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SECTION H
GENERAL REPORT

1 The Council received reports from the Ministries Committee on various matters during the year.

2 **Ministerial Development Review**
Further to the Stationing Review and Memorial 20 to the 2025 Conference regarding Ministerial Development Review (MDR), the committee noted that there would be a review of the practice of MDR across the Districts. A variety of vocational conversations will take place and proposals will be brought to the 2027 Conference.

3 **Supervision**
The committee received a report which gave an update on supervision including training, record-keeping and the Supervision Research project. The Council approved the principle that supervision records are not retained for more than seven years and directed that guidance be produced to cover any necessary exceptions, in order to ensure that GDPR requirements are met, noting that this is an advance change to the Supervision Policy.

4 The committee received a report on a **Gifts Policy for Ministers** from the Law and Polity Committee and approved a proposed amendment to Standing Order 801(1) by the addition of a new sub-clause (d), subject to the Law and Polity Committee's final scrutiny. This is brought in the Law and Polity Committee report to the Conference.

5 The Committee received the **Annual Report 2024-2025 from Cliff College**.
The 2024–25 academic year was a season of significant transition for the College, as preparations were made for leadership change with the appointment of the Revd Dr Andrew Stobart as Principal from September 2025. During the year, the College faced up to the reality that its current operational model could not continue indefinitely. Deep analysis of current financial dynamics was undertaken, alongside significant consultation with staff, students and stakeholders from the Methodist Church and beyond. A new strategy and business plan was adopted in July 2025, to be implemented in the two years from September 2025.

Drawing inspiration from the College's rich 143-year heritage of lay training and mission engagement, the Trustees agreed a new statement of the College's core purpose: *to inspire and equip ambassadors of the joyful news of Jesus*. Five strategic aims were adopted for the coming two years:

to become more visibly aligned with the Methodist Church in Britain;
to align all College activities with its core purpose;
to develop a collaborative network of meaningful relationships;
to develop a plan for the long-term future of the Cliff site; and
to secure the College's financial sustainability.

This strategy is already well on the way to being implemented, with a 25% reduction in the College's staffing completed, encouraging signs that finances are stabilising, and a new network of collaboration with Methodist churches and circuits established.

Meanwhile, the core work of the College has continued. A total of 188 students were part of the Cliff learning community during the 2024-25 academic year, comprising:

Eight Cliff Year participants (including four Methodist young adults);
83 taking Foundations units (including 19 local lay-pastors and 18 Methodist Church in Ireland Local Preachers);
43 undergraduates on the BA Theology and Mission (including eight ordinands for the Methodist Church in Ireland and one for the Methodist Church in Uganda);
39 on the MA Theology and Mission programme (including seven MCB presbyters and deacons undertaking further study, two presbyters from the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas; four being formed as UMC elders for the European Central Conference via the European Methodist eAcademy; and two MCI ordinands);
15 undertaking doctoral study (including five Methodists looking at preaching in NPNP contexts, cross-cultural leadership in MCB, Wesley and NT Wright, the use of Scripture in the Methodist Church, and trauma-informed Methodist pastoral care).

Many more people engaged in training and learning opportunities onsite and online, including over 2,500 places booked on the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland *Children's Ministry Essentials* online training course, co-designed and delivered by Cliff College through the TheologyX learning platform. One hundred and thirty-five conference centre bookings were fulfilled throughout the year, including Methodist and ecumenical partners gathering for local, national and international retreats and conferences. The College's 2025 annual Festival was

held over the late May bank holiday, with over 800 people gathering for a weekend of worship, teaching and activities for all ages.

Cliff College has contributed to the ongoing Learning for Ministry Review and continues to invest in cultivating a positive vision of learning for the whole Church. Highlights from current work include:

- developing placement opportunities that nurture lay vocations, in partnership with Methodist churches;
- enhancing online microlearning opportunities to strengthen disciples in Scripture, theology, discipleship, ministry and missional practice;
- developing accessible vocation-focussed learning pathways that support excellence in preaching and worship (including a pilot alternative to Worship: Leading and Preaching);
- connecting local churches to resource and equip them in worship renewal and making new disciples of Jesus; and
- understanding and strengthening contemporary Methodist ecclesiology through research and scholarship in pioneering and digital contexts.

The College is keenly aware of the challenges and uncertainties of the future but is renewed in its commitment to shaping its life in the disciplined habits appropriate for a community of worship, prayer and study, to ensure that everything it does springs from its own organisational health. In partnership with others, Cliff College seeks to be a trusted ally to the Methodist Church in cultivating a positive vision for learning, which will inspire and equip ambassadors of the joyful news of Jesus, and energise the whole Church to embody the whole gospel in the whole of life.

6 The Ministries Committee received **the annual report from the Queen's Foundation**. The committee also welcomed the new Director of Methodist Formation, Catrin Harland-Davies, to its meetings. 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 2024 Queen's had a total of 46 student ministers. Of these, 25 were full-time and 21 part-time; 11 were student deacons and 35 student presbyters. Among the full-time students were five students on the Circuit-based Learning Pathway (CBLP). The new cohort for 2025-26 comprised 14 student ministers, four allocated to the full-time pathway and ten to part-time, with two presbyters and one deacon provisionally allocated to CBLP for later in their training. Of the new cohort, three are student deacons and eleven student presbyters; nine are women and five men; six are of Global Majority Heritage. In 2024-25, Queen's worked with 42 probationers on the programme of probation studies designed to build on their

pre-ordination training. The work was led by the Revd Dr Catrin Harland-Davies, but from September 2025 this role has been held by the Revd Dr George Bailey.

The end of the 2024-25 year saw four valued Methodist colleagues move on into other appointments, and four new colleagues joined us in September 2025: Deacon Angie Allport and Revd Dr George Bailey, as full-time team members, and Revd Dr Nicola Price-Tebbutt and Revd Sylvester Deigh, both working part-time. The Revd Dr Christine Dutton's role as tutor in Evangelism and Leadership, undertaken within her appointment to the Connexional Ministries Team and made possible under the God For All Strategy, has continued to work well. Her teaching in the area of evangelism is well-embedded and she has been developing further offerings in the area of transformational, adaptive leadership during the year. The collaboration between the Ministries Team and the Queen's Methodist staff has been strengthened and deepened through this post, in addition to the expertise that has been added to Queen's work overall. Methodist staff appointed to Queen's continue to make wider contributions to the life of the Connexion beyond initial ministerial training and probation studies, through participation in, among other areas, the Faith and Order Committee, the New Places for New People Guiding Team, Discerning Ordained Vocation, and the *Holiness* editorial board. Tutors also continue to lead worship, study days and other events