for~~ Christian discipleship.

(3) The names of all children for whom thanks have been given in a public act of thanksgiving after their birth or adoption ~~must~~ ***may*** be entered into a thanksgiving ***record*** ~~register kept for the purpose~~ in each Local Church or Circuit separately from the register of baptisms.

(4) The names of all persons who have been confirmed in a service of public worship shall be entered into a confirmation register kept for the purpose in each Local Church or Circuit.

(5) The Pastoral Committee ***(or Church Council if no Pastoral Committee is appointed)*** shall record ~~in a book or roll, to be kept for the purpose,~~ the names of all the members of the Methodist Church belonging to the Local Church, and shall examine the ~~roll~~ ***record*** name by name not less than once in each year.

(6) The number of members returned for each Local Church shall be recorded in the minutes of the Church Council after each annual review.

(7) ***In addition to the record of members, the Pastoral Committee (or Church Council if a Pastoral Committee is not appointed)*** ~~The Church Council~~ shall establish a community roll ~~or card-index system~~ in which the names of all ***other persons*** ~~those~~ who are within the pastoral care of the Local Church shall be recorded. This shall include ~~baptized~~ children ***(whether or not baptized)***, ~~children in family church or Sunday school and adolescent or adult~~ ***young people and*** adherents ~~as well as members~~ ***of any age***.

(8) ~~Every effort shall be made to lead those who are not members to the commitment involved in membership and to this end the~~ ***The community*** roll shall be reviewed not less than once in each year ***to ensure its accuracy and so that every effort may be made to lead those who are not members to the commitment involved in membership***. ~~A name shall be taken off the roll only when it is clear that the person has completely severed connection with the local community of the Church.~~

(9) The procedure of transfer set out in Standing Order 055 shall apply to those whose names are on the community roll as well as to members.

(10) The number on the community roll~~, including members,~~ shall be recorded in the minutes of the Church Council after each annual review.

(11) The name of a person who has ceased to be a member pursuant to clause 10(*a*) or (*c*) of the Deed of Union shall ***not*** be retained on the community roll unless ~~he or she requests that this shall not be so~~ ***consent has been given by that person.***

(12) ***The presbyter in pastoral charge, or such other person as shall be appointed by the Church Council or the Circuit meeting, shall report in the annual return and to the Chair of District the*** ~~The~~ numbers ***set out*** on the membership roll and the community roll ~~shall be reported by the Superintendent to the secretary of the Synod and by him or her to the Chair of the District~~.

(13) In all returns of membership the number of members shall exclude persons in training for membership.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

37/6. The Conference receives the Report.

37/7. The Conference amends Standing Orders 015(3A) and 054 as set out above.

37/8. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee and the Law and Polity Committee to undertake the policy and drafting work required to bring Standing Orders 055 and 056 into line with current Data Protection legislation and to report the outcome of that work, together with any proposed Standing Order amendments, to the 2026 Conference.

SECTION I
M20 (2023) AND STANDING ORDER 650(6) - CHARITABLE GIVING BY LOCAL CHURCHES

In 2023 by way of Memorial M20 the Notting Hill Circuit Meeting asked for clarification about the ability of Church Councils to make donations to non-Methodist charities such as Christian Aid and the Fund for Human Need. They had received conflicting advice: namely that this was possible under Standing Order 650(6)(v); and that the Methodist charitable purposes in Standing Order 650(6)(i) to (iii) took precedence such that donations could not be made to non-Methodist charities under subclause (6)(v) until all possible Methodist causes had been satisfied.

In its reply, the Conference clarified that the Law and Polity Committee considered the first view to be correct, namely that a Church Council could donate to non-Methodist charities under Standing Order 650(6)(v) but should exercise responsible stewardship of its funds and give due weight to the claims of Methodist causes. It would also need to ensure that the non-Methodist charitable purposes in question were not contrary to Methodist purposes or discipline, as stated in the Standing Order.

The Conference, by way of interim reply, referred the memorial to the Methodist Council and Law and Polity Committee, for consideration and report to a later Conference. The committee has completed its consideration and now proposes a small amendment to the Standing Order to make its meaning clearer, as appears below. The committee also suggests a small amendment to include a cross-reference to subclause (iA) that had been omitted, and a deletion to remove the reference in subclause (iv) to the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust. The latter, being no longer an exclusively Methodist charity, is better included within the general provision of Standing Order 650(6)(v).

*****RESOLUTIONS**

37/9. The Conference receives the Report.

37/10. The Conference amends Standing Order 650(6) as follows:

(iv) ~~the support of the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust;~~

(v) ~~subject to~~***having given due consideration to the charitable purposes listed in*** (i), ***(iA),*** (ii) and (iii) above, the support from the general church fund of any other charitable fund or body, except in so far as such support would be contrary to any purpose of the Methodist Church or to Methodist discipline.

37/11. The Conference adopts the Report as its further reply to Memorial M20 of 2023.

SECTION J
STANDING ORDER 725 – MCPOC POWERS TO ACT

The Conference of 2024 noted[3] that the committee had been asked to review the way in which the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (MCPOC) is able to act, and specifically whether MCPOC should only respond when the oversight bodies (the Student Oversight Committee or the district Probationers' Committee) make recommendations.

This report explains the committee's deliberations (in consultation with MCPOC and the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee) and invites the Conference to make amendments to Standing Order 725 as a result.

Standing Order 252(10) currently gives MCPOC overall responsibility for the recruitment, training and oversight of individual student and probationer presbyters and deacons and states that MCPOC reports to the Ministries Committee as provided in Standing Order 311. Importantly, however, Standing Order 311 makes clear that MCPOC only reports to the Ministries Committee (and through it to the Conference) about matters of general policy and process. Recommendations about individual candidates are made as appropriate directly to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee by the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation (see Standing Order 714(1)). Recommendations about individual students and probationers are made as appropriate directly to the Presbyteral Session or Conference Diaconal Committee by MCPOC, as provided in Standing Orders 725(1) and (2).

Since the 2013 Conference the requirement has been that reports about diaconal probationers be submitted by the Warden of the Order to the district Probationers Committee which has in turn made its recommendations to MCPOC. The phrase "in the case of presbyteral probationers" in Standing Order 725(2), which suggests that the district committee only deals with presbyteral probationers, is therefore otiose and should be deleted.

If Standing Order 252(10) gives MCPOC overall "oversight of the whole period of a person's training from acceptance as a candidate by the Conference until reception into Full Connexion and ordination", clause (2) of Standing Order 725 makes provision for a number of subsidiary bodies to make recommendations about individuals to MCPOC in order for MCPOC to fulfil that responsibility: in practice, the Queen's Oversight Committee

3 Under the sub-heading of *Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee* in Section K of Part 2 of the Methodist Council Report to the 2024 Conference (Item 22 in the Agenda), at paragraph 59.

in respect of student deacons and presbyters and district Probationers Committees in respect of probationer deacons and presbyters.

The implicit assumption seems to be that all recommendations will come through the subsidiary bodies to MCPOC and thence to the Conference, although in cases of discontinuance of student presbyters and deacons that has not always been the practice. That implicit assumption would however uphold both the principle that oversight is holistic (not least in holding together pastoral care and rigorous assessment) and also the principle of connexional subsidiarity (namely that those closest to a situation that will be affected by a decision should play at least a part in the making of that decision). An amendment to Standing Order 030 to make this clear in all cases of discontinuance is offered in the report on Appeals Processes elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.

At present, Standing Orders 030(1) and (2) make provision for when "either of the oversight committees concerned recommends discontinuance (that is to say that a student cease training or that a probationer be not continued on trial or be not recommended for ordination)". Standing Order 030(3) makes it plain that for presbyteral and diaconal students the two committees concerned are MCPOC and the local oversight committee; and for presbyteral and diaconal probationers MCPOC and the district Probationers Committee.

That means that in cases of discontinuance MCPOC can vary recommendations it has received from a local oversight committee or district Probationers Committee. Yet if it can do that in the extremely serious matter of discontinuance, it follows that it can also do so in less serious matters. Sometimes MCPOC will do so to moderate the judgements of the subsidiary committees and to ensure connexional consistency. At other times, though, it will be because information has come to connexional officers and to MCPOC about matters such as a student's or probationer's physical or mental health and well-being, personal and family relationships, vocational development, or grievances about institutions and processes in the wider connexion. These may not immediately affect a student's or probationer's progress, and there may be good reason for not immediately disclosing them in that local situation either on grounds of confidentiality or because premature disclosure might adversely affect that situation.

In these latter situations it ought to be clear that MCPOC cannot just be reactive to recommendations from a subsidiary student oversight committee or district Probationers Committee but may also initiate action. This might involve such things as referring the student or probationer for occupational health assessments, or to the Stationing Advisory Committee, or to an investigative panel of its own or some other legitimate process.

At the same time, if MCPOC does initiate action, the principles of holistic oversight and connexional subsidiarity referred to above suggest that the Chair and officers of the relevant local or district oversight panel should at least be informed in confidence that this is happening or, where appropriate, they or representatives of their committee should be involved in any panel of meeting of MCPOC that is making a decision.

The following amendments to Standing Order 725 are proposed to effect the above. The proposed new clause (2A) cross-refers to Standing Order 251(3) which does not currently exist but is proposed to be introduced via the Standing Order amendments relating to Appeals Processes presented elsewhere in the Conference Agenda. If the Conference declines to approve the new Standing Order 251(3), the committee's Conference Sub-committee will advise the Conference as to alternative wording for the new Standing Order 725(2A).

> **725** . . . (2) Such oversight shall include elements of both pastoral support and assessment. To this end, the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall coordinate and guide the work of student oversight committees appointed for training institutions and theological colleges and~~, in the case of presbyteral probationers,~~ district Probationers Committees. In particular they shall formulate guidelines for practice and connexional criteria for assessment.
>
> ***(2A) If at any point concerns are raised about a student or probationer, including in the case of a diaconal student or probationer matters raised by the Warden and relevant bodies of the Methodist Diaconal Order, the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee may institute such procedures as it sees fit under the provisions of Section 03, Part 11 and this Section of Standing Orders and in accordance with the principles and procedures agreed by the Ministries Committee under Standing Order 251(3), always ensuring that the officers of relevant student oversight committee or district Probationers Committee are informed or consulted in the process.***

*****RESOLUTIONS**

37/12. The Conference receives the Report.

37/13. The Conference amends Standing Order 725 as set out above.

SECTION K
STANDING ORDER 410(1)(VIII) – CHILDREN AND YOUTH ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATION AT SYNOD

Under Standing Order 410:

> "(1) Subject to Standing Orders 785(8) and clause (6) below the Representative Session of the district Synod shall consist of:
>
> . . .
>
> (viii) two persons appointed by the last preceding meeting of the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly from the young people connected with the life of the Methodist Church in the District who attended that Assembly and who are members of the Methodist Church;
>
> . . ."

The Conference of 2024 made substantial amendments to what had been Standing Order 250 (now Standing Order 240), relating to the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly, to give effect to previously approved changes in the way in which the Methodist Church carries out its work with children and young people. Those changes included the removal of arrangements under which, in respect of each District, two persons were (or ought to have been) appointed by the Assembly as members of the Representative Session of their district Synod.

It was appreciated at the time that those changes had the effect that Standing Order 410(1)(viii) could not be effective and there was anecdotal evidence that it was often honoured in the breach rather than the observance. By the time the Conference met, however, it had not been possible to establish whether those responsible for work with children and young people, and children and young people themselves, wished to include an alternative provision to facilitate the engagement of children and young people with their District or whether the existing provision should simply be deleted, enabling more flexible and informal arrangements to be made. The committee is grateful to the 2023-24 Youth President who took this point forward after the Conference and proposed to the committee that Standing Order 410(1)(viii) should be deleted, leaving the way clear for the development of the involvement of children and young people with the District in relevant ways in the light of modern models of participation.

The Committee therefore invites the Conference to delete Standing Order 410(1)(viii).

*****RESOLUTIONS**

37/14. The Conference receives the Report.

37/15. The Conference amends Standing Orders by deleting Standing Order 410(1)(viii).

SECTION L
AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

As usual, the committee submits a list of corrections to Standing Orders, consequent upon decisions already taken by the Conference, or to remedy minor errors or omissions.

1. **Minor and consequential amendments for ratification**

In the preparation of the 2024 edition of Volume 2 of CPD, a number of minor editorial or consequential corrections were made to give effect to the Conference's decisions and to ensure coherence within Standing Orders. These corrections are additional to the amendments which were made under Resolutions 50/7 and 50/8 (2024) to give effect to the extensive cross-referencing work required as a result of the Oversight and Trusteeship implementation (reported in Section B of the committee's first report in Volume 1 of the 2025 Conference Agenda).

The amendments listed below were approved by the committee at its April 2025 meeting and are now submitted to the Conference for formal ratification. Details of the rationale for each amendment are available on request.

- Standing Order 004(ix): ". . .~~a~~ ***the*** Connexional Secretary . . ."
- Standing Order 102(1): ". . . ***~~subclauses~~*** ***items*** ***(v)-(vii)*** . . ."
- Standing Order 114(1D): ". . . the Connexional ~~Secretaries~~ ***Secretary*** . . ."
- Standing Order 200(1)(c): " . . . Methodist Church. ***No person shall be a member of the council who is stationed ~~(other than as President, Vice-President or Secretary of the Conference)~~ to serve in or is employed in the Connexional Team (other than as President, Vice-President or Secretary of the Conference)***.
- Standing Order 200 (4)(*a*)(i): ". . . Methodist Church***, or becomes stationed ~~(other than as President, Vice-President or Secretary of the Conference)~~ to serve in or becomes employed in the Connexional Team (other than as President, Vice-President or Secretary of the Conference)***.
- Standing Order 235(4)(vi) : ". . . any of Standing Orders ~~731(7A)~~ ***714A***, . . ."

- Title to Part 3 of Standing Orders: ***CONNEXIONAL*** COUNCIL-APPOINTED COMMITTEES AND AREAS OF WORK
- 362(3): ". . . the budget for ~~***from***~~ ***the connexional funds***
- Standing Order 373(2)(b): ". . . the policy adopted by the ~~Connexional Council~~ ***council*** . . ."
- Standing Order 377 (title): **Accounts:** ***date for closure***
- Standing Order 384: ". . . between the ***Connexional C***ouncil and the . . ."
- Standing Order 388(1): ". . . as further required in clause ~~(3)~~ (***4***) below."
- Standing Order 402(6) ". . . or (in the case of forces chaplains ~~and chaplains' assistants~~) . . ."
- Standing Order 48A4(3): delete item (xiii)
- Standing Order 502(4)(*a*): ". . . subject to ~~paragraph~~ ***sub-clause*** (*b*) below
- Standing Order 565B, item (iii): ". . .required by the ~~council~~ ***committee***."
- Standing Order 581(1): ". . . ***to be formed by amalgamation under*** ~~***Section***~~ ***Standing Order 501*** . . ."
- Standing Order 770(3): ". . . only (i) by ~~election~~ ***appointment*** as a representative . . ."
- Standing Order 770(4)(*c*): ". . . and advise the ~~Council~~ ***committee*** . . ."
- Standing Order 803(1)(*d*): "Such permission shall only be granted if the committee ~~or council~~ (or other body) . . ."
- Standing Order 806(4)(viii)(*e*): "in the case of ~~a~~ ***the*** Connexional Secretary . . ."
- Standing Order 913A(2): "In cases in which other ~~trustees~~ ***trustee*** bodies . . ."
- Standing Order 983A(3) ". . . ~~Methodist~~ ***Connexional*** Council . . ."
- Book VI, Part 1. In the heading for the list of offices in paragraph 2 at the end of Section 1 (Qualification for Appointment): ~~**Representational**~~ ***Governance***
- Book VII.A, Part 5 paragraph 2(b) "***. . . Occupational Health assessment as specified in Standing Order 715(2) shall be undertaken by each*** ~~***applicant***~~ ***person concerned . . ."***
- Book VII.A, Title of new Part 5A Guidance for Breakdown of Marriage ***or Civil Partnership***

2. **Minor and consequential amendments arising from the 2024 CPD editing process**

The committee invites the Conference to approve the following minor amendments to Standing Orders:

(a) **Standing Order 240(11):** amend "the Conference Office" to "the Secretary of the Conference", i.e.:

(11) There shall be elected annually the representative of the Assembly to the next Conference required under Standing Order 102(1)(viii). To be eligible to be elected, a person shall:

(i) *[deleted]*

(ii) if not already a member of the Methodist Church, have signified the intention of seeking to become a member.

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 ***Secretary of the*** Conference ~~Office~~ the steps to be taken to appoint a substitute.

(b) **Standing Order 730(8):** insert "and" between (i) and (ii), to clarify this is not an "either/or" scenario, ie:

(8) The committee shall not recommend that an application be granted unless:

(i) the applicant has given the signed assurance required in clause

(4) (iv) above and has satisfied the committee of adherence to Methodist doctrines and discipline and, if offering for the diaconate, of commitment to the life of the Methodist Diaconal Order; ***and***

(ii) the Stationing Committee has approved outline provisions for the stationing of the minister including proposals about the minister's exercise of ministry and terms and conditions of service, and the Transfer Committee is satisfied that the applicant is willing and able to fulfil them.

(c) **Standing Order 761(7):** when deleting text from the penultimate line of this Standing Order in 2024, the non-inclusive language in the first line should have been amended too, ie:

(7) ***If the applicant wishes to do so, the*** ~~The~~ applicant~~, if he or she wishes,~~ may remain in the vicinity of the committee room after being interviewed and, in that event, shall be informed orally by the chair or some other person appointed by the committee of the interviewing committee's recommendation as soon as the meeting is over. In any event, the interviewing committee's recommendation shall forthwith be communicated to the President of the Conference who shall, in writing, officially inform the applicant, and, where the applicant is a former deacon, the Warden of the Order.

3. **Standing Order 754(2A) - Methodist Diaconal Order Support and Advisory Group**

In 2023 Standing Order 755 was amended to replace the Methodist Diaconal Order "Leadership Group" with the Methodist Diaconal Order "Support and Advisory Group".

Standing Order 754(2A) should have been similarly amended, i.e.:

(2A) The deputy Warden shall assist the Warden of the Order in fulfilling the Warden's functions and responsibilities. Subject to clause (5) below the Warden shall delegate to the deputy Warden the discharge of such of those functions and responsibilities as the Warden, with the agreement of the Methodist Diaconal Order ~~Leadership~~ ***Support and Advisory*** Group, thinks fit.

4. **Standing Order 252(6) – MCPOC deputy chair**

Standing Order 252(6) states that the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers' Oversight Committee (MCPOC) shall appoint two deputy chairs. The committee understands that MCPOC works well with one chair and one deputy chair and wishes to continue operating in that way. The Conference is therefore asked to amend Standing Order 252(6) as follows:

(6) The member appointed under head (iv) of clause (1) above shall chair the committee. The committee shall appoint ~~two~~ ***one*** deputy chair~~s~~ from among its members who shall serve for an initial period of three years, which may be extended.

5. **Standing Order 728 - Reception into Full Connexional and Ordination: Presbyters**

Standing Orders 728(2)(*c*) and 728(5)(*a*) both contain an incorrect reference to the "Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Committee".

The Conference is asked to amend these references to the "Ministerial Candidates and Probationers ***Oversight*** Committee".

*****RESOLUTIONS**

37/16. The Conference receives the Report.

37/17. The Conference ratifies the Standing Order amendments listed in paragraph 1 of the Report.

37/18. The Conference amends Standing Orders as set out in paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Report.

SECTION M
ONGOING WORK

The committee wishes to highlight to the Conference the following items on the committee's workplan which it believes will be of interest to Conference members and managing trustees around the Connexion:

1. Producing guidance for managing trustees on a suite of topical Local Church issues including modified constitutions (in response to M21 and M22 from the 2024 Conference), online church (working in conjunction with the Faith and Order Committee), trustee responsibilities and delegation of trusteeship, and using different charitable vehicles (such as CIOs) for Local Church projects. Guidance on church mergers has already been produced and is available on the Methodist Church website.[4]

2. Producing updated guidance and template resolutions for managing trustees in respect of Circuit mergers and amalgamations under Standing Order 501.

3. In consultation with the Ministries Committee, advising on a gifts policy to deal with church members or congregations giving gifts to their ministers above an appropriate threshold in terms of monetary value.

4. Representation on the Task Group reviewing the *Guidelines for Good Practice in Confidentiality and Pastoral Care,* and continuing to work on the alignment of Standing Order 1104 with the Church's data retention schedules in the light of the recommendations of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) as to the holding of records relating to safeguarding matters.

5. Continuing to review CPD for non-inclusive language and to review and consolidate CPD as a whole.

*****RESOLUTION**

37/19. The Conference receives the Report.

4 https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/governance/guidance-on-church-mergers-and-amalgamations/

SECTION N
ADVICE REGARDING PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE PROBATION ASSESSMENT PROCESS

At its April 2025 meeting the committee was asked by the Connexional Council to advise on changes proposed by the Ministries Committee to the way in which probationers are assessed. The proposals are presented in the Ministries Committee's section of the Connexional Council report elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.

The committee expressed concern about the constitutional implications of the proposals and wanted more time to consider them before advising the Conference. The committee believes that the proposals require application of the Deed of Union, including how they are handled at the Conference and whether consultation with the Synods is also required; or, alternatively, that the proposals require a clarification of, or possible changes to, the Deed of Union, which – if required – will involve a Special Resolution process. The committee's Conference Sub-committee will advise the Conference as to what resolutions might be appropriate when the business is presented.

37/20. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION O
STANDING ORDERS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING MATTERS

By Resolution 22/21, the Conference of 2024 approved the principles of a proposed unified safeguarding structure to be implemented by 1 September 2025 and directed the Safeguarding Committee, in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee, to bring the necessary Standing Order amendments to the Conference of 2025. The amendments form part of a wider piece of work to consolidate and clarify all Standing Orders and CPD guidance relating to safeguarding matters, including separating out the functions of the Safeguarding Committee and its safeguarding panels (as mentioned in the Safeguarding Committee's report to the Conference of 2024).

The committee will bring the Standing Order amendments relating to the unified safeguarding structure through its Conference Sub-committee in the Order Paper, and expects to bring a suite of other safeguarding-related amendments to the Conference of 2026.

37/21. The Conference receives the Report.

Contact name and details	Matt Tattersall – Executive Director of Finance and Resources tattersallm@methodistchurch.org.uk
Action required	For approval
Resolutions	38/1. The Conference receives the report. 38/2. The Conference approves the re-appointment of Martin Tingle as a Director of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Trust Limited (the Trustee body of MMPS) for a period of three years commencing September 2025.

Pensions Administration

1 The MMPS Trustee undertook a review of the current provision of administration services in the light of a number of emerging risks. This review concluded that:

- deficiencies in the current IT system meant compliance with the November 2025 statutory deadline for connection to the Pension Dashboard was at significant risk;
- these same IT deficiencies meant that there was too much reliance on manual systems and processes which used complex spreadsheets. The service therefore was inherently riskier, prone to error (despite the high degree of diligence by the current admin team) and less efficient than you would expect, and
- as the administration team is small, meeting activity spikes is challenging. Furthermore, the admin team was also overly reliant on a key individual for critical tasks such as pensioner payroll with lack of capacity leading to insufficient sharing of tasks throughout the team.

2 Having shared these findings with the Connexional Council it was agreed that a joint project would be established (between the Church and the Scheme Trustee) to address the issues. However, it was noted that any change to the administrative provision was a decision for the Trustee.

3 Critical to this project was the implementation of a new IT system to replace the previous administration system which had been introduced around 10 years previously and had never functioned as planned. Given the current market for Defined Benefit Pension IT systems, there were no suitable systems identified that reflected the relatively small size of MMPS. The systems were designed for much larger schemes and were consequently prohibitively expensive. In addition,

a new system would not address the small team challenges. As a consequence, it was determined a third party administrator would need to be appointed to provide the administration service and ensure that the scheme could continue to meet its statutory obligations.

4 A procurement exercise is underway to appoint a new administrator to commence in late 2025. The implications of this change will be communicated to members as the implementation progresses. However, as well as mitigating risks to the MMPS Trustee, it is anticipated the new service will provide an enhanced service to members. In addition to providing pension professionals who can answer pension queries by letter, phone or email, some services will also be provided (in addition) on-line.

5 The consequences for the existing Pensions Admin Team are being dealt with on an individual basis in line with Connexional Team policy and support is being offered through the Wellbeing service.

Employer Nominated Directors

6 Under its Articles, six directors of Methodist Ministers' Pension Trust Limited (the Trustee body of MMPS) must be nominated by the Council and appointed by the Conference.

7 The Council recommends Martin Tingle is re-appointed as a director of the MMPTL for a period of three years commencing 1 September 2025. Martin has served as a director for three years and is being appointed for a second term.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

38/1. The Conference receives the Report.

38/2. The Conference approves the re-appointment of Martin Tingle as a Director of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Trust Limited (the Trustee body of MMPS) for a period of three years commencing September 2025.

39. Second Report of the Conference Business Committee

Contact name and details	Dr Daleep Mukarji Chair of the Conference Business Committee daleepmukarji@googlemail.com

En bloc items

The Business Committee proposes the following items to be taken *en bloc*:

3. Connexional Council part one sections A, C, D, E, H
6. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity part one
7. Trustees for Jersey Methodist Church Purposes
8. Trustees for the Bailiwick of Guernsey Methodist Church Purposes
12. Methodist Schools Appointments
19. Connexional Council part two sections K, L, N
20. Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland
21. Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes
22. John Wesley's New Room
25. Methodist Schools Property Company: Revision of Articles
26. Methodist Independent Schools Trust: Revision of Articles
27. Referred Memorials and Notices of Motion
34. Stationing Committee
35. All We Can
36. Methodist Ministers' Housing Society
37. Committee on Methodist Law and Polity part two, sections K, L, M, O
38. Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme
42. Ecumenical Report
44. Central Finance Board
45. Trustees for Manx Methodist Church Purposes
55. Necessitous Local Preachers' Fund
56. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report
59. Managing Trustees of Central Hall Westminster
60. Process for the appointment of the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order

Under the terms of SO 134A, if Notices of Motion are received about items in the *en bloc* list those items will automatically be removed from the list. In addition, by giving notice to the Assistant Secretary of the Conference, any six members of the Conference may, without proposing an amendment, require that an item be removed from the list and debated. Such notice must be given before the close of business on Monday 1 July (SO 134A(1)(c)).

*****RESOLUTION**

39/1. The Conference adopts the Report of the Business Committee.

1. PRESBYTERS OFFERING AS CANDIDATES FOR THE DIACONATE
No case

2. TRANSFER TO OTHER CONFERENCES AND DENOMINATIONS
No case

3. TRANSFER TO THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND
No case

4. PERMISSION TO SERVE ABROAD
See the draft of the stations

5. PERMISSION TO RESIDE ABROAD
See the draft of the stations

6. PERMISSION TO SERVE ANOTHER CHURCH (under Standing Order 735)
See the draft of the stations

*****RESOLUTION (Presbyteral Session)**

40/1. The Conference adopts the Report.

1. Recommendations of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation acting as a Transfer Committee

1.1 The report of the Appeals Committee on applicants who have appealed against the recommendations of the committee under Standing Order 730(10) [see also SO 730(14)]
No case

1.2 Report on cases where there have been medical objections
No case

1.3 Applicants for transfer recommended by a 75% majority or more in the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation to be transferred to the jurisdiction of this Conference under SO 730

Manoa Ratubalavu	Methodist Church Fiji
Michael John Claridge	Church of England (supernumerary)

1.4 Applicants for transfer recommended by a 75% majority or more in the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation to proceed to probation prior to Reception into Full Connexion
No case

1.5 Applicants for transfer recommended by a 75% majority or more in the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation to be received on transfer upon fulfilment of stated conditions

Chellaian Lawrence, Church of South India. Conditional on receipt of home church consent. Condition met.

Paulson Devasahayam Leela, Church of South India. Conditional on stationing. Condition met.

Eliska Jo Mulliner, Church of England. Conditional on stationing. Condition met.

1.6 Applicants not recommended for transfer

Annie Mwaka Deche, Methodist Church of Kenya

1.7 Former presbyters and deacons of other Churches applying to be received into Full Connexion (under Standing Order 731)

(a) **Those recommended**
No case

(b) **Those recommended upon fulfilment of stated conditions**
Jennifer Karen Walters, ex-Church of England. Conditional on stationing (ordained probationer). Condition met.

(c) **Those not recommended**
No case

1.8 Applicants recommended to be recognised and regarded as presbyters in Full Connexion with the Conference under Standing Order 732

Annie Jeanne MacNeal Baker-Streevy	UMC New England Conference
Kundai Katiyo	UMC Zimbabwe East
Simon Madhiba	Methodist Church in Zimbabwe
Ung Soon Nguang	The Methodist Church in Malaysia
Mary Elizabeth Gaston Peters (Meg)	UMC Western North Carolina Conference
Thomas Chingoka Kanyingi Phiri	United Church of Zambia
Eric George Raygor	UMC Western Pennsylvania Conference
Sydney Sichilima	United Church of Zambia
Neil Michael Vels	Methodist Church of Southern Africa
Loren Preston Whetsell	UMC Missouri Conference
Linberg Joon Yong Wong	Methodist Church in Malaysia

2. TRANSFER FROM THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND
No case

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REINSTATEMENTS TO FULL CONNEXION
Stephen Jay
Nigel Williams

4. **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REINSTATEMENTS AS LOCAL PREACHERS**
No case

*****RESOLUTIONS (Presbyteral Session)**

41/1. The Conference adopts the Report.

41/2. The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that those persons whom the Conference has duly adjudged as fit to be received by transfer as presbyters be now or at a specified date presented to the Representative Session to be received into Full Connexion with the Conference, and if not already ordained, to be ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands.

41/3. The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that those persons whom the Conference has duly adjudged as fit to be received by reinstatement as presbyters be now or at a specified date presented to the Representative Session to be received into Full Connexion with the Conference.

Contact name and details	The Revd Steven R M Cooper Connexional Ecumenical Officer eo@methodistchurch.org.uk

Why bother with ecumenism?

We shouldn't bother with it. Hear me out... I bother my manager to approve my annual leave. I bother my next door neighbours to find out what day I put the bins out. I bother my landlord to fix the leaking tap in my kitchen... Bothering is taking someone from where they want to be and inconveniencing them to somewhere else. That is not what ecumenism is for me. Ecumenism is an opportunity to be joyful and intentional. Ecumenism is something that we should be seeking and creating and growing and rejoicing in... So: why bother with ecumenism? Please don't bother with it, but let's embrace it joyfully together.

Words of Samuel Ebden, a young adult Methodist from London, addressing the Forum of Churches Together in England (CTE) in March 2025. Samuel articulated the joy and the enrichment of our faith, and of the witness and service we can offer to our communities, that come with a truly ecumenical perspective on – and ecumenical engagement with – the Church's life. He turned the question "Why bother?" on its head, debunking the notion that ecumenism is something to be experienced as a hassle or a burden: rather, done right, it is the very opposite – life-giving, energising, faith-building, and rooting us more profoundly in Christ.[1]

2025 has been hailed by the World Council of Churches as an 'ecumenical year'. It is a year in which, unusually, both western and eastern Churches have celebrated Easter at the same time. And it is a year in which many Churches across the world are marking the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea in 325, from which (with augmentations by the Council of Constantinople in 381) originated the Nicene Creed – which unites Christians of so many traditions in our understanding of God's Trinitarian nature, to this day.

Ecumenism at national level
CTE Forum 2025

The triennial Churches Together in England (CTE) Forum, which took place in Swanwick over 17-19 March, was an outstanding demonstration of the reality articulated by

1 Samuel's presentation, as a winning contestant in the 2025 CTE Forum's *Theology Slam* competition on the theme "Why bother with ecumenism?", can be viewed in full at www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDgbw-NgfF8

Samuel Ebden above. The theme of the Forum was *One but not the Same: Celebrating diversity – Living with difference*. The Forum brought together nearly four hundred representatives from CTE's more than fifty Member Churches and its associated ecumenical organisations, including many Methodists. Its programme included high-quality presentations accompanied by profoundly stimulating artistic reflections on a number of key issues for our churches and communities today, from a truly diverse range of Christian perspectives. These issues included: the call to peace; synodality (walking together) in the life of the churches; the Priesthood of All Believers; Artificial Intelligence and the Church; Racial Justice and reparations; and the significance today of the Council of Nicaea.

The Forum's concluding address was given by Methodist President of Conference, the Revd Helen Cameron (in her capacity, at that time, as one of the six Presidents of CTE), on the theme "The Pursuit of Unity". In Helen's words: "My deep desire is that we might rediscover the joy of Christian Unity, and shed some of the burdens about our disunity in order to embrace more fully the joy of our God-given unity."

Helen's address continued later, "Ecumenism must not become a technical conversation: It's got to begin with the profound love of God in Jesus Christ for each of us and for all the world. So this is my Call to Arms: I am always willing to take part in drafting conversations for statements; but I want us in our ecumenical relationships to be filled with the joy and the hope and the love that Christ gives us through the Holy Spirit. Because that's the holy living to which we are called.

"And we are mistaken if we associate the holiness of God with separateness, with separation: because we know that the Jesus-event is about the exact opposite. It's about God coming to be with us, and to be in the difficult places. And the coming of Jesus casts a new light on everything: you can't look at things in the same way anymore. We are invited to be caught up in the mystery of God's love, and to speak of the beauty and the splendour of God's love, and to show that generous and profligate love of God to those who need it most. And if we can't do that together, we are lost.. . .

"My prayer is that we will abandon separatism, and take up love."[2]

Churches Together in England

In addition to its triennial Forum, CTE continues as a key strategic partner for the Methodist Church in our engagement ecumenically in England. It provides significant

2 Much more information about the 2025 CTE Forum, including a link to video recordings of Helen Cameron's full address and all of the keynote contributions to the event, can be found at https://cte.org.uk/about/about-cte/forum/2025-forum/

support to us, both in working together with other Churches at national level, and in supporting and resourcing local ecumenical relationships. CTE's current strategic objectives and priorities are as follows:

Objective 1: Support CTE's role of assisting the churches speaking into the world

- Ensure that a variety of Christian voices are reflected on key issues emerging from the churches.
- Develop CTE's reputation as the go-to place for ecumenical information in England.

Objective 2: Develop the work of diversity for CTE and its members

- Develop a new generation of young ecumenists.
- Deepen and broaden the engagement of Member Churches with the 'Living with Diversity Well' ecumenical journey.
- Engage Member Churches with emerging Racial Justice themes.

Objective 3: Provide an environment for members to share their understanding, experience and practice of mission

- Facilitate and enable churches to work effectively together in mission through co-ordinating groups, conferences and other projects.
- Develop partnerships with other mission-focused groups.

Objective 4: Find ways to support intermediate and local ecumenism[3]

- Continue to support quality training, the sharing of good practice and resources to support intermediate and local ecumenism.
- Deepen the relationship between CTE, its Member Churches and intermediate and local ecumenism.
- Increase the diversity of Member Churches engaged in intermediate ecumenism.
- Develop intermediate ecumenism in areas where it is not currently functioning.

3 The term 'intermediate ecumenism' means ecumenism at regional or county level, for example through county-scale Churches Together groups, and the work of ecumenically-appointed County Ecumenical Officers.

Objective 5: Create more opportunities for churches to do theology together

- Prioritise CTE's engagement in ecumenical bi-lateral conversations and other opportunities for ecumenical dialogue.
- Encourage ecumenical theological publications and conversations.
- Maximise the opportunity of Member Churches celebrating 1700 years of the Council of Nicaea.

Objective 6: Find ways to extend CTE's role in relationship building

- Support CTE Presidency Groups to deepen ecumenical relationships.[4]
- Collaborate with other ecumenical instruments and networks.
- Maximise opportunities to build ecumenical relationships with CTE Members and other movements.

The Methodist Church is represented on CTE's Enabling Group by the Revd Dr David Chapman and by the Connexional Ecumenical Officer, the Revd Steven Cooper, who was also appointed this year as a Trustee of CTE. The Churches Group for Evangelisation, coordinated by CTE, is chaired by our own Director of Evangelism and Growth, Trey Hall.[5]

The Free Churches Group

The Free Churches Group (FCG) now encompasses 29 denominations in England and Wales, including two new member churches in the past year: the Redeemed Christian Church of God, and Vineyard Churches UK & Ireland. The FCG continues to support its member churches in seeking to promote faithful Christian witness in the public square; in particular through enabling routes into chaplaincy – in prisons, healthcare, education and the military – for smaller churches which historically have not had easy access to serving society in this way.

For the past three years, until March 2025, the Moderator of the Free Churches Group (and thereby one of the six Presidents of CTE) has been the out-going President of the Conference, the Revd Helen Cameron. On Palm Sunday, Helen handed on this mantle for the next three years, to the Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson of the United Reformed Church.[6]

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4 CTE's Member Churches are grouped into six groups, from each of which is designated a CTE President. These six Presidency Groups are: the Church of England; the Roman Catholic Church; the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches; the 'Fourth Presidency Group'—comprising Lutheran churches, Quakers, and the Church of Scotland (Presbytery of England); the Orthodox Churches; and the Free Churches Group (of which the Methodist Church is a member).

5 More information about CTE and its work is available at https://cte.org.uk/

6 More information about the Free Churches Group can be found at www.freechurches.org.uk

Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales

Cytûn's work is wide-ranging in facilitating opportunities for connection between the Churches in Wales, and has a particular focus on supporting churches in engaging, together, with public policy issues. In July 2024, Cytûn welcomed a new General Secretary, Dr Cynan Llwyd who is leading this work energetically. The Methodist Church plays a significant role in Cytûn, with its Board of Trustees being chaired by Methodist District Chair, the Revd Jennie Hurd.[7]

The Covenanted Churches in Wales

The Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales, of which the Methodist Church is a partner Church, is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.[8] The Commission is chaired by a Methodist, Ms Miriam Moules. Proposals for how we might achieve full visible unity in Wales have been put forward on a 'now or never' basis, with the Commission adopting a 'sunset clause' for the Covenant of 2028 for these proposals to make progress. These proposals include papers on 'supplemental ordination and commissioning', that would enable a new relationship of unity between the Covenant's five partner Churches. The draft proposals constitute a four-pronged approach that includes:

- Shared decision making for mission and service;
- Shared oversight and leadership;
- Shared understanding of ordination;
- A joint commission to develop shared patterns of worship.

The proposals are not yet finalised, and will in due course have to come to the Conference and governing bodies of the other four partner Churches. So far discussions have been fruitful, and the author of the paper on 'supplemental ordination and commissioning' is in liaison with Methodist colleagues, to seek to ensure that, when it comes to the Methodist Conference, what is proposed is able to meet with the Conference's approval.

Ecumenism in Scotland

The Scottish Christian Forum is now the ecumenical body in Scotland, this following on from the decision of the 2024 Methodist Conference, along with that of ecumenical

7 More information about Cytûn is available at www.cytun.co.uk
8 The Covenanted Churches in Wales are: the Covenanted Baptist churches, the Presbyterian Church of Wales, the United Reformed Church, the Methodist Church, and the Church in Wales (Anglican).

partners (the members of ACTS).[9] Work is now underway to sort out the working methods for this body, and put into practice the decisions made by the Churches in Scotland. Alongside this, the work of trusteeship for ACTS continues, with that body also changing and developing into its new role as a grant giving body.

There are a number of bi- and tri-lateral partnerships and declarations within the ecumenical landscape in Scotland, that allow for the addressing of issues between respective Churches, and the growth of friendship both locally and institutionally. Among these is the Episcopalian, Methodist and United Reformed relationship within 'EMU', which in the next year will be undergoing its periodic review. Alongside this the EMU Churches, working with the Church of Scotland and others, are conducting an ecumenical audit of church life in Scotland, looking at both local, regional and national matters, to see where things are going well and where more support is needed.

Methodist relationships with particular Churches

The Church of England

The Methodist Church in Britain and the Church of England are committed to an especially close relationship with one another under the Anglican-Methodist Covenant. Signed on 1 November 2003, the present connexional year marks the Covenant's 21st anniversary. A special anniversary service was held at Methodist Central Hall Westminster, followed by evensong in Westminster Abbey, in November 2024. At that event, both the then-Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and President of the Conference Helen Cameron spoke solemnly and with sincerity: both about the frustration of not having achieved more in our journey together as Churches over the past 21 years, but also recognising how far we have come – and the potential and the mandate that our Covenant relationship continues to hold, for us to grow much closer in our life together. With her address, the President of the Conference articulated a profound vision of what our life together as Churches should mean:

"...We all know too well that our desire for unity can get overtaken by our fears about losing things – particularly control; about having to let go and becoming different. But if the Cross is the place where we are truly one, then we need to learn again the strange upside-down nature of God's order: where what appears to be loss is found to be gain; what appears to be death is really life in all its fullness; what appears to be desolation is glory.

9 ACTS is Action of Churches Together in Scotland — from 1990 to 2022 the national ecumenical organization for churches in Scotland, which is now defunct in that form, but is transitioning to become a grant-giving body to support ecumenical work in Scotland.

"To be renewed this day in our faithfulness to God's gift and promise of unity, through our Covenant together, is to be renewed in our willingness to be together where Jesus is, in his lifting up upon the Cross. To be where Jesus is, upon his Cross, is to suffer, and resist the powers that be and their vision for the world. 'When I am lifted up,' says Jesus, 'I will draw all people to myself.' To be where Jesus is on his Cross is necessarily to have a universal horizon.

"Our trust in each other, this Covenant, our Christian unity cannot be an end in itself. It has value if it's a necessary step towards the unity that God wills for the whole world. Otherwise, we're just part of the continued polarizations of the world in terms of faith and no faith, and every faith.

"To be renewed in our search for Christian unity, which this anniversary of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant permits, surely is to commit ourselves to a larger and more urgent unity – which includes most obviously the divisions between religions and faiths that are the source of so much pain and hurt and destruction in our world currently.

"So my prayer at this moment is that we will keep walking together in trust and in hope: not necessarily towards each other; but hand in hand together, towards the world – where peace is required, and justice needs seeking. May we do that together, in and through the love of God."

Life in Covenant

The past several months have been a difficult time for the Church of England institutionally; and relationships at local level with Methodists, while excellent in many places, continue not always to be easy in others. Methodists continue to experience difficulties with the Church of England's provision for ministry to those who are opposed to the ministry of women. And so the way forward in our relationship together as Churches is not without its challenges. Nevertheless we continue to explore how we may build bridges and share more closely in each other's life and ministry.

In February, the President and Vice-President of the Conference met with the Archbishop of York in their annual meeting (that would normally also include the Archbishop of Canterbury, but for that position being vacant at the time). Their discussion included sharing around the joys and challenges affecting our two Churches at the moment. Both the President and the Archbishop expressed a shared desire to move forward with the ongoing work needed to enable fuller sharing between our Churches in the mission of God, including work towards a hoped-for relationship of 'full communion' between our Churches, in which our ordained ministers will be able to serve interchangeably between the two. There was conversation around the key issue of safeguarding in the life of our Churches, to which the Vice-President, Carolyn Godfrey, brought particular insight from her professional experience as a Safeguarding Officer. A mutually illuminating discussion

about the distinctive ministries of deacons in the Methodist Church and the Church of England led to a shared desire for further conversation to learn about the different forms diaconal ministry takes in our two Churches, and about how those ministries may relate with one another. The meeting also included discussion of the Methodist Church's leading role in the Let's End Poverty campaign, and about how our churches can share together in responding to the needs of local communities.

The 'Life in Covenant' Group continues to meet regularly, to help support the relationship between our two Churches; and the Faith and Order bodies of our two Churches have recently begun to re-examine the *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* proposals that might enable full interchangeability of ministers (in the first instance, presbyters) between our two Churches. This work continues.[10]

MAPUM: Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission

The MAPUM – which in addition to Methodist and Anglican representatives includes active observer participants from the United Reformed Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Baptist Union – continues to meet regularly to support shared mission between the Methodist Church and its Anglican and other ecumenical partners, particularly at local level. The focus of MAPUM is not on Anglican-Methodist relations *per se*, but more broadly on the mission of the Church in Britain, and on how Methodists and Anglicans – together with others – can most effectively share in that enterprise.

A successful initiative of the MAPUM in March was an online joint gathering of Methodist Superintendents and Church of England Area Deans and their colleagues, to learn from each other about the ways in which Circuits and deaneries work, and to explore how they might work together. This gathering established a precedent for such joint online gatherings for Anglican and Methodist colleagues, which will be developed further, to explore various issues of mutual concern in the exercise of our mission and ministry in local communities.

The Roman Catholic Church

The Methodist Church received with sadness the news of the death of His Holiness Pope Francis, and paid tribute to his life of faithful Christian witness.[11] At the time of writing, we await news of the late Pope's successor, and hold in prayer the Roman Catholic Church as she navigates this period.

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10 For more on the Anglican-Methodist Covenant for England, see https://anglican-methodist.co.uk

11 The Methodist Church's full statement on the death of Pope Francis, with a prayer of thanks for his life, is available at www.methodist.org.uk/about/news/a-statement-on-the-death-of-his-holiness-pope-francis/

The British Methodist-Roman Catholic Dialogue Commission met over three days in November 2024 in the ecumenical shrine village of Walsingham, Norfolk, to conclude its work of the past five years. The commission worked on its final report of this quinquennium, which will be released soon, and prepared for the next round of its work. The commission includes representatives of both the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of England & Wales, and of Scotland; and Methodist representatives from across Britain, although we currently have a vacancy for a Methodist participant from Scotland.

On the agenda for the dialogue's coming phase of work is the study document *The Bishop of Rome*, published by the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity in June 2024. Issued with the blessing of the late Pope Francis, it is a creative and generous-spirited document that seeks, with humility and self-awareness, to explore ways in which the office and ministry of the Pope might come to be offered, understood and received as a gift for all the Churches; as way of helping to signify to the world the essential unity of the Church.[12]

The Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome (MEOR)

The Methodist Church in Britain continues to support the excellent work of the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome. The Director of the MEOR, currently the Revd Matthew Laferty, has for some years been deployed as a mission partner of the British Methodist Church. A process in now underway to transfer the mechanism by which the Director is deployed to the United Methodist Church, working in partnership with the World Methodist Council and other partners through the MEOR Forum[13] – the governing body of the MEOR, co-chaired by the General Secretary of the World Methodist Council and the President of the Methodist Church in Italy (OPCEMI). The Methodist Church in Britain will remain a close partner with the MEOR, but this change in its organisational arrangements will enable it to break free from historical concerns of being too heavily under the direction of British Methodism, and enable it to flourish as the representative body in Rome of the World Methodist Council.[14]

The United Reformed Church

The Methodist-URC Liaison Group continues to meet twice in each calendar year, once in person usually in London and once by video conference, to discuss topics of common interest and concern to both Churches, especially in relation to where the two Churches

12 The document *The Bishop of Rome* is available to read at www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/news/2024/2024-06-13-il-vescovo-di-roma-nuovo-documento-dpuc.html
13 These partners include the Methodist Church in Britain, the Italian Methodist Church and the European Methodist Council.
14 Visit the website of the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome at https://meorome.org

work together in Local Ecumenical Partnerships. Recent topics have included: the deployment of ordained ministry at a time of acute shortage of ministers; trusteeship and oversight in relation to Local Churches, Circuits (Methodist) and mission areas (URC); and the constitutional status of Ecumenical Areas. The group has published guidance notes for the welcome and induction of Methodist and URC ministers in Local Ecumenical Partnerships and is currently working on general guidance concerning the formulation of Terms of Settlement and Letters of Understanding in situations where a URC minister is to serve on the staff of a Methodist Circuit or a Methodist minister is to serve on the staff of a URC Mission Area. We encourage Local Ecumenical Partnerships to rediscover the rich ecclesial and spiritual endowments of the Methodist and Reformed traditions, as found for example in the offices of elder and steward. In all its work, the group takes account of the different legal and ecumenical context in Scotland and in Wales. The group is grateful for the support and guidance of the respective denominational ecumenical officers, Steven Cooper (Methodist) and Lindsey Brown (URC). The presence of Hilary Treavis, ecumenical officer for the Baptist Union, as an observer is greatly valued for her wisdom.

International ecumenical engagement

The Methodist Church in Britain maintains ecumenical links internationally, not least through its membership of Churches Together in Britain in Ireland (CTBI), the World Council of Churches (WCC), and the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE).[15]

In March 2025 the Methodist Church was represented by the Connexional Ecumenical Officer at an historic ecumenical conference in Rawalpindi, Pakistan hosted by the Christian Study Centre – an ecumenical institution that involves the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Pakistan (our partner Church in Pakistan, being a union of Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian and Lutheran Churches), and others. The theme of the Conference was the Council of Nicaea at 1700 years, and what it means for the Church today – particularly in responding to a context that is majority-Muslim. Keynote speakers who travelled to Pakistan for the conference included HE Kurt Cardinal Koch of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, the Rt Revd Dr Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, and HE Archbishop Angaelos of the Coptic Church in Britain. The conference represented a significant and internationally noteworthy moment of ecumenical witness by the Churches.[16]

15 See the websites: CTBI: https://ctbi.org.uk – WCC: https://oikoumene.org – CPCE: www.leuenberg.eu

16 More information about the Christian Study Centre, Rawalpindi – and about the conference that took place 27-30 March 2025 – can be found at the Centre's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100091624969153

In October 2025, in this 1700th anniversary year of the Council of Nicaea, the World Council of Churches will hold the Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order, near to Alexandria in Egypt. This is a major global gathering, the last such conference having taken place in 1993. The theme of the Conference will be: "Commemorating the Council of Nicaea: Where Now for Visible Unity?" The Methodist Church in Britain will be represented at the conference by the Revd Evelyn Bhajan.

Conclusion

This report in many ways only scratches the surface of the ecumenical life of the Methodist Church. There are many other areas of shared engagement with other Churches, across the Church's life both connexionally and locally, which are not captured here. Some of these points of ecumenical engagement are reflected in other reports to the Conference.

Locally, up and down the Connexion, Methodist churches are actively engaged in partnerships of various kinds with their local ecumenical neighbours. In the past year, for example, well over 200 Methodist Local Churches have entered into or renewed arrangements to licence their premises to local ecumenical partner churches for use for worship – most commonly Pentecostal and new and independent churches that may not have their own premises.

The past year has been the first for some time in which the Methodist Church has had a full-time Connexional Ecumenical Officer. The Methodist Church's ecumenical relationships locally are also supported by an expert network of District Ecumenical Officers, who do a huge amount to promote and enrich the ecumenical life of the Methodist Church – although there are vacancies for these roles in some Districts. In addition we are indebted to the staff of TMCP (Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes), to whom falls a significant amount of work in supporting Local Churches in their ecumenical arrangements, wherever property is concerned.

Work has begun, albeit at an early stage, on formulating an Ecumenical Strategy for the Methodist Church, in order to give a clear and coherent basis to our ecumenical engagement at every level of the Church's life. This will come to the Conference in due course.

*****RESOLUTION**

42/1. The Conference receives the Report.

Contact name and details	Rachel Lampard, Director of Social Justice and Social Action LampardR@methodistchurch.org.uk
Action required	For information
Resolutions	None

Summary of content

Subject and aims	This briefing introduces the session on conferring on justice for refugees and asylum seekers and invites members of the Conference to consider some questions in preparation.
Main points	Current situation facing refugees, particularly in the UK Range of responses by churches Questions for consideration
Background context and relevant documents (with function)	The Justice-seeking Church report (2023) https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/29385/conf-23-pc-12-walking-with-micah-project.pdf https://jpit.uk/issues/asylum-and-migration

Briefing for conferring on the Justice Priority: justice for refugees and asylum seekers

"The war with ISIS was very bad. My family had death threats for saying what we thought was wrong. People were being killed on the street for smoking or listening to music. I came here because I know the language and we know that the UK has a great tradition of taking care of refugees and I would be welcomed here. I want to be part of UK society and hope to be able to continue my medical training to become a GP."

Ali, a medical graduate from Iraq, Trinity Safe Space, Widnes, [from methodist.org.uk]

Introduction

1. The Methodist Conference 2023 adopted the Justice-Seeking Church report.[1] One of the recommendations was:

1 https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/29385/conf-23-pc-12-walking-with-micah-project.pdf

"that the Conference sets aside time each year for members to confer deeply on one of the five Priorities, in a way which offers resource or direction for the future, a practice that could also be reflected in districts and circuits. . . the main focus would be on discerning where God is acting for justice within the priority areas and conferring on how the Methodist Church can best join in."

2. Conference members will this year be invited to confer on the priority of **Seeking justice for refugees: one people, one world**. This paper offers some contextual information on the situation facing refugees, particularly those in the UK; describes some of the ways Methodists are engaging with this justice priority; and suggests some ways in which members of the Conference might prepare for this session.

Who is a refugee?

3. The definition of a **refugee** according to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention is:

   "A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

4. A **person seeking asylum** is someone who has left their country of origin and formally applied for protection in another country. They are awaiting the outcome of their application.

5. A **migrant** is a person who has moved to another country for any other reason, such as to find work or join family abroad.

The global picture

6. As of the end of June 2024, there were an estimated 122.6 million people around the world who had been forced to flee their homes. Among them are nearly 43.7 million refugees. 71% of the world's refugees and people in need of international protection are hosted in low- and middle-income countries. Children account for 30% of the world's population but 40% of all forcibly displaced people. People flee their homes for many reasons - conflict, violence, persecution and fear of human rights violations – and factors such as poverty and climate change may leave them fewer options.

7. The World Methodist Council's theme for 2024-9, *On the Move*, recognises the broader impact of migration and that most of our global Church Partners experience at first hand the impact of displacement and people on the move in their contexts. In the words of Martin Mujinga of the Africa Methodist Council, people are coming with 'faith seeking a home'. How do we understand and join in the movement of God in migration?

Refugees and asylum seekers in the UK

8. The incoming Labour Government scrapped the scheme to send asylum seekers to Rwanda without considering their asylum claims and has re-started assessing pending claims. The espoused focus of government policy efforts continues to be on reducing the numbers of people arriving across the Channel by small boats.

9. People from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran were the most common nationalities claiming asylum in the UK in 2024, together representing 25% of people claiming asylum. Of people who arrived on small boats, six in 10 were from just five nationalities – Afghan, Syrian, Iranian, Vietnamese and Eritrean. These are all countries where people face violence, conflict, persecution and human rights violations.

10. Unless you qualify for a resettlement scheme (eg such as the Ukrainian or Afghan schemes), there are no safe and legal routes through which you can claim asylum in the UK.

11. People claiming asylum experience a significant wait for their claims to be processed – at the end of 2024, there were 91,000 cases awaiting an initial decision, relating to 125,000 people. During this time, they are provided with accommodation and an allowance of just £7 a day and not permitted to work. If they are judged to have no recourse to public funds, they may well find themselves destitute.

12. The increased use of hotels to house people seeking asylum meant that large numbers of people were placed in communities without preparation, support or integration, and liable to be relocated at short notice. These hotels (and the people within them) became the focus of violence and racist hatred during the riots in summer 2024, with an impact on the mental health of refugees and people seeking asylum.

13. 47% of initial decisions on people's asylum claims made in 2024 were grants of protection, meaning they have been awarded refugee status or humanitarian protection. More people are granted protection on appeal.

14. Once people are granted asylum they have 56 days to find a new home. The number of households who became homeless and received help from a local authority after leaving asylum accommodation increased by 250% last year.

15. Migration remains a political issue in much of the UK. Asylum seekers represent less than 10% of long-term migrants to the UK in 2024, but are often at the sharp end of public policy and political rhetoric. In communities where people already feel economically squeezed and politically abandoned, narratives around asylum seekers being given hotel rooms, or perceptions of threat, have in some cases led to increased tensions. Political rhetoric which plays into these tensions and stokes racism is increasingly apparent.

How have churches responded?

16. The story of the people of God is full of experiences of journeying and of exile. Perhaps because of this, a deep ethic develops through the Bible about how travellers and foreigners are to be treated. Repeated instructions to 'love the stranger', respect the rights of foreigners, ensure the fair treatment of those at risk of oppression, and the reminder that 'you were once strangers in Egypt', mean that commandments to protect migrants are the most-repeated injunctions in the Bible. For Christians, added to this imperative is the Gospel understanding that by welcoming the stranger, we welcome Christ himself (Matthew 25:35).

17. God's people are a wandering people, and the Methodist Church in Britain is made up of many people who have chosen or been forced to leave their place of birth for various reasons. Our churches have been changed and are richer for that. Christians who are fleeing persecution or people who simply experience love expressed by local churches are growing and enriching the Methodist family.

18. Specifically looking at refugees and asylum seekers, some churches have been able to respond to asylum seekers arriving in their communities, opening premises for food and hospitality. Some churches have become Churches of Sanctuary, publicly committing to be welcoming places of safety for all and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution. Some individuals and churches have participated in community sponsorship schemes or hosting schemes, offering a home to people on resettlement schemes or with no recourse to public funds. Some people and churches join to make communities places of welcome, advice and support for people seeking asylum or resettling as refugees. And refugees and people seeking sanctuary help to enrich and shape their communities in return, with some coming to Christian faith for the first time or finding a new Christian home with local churches.

19. Through the Joint Public Issues Team, the Church has brought its voice to public policy debates around asylum and migration, calling for a fairer and more compassionate approach and defending the right of people to seek safety from war and persecution in the UK. It has enabled advocacy on issues including the Rwanda scheme, for asylum seekers to have the right to work, and the need to create new safe routes for people to come to the UK.

Conferring at the Conference

20. Conference members will be invited to confer on this justice priority. This will involve listening to the realities and experiences of people who have experienced seeking asylum and those who have been alongside them. The Conference will be invited to listen, pray and confer together, seeking where God is leading us.

21. Particularly for people for whom seeking asylum is part of their personal lived experience, this justice priority is not an issue nor is it just a story. Therefore, members of the Conference are reminded to be mindful of each other's needs as we confer. Members who wish to know more about the session beforehand will be given further details in advance.

22. To prepare for this conversation, members are invited to reflect on these questions, perhaps by discussing them with people in their churches or local communities:

    a. What has been your experience of the enrichment refugees and people seeking asylum have brought to your church or community? What have been the learnings and the challenges? How might your church be supported to provide a better (or even better) welcome to refugees and asylum seekers?
    b. How can Churches, Circuits and Districts consider the gifts and needs of refugees in their Mission/Growth planning and equality impact assessments?
    c. How should the Methodist Church be using its voice and power for justice for refugees and people seeking asylum?
    d. What one strategic or organisational change or issue might the Conference ask the Connexional Council to consider in the light of this conferring?
    e. Where do you see God at work as you reflect on these questions? How is God at work through those seeking refuge and those migrating to the UK.

Sources for the data in this paper include: United Nations High Commission for Refugees; UK Government immigration statistics and homelessness statistics; the Refugee Council.

44. Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church

Report for the eighteen-month period ended 31 August 2024
as approved by the Board at a general meeting of 16 December 2024

Chair's statement

Introduction

It is only six months since I last prepared a statement for the annual report of the Central Finance Board (the CFB). Traditionally, our reporting date has been the end of February, but the Board approved a change in accounting date to 31 August at its general meeting in 2023. To effect this change of date, the Board has therefore been enjoying a long eighteen-month reporting period from 1 March 2023 to 31 August 2024. Our general meeting of April 2024 approved written reports for the twelve-month period ended 29 February 2024 from myself and our Chief Executive Officer. These reports were submitted to the Conference in 2024. However, that report did not include financial statements due to the long reporting period.

This report will therefore include the financial statements for the eighteen-month period ended 31 August 2024. In future the CFB will report as at 31 August in each year, in line with the reporting date for most entities within the Methodist Church of Great Britain.

The end of an era

The attrition in the assets managed by the CFB has been well documented as the Methodist Pension Schemes have taken advantage of higher interest rates to "de-risk" their assets. This has been great news for the finances of the Church but has presented an enormous challenge for the CFB. The last of the pension scheme money managed on behalf of three major pension schemes will leave us in December 2024, meaning that the CFB and Epworth will have lost £550m of assets under management over the last five years (a small AVC portfolio of £4m will still be with us). This attrition was always anticipated by the pension trustees and the Executive, but its speed was faster than expected. We could not have managed the transition to a more outward facing organisation without the support of the Methodist Council. This period's financial statements include additional management fees of £500k that we received from the Methodist Council during the period.

Changing the shape of our business

The loss of the pension scheme assets means that the organisation manages far less equities than previously. In the five years to August 2024 the equities under management have fallen from £680m to £245m. This could have significantly reduced the power of our ethical voice in the investment market, but I am pleased to report that our Chief

Responsibility Officer, the Revd Dr Andrew Harper, has managed to raise the Methodist Church's profile with company boards during this time.

As well as equities, the CFB has also seen the bonds that it manages greatly diminish in value with the withdrawal of the pension scheme assets. This resulted in the consolidation of four bond funds into one managed fixed interest fund last year. With equity assets suffering a similar fate, the Executive is exploring whether the CFB Equity funds should also be merged into a managed vehicle.

At the general meeting earlier this year we were asked to report the recent changes in the assets managed by the CFB. Here is the 5-year history of each Fund's asset value:

CFB Fund value 2020-2024

	08.24 £m	**08.23 £m**	**08.22 £m**	**08.21 £m**	**08.20 £m**
UK Equity	30	56	164	248	337
Global Equity	30	48	136	198	147
Short Fixed	-	13	14	15	14
Gilt	-	5	4	5	5
Corporate Bond	-	20	18	114	100
Property	13	14	24	23	20
Managed Mixed	28	27	30	32	27
Managed Fixed	34	-	-	-	-
Methodist Council Medium Term	9	11	-	-	-
Methodist Council Long Term	61	61	-	-	-
Total Ex Deposit	**205**	**255**	**389**	**637**	**623**
Deposit	420	354	356	372	345
Total All	**625**	**609**	**745**	**1,009**	**968**

The Funds of the Methodist Council exclude assets invested into other CFB Funds. The CFB Managed Equity Fund is not included in the above table as it invests all of its assets into other CFB Funds.

Efforts to replace the lost assets have focussed on Epworth's Cash Plus Fund. The interest rate paid by this Fund closely tracks the Bank of England base rate, offering

highly attractive interest rates with same day access to UK charities. Over the last eighteen months the value of this Fund has increased by £181m. At the 31 August £703m (65%) of the assets managed within the organisation were Deposit Funds. Recognising that the favourable investment environment for the Deposit Funds could deteriorate later this decade, the Epworth business development team is focusing on the promotion of our managed portfolio and managed fund solutions for charities. They have built up a tremendous pipeline of potential new business – the success of the next year will be driven by whether or not they manage to convert this pipeline into new business.

The Deposit fund system

I noted in my last report the issues that users are having with our deposit fund system. It runs on very old software that has problems dealing with new software upgrades and communication with the separate online portal. I am once again grateful to the Methodist Council who have provided finance for a project to replace the systems that the Deposit fund uses. This project is already up and running and I hope to see a significant improvement in the service that we provide to church treasurers by the end of 2025. Part of the project will be looking at opportunities for digitisation and we will work with the Connexional Team to explore how this could affect the broader Church.

Thanks

Several times in this report I have referred to financial support from the Methodist Council as we dealt with the sudden loss of funds under management. Not only has their support been financial but they have also given us tremendous encouragement. The team has moved into the connexional offices in Tavistock Place and I look forward to the opportunities for closer collaboration that this will give us.

John Sandford
Chair
12 December 2024

Chief Executive Officer's report

The Chair has already reflected upon the assistance we have received from the Methodist Council over the last 18 months. This has enabled Epworth to invest in business development resources and activities leading to strong sales growth over the last 18 months, particularly in Epworth's Cash Plus Fund. We have yet to replace all of the assets under management that have been lost from the CFB Pension Schemes but there are encouraging signs that we will succeed in this key strategic objective.

Major projects

The new financial year is seeing the delivery of several projects that the team have been working on for some time.

Move to Tavistock Place

In November 2024 we became the main tenant on the top floor of Methodist Church House in Tavistock Place. We moved into a floor that is fitted out to the same standard as the Connexional Team enjoys in the rest of the building. We have our own meeting rooms but also have access to larger spaces on the ground floor through a reservation system.

Deposit Fund System

Our Chair has already mentioned the financial support our review of our Deposit fund systems has received from the Methodist Council. This project is investigating how we can modernise our operating model so that it is more digital and more accessible to church treasurers. In parallel with rethinking our processes in the Deposit Fund, we are looking at ways that we can protect the Church from the activities of bad actors that may seek to use the myriad accounts of the Church for nefarious purposes.

Epworth's resignation as an Authorised Fund Manager

Epworth has stepped back from its role as Authorised Fund Manager (AFM) to the Epworth Investment Fund for Charities. The regulatory burden of this role had become too demanding for a firm of Epworth's size. Epworth remains as the sponsor and investment manager to the Fund. Replacing Epworth as the AFM is Waystone, the largest independent Authorised Fund Manager for regulated funds in the UK. At the same time as Epworth stepped down as the AFM, the other Trustee to the Fund also changed with HSBC stepping down to be replaced by Bank of New York Mellon. This change of Trustee also involved a change of custodian to the Fund and the Epworth team were involved in a major transfer of data and assets between the custodians in October 2024.

New Trustee and Custodian to the Epworth Cash Plus Fund

HSBC are also stepping down as the trustee and Custodian to the Epworth Cash Plus Fund. These roles are likely to transfer to the National Westminster Bank (trustee) and CACEIS (custodian) in the first quarter of 2025.

Merger of the Epworth UK Equity Fund & Epworth Climate Stewardship Fund

In between all the above projects, the Change team are looking to organise the merger of Epworth's two Funds that invest in the UK Equity market. The Climate Stewardship Fund was launched when some of Epworth's clients wished to disinvest from the oil and gas sector ahead of similar recommendation from the Methodist Church's Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment. That differentiator between the Funds disappeared several years ago and the disinvestment by the Methodist Pension Schemes has shrunk both Funds down to uneconomic sizes. A merger of these Funds will also resolve a potential regulatory issue with the naming of the Climate Stewardship Fund as the FCA's new Sustainability Disclosure Requirements start to bite.

Award

I am delighted to announce that, for the third year in a row, Epworth received the award for best Charity Investment Fund Management Firm in the UK from the Wealth & Finance Awards.

Thanks

I must not forget to express my gratitude in this report to the Council and Epworth Board members who work so hard to support us and to the staff of the CFB that have stuck with us through difficult times, keeping their positive attitude and showing why the CFB is a unique place to work in the City of London.

David Palmer
Chief Executive Officer
12 December 2024

Chief Investment Strategist's report

The last 18 months have been a positive period for most investment markets, with leading global equity markets testing new highs, albeit with different drivers. The boom in artificial intelligence and technology has driven US, and thus global markets, while the UK, despite being a long-time underperformer, has had a good year with many companies seeing takeover bids. Inflation has moderated in 2024 and so interest rate sensitive assets such as bonds and infrastructure have improved after a challenging period. Our focus at the CFB has been to expand the range of external ethical funds we use to complement our in-house products and offer a strong, risk adjusted portfolio of investments that are aligned with our Christian values.

We expect central banks to continue cutting interest rates slowly through the year, but the number of interest rate cuts is difficult to judge given the volatility in economic data and

the number of elections taking place this year. We believe the risk of economic shocks has reduced but not disappeared completely, and the constant threat of geopolitical escalation continues to cloud the risk outlook. We do not think inflation should remain structurally higher now that the recent supply shocks have largely run their course, but further shocks cannot be ruled out. We have continued with a neutral position in equities, monitoring valuations for signs of excess after a prolonged period of strong performance across markets globally and think there continues to be a risk of near term correction. We continue to view bonds as attractive assets at current yields, considering our expectations for interest rate cuts and given the ongoing economic risks. We continue to have a negative view towards property assets in the UK, with a lack of available capital and significant investment needs, particularly in the office space. We believe some infrastructure assets are undervalued, but it is a wide sector. Private equity has performed better where investments are high quality and technology focussed, which we expect to continue, whilst commodities will remain volatile, driven by geopolitics.

The CFB UK Equity Fund (investing mainly into the Epworth UK Equity Fund) has had a strong 12 months, supported by takeover activity in the conviction part of the portfolio. In contrast the CFB Global Equity Fund (investing mainly in Epworth's Global Equity fund) has had a mixed year, with poor relative performance in the conviction portfolio due to the absence of large technology stocks, being offset by strong returns in the core portfolio.

Performance to 31 August 2024

	1 year %	3 years %pa	5 years %pa	10 years %pa
UK Equity Fund	18.8	3.9	5.6	5.8
FT All Share	17.0	7.5	6.6	6.1
Global Equity Fund	15.3	4.3	9.3	11.2
FT All World	19.4	7.9	10.9	11.9
Managed Mixed Fund	10.9	1.7	4.9	6.1

Chief Responsibility Officer's report

The CFB has remained focused on more effectively integrating our theological principles with our policies on ethical investing. These enhancements demonstrate the CFB's ongoing dedication to fulfilling God's call for stewardship over the planet and a concern for its people.

Over the last 18 months, the CFB has also sought to reflect the core social justice values of the Methodist Church, as detailed in the *Justice-Seeking Church* report, by

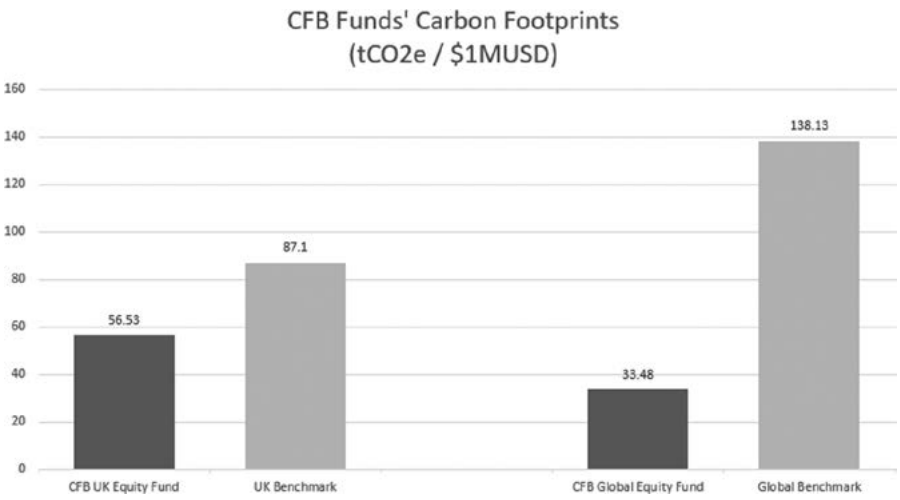
updating ethics policies to prioritise equality, personal integrity, and communal support. Importantly, the CFB adopted a new Conflict policy that seeks to implant these values into the devastating rise in global armed conflict.

Alongside policy making, the CFB remains committed to engaging companies to improve corporate behaviour. Working in collaboration with other investors, the CFB led the charge in exposing hypocrisy within HSBC and Barclays climate commitments. The resulting media pressure resulted in HSBC changing its climate policy to include greater investor transparency, and Barclays agreeing to ongoing scrutiny meetings.

Other areas of engagement include human rights abuses on tea plantations, the promotion of healthy food offerings, petitioning for greater concern on biodiversity, and tax justice.

The implied carbon footprints of the companies in which we invest remain a key performance indicator for the CFB and I am pleased to confirm that we continue to outperform in this regard.

Carbon footprint of CFB Equity funds vs benchmark at 31 August 2024



*****RESOLUTION**

44/1. The Conference receives the Report.

45. Trustees for Manx Methodist Church Purposes (TMMCP)

The following appointed Trustees served during the 2024/2025 connexional year:

Chair:	Mr Eddie Teare	
Trustees:	The Revd Dr Janet Corlett, Chair of the Isle of Man District	
	The Revd Stephen Ingrouille	
	The Revd Bryan Yardy	
	The Revd David Shirtliff	(Appointed 21 September 2024)
	Mr Andrew Foxon	
	Mrs Hollie Johnson	
	Mrs Claire Quayle	
Secretary:	Mr Alan Gelling (also Treasurer)	

1 The Trustees continue to exercise their responsibilities as Custodian Trustees of the Methodist Church in the Isle of Man under the Methodist Church Act 1982 (an Act of Tynwald).

2 Under the terms of the said Act there needs to be an even number of presbyters and lay members and action was taken during the period to appoint the Revd David Shirtliff as an additional trustee, thus restoring an even number.

3 This year, the TMMCP has managed a balanced trustee board of up to eight members, including lay members and presbyters, focusing on the asset management of the Methodist Church on the Isle of Man. Key activities included overseeing property titles and facilitating asset management for the housing needs of a member of the Connexional Team, with only one sale occurring during this year.

4 Baldrine Chapel premises were sold and the proceeds retained by the church to refurbish the hall as a place of worship.

5 We are aware that another property, Ballafesson, near Port Erin, is likely to cease worship in the near future and the title will then rest with TMMCP.

6 Financially, the trust has optimised chapel cash balances by securing favourable interest rates, thus enhancing income for the District through effective cash flow management. The transition of accounts to Lloyds Bank has markedly improved our banking services, facilitated by direct interactions with local decision-makers.

7 Furthermore, the trustees have effectively managed legacies and donations, ensuring the continued Methodist mission on the Island. We thank the dedicated individuals serving TMMCP, including our auditor and treasurer, whose expertise has been invaluable throughout the year.

*****RESOLUTION**

45/1. The Conference receives the Report.

Contact name and details	The Revd Dr Claire Potter potterc@methodistchurch.org.uk

1. Special Reports

1.1 Candidates accepted at previous Conferences and given permission to delay entry into training

(a) Those given permission to defer by a further year
No case

(b) Those given permission to enter into training
No case

1.2 Candidates to be accepted at this Conference and to be given permission to delay entry into training

No case

1.3 Candidates to be accepted at this Conference and to be given permission to transfer to another Conference

No case

1.4 Candidates conditionally accepted at previous Conferences

(a) Those judged to have fulfilled the condition and therefore to be accepted as candidates
Sue Ann Mak

(b) Those judged to have failed to fulfil the condition and thereby not to be accepted as candidates
No case

(b) Those still to fulfil the condition
Olive Ruzvidzo

1.5 Changes in expected date of Reception into Full Connexion

(a) To an earlier date
No case

(b) To a later date
Laura Sarah Martin from 2026 to 2027
Naomi-Rachel Frances Sparey from 2026 to 2027

1.6 Deferment or suspension under SO 726

(a) Student presbyters
No case

(c) Probationers
No case

1.7 Withdrawals under SO 727

(a) Candidates
No case

(b) Student presbyters
No case

(c) Probationers
No case

1.8 Transfer to other Conferences or Churches

No case

1.9 Reinstatements under SO 761

(a) Student presbyters
No case

(b) Probationers
No case

1.10 Discipline

No case

1.11 Discontinuance under SO 031(4)

Cassandra Emma Jennings

***RESOLUTION** (Presbyteral Session)

46/1. The Conference adopts the special reports of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

2. CANDIDATES FOR PRESBYTERAL MINISTRY

***RESOLUTION** (Presbyteral Session)

46/2. The Conference resolves to recommend to the Representative Session for training those persons whose names have been duly presented to it.

***RESOLUTION** (Representative Session)

46/3. The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that it accepts for training unconditionally or conditionally as the case may be the candidates for presbyteral ministry recommended by the Presbyteral Session whose names are recorded in the Daily Record for that Session.

3. PREACHERS RECOMMENDED FOR CONTINUANCE ON TRIAL

In the following lists:
** = change from the lists approved by the 2024 Conference*
+ = candidates accepted by the 2024 Conference

Surname	First name(s)	Due to be received into Full Connexion
Alex	Abi	2026
Banks	Kyung Mi	2026
Barker	Michaela Jayne	2026
Bediako	Eric Obenaye	2027
+Bohan	Kieran Matthew	2029
Bryon	Ian David	2026
Carney	Owen Geralllt	2027
Carrington	Anna Marie	2026
Chan	Chi Lok (Rocky)	2027
Chikaviro	Godfrey	2027

Surname	First name(s)	Due to be received into Full Connexion
Clark	Julie	2026
+Clayton	Thomas Richard	2029
+Coleman	Paul Michael	2029
+Cree	Samantha Ashley	2029
Cullingford	James Jeremy	2026
Edbarg	Christvin Johnson Kirubakara Pandian	2027
+Ferguson	Thomas	2029
Frimpong-Manso	Collins	2027
Geeson	Nicola Jayne	2026
George	Daniel Richard	2027
+Groves	Susan Elinor	2028
+Halliday	Kerry Louise	2029
Haraszti	Ildiko Maria	2027
+Hood	Jonathan	2029
Jacobs	Susan Nerissa	2026
+James	Hayley Anne	2029
+Lau	Ka Fai Stephen	2029
+Magaisa	Mwadzipaura	2029
+Mak	Sue Ann	2028
Marshall	Rebecca Jane	2026
*Martin	Laura Sarah	2027
Mayo	Stephen Neil	2026
+McLeod	Luke Rhys	2028
+Musey	Genevieve Mawufemor	2028
+Nott	Claire Louise	2028
+Odoom	Sophia Jemima	2028
+Peek	Joanne Rose	2028
Pipet	Dorothy Anne	2027

Surname	First name(s)	Due to be received into Full Connexion
Popoola	Joyce	2026
Read	Rachel	2027
+Reed	Sarah Jane	2029
Sheridan	Liam James John	2028
*Sparey	Naomi-Rachel Frances	2027
Sutcliffe	Claire Lucy	2027
+Tanveer	Aqeela	2029
+Taylor	Louisa Joanne	2028
Tedd	Paulette Rosemarie	2026
Thevanesan	Obeth Ratnesan	2027
Watkin	Stuart John	2028
Wheeler	Lorraine Fay	2028
+Williamson	Marc Alexander	2029

***RESOLUTION** (Presbyteral Session)

46/4. The Conference adopts the report on preachers recommended for continuance on trial.

4. Preachers on trial presented to the Conference for reception into Full Connexion in 2025

Surname	First name(s)
Banks	John Paul
Bell	Judith Helen Elizabeth
Birks	Tracy Ann
Brooker	Tina
Chun	Hannah Moon
Dowson	Ruth Elizabeth
Edmondson	Hayley Lisa

Surname	First name(s)
Gillard	Samantha Jane
Holmes	Christopher John
Hooks	Sarah Anne
Kwallah	Joseph Ndehi
Makunde	Sincere
McGhee	Kirsty Seonad
McMahon-Riley	Jason Lee
Pinkney	Rachel Elizabeth
Porter	Richard John
Prince	Rachael Helen
Sam	Agnes Eyiaba
Simmons	Heather Elizabeth
Smith	Fiona Marie
Thorne	Penelope

***RESOLUTION** (Presbyteral Session)

46/5. The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that it judges that those persons whose names are printed in the Agenda have duly completed their training and probation and thereby it recommends them to the Representative Session as fit to be received into Full Connexion with the Conference as presbyters and, if not already ordained, to be ordained.

***RESOLUTION** (Representative Session)

46/6. The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that those persons whose names have been read to the Conference and are printed in the Agenda and Daily Record be now received into Full Connexion with the Conference as presbyters, and that those not already ordained, be ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands on the afternoon of this day, 29 June 2025, at:

St Chad's Church Shrewsbury
Shrewsbury Abbey
All Saints Church, Wellington

Contact name and details	The Revd Andrew Charlesworth Chair of the Authorisations Committee

1. The Authorisations Committee has reviewed applications from Circuits who cannot meet a sustained need for the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper from the presbyters available in accordance with Standing Order 011. Careful consideration was given to applications using the recently revised criteria set out in Book VI, Part 3 of CPD.

2. This is the second year in using the new criteria which were established in 2023. Last year a new application form was used based on these criteria and this has been further adapted for this year, introducing two key questions relating to why any sustained need for the sacrament cannot be met from the people already available and whether the granting of an authorisation could lead to a blurring of the distinctions between orders of ministry.

3. Authorisations when granted, are for one year and their scope is limited to the Circuit in which the person resides. If the District Policy Committee (DPC) is satisfied that the person authorised remains suitable and the circumstances of the Circuit have not changed, it may on the application of the Circuit Meeting recommend a renewal of the authorisation for a second or third year, and the Authorisations Committee supports any such recommendation without further investigation (see lists B and C below). As we have continued to adapt the process following the changes to the criteria and to further regulate the processes for renewals a new much simplified application form was introduced part way through this year for such cases.

4. Throughout the year the Authorisations Committee has considered a small number of emergency applications which upon recommendation were subsequently granted by the President of the Conference.

5. For 2025, the committee considered a total of 89 applications (including renewals after three years): 10 for presbyteral probationers and 79 for lay people. 89 authorisations are recommended to the 2025 Conference.

6. Applications are scrutinised by Circuit Meetings and District Policy Committees before submission. We are grateful to those Circuits and Districts which supply us with full and accurate details, as that helps us complete our part of the process with the minimum of uncertainty and delay.

7. All applications for consideration in 2026 should be submitted by Friday 27 March 2026 to authorisations@methodistchurch.org.uk. The committee will meet on 21 April 2026 to consider the applications received.

8. The Authorisations Committee presents three lists to the Conference. List A records the recommendations of the Committee on the initial applications and renewals at the end of a three-year term. Lists B and C set out the recommendations of the Authorisations Committee on renewals for a second or third year.

9. The committee welcomes informal consultations with any Circuit considering making an application for an authorisation.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

47/1. The Conference receives the Report.

47/2. The Conference authorises the following persons to preside at the Lord's Supper for the year commencing 1 September 2025 in accordance with the provisions of SO 011:

Key: P = Probationer presbyter
L = Lay person
M = Approved under missional criterion

LIST A – New applications for authorisations for three years

Circuit Number	Circuit Name	Application	Category
1/7	Bury	Thomas King	L
1/9	East Cumbria	Dean Lawson	L
1/9	East Cumbria	Morgan Tebb-Roger	L
1/15	High Peak	Diane Farrow	L
1/15	High Peak	Ian Stubbs	L
1/15	High Peak	Jeanette Saxby	L
1/17	Kirkby Stephen, Appleby & Tebay	Heather Radford	L
1/17	Kirkby Stephen, Appleby & Tebay	David Askew	L
1/17	Kirkby Stephen, Appleby & Tebay	Penny Hilland	L
1/17	Kirkby Stephen, Appleby & Tebay	Richard McGregor	L
1/37	Trafford	Kevin Jaquiss	L
1/37	Trafford	Graham Axford	L
1/40	Western Fells	Lillian Dixon	L

Circuit Number	Circuit Name	Application	Category
1/40	Western Fells	Mandy Taylor	L
1/40	Western Fells	Vivienne Kendall	L
1/41	Wigan	Sandra Morris	L
2/1	Cymru	Elizabeth Jones	L
2/1	Cymru	Maryl Rees	L
2/16	Mid-Glamorgan Mission	Paul Cooke	L
2/16	Mid Glamorgan Mission	John Cullwick	L
5/4	Birmingham (Sutton Park)	Collins Frimpong-Manso	P
11/8	Cheshire (South)	Obeth Thevanesan	P
11/15	Potteries Mission	Jacqueline Gillon	L
11/15	Potteries Mission	Paul Owen	L
11/18	Stoke-on-Trent	Alison Price	L
13/7	Cleveland and Danby	Paul Wells	L
13/19	North Yorkshire Dales	Rachel Martin	L
15/1	Isle of Man	Christvin Edbarg	P
17/6	East Lincolnshire	Neil Baxter	L
17/6	East Lincolnshire	Nicholas Adams	L
22/1	Nottingham (North East)	Claire Sutcliffe	P
22/4	Nottingham (Trent Valley)	Colin Firbank	L
22/4	Nottingham (Trent Valley)	Neil Jones	L
22/4	Nottingham (Trent Valley)	Paula Dawson	L
22/13	Borders Mission	Jacqueline Jones	L
22/13	Borders Mission	Michael Render	L
22/16	East Staffordshire and South Derbyshire	Teresa Tilley	L
23/7	Leicester (Trinity)	John Aldridge	L
23/7	Leicester (Trinity)	Miriam Stevenson	L
23/9	Leicester (West)	Michael Furborough	L
23/11	Hinckley	Colin Haddon	L

Circuit Number	Circuit Name	Application	Category
23/11	Hinckley	Judith Cooke	L
23/12	Melton Mowbray	Janet Norburn	L
23/14	East Mercia	Lucy Catling	L
23/21	Peterborough	Brian Thornton	L
23/21	Peterborough	Nigel Lightfoot	L
23/21	Peterborough	Caroline Hutchings	L
25/1	Sheffield	Nick Waterfield	L
25/14	Doncaster	Elizabeth Worsley	L
25/14	Doncaster	Christine Ogley	L
25/14	Doncaster	Keith Mears	L
26/2	Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey	Peter Castle	L
26/11	Isle of Wight	Jane Morris	L
26/11	Isle of Wight	Mike Hackleton	L
27/34	Calderdale	Godfrey Chikarviro	P
27/34	Calderdale	Caroline Stead	L
28/1	Wolverhampton	Ildiko Haraszti	P
28/2	Hidden River	Peter Kelsall	L
28/3	Shropshire and Marches	Andrew Skitt	L
28/3	Shropshire and Marches	Jean Matthews	L
28/3	Shropshire and Marches	Keith Edlington	L
28/3	Shropshire and Marches	Vivienne Thomas	L
28/3	Shropshire and Marches	Michael Owens	L
28/14	Gornal and Sedgley and Blackheath and Halesowen	Jonathan Jones	L
31/1	Scotland	Daniel George	P
34/4	South Bedfordshire	Peter Baker	L
34/4	South Bedfordshire	Roger Owers	L
34/9	Chelmsford	James Lowe	L
34/9	Chelmsford	Val Carter	L

Circuit Number	Circuit Name	Application	Category
35/42	Widmore	Eric Bediako	P
36/5	Staines and Feltham	Paul Murphy	L
36/8	West Sussex (Coast and Downs)	Owen Carney	P
36/21	North Kent	Rocky Chan	P
36/27	Canterbury and East Kent	Linda Beverton	L
36/27	Canterbury and East Kent	Michael Baybutt	L
37/7	St Austell	Bernard Goudge	L
37/7	St Austell	John Keast	L
37/7	St Austell	Tony Warren	L
37/9	West Cornwall	Katherine Baxter	L
37/9	West Cornwall	Lester Scott	L
37/9	West Cornwall	Tony Warren	L
37/16	Tiverton and Wellington	Gill Atkinson	L
37/16	Tiverton and Wellington	Hazel Parsons	L
37/16	Tiverton and Wellington	Richard Allington	L
37/16	Tiverton and Wellington	Ruth Hartley	L
37/19	Ilfracombe and Barnstaple	Brenda Prentice	L
37/21	Torridge	David Ley	L
37/22	South Molton and Ringsash	Sheila Collier	L
37/24	Mid-Cornwall	Christine Roberts	L

LIST B – Renewals after one year for applications granted in 2024

Circuit Number	Circuit Name	Application	Category
1/37	Trafford	Dorothy Bretherton	L
1/41	Wigan	Kenneth Vernon	L
1/42	Wirral	Ian Jackson	L
1/42	Wirral	Steve Cooper	L

Circuit Number	Circuit Name	Application	Category
1/42	Wirral	Judith Stelfox	L
1/42	Wirral	Mark Thomas	L
2/6	Bridgend United Area	Neville Granville	L
2/20	South West Wales	John Birch	L
5/1	Birmingham	Julie Clark	P
5/6	Birmingham (West) and Oldbury	Michael Hall	L
11/4	Mid-Cheshire	Kathryn Craig	L
11/5	Dane and Trent	Anna Carrington	P
11/18	Stoke-on-Trent Mission	Amy Wyatt	L
11/18	Stoke-on-Trent Mission	Glynis Cooper	L
11/22	North Staffordshire	Karen Barnett	L
11/24	Staffordshire Moorlands	Beryl Stew	L
11/24	Staffordshire Moorlands	Gillian Meredith	L
14/10	Norfolk Broads	Shaun Cushion	L
14/15	Ely and Newmarket	Laura Martin	P
17/11	Barton, Brigg and Wolds	Jane Lloyd	L
17/15	South Holland	Darren Charlton	L
22/2	Nottingham (South)	Naomi Sparey	P
22/12	National Forest East	Alan Brady	L
22/12	National Forest East	Nicola Geeson	P
23/23	West Oxfordshire	Susan Jacobs	P
23/29	Vale of Aylesbury	Peter Honeyball	L
26/8	Dorset South and West	Pamela Woodland	L
26/8	Dorset South and West	Anthony Boyden	L
27/32	Bradford North	Stuart Ayrton	L
28/2	Brownhills and Willenhall	John Worth	L
28/2	Brownhills and Willenhall	Michael Cronogue	L

Circuit Number	Circuit Name	Application	Category
28/4	Walsall	Sue Smith	L
28/4	Walsall	Sharon Jackson	L
28/4	Walsall	Bruce Kirk	L
28/13	Dudley and Netherton	Peter Roberts	L
28/13	Dudley and Netherton	William Jones	L
28/21	Telford	Josephine Kudlacik	L
29/16	Tadcaster	Abi Alex	P
29/26	Nidd Valley	Ian Bryon	P
31/10	North of Scotland Mission	Sarah Sim	L
34/1	North Bedfordshire	Paulette Tedd	P
34/10	Southend and Leigh	Stephen Mayo	P
34/10	Southend and Leigh	Colin Turner	L
35/37	Teddington	Philip Slater	L
36/1	Hampshire Surrey Borders	Kyung Mi Banks	P
36/25	South Kent	David Songer	L
36/25	South Kent	David Smith	L
37/1	Camborne, Redruth and Hayle	Sarah Flowerday	L
37/1	Camborne, Redruth and Hayle	Robert Manley	L
37/4	Plymouth and Devonport	Rebecca Marshall	P
37/6	Tavistock	Ali Mansfield	L
37/7	St Austell	Jo-Anne Petzing	L
37/14	The Lizard and Mounts Bay	Tracie Haslam	L
37/14	The Lizard and Mounts Bay	Sylvia Richards	L
37/14	The Lizard and Mounts Bay	Shirley Wearne	L
37/14	The Lizard and Mounts Bay	David Pascoe	L
37/24	Mid-Cornwall	Miranda Knight	L

LIST C – Renewals after two years for applications granted in 2023

Circuit Number	Circuit Name	Application	Category
1/35	South West Cumbria United Area	Janet Ladds	L
1/35	South West Cumbria United Area	Robert Mantle	L
2/13	Gwent Hills and Vales	Hugo Potgeiter	L
2/13	Gwent Hills and Vales	Celia Price	L
2/18	Neath Port Talbot	Clem Raymond	L
2/18	Neath Port Talbot	Robin Sherwood	L
2/27	Vale of Glamorgan	Phillipa Doble	L
5/1	Birmingham	Danielle Wilson	M
5/12	South Warwickshire	Sheila Brown	L
15/1	Isle of Man	Rita Norrey	L
17/6	East Lincolnshire	Susan Alldread	L
17/6	East Lincolnshire	Tricia Johnson	L
17/6	East Lincolnshire	Richard Neale	L
22/2	Nottingham (South)	Paul A Johns	L
25/14	Doncaster	Sean Worsley	L
25/17	Rotherham and Dearne Valley	Edward A Siddall	L
26/6	Meon Valley	Rosie Banks	L
26/11	Isle of Wight	Shirley Whittingstall	L
27/21	Settle	Wendy Holt	L
28/3	Shropshire and Marches	Ruth Downes	L
28/3	Shropshire and Marches	Mike Hallworth	L
28/3	Shropshire and Marches	Adrian Williams	L
28/9	Stafford	Robert Johnson	L
28/14	Gornal and Sedgley	William Caldwell	L
34/1	North Bedfordshire	Paul Cooper	L
36/17	Hastings, Bexhill and Rye	Alan Hurrell	L
36/17	Hastings, Bexhill and Rye	Jill Sayers	L

Circuit Number	Circuit Name	Application	Category
37/1	Camborne, Redruth and Hayle	Archie Rowe	L
37/7	St Austell	Jenny Taylor	L
37/12	Fore Street, St Ives	William Thomas	M
37/20	Camelford and Week St Mary	Peter Daniel	L
37/20	Camelford and Week St Mary	Julie E Swann	L
37/4	Plymouth and Devonport	Janet Dobinson	M
37/6	Tavistock	Sandra Dodd	L
37/10	South Devon	Rachel Mitchell	L
37/19	Ilfracombe and Barnstaple	Sylvia Edwards	L
37/22	South Molton and Ringsash	Susan Proctor	L
37/21	Torridge	Roy Harris	L
37/21	Torridge	Elsie Potter	L
37/21	Torridge	Frank Watson	L
37/26	West Devon	Angela Banfield	L
37/28	Teignbridge	Sharon Hurlow	L

*****RESOLUTIONS**

48/1. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Conrad J Hicks as Chair for the South East District for a period of six years from 1 September 2025.

48/2. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Dr Rachel Deigh as Chair for the West Midlands District for a period of six years from 1 September 2025.

48/3. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Faith Nyota as Chair for the London District for a period of two years from 1 September 2025.

48/4. The Conference designates for appointment the Revd Rachel A Bending as Chair for the Channel Islands District, in addition to the Southampton District, for a period of four years from 1 September 2026.

Reasoned Statements:

The Revd Conrad Hicks

Conrad Hicks is a former Assistant Chair and is currently Superintendent of the Gibraltar Circuit. He therefore brings to the District experience of working in the District and a deep understanding of its missional priorities. He also brings a deep spirituality, an ability to think strategically, more than thirty years of ministerial experience in Circuits in Britain and Ireland, in circuits overseas, and in the Connexional Team. He articulates a future for the District that is informed both by his enthusiasm for God's mission and a profoundly reflective approach to the Methodist tradition of holiness.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Conrad Hicks is appointed to serve as Chair for the South East District for a period of six years from September 2025.

The Revd Rachel Deigh

Rachel Deigh is a mission partner in Sierra Leone and offers to the District the experience of 25 years of presbyteral ministery in a wide variety of settings, including as a circuit minister, a Superintendent, and a District Mission and Evangelism Facilitator. She brings an ability to reflect theologically, to articulate a vision for the life of the new District, a collaborative form of leadership, experience in change management, and an understanding of the diversity of the District, all of which are gifts which the committee believes will serve the District well at this critical moment in its life and which will instil confidence and hope into new and emerging arrangements in the District.

The Synods recommend to the Conference that the Revd Dr Rachel Deigh is appointed to serve as Chair for the West Midlands District for a period of six years from September 2025.

The Revd Faith Nyota

Faith Nyota has been Deputy Chair for the London District since 2018 and a Superintendent for 15 years. She offers to the District a clear vision of the needs and opportunities of a complex and diverse District, pastoral sensitivity, a confident handling of the processes of the Church, an ability to work caringly with others, and a model of leadership that is Spirit-led and collaborative. Her ministry is underpinned by a vital spirituality which will enable her to hold the complexities and challenges of an interim role at this point in the District's life.

The Synod recommends to the Conference that the Revd Faith Nyota is appointed to serve as Chair for the London District for a period of two years from September 2025.

The Revd Rachel Bending

The Southampton Synod and Channel Islands Synod recommend to the Conference that the Revd Rachel Bending is appointed Chair for the Channel Islands District, in addition to being Chair for the Southampton District for the remainder of her current invitation as Chair of the Southampton District. The report detailing the arrangement between the two Districts is found elsewhere in the Agenda.

PRESBYTERS BECOMING SUPERNUMERARY OR RETURNING TO THE ACTIVE WORK

1. Recommended to return to the active work
Andrew Orton

2. Permission to return to the active work granted during the year

3. Permission to become supernumerary granted during the year

4. Presbyters requesting permission to become supernumerary

The figure in brackets indicates the number of years of status as a presbyter of the person concerned (with any former years of status as a deacon added with the prefix D).

+	Barry J Allen	(8)		C John Hartley	(27)
	Christopher J Ambler	(41)		David C P Haseldine	(27)
	Paul R Arnold	(40)		Rosamund V Hollingsworth	(17)
	Andrew M Baker	(32)		Rachel L Hope	(12)
	Michael Belfield	(49)		William J Hunter	(42)
	Nigel S Bibbings	(37)		John R Izzard	(48)
	Robert J Blackhall	(36)		Leslie Jones	(13)
	David H Bonny	(30)		Jeongsook Kim	(17)
	Catherine M Bowstead	(31)		Julie A Letts	(16)
+	Stephen J Boxall	(9)		Barry D Lotz	(17)
	David J Burrow	(33)		Ruth Lownsbrough	(10)
	Andrew P Burrows	(15)		Andrew H Lyons	(19)
	Stephen Caddick	(41)		Sandra K Marshall	(32)
	Helen D Cameron	(36)		David Milner	(36)
	Nigel J Coke-Woods	(32)		David C Newton	(19)
*	Mark T Coles	(28)		Katherine J Pickering	(12)
	Paul A Collings	(23)		Mark G Read	(17)
	Nicholas P Collison	(19)		Michael J Redshaw	(34)
	Alan J Combes	(12)		Andrew Reed	(17)
	Timothy M Cooke	(10)		Kathryn A Selby	(22)
	Deborah A Cornish	(21)		Neville Simpson	(17)
	Jennifer M Dyer	(30)	+	Tony Simpson	(8)
	Colin J Emerson	(30)		Sobanathasar Sinnathamby	(27)
	Linda Francis	(23)		Roger M Smith	(34)
	Michael G Giles	(34)		Alan Smithson	(32)
	Christine Gillespie	(27)		Kenneth Stokes	(41)
	Gavin P Hancocks	(23)		Neil A Stubbens	(41)

M Peter Taylor	(45)	Rupert L A Weekes	(17)
J Nicholas H Thompson	(33)	Rose A S Westwood	(28)
Keith R Underhill	(36)	Neil J Whitehouse	(35)
Catherine M Wagstaff	(11)	Stephen D Wigley	(36)
Philip P Wagstaff	(41)	Sharon L Willimott	(15)
Deborah Wainwright	(23)	Ian M Worrall	(37)
Ralph Waller	(53)	Stewart B K Young	(24)

*All applications are made under Standing Order 790(1), except those marked * who are applying on grounds of ill health under Standing Order 790(2) and those marked + who are applying under the terms of Standing Order 790(1C).*

*****RESOLUTIONS**

49/1. (Presbyteral Session)
The Conference receives the Report.

49/2. (Presbyteral Session)
The Conference recommends to the Representative Session that the presbyters listed above be permitted to become supernumerary on the grounds shown.

49/3. (Representative Session)
The Conference permits those presbyters whose names have been recommended by the Presbyteral Session to become supernumerary.

49/4. (Representative Session)
The Conference permits Andrew Orton to return to the active work.

DEACONS BECOMING SUPERNUMERARY OR RETURNING TO THE ACTIVE WORK

1. Recommended to return to the active work
No case

2. Permission to become supernumerary granted during the year
* C Michelle Hamilton

*Those marked * were granted permission on grounds of ill health under Standing Order 790(2).*

3. Deacons requesting permission to become supernumerary

Gillian M Judge (13)
Gail I Morgan (10)
Brian J Purchase (19)

*****RESOLUTIONS**

49/5. (Representative Session)
The Conference permits those deacons whose names have been recommended by the Conference Diaconal Committee to become supernumerary.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

50/1. The Conference appoints the Connexional Council:

The President and Vice-President of the Conference;
The Secretary of the Conference;
The chair of the Council: The Revd Sonia Hicks
The chair of the Mission Committee: The Revd Dr Joanne Cox-Darling
The chair of the Ministries Committee: Barbara Easton
The chair of the Resourcing Committee: Ms Alethea Siow
The chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee: Mr Keith Hickey
Up to fourteen other persons: The Revd Mucharutya Chisvo; Mr Thomas Hart; the Revd Michael Long, Ms Anna Malnutt (deputy chair), Prof David Matthews, Mrs Judith Neal; the Revd Sarah Parkin, the Revd Cliff Shanganya; Mr Paul Spray, Ms Dawn Wood.

50/2. The Conference appoints the Authorisations Committee:

The Revd Andrew Charlesworth (Chair), Mrs Lorraine Darlow, the Revd Helen Jenkins, the Revd Jennifer Matthews and the Revd Sally Thornton
In attendance: the Revd Gillian Newton

50/3. The Conference appoints the following officers of the Conference Diaconal Committee:

Recording Officer: Deacon Tracey J Hume
Reporting Officer: Deacon Gail Morgan

50/4. The Conference appoints the Faith and Order Committee:
A senior member of the Connexional Team representing the Secretary of the Conference: The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler.

The Secretary of the Committee: The Revd Dr Mark Rowland.

The Revd Moses Agyam, Deacon Angie Allport, the Revd Jonny Bell, the Revd Yanyan Case, Ms Anna Clough, Mr Dudley Coates, the Revd Dr Graham Edwards, Prof Alan Gillies, the Revd Dr Kennedy Gondongwe, the Revd Dr Catrin Harland-Davies, the Revd Kevin Highfield, the Revd Dr Eleanor Jackson, the Revd Dr Clement Matarirano, the Revd Jo Rand, the Revd Neil Stubbens, the Revd Dr Martin Wellings (Chair), the Revd Dr Caroline Wickens, the Revd Ian Yates.

50/5. The Conference appoints the Law and Polity Committee:

Mrs Joanne Anderton (Convener/ Secretary), Mr Simon Birks, the Revds James A Booth, Andrew Charlesworth, James A Cruddas, Jennifer M Dyer, Mrs Susan Eldridge, Mr David Gibson, the Revds Helen R Hollands, Kenneth Howcroft, Mrs Susan R Howdle, the Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler, Mrs Nwabueze Nwokolo, the Revd Thomas J Osborne, Miss Elizabeth Ovey, Mr Richard Price, Mr Thomas Pye, the Revd Keith A Reed, Professor Diane Rowland, the Revds Ian S Rutherford, Dr James N Tebbutt (Chair), E Adam Wells.

50/6. The Conference appoints the Nominations Committee:

The Revd Dr Bonni-Belle Pickard, Mr Nick Garrett, *Vacant* (Chair), the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler (convener), Ms Cathryn Martin, Mr Brian Oakley, the Revd Tom Osborne.

50/7. The Conference appoints the JDS Scrutiny Group:

Ruby Beech, Bala Gnanapragasam, John Robinson

50/8. The Conference appoints the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee:

Mrs Sarah Atwell-King, Mr Adrian Burton, Mr Keith Hickey (Chair), Mrs Susan M Mortimer, Mr Michael Rickard.

50/9. The Conference appoints the Safeguarding Committee:

Deacon Lorraine Brown, Mrs Carolyn Godfrey, the Revd John Hellyer, Mr David Jones, the Revd Susan McIvor, the Revd Nick Orborski, Ms Constantia Pennie, Ms Tina Pokuaah, Mrs Sarah Simpkin, Mr Graham Snelling, Ms Jane Stacey, the Revd Kate Strange, Mrs Georgina Tagoe, Ms Crystal Williams

In attendance: Mr Tim Carter, the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, Mr Donald Urquhart

50/10. The Conference appoints the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation:

The Revds Dr Iain M Ballard, Nicola Briggs, Richard J Byass, Mark Carrick, Benjamin P Clowes, Dr Graham M Edwards, Dr Simon C Edwards, Mark P Hammond, Helen E Hickson, Catherine Hutton, Philip J Jackson, David Jebb, Naomi Kaiga, Saidu Kanu, Dr Elizabeth A Kent, Julie King, M Susan E Lawler, Farai Mapamula, Vindra Maraj-Ogden, Paul Mellor, Andrew C Moffoot, Charity Nzegwu, Gill Newton [SO 250(1)(i)], Mary Sachikonye, Christopher L A Sandy, Matt Sheard, Cleopas Sibanda, Vivienne G Smith, Tina F Swire, Etleva Walker, Bethany Willers

Deacons Melanie Beaven, Richard D Goldstraw, David Keegan, Jonathan Miller, Julie Morton, Suzanne Peat, Kerry R Scarlett, Sian M Street, Suzie Viana, Linda Watkin, Helen Webster, Jacqueline L Wright, Ruth Yorke,

Ms E Jane Allin, Ms Charlotte Ballard Scott, Mr Geoffrey Best, Ms Anne Browse, Ms Jenny Cheung, Ms Sharon Clutterbuck, Ms Paula Dawson, Ms Jo Henderson-Merrygold, Mrs Jane Lloyd, Mrs Catherine Roots, Ms Denise Tomlinson, Mr Dan Bishop [SO 250(1)(i)]

The Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order has the right to attend but not to vote.

50/11. The Conference appoints the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee:

(i) no more than two representatives of oversight committees of training institutions: The Revd R Margaret K Mwailu, the Revd Mucharutya Chisvo
(ii) three persons each of whom has recent and relevant experience of discerning vocation for candidates: The Revd Jackie Bellfield, Deacon Jenny Jones. Miss Marion Mear (Deputy Chair)
(iii) three persons each of whom is a current or recent member of a district Probationers Committee: Mr Dave Kitchen, Mrs Carol Reeves, Mrs Denise Tomlinson
(iv) one district Chair: The Revd Helen Kirk (Chair)
(v) one recent ordinand in their third, fourth or fifth year of ministry: The Revd Fiona Weir
(vi) two of the Team members responsible for presbyteral candidates, initial presbyteral training and presbyteral probationers: The Revd Gillian M Newton, a vacancy
(vii) further deacons where necessary to ensure that the committee includes at least two: Deacon Flip den Uil, Deacon Jacqueline Esama-John
(viii) further lay people where necessary to ensure that the committee includes at least two: Mrs Anne Baldwin
(ix) further presbyters where necessary to ensure that the committee includes at least two: The Revd Donald Ker, the Revd Leigh A Maydew, the Revd Stephen E Robinson
(x) the Warden or deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order: Deacon Michelle Legumi (Deputy Warden of the MDO)
(xi) up to five further members, selected in collaboration with the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee, to ensure that leadership is offered regarding the

concerns of justice, dignity and solidarity, having regard to the leadership also offered by other members of the committee;

(xii) a further member to be the safeguarding adviser to the committee if no other member of the committee is able to act as the safeguarding adviser. [The committee does not believe additional nominations are needed under (xi) or (xii)}]

50/12. The Conference appoints the oversight tutors [in accordance with Standing Order 321(5)(b)]:

Where more than one oversight tutor is appointed for the same institution one shall be identified as having oversight responsibility. In the following list, that person is identified by an asterisk.

Queen's Foundation, Birmingham: the Revd George Bailey, Deacon Melanie Beaven, the Revd Sylvester Deigh, the Revd Dr Christine Dutton, the Revd Dr Catrin Harland-Davies, Deacon Julie Hudson, the Revd Dr Nicola Price-Tebbutt, the Revd Dr Judith Rossall.

50/13. The Conference appoints the Stationing Committee:

(i) lay chair and lay deputy chair: Ms Jenny Jackson (chair) and Mr Chris Beckett

(ii) The Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Conference: The Revds Dr Jonathan R Hustler and Michaela A Youngson

(iii) Seven district Chairs and seven district Lay Stationing Representatives:

South-East	The Revd Dr Jonathan Dean
	Mr Keith Norman
South-West	The Revd Rachel Bending
	Mr Chris Beckett
Wales/Midlands	The Revd Andrew Charlesworth
	Mrs Val Mayers
Yorkshire	The Revd Vicky Atkins
	Dr Julia Branson
East Midlands	The Revd Angela J Long
	Mrs Sue P Walters
North-West	The Revd Dr James N Tebbutt
	Mr Malcolm Aspey
North/Scotland	The Revd Jona Sewell
	Sue Marshall-Jennings

(iv) No more than two Team members with responsibility for presbyteral and diaconal selection; and for the stationing of probationers: The Revd Gillian Newton
(v) *deleted*
(vi) *deleted*
(vii) The chair of the Stationing Advisory Committee: *to be confirmed*
(viii) The Warden or deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order: Deacon Karen McBride
(ix) The chair and a lay member of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-committee: the Revd Dr Dan Haylett, Mr Steve Cooper
(x) The chair of the group responsible on behalf of the Stationing Committee for overseeing the matching of particular presbyters to appointments: The Revd Jennifer A Impey

(xi) The convener of the Stationing Action Group: *to be confirmed*

50/14. The Conference appoints the Methodist Independent Schools Trust

The Revd Stephen Burgess, Ian McCaig (Chair), Tim Emmett, Bernasia Halikowa, Stephen Holiday, John Jefferson, Henrietta Mbeah-Bankas, Lady Fiona Mynors, Adam Proctor, Simon Small, Mark Wakelin.

50/15. The Conference appoints the Forces Board

Cdr Mark Barton, the Revd Rachel Bending, the Revd Stephen Caddy, the Revd Mark Davidson, the Revd Kevin Highfield, Mr Philip Maltby, the Revd Alasdair Nicoll, the Revd Mark Noakes, the Revd Richard Smith, Mrs Sue Walters, Mr Robin Waugh, the Revd Dr Andrew Wood, the Revd Michaela Youngson.

50/16. The Conference appoints the panel for Connexional Discipline, Pastoral and Appeal Committees and persons with associated functions:

Connexional Complaints Officer: Professor Diane Rowland, the Revd James A Booth (deputy).

Chairs: Mr Stephen Allinson, Mr Graham Danbury, Mr Robert Gaitskell, Sir Alastair Norris, the Revd Nicholas A Oborksi, Miss Elizabeth Ovey.

Advocates: Mr Stephen Allinson, the Revd Jennifer M Dyer, Mr Adrian Turner, the Revd Stuart Wild.

Conveners: Discipline, Appeals and Pastoral: The Revd C Mary Austin, the Revd Andrew Cordy, Mr David Kendrew, Mr Chris Kitchin, Mrs Shelagh Morgan, the Revd Ian S Rutherford,

The Revds Derek A Aldridge, C Mary Austin, Peter E Barber, Inderjit S Bhogal, Neil A Bishop, Nick Blundell, Jill B Bowden, Kathleen M Bowe, Dr Stuart J Burgess, R Graham Carter, David Clowes, John A Cooke, K Hilary Cooke, Judy M Davies, Paul H Davis, Dr Valentin Dedji, Christine A Dybdahl, Jennifer M Dyer, Stuart Earl, Hazel M Forecast, Albert Gayle, Anne E Gibson, Dr Barbara C Glasson, Yvonne Haye, John Hellyer, David A Haslam, Sonia M Hicks, Brian R Hoare, Kenneth G Howcroft, Jimione Kaci, Jacob Kaiga, Prof Teddy Kalongo, Saidu Kanu, Ermal Kirby, Christina Le Moignan, Helen R Hollands, Julie A Lunn, Charity Madenyika, Paul Martin, Loraine N Mellor, William R Morrey, Siperire Mugadzaweta, Dr Paul Nzacahayo, Hayford Ofori-Attah, R Stephen Penrose, Dr David W Perry, Stephen J Poxon, Dr Kathleen M Richardson, Dr Neil G Richardson, J Roger Roberts, John D Robinson, Ian S Rutherford, Calvin T Samuel, D Paul C Smith, Ian Souter, Kenneth Stokes, Thomas J Stuckey, Richard J Teal, G Jeff Thomas, Graham Thompson, Alison Tomlin, Martin H Turner, Dr Mark H Wakelin, C Norman R Wallwork, Dr Roger L Walton, Peter Whittaker, Julia M Wiktorska, Sharon Willimott, Ian Yates.

Deacons Kate Barrett, Sue Culver, Jane Middleton, Myrtle Poxon, Rowland H Wilkinson.

Mrs Jane Allison, Mr Donald B Appleyard, Mrs E Jill Baker, Dr B Jill Barber, Mr John A Bell, Mr Simon Birks, Mrs Stella Bristow, Mrs Teresa Broadbent, Mr Dudley Coates, Mr John Connor, Mr Colin Cradock, Mr Andrew Cross, Ms Gillian M Dascombe, Mr Brian Davies, Mr Peter Dawe, Mrs Barbara Easton, Mr Balachandren M Gnanapragasam, Prof Peter Howdle, Mr David Kendrew, Mr Michael P King, Mrs Sophie Kumi, Ms Rachel J Lampard, Prof Clive Marsh, Dr Daleep S Mukarji, Mrs Nwabueze Nwokolo, Mrs Margaret Parker, Mrs Ruth Pickles, Mr Timothy Ratcliffe, Mrs Jean Schroeder, Mr Stephen Schroeder, Dr Alan Thomson, Mr Brian Thornton, Mrs Rosemary Wass, Mr Ivan Weekes.

50/17. The Conference appoints the Connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry:

Vacant (Chair), the Revd Robert Birnie, Ms Sarah Chadwick, the Revd Dr Neil Cockling, the Revd William Davis, the Revd Dawn Saunders.

50/18 The Conference appoints the Methodist Diaconal Order Support and Advisory Group:

Vacant (Chair), the Revd Adrian Burdon, the Revd Cathy Gales, Ms Caroline Hutchings, Deacon Lemia Nkwelah, Ms Omobolaji Nzwkwe, *a vacancy*

50/19. The Conference appoints the panel for Connexional Complaints Teams:

The Revds Timothy J Bradshaw, Hilary Cheng, Molly Chitokwindo, Edson Dube, Jacquie P Evans, Maree Farrimond, Andrew F Goodhead, Oluyemisi Jaiyesimi, David Jebb, Christopher Jones,

Saidu Kanu, Simon H Leigh, Charity Madenyika, Farai Mapamula, R Margaret K Mwailu, Nicholas A Oborski, Stephen Penrose, David M Shaw (A), Kate Strange, Ruth E Whittard, Stuart Wild, Linda M Woollacott, Mmasape Zihle.

Deacons Myrtle Poxon, Stephen F Roe.

Ms Trudi Awuku, Miss Joan Ball, Mr Malcolm Bell, Ms Charlotte Boaitey, Mr David M Chandler, Mr Leo Cheng, Mr Peter Dawe, Mrs Eve DeGraft, Mr Daniel Djaba, Mr David Kendrew, Mr Chris Kitchin, Miss Kathryn Larrad, Mr David Laycock, Ms Betty Maynard, Mrs Nwabueze Nwokolo, Mrs Jean Schroeder, Mr John Scott

50/20. The Conference notes that the trustees of Action for Children for the current year are:

Sarika Patel (Chair), Dawn Warwick (Vice-Chair), Mike Long, Enda Johnson, Steve Bell, Peter Curran, Lynne Atkin, Leslie Evans, Charles Geekie, Navin Kaul.

50/21. The Conference appoints the Trustees of Epworth Old Rectory:

The Revd Vicky Atkinson, Dr Tom Dobson, Mrs Sarah Friswell (Chair), Professor William Gibson, the Revd Stuart Gunson, the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, the Revd Angela Long, Mr John Purdy (Secretary), Mrs Susan Storey, the Revd Paul Wilson, Mrs Maggie Woods

World Methodist Council Trustees:

The Revd Dr Reynaldo Ferreira Leao Neto, Ms Shayla Jordan, the Revd Dr Joe Kenston, Mrs Gillian Kingston, Mr Joshua Rathnam, Bishop Teresa Snorton

50/22. The Conference appoints the following officers of the 2026 Conference:

Representative Session
Journal Secretary: *to be confirmed*
Record Secretary: Mr Martin Harker
Convener of the Memorials Committee: *to be confirmed*

Presbyteral Session
Record Secretary: *to be confirmed*
Assistant Record Secretary: The Revd Rosemarie E G Clarke

50/23. The Conference appoints the panel for the nomination of District Chairs:

The Revds Anne E Brown, Richard J Byass, William Davis, David P Easton, John Hellyer, Christine Jones, Nichola G Jones, Charity D Madenyika, Paul Nzacahayo, Keith A Reed, Daniel P Reed, D Paul C Smith, Graham Thompson, Martin H Turner, Dr Martin Wellings.

Deacons Melanie Beaven, Josephine F A Critchley, David C Hunt, Suzie Viana.

Ms Jane Allin, Ms Janet Arthur, Mrs Sue Chastney, Ms Evelyn de Graft, Prof Peter D Howdle, Miss Marion Mear, Miss Elizabeth Ovey, Mr Malcolm Pearson, Mr Noel Rajaratnam, Mrs Caroline Stead, Mrs Rosemary Wass, Mrs Ruth Wilton, Mrs Helen Woodall, Mr Rob Wylie

with the Secretary of the Conference as convener.

50/24. The Conference appoints representatives to ecumenical bodies as follows:

(a) *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI): Annual General Meeting*
Mr Bala Gnanapragasam
(b) *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland: Senior Representatives' Forum:*
Mr Bala Gnanapragasam; the Revd Steven R M Cooper
(c) *Churches Together in England (CTE): Enabling Group*
The Revd Dr David M Chapman, the Revd Steven R M Cooper
(d) *Scottish Christian Forum (formerly Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS)): Members' Meeting:* The Revd S Mark Slaney; the Revd A James Patron Bell
(e) *Scottish Christian Forum – Scottish Church Leaders Forum:*
The Revd Mark Slaney
(f) *Scottish Christian Forum – Scottish Ecumenical Officers Forum:*
The Revd A James Patron Bell
(g) *Cytûn (Churches Together in Wales): Enabling Group*
The Revd Dr Jennifer A Hurd
Proxies: The Revds Dr Ian D Morris, Phillip A Poynor

50/25. The Conference elects the following persons to the Central Finance Board for a period of one year from 1 September 2025:

Dr Keith Aldred, Jennie Austin, Ruby Beech, Julian Blakemore, Graham Boyd, Julian De Garis Parker, Revd Anne Ellis, Ashley France, Bala Gnanapragasam, Anne Goodman,

Sue Haworth, Peter Hobbs, Revd Dr Peter Howson, David James, Nick Moore, the Revd Leslie Newton, Colin Pearson, the Revd Jennifer Potter, Martin Rees, John Sandford, Nicola Sivori, Andrew Slim, the Revd Eleanor Smith, the Revd Timothy Swindell, Matthew Tattersall, the Revd Graham Thompson, Morwenna Williams

50/26. The Conference appoints the Managing Trustees of the Conference Property at Central Hall Westminster:

The Revd Paul Regan (Chair), the Revd Anthony D Miles (Superintendent, London Westminster – ex officio), the Revd Dr Jonathan Dean (Chair of the London District – ex officio), Mr Nevil Tomlinson (Treasurer to the Trustees), Mr Bala Gnanapragasam (Secretary to the Trustees), Mrs Ama Ackah-Yensu, Mrs Judith Mitchell, Mr John Robinson

50/27. The Conference appoints the following trustees of John Wesley's New Room and Charles Wesley's House, Bristol:

Prof Clifford Friend (Chair), Ms Jane Allin, the Revd Ivan Fowler, Mr Geoffrey Gollop OBE (Treasurer), the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler (ex-officio), Mrs Linda Jones (secretary), the Revd A Ward Jones, the Revd Teddy Kalongo (ex-officio), the Revd Sharon Lovelock, Mr Michael Rose, the Revd Marcus Torchon (ex-officio), the Revd David Weeks, the Revd Martin Wellings.

Reasoned Statements

Vicky Atkins	designated as Chair of the Sheffield District, and nominated to represent the Yorkshire region.
Rachel Bending	Chair of the Southampton District, and nominated to represent the South West region.
Chris Beckett	member of the Stationing Committee, as lay stationing representative representing the South West region. He is nominated as lay deputy chair of the Stationing Committee.
Dan Bishop	Director of Ministry Development in the Connexional Team.
Julia Branson	Lay Stationing Representative for the Yorkshire North and East District, and nominated to represent the Yorkshire region.
Andrew Charlesworth	Chair of Wales Synod Cymru, and nominated to represent the Wales/West Midlands region.

Mucharutya Chisvo	Superintendent of the Birmingham West and Oldbury Circuit. Brings a passion to offer strategic thinking in areas such as risk assessment and relationships with communities in the wider Connexion, along with wide experience of dealing with social and political issues with bodies outside the Church both in the UK and in Zimbabwe. His ministry has included giving especially careful support and guidance to the minister from an overseas conference in the Circuit. He brings empathy, pastoral insight and connexional perspective to serve well on MCPOC.
Dudley Coates	a former Vice-President of the Conference with wide experience of Methodist committees and working groups, including being involved in the creation of *The Methodist Worship Book* and chairing a commission on the Conference which reported in 1996. He is a local preacher in the Salisbury Circuit and holds MAs in both theology and liturgy.
Tom Dobson	a Research Fellow with the Westminster Oxford Research Network, serving on the Methodist Church's Archives and Records Advisory Group, having previously worked as the 'Collections, Digitisation, and Research Officer' at the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History. His PhD, awarded by Oxford Brookes University in 2024, explored the history of Westminster College and the development of Methodist teacher training in the 20th century.
Barbara Easton	appointed by the Connexional Council as Chair of the Ministries Committee from September 2025. Connexional Director of Education from 2014, prior to which Barbara Easton was an RE teacher, inclusion and interfaith specialist, safeguarding lead and secondary head teacher in the West Midlands. She went on to lead the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust, and served as Vice-President of the Methodist Conference for 2021/22. Barbara is a local preacher and is currently Area President of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women.
Reynaldo Leão Neto	General Secretary of the World Methodist Council. He served previously in the Connexional Team. From 2011-2018, he was the superintendent minister of the Harlesden Circuit.

Alan Gillies	a Professor of Healthcare Management and a local preacher. He has published extensively and has particular expertise in leadership, management and education, including serving as Chair of Governors for a Methodist-Anglican Primary School. In theological terms, he has engaged in research on the relation of science and theology and has interests in practical theology, liberation theology and the interaction between ethics, philosophy and theology.
Tom Hart	Youth President 2023-2024. Brings experience of connexional bodies and an understanding of the life of the Connexional Team and o the mission of the Church in the present age. He is committed to principles of JDS and desires to offer spiritual leadership and theological thinking.
Dan Haylett	Chair of the South West Peninsula District, and nominated as Chair of the Diaconal Stationing Subcommittee.
Stephen Holliday	an education specialist with extensive experience as a Head Teacher, Advisor, and Independent Schools Reporting Inspector. Member of the Methodist Church and Lay Preacher. Stephen is a serving Trustee and currently in his second term of office.
John Jefferson	an active member of the Methodist Church, having served in various roles within Local Churches and Circuits. He is a Trustee and Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee for the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP). He also serves as Board Chair and Chair of the Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee for Methodist Insurance PLC. John is a serving MIST Nominated Trustee and currently in his first term of office.
Shayla Jordan	a doctoral candidate in Theology at Villanova University, USA, focusing on Christian Ethics and Systematic Theology. She teaches undergraduates at Villanova, serves as a delegate to the World Methodist Council, and is a certified elder candidate in the UMC.
Joseph Kenaston	currently serving at Forrest Burdette Memorial UMC, having previously served as Southern District Superintendent and at Lewisburg UMC; Wayside UMC; as well as being Associate Pastor at Christ Church UM. He spent 1984 – 1987 in Stretford-Urmston Methodist Circuit, Manchester. His interests include history: Study

	of the Wesleys and the Methodist movement in Britain and the United States.
Julie King	a presbyter ordained in 2022, Julie is serving in the Harrow and Hillingdon Circuit. She brings experience of chairing Churches Together groups and as a community based Lay Pastor before she candidated.
Gillian Kingston	a local preacher in the Methodist Church in Ireland and a former Lay Leader of that Conference. A teacher by profession, she was a chaplain at University College, Dublin, for ten years. She has been a member of the European Methodist Council and was Vice President of the World Methodist Council from 2014 until 2024. She served on the Methodist/Roman Catholic International Commission for twenty years and has a life-long involvement in things ecumenical, both in Ireland and further afield.
Henrietta Mbeah-Bankas	a health care professional with over twenty years' experience in the mental health and nursing fields. Experience in lecturing on Culture and Diversity Experience in commissioning higher educational resources via technology. Member of the Methodist Church. Henrietta is a serving Trustee and currently in her first term of office.
Judith Neal	Lay worker and local preacher in the Derby Circuit. Brings experience as a Justice of the Peace and a member of the Health Authority Research Ethics Committee, and an ability to think strategically and theologically.
Gillian Newton	appointed as the Ministerial Coordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries in the Connexional Team.
Nick Oborski	superintendent of the Hants-Surrey Border Circuit and Synod Secretary for the South East District. He serves as chair for Complaints Panels and therefore has the transferable skill set to chair Discipline and Appeal Committees. He is a member of the Safeguarding Committee which provides useful expertise.
Bonni-Belle Pickard	a presbyter in the British Methodist Church since 2001. She has been active at circuit, district, and connexional levels, serving as a Superintendent, on District Councils, on the Connexional EDI committee and the Presbyteral Session Conference Business

	Committee. She developed a Nominations Committee protocol for local churches and circuits, which has been presented to the Superintendents' Conference and used in many circuits.
Joshua Rathnam	a layman from India. He studied at Wesley School & College in Hyderabad. During his college days, he entered politics as student leader and was actively involved in Youth for Christ Ministry. He served as Secretary of The Minority Department of the ruling political party and as the Special Executive Officer, Government of Maharashtra. He is Director of an Education Institute and serves on the Board of Converge South Asia; Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, India Board; Biblica, India and is a Mission Council Member EMS Germany. He was on the Strategic Planning and Nominations Committees of the World Methodist Council and is currently its Vice-President.
Stephen Robinson	Deputy Chair of the Southampton District. He has previous experience on the Connexional Candidates Committee. From 2012-2018 he served as a Panel member and then from 2018 to 2024 he served as a Panel Chair. This work has also included the discernment process of ministers applying to come to the Methodist Church in Britain from overseas and ministers who wanted to transfer from other denominations.
Jonathan Sewell	Chair of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne District and nominated to represent the North/Scotland region.
Cliff Shanganya	Presbyter stationed in the Thames Valley circuit, with experience of working in different cultural contexts. Brings a commitment to JDS, an appreciation of shared discernment through working collaboratively, extensive experience as a charity trustee, and a commitment to social justice as a major part of the Church's calling.
Matt Sheard	a presbyter ordained in 2021 and currently serving in the Bede Circuit in the Newcastle District. He has experience in interviewing, chaplaincy, working under pressure and various forms of discernment. He has skills of critical thinking, appropriate challenge, theological reflection and collaboration.
Teresa Snorton	the Ecumenical and Program Development Officer for the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. She previously served as Presiding

	Bishop of the CME Districts that include Alabama, Florida and ten countries in East Africa. She is the Chair of the Board of Directors of Friendship Press, the publishing arm of the National Council of Churches in the USA (NCC). She is the immediate past Chair of the Governing Board of NCC. She is active in Churches Uniting In Christ, the Pan-Methodist Commission, the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, the World Methodist Council, and the World Council of Churches.
Fiona Weir	a presbyter currently stationed in Durham and Deerness Valley circuit who was ordained in 2024. She has learned to navigate the challenges of bringing up neurodivergent children alongside the demands of ministry. MCPOC have a policy that one of their members is always a recent ordinand and Fiona is nominated to fulfil this role.
Bethany Willers	a presbyter ordained in 2015 in the United Methodist Church, Bethany transferred to ministry in the Methodist Church in Britain in 2020, firstly as 'Recognised and Regarded'. She was received into full connexion in 2024. Bethany currently serves in the Newport and Lower Wye circuit. Having been through the transfer processes recently, she has an insight into the work of the committee and experience of ministerial formation from beyond the British context.

PRESBYTERS TO BE RECOGNISED AND REGARDED AS PRESBYTERS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

The names of persons to be recognised and regarded as Presbyters in Full Connexion are printed below and may be amended in the Order Paper at the Conference in order to incorporate any changes consequent upon the decisions of the Stationing Committee.

(1) Presbyters of the Irish Conference

Under Clause 43 of the Deed of Union all presbyters admitted into Full Connexion with the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland are automatically recognised and regarded as presbyters in Full Connexion with the Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain, irrespective of whether they are stationed by the latter Conference (although they only come under the rules and discipline of the Conference when stationed by it). The names of those who serve on the stations of the Methodist Church in Britain are printed in the Minutes of the Conference.

(2) Presbyters of other autonomous Methodist Conferences

Christopher Andam	23/7	Methodist Church Ghana
Opeyemi Awe	35/12	Methodist Church Nigeria
Annie J M Baker-Streevy	27/15	United Methodist Church
Ilidio Christino de Oliveira Jr	5/6	Methodist Church in Brazil
Jeffrey A Conklin-Miller	25/13	United Methodist Church
Annie Deche	37/15	Methodist Church Kenya
Shannon C DeLaureal	27/15	United Methodist Church
Donna L Fowler-Merchant	34/14	United Methodist Church
Jacqueline Jones	35/31	Methodist Church of Southern Africa
Katiyo Kundai	13/3	Methodist Church of Zimbabwe
Simon Madhiba	35/23	Methodist Church of Zimbabwe
Josefa R Mairara	26/FC	Methodist Church Fiji
David Markay	35/7	United Methodist Church
Kristin Markay	35/6	United Methodist Church
Tongayi J Matamba	36/8	Methodist Church Zimbabwe
Collin L Moore	7/16	Methodist Church of Southern Africa
Ung Soon Ngaung	35/39	Methodist Church Malaysia
Emmanuel Onabanjo	34/15	Methodist Church Nigeria
Mary E G Peters	13/7	United Methodist Church
Thomas C K Phiri	27/17	United Church of Zambia
Eric G Raygor	29/32	United Methodist Church
Nimilote Rokotoro	26/FC	Methodist Church Fiji
Sydney Sichilima	34/1	United Church of Zambia

Sean Turner	15/1	United Methodist Church
Neil Vels	14/15	Methodist Church of Southern Africa
Loren Whetsell	29/31	United Methodist Church
Linberg J Y Wong	35/2	Methodist Church of China

*****RESOLUTION**

51/1. By a Standing Vote, the Conference welcomes those presbyters to be appointed to the stations, whose names are listed in the Agenda and as amended by the Order Paper circulated to the Conference, as ministers of other autonomous Methodist Conferences who, by virtue of clause 44 of the Deed of Union, will thereby be recognised and regarded as presbyters of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion.

(3) Presbyters of other communions to be recognised and regarded

Mark R Mander	26/FC	Independent Methodist Churches
Andrew S C Melvin	36/13	Baptist Union of Great Britain
Aboseh Ngwana	7/2	Presbyterian Church in Cameroon
Rajbharat Patta	19/2	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

*****RESOLUTION**

51/2. By a Standing Vote, the Conference, by virtue of clause 45 of the Deed of Union, declares that the persons whose names are printed for this purpose in the Agenda as amended by the Order Paper circulated to the Conference, shall be recognised and regarded during the period of their appointment to the stations for the next ensuing year as presbyters of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion.

DEACONS OF OTHER CHURCHES TO BE RECOGNISED AND REGARDED AS DEACONS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH
No case

PRESBYTERS AND DEACONS OF OTHER COMMUNIONS APPLYING TO BE AUTHORISED PRESBYTERS OR DEACONS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

The names of presbyters and deacons to be authorised to serve are printed in the draft of the stations circulated to the Conference, which may be amended via the changes to the stations distributed to the Conference while it is in session.

*****RESOLUTION**

51/3. The Conference resolves that the persons whose names are printed for this purpose in the draft of the stations as amended by the changes to the stations circulated to the Conference, be authorised to serve the Methodist Church as presbyter or deacon as the case may be for the next ensuing year by virtue of Standing Order 733(1) and that each person so authorised shall reside for the purposes of the stations in the Circuit under which his or her name is listed.

PRESBYTERS AND DEACONS OF OTHER COMMUNIONS APPLYING TO BE ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERS OR DEACONS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

*The names of presbyters and deacons of other communions to be granted the status of associate pre*sbyter or associate deacon as the case may be are printed in the draft of the station*s circulated to the Conference, and may be amended in the changes to the stations distributed to the Conference whilst it is in session.*

*****RESOLUTIONS**

51/4. The Conference resolves that the persons whose names are printed for this purpose in the draft of the stations as amended by the changes to the stations circulated to the Conference, be granted the status of associate presbyter for the next ensuing year by virtue of Standing Order 733A(1) in the Circuit whose number appears against his or her name so listed.

51/5. The Conference resolves that the persons whose names are printed for this purpose in the draft of the stations as amended by the changes to the stations circulated to the Conference, be granted the status of associate deacon for the next ensuing year by virtue of Standing Order 733A(1) in the Circuit whose number appears against his or her name so listed.

The Revd Jennifer Dyer

Jenny Dyer has served as the Record Secretary for the Presbyteral Session of the Conference and the Journal Secretary of the Representative Session of the Conference since 2007, and in similar roles before that date. In these roles, which require sustained attention to detail and clear communications skill, Jenny has enjoyed the confidence of the Conference that its decisions were carefully and appropriately recorded. Both in her regular reports and her interventions to assist the Secretariat (within and outside the hall) she has operated with grace and gentle good humour.

The Conference is thankful to Jenny for the skills that she has offered in her service and the alertness and clarity which has greatly assisted the Conference in its work.

***RESOLUTION**

52/1. The Conference expresses its thanks to the Revd Jennifer Dyer for her work as the Record and Journal Secretary to the Conference and wishes her well for the future.

The Revd Alan Bolton

Alan Bolton has served as the Conference Letter Writer since 2019. In this role, Alan has brought great attention to detail understanding of the importance of the timely nature of this work, promptly communicating the Conference's greetings in limpid and elegant letters. He has also served as the editor of the obituaries, carefully checking the details and communicating sensitively with those who are grieving.

The Conference has cause to be grateful to Alan for his dedicated work at the Conference and for him offering his time willingly to ensure that in these aspects of the work the Conference's pastoral concerns are effectively and graciously communicated.

***RESOLUTION**

52/2. The Conference expresses its thanks to the Revd Alan Bolton for his work as the Letter Writer for the Conference and wishes him well for the future.

The Revd Kenneth Howcroft

Ken Howcroft has served as Chair of the Memorials Committee since 2021. Ken has brought to the role of Chair of the Memorials Committee his wide connexional experience, along with a clear understanding of the role of Memorials in the life of

the Church. Ken has chaired the Committee with wisdom and sensitivity in respect of the wide range of subjects covered in the Memorials, while working hard to ensure the mission of the Church remains at the forefront of the committee's thinking and is reflected in the draft replies. Ken presented the memorials to the 2024 Conference knowledgably and clearly, ensuring that opinions were reflected appropriately so that the Conference could make the decisions it needed to make. With his deep understanding of the Conference's precious decisions and ways of working, his theological acumen and his openness to new thoughts, Ken's contributions have been invaluable both in the meetings of the Memorials Committee and in the Conference.

*****RESOLUTION**

52/3. The Conference expresses its thanks to the Revd Kenneth Howcroft for his work as the Chair of the Memorials Committee and wishes him well for the future.

The Revd Catherine Dixon

Catherine Dixon has brought considerable knowledge and experience to the role of Convener of the Memorials Committee from 2019. Catherine's clear understanding of the procedures of the Conference and the innovative ways of presenting the memorials have enabled the Conference to discharge of its duties in regards to the memorials received. Her ability to distil a complex piece of reasoning lucidly and at times humorously are gifts for which the Conference remains grateful.

*****RESOLUTION**

52/4. The Conference expresses its thanks to the Revd Catherine Dixon for her work as the Convener of the Memorials Committee and wishes her well for the future.

53. Nominations Committee

1. Following recruitment to the Nominations Committee during 2024-25, the current membership comprises a Chair and five members. This includes two appointments made during the year by the Council, acting on the Conference's behalf, of the Revd Tom Osborne and Mr Brian Oakley. The committee brings the additional nomination of the Revd Bonni-Belle Pickard and reports the resignation of Verity Wild, thanking her for her service.

2. The Committee is grateful to Bala Gnanaprasagam for his leadership of this work as chair of the committee. At the time of writing the recruitment process is in train to identify his successor.

3. The Committee has continued to exercise its responsibilities in partnership with the bodies to which appointments need to be made. It does this through scrutiny of both the paperwork and advertising, interview and selection process. Usually, a member of the Committee sits on the shortlisting and interview panel.

4. The Nominations Committee has been involved in the recruitment processes of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Ministries Committee and members of the Connexional Council.

5. The Committee was asked to participate in the process to appoint a Chair of Trustees of Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, and recommends to the Conference that the appointment of Conference Property Trustees be brought within its purview.

6. The Committee advertised for and interviewed candidates for the membership of the Council. It brings four nominations for the appointment of members to the Connexional Council, noting that (if the Conference agrees) this will now leave the membership of the Council at 18 (its minimum size) and it therefore advises that a further recruitment process be run before the 2026 Conference. The nominations are:

The Revd Mucharutya Chisvo
Thomas Hart
Judith Neal
The Revd Cliff Shanganya.

7. On the advice of the Council, the Committee nominates Anna Malnutt to be deputy Chair of the Connexional Council. The full list of nominations (with the appropriate resolution) is in the report on committee appointments.

8. The Nominations Committee was directed by the 2024 Conference to confer with the chairs of the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity, Faith and Order, Law and Polity and Safeguarding Committees as to how the work of the Nominations Committee might support the recruitment to those committees.

9. All four committees were content that the Nominations Committee review and approve paperwork for recruitment and that a member of the Nominations Committee be involved in the interview process.

10. It is suggested that there should be an annual meeting between the Chair of the Nominations Committee and the Chair of each of those four committees, to review how the processes are working and to provide an opportunity to highlight any upcoming or expected recruitment needs.

11. The Nominations Committee made the recommendation to the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group that these four committees should be embedded into the work of the Nominations Committee and the Standing Order changed to reflect that.

12. The Committee has continued to work closely with the Connexional Team's HR officers and the Director of Inclusion to review and refine its processes.

*****RESOLUTION**

53/1. The Conference receives the Report.

Introduction

1. The 2024 Conference received a report from the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group as the latest in a series of reforms to the governance structures of the Church, beginning in 2017. In some ways, this has been the most significant period of change in this area since 1996 if not since the Methodist Church Act of 1976. A fuller account of the journey that the Conference has taken can be found in the 2023 and 2024 reports, Oversight and Trusteeship.

2 By comparison with some of the other reports in this series, the decisions that the Conference is asked to make in 2025 might seem less significant. For the most part, they are consequences of the changes that the Conference has already made; the resolutions attached to this report ask for confirmation of positions that the Conference has already taken or complete work for which there was insufficient time or around which there was insufficient clarity in 2024. For those reasons, the Conference asked the group that reported in 2024 to continue and to finish its work.

3. However, there are four other sorts of decisions which the Conference will be asked to make as it receives this report. The first is to recognise that in a small number of instances the decisions that previous Conferences have made have had unintended consequences. A prime example of this is that (following advice from the auditors) the special resolution on the changes to the Model Trust definitions, on which the Synods in the relevant jurisdictions were asked to vote, is brought back to the Conference but the Conference is invited to adopt it with the exclusion of one of the proposed amendments (see paragraph 24 below). A second category of proposed changes concerns a number of resolutions that result from having 'road-tested' our new ways of working over the past year and found that what seemed good to the Conference could work better in practice. An example of this is the changes proposed to the Nominations Committee's ways of working. Thirdly, as it has done its work, the OTTG has noted or been alerted to a number of inconsistencies in the new ways of working and seeks to remove those where possible in the interests of simplicity and fairness. So, for example, there is a proposal to standardise the length of the terms that committee members serve. Fourthly, the OTTG brings for confirmation some changes in provisions regarding District leadership that were indicated in last year's Conference Report.

4. Those who have served on the OTTG this past year are Anne Bolton, the Revd Dr David Chapman, Susan Howdle, the Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler, Dr Daleep S Mukarji, the Revd Leslie M Newton, David Pickles, the Revd Dr Mark Rowland, Sandie Smith, Doug Godfrey-Swanney, and the Revd Dr James N Tebbutt. This is the group's final report and a debt of thanks is owed to them for their tireless and

painstaking work. This report is in some senses an end of a journey, and others will pick up work in developing and giving life to the new arrangements. However, it is possible that new questions will emerge in 2025-26 as they did in 2024-25. The OTTG would not favour a standing committee to deal with such questions so the final resolution directs the Secretary of the Conference to take appropriate action to ensure that any such points are addressed and recommendations made to the 2026 and future Conferences.

SECTION A: Committee Structure

5. The focus of the work on oversight and trusteeship has been to ensure that the principal connexional bodies, the Conference and the Connexional Council, are able to fulfil those functions that are necessary for the Methodist Church to discern what its part in God's mission in Great Britain is and to work in ways which are efficient, effective and in line with the best practice in charity governance. Throughout the discussions, there has been a recognition that in order to do that, the Church needs a number of committees which will report to the Conference, the Council or both, but that a smaller Church can maintain (and ought to require) fewer committees than it has inherited. One of the aims of the reforms that was articulated early on was that the structure of the Connexion should be more flexible. As the 2021 report put it, 'The recognition throughout this process that the current structures were designed for a larger Church means that part of the consideration has to be to seek to reduce and streamline where possible. Changes of connexional committees and organisational structures alone will not result in greater efficiencies, accountability, and the smoother working of the governance of the Connexion. There are other factors that need to be addressed such as the cultural change in the practice of governance, oversight, and trusteeship within the church.'

6. The Conference was therefore presented with an organogram in 2023. Fundamental to this (and to the reformed structure of the Connexion) was that there are seven main committees. Three of those – Safeguarding, Faith & Order and Law & Polity – are committees of the Conference. Four – Resourcing, Audit & Risk Assurance, Ministries, and Mission – are committees of the Council.

7. The organogram included in the Appendix to this report notes the existence of a number of other bodies reporting directly to the Conference. Some are those which enable the Conference to do its business – the Memorials Committee, the Business Committees, the Scrutiny Committee, the Conference Planning Executive and the Conference Arrangements Committee, and the Law & Polity Conference Subcommittee. The organogram reflects present arrangements, but is also an evolving 'work in progress' where further flexibility or development

is helpful or required (for example, the Stationing Review recommends some changed stationing arrangements which, if accepted and once implemented, may require further evolutions).

8. Particular attention has been given to the place of the JDS strategy in the Church's oversight and governance. The Conference remains committed to ensuring that the whole Connexion treats people with equity, maintains and enhances its diversity, and enables the inclusion of all people with particular concern for those with protected characteristics and those who have in the past been under-represented in the life and structures of the Connexion. To that end, the OTTG proposes that this work be now understood in two ways. Completing the work to which the 2021 Conference committed itself through the JDS Strategy is a vital part of the mission of the Church and therefore it is appropriate that the JDS Committee report to the Council through the Mission Committee. However, in order that the Conference might keep under review its own work in the light of JDS concerns, the EDI scrutiny group should remain independent of all other structures and be appointed by and report to the Conference. Whether or not these arrangements need to be permanent is a matter for some debate: the OTTG recommends that the provisions are retained and kept under review by the Secretary of the Conference in meetings with the EDI scrutiny group and in consultation with the Council.

9. The OTTG makes no recommendation in relation to the Stationing Committee. It remains of the mind that, as the stationing of its ministers is the prerogative of the Conference, a body that determines recommendations for stationing needs to report directly to the Conference. It also recognises that the Ministries Committee has a role to play in developing policies which effect ministerial stationing. The Conference is to consider a review of its stationing processes as a separate agenda item.

*****RESOLUTION**

54/1. The Conference receives Section A of the Report.

SECTION B: Evaluation/development of committee chairs

10. Best practice in charity governance asks that those who take on roles as Trustees should continually assess their skills and be open to the benefits of undertaking ongoing training and reflection beyond ensuring they have a full understanding of their responsibilities. For those chairing meetings which are part of the

connexional structure it is essential they are open to both the feedback of their peers and any opportunities for their development that may be identified during their appointment.

11. SO 220(5)(iv) gave to the Nominations Committee the role of advising the Council on training and self-evaluation of all those who are appointed to bodies coming within its ambit. In the majority this refers to the committees of the Conference, the Connexional Council and its committees.

12. The practice of self-evaluation is not new to some connexional bodies, with, in the previous iteration, the members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee carrying out 360-degree review of each other and their Chair.

13. The OTTG affirmed during the year that the practice of those who are appointed being in a process of self-reflection as well as there being peer reflection was a positive developmental tool.

14. The Nominations Committee is asked to ensure that this practice is embedded throughout the connexional committee structures and is asked to work in tandem with HR in the Connexional Team to best implement this.

*****RESOLUTION**

54/2. The Conference receives Section B of the Report.

SECTION C: Amendments to the Model Trusts and Standing Orders

I. SPECIAL RESOLUTION RELATING TO THE MODEL TRUSTS

15. With the new relationship of the Conference to the Connexional Council as the trustee body with effect from 1 September 2024, as well as the replacement for the Methodist Council, amendments were needed to the Model Trusts to deal with: (A) the creation of the Connexional Council; and (B) the continuing powers of the Conference in relation to the Model Trusts, with particular reference to Conference and Connexional Property. A full explanation is set out in Section C of Conference Report 57 (2023): Oversight and Trusteeship.

16. By Special Resolution 57/5, the 2023 Conference agreed to make the relevant amendments to the Model Trusts, and the intention was that, after appropriate consultation, the proposed amendments in Special Resolution 57/5 would be brought back to the 2024 Conference for confirmation (again by Special

Resolution), to take effect from 1 September 2024 when the Connexional Council came into being.

17. Unfortunately, the proposed amendments were not submitted to the relevant Synods under Standing Order 126(1)(*a*) for consideration, meaning the 2024 Conference was not able to confirm the Special Resolution. The process therefore needed to begin again and the 2024 Conference duly re-adopted the Special Resolution (as Resolution 24/5) to enable the appropriate consultation to take place before being brought for confirmation (or otherwise) in 2025.

18. In the meantime, to allow for the fact that all references to "Methodist Council" in the Model Trusts would need to remain in place pending the outcome of the consultation despite the Methodist Council being disbanded on 31 August 2024, the 2024 Conference adopted an amended Standing Order 904 covering the interim position so that:

    the functions, powers, duties and responsibilities assigned to the Methodist Council in the Model Trusts shall be exercised and performed by the Connexional Council (the Connexional Council being, for this purpose only, to be regarded as the body of persons identified under the Model Trusts as "the Methodist Council"); and the Connexional Council shall constitute the connexional trustees.

19. A further resolution was also necessary with regard to the appointment of trustees of Conference property, defined as "Conference trustees" in the Model Trusts. It had been intended that such appointments would in future be made by the Connexional Council rather than the Conference. Therefore, pending such change, the 2024 Conference by Resolution 24/3 delegated its power of appointment to the Connexional Council. The reasoning for this is set out in the Law and Polity Conference Sub-committee's report at item 5/7/1 of the 2024 Conference Daily Record: https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf-2024-daily-record-complete.pdf.

20. However, since the 2024 Conference, the Connexional Team has been advised by the Church's auditors that the effect of providing that the Connexional Council rather than the Conference appoints the "Conference trustees" is that the Conference property accounts would have to be consolidated with the Connexional Council accounts, which would be an unintended and undesirable result.

21. The Law and Polity Committee has therefore advised that the Special Resolution intended to come to the 2025 Conference for confirmation should omit that particular amendment to the Model Trusts. The effect of omitting this provision

would ensure that the Conference's existing power to appoint the "Conference trustees" under the Model Trusts remains with the Conference, rather than being transferred to the Connexional Council.

22. The Special Resolution consultation process under Standing Order 126(1)(*a*), however, involves consultation on the resolution as passed by the 2024 Conference and so the Connexional Council was asked to vote on it in that form, and then to consider the Law and Polity Committee's advice to withdraw the "Conference trustees" amendment and pass a second resolution indicating the Council's views on that point. At the same time, in accordance with the requirements for consultation with the relevant Synods (ie the Isle of Man, Channel Islands and Scotland and Shetland), those Synods were also invited to adopt a similar process.

23. The Council approved the special resolution as adopted by the Conference of 2024, but then, as advised, resolved to support the proposal that if and when Special Resolution 24/5 is put to the 2025 Conference for confirmation, it be put in a form which omits the amendment to the definition of "Conference trustees" in Section (B). The outcome of the voting in the relevant Synods will be reported in the Order Paper.

24. The amendments proposed by Special Resolution 24/5 of the 2024 Conference are as follows, in accordance with the usual convention that the proposed insertions are shown in ***bold italics*** and deletions shown as being struck through:

A. Amendments relating to the Connexional Council

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

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

. . .

Replace 'Methodist Council' by 'Connexional Council' in the following instances: 3(2)(a), 3(3), 4(1), 5(2), 6(1), 6(2), 8(3), 11 (title and text), 11A, 18(1), 19(2), 19(3), 21A(*c*), 26(1)

B. Amendments relating to Connexional and Conference property

1. Interpretation

. . .

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

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

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

. . .

(d) Connexional property: the Connexional ***Council*** ~~Trustees~~;

(dA) Conference property: the Conference Trustees;

25. The Conference is therefore invited to approve the special resolution with the exception of the item in Section B relating to the definition of "Conference Trustees" in paragraph 1 of the Model Trusts (shown in the text that is shaded above) which will therefore remain unaltered.

26. There are some consequential amendments proposed in the next section of this report which will depend upon the outcome of the Conference's decision on this item.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

54/3. The Conference receives the report upon the Special Resolution process and concurs with the advice of the Law and Polity Committee.

54/4. ***(Three quarters majority)*** **The Conference amends the Model Trusts as set out above, with the exception of the first item listed in section B. 1. Interpretation, as to the meaning of 'Conference Trustees'.**

II. STANDING ORDER AMENDMENTS CONSEQUENT UPON THE SPECIAL RESOLUTION IN SECTION I.

27. The Law and Polity Committee has taken the view that if the Special Resolution amending the Model Trusts {with the exception of the one item mentioned above) is adopted at this Conference, not having been able to be adopted last year, then the 'holding position' which the Conference was invited to adopt for the current connexional year, in the form of SO 904, will no longer be necessary, as the essential points will now be covered in the Model Trusts. Therefore the Conference is invited to revoke SO 904, so as to follow our usual practice of avoiding direct repetition in Standing Orders of provisions which appear in the Model Trusts or Deed of Union, to reduce confusion and affirm the primacy of those documents. The current text of SO 904 reads as follows:

904 Trusteeship Provisions Consequent on the Establishment of the Connexional Council.

(1) The Connexional Council shall constitute the connexional trustees for any connexional property or part or category of such property.

(2) The Connexional Council shall perform and exercise the functions, powers, duties and responsibilities assigned to the Methodist Council in the Model Trusts and for this purpose only is the body of persons of that name constituted by the Conference.

*****RESOLUTION**

54/5. *[To be moved if the Conference confirms the main body of the Special Resolution]* **The Conference revokes Standing Order 904.**

28. If the Conference adopts the Special Resolution as recommended, ie without the intended amendment of the definition of "Conference Trustees" (as explained above), then the consequential amendments to SO 280 and 281 dealing respectively with the appointment of the trustees of the New Room, Bristol and of the trustees and chair of the trustees of Westminster Central Hall which were put in place last year need now to be amended again, partly to revert to the previous

provision, but additionally to reflect the revised functions of the Nominations Committee which is being proposed at paragraph 31 below.

*****RESOLUTION**

54/6. *[to be moved if the Conference adopts the Special Resolution with the omission of the item relating to the meaning of "Conference Trustees"]*
The Conference amends Standing Orders 280 and 281 as appears below.

280 The New Room, Bristol

(1) The ~~Connexional Council~~ ***Conference*** shall~~, in exercising its powers of appointment in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2(1)(dA) of the Model Trusts,~~ annually appoint managing trustees**,** as provided below**,** for the Conference Property at John Wesley's Chapel (the New Room) and 4 Charles Street (Charles Wesley's house) and 5 Charles Street, Bristol.

. . .

(3) The trustees shall appoint a chair, a secretary and a treasurer from among their own number~~, with the agreement of the council~~.

281 Westminster Central Hall

(1) The ~~Connexional Council~~ ***Conference*** shall~~, in exercising its powers of appointment in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2(1)(dA) of the Model Trusts,~~ annually appoint, as provided below, the managing trustees of Westminster Central Hall, as a Conference Property.

(4) The chair of the trustees shall be appointed by the ~~council~~ ***Conference***~~, upon the nomination of the Nominations Committee~~.

III. OTHER PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

29. There follow a number of proposed amendments arising from further reflection upon the changes made last year, in the light of working practice, as explained in the introduction to this Report. The reason for each change is set out below, and the resolution at the end of this Section C is brought to enact these various changes.

1. Terms of appointment and related matters

30. This group of proposed amendments ((i) to (iv)) is intended to clarify and standardise the terms of appointment for various connexional bodies, to be normally for a period of three years renewable for three, and only further renewable after that in exceptional circumstances.

(i) 200(1)

Counsel's Opinion on the governance proposals in 2022 included the advice that the provision for annual appointment of the members of the Connexional Council did not accord with the proposed terms of service, and should be deleted. This had previously been agreed by the Law and Polity Committee, but not then followed through in the drafting of SO 200(1)(a). Therefore this deletion is now proposed.

200(1)(a): The Connexional Council . . . shall be appointed ~~annually~~ by the Conference . . .

(ii) 200(2)

The terms of appointment of Connexional Council members (other than those appointed ex officio), and of its chair (and deputy chair), currently provide for a four year period of office, renewable for a further two years. (Four years was the equivalent provision in relation to the Methodist Council.) It is now thought appropriate that these appointments should reflect those of the main committees (and current practice in many charitable bodies) and therefore it is proposed that the appointments should normally be for three years, renewable for three, with the provision proposed in (c) for exceptional extensions, equivalent to that for the main committees in SO 300(5).

200(2)(a): The chair of the council shall be appointed … normally to serve . . . for a period of ~~four~~ ***three*** years and may be appointed for a further period of up to ~~two~~ ***three*** years. . ..

(b): The persons appointed under head (1)***(b)***(viii) above . . . shall normally serve . . . for a period of ~~four~~ ***three*** years and may be appointed for a further period of up to ~~two~~ ***three*** years.

(c) Any extension of an appointment under sub-clause (a) or (b) above beyond the initial reappointment shall only be granted if the Conference is satisfied that there is good reason to do so in the light of a statement by the Nominations Committee as to the exceptional nature of the circumstances which have led the council to make the further nomination.

(iii) Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

It is proposed to standardise the terms of appointment of this committee to accord with the proposed term for the Connexional Council, and those for the council's main committees.

Furthermore, as the committee's function is to provide assurance to the Connexional Council, not the Conference, as to the matters within its responsibilities, it is thought appropriate that it should be appointed by the Connexional Council and be treated as one of the council's main committees. In accordance with the arrangement of Standing Orders into Parts 2 and 3 adopted last year it would therefore be appropriate for it to appear in Part 3, and be renumbered as SO 304. This would require some further consequential amendments as set out below, mainly because what would previously have been specific provisions for this committee are now covered by the general provisions as to the main committees in SO 300.

300 The Main Council Committees: General Provisions

(1) This Standing Order applies to the appointment of the following committees:

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

referred to here as 'the main council committees'.

. . .

301 Responsibilities

(1) The respective general areas of responsibility of the main council committees shall be as delineated in Standing Orders ***304,*** 311, 321 and 361 below . . ..

~~***222***~~**(1)** ***304*****:**

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. (1) The ~~Conference shall each year appoint, upon the nomination of the Connexional Council, a~~ connexional Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, ~~having~~ ***shall have*** the constitution and responsibilities specified below, in order to assist the ***Connexional C***ouncil in its functions under Standing Order 203 and 204.

(2) The committee***, appointed in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 300 above,*** shall consist of no fewer than three persons~~, including one appointed by the Conference to chair the committee and, if the Conference thinks fit, one appointed as deputy chair~~, all of whom shall be members of the Methodist Church~~ and all of whom shall normally serve for an initial term of four years and thereafter on an annual basis for a maximum of three years~~.

(3) (*a*) With the exception of the person appointed to serve *ex officio* on the ~~Connexional C~~**c**ouncil by virtue of Standing Order 200(1)(*b*)(vii), no member of the council shall be eligible to be a member of the committee.

(*b*) No member of the Connexional Team shall be eligible to be a member of the committee.

~~(4) Any nomination for appointment which will result in a committee member serving for a continuous term exceeding seven years may only be made in exceptional circumstances and shall require a resolution of the council carried by a majority of 75% of those present and voting. *[The general provision in SO 300(5) now covers this.]*~~

(5) The committee shall meet as frequently as need be, but in any event at least three times a year and also whenever the auditors appointed under Standing Order 012 require it to do so.

(6) When required to do so by the committee, any appropriate members of the Connexional Team shall also be in attendance at meetings.

(7) The responsibilities of the committee shall be:

(i) to advise the council upon the appointment in accordance with Standing Order 012 of auditors for all the funds for which it is responsible, and (subject to that Standing Order) upon the nature and scope of the audit required;
(ii) to ***conduct a*** review ***of*** the consolidated accounts required by Standing Order 203(8); *[See below, under Finance and Resourcing Matters, for this proposed amendment, to clarify the relationship between various bodies.]*
(iii) to review, in direct consultation with the auditors, their annual report;
(iv) to review and monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of the financial and other internal control systems with regard to moneys and other assets for which the council is responsible;

(v) to review and monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of risk management processes and assurance reporting arrangements;
(vi) to submit an annual report to the council.

~~(8) In carrying out its functions the committee shall have reference to the terms of reference for the committee provided by the council from time to time.~~ *[The general provision in 301(2) now covers this.]*

Consequential amendment:

204(2) ". . .such advice and reports from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee as are required in Standing Order ~~222~~ ***304***

(iv) Nominations Committee

Again, it is proposed to amend the terms of appointment of this committee, to align with the proposed term for the Connexional Council and its committees. [Further proposed amendments in relation to the Nominations Committee appear further on in this report.]

220 (2) The committee shall consist of a chair and up to six other members, none of whom shall be members of the Connexional Council. The members shall (subject to the need to ensure appropriate continuity and turnover) normally be appointed to serve for a ~~maximum~~ period of ~~four~~ ***three*** years ***and may be appointed for a further period of up to three years***. . . .

2. Nominations Committee: further amendments

31. Now that the processes relating to this committee's role and functions have been able to be put into practice, and after consultation with the committee, the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group propose some further amendments to SO 220.

As a result of the conversations which followed Resolution 45/5 of the Conference of 2024, it is proposed that certain other committees should be added to the remit of the Nominations Committee, as set out in the amendment to SO 220(4) below at (a). *See the report of the Nominations Committee elsewhere in the Agenda.*

On further reflection it has been thought more appropriate for the body to whom the appointment is being made to bring any nomination to the Conference. This would therefore require a revocation of SO 220(5)(ii), and certain consequential amendments. See (b) below.

The role of the committee member in taking part in selection processes has been further explored and clarified in the amendment to SO 220(5)(i). See (c) below.

(a) Nominations Committee – expansion of role

220(4): Add as further heads:

- ***the Faith and Order Committee***
- ***the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee***
- ***the Law and Polity Committee***
- ***the Safeguarding Committee***
- ***the Conference Trustees***

(b) Nominations Committee – not to be responsible for bringing the resulting nomination

220(5)(ii): ~~bring to the Conference or council, as required, the resulting nomination for appointment;~~

Consequential amendments if 220(5)(ii) is revoked:

(i) The Connexional Council: 200(2)(a) The chair of the council shall be appointed upon nomination by the ~~Nominations Committee~~ ***council*** normally to serve, subject to the provisions of clause (4), for *[see other amendment as to term of appointment above]*. . . . The ~~Nominations Committee~~ ***council*** shall also nominate for appointment by the Conference, from the members appointed under head (1)(viii) above, a deputy chair, who may hold office during the period of appointment under sub-clause (*b*) below**.**

(b) The persons appointed under head (1)(viii) above shall be nominated by the ~~Nominations Committee~~ ***council*** for their experience, expertise and representative roles, each person having the appropriate skills to serve on a trustee body. *[See other amendment as to term of appointment above]*

(ii) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. 221(2) The *[JDS scrutiny]* group shall comprise three persons with relevant experience, knowledge and skills relating to the implementation of complex issues and understanding of the workings of the Methodist Church, who shall be nominated annually to the Conference by the Nominations Committee.

(iii) 300 The Main Council Committees: Appointment

(5) All persons appointed to the main council committees shall initially be appointed for a period of three years and may be reappointed for a further period of no more than three years. The council may only extend the appointment for a further period beyond the initial reappointment if it is satisfied that there is good reason to do so in the light of a statement by the Nominations Committee as to the exceptional nature of the circumstances ***involved*** ~~which have led the committee to make the further nomination~~.

(c) Nominations Committee – participation in selection processes

220(5)(i): add at the end "***, including where appropriate taking part in but not voting in selection processes, nor shall they chair them unless so requested by the relevant recruitment group or panel.***"

3. Nominations to office generally: the provision in Standing Order 016

32. SO 016, which appears below in strike-through, is a provision which dates from an earlier period of our history. It is purportedly of general application, but SO 200 has already limited it in relation to nominations which are currently brought by the Nominations Committee [see above for the proposal in relation to SO 220(5)(ii)], and it is also excluded eg for the process of appointment of District Chairs. In other contexts awareness of the provision is probably minimal. In most cases the body in question would determine its own procedure in the case of a contested nomination, and if anything this provision goes against what might be good and safer recruitment practice in explicitly permitting other names to be brought. It is proposed that it now be revoked, together with the consequential references in SO 220(7) and 300(4).

016 **Nominations.** ~~Where provision is made in these Standing Orders for the nomination or proposal of a name or names by a committee or officer to an appointing or nominating body for appointment or nomination respectively by that body then in the absence of provision to the contrary members of that body may add other names before the vote takes place and unless some other procedure is specified may do so orally when the business is called.~~

220(7) [Nominations Committee} ~~For the avoidance of doubt, the provisions of Standing Order 016 do not apply to nominations brought to the Conference or any other body by the committee.~~

300(4) [The Main Council Committees: Appointment] The council shall work in consultation with the Nominations Committee, in accordance with that committee's responsibilities under Standing Order 220, to make the appointments under clauses

(2) and (3) above. ~~For the avoidance of doubt, the provisions of Standing Order 016 do not apply to nominations brought to the council by the committee.~~

4. Financial and Resourcing Matters

33. **Accounts**

It is proposed that matters to do with the necessary review of the accounts should appear under SO 222, to be renumbered as 304 if the suggestion above is agreed, so as to clarify that this is the responsibility of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (rather than the Resourcing Committee), and therefore it is also proposed to delete SO 362(2) and make the appropriate provision under what would become SO 304.

An amendment is also proposed to SO 204, to clarify what was intended to be the relationship between the Connexional Council and the Conference as to the accounts: the ultimate responsibility for the preparation and approval of the connexional accounts is for the Connexional Council as the trustee body, but provision needs to be clearly made for members of the Conference (and any other persons who wish to do so) to have access to the accounts via the church's website, and that appears in SO 204(1)(i) below.

203 [Connexional Council's] General Responsibilities as Trustee Body

(8) [This general provision remains unchanged] The council shall be the trustee body for all connexional funds and have responsibility for the preparation and approval of the connexional accounts.

204 [Connexional Council's] Responsibilities for Finance and Property

(1) The Connexional Council shall be responsible for:

(i) ~~presenting to the Conference the financial statements for information~~ ***ensuring that the accounts specified in Standing Order 370 are published on the Methodist Church's website,*** and

(ii) presenting to the Conference the budget for expenditure upon the central services for which the council is responsible, for approval by the Conference.

304 *[as proposed to be renumbered]* Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

(7) The responsibilities of the committee shall be:

. . ..(ii) to ***conduct a*** review ***of*** the consolidated accounts required by Standing Order 203(8);

362 Resourcing Committee: Particular Responsibilities. (1) Without limiting the ambit of its general responsibilities as outlined in Standing Order 361, the committee's responsibilities shall include those listed below.

~~(2) The committee shall be responsible for~~

~~(i) the detailed examination of the accounts required by Standing Order 370 to be prepared and for recommending their adoption by the Connexional Council; and~~
~~(ii) the preparation of summary accounts to be presented for information to the Conference~~

34. The Resourcing Committee

The rest of Standing Order 362 then lists the various other responsibilities of the Resourcing Committee. Now that this committee has come into operation and its relationship with the Connexional Council and other bodies has become clearer, it is recommended that the current provisions in SO 362(3) set out below (which were largely taken over as interim provisions from what appeared at various points in Standing Orders previously) be replaced with what follows below.

~~(3) To enable the council to fulfil its responsibilities under Standing Order 204(1) and Section 37, the committee shall propose to the council, for presentation to the Conference for its approval, the budget for the connexional funds for expenditure upon the central services for which the council is responsible, together with a rationale for it in terms of the priorities and mission strategies of the Methodist Church, recommending the total amount required to be levied by the Conference for the next connexional year and the payments to be made from the fund, taking into account the priorities judged necessary by the council.~~

~~(4) The committee shall act to advise and enable the council to fulfil its legal duties and obligations as an employer. It shall have responsibility for all personnel matters for those with council employment contracts, and shall act as the responsible body for implementing the Church's duty of care towards those ministers appointed to serve in appointments under the direction of the council and those ministers appointed as officers of the Conference and located in the Connexional Team.~~

~~(5) The committee shall, on behalf of the council, oversee and administer the funds referred to in Section 37 below, and all other connexional funds of which the council is trustee.~~

~~(6) The committee shall make recommendations to the council, to be brought to the Conference, as to ministerial stipends and related matters. These shall include (but not be limited to) recommendations as to: minimum stipends to be paid to ministers and probationers; the amount of any additional allowances and initial payments; the level of travel expenses payable; financial arrangements for ministerial sabbaticals; expenses incurred and any additional allowances payable on removal between circuits.~~

~~(7) The committee shall produce guidance for ministers, probationers and students as to grants, loans and allowances available to them (particularly where stationed in one of the Island districts, the Isles of Scilly, the Isle of Wight, Malta or Gibraltar).~~

~~(8) The committee shall be responsible for making recommendations as to any other terms under which ministers and probationers serve within their covenant relationship with the Conference.~~

(2) The committee shall be responsible for:

- (i) ***the preparation of the budget for connexional funds, for presentation by the Connexional Council to the Conference for its approval;***
- (ii) ***advising and enabling the council to fulfil its legal duties and obligations as an employer;***
- (iii) ***scrutiny, on behalf of the council, of all connexional funds;***
- (iv) ***making recommendations to the council, to be brought to the Conference, as to ministerial stipends, allowances, and related matters; producing guidance on grants, loans and allowances for minsters; making recommendation as to any other terms under which ministers and probationers serve within their covenant relationship with the Conference;,***
- (v) ***scrutiny of connexional property guidance;***
- (vi) ***advising the council concerning properties for which it is managing trustee;***
- (vii) ***overseeing the work of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee;***
- (viii) ***overseeing the relationship with those entities whose accounts are consolidated in the accounts of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, and with any other bodies which act in partnership with the church, in accordance with a list to be published from time to time by the Connexional Council.***

5. Other minor drafting amendments

35. The following list contains a number of minor amendments, either to correct the drafting which took place last year or to make alterations to what was then decided, in the light of experience.

(a) Representatives and Delegates to Other Bodies and Associate members of the Conference

There are some instances where on fuller reflection it would better reflect current and appropriate practice if these Standing Orders were amended as to the responsible office-holder involved.

106 Representatives and Delegates to Other Bodies. (1) [revoked]

(2) The Conference may itself appoint any representatives whom the Conference or the Methodist Church is entitled to appoint to other autonomous conferences (as defined in the Deed of Union), and may appoint a committee or committees to bring nominations for that purpose, but in so far as any such representatives are in any year not appointed by the Conference itself the power and responsibility of appointing them is hereby delegated to and laid upon the Secretary of the Conference after consultation with the ~~Ecumenical Officer~~ ***Connexional Secretary***.

(3) (a) Before the first meeting of the World Methodist Council in each quinquennium the Conference shall appoint its representatives for that quinquennium in such numbers as the Conference shall determine.

(b) The power and responsibility of making appointments to fill any vacancies arising during the quinquennium by the death or resignation of any such representatives or by the inability of any such representative to attend particular meetings is hereby delegated to and laid upon the Secretary of the Conference after consultation with the ~~Ecumenical Officer~~ ***the Connexional Secretary***.

(4) The Conference shall from time to time decide whether any right of the Methodist Church or of any person or body on its behalf to appoint delegates or representatives to any assembly other than those specified in the above clauses shall be exercised. If so, the Conference may itself appoint the delegates or representatives and may appoint a committee to bring nominations for that purpose, but in so far as any such delegates or representatives are in any year not appointed by the Conference itself the power and responsibility of appointing them are hereby delegated to and laid upon the Secretary of the Conference after consultation with the Ecumenical Officer ***or the Connexional Secretary.***

107 Associate Members. (1) The associate members of the Conference to be appointed under clause 14(4) of the Deed of Union shall be as follows:

(i) four persons appointed by other churches and Christian bodies which are members of an ecumenical body or association in Great Britain of which the Methodist Church is also a member;
(ii) fourteen persons appointed by other autonomous conferences, other Methodist churches and united churches in which Methodists have joined.

(2) The Secretary of the Conference***,*** after consultation with ***in the case of (1)(i) above*** the Ecumenical Officer ***and in the case of (1)(ii) the Connexional Secretary*** shall annually recommend and the Conference shall annually determine which bodies are to appoint associate members, and in what numbers, to the next or next but one Conference under clause (1) above.

(3) The appointment under clause 14(4)(d) of the Deed of Union of two associate members as members of the Conference shall be made by the Secretary of the Conference after consultation with the ~~Ecumenical Officer~~ ***the Connexional Secretary***. Such appointment shall not give rise to a casual vacancy or require or permit further appointments of associate members to be made.

(b) Conference Planning Executive.

The provision which previously appeared at SO 212(6) as a function of the Methodist Council needs to be reinserted, with the substitution of the Conference Planning Executive for the Methodist Council, as appears below.

140 Conference Planning Executive and Conference Arrangements Committee

Insert as a new clause (3A):

The executive shall be responsible for recommending to the Conference what date it shall fix for the commencement of the next Conference and what date it shall provisionally designate for the commencement of the next Conference but one.

(c) The Property Secretary

At various points in the Model Trusts and Standing Orders, reference is made to 'the Property Secretary'. There is no longer a specific person

appointed to that office; instead, the Property Secretary's various duties are fulfilled by different Connexional Team members, as assigned to them by (until this year) the Methodist Council. The office cannot simply be abolished, as there are references to such an office in the particular clauses of the Model Trusts which are not able to be amended. It is thought sensible to make explicit that this arrangement continues, with the Connexional Council now replacing the Methodist Council in this regard. This would be added to Standing Order 204(4), which already provides for the council to discharge the responsibilities of the Property Division (an arrangement which similarly has to remain in place because the Property Division is referred to in unamendable provisions).

204 Responsibilities for Finance and Property

(4) For the purposes of the Methodist Church Act 1976 and the Model Trusts the council is the connexional organisation authorised by the Conference to act generally on behalf of the Conference in relation to property affairs and constituted to discharge the responsibilities of the Property Division. ***The council is also the body authorised for the purposes of Standing Order 006(2A) to appoint such person or persons as are required to fulfil the duties assigned to the Property Secretary or General Secretary of the Board of the Property Division by the Model Trusts.***

*****RESOLUTION**

54/7. The Conference amends Standing Orders as proposed in Section III above, with effect from 1 September 2025.

SECTION D: Connexional Leaders' Forum

36. The 2024 Conference received a section of the OTTG's report which recommended that a 'retreat type gathering' be held for District Chairs and the Warden and members of the Connexional Council. This gathering took place at Yarnfield in early March and was facilitated by Jill Baker, a former Vice-President of the Conference. Over 24 hours, those assembled attempted to listen to what God is saying to God's Church through Bible reading, prayer, teaching, discussion and silence.

A number of key themes emerged during the planning and the event itself. Unsurprisingly, a range of Methodist spiritualities disclosed different approaches to (and differing levels of comfort with) the challenge of communal silence.

37. Subsequently, both the Connexional Council and the District Chairs'/Warden's meeting have reflected on the Yarnfield experience. The council affirmed its sense that being able to spend time with others in connexional leadership (primarily but not exclusively the Chairs and Warden) would be hugely valuable. In some senses, the two groups would seek different but complementary outcomes from such a gathering. The Connexional Council, as a trustee body, would value the opportunity to engage with those in senior oversight roles such as the District Chairs and Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. Connexional leaders, including the District Chairs and Warden, would value the opportunity to engage with members of the Connexional Council for mutual learning, discernment, and awareness of their respective responsibilities. The council also noted that such a meeting need not be residential and that with the right facilitation and venue a lot could be achieved in a day.

38. The OTTG recognises the value of those with these responsibilities spending time together annually and notes the introduction of a post-Conference meeting to discuss the work of the next connexional year. It feels that a broader agenda reflecting on the work of God should also form the basis of discussion during the year and therefore recommends that a gathering that focuses on listening to God and God's people be planned each year. In addition to the Chairs and Warden and Connexional Council (including the Assistant Secretary of the Conference, the Connexional Secretary and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice), the OTTG recommends that the Secretary of the Conference determines who should be present at such a gathering.

39. The OTTG also notes that that SO 293 has been suspended for two years; the council has noted that not every meeting in the life of the Church requires a SO and that greater flexibility and openness might be achieved by there not being one. The OTTG therefore presents a simplified SO 293. It also recommends amending SO 294 to update its title.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

54/8. The Conference receives Section D of the Report.

54/9. The Conference amends SO 293:

293 The Connexional Leaders' Forum. ~~(1) Leaders appointed by the Conference to exercise oversight in particular bodies or spheres of responsibility shall work together collegially in the oversight of the whole Church. The leaders listed in (2) below shall meet together as often as practicable to watch over one another in love in order to support~~

~~each person in the exercise of the particular responsibilities of the office, to engage in prayerful theological reflection, to share insights and develop vision, and to confer about how the vision and policies adopted by the Conference might be implemented in the Church.~~

~~(2) The Connexional Leaders' Forum shall consist of:~~

~~(i) the Secretary of the Conference;~~
~~(iA) the assistant secretary of the Conference;~~
~~(ii) the President, Vice-President, ex-President, ex-Vice-President, President-Designate and Vice-President-Designate of the Conference;~~
~~(iii) the District Chairs;~~
~~(iv) the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;~~
~~(v) the Connexional Secretary as defined in Standing Order 383;~~
~~(vi) the members of the senior management group as defined in Standing Order 383 not otherwise forming part of the Connexional Leaders' Forum under this clause;~~
~~(vii) the chair of the Connexional Council;~~
~~(viii) the chair of the Ministries Committee;~~
~~(ix) the chair of the Mission Committee;~~
~~(x) the chair of the Resourcing Committee;~~
~~(xi) the Youth President.~~

(3) ~~Other persons appointed by the Conference to fulfil connexional duties shall be invited to form part of the Forum on particular occasions, as appropriate.~~

The Secretary of the Conference shall at least once a year convene a meeting of the Chairs of District and the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order together with the members of the Connexional Council and such other persons whom the Secretary of the Conference considers it appropriate to invite to consider the work of God and for mutual learning, discernment, and awareness of their respective responsibilities.

54/10. The Conference amends SO 294 as follows:

294 Chairs' ***and Warden's*** **Meeting.** ***(1)*** There shall be a meeting of the Chairs of ~~the home~~ Districts ***and the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order*** not less than three times a year for the discussion of stationing issues and other matters of mutual concern**,** reflection upon the work of God in the Districts and Connexion and consideration of whether there are any matters that the meeting believes it to be necessary or appropriate to bring to the Conference's or Connexional Council's

attention. The expenses of these meetings shall be pooled and charged to the District Expenses Funds of the Districts, assisted by a grant from the Methodist Church Fund.

SECTION E: District Leadership

40. This matter was raised in some previous Oversight and Trusteeship Reports, most fully in Section 5 of the Report to the 2024 Conference (https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/50._OTTG.pdf). This has reflected a move towards reconfigured arrangements within or between Districts, including District mergers and amalgamations to form, in some cases, larger Districts, leading towards new ways of being a District and new patterns of officers serving them. This applies in particular to the roles of Chairs of District and those who deputise for them or assist them, and more generally to the principles of shared and collaborative district leadership. Over the years a wide range of patterns have emerged which are increasingly divergent, and that tendency is likely to increase under the new developments. As Section 5 of the OTTG Report to the 2024 Conference acknowledged, care is therefore needed to ensure that arrangements can be tailored to suit the context of an individual District, but within a consistent connexional pattern.

41. In Section 5 of the OTTG Report to the 2024 Conference, the OTTG made initial recommendations to amend and amplify some of the provisions within CPD concerning District Leadership. These recommendations were considered by the Law and Polity Committee. In response to a Conference direction, the Faith and Order Committee also considered the matter of District Leadership in their Report (No.28) which was received by the 2024 Conference on The Role of a District Chair. Care was taken to ensure that the respective reports were mutually informed so that the Conference might receive a cohesive set of recommendations. Section 5 of the OTTG Report included indicative changes to the relevant Standing Order, SO 426. A related special resolution provisionally amending the Deed of Union was also passed by the Conference, with the expectancy that final proposals would be brought to the Conference of 2025.

42. The OTTG presented Standing Order amendments to the 2024 Conference that were only indicative for this matter because, firstly, the amendments could not be fully adopted without confirmation first of the Deed of Union amendment by special resolution of the 2025 Conference; secondly, to allow for any necessary adjustment in the light of other possible proposals that might be presented to the 2025 Conference (not least in respect of the Stationing Review); and thirdly, to

allow for comment on the proposed SO amendments. On the first point, a special resolution to confirm the Deed of Union amendment is included in this Report; on the second point, the OTTG is not aware of any other proposals (including in connection with the Stationing Review) that would affect the ability to confirm the amendments proposed in their various details at the 2025 Conference; and thirdly there have not been any comments received on the indicative Standing Order amendments to suggest further variation or refinement.

43. Accordingly, proposals are now brought to the 2025 Conference to confirm the proposed amendments to the Deed of Union and Standing Orders. The reasoning for these is set out in the remainder of this report, which to a large degree repeats the explanatory text received by Conference in Section 5 of the 2024 OTTG Report, but with updating where now appropriate, to enable the members of the 2025 Conference also to consider what is proposed.

44. The relevant Standing Order, SO 426, makes provision for two categories of persons to be appointed to deputise for or to assist a District Chair. Different roles, descriptions and mechanisms for appointment are involved. Firstly, there is provision for a Synod to appoint one or more people to act as deputies to the Chair [Clauses (1) and (3)].

44.1 As the role of Chair involves exercising pastoral responsibility, ministerial oversight, and some forms or expressions of pastoral charge, these deputies are to be presbyters in the active work stationed in the District concerned [Clause 2(ii)]. Being "in the active work" and having regard to Deed of Union Clause 1 (iA), means that they cannot be a supernumerary or without appointment, and it is inferred that they may be Recognised and Regarded (under DU 45 and SO 732), but cannot be an Authorised (or Associate) Presbyter (under SO 733 or 733A)). Given silence on the point, they may apparently be full-time in this role or part-time.

44.2 Their role is to perform the duties specified in a role description approved by the Synod [Clause (2)(i)]. The Standing Order does not specify what those duties should be, but it does specify that they cannot include anything that the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts expressly state can only be performed by the Chair of District. The only thing that can easily be found to be without exception in that category is that another presbyter cannot be a substitute for a Chair of District in the membership of the Conference (clause 14(2((v) of the Deed of Union).

45. Secondly, SO 426 makes provision for a Chair to appoint other people "to assist him or her" [Clause (5)]. The language is important here. Some Districts

have adopted the terminology of 'Assistant Chairs'. That is understandable in common speech, but the language of the Standing Order as presently drafted would suggest that technically it would be more correct to refer to them instead as 'Chair's Assistants'. Assisting the Chair in this way may involve a range of duties other than those of exercising presbyteral oversight and forms of pastoral responsibility or charge. This is demonstrated by the fact that the people appointed to this role may be other than presbyters in the active work. Standing Order 426(6) allows for both ordained and lay possibilities.

45.1 If ministers, they have to "reside in the District for the purposes of the stations" [SO 426(6)(i)]. Standing Orders 005(vi), (vii) and 785(4)(a) imply that this encompasses presbyters or deacons who are in the active work, those who are authorised ministers, those in appointments not within the control of the Church, those without appointment, or those who are supernumeraries; but not those residing for the purposes of the stations within the categories referred to in SO 785(8)(c) or (d). In suggesting amendments below to this category of those who assist Chairs and contribute to the leadership of a District, it is proposed to narrow the possible classes of minister involved to those in the active work who are stationed in the District (although those outside the District should be able to apply but would need to be stationed in the District on appointment to the role). In making that proposal, the OTTG considered the level of responsibility involved and concluded that it was not dissimilar to that involved in taking pastoral charge of a local church (a supernumerary minister would need to return to the active work in order to have pastoral charge, with the responsibilities and accountabilities that come with being in the active work). It noted also that Districts could still appoint supernumerary ministers to other offices or supportive roles, and that the proposed revisions to SO 426 were focused on District Leadership. The OTTG therefore agreed that a supernumerary or minister without appointment who wished to be considered for a District leadership role under SO 426 should seek to return to the active work.

45.2 Alternatively, those appointed as 'Chair's Assistants' have to be members in the District concerned. That means that they can be lay people.

46. Going forwards, a consistent intent has been to retain Deputy Chairs, but to be clearer about the role(s) of Chair's Assistants/Assistant Chairs, and not least to acknowledge that such roles may contribute to or have a share in the leadership of the District as a whole (whether lay or ordained), rather than merely 'assisting' the District Chair, even if that is conceptually or practically part of the role. Further considerations follow regarding the possible nature, purpose and terminology of the different roles.

47. Deputy Chairs will share with the Chair(s) of a District in the Chair's presbyteral duties of maintaining Methodist order and discipline [SO 424(2)]; exercising oversight of the character and fidelity of the presbyters and presbyteral probationers in the District [SO 424(3)]; stationing; being a pastor to the ministers and probationers [SO 424(1)]; representing the District in the Conference (if agreed, as proposed, from now on), Connexion and wider world; and representing the Conference and wider Connexion in the District. They may also substitute for the Chair with delegated authority where appropriate. The Deputy (or a particular one of them if there is more than one, as determined by the District Policy Committee from time to time) should in addition be designated as the person to fill the role of the Chair (including as a member of the Conference, if this change were to be agreed) should the Chair be incapacitated or unable for a time to exercise their office.

48. Three particular proposals arise (the first and second perhaps standing or falling together) concerning the Deputy Chair role:

48.1 The connexional aspects of the role of the Chair that a Deputy or Deputies would thereby share or fulfil as a substitute mean that representatives of the wider Connexion should play some role in the appointment of Deputies, just as they are in the initial appointment of a Chair (but perhaps not to the same extent, involving for example two members of the connexional panel referred to in Standing Order 421A(3)).

48.2 Districts should be entitled to have a Deputy Chair substitute for their District Chair in the Conference, which would require a change to clause 14(2)(v) of the Deed of Union by special resolution. Such a change was not contemplated in the Reply accepted by the Conference of 2019 when a question to that effect was raised in Memorial M12; however, a precedent towards allowing the filling of a Conference seat by alternate or substitute named officers was established by the 2024 Conference's amendment of clause 14(2)(vii) of the Deed of Union to permit the filling of a seat by alternates: "the President or the Lay Leader of the Methodist Church in Ireland. . .".

48.3 The appointment of someone as a Deputy should be shown against the name of the person concerned on the stations. If the Deputy role is only part-time and they are also appointed to other duties it can be shown against their name in the Circuit in which they are stationed as ". . . (. . . also Deputy Chair)". If ever full time, it would be shown under the District Chair's name at the start of a District's list, provided that in the appointment there has indeed been connexional panel involvement as suggested above.

49. The 'Chair's Assistant' role would become more focused on contributing to the leadership of the District in other ways than the specifically presbyteral role described above. It might be open to both lay members in the District, or ordained, and if ordained, to either deacons or presbyters stationed in the District, but in either case being clearer that those ordained should be in the active work (ie in Full Connexion or Recognised and Regarded). Since the role would be focused on contributing to and sharing in leadership of the District:

49.1 Firstly, a title other than 'Chair's Assistant', or even 'Assistant Chair', might be preferred and should be permitted. Indeed, if the role is filled by a lay person, there has previously been concern expressed in the OTTG that using 'Assistant' of a lay person reinforces a risk of actual or perceived hierarchy rather than the practice of collaborative leadership. As an alternative term, 'District Secretary', with its analogies to Connexional Secretary or Diocesan Secretary, is gaining currency in the proposals for some merged Districts, a term that need not be confused with the role of Synod Secretary. However, since no single term commands universal assent or meets every contextual requirement, flexibility in the use of terms should be permitted, and under these provisions Districts will have some liberty in finding appropriate titles for those who assist the Chair and contribute to the leadership of the District. The proviso is that the Synod should determine which title should be used for the role, the nature and details of which they will also agree, in their context. This is reflected in the suggested Standing Order amendments below.

49.2 Secondly, since the category is primarily envisaged as involving a contribution to District leadership, references to clerical and administrative duties should now be removed (given that Standing Order provisions are surely not required for this). If helpful in practice these or other forms of support can still be provided for the District Chair or other District Leaders as may be required (but again without requiring a Standing Order to permit them).

50. In terms of distinguishing between the roles:

50.1 If the Deputy role can be defined as in paragraph 47 above, it should be explicit that the role(s) of those who assist Chairs or contribute to District Leadership in this category do not include those duties. If that is made clear, then the confusion of describing 'Deputy Chairs' as 'Assistant Chairs' might be ended. This will require adjustment in the use of terms in some contexts, where usage has perhaps sometimes developed as a pragmatic response to the methods of recruitment set out by the present Standing Order (which will also be addressed below), rather than through focusing on the essence of a deputy's role as

envisaged in SO 426(1)-(4), and which it is proposed to be made clearer through the suggested amendments so as to ensure greater connexional commonality and clarity concerning the different categories.

50.2 As for what under the present Standing Order might be described strictly as 'Chair's Assistants', but for which going forwards there will liberty to adopt a title and role agreed by the Synod (such as 'Assistant Chairs', 'District Secretaries' or other appropriate term, but not in this category Deputy Chair), in essence, these lay or ordained roles will be focused on contributing to the leadership of the District in general or specified ways, other than through fulfilling the presbyteral functions referred to above. Such roles will, like Deputy Chairs but in other ways, constitute and enable helpful and valued contributions to the life and mission of both traditional sized and merged Districts.

51. The development of larger Districts with more complex or creative features for fulfilling the responsibilities of a District in the contemporary environment has raised related questions about how both ministerial and lay roles might best be recruited or appointed, which also needs to be considered. The Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group has long noted that the Methodist Church has become increasingly aware that recruitment and appointment processes should be transparent and inclusive. Thus, whilst at present under SO 426(6)(ii) any public facing aspect undertaken by a Chair's Assistant must be approved by the District Policy Committee or Synod, in other respects, a Chair's Assistant can be appointed by the District Chair alone: the EDI risks of appointing by an individual, at worst simply through a 'tapping on the shoulder' method, should from now on be avoided; and the greater leadership aspect being emphasised through the development of the role to meet emerging circumstances also suggests that a public process should be embedded. For these reasons, but also out of concerns that there should be scope for recruiting suitable postholders to both the Deputy Chair and Assistant Chair/District Secretary type roles, the following suggestions are made to reinforce and develop the processes for recruitment and appointment going forwards.

52. Given the presbyteral and representative responsibilities for deputising for the District Chair, it is proposed that Deputy Chairs should be appointed connexionally on the nomination of the Synod.

52.1 Potentially this would mean that the District might advertise for applications or to invite nominations for suitable presbyters from both within or outside the District for full or part time roles. Such appointments should involve two members of the connexional panel involved in the nomination of District Chairs and, on the

nomination of the Synod, mean that the appointee would be stationed to the role by the Conference, either by separate resolution of the Conference (as for District Chairs) or more simply through the adoption of the stations with the deputy being listed as such in the stations for that District.

52.2 It is recommended that advertisement of a Deputy Chair role, whether full or part time, should not require the approval of the Stationing Committee (nor require the presbyter to seek the approval of the Stationing Advisory Committee ['SAC'], since this is an appointment within the control of the Church).

52.3 However, if a part time role is involved and appointment to a circuit role is also desired in connection with the appointment, which may require recruitment from outside the District, or a circuit appointment within the District that is half time or more, then, regarding the circuit aspect, the applicable stationing matching provisions and processes should still be applied. This would require the timetable of the circuit and district appointment processes to be correlated between the District and the Circuit to enable stationing to both aspects to take place at the same time, and to be subject to both a satisfactory circuit match and satisfactory appointment to the deputy chair role, to be approved by the Conference through the adoption of the stations.

53. Regarding any other type of district leadership role under SO 426 (ie the category of Assistant Chair/District Secretary/other suitably termed role):

53.1 If this is to be advertised for appropriate fulfilment by a lay person, a successful recruitment process involving advert, agreed role description, application and interview should lead to appointment by the District Policy Committee ('DPC') as the District Trustees and employing body, and not be dependent on or wait for confirmation by the Synod, provided that the role has previously been agreed to in principle by the Synod through the approval of a title and role description specifying the duties that will be involved.

53.2 If the role is also open to a minister in the active work, following existing principles, the District will not need permission from the Stationing Committee to advertise nor the minister to seek permission from SAC (although references from the minister's minister in oversight should as standard be required, and from the Warden of the Diaconal Order in the case of a deacon). For parity (and reflecting the possibility in the present Standing Order), appointment should be by the DPC, again providing the role and title has previously been agreed in principle by the Synod, although in a minister's case also being subject to the Conference's confirmation of the stations.

53.3 If ever the role were appropriately to be suitable only for an ordained minister, the minister will need to be in the active work and appointment should again be by the DPC, but to a role and title previously agreed in principle by the Synod. Additionally:

i. if the role is part time and involves release of a minister stationed within a circuit, it could be dealt with through agreement between the District and Circuit (but in the case of a deacon will require the agreement also of the Warden of the Diaconal Order) with, where necessary, changes to the Stations with the approval of the Conference.
ii. if part time but requiring a 'new' minister who will also be expected to fulfil a circuit role, recruitment should be through the standard stationing matching process.
iii. if a full time role and it is desired to advertise and seek applications for the post, the permission of the Stationing Committee will be required.

54. In terms of the length of the appointment of Deputy Chairs or other district leadership roles under SO 426, at present SO 426(2)(iii) provides for repeatable three-year terms for Deputies, and there is no provision in 426(5)-(6) regarding (what are at present) 'Chair's Assistants'. The present Stationing Review, contained elsewhere in the Agenda, continues the move adopted in the recent Changing Patterns of Ministry Report towards establishing more flexible appointment periods. Part time district leadership appointments might also be coupled with circuit appointments, themselves of different length. Lay appointments usually need to be open ended, or at least to reflect available funding, and are subject to general provisions regarding redundancy and dismissal. Thus, seeking to legislate comprehensively for appointment lengths might be difficult or unwise, even if desired, although there would be merit in allowing for greater flexibility for appointment periods of deputies. In order nonetheless to provide an appropriate baseline, an initial maximum length of a ministerial appointment as Deputy Chair, or as an Assistant Chair/District Secretary, is suggested as being five years, to correspond with what is often still the standard initial circuit appointment, as included in the indicative Standing Order amendments (and thereafter the principles of a circuit reinvitation process have been referred to where connected circuit appointments are also involved.

55. The Deed of Union and Standing Order amendments set out below are therefore intended to provide some clarifications and updating regarding the roles and recruitment of Deputy Chairs and others who may also be appointed under Standing Order 426 to senior leadership in a District. As explained, one aspect proposed is that a Deputy Chair should be able from now on to substitute for a

District Chair as a member of the Conference in limited circumstances where appropriate. Since this requires a change to the Deed of Union and therefore a two-year special resolution process, this was first proposed to and agreed by Conference of 2024 (Resolution 50/11). The consultation required under SO 126(1) was directed by the Law and Polity Sub-Committee to be with the Connexional Council (Daily Record 7/42/1 https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf-2024-daily-record-complete.pdf), and the Connexional Council agreed the amendment by Resolution 19/3 at its March Meeting. Accordingly, the OTTG therefore invites the Conference by special resolution to confirm the following amendment to the Deed of Union, to take effect from 1 September 2025:

Deed of Union clause 14(2) (v) the Chair or Chairs of each home District***, or, as prescribed by Standing Orders, a deputy for a Chair who is unable to attend***;

56. The OTTG sets out the following amendments to Standing Order 426 which, if approved by the Conference of 2025, would take effect from 1 September 2025.

426 ~~Permanent Deputies, Temporary Deputies and Assistants.~~ ***Deputy Chairs and other senior District leaders***

(1) ***On the nomination of t***~~T~~he Synod***, the Conference*** may appoint a ~~person~~ ***presbyter or presbyters in the active work*** to the office of deputy to the Chair. ***A Deputy Chair shall share with the Chair in the leadership and presbyteral duties of the Chair, dealing with matters of Methodist order and discipline, stationing, the pastoral care of ministers and probationers, representing the Conference in the District and the District in the Conference.***

(2) Any appointment made under clause (1) above shall comply with the following requirements:

(i) the appointment shall be on terms that the deputy is to perform the ***particular*** duties specified ***in each case*** in a description of the deputy's role which has been approved by the Synod;

(iA) The Secretary of the Conference and two members of the panel appointed annually by the Conference under Standing Order 421A(3) shall be consulted in making any nomination to the Synod concerning such an appointment.

(ii) ~~the person appointed shall be a presbyter in the active work who is stationed in the District~~ ***the appointment may be full-time or part-time and in either case shall be advertised. Following satisfactory recruitment (and completion of any***

stationing matching process applying to a related circuit appointment), the appointment shall be brought to the Synod for nomination to the Conference for confirmation by designation on the list of the stations in the Districtt;

[Suggested editorial note: The words in parenthesis relate to situations where a presbyter is being appointed as a part-time Deputy Chair and also being newly stationed to a part-time circuit appointment, when the applicable stationing matching processes will still need to be followed for the circuit appointment. Other situations may involve the partial release of a presbyter from their existing circuit appointment, where a new stationing matching process will not be required but where the District should still liaise sensitively with the Circuit. In all cases, the processes for both the district appointment and any related part-time new or reconfigured Circuit appointment should be coordinated, and will culminate with the Conference's confirmation of the appointments through the adoption of the stations for the ensuing year.]

(iii) the appointment shall be for a specified period not exceeding ***five*** years in the first instance (but capable of extension for a further period or periods each of which shall not exceed three years and upon terms that it shall terminate if the ~~person~~ ***presbyter*** appointed ceases to be ~~qualified under (ii) above~~ ***in the active work and stationed in the District***~~;~~***.***

~~(iv) the duties to be performed by the deputy shall not include duties expressly required to be performed by the Chair by any provision of the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts.~~

(3) ~~The Synod may appoint more than one person to hold office as a deputy at the same time, but each appointment shall comply with the requirements set out in clause (2).~~

~~(4)~~ If the Chair of a District ~~or a deputy appointed under the preceding clauses of this Standing Order~~ is temporarily unable to fulfil all or any of the duties of the office because of accident, illness, absence from the country, sabbatical leave or other cause, ***the Deputy Chair duly appointed under this Standing Order shall substitute for and act as the Chair in all matters, including that of membership of the Conference. If more than one Deputy Chair has been appointed, one of them shall have been expressly designated in advance to substitute as a member of the Conference by*** ~~the Synod or~~ the district Policy Committee~~., or~~

(4) In cases of emergency ***and in the absence of a deputy previously appointed under this Standing Order,*** the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf***, after consultation with the Synod or district Policy Committee and the Conference***

Office, may appoint a person, being a presbyter in the active work stationed in the District, with authority to fulfil such of those duties which the Chair ~~or deputy~~ is unable to perform as may be specified in the appointment. An appointment made by the President or Vice-President shall continue only until such time as the Synod ~~or district Policy Committee~~ is able to confirm the***ir nomination of the*** appointment, or to ~~appoint~~ ***nominate*** another person under the provisions of this ~~clause~~ ***Standing Order, for appointment by the Conference by designation on the list of the stations in the District***.

(5) ~~A Chair~~ ***The district Policy Committee*** may at any time appoint a person to assist ~~him or her in such way as he or she may think fit~~ ***the Chair and contribute to the senior leadership of the District. The appointment shall not be to fulfil the duties set out in clause (1) above, but to fulfil such duties as are specified in each case in a description of the role approved by the Synod, with such title as shall be determined by the Synod.***

[Suggested editorial note: This replaces a previous provision for the appointment by a District Chair of an assistant (sometimes to a purely clerical or administrative role, since such support can be provided without requiring a Standing Order to that effect), with a provision enabling Districts to appoint others to share in the senior leadership of the District, including, if a minister, from within or beyond those already stationed in the District. A title such as Assistant Chair, District Secretary or other suitable title (and not therefore 'Deputy Chair) may be used for a role under SO 426(5)]

(6) ~~Unless the assistance is purely clerical or administrative, a~~***A***ny appointment made under clause (5) above shall comply with the following requirements:

(i) the person appointed***, if a minister,*** shall ~~reside~~ ***be in the active work and stationed*** in the District ~~for the purposes of the stations~~***, or, if a lay person,*** shall be a member in the District, and the terms of appointment shall provide for it to terminate if this requirement ceases to be satisfied;

(ii) ~~if the person appointed is to act publicly on behalf of the Chair, the appointment shall not take effect until it has been approved by the Synod or the district Policy Committee.~~ ***the appointment may be full time or part time and shall be advertised if open to lay persons or to lay persons and ministers. If the appointment is appropriately open only to ministers, it may be advertised if any necessary permission has been given; otherwise, recruitment shall be through a stationing matching process. Following satisfactory recruitment (and, in the case of a minister, completion of any stationing matching process applying to a related circuit appointment), the district Policy Committee shall make the***

appointment, subject in the case of ministers to the Conference's confirmation of the appointment by designation on the list of the stations in the District;

[Suggested editorial note: Permission of the Stationing Committee is usually required to advertise ministerial appointments, unless also open to lay persons. If the appointment is part time and involves a minister who is also being newly stationed to a part-time circuit appointment, the applicable stationing matching processes will still need to be followed for the circuit appointment. Other situations may involve the partial release of a minister from an existing circuit appointment where a new matching process will not be required but where the District should still liaise sensitively with the Circuit, and, in the case of a Deacon, additionally with the Warden of the Diaconal Order. In all cases, the processes for both the District appointment and any related new part-time or reconfigured Circuit appointment should be coordinated, and will culminate with the Conference's confirmation of the appointments through the adoption of the stations for the ensuing year.]

(iii) ~~the duties to be performed by the person appointed shall not include duties expressly required to be performed by the Chair by any provision of the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts~~ ***if the appointment shall be of a minister, the appointment shall be for a specified period not exceeding five years in the first instance (but capable of extension for a further period or periods following a reinvitation process that shall reflect the principles involved in a circuit reinvitation process), and upon terms that it shall terminate if the minister ceases to be in the active work and stationed in the District.***

(7) Nothing in this Standing Order infringes upon the provisions in the Deed of Union for filling casual vacancies.

See cl. 42(c) of the Deed (Book II, Part 1).

*****RESOLUTIONS**

54/11. The Conference receives Section E of the Report.

54/12. [Special Resolution]

The Conference amends clause 14(2) of the Deed of Union as follows and directs that it takes effect from 1 September 2025:

(v) the Chair or Chairs of each home District***, or, as prescribed by Standing Orders, a deputy for a Chair who is unable to attend***;

54/13. The Conference adopts the amendments to Standing Order 426 set out in paragraph 56 above with effect from 1 September 2025.

SECTION F: Conclusion

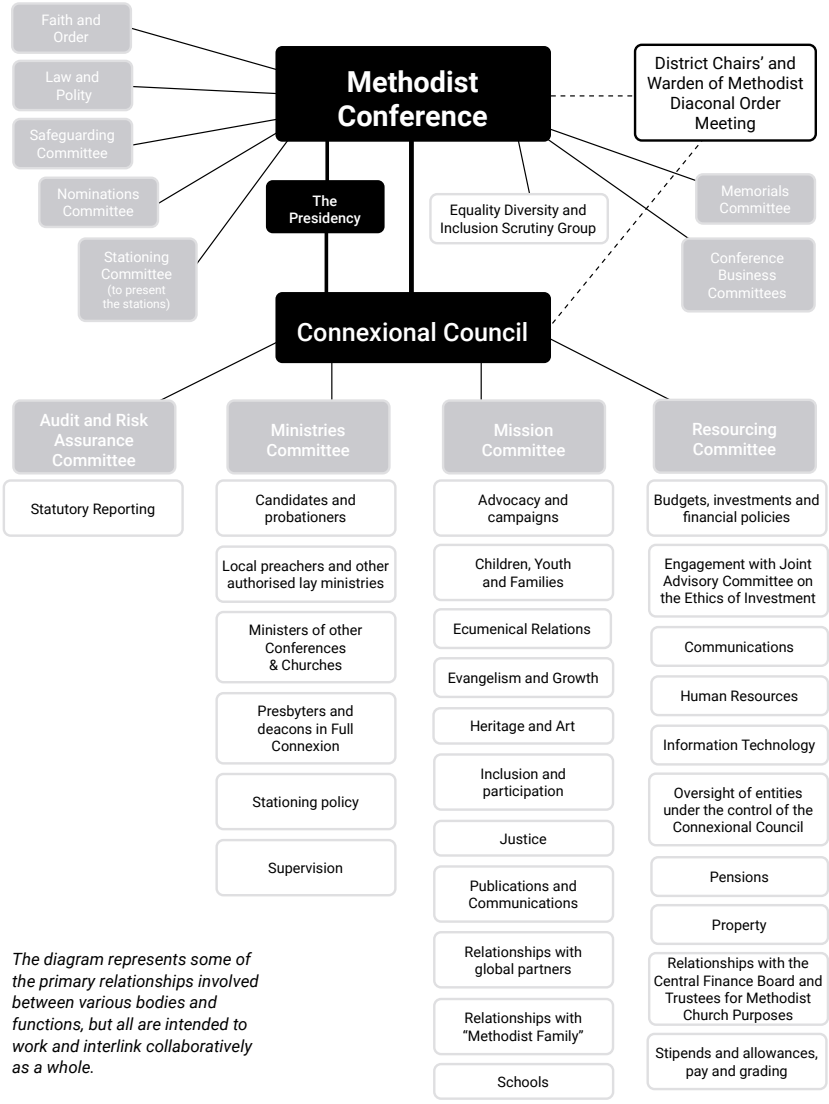
57. The Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group has completed the work entrusted to it and is grateful to all who have contributed to its work. In its final meetings, it has reflected on the benefits of a process that has drawn together representatives of the Faith & Order and Law and Polity Committees with (from the previous governance structure) members of the SRC and others.

58. The Task Group notes the importance of keeping under review the efficiency, effectiveness and suitability of the structures of the Church. The group, however, believes that this responsibility lies with the Secretary of the Conference under the provisions of SO 114(1A) and therefore recommends that the Secretary of the Conference continues to keep this work under review, in consultation as appropriate with the Faith and Order Committee, the Law and Polity Committee and the Connexional Council.

*****RESOLUTION**

54/14. The Conference receives Section F of the Report.

APPENDIX



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

The 2023 Conference received a report detailing the current status of the NLPF and the steps necessary to reactivate the fund. The Conference (resolution 44/2) removed the existing trustees and replaced them with four new trustees, one of whom is ex officio as a member of the Connexional Team and confirmed (Resolution 44/3) that the Ministries Committee shall be responsible for administration of the Fund in place of the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust.

Resolution 44/4 directed the new trustees of the NLPF, in consultation with the Law & Polity Committee "to propose amendments to modernise and clarify the terms and powers of the Trust Deed and to report to the 2024 Conference."

Since the 2023 Conference, the Trustees have committed substantial time and effort to investigating the necessary changes to the Trust Deed, including meeting seven times online. Initially, the work was in consultation with the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice, subsequently in consultation with TMCP.

The Trustees drew up outline requirements for updating the Trust Deed, and also drafted updated operating procedures for implementation when the updated Trust Deed is in place.

TMCP advised that the advice of the Charity Commission would be required as the NLPF was not formally constituted with a new Trust Deed at the time of merger of the three previous charities in the 1940s. The trustees (with the support of TMCP) have since been liaising with the Charity Commission on the content of the new Scheme, which will be known as the Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Benevolent Fund. As its name indicates, the new Scheme includes provision for the needs of worship leaders.

As directed by the Conference, the trustees are now consulting with the Law and Polity Committee regarding the terms of the new Scheme, which is currently with the Charity Commission for final review.

It is hoped that the new Scheme will be agreed by the time the Conference meets. An update will be provided in the Order Paper. It is hoped also that nominations for the new trustees will be provided in the Order Paper.

*****RESOLUTION**

55/1. The Conference receives the Report.

56. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report

Contact name and details	Deacon Karen McBride Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order mdowarden@methodistchurch.org.uk

The Methodist Diaconal Order is a Christ-centred, prayerful, pioneering, Religious Order, committed to modelling God's love in action.

Our life together as deacons and members of the Order

Membership:

The Methodist Diaconal Order currently has a complement of 249 members:

117 in the active work (including four diaconal probationers, and three diaconal ordinands)
117 supernumerary deacons
Nine diaconal students (four of which are to be stationed by the Conference as diaconal probationers)
Two deacons hold 'without appointment' status
One deacon holds 'permission to study' status
One authorised deacon and one associate deacon in the active work
One supernumerary associate deacon

12 'Associate members' and a number of 'Friends' who commit to support the Order through prayer and advocacy.

Since the MDO report to the Conference 2024:

- Two full members have died
- Six diaconal probationers have been received into Full Connexion and full membership of the Order, and ordained into the diaconate within the universal Church.
- One ordained diaconal probationer was received into Full Connexion and full membership of the Order
- Four people were accepted as candidates for training in 2024 and four further candidates will be recommended to the Conference 2025
- Three members are seeking the permission of the Conference, to 'sit down' and one has been granted permission by the President during the year.

The Order is enjoying settling into its new home in new Methodist Church House. We are grateful to our neighbours in the House for their care, interest and support of those of us based in the MDO Centre and for the work of deacons and the MDO within the Connexion. In October we both celebrated the opening of the new MDO Centre and welcomed our new Deputy Warden, Michelle Legumi, in a service presided over by Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Conference. These were delightful events full of prayer, love and cake!

Appreciations:

The terms of office of two Chairs of MDO work come to an end this year:

The Chair of the MDO Support and Advisory Group (SAG), Rachel Lampard has been a strong and supportive friend of deacons for a very long time and we know that that will not end as she retires as the chair of MDO SAG. This is a post Rachel has held for the last six years. We have been deeply blessed by her integrity and commitment, and have appreciated greatly her clear leadership and kind companionship to the MDO with particular concern for the Warden and Deputy Warden. We give thanks to God and to Rachel for her service and witness among us.

The Chair of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee, the Revd Dr David Hinchliffe has gently and wisely led the DSSC, which supports and advises the work of the Warden in preparing and matching deacons and Circuits for recommending to the Conference for stationing. We have appreciated David's dedication and service, his humour and friendship, and we give thanks to God and to David for all he has generously offered to the MDO.

Our relationship with other diaconal orders and deacons

The MDO continues to be active in praying for, collaborating with and supporting other diaconal orders, seeking to build and strengthen the ecumenical diaconal community. This year three members and a diaconal student of the MDO will travel in July to participate in the World Diakonia Conference in Tanzania.

At this year's Convocation as part of our programme we explored with several siblings from a host of denominations and contexts the current Diaconal Landscape. Our sibling guests included deacons/deaconesses/diaconal workers from the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Roman Catholic Church, the United Reformed Church, and other Methodist global contexts - the Caribbean, Ireland and Southern Africa. In addition, the Connexional Ecumenical Officer, the Revd Steven Cooper, joined us.

There was a panel discussion facilitated by two deacons from the Scottish Episcopal Church and the MDO. This was followed by a facilitated World Café style conversation; all present were invited to consider three questions in advance of the gathering:

- Scriptural Calling: What is the key text(s) that have companied with you through your vocational life?
- Diaconal Leadership: What kind of leadership are we, as deacons, called to?
- Prophetic ministry: What does it mean to offer a prophetic ministry? Where/what are the opportunities to be prophetic? How and who are we being called to encourage?

We heard one another's stories and noticed how much resonated within the vocational calling to service, justice, community building, prayer and proclamation of God's love in action. We recognised some shared concerns around how the ministry of deacons can be misunderstood; and the vital part of their role to remind and stir up the Church in its call to model the life of Jesus Christ the servant, and to encourage all who follow Christ in their diaconal ministry as part of discipleship. We noted too where our churches and traditions diverged, particularly in how vocations are nurtured and supported, and deacons/diaconal workers are appointed, and how such ministry is valued and encouraged. It was humbling and challenging to hear some of these differences in contrast to this Church's understanding and affirmation of the diaconal ministry of deacons and of the MDO.

This was an inspirational time, and there is much to continue to pray and ponder with. We will continue this dialogue with our siblings, seeking to notice God's leading and praying that together we will grasp the holy opportunities and invitations as they arise.

The Convocation:

The theme for our Convocation this year was 'Continuing to become the Order God desires us to be' and drew upon Paul's Letter to the Philippians 1:1-11 and the MDO Rule of Life, which highlights this as one of its purposes, for the sake of God's world and God's glory.

As we met for Convocation with its opportunities for gathering and fellowship, support and care, joy and laughter, we remained mindful of God's world and its brokenness – the communities in which we live and serve, and news from world situations and concerns around human rights. We prayed with our brother deacons from the Roman Catholic Church as the Conclave met, for the anniversary of Victory in Europe, and for the many of the world's situations and for those who live in fear because of prejudice and hatred.

Our reflecting and praying were enabled, challenged and supported by a daily pattern of prayer and also by those who led or facilitated our sessions.

The retiring Chair of the MDO Support and Advisory group Rachel Lampard and two members of the MDO creatively enabled the Convocation to reflect theologically on this theme using the Scriptures, art and poetry. Each invited us in different and insightful ways to see our unique selves as God sees us and to honour that self. In doing so we can then move to honour others and in this way we can continue to participate in that good work God has begun in each of us, that we may become the Order and the individuals God created us to be.

The President and Vice-President of the Conference, the Revd Helen Cameron and Carolyn Godfrey, joined the Convocation. Throughout the Convocation they continually offered to us a ministry of care and affirmation, of inspiration and gentle challenge. Two examples: In our Prayer Service for the World, the Vice-President encouraged us to allow ourselves to be drawn back to the Shepherd finding the green pastures, still waters and places to restore the soul, to enable resilience and faithfulness in uncertain times, so we are not personally overwhelmed as we seek to model and share God's love for all and challenge unjust practices. In the Service of Rededication the President, through the story of Bartimaeus urged us and God's whole Church to 'take heart and to listen – he is calling you'; to throw off our cloaks and to be courageous like Bartimaeus – to know/believe that Jesus will transform our lives, so with Jesus we can follow that calling: to be in solidarity with others and to speak up in a time of uncertainty.

The Methodist Liaison Officer in Jerusalem, the Revd David Hardman, also joined the Convocation and offered generously of his time, wisdom and his prayerful hopes. Through a session called 'Holy Land?' he helped us to be more informed in our prayer and in our concern, without being partisan and becoming overwhelmed. The Convocation wrote to the Christians and Church Leaders in Palestine, expressing our solidarity with them and committing to our continued praying for them and the situation in the Holy Land. The collection of the Convocation will also go to the Gaza Appeal.

We were also accompanied by representatives of All We Can and members of the Connexional Team, including the Children and Youth Team and the Learning Network, who led sessions, activities and conversations to inspire and resource us in our ministry.

Creating God, your way of love makes all things new.
Plant seeds of confidence and joy in our hearts,
so trusting our lives to you, we may become mirrors of your love in the world.
God's love present and working in us now, does more than we can imagine: Glory to God!
(The Convocation Prayer)

*****RESOLUTIONS**

56/1. The Conference receives the Report.

56/2. The Conference resolves that the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall meet at Yarnfield Park, Staffordshire, from Tuesday 5 May until Friday 8 May 2026.

57. Report to the Representative Session of Business Conducted by the Conference Diaconal Committee

The Conference Diaconal Committee met on 9 May 2025. The President took the Chair.

1. Deacons who have died

The Committee approved the obituaries of Gwen Agar and Sheila Parnell.

2. Candidates

2.1 The Committee recommended, with the required majority, acceptance by the Representative Session of the following candidates to proceed immediately into pre-ordination training:

Kathy Newland Bevan
Kai Bland

2.2 The Committee recommended, with the required majority, acceptance by the Representative Session of the following candidates to proceed to training upon the fulfilment of certain conditions:

Dawn Louise Venn

2.3 The Committee noted the following deacons recommended by the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation for training for presbyteral ministry upon transfer from diaconal ministry:
No case

2.4 The Committee noted the following accepted diaconal candidates recommended by the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation for training for presbyteral ministry:
No case

3. Transfer

The Committee adopted the recommendation by a 75% majority or more of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation acting as Transfer Committee that the following applicants should be transferred to the jurisdiction of this Conference, as a probationer:
No case

4. Training and probation

The Committee adopted the following special reports of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers' Oversight Committee:

4.1 Candidates accepted at previous Conferences and given permission to delay entry into training
No case

4.2 Candidates accepted at this Conference and to be given permission to delay entry into training
No case

4.3 Candidates accepted at this Conference and to be given permission to transfer to another Conference
No case

4.4 Candidates conditionally accepted at previous Conferences

(a) Those judged to have fulfilled the condition and therefore to be accepted as candidates
No case

(b) Those judged to have failed to fulfil the condition and thereby not to be accepted as candidates
No case

(c) Those still to fulfil the condition
No case

4.5 Changes in expected date of Reception into Full Connexion

(a) To an earlier date
No case

(b) To a later date
Deborah Jane Brazier from 2027 to 2028
Jane Brough from 2028 to 2029
Joanne Dolman from 2027 to 2028
Helen Gardner from 2025 to 2026

4.6 Deferment or suspension under SO 726

(a) Student deacons
No case

(b) Probationers
No case

4.7 Withdrawals under SO 727

(a) Candidates
No case

(b) Student deacons
No case

(c) Probationers
No case

4.8 Transfer to other Conferences or Churches
No case

4.9 Reinstatements under SO 761
No case

4.10 Discipline
No case

4.11 Special reports
Alison Hyde
Marcianne Uwimana

4.12 Discontinuance under SO 031(4)

(a) Student deacons
No case

(b) Probationer deacons
No case

In the following lists:
** = change from the lists approved by the 2024 Conference*
+ = candidates accepted by the 2024 Conference

Surname	First name(s)	Due to be received into Full Connexion
Blackhall	James	2028
*Brazier	Deborah Jane	2028
+*Brough	Jane	2029
Chikaviro	Vivian	2028
Cook	Helen	2027
+Dalton	Jessica Anne	2028
*Dolman	Joanne	2028
*Gardner	Helen	2026
Morris	Samantha Jane	2026
Paterson	Katrina (Kate)	2027
Topping	William (Bill)	2027
+Wheeler	Melissa Jane	2028
+Williams	Kathryn Ann	2028

5. Ordinands

The Committee recommended to the Representative Session of the Conference that the following are fit to be received into Full Connexion with the Conference as deacons and to be received into full membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order, and, if not already ordained, to be ordained:

Natalie Mary Clark
Adelha Da Silva Kaka
Judith Grace Laycock

6. Permission to serve abroad

Ramona Dinard
Marlene A Skuce

7. Permission to reside abroad

Harriet P Bacon
Gordon H Wallace

8. Deacons becoming supernumerary

(a) The Committee recommended to the Representative Session that the following deacons be permitted to become supernumerary:

Gill Judge
Gail Morgan
Brian Purchase

(b) Permissions granted during the year:

During the year, the President permitted the following deacon to become supernumerary on health grounds:

C Michelle Hamilton*

*All applications are made under SO 790(1), except those marked * who are applying on grounds of ill health under SO 790(2).*

See the Presbyters and Deacons Becoming Supernumerary or Returning to the Active Work *section of the Agenda for the resolution to be presented to the Representative Session.*

9. Resignations
No case

10. Annual Inquiry

The Warden of the Order gave to the President on behalf of the Convocation the assurances as to the character and discipline of the deacons and diaconal probationers required by SO 183.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

57/1. The Conference receives the Report.

57/2. The Conference resolves, by a Standing Vote, that it accepts for training, unconditionally or conditionally as the case may be, the candidates for ministry recommended by the Diaconal Committee whose names are recorded in the report of that Committee.

57/3. The Conference adopts the report on diaconal students and probationers recommended for continuance in training or on probation as set out in section 4.

57/4. The Conference resolves by a Standing Vote that those persons whose names have been read to the Conference and are printed in the Agenda be now received into Full Connexion with the Conference as deacons and into full membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order, and, if not already ordained, to be ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands on the afternoon of this day, 29 June 2025, at St Andrew's Church, Shifnal.

Contact name and details	The Revd Paul Regan Chair of the Trustees pregan@c-h-w.com

Introduction

This report from the Managing Trustees gives an overview of the varied activities and events that have been part of the life of Methodist Central Hall Westminster during 2024-25. The trustees oversee the building on behalf of the Conference. Letting and related income generated through our wholly owned trading company is used for the upkeep of the Grade 2* listed building, to support the worshipping community based there and the mission of the church.

The main task facing the Trustees is to bring Central Hall onto a path of financial sustainability.

Historically the finances of the Trust have been wholly dependent upon the profits generated by the Company and these are still way behind the pre Covid levels. We are now repurposing some of the spaces in the building to increase the Company's capacity for commercial hiring from September 2025, which should provide a significant financial boost. It will also be important to use external grants to finance major expenditure on the building and this is currently under investigation by the Trustees.

Ministry of the Church

In October 2024, MCHW celebrated our 112th Church Anniversary. The Revd Dr Reynaldo F Leão-Neto, the World Methodist Council General Secretary, was our guest, and a successful church anniversary lunch followed the morning services. Leão now has an office at MCHW. Our multi-cultural congregation continues to grow following the pandemic with our 11 am Easter Day service drawing over 400 people. Church membership fluctuates at about 420. This year, we have, to date, received 11 new members through confirmation and seven by way of transfer from other churches. Our popular weekly live-streamed services from our Chapel continue to average 700-800 views each week from across the Connexion and globally: approximately 190 watching live every Sunday morning and the rest tuning in later. We look forward to marking our 300th online service. We have recently installed new cameras and projection equipment in the Great Hall to capture content from our 11 am service. Other online initiatives include Alpha, Bible studies, and other short courses. Our choir and musicians, led by our Directors of Music, continue to offer a wide range of music to enhance our worship. Our Organ Matinee concerts are greatly appreciated by those who attend.

The Revd Lansford Penn-Timity has entered the stationing process and will leave the Circuit towards the end of July 2025. Unfortunately, a successor will not be appointed for at least a year. The Revd Gordon Newton (Supernumerary) has been an active team member but, for health reasons, now needs to step back. Mark Williamson, our Young Adults Leader, has also stepped down from his role to concentrate on his mission work with One Rock International. We will hugely miss Lansford, Gordon, and Mark and their enormous contribution to our life, worship and ministry. We wish them well and assure them of our love and prayers. Our probationer, the Revd Dr Joyce Popoola, is progressing well, and her ministry is greatly appreciated, albeit with limited deployment. We are reviewing our staffing needs and functions due to financial challenges and our losing a presbyter. We will be stretched next year. However, we are blessed with a vibrant engagement with children, teenagers, and young adults. We were delighted to receive a District Advance Fund grant to enable us to advertise for a Children's and Families Worker, which will significantly support the Superintendent, the Revd Tony Miles, Deacon Ali McMillan and the rest of the staff team.

Recent new initiatives include a Men's Fellowship. MCHW is also working towards Eco Church registration, and we have established a Neighbourhood Evangelism Team. We continue to engage with our local community, social justice issues, and support local charities: these include The St Vincent Family Project (hosted on site), The Westminster Food Bank, The Westminster SWEP Night Shelter, The Passage (helping homeless people), the London Prison's Mission and our work alongside Parliament. The Revd Tony Miles is working in Parliament with Lord Leslie Griffiths of Burry Port, seeking to build relationships and offering pastoral care and support. The Methodist Parliamentary Covenant Service enables us to host a service for MPs and Lords. This year, the Very Revd Dr David Hoyle, the Dean of Westminster, preached a very relevant sermon. There was also an interview with Lord Leslie Griffiths. Other participants included MPs, Lords, and members of the Connexional and MCHW teams.

Our small Visitor Services team serves us well. We can host some building tours (usually on Thursdays), and we seek to resource our Archives for Mission. We endeavour, where possible, to partner with other organisations, like Premier Radio and the BBC. Highlights among our special events continue to include Daffodil Day (about 700 attending), a Traditional Carol service (about 1200), Jazz Carols, and Jazz Vespers (about 600). We look forward to our forthcoming Healing Conference in May.

The Circuit Meeting and the Trustees have permitted the Circuit Stewards to sell our Battersea manse, jointly owned by the Westminster Circuit and the Trustees. The Circuit then aims to buy a more suitable, strategically located manse. Despite hugely diminished resources in both the church and Circuit due to the pandemic, we have launched a £150k 'Church Anniversary Mission Investment Appeal', and we thank God that we managed to

raise the £100k required to reach our Easter target. God is good! We press on with faith, imagination, courage, and expectancy.

Our Business Centre

We have continued to rebuild our client base following Covid seeing the return of many longstanding clients such as PiXL, Fever's Candlelight Concerts, and our many graduation clients. Over the past year we were honoured to be chosen to host the Infected Blood Enquiry as they announced their long-awaited findings and we welcomed other notable performers or speakers including Steven Bartlett, Katy Perry, Prof Yuval Harari, Ahluwalia and Trevor Noah.

Revenue generating opportunities in the financial year to 31 August 2024 were hampered by a closure of the building from December 2023 to February 2024 for upgrades to the sound system in the Great Hall – funded by our service partners - and delivering enhanced acoustics for all guests and MCHW. At the same time, we took the opportunity to overhaul our ageing goods lift with support from MCHW.

The annual lull in short lead event enquiries ahead of the summer was felt earlier than usual from April 2024. Despite securing some great bookings for the following year, our enquiries for summer 2024 fell short of expectations. Our overall revenues for the year of £7.5m fell short of budget. Compounded with continued wage inflation, the high costs of heating the building and ever-increasing reactive maintenance costs – a consequence of deferring £1.3m of scheduled maintenance and renewal over the Covid years, we incurred a significant loss.

We are pleased to report continued growth in our revenues during the first part of the financial year 2024/25 and are confident that revenues for the full year to August 2025 will settle between £8.5m and £8.8m. This is a significant improvement, but if we are to contribute further to the costs of upgrading the building in line with modern requirements and to build the reserves of the Trustees, we need fresh approaches in how we use our venue and reach the right audiences.

We have identified an opportunity to use the space currently occupied by Wesley's Café as an additional event space, providing an enhanced multi-purpose event/exhibition space in our light filled basement capable of accommodating up to 800 delegates. This additional space can be hired out as a stand-alone area but also allows us to pitch for significantly larger exclusive use events which will widen our potential client base.

Wesley's Café is a major part of the building's mission and offering. After consultation with Trustees and MCHW we developed designs for a new Wesley's Café, at street level opening the current Street Café into the Broadbent Room behind - improving accessibility

and appeal. Work is now underway on the new Wesley's Café to accommodate up to 62 seated guests. Funding for this has been provided by our service partners Green and Fortune. We are taking the opportunity to review our menu and marketing – aiming to position Wesley's as a destination café – not just a coffee stop but a must-visit Westminster experience as well as the go-to place for our church and local community.

We expect the new Wesley's to open from 30 June 2025 and the new basement event space to receive its first guests on 1 September 2025. We are confident these developments will help us to deliver a stable income to Trustees, nevertheless we continue to explore other opportunities to enhance our contribution to the reserves of Trustees and further the mission of the Methodist Church.

The Building

The Hall Fabric Committee oversees the maintenance and upkeep of the building. We continue a programme of proactive maintenance but since 2020 our capital expenditure has been constrained for financial reasons. Our immediate attention is the recovering of two roofs that have been leaking, overhaul of the stage lifting mechanism and remedial fourth floor works. Until our finances improve, major expenditure will necessarily be limited.

Changes to the Wesley Café are outlined above and are proceeding satisfactorily.

Methodist Central Hall Westminster remains fully compliant with all health and safety, building, and environmental regulations. We have complied with the recommendations of the Quinquennial Inspection in 2022. We recognise that our operations have a local and global environmental impact, and so we are committed to reducing this as much as possible by following sustainability best practices. We are committed to innovative ideas in assisting the building to reach Net Zero within Government and Methodist guidelines.

Financial Situation

Central Hall was closed for six weeks in early 2024 for work on upgrading AV systems and refurbishing the goods lift. There was little customer business during the summer of 2024 and the financial year 2023/24 ended with a trading loss for the Trust and Company combined of around £1,000,000.

On 25 April 2024 the Trust received a connexional grant of £4million to cover historic losses and repay the ensuing bank debt. This allayed our immediate concerns and gave us a valuable breathing space. The current year has seen a better performance and the Trust and Company combined are expected to make a small loss for 2025/26 with the prospect of an overall small profit in 2026/27.

In February 2024, the Trust stopped paying a monthly cash grant to the MCHW Church which has led to financial challenges for the Westminster church as outlined above. It is unclear when this grant can be resumed.

The Trustees are committed to building up a cash reserve of £1million; due to the losses in 2023/24 and 2024/25 nothing can yet be allocated to this reserve. There is a long way to go; our immediate actions include increasing the Company's capacity for commercial hiring and investigating the use of external grants to finance major expenditure on the building.

The Trustees

On 21 July 2024 the Revd Paul Regan succeeded Revd Nigel Cowgill as Chair of Trustees. He is an independent Chair of Trustees recruited in line with a new role description to reflect the particular skills and expertise required. His recruitment followed the Nominations Committee process. The appointment of new trustees is in accordance with the arrangements for all other connexional committees.

We appreciate the work done by the trustees and record our thanks for their work.

*****RESOLUTION**

58/1. The Conference adopts the Report.

59. Two Districts, One Chair: Southampton and the Channel Islands

1. For the last few years, the Districts in the South West of England have explored the possibilities of closer working in light of the reduced resources and new ways of working. The conversations led, among other things, to the formation of the South West Peninsula District in 2024, and to various areas of cooperation between the Southampton and Channel Islands Districts.

2. The Southampton and the Channel Islands Districts are not at a point when it appears that a merger will be helpful and, given the unique context of the Channel Islands, are unlikely ever to be. However, the decision of the Chair of the Channel Islands not to seek reinvitation after 2026 has prompted discussions about whether that District needs its own Chair.

3. The Channel Islands District Policy Committee (DPC) met to discuss the question of the need for its own Chair. The members of the committee reflected that the current model requires the Chair to be away from the District for a significant proportion of the year to represent the District at the Conference, the Chairs' Meeting, and Stationing Matching. This is not easy when the Chair is also superintendent minister with pastoral charge of Local Churches and seems disproportionate to the size of the District.

4. The Southampton District Policy Committee also met to discuss the possibility of sharing a Chair with the Channel Islands. Concerns about the possible increase in workload of the Chair were discussed and it was noted that there were significant areas of work that were already shared (eg. Probationers' Committee, Safeguarding, and Presbyteral Synod) and that there were also meetings that were at present attended by both Chairs which would result in no added work. However, it is clear that considerable work will need to go into the development of the Deputy Chair roles in both Districts.

5. Both DPCs noted that, for the past 9 years, the Chair of the Scotland District has also been the Chair of Shetland, representing both Districts in connexional bodies. The Shetland District has a Deputy Chair who works pastorally in the District on behalf of the Chair and can act as the first point of reference on the islands. The Channel Islands DPC is minded that a similar, but not identical model, might work with the Southampton and Channel Islands Districts.

6. The Deputy Chair of Shetland is appointed following a process similar to that of a District Chair. The Channel Islands DPC feels that this is unnecessary in this context and that it would be better for the distinct nature of the Channel Islands District, with its multiple jurisdictions to be recognised by the Synod appointing one of the Superintendents as Deputy Chair, whilst expecting that the two Superintendents in the District will work jointly and severally, each representing

the District within the jurisdiction, Circuit and ecumenical context in which they serve. That would also mean that the appointment of deputies in both Districts would be by the same process (ie under SO 426).

7. Neither District believes that it is necessary for these arrangements to be included in the Standing Orders, but acknowledges that this might be a matter for further discussion, possibly in the Law and Polity Committee.

8. The Synods therefore propose that the Channel Islands and Southampton Districts remain as separate Districts, and that from September 2026 the Chair of the Southampton District shall also be the Chair of the Channel Islands District. The Synods have delegated responsibility for enacting the agreement and agreeing any practical arrangements to the District Policy Committees. The Synods have further agreed that, for the purposes of SO 421A, the District Policy Committees shall meet together to nominate jointly a representative group to the Synods for appointment.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

59/1. The Conference receives the Report.

59/2. The Conference agrees to the change in the number of Chairs for the Channel Islands and Southampton Districts as set out in this report with effect from September 2026.

59/3. The Conference requests the Law and Polity Committee to advise on whether it is necessary for this change to be reflected in the Standing Orders.

60. Process for the appointment of the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order

Under Standing Order 754(1B) the Conference, on the recommendation of the Ministries Committee, has responsibility for determining the procedure for the appointment of the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. The Standing Order states that in determining the procedure the Council shall follow as closely as possible the provisions for the appointment of a Chair of District, with the Convocation having the equivalent functions to those of the Synod.

With due reference to the provisions for the appointment of a Chair of District as set out in SO 421A and SO 423B, the Ministries Committee recommends the following procedure:

1. The Convocation of the Order appoints a Warden's Nomination Committee of five deacons, including a convener. It also appoints at least two substitutes having due regard for the diversity of the Order.

2. At an appropriate time the Secretary of the Conference (or an appointed representative) along with the convener of the Committee shall initiate a conversation with the Warden to ascertain if an extension of the initial appointment is being sought. Where an extension is being sought the Warden's Nomination Committee shall undertake a representative consultation to gather views on any extension and bring a recommendation to the Convocation. The Convocation shall subsequently make a recommendation to the Conference.

3. The Secretary of the Conference (or an appointed representative) shall act as an advisor to the Committee ensuring that amongst other matters the connexional role of the Warden is taken into account as part of any consultation on an extension, or formulation of a profile for a new appointment.

4. Where a new appointment is being made the Nomination Committee members shall be the panel appointed by the Convocation (whether original or substituted), together with the Secretary of the Conference, the Chair of the Methodist Diaconal Order Support and Advisory Group (appointed under SO 755) and one person chosen by the Secretary of the Conference from the District Chairs' Nomination panel. The President or Vice-President, or an Ex-President or Ex Vice-President, shall chair the committee. The Secretary shall ensure that the panel includes a minimum of two lay persons.

5. The process for the designation of a new Warden shall follow that of the appointment of a District Chair (ie, the appointment shall be advertised and expressions of interest or nominations invited; the panel shall shortlist and interview as appropriate). A name shall be presented to the Convocation. The Convocation shall subsequently make a recommendation to the Conference.

*****RESOLUTION**

60/1. The Conference adopts the procedure for the appointment of the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order as laid out in the Report.

Note: the Conference received three identical resolutions with similar introductions. The Agenda therefore includes the first part of each introduction followed by the text that is common to all three.

Birmingham District

1.. The Synod of the Birmingham District, meeting in its Representative Session (Present: 98; For: 77; Against: 5) notes with significant concern the issues around ministerial work-life balance, stress and burnout raised in its Presbyteral Session, and invites the Methodist Conference of 2025 to affirm its commitment to the well-being of all ministers in Full Connexion and to direct that proposals be developed to address these issues.

2. The Conference shares in a covenantal relationship with those ministers, both Presbyteral and Diaconal, who are in Full Connexion. This is a mutual relationship, and for its part the Conference provides the broad context for the exercising of these two orders of ministry, in part by setting certain terms, conditions, and expectations on the work of those in Full Connexion. The Conference's commitment to that covenant relationship with its ministers is enacted in practical terms throughout the Connexion, not least in circuits and districts.

3. Over the last few years there has been growing concern amongst those in the active work with regards to well-being, especially in relation to their ability to properly balance the demands of Church, family, social and personal commitments. A notable number of ministers have described themselves as being 'at the edge', with others having become burnt out. In turn, this leads to a reduction both in the level of work undertaken and in the quality of life of the ministers, their families and friends, and the communities they serve.

4. Within the Birmingham District many in the active work are experiencing high levels of stress, exhaustion, and significant risk of burnout, and we understand that this is a situation that is replicated across the Connexion. We therefore call on the Conference to address these issues, and in particular to take active and definite steps in reducing the number of sessions worked by ministers in order to increase work-life balance and reduce burnout.

Northampton District

1. The Northampton District, meeting in its Presbyteral Session (present: 73 for: 66 against: 2), notes with significant concern issues around ministerial work-life

balance, stress and burnout, and invites the Methodist Conference of 2025 to commit to measures that would address these issues.

2. The Conference shares in a covenantal relationship with those ministers, both presbyteral and diaconal, who are in Full Connexion. This is a mutual relationship, and for its part the Conference provides the broad context for the exercising of these two orders of ministry, in part by setting certain terms, conditions, and expectations on the work of those in Full Connexion.

3. Over the last few years there has been growing concern amongst those in the active work with regards to well-being, especially in relation to the ability to properly balance the demands of Church, family, social and personal commitments. A notable number of ministers have described themselves as being 'at the edge,' with others having become burnt out. In turn, this leads to a reduction both in the level of work undertaken and in the quality of life of the ministers, their families and friends, and the communities they serve.

4. Within this District many in the active work are experiencing high levels of stress, exhaustion, and significant risk of burnout, and we understand this is a situation that is replicated across the Connexion. We therefore ask the Conference to discuss in its Representative Session the proposed resolution and call on them to take active and definite steps in reducing the number of sessions worked by ministers in order to increase work-life balance and reduce burnout.

Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District

1. The Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District, meeting in its Presbyteral Session (voting as follows: Present: 67; For: 49; Against: 3), notes with significant concern issues around ministerial work-life balance, stress and burnout, and invites the Methodist Conference of 2025 to commit to measures that would address these issues.

2. The Conference shares in a covenantal relationship with those ministers, both Presbyteral and Diaconal, who are in Full Connexion. This is a mutual relationship, and for its part the Conference provides the broad context for the exercising of these two orders of ministry, in part by setting certain terms, conditions, and expectations on the work of those in Full Connexion.

3. Over the last few years there has been growing concern amongst those in the active work with regards to well-being, especially in relation to the ability to properly balance the demands of Church, family, social and personal commitments. A notable number of ministers have described themselves as

being 'at the edge,' with others having become burnt out. In turn, this leads to a reduction both in the level of work undertaken and in the quality of life of the ministers, their families and friends, and the communities they serve.

4. Within this District many in the active work are experiencing high levels of stress, exhaustion, and significant risk of burnout, and we understand this is a situation that is replicated across the Connexion. We therefore ask the Conference to discuss in its Representative Session the proposed resolution and call on them to take active and definite steps in reducing the number of sessions worked by ministers in order to increase work-life balance and reduce burnout.

Text common to all three submissions

5. Significant research has been conducted in recent years on the nature of burnout and how occurrences relate to the hours worked by an individual (see Appendix 1). While the impact of high stress, exhaustion and burnout on individual ministers, churches and circuits is not quantifiable, we do know that in 2022-2023[1] £229,339 was spent on recuperative years and £110,793 was spent on sick leave (this figure only accounts for leave which has lasted for more than 6 consecutive months). The true cost of sick leave in terms of reduced work and reduced quality of ministerial lives and relationships is, of course, unknown.

6. Currently, the Guidance in CPD (Book VII, Part 3: Holidays) makes clear that a full-time appointment is assumed to involve 12 sessions a week, where a session is a morning, afternoon or evening. This leads to working six days a week, or, in order to reduce the number of days working, regularly undertaking 3 sessions per day. Accepting the average session is 3.5-4 hours, 12 sessions equates to 42-48 hours per week. Although we would want to be careful in making direct comparison to 'employed work', we do note that the average number of hours worked by a full-time employee has fallen in recent years from 38.7 (1997) to 36.6 (2024).[2] Alongside this the Connexional Team now recruits full-time posts at 35 hours per week. This equates to 10 worked sessions if each was at the lower end of 3.5 hours per session.

7. Taking the need to reduce levels of work-related stress, ill-health and burnout, and the clear move toward reducing working hours in wider society, we believe it is time both to invest in proper analysis of ministerial stress, and provide ways of

1 https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf-24-pc-16-unified-statement-connexional-finances.pdf

2 https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/timeseries/ybuy/lms

reducing this, with one clear and identifiable step being the reduction of expected sessions from 12 to 10 per week, thereby creating greater ability and flexibility for ministers to engage in the rest, recreation, exercise, fellowship, and family life that CPD also recognises as necessary for a healthy ministerial life.

8. In offering this resolution, we recognise that it has been long held that the provision of a stipend is not payment for work done but is instead a gift such that ministers in the active work do not need to seek employment elsewhere. We are therefore not proposing any consequent change to the stipend level. However, if the number of sessions for a full-time appointment is changed, there should be a change in the calculation for those in less than full time appointments - whereas someone currently undertaking duties for 6/12 sessions receives 50% stipend this would change to 6/10 sessions and therefore equate to 60%, while someone being offered a role at 50% would be expected to work 5/10 sessions.

*****RESOLUTION**

61/1. The Conference:

a. affirms its commitment to the well-being of all ministers in Full Connexion;

b. directs the Ministries Committee to work with others to bring forward proposals to assess and address the high stress levels amongst ministers stationed by the Conference;

c. directs the Ministries Committee to bring forward proposals for the reduction of the recommended number of sessions for 'full time' ministers from 12 to 10 from 1st September 2026, with consequent changes to the provision for those in less than full time appointments.

Appendix

Burnout

The social psychologist Christina Maslach has described burnout as "an erosion of the soul caused by a deterioration of one's values, dignity, spirit, and will". The chief executive of the Guild of Health and St Raphael, the Revd Dr Gillian Straine, lists its symptoms: "Emotional exhaustion, loss of empathy. You want to be alone. You fantasise

that you're somewhere else. You feel unwell, pessimistic, irritable, overwhelmed. You don't care any more."[3]

The risk factors for burnout for the general workforce include:[4]

- Unreasonable time pressures
- Lack of communication/support from senior managers
- Lack of role clarity
- Unmanageable workload
- Feeling of having no control over your work/life
- Being mistreated by colleagues, management, clients
- High stress work
- Lack of recognition
- Working long hours
- Poor work life balance
- Not getting enough rest

For those in ministry there has been an identification of more specific risk factors alongside those identified above.[5]

- Playing different roles throughout the day
- Lack of boundaries exacerbated by living within a community
- Livelihood, social life and housing are all intertwined
- Not being able to share how we are feeling – putting on a mask
- Toxic criticism
- Gossip
- Lack of support
- Endless schemes and initiatives

Not only does burnout cause a loss in productivity or the feeling of stress it can have serious affects on both physical and mental health leading to:[6]

- High cholesterol levels
- Type 2 diabetes
- Coronary heart disease (increasing risk of heart attack)

3 https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2023/6-october/features/features/clergy-well-being-the-smoke-before-the-burnout
4 https://www.verywellmind.com/stress-and-burnout-symptoms-and-causes-3144516
5 https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2023/6-october/features/features/clergy-well-being-the-smoke-before-the-burnout
6 https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0185781

- Musculoskeletal pain
- Depression

Working Hours

Whilst there are several different causes of burnout, a number of key factors relate to the number of hours worked. Equally, a key protective factor is having more time away from work and therefore time to be with family, friends, to undertake exercise or a hobby, etc.

Whilst the Resolution is not asking to move to a four-day week, we do believe research from studies relating to the effects of reducing the working week to four days shows significant benefits associated with reducing work hours.[7,8] Since a 2022 trial of the four-day working week:

- 56/61 participating companies have continued 4 day week
- 39% of employees said they were less stressed
- 71% had reduced levels of burnout
- 43% felt an improvement in their mental health
- 46% reported a reduction in fatigue
- 54% said they had significantly better work-life balance
- 54% reduced staff turnover

Not only is a reduction in hours beneficial to those in the active work it would also have benefits to the church. With recent research from the University of Reading showing:[9]

- Increase in productivity
- Reduced stress
- Reduced sick leave
- Happier workforce
- Increased job satisfaction
- Reduces the number of car journeys
- More likely to spend time with family/friends
- More likely to eat/cook properly

7 UK Research & Innovation: https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/how-we-are-doing/research-outcomes-and-impact/esrc/a-four-day-working-week-improves-mental-and-physical-health/
8 https://www.4dayweek.com/uk-pilot-results
9 https://assets.henley.ac.uk/v3/fileUploads/Four-day-week-white-paper-FINAL.pdf

62. Memorials to the Conference

Contact name and details	The Revd Kenneth Howcroft Chair of the Memorials Committee memorials@methodistchurch.org.uk

Notes for the guidance of members of the Conference

1. Introduction to memorials

Memorials are messages from Circuit Meetings and District Synods to the Conference. They suggest that the Conference takes action or makes a statement on an issue. The memorials received since the last Conference are listed in this report. These memorials may help members of the Conference to judge the main concerns currently felt in the Connexion, and the strength of opinion they represent.

Each year a Memorials Committee is appointed under Standing Order 138 to aid the Conference in replying to each memorial. The replies to these memorials have been drafted by members of the Connexional Team and officers of other relevant bodies. They have been scrutinised by the Memorials Committee and amended where the committee felt it was appropriate.

The committee recommends to the Conference the replies printed in the Agenda under each memorial. The Conference binds itself to agree each reply, to amend it, or to agree an alternative reply (see Standing Order 133(4), printed in the Rules of Procedure on page xii of the Agenda).

In some of its responses, the committee makes no comment on the substance of a memorial, but indicates that the reply of the Conference is given in other resolutions of the Conference. This kind of response does not mean that the committee has not taken seriously the points made in the memorial. It means that another report deals with the issue more fully. Debate on that report gives the Conference an opportunity to discuss the issues raised by the memorial and the Conference will have opportunity to consider its reply to the memorial in the context of its debate on that report.

Similarly, the Conference is sometimes invited to adopt the same reply to more than one memorial. This does not imply that the Memorials Committee has not considered each memorial carefully, but merely that the memorials ask the same or very similar things of the Conference.

2 Consideration of the memorials by the Conference

Any member of the Conference has the right to move an amendment to the reply recommended by the committee, or to propose that it is substituted by a different

reply. Amendments to replies should be submitted in the form of a notice of motion, the deadlines for which can be found in the First Report of the Conference Business Committee on page 8-12 of the Agenda. However, members are urged to give notice of their intention to move an amendment as early as possible and not to wait until the deadline.

If the Conference rejects a reply, an acceptable alternative must, then or later, be put to and agreed by the Conference. In addition, any two members of the Conference may, by notice of motion submitted on the first day of the relevant session, propose that, instead of dealing with the committee's recommended replies in the ordinary course of business, the Conference shall debate a resolution based on one or more of the memorials.

This year, the Memorials Committee has recommended to the Conference Business Committee that the replies to any memorials which relate to other items of business in the Agenda be taken at the same time as that business. The committee recommended that the remaining replies should be placed in the *en bloc* business of the Conference, unless the Business Committee feels that they should be debated. Any recommended reply to a memorial which is the subject of an amending notice of motion will automatically be removed from *en bloc* business (see Standing Order 134A(1)(*c*), Agenda page xiii).

Members of the Conference with questions on any matter affecting memorials and the procedures described above should consult the Chair of the Memorials Committee, the Revd Kenneth Howcroft. For example, if any member wishes to change the recommended reply of the committee, the Chair of the Memorials Committee would be happy to advise on how and when to propose either an amendment or the substitution of a different reply.

The Memorials Committee will notify each Synod and Circuit of the reply the Conference has made to its memorial.

MEMORIALS AND OTHER WAYS OF ENGAGING WITH THE CONFERENCE AND THE WIDER CONNEXION

Reports to the Conference in recent years and consequential amendments to *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church* have led to far-reaching changes in the ways in which oversight and trusteeship are exercised throughout the Connexion. One consequence has been a reduction in the ways that Circuits and Districts may participate directly in the governance of the Church and influence its agenda. For example, the Connexional Council does not have the same role and responsibilities as the former Methodist Council, nor does its membership include a representative of each District on it as the Methodist Council's did.

All this leads to an increased emphasis on Memorials to the Conference and Notices of Motion at the Conference as means by which Circuits and Districts may participate in and contribute to the oversight and trusteeship of the whole Church proactively (and not just reactively to agendas set by others). Yet the shorter length of the Conference and the lack of opportunity for properly researched consideration of the topics that are raised in this way, often at the last minute, puts pressure on the ways in which Notices of Motion are handled.

Similarly, memorials are sometimes somewhat unclear about precisely what they are requesting and why, and the fact that they are often received late in the connexional year leaves little time for these things to be clarified or for detailed work and consideration in the production of draft replies.

Moreover, the requests raised in memorials are sometimes such that if appropriate they could be enacted immediately and reported afterwards to the Conference. Some may not even need to become a formal memorial or Notice of Motion. The Conference Office and other members of the Connexional Team always welcome people raising issues with them before they reach that stage, and are ready and able to offer advice about how they may best be addressed.

Possible ways of addressing some of these issues could include creating a triage system by which potential memorials, Notices of Motion and District Resolutions could be considered, appropriate advice offered, and the most suitable way of taking the particular proposals forward suggested. The Memorials Committee takes the view that an examination of these issues and the offering of proposals for improvements to the Conference of 2026 would be very helpful.

By way of illustration only, such a system of 'triage' might look as follows.

1. People in Districts and, in particular, Circuits would be encouraged to submit their suggestions, proposals, potential Notices of Motion or actual memorials as early in the connexional year as possible (where possible, before Christmas). There would be cut-off dates as at present for what can be brought to the Conference as a memorial or Notice of Motion and a further cut-off date for what can be otherwise reported in any particular year to the Conference.

2. The material submitted shall then be assessed as they come in by a 'triage' group consisting of the Chair of the Memorials Committee; two members of the Memorials Committee nominated by the stationing regions under Standing Order 138(2)(viii), at least one of whom must be lay; the Secretary or Assistant Secretary of the Conference; and the Connexional Secretary. The group shall take

advice from others, such as the Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice, as required.

3. The 'triage' group shall decide that one or more of the following actions be taken about each matter submitted.

    a. Where necessary, clarification can be sought by or on behalf of the triage group as to what exactly is being requested by the people making the submission, and advice offered as how best to phrase and direct the request.

    b. If it can be formally established that what is proposed is already within the policies of the Church and the Conference's guidelines for "Speaking on Behalf of the Methodist Church", and within current workplans and budgets, then it would be possible for the proposal to be enacted immediately by the appropriate officers and bodies in the Church and the outcome reported to the Conference.

    c. The proposal can be referred to the Connexional Council or one of the Committees in Part 2 or Part 3 of Book III of Standing Orders for detailed consideration or enactment, as appropriate, with the outcome reported to the Conference.

    d. A recommendation can be made that the proposal be taken to the relevant Circuit Meeting or District Synod for approval as set out in the current Standing Orders as a formal Memorial or District Resolution. Any resulting Memorial would, as previously, be taken to the Memorials Committee which would consider draft replies prepared by the relevant officers and present them as recommendations to the Conference for adoption or amendment. Any resulting District Resolution would be taken to the Conference Business Committee for inclusion in the business of the Conference.

    e. A recommendation can be made that the proposal may best be dealt with by being submitted to the Conference as a properly researched and argued Notice of Motion.

4. In all cases the decisions of the 'triage' group shall be reported to the Conference through Memorials Committee. In cases which are complicated or contentious or where there is doubt, the decisions shall first be approved by that Committee.

5. The people and bodies who have raised issues or made proposals shall still be able to submit them as memorials or Notices of Motion if they so choose, even if the 'triage' group has recommended other ways of dealing with the matter.

The Memorials Committee recognises that the issues raised in this report are complex and that the illustration above is but one way of addressing them. It therefore recommends that the Conference direct that further work be undertaken to consider them in consultation with interested parties, and that detailed proposals and any appropriate amendments to Standing Orders be brought to the Conference of 2026.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

62/1. The Conference receives the Report.

62/2. The Conference directs that the Memorials Committee and the Conference Planning Executive in consultation with others as appropriate bring detailed proposals about the issues raised to the Conference of 2026.

M1 The proposed cuts to the UK Aid Budget

The Wirral Circuit Meeting (present: 50; voting: 43 in favour, 2 against) notes that Baptist, Methodist, Church of Scotland and United Reformed Church leaders wrote a letter saying:

"UK aid programmes protect women and girls from violence, provide cost-effective vaccines to babies and young children and support human rights defenders who work to prevent future conflict. Such programmes will be under threat if UK aid is further slashed by 40%."[1]

Christian Aid says:

"We must reject the false choice between defence and development... Properly used, development funding helps prevent conflict, tackles instability and builds a safer more just world. Cutting aid in this way risks exacerbating the very crisis that leads to insecurity and conflict."[2]

1 https://urc.org.uk/church-leaders-lament-cuts-to-international-aid-budget/
2 Chair of Christian Aid Bishop Sarah Mullaly, https://www.christianaid.org.uk/news/what-we-do/cuts-foreign-aid-budgets-have-human-cost

The Just Money Movement says:

"The cuts to overseas aid announced by the Prime Minister last week will take UK aid to its lowest level in 25 years. It is not only morally wrong to drastically reduce funding to some of the most vulnerable and fragile communities on earth, but as many have been pointing out, it is also short-sighted and counterproductive to efforts to build a more secure world."[3]

Global Justice Now says:

"The prime minister has announced a brutal 40% cut to the UK aid budget, in the wake of Donald Trump's calls for increased military spending. It's a wrong-headed move that represents a retreat from Britain paying its fair share towards the fight against global poverty. Keir Starmer has said the cuts are necessary. But they're a political choice, not an economic necessity."[4]

We at the Wirral Methodist Circuit Meeting agree with the above sentiments. We believe these cuts are at odds with our Christian principles and priorities. Jesus advocated the generous sharing of resources to provide for the needs of all people. There are other, better, fairer, more progressive ways to raise money than these aid budget cuts. For example a number of organisations propose the introduction of a 2% tax on those who own assets worth more than £10 million affecting just 0.04% of the population. We recognise the complexities of this, but this could bring in billions a year according to Tax Justice UK.[5] There is also the possible use of a Financial Transactions Tax.[6] Either of these could be used to restore the UK Aid Budget and enable its work to continue to help the poorest and most marginalised communities in our world.

We call upon the Methodist Conference to write to the UK government asking it to reverse its decision to cut the aid budget to 0.3% of GDP, to restore it to 0.5% of GDP and aim to increase it to 0.7% of GDP, (as stated in the Labour party's manifesto).

Reply

The Conference thanks the Wirral Circuit Meeting for its memorial, and for drawing attention to the recent cut to the UK's international development budget and the harmful impact that it will have around the world.

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3 In an email to supporters on 06/03/2025 from Sarah Edwards, Executive Director of JustMoney Movement

4 https://act.globaljustice.org.uk/dont-cut-aid-tax-wealth?utm_medium=email&utm_source=mailchimp_2503AID1&utm_campaign=Aid_campaign&mc_cid=aaa150e2c3&mc_eid=520f9f8494#

5 https://taxjustice.uk/blog/mps-are-demanding-a-wealth-tax-to-stop-international-aid-cuts/

6 https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/why-uk-needs-financial-transaction-tax/

As the memorial notes, at the time that the cut was announced, the President and Vice-President of the Conference joined leaders from the Baptist Union, and United Reformed Church and Church of Scotland in lamenting the decision. Their statement went on to state that "Our Churches have strongly encouraged and supported the UK in its commitment to international development, not only as a way of showing care to our global neighbours, but in recognition of the UK's historic and ongoing responsibilities to address the causes of global injustice, poverty, forced migration, climate change and conflict. It is a source of deep regret to see a backing away from that responsibility."

The cut follows the decision made by the previous government in 2020 to reduce the international development budget from 0.7% to 0.5% of GDP, initially as a temporary measure. Previously, the 0.7% target had been met every year since 2013, and enshrined in law since 2015. The 0.7% target has its origins in an initiative of the World Council of Churches in 1958, before being adopted by the United Nations in 1970.

The memorial points out that there are many options available to the government for funding the international development budget at previous levels, and that this cut is therefore a reflection of political priorities and choices. The Conference reiterates its support[7] for a more progressive approach to taxation, and endorses the principle that at a time of increased pressure on public finances, ways should be found to more fairly tax the UK's increasing – but inequitably distributed – wealth.

The Conference accepts the memorial, will write to the government as requested, and would encourage individual members and churches to also raise this issue with their MPs.

M2 Overseas Budget

The North Yorkshire Coast Circuit Meeting (Present: 38; Voting: unanimous)

(i) Requests the Conference to consider the recent cuts to the British government's Overseas Aid budget.

(ii) With the Conference's approval, requires the Conference to ask the government to commit to restoring the Overseas Aid budget to a target of 1% of GDP within the lifetime of the current parliament.

(iii) and also ask the government to take immediate steps towards achieving the target

7 https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf2011-pc-11-poverty-and-inequality-0812_fgKlh9i.doc

Reply

The Conference thanks the North Yorkshire Coast Circuit Meeting for its memorial. It notes that that the UK's international development budget has never reached 1% of GDP, but that the previous 0.7% target was set as a result of long campaigning by the Churches and others. It adopts as its reply the reply to memorial M1.

M3 Housing

The London District Synod (present: 151; voting: 150 for, 0 against) draws the attention of the Conference to the current housing crisis in the UK. A shortage of truly affordable homes is pushing more people into homelessness than ever before.

Record numbers of people are stuck for years in temporary accommodation that harms their health. This includes over 164,000 children in England who are growing up in unsafe conditions, restricting their life chances and trapping them in poverty.

People are being forced to sleep on friends` sofas, fearing they have outstayed their welcome, and thousands are left to face the danger of sleeping on the streets.

This is all having a huge impact on wellbeing, health, employment, education, community cohesion and it is happening in every part of the UK, affecting all the communities we serve, whether they are urban, rural or coastal, or in areas of affluence or deprivation.

The chronic and longstanding shortage of affordable housing is the key factor driving London's homelessness emergency that requires London boroughs to spend £4m a day on providing temporary housing for the 183,000 Londoners who are currently homeless.

It should be recognised that this housing crisis harms us all and that The Methodist Church can play its part in responding to the housing need, particularly in so far as it affects the poorest and most marginalised in our communities.

Such a response by the Methodist Church would strengthen communities, combat poverty, reduce destitution, and increase wellbeing and flourishing. Everyone needs a safe, secure, affordable and warm home in order to live well.

However, there are currently legal limitations for churches, circuits, and districts who wish to respond by selling or leasing land or buildings to provide accommodation. An increased provision of accommodation for those affected by the shortage of genuinely affordable housing and of good quality emergency provision including modular requires more flexibility to facilitate this work.

We therefore ask that the Conference:

(i) affirms that the provision of genuinely affordable homes and of emergency accommodation is an integral part of the mission of The Methodist Church as a sign of the gospel of Jesus Christ and as an outworking of our commitment to be a justice seeking church and is furthering the purposes of the Methodist Church;

(ii) recognises the rich heritage of the Methodist Church and celebrates the work that Methodist churches, circuits, districts and others are engaged in to meet local housing need, including emergency accommodation. The Conference strongly encourages the Methodist people to consider what more they can do to tackle the housing and homelessness crisis in their area;

(iii) directs the Connexional Council to consider the steps to be taken to achieve greater flexibility in order to facilitate (i) and (ii) above;

(iv) directs Districts and Circuits to identify suitable manses, church premises, buildings, and land that could be used to meet housing need.

Reply

The Conference thanks the London District Synod for its memorial, and for highlighting the current housing situation in their areas and across the UK. The Conference is troubled by the current levels of homelessness, numbers of people in temporary accommodation and shortage of affordable housing, and notes that the housing crisis impacts individuals and communities throughout the Connexion, in both urban and rural contexts. The Conference recognises that the Church can and should play a part in addressing the systemic causes of homelessness and the housing crisis, including through advocacy and practical responses.

The Conference agrees with the general intentions of the memorial, and encourages the Methodist people to consider what more they can do to tackle the housing and homelessness crisis in their area.

The Methodist Church is called to be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice as part of its commitment to be a justice-seeking church. In living out the gospel of Jesus Christ, the provision of genuinely affordable homes and of emergency accommodation may be a powerful response to this call.

The Conference reminds churches, Circuits and Districts that the Property Support Team is available to support Managing Trustees in considering how they can use property and land missionally, including to address housing need and homelessness.

While the Conference celebrates the good work that Methodist churches, Circuits, Districts and others are engaged in around housing, it also notes that for a variety of reasons, including the legal frameworks within which charities have to operate, it is not always straightforward work to pursue.

For that reason, the Conference believes that a review should be undertaken to understand and clarify the legal, procedural, practical and resourcing issues involved in enabling Methodist buildings and land to be used to meet housing need.

The Conference notes that learning may be gathered from ecumenical partners around these questions, particularly from the work that has been undertaken in the Church of England following the report of the Archbishops' Commission on Housing, Church and Community (2021), which was supported by the Methodist Church.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial but directs the Connexional Council to consider how a review of the issues highlighted in the memorial might be enabled, recognising that this will require input from various stakeholders across the Connexion.

M4 Housing

The Yorkshire North and East District Synod (Present: 91, voting unanimous) draws the attention of the Conference to the current housing crisis in the UK. A shortage of truly affordable homes is pushing more people into homelessness than ever before.

Record numbers of people are stuck for years in temporary accommodation that harms their health. This includes over 164,000 children in England who are growing up in unsafe conditions, restricting their life chances and trapping them in poverty.

People are being forced to sleep on friends` sofas, fearing they have outstayed their welcome, and thousands are left to face the danger of sleeping on the streets.

This is all having a huge impact on wellbeing, health, employment, education, community cohesion and it is happening in every part of the UK, affecting all the communities we serve, whether they are urban, rural or coastal, or in areas of affluence or deprivation.

In March 2025, North Yorkshire Council reported that homelessness acceptances in North Yorkshire have risen 22% over the last two years, From Harrogate to Hull and Selby to Scarborough, Methodists already play a role in supporting people experiencing a crisis

in their housing circumstances across the Yorkshire North and East Methodist District. One of the gaps, however, is the availability of affordable housing options that people can move on to. Market conditions right across the Yorkshire North and East Methodist District continue to pose a challenge for anyone living on low incomes trying to obtain accommodation either to buy or rent. Average house prices across North Yorkshire are around ten times average household incomes. The range of affordable options within the privately rented sector is shrinking. Crucially, the availability of accommodation that people on the lowest incomes really need – social lets – has also reduced.

It should be recognised that this housing crisis harms us all and that the Methodist Church can play its part in responding to the housing need, particularly in so far as it affects the poorest and most marginalised in our communities.

Such a response by the Methodist Church would strengthen communities, combat poverty, reduce destitution, and increase wellbeing and flourishing. Everyone needs a safe, secure, affordable and warm home in order to live well.

However, there are currently legal limitations for churches, Circuits, and Districts who wish to respond by selling or leasing land or buildings to provide accommodation. An increased provision of accommodation for those affected by the shortage of genuinely affordable housing and of good quality emergency provision including modular requires more flexibility to facilitate this work.

We therefore ask that the Conference:

(i) affirms that the provision of genuinely affordable homes and of emergency accommodation is an integral part of the mission of The Methodist Church as a sign of the gospel of Jesus Christ and as an outworking of our commitment to be a justice seeking church and is furthering the purposes of the Methodist Church;

(ii) recognises the rich heritage of the Methodist Church and celebrates the work that Methodist churches, circuits, districts and others are engaged in to meet local housing need, including emergency accommodation. The Conference strongly encourages the Methodist people to consider what more they can do to tackle the housing and homelessness crisis in their area;

(iii) directs the Connexional Council to consider the steps to be taken to achieve greater flexibility in order to facilitate (i) and (ii) above;

(iv) directs Districts and Circuits to identify suitable manses, church premises, buildings, and land that could be used to meet housing need.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Yorkshire North and East District Synod for its memorial and offers the same reply as M3.

M5 Housing

The South West Peninsula District Synod (present: 113; voting unanimous)

We ask that the Conference

(i) affirms that the provision of genuinely affordable homes and of emergency accommodation is an integral part of the mission of The Methodist Church as a sign of the gospel of Jesus Christ and as an outworking of our commitment to be a justice seeking church and is furthering the purposes of The Methodist Church;

(ii) recognises the rich heritage of the Methodist Church and celebrates the work that Methodist churches, circuits, districts and others are engaged in to meet local housing need, including emergency accommodation. The Conference strongly encourages the Methodist people to consider what more they can do to tackle the housing and homelessness crisis in their area;

(iii) directs the Connexional Council to consider the steps to be taken to achieve greater flexibility in order to facilitate (i) and (ii) above;

(iv) directs Districts and Circuits to identify suitable manses, church premises, buildings, and land that could be used to meet housing need.

Reply

The Conference thanks the South West Peninsula District Synod for its memorial and offers the same reply as M3.

M6 Housing

The Birmingham District Synod (present: 98; voting: 89 in favour, 0 against) draws the attention of the Conference to the current housing crisis in the UK. A shortage of truly affordable homes is pushing more people into homelessness than ever before.

Record numbers of people are stuck for years in temporary accommodation that harms their health. This includes over 164,000 children in England who are growing up in unsafe conditions, restricting their life chances and trapping them in poverty.

People are being forced to sleep on friends' sofas, fearing they have outstayed their welcome, and thousands are left to face the danger of sleeping on the streets.

This is all having a huge impact on wellbeing, health, employment, education, community cohesion and it is happening in every part of the UK, affecting all the communities we serve, whether they are urban, rural or coastal, or in areas of affluence or deprivation.

The West Midlands suffers from a multitude of housing issues:

1) As at December 2023, there were 12,590 homeless children living in temporary accommodation across the West Midlands[8] and 9,405 of them were in Birmingham. By September 2024, the number in Birmingham had risen to over 11,000.[9]

2) Over 600 households a week become homeless in Birmingham.

3) One in three of Birmingham City Council's homes do not meet the decent homes standard. In May 2023, it received a warning from the social housing regulator for failing to keep thousands of tenants safe.

4) 'Temporary' in Birmingham can mean 3-4 years and even longer for some.

5) There is a shortage of affordable homes.

It should be recognised that this housing crisis harms us all and that The Methodist Church can play its part in responding to the housing need, particularly in so far as it affects the poorest and most marginalised in our communities.

8 https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/at_least_309000_people_homeless_in_england_today

9 https://householdsintemporaryaccommodation.co.uk/statistics/

Such a response by the Methodist Church would strengthen communities, combat poverty, reduce destitution, and increase wellbeing and flourishing. Everyone needs a safe, secure, affordable and warm home in order to live well.

However, there are currently legal limitations for churches, Circuits, and Districts who wish to respond by selling or leasing land or buildings to provide accommodation. An increased provision of accommodation for those affected by the shortage of genuinely affordable housing and of good quality emergency provision including modular requires more flexibility to facilitate this work.

The Synod requests that the Conference

(i) affirms that the provision of genuinely affordable homes and of emergency accommodation is an integral part of the mission of the Methodist Church as a sign of the gospel of Jesus Christ and as an outworking of our commitment to be a justice seeking church and is furthering the purposes of the Methodist Church;

(ii) recognises the rich heritage of the Methodist Church and celebrates the work that Methodist churches, circuits, districts and others are engaged in to meet local housing need, including emergency accommodation. The Conference strongly encourages the Methodist people to consider what more they can do to tackle the housing and homelessness crisis in their area;

(iii) directs the Connexional Council to consider the steps to be taken to achieve greater flexibility in order to facilitate (i) and (ii) above;

(iv) directs Districts and Circuits to identify suitable manses, church premises, buildings, and land that could be used to meet housing need.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District Synod for its memorial and offers the same reply as M3.

M7 Tent of Nations

The Burnley and Pendle Circuit Meeting (present: 33 voting; in favour 32, against 0) thanks the Conference of 2024 for the support expressed for the Tent of Nations. However, the situation has now deteriorated further, with 8 large containers being placed by settlers right alongside the fence of the Tent of Nations, with utilities being put to

them, which threatens encroachment onto the land of the Nassar family under the guise of 'security risk.'

In view of the rapidly deteriorating situation for Palestinians in the West Bank the Circuit urges the Conference to commit itself to stand in solidarity with the Nassar family as they seek to live out their Christian faith in non-violent residence to the oppression of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

The Circuit calls upon the Conference:

1 To request a meeting with the British Foreign secretary to share with him the situation of the Nassar family.

2 To arrange a meeting with the Israeli Embassy in the UK stating the Methodist awareness of the situation, our continued support for the Nassar family and requesting that the process to re-register their land is completed quickly.

3 To communicate with the British Consulate in Jerusalem, thanking them for their support and encouraging them to continue their involvement, giving whatever practical help they can in ensuring that the process of re-registration of the Tent of Nations land can be completed quickly.

4 To send a delegation from the Methodist Church to the Tent of Nations.

5 To encourage Methodists who are able to go as volunteers on the Tent of Nations Farm.

6 To continue to highlight the peace work of the Nassar family through its communications with the wider Methodist Church in the U.K.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Burnley and Pendle Circuit Meeting for its memorial and ongoing support of the Nassar family.

In the Conference report 'Justice for Palestine and Israel' 2010, the Methodist Church in Britain clearly stated that the occupation of the West Bank and settlement building by Israel is illegal. The International Court of Justice in July 2024 ruled that Israel's occupation was unlawful and that Israel should withdraw immediately and evacuate all settlements immediately.

The Methodist Conference stands with those who seek an end to this injustice through non-violent means including the Nassar family.

The World Methodist Council recognised the non-violent resistance of the Nassar family in 2017 when they received the World Methodist Peace Award. Daoud Nassar addressed the Methodist Church in Britain's Conference 2024 via a pre-recorded video and the Methodist Liaison Office, Jerusalem (MLO) is in regular contact with the family and the farm and has welcomed members of the family to contribute to various on-line prayer and advocacy opportunities. The Methodist input to Greenbelt Festival in 2024 included the presence of the family at the Festival's communion service. At this year's Cliff Festival the work of the Tent of Nations was highlighted in a workshop.

The Connexional Team, on behalf of the Conference is engaged in building relationships with elected Politicians and Government Ministers and with staff at the Israeli Embassy. The MLO is developing a relationship with the new British Consul General in Jerusalem. These relationships often offer a more effective dialogue than a one off letter or meeting request. Members of the Connexional Team will continue to raise the issue of the Tent of Nations in meetings with the appropriate departments of government.

The President of the Conference 2025/26 has a visit to the region during their presidential year planned and the MLO will ensure that, if possible, the President visits the Tent of Nations.

The MLO, through the Global Relationships team, offers volunteering opportunities for Methodists in the Holy Land and as part of this promotes opportunities at the Tent of Nations. The security situation can change quickly in the region and the Global Relationships team and the MLO must feel confident that volunteers will not find themselves in a dangerous situation; these opportunities are therefore strictly risk-assessed.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial to the extent outlined in the reply.

M8 Israel/ Palestine

The Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod (present: 67; voting: 52 for, 3 against) notes that the official position of the UK Government is that it will recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the object of peace. Against a quickly deteriorating situation in terms of Palestinian land rights, the Synod requests that the Conference write to the UK government urging it to recognise that now is that time.

In response to memorial M8 from the South Worcestershire Circuit in 2024, the Conference recognised that calls for recognition of Palestinian statehood arise from the

appropriate and just pursuit of Palestinian self-determination and agreed to call on the UK Government to recognise the State of Palestine.

In the intervening twelve months the Israeli government has accelerated the seizure and annexation of Palestinian land, in violation of international law. This has implications not only for Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza who are forcibly displaced but also for any prospect of a future peace based on a two-state solution. Time is running out on this as a potential way forward.

In calling for a repeat of action that the Conference has already undertaken, the Synod is conscious of the parable of the widow and the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8) where justice results from persistent petitioning. The Synod, conscious of the biblical notion of "Kairos", also believes that it is highly appropriate time to renew this call upon the government now, when it is already reported to be in discussions with France and Saudi Arabia about recognition of Palestinian statehood, and when pressure upon it to take this decisive step is rising from many quarters in society.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod for its memorial. The Conference has expressed its support for the recognition of the state of Palestine and as the memorial says this was reiterated in response to memorial M8 at the 2024 Conference.

The situation is deteriorating in the West Bank with more land being lost to illegal settlements and Israeli Governments continuing policy to annex much of the West Bank. There is also a law progressing through the Knesset to remove any reference to the 'West Bank' in official documents and to replace it with the description 'Judea and Samaria'.

However, the Conference believes that a better response to the challenges identified in the memorial is to stand in solidarity (including theological solidarity) with Palestinian Christians. Recognising that this is a crucial time for the future of Palestinians, the Conference, therefore, accepts the memorial and will write an appropriately worded letter to the UK government.

M9 Christian Zionism

The Sheffield Circuit Meeting (voting: present 65; in favour 64, against 0) calls upon the Methodist Conference to:

- express its grave concern at the increasing influence of Christian Zionism in modern politics affecting Israel and Palestine, especially in the USA and in some Methodist congregations;

- assert in the words of *Cry for Hope*, which the Conference 2021 commended for study to the Methodist people that "support for (*Christian*) Zionism as a theology and an ideology that legitimizes the right of one people to deny the human rights of another is incompatible with the Christian faith and a grave misuse of the Bible";

- direct the Faith and Order Committee to produce a report for the Conference of 2027, which will guide our members on how best to combat this deviant theology within our church and beyond it.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Sheffield Circuit Meeting for its memorial. The Conference continues to be gravely concerned at the ongoing violence and conflict between Israel and Palestine, not only in Gaza but also in the day-to-day oppression of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. The consequence for the people of the region is unimaginable human suffering. As it noted in 2021, the Conference has long maintained a position first outlined by the 2001 Conference, "recognising that peace and security can only be achieved when international judgements are respected and justice is done", and that "a return to the borders of 1967 and a status for Jerusalem as a place for two nations and three faiths, with parity of esteem, is the real basis upon which trust could be built up among the different communities. The desire for a lasting peace can only be based on trust, security and freedom from fear for all people in the area." The Conference calls on all who engage theologically and politically with the situation in Israel and Palestine to join with it in these aims.

In commending Cry for Hope for careful and prayerful study by the Methodist people, the Conference 'invite[d] readers to use discernment with respect to the various aspects of the call.' The Conference maintains that such careful discernment is still essential, especially in considering Christian Zionism. In response to the report Justice for Palestine and Israel, the Conference in 2010 directed the Faith and Order Committee 'to undertake further work on the theological issues, including Christian Zionism, raised in the report that are needed to guide and support the approach of the Methodist Church to the Israeli/Palestinian situation and to bring a report to Conference.' After careful consideration, the Faith and Order Committee reported the following to the Conference:

> *The Faith and Order Committee has attempted to develop a number of papers in response to this resolution over the last few years. However, the Committee*

has expressed concern over both the content and the process and developed the following report in response to the resolution.

In 2010 the Conference received the report of a working group, entitled Justice for Palestine and Israel. The Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee "to undertake further work on the theological issues, including Christian Zionism, raised in the report that are needed to guide and support the approach of the Methodist Church to the Israeli/Palestinian situation and to bring a report to Conference" (2010 Conference Agenda, Resolution 14/5).

The Committee has given careful consideration to how it might best fulfil the intentions of the 2010 Conference as expressed in Resolution 14/5. Justice for Palestine and Israel uses the word 'complex' and its cognates no fewer than 11 times to describe the historical, political, religious and cultural dimensions of Israel-Palestine. The theological issues raised in the report are no less complex and rank among the most contentious aspects of interfaith relations.

For the Methodist Church to undertake a major piece of theological work on the subject of Israel-Palestine would duplicate work done elsewhere and would be unlikely to contribute anything fresh to the present state of debate. For example, the Anglican Communion Network for Inter Faith Concerns has recently published a relevant report, under the auspices of the Anglican Consultative Council, entitled Land of Promise? An Anglican Exploration of Christian Attitudes to the Holy Land, with special reference to Christian Zionism (November 2012). 'This report seeks to set out an Anglican response to the phenomenon of Christian Zionism, and to do so within a wider account of Christian thinking about Israel' (p 7).

Methodists, like Anglicans, have their own particular narrative within the Christian story, and our theological tradition has certain characteristic emphases that may not be shared by others in quite the same way. Nevertheless, the theological resources available to Methodists in thinking about the issues raised by the situation of Israel-Palestine, including Christian Zionism, need not be any different to those available to Christians generally.

The Committee therefore believes that it would be more useful at the present time to draw attention to a range of relevant theological resources that are presently in the public domain. Any future Methodist study of the theological issues relating to the situation of Israel-Palestine would probably draw on these and other sources, though the Faith and Order Committee recommends that any such work should be undertaken jointly with ecumenical partners.

To enable Methodists to engage with the theological issues raised by the historical, political, economic, religious and cultural situation of Israel-Palestine, the Committee has prepared a short resource list for further reading which will be placed on the Faith and Order section of the Methodist Church Website. The list is neither exhaustive nor comprehensive (the field is simply too vast even to consider such an undertaking) but it is broadly representative of the present state of theological scholarship on the subject.

It should be noted that in this much debated area neutrality is rarely possible, and there will be those who defend enthusiastically some of the resources listed on the website and those who are much more cautious about them. It is important to state, therefore, that the inclusion of specific works in the list should not be taken to indicate any kind of approval or endorsement by the Committee or by the Conference. For this reason, it is worthwhile drawing attention to the fact that published works are listed in alphabetical order, according to the author.10

The Conference believes that the reasons identified by the Faith and Order Committee still apply today, and that in particular a wide variety of theological resources is available on this subject. It therefore does not believe it appropriate to direct the preparation of a specific Methodist report on Christian Zionism and the resource list mentioned by the Faith and Order Committee remains available on the Methodist Church website. The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

M10 Expediting TMCP Procedures for local churches - Discretion at auction

The Birmingham District Synod (Present: 100; voting: 92 in favour 1 against) requests that the Conference ask the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes to allow auctioneers up to 5% discretion on the reserve price when selling former chapels, manses or other property by public auction. It believes that if TMCP makes these changes in policy and procedure big financial and reputational losses can be avoided.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District Synod for its Memorial and has consulted with the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) about the process for selling Model Trust property at auction in England and Wales. The Conference is advised that the requirements concerning auction reserve prices for charity land sales

10 2013 Conference Agenda, item 37, section 1.2 https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fmedia.methodist.org.uk%2Fmedia%2Fdocuments%2Fconf-2013-37-faith-and-order_IlJ111o.doc&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

are requirements laid down by the Charity Commission (in England and Wales) rather than by TMCP or the Methodist Church.

The Charity Commission publishes guidance which highlights two strict legal requirements for disposals of charity land: (i) to obtain and consider a report from a designated adviser; and (ii) to obtain the best terms reasonably possible for the charity. For auction sales, the Commission's guidance goes on to state the following:

"Selling land at auction

You must follow the 2 legal requirements set out above before the auction and be satisfied that an auction is in the best interests of your charity. You may find it helpful to get professional advice.

You should also:

- set the reserve price at or above your designated adviser's lowest value for the land. The reserve price is the minimum price the land is allowed to sell for at auction
- write into the conditions of the sale that if the purchaser is a connected person, the transaction will be subject to a Charity Commission order being made"[11]

In effect, the reserve price is set by the designated adviser under charity law.

If a property does not sell at auction, TMCP will assist the Managing Trustees and recommend that they speak with their designated adviser about the next steps, including whether auction remains the best method of disposal and if the initial valuation is still appropriate. Managing Trustees should follow the advice and recommendations of their designated adviser.

The Conference sympathises with the frustration that Managing Trustees may feel about the process for selling Model Trust property at auction. However the Conference considers that the lack of discretion to accept bids below the reserve price at auction is reflective of charity law requirements to which all Managing Trustees in England and Wales are subject. The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

11 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sales-leases-transfers-or-mortgages-what-trustees-need-to-know-about-disposing-of-charity-land-cc28/sales-leases-transfers-or-mortgages-what-trustees-need-to-know-about-disposing-of-charity-land

M11 Expediting TMCP Procedures for local churches - Proforma Leaseholder Agreement

The Birmingham District Synod (Present: 100; voting: 92 in favour, 0 against) requests that the Conference ask the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes to create a proforma Leaseholder Agreement that can easily be adapted for use where a potential outside organisation wish to use our premises for an activity where "exclusivity" is a requirement for Safeguarding reasons.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District Synod for its Memorial and appreciates that there are many situations where Local Churches and Circuits wish to grant leases and licences of Methodist property in order to produce income for furthering mission while also helping local groups and organisations.

The Conference has consulted with the Trustees for Methodist Purposes (TMCP) regarding the possibility of making proforma lease templates available for use by Managing Trustees.

TMCP's website provides detailed guidance for Managing Trustees who are considering granting commercial leases or licences of Methodist property. There are also template heads of terms for various common types of leases and template clauses for insertion into those leases. TMCP has a template short form lease for short commercial lettings of rooms in a building and a tenancy-at-will template, both of which are available on request by the solicitors acting for Managing Trustees, to be used when appropriate in the particular circumstances. The existing template documents include provisions which account for the requirements of charity law, Methodist law and policy, and best practice.

Managing trustees should take legal advice from their solicitors when they are arranging to grant leases, and they may opt to use one of the Methodist Church's Panel Solicitors or another firm of their choice. In either case, it is expected that any law firm dealing with leases will have their own precedent documents available and will be up to date with any changes to the law in order to produce a lease suited to the specific circumstances of each letting.

In addition, TMCP is about to launch a streamlining process for leases in cases where Managing Trustees instruct a firm from the Methodist Church's Panel of Solicitors. It is anticipated that the new lease streamlining process will be in place prior to the 2025 Conference.

The negotiation of commercial leases can be a lengthy and complex process, particularly where there are specific requirements on one or both sides. This is a general characteristic of commercial leases and is not unique to the Methodist Church. There are additional legal requirements when charities are involved. This means that it is impossible for there to be a "one-size-fits-all" template because any lease must be tailored to suit the specific circumstances.

The Conference considers that TMCP's approach in limiting the provision of template lease documents is correct and reminds Managing Trustees that they should be taking appropriate advice from their surveyors and legal advisers for each proposed letting. The Conference therefore declines the Memorial and reminds Managing Trustees that they should contact TMCP early in their proceedings if they need information or guidance about the suitability of types of occupational agreement, or provisions specific to particular proposed occupiers, and if they cannot find answers in the information on the TMCP website.

M12 Safeguarding

The Yorkshire North and East District Synod (Present: 91, voting 90 for 1 against) celebrates the church's commitment to safeguarding across the Connexion and is proud of work done to ground this in our mission as a church. The Synod also celebrates and commends the efforts taken to further embed a safe culture within the life of the Conference, notably ensuring the named designated safeguarding officer for the 2025 Conference being circulated prior to the opening of the Conference. However, to further enhance good practice the Synod asks that the Conference resolve that it must always have a named safeguarding officer who is independent of the membership of the Conference and easily accessible; and that they should be well publicised prior to and during the Conference.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Yorkshire North and East Synod for its commitment to the very best practice in safeguarding.

The named person who acts as contact for safeguarding matters at the Conference is the Assistant Secretary of the Conference (ASC). All members of the Conference are responsible for the safeguarding of others but it is, as the memorial suggests, important for a particular person to be a point of contact should a concern arise. The chaplains at the Conference are also points of contact to whom safeguarding concerns can be expressed.

Events in churches, Circuits and Districts will have a designated safeguarding lead; this need not be someone 'independent' of the event. The ASC is a senior person within the life of the Conference and having the person in that role as a designated point of contact demonstrates the importance which the Conference places on the safeguarding of those who attend the event. In terms of workload, it is likely that upon receiving a concern, the ASC would then pass that to the most suitable person to follow it up, which in most cases will be the District Safeguarding Officer based in the District where the Conference takes place.

The Conference declines the memorial but directs the Conference Planning Executive to ensure that clear details of whom to contact regarding safeguarding concerns are available to all members of the Conference.

M13 Safeguarding

The London District Synod (present: 151; voting: 140 in favour, 3 against) is deeply aware that some of the operational issues relating to safeguarding (both inside our own Church and others, and also, significantly, wider society and public opinion) would benefit from thoughtful and prayerful exploration and sharing. We therefore request the Conference to encourage and affirm a symposium to explore these issues. The London District is invited to share in the hosting of such an open meeting at Methodist Central Hall Westminster before the end of 2025.

The symposium would seek to provide an inclusive and informed conversation about safeguarding and the Gospel, and also address some of the personal, pastoral and theological issues being raised by ministers and members throughout the connexion. The underlying purpose of this discussion is to build up the Body of Christ in accordance with the strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity and the Theology of Safeguarding Report. Given the broad nature of some of the issues under conversation, the open meeting would seek to ensure ecumenical participation.

Reply

The Conference thanks the London District Synod for this thoughtful proposal and can see benefit in encouraging wide dialogue about what it means to be a truly safe church and ensure that our policies and procedures to achieve this are being implemented. The memorial indicates the range of issues that are likely to be explored in such a gathering.

The Conference notes the ambition to build up the Body of Christ and that the 2021 Conference aimed to contribute to that through the adoption of *The Theology of Safeguarding* which has subsequently been supported by additional resources.

The Conference is also aware that the Safeguarding Committee's workload is currently dominated by the new structures that are being implemented and with bedding these in during the first few months of the new connexional year. As such, it is not realistic to expect any input from the connexional safeguarding service in the planning and delivery of a symposium such as that which the Synod proposes before the end of this calendar year.

The Conference wishes to encourage the Methodist people in seeking imaginative ways to explore issues around Safeguarding and would urge the District to draw on the work already done in planning any event(s) it chooses to hold.

However, given the breadth of the suggested agenda and the ecumenical dimensions and given that it is not entirely clear what the operational and theological issues are, it feels that it cannot offer any connexional support at this time and therefore has no choice but to decline the memorial.

M14 Delivery of Training Modules

The Bradford North Circuit Meeting (Present: 28; voting: 23 in favour, 0 against) notes and welcomes that an updated foundation module for Creating Safer Space is being rolled out. We also note that our circuit currently has no one offering to deliver this training within the Circuit. The Circuit requests that greater consideration be given as to how the delivery of this, and other, training modules may be delivered through district and connexional resources rather than relying on resources within Circuits. It also requests that consideration be given as to how other national organisations deliver training locally and whether anything might be learnt from the way this is achieved.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Bradford North Circuit Meeting for its memorial and offers the following response to the memorial.

The delivery modes for the Foundation Module are currently through onsite or online delivery (via a Zoom meeting) facilitated by circuit trainers. In addition, the new Foundation Module will be available through self-study via the MCBX e-learning platform from August 2025. Participants new to their role who are accessing Foundation Module training for the first time should attend a facilitated course - either onsite or online, where pastoral support is available, as we are aware that for some people the content of this training may cause distress and anxiety. The e-learning mode can then be accessed for further refreshing of the training every 4 years.

The District Safeguarding Group should be made aware of any difficulties in providing training within circuits. The District Safeguarding Officer and Learning Network Officer can provide advice on how best to support this learning within circuits. Where trainer posts are vacant or trainers require initial training or upskilling as modules are refreshed, the DSO and LDO can provide relevant equipping and support.

Circuits can also share training needs with neighbouring circuits and agree on how to support this together. This could be by trainers sharing in training provision for two or more circuits. It may also mean inviting trainers to facilitate training in another circuit or offering places on scheduled courses by a neighbouring circuit.

The rationale for circuit delivery is as follows.

1. Onsite delivery options are more accessible within a smaller geographic area.

2. Online delivery options allow remote access, which enhances options for those who prefer an online mode of delivery or are limited in access to onsite provision.

3. Offering this training within the context of a circuit provides a more localised understanding of the circuit's work as well as opportunities to network with others involved in that context. The nuances of processes of which participants require knowledge and understanding are more likely to relate to the churches/ circuits within which their work is carried out, and these local opportunities help in this regard.

The implications of providing Foundation Module training by District and Connexional staff would be well beyond the resource provision available and would not utilise the knowledge held by circuit trainers.

All other mandatory safeguarding training is offered, whether onsite or online, by District Safeguarding Officers in partnership with Learning Network Officers. The Connexional Safeguarding Training Group consists of officers who represent the Church of England and the United Reformed Church. Great consideration is given to learning from one another and sharing resources.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial and encourages Circuits to undertake further exploration of the range of delivery options available for engaging in the Safeguarding Foundation Module.

M15 Training Accreditation

The East Solent and Downs Circuit Meeting (Present 38; voting unanimous) recognises that the ministry and work of the Church is blessed by the dedication of a large number of volunteers that not only fulfil roles in the church but are prominent leaders within other sectors, where they are also trained in UCB, EDI and Safeguarding courses.

With consideration of the workload of ministers and the church leaders and volunteers, we request that the Methodist Conference considers the accreditation of the training offered in other organisations so that volunteers who are already trained in that way do not have to redo training within the Methodist Church.

Reply

The Conference thanks the East Solent and Downs Circuit Meeting for the memorial.

Each organisation has its own particular requirements for training in areas such as Unconscious Bias (UCB), Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Safeguarding. If an individual is part of another organisation there will be an expectation that they complete the training relevant to that organisation whatever their experience and training elsewhere. The Methodist Church in Great Britain is no different and therefore has developed specific training that links these areas of concern to the church context.

The Conference declines the memorial and affirms the completion of the UCB, EDI and safeguarding training as required, whilst also encouraging those who have completed training in UCB, EDI and safeguarding in other contexts to share their knowledge and experiences within the church setting.

M16 Safeguarding Training

The Ealing Trinity Circuit Meeting (present: 20; voting: unanimous) draws the Conference's attention to the delay in officeholders completing their Advanced Module safeguarding training due to the limited number of gathered sessions, reflecting the restrictions on those authorised to offer this training. The Ealing Trinity Circuit asks the Conference to increase the capacity for holding gathered sessions by allowing authorised Foundation Module trainers to be trained and authorised to offer Advanced Module training, subject to their capacity and willingness.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Ealing Trinity Circuit Meeting for its memorial.

The need for additional Advanced Module trainers in some Districts is appreciated. However, ways to manage this situation vary around the Connexion. In some regions, those who are authorised Foundation Module trainers are also able to become Advanced Module trainers as well, if they are recommended by the DSO, and/or relevant Learning and Development Officer. They must then also attend an Advanced Module Train the Trainer session, to ensure that they are fully prepared to deliver the course materials.

Another way that some Districts currently enable officeholders to access Advanced Module training is by sharing access to online gathered sessions with neighbouring districts. This increases the number of dates offered to individuals whilst also ensuring that online sessions have good attendance levels.

There is ongoing work, by members of the Safeguarding Training Working Group, to develop Connexional Training Standards which will harmonise safeguarding training processes around the Connexion. Details about who is permitted to deliver the different modules of training will be included in these standards.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial to the extent that it encourages conversations between the District Safeguarding Officer or (from 1 September 2025) Regional Officer for Safeguarding, the relevant Learning and Development Officer, and those trained as Foundation Module trainers, to assess their willingness and suitability to be trained and accredited in delivering the Advanced Module.

M17 Local Preacher Training

The Aire and Calder Circuit Meeting (Present: 78; Voting: 76 for, 2 against) has prayerfully reflected on our ongoing experiences of local preacher training and is deeply concerned about the high drop-out rates and discouragement among prospective local preachers.

We note in particular that:

1. Many are called but feel overwhelmed.

   Some offering for local preacher ministry may have limited IT skills or no recent experience of academic study. Despite having a clear call and deep commitment, they find the online syllabus daunting and become discouraged.

2. Isolation and lack of group learning.

   The current training presupposes a vibrant network of fellow students and readily available tutors. In reality, many trainees work alone, reliant on remote tutoring, with little chance of group discussion or mutual support.

3. Emphasis on academic content risks overshadowing spiritual calling.

   While a firm grounding in theology is vital, the course can give the impression that academic achievement is valued above testing and nurturing the call, grace, and gifts that have always been central to our Methodist understanding of preaching.

4. Previous memorials on accessibility and flexibility have not led to tangible change.

   Several Circuits and Districts have raised these concerns in recent years. Yet the barriers remain, and training materials still assume significant computer literacy and academic aptitude.

We therefore request the Conference to:

1. Undertake a comprehensive review of how the training is delivered to ensure trainees are not left isolated or overloaded, and to recognise that many come from non-academic backgrounds and older congregations.

2. Develop simpler, more flexible training pathways alongside the existing course, incorporating face-to-face study options or printed materials for those unable to use computers confidently.

3. Provide an introductory 'Pre-Study Module' or orientation, helping those with limited IT or academic experience to feel more confident in navigating the course.

4. Reaffirm and prioritise the spiritual and practical call to preach alongside academic study.

5. Adopt an 'apprenticeship model' of training, ensuring that mentoring, practical guidance, and discipline from experienced preachers sit at the heart of the process, rather than relying predominantly on academic material.

In 1746 the Methodist Conference identified three key questions to ask of those called to preach...

a. Have they grace?

b. Have they gifts as well as grace?

c. Have they fruit?

We encourage rediscovering the Wesleyan priorities of *'grace, gifts, and fruit,'* so that the vocation itself is nurtured and fostered.

We believe adopting these measures will help retain the hearts and enthusiasm of those responding to God's call, thus strengthening the ministry of preaching across the Connexion.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Aire and Calder Circuit Meeting for its memorial related to the Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Course and wishes to thank all local preachers and worship leaders, tutors and mentors for their hugely valued contributions to the life of the Church.

The Conference notes the centrality of worship to *Our Calling* and wishes to reaffirm its importance in the life of the Church. Worship renewal is a key aim of *God for All 2025-32* and, as such, the Connexional Team are working on plans to realise this vision. A key principle of this will be the need to work in partnership with worshipping communities in their specific contexts, to ensure that worship is a place of deep, life-giving encounter with God. Local preachers and worship leaders are a key community in the leading of such worship and, as such, appropriate high-quality training, support for discernment and development is of significant importance.

The current online Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Course (WLP) was created as a result of a direction from the Conference of 2012. Since then, much work has taken place to ensure that the course and its delivery are as inclusive and accessible as possible. Online delivery of the course has enabled participation of many students for whom a paper-based course and face-to-face tutorials would have been impractical, a fact demonstrated particularly by the progress many students were able to make during the COVID-19 pandemic. The course website is designed to be used on any electronic device and accessibility features are provided to enable screen presentation to be adapted to suit particular learning needs, together with audio transcription and instant translation facilities. The course content is continually under review in line with the requirements of the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion requirements, and support for training in Study Skills for the course is provided by the Learning Network.

The Connexional Team has progressively worked to improve the variety of material in terms of accessibility and media used. The Conference notes that, in recent years, the following changes have been made.

- There is now one project to complete for each module-section, replacing previous complex choices of options.
- Portfolios no longer have to be compiled, zipped and uploaded to a website. Each project is completed and assessed online using a simple dialogue between student and tutor.
- Students and tutors can track their progress though the portfolio using a simple traffic-light system.
- There are now no deadlines for submission of portfolios as moderation starts as soon as a portfolio is complete.
- Online Induction sessions are offered to all new students and tutors providing a basic explanation of the course and introduction to the course website.
- Online courses in Study Skills are offered, together with training for new and experienced tutors
- The course website has been comprehensively updated to make usage simpler and more intuitive on all kinds of devices. Printing of all content is straightforward if required.
- A comprehensive accessibility tool is provided, offering numerous screen adaptations such as adapted contrast, fonts, size and highlighting. This tool also offers audio transcription and instant translation facilities (text and often spoken) in dozens of languages.
- Students are encouraged to use different media for submitting their project work. Most projects can be completed using audio or video as an alternative to typing, and photos of handwritten work can also be uploaded.

The WLP course sits alongside the formation of the preacher in the context of the LP Meeting, where call, grace and gifts can be nurtured. WLP is designed to encourage the practice of theological reflection. As such, it must always have an emphasis on theological learning, which underpins high-quality worship. Additionally, it should be noted that formation of a local preacher or worship leader is primarily a process of discernment in the context of the Local Preachers' Meeting, supplemented by theological learning through the Worship: Leading & Preaching course. As such, it is expected that not all who commence training will necessarily complete it and may discern that their calling lies in a different role in the Church. This does not necessarily represent a failure of the training programme, but the outworking of the discernment process.

The Conference additionally acknowledges that group learning is central to the ethos of the course, but understands that for many students, the reality is of one-to-one work with their tutors and mentors. The Connexional Team aims to provide opportunities for

group learning to supplement local provision: Explore Online provides quarterly weekend sessions on Zoom, and Explore Weekends now offer a similar format in-person.

The Conference wishes to emphasise the importance of worship to *Our Calling*, the centrality of high-quality preaching and worship leading to life-giving worship, the purposes of the WLP course and process as both a learning and discernment, and the significant actions taken in response to previous memorials.

The Conference therefore neither accepts nor declines the memorial at this stage and refers the matter to the Ministries Committee for further consideration. It also suggests that the Ministries and Learning Team work with Districts and Circuits as appropriate to undertake a systematic exploration and review of the WLP course in the light of the wider context of worship renewal and explore the development of a 'Pre-Study' orientation module, to ensure that no one who is called by God to serve in leading worship and preaching is excluded from following their call'

M18 Training of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders

The Redruth, Camborne and Hayle Circuit Meeting (present: 38; voting: in favour 36, against 0) is committed to the appropriate and effective training of local preachers and worship leaders for proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus and making new disciples, and respectfully request that the Conference gives urgent attention to amending the present WLP 3.0 course for worship leaders and local preachers (WLP) with a revised curriculum which would be more practical and fit for purpose. Our concerns with the present course include:

- WLP 3.0 is unwieldy in its concept. It is too long and involved, time-consuming and idealistic in its approach. It includes many 'nice to have' and 'nice to do' elements but not enough of the basic essentials.
- It is impractical and almost impossible to complete in two years, particularly as most students are part-time. Many are disillusioned, as their expectations had been they could complete training in about one (WLs) or two (LPs) years.
- In consequence, prospective students are overwhelmed by the huge demands the present course makes, and many decide not to attempt it.
- There is a lack of suitable tutors, with many local preachers not willing to assume the role.
- The Cliff College Explore Weekends are too remote for students and many are unable to attend.
- It does not meet local and circuit needs.

We suggest that the revised curriculum is based on an awareness of the variety of needs of local congregations, and that the following points be considered in the modified study programme:

❖ A more concise syllabus which can be completed realistically in about one (WPs) or two years (LPs).

❖ The curriculum provides for / retains:

- a more systematic approach to Christian Doctrine and Theology, including an emphasis on the Methodist understanding of doctrine, particularly Wesley's 'Four Alls' of Salvation including the Wesleyan doctrines of Assurance and Christian Perfection,
- a more structured approach to the study of the Scriptures, including an understanding of exegesis and exposition, which provides for the use and non-use of the Common Lectionary,
- a concise approach to the fundamentals of liturgy (including informal liturgy), homiletics (including sermon construction), hymnody and the place of prayer and music, both classical/traditional and contemporary, in worship,
- the use of different resources including physical and digital resources (music, video, YouTube [pros and cons]) and how to use these effectively.
- local preachers and worship leaders are given the opportunity to study together to offer mutual support and encouragement whilst progressing through each module rather than an Explore session after the module has been completed. For this purpose, we suggest that tuition be included on the use of the Teams and Zoom apps to enable effective video conferencing and team chat.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Redruth, Camborne and Hayle Circuit Meeting for its memorial related to the Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Course and offers the same reply as M17.

M19 Local Preacher and Worship Leader Training

The Doncaster Circuit Meeting (voting: 45 present; unanimous) thanks the Conference for the work it has done/does on the local preacher/worship leader training pathway.

However, it requests that the Conference revisit the Local Preacher/Worship training pathway, to make it more inclusive and diverse.

We assert that the existing mode of study pathway is putting off some of those who are considering becoming local preachers/worship leaders.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Doncaster Circuit Meeting for its memorial related to the Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Course and offers the same reply as M17.

M20 Ministerial Development Review Process

The South East District Synod (Present 109; voting: 104 for, 1 against) is aware that the delivery of the Ministerial Development Review process across the Connexion is uneven in spite of the direction from the Conference that it shall take place annually. The reality is that some ministers who would appreciate it are not offered it, whilst others find the regularity exhausting, with congregants becoming frustrated when it comes round almost before it has achieved completion the year before, and certainly before learning can be effected. In addition, in years where there has been a re-invitation process it becomes very difficult to keep the two processes separate and in smaller churches, the same people often end up being asked to contribute to both.

The superintendent minister may be involved in the MDR for several members of circuit staff as their ordained contributor, and also for several members of other circuit staff as the Supervisor, adding significantly to the administrative load.

In bringing this memorial, we recognise that the Stationing Review Group is due to report to Conference this year and that it is looking not only at the stationing process but also considering other matters including the possibility of an annual vocational conversation.

The question arises as to whether MDR should continue in the current desired form, become optional or become part of a bigger process that includes Stationing, Supervision and anything else that is under review by the Stationing Review Group. In any event, if MDR is to continue it needs to be done well, intentionally and uniformly across the Connexion and care should be taken to ensure that it fits neatly into the new structure.

Whilst recognising that the length of Stationing appointments vary, where the period of appointment is five years our view is that holding a MDR in years two and five would seem to provide the best results for all involved in this valuable process, although where necessary the frequency could be adjusted to suit the local circumstances. This memorial therefore asks Conference to direct the Ministries Committee to implement a change in MDR frequency to a minimum of twice in a five-year period, and to institute

systems whereby implementation of this is eventually mandated within the structure to be presented to Conference this year by the Stationing Review Group. We would ask Conference to direct the Ministries Committee to report back on this Memorial at the Conference of 2026.

Reply

The Conference thanks the South East District Synod for the memorial and their reflections on the delivery of the Ministerial Development Review (MDR) process. The Conference recognises the discrepancies that the memorial highlights and the desire for enabling a consistent approach to MDR across the connexion.

The Stationing Review Report, if the proposals are approved by the Conference, offers some clarity in the way that Supervision, MDR and the proposed Vocational Conversation are intended to operate and how they complement one another moving forward.

Whilst the Conference acknowledges that a review of the MDR processes would be beneficial it feels that the current wording of the memorial may limit such a review. The Conference therefore declines the memorial in its current form but directs the Ministries Committee to undertake a review of the MDR processes, in consultation with Districts, in light of the proposed changes to the Stationing processes and report back to the Conference of 2027.

M21 Resourcing Administration

The Isle of Man District Synod (Present: 32 voting: in favour 32, against 0) notes that in reply to Memorial M3 at the 2024 Conference it was acknowledged that:

"It will be helpful to ask Local Churches and communities to prioritise their commitment to vibrant, healthy evangelism – including starting New Places for New People and Church at the Margins communities – in the years ahead."

Whilst we applaud the work of the Evangelism and Growth Team and the provision of Connexional funding to support additional paid roles in each District under the God For All initiative, we seek to draw Conference's attention to the difficulty many Local Churches and Circuits face in prioritising this vital work due to increasing administrative demands related to finance and property management.

We believe that:

1. Administration is a vital enabler of mission – ensuring that evangelism and discipleship remain the focus of lay and ordained leaders.

2. Resourcing Circuit administration would empower local mission – freeing ministers, lay workers, and volunteers from excessive administrative tasks.

We therefore request that the Conference explore releasing additional funds to support the employment of skilled property and/or financial administrators within each Circuit, recognising administration as a Spirit-given gift that enables the Church's mission and ministry.

We believe that this will release others, both lay and ordained, to more fully exercise their gifts in mission and ministry at a local level, including the prioritisation of "vibrant healthy evangelism".

Reply

The Conference thanks the Isle of Man District Synod for its memorial highlighting the importance of administration in enabling the mission and ministry of the Church.

In supporting the next phase of the God for All (GFA) strategy, the Conference of 2024 effectively committed over £40m of Connexional Funds over the next seven years to this vital initiative. In so doing, it has committed substantial balances from the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF) that will mean other initiatives cannot be prioritised. It also relies upon the assumption that income to the CPF from the property levy will continue at the current rate (a reasonable assumption to make, but not something that is known with certainty). As such, there are not additional connexional funds readily available to be released to meet this request for support with administration.

In addition, there are substantial financial resources across the Connexion in district, circuit and church accounts that could be deployed to support administration. However, it is noted that these resources are not always in the places of greatest need. This subject is already part of the work of the Connexional Economic Justice Working Group established by the Conference in 2024.

Therefore, the Conference declines the memorial, but refers the broader issues raised to the Connexional Council for further consideration.

M22 "Don't Buy Into" Report

The Darlington District Synod (Present; 48 voting; 34 in favour, 14 against) requests the Conference to note the 'Don't Buy into Occupation' Report of November 2024, which shows that HSBC and Barclays are second and third in the table of international banks providing loans and underwriting services to companies operating in the Occupied

Palestinian Territories. They each provided a total of over $18m to 58 key companies active in the illegal settlement enterprise between January 2021 and September 2024.

The Conference is therefore urged to ask JACEI and the CFB to put these findings directly to the two banks, in which the Board holds shares, to point out that they are directly complicit in breaking international law and that therefore indirectly are all their investors, and to consider actively the possibility of disinvestment if the responses are unsatisfactory. In the meantime, the Methodist people are encouraged to boycott these two banks (for this reason and also their involvement in funding fossil fuel development).

It further requests the Conference to raise with JACEI and the CFB the strong possibility that the large companies engaged in developing sophisticated technology and artificial intelligence are exploring further methods of technological warfare, including drones and guided weaponry. Conference is encouraged to note the JPIT recent 'Future of Arms' Report, which states 'Technology is... helping to reshape the battlespace of tomorrow to such an extent that it is changing the way that we think about war. There are suggestions that Gaza and indeed the West Bank have become testing grounds for these forms of 'sophisticated' warfare. The CFB and JACEI are encouraged to explore this deeply worrying development in their dialogue with both the Banks and the large tech companies, and for JACEI to report back on both the above issues to the Conference of 2026.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Darlington District Synod for its memorial and for drawing attention to the November 2024 *Don't Buy Into Occupation* report, which raises significant concerns about the financial relationships between international banks, including HSBC and Barclays, and companies operating in the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The Conference reaffirms the Methodist Church's longstanding commitment to peace, justice, the upholding of international law, and the protection of human dignity. It also recognises the responsibility of investors to ensure that the capital they steward is used in ways that are consistent with these values.

The Conference notes that the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church (CFB), together with its subsidiary Epworth Investment Management, maintains an active programme of ethical engagement with major banks. This includes dialogue on human rights, climate risk, fossil fuel financing, and corporate accountability. The CFB's public advocacy, particularly in relation to bank financing of new fossil fuel projects, has been widely reported in the national and financial press, and has contributed to meaningful scrutiny of bank lending practices. These efforts reflect the Methodist Church's

commitment to using its influence as a shareholder to promote responsible corporate behaviour.

The Conference accordingly refers the issues raised in the memorial to the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) and to the CFB, requesting that they engage HSBC and Barclays directly in relation to the concerns raised in the *Don't Buy Into Occupation* report. The Conference also encourages JACEI and the CFB to consider the ethical implications of technological developments in modern warfare, as highlighted in the Joint Public Issues Team's 2024 report *The Future of Arms*, and to incorporate these concerns in their broader programme of engagement with banks and major technology firms.

The Conference notes that the CFB prioritises constructive engagement as the principal means by which it seeks to influence corporate behaviour. While disinvestment remains an available tool where dialogue fails, it is not the current position of the Church to pursue or to advocate for disinvestment from HSBC or Barclays. Rather, the Church affirms its trust in the CFB and JACEI to continue applying the Church's ethical investment policy with integrity, transparency and rigour.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial in so far as this reply indicates and requests that JACEI report to the 2026 Conference on progress made in its engagement on these matters.

Members of the Conference 2025

1	The Revd Helen D Cameron	Retiring President	(Deed of Union 14(2)(i))
2	Mrs Carolyn Godfrey	Retiring Vice-President	"
3	The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler	Secretary of the Conference	"
4	The Revd Gillian M Newton	Ex-President	(DU 14(2)(ii))
5	Deacon Kerry Scarlett	Ex-Vice-President	
6	The Revd Richard M Andrew	President-Designate	(DU 14(2)(iii))
7	Mr Matthew Forsyth	Vice-President-Designate	

Conference Secretariat and other Officers (DU 14(2)(iv) SO 101)

8	The Revd Michaela A Youngson	Assistant Secretary
9	Mr Martin Harker	Record Secretary
10	The Revd Jennifer M Dyer	Journal Secretary
11	to be confirmed	Convener of the Memorials Committee
12	Dr Daleep Mukarji	Chair of the Business Committee SO 136(1)(i)
13	Mrs Joanne Anderton	Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice

The Chair of each Home District (DU 14(2)(v))

14	The Revd Dr James N Tebbutt	North West England	
15	The Revd Andrew Charlesworth	Wales Synod Cymru	
16	The Revd Dr Jennifer A Hurd	Wales Synod Cymru	
17	The Revd Novette S Headley	Birmingham	
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19	The Revd Dawn J Saunders	Channel Islands	
20	The Revd Helen R Kirk	Chester and Stoke-on-Trent	
	The Revd Richard M Andrew	Darlington	*dual qualification*
21	The Revd Helen Hollands	East Anglia	
22	The Revd Dr Janet E Corlett	Isle of Man	
23	The Revd Angela J Long	Lincolnshire	
24	The Revd Jonathan Sewell	Newcastle upon Tyne	
25	The Revd Andrew W Fyall	Nottingham and Derby	
26	The Revd Dr Sonia M Hicks	Northampton	*dual qualification*
	The Revd Gillian M Newton	Sheffield	*dual qualification*
27	The Revd Rachel Bending	Southampton	
28	The Revd Kerry W Tankard	Yorkshire West	
29	The Revd Rachel E Parkinson	Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury	
30	The Revd Leslie M Newton	Yorkshire North and East	

31	The Revd S Mark Slaney	Scotland	
	The Revd S Mark Slaney	Shetland	*dual qualification*
32	The Revd Dr David M Chapman	Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire	
33	The Revd Dr Jonathan Dean	London	
34	The Revd Dr Jongikaya Zihle	London	
35	The Revd Dr David Hinchliffe	South East	
36	The Revd Dr Daniel R Haylett	South West Peninsula	

Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order (DU (14)(2)(vi))

37	Deacon Karen McBride	The Warden

Representatives from the Irish Conference

38	The Revd Alan Wardlow	(President or Lay Leader, Methodist Conference in Ireland) (DU14(2)(vii))
39	The Revd Dr Heather Morris	(Secretary, Methodist Conference in Ireland)

Representatives of United Methodist Church (DU 14(3))

40	Bishop Hope Morgan Ward
41	Dr David Field

Conference-elected Representatives (DU 14(2)(ix), DU 14(5), SO 103)
Retiring in 2025

42	The Revd Kenneth G Howcroft
43	The Revd Joanna R Rand
44	Ms Martha Rand

Representatives of Connexional and Other Bodies (SO 102)

	The Revd Dr Sonia M Hicks	The Chair of the Connexional Council (1)(i)
45	The Revd Dr Joanne Cox-Darling	member of the Connexional Council
46	The Revd David M Goodall	member of the Connexional Council
47	The Revd Dr Michael J A Long	member of the Connexional Council
48	Professor David Matthews	member of the Connexional Council
49	Alethea Siow	member of the Connexional Council
50	Paul Spray	member of the Connexional Council
51	The Revd Timothy A Swindell	member of the Connexional Council
52	Mr Doug Godfrey-Swanney	Connexional Secretary (1)(ii)
53	The Revd Dr Mark Rowland	Faith and Order representative (iii)

54	Miss Elizabeth H Ovey	Law and Polity representative (iv)
55	The Revd Mark Noakes	Forces Chaplain (v)
56	The Revd Rachel Deigh	Overseas Service (vi)
57	The Revd Naomi Kaiga	concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion (vii)
58	The Revd Andrew Brazier	concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion
59	The Revd Charity Tozivepi-Nzegwu	concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion
60	Bea Hulme	Youth President (viii)
61	Alex Day	Youth Assembly
62	Bishop Godson Lawson-Kpavuvu	Representative of autonomous conferences DU (14)(4)(d)
63	The Revd Eduardo Conde	Representative of autonomous conferences DU (14)(4)(d)

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65	The Revd Grace Cauldwell	76	Mr Stephen Cooper
66	The Revd Dr Graham Edwards	77	Mrs Ruth Dawson
67	The Revd Sarah Parkin	78	Mrs Carolyn Hothersall
68	The Revd Rajbharat Patta	79	Mr Brett Jackson
69	The Revd Sharon Read	80	Mr David James
70	The Revd Ian Rutherford	81	Mrs Anna Malnutt
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72	Deacon Angleena Keizer	83	Ms Abigail Parr
73	Deacon Clare Purfit	84	Mrs Gillian Womersley
74	Miss Rebecca Ainsworth		

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86	Deacon Linda Brown	90	Trevor Evans
87	Deacon Laura J Evans	91	Miriam Moules
88	Emily Barry		

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94	Deacon Corinne A Brown		
95	Mr Ade Johnson		
96	Ms Debora Majola		

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100 The Revd Rachel H Leather
101 The Revd Leigh A Maydew
102 Mrs Hannah Bevan
103 Mr Niall Briggs
104 Mr David Pendle
105 Mr Ingram Rose

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106 The Revd Jacqueline A Cottrell
107 Mrs Helen Mahoney

Chester and Stoke-on-Trent

108 The Revd Ruth Jeffries
109 Mrs Isabel Brislen
110 Mr Daniel Keen
111 Mrs Val Mayers

Darlington

112 The Revd Beverly Hollings
113 Mr Tat Cheong Luk
114 Mrs Alison Ogle
115 Mrs Susan Smith

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116 The Revd Paul D Critchley
117 The Revd Saul Tadzaushe
118 Ms Rebecca Belshaw
119 Mr Chris Finbow
120 Mrs Judy Read

Isle of Man

121 The Revd Stephen P Ingrouille
122 Mrs Rita Norrey

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123 The Revd Kathleen R Deakins
124 The Revd Neil Vickers
125 Mrs Hazel Jackson
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129 Deacon Jill Henderson
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136 Miss Ruda Mvundara
137 Mrs Fiona Riley-Schnoor

Northampton

138 The Revd Karen Beecham
139 The Revd Sara Cliff
140 The Revd James Patterson
141 Ms Jane Allen
142 Ms Jackie Commey
143 Ms Angharad Herriman
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148 Mrs Judith Simms
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199 Ms Evelyn Annan
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202 Mr John Logan
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208 The Revd Victoria E Davidson
209 The Revd Nicholas A Oborski
210 Deacon Joy Everingham
211 Mr Henry Cheung
212 Ms Jenny Jackson
213 Mr Thomas Oborski
214 Mr Oscar Siu
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217	The Revd Darren Middleton	222	Mrs Sue Cresswell
218	The Revd Steven J Swann	223	Mrs Barbara Easton
219	Deacon Deborah Marsh	224	Mr Rob Manley
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227	The Revd Geoffrey Clarke	The United Reformed Church
228	The Revd Meelis Süld	The Lutheran Church of Great Britain
229	Elaine Green	The Society of Friends

(b) Overseas

230	The Revd David Prospero Sharpe	Iglesia Metodista de Guinea Ecuatorial
231	Presiding Bishop Isaiah Deye	Methodist Church Kenya
232	The Rt Revd Dr Tom A D Demby	Methodist Church Sierra Leone
233	The Revd Kingsley Weerasinghe	Methodist Church in Sri Lanka
234	The Revd Mal Sawm Thang	Methodist Church Upper Myanmar
235	The Revd Dr Paula Onoafe Latu	Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga
236	The Revd Marta López Ballalta	Iglesia Evangelica Española
237	Christine Schneider	UMC Central and Southern Europe
238	The Revd Olav Schmidt	UMC Germany
239	Bishop Juan M Simpson B	Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas
240	The Revd Guillermo de Jesús Rios	Iglesia Evangelica Metodista de Nicaragua
241	Bishop Jorge Merino Riffo	Iglesia Metodista de Chile

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The Revd David R Alderman
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The Revd Alan J Bolton
The Revd Paul Braisdell
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The Revd Dr Christine M Dutton
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The Revd Graham Thompson
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The Revd Phillip J Warrey
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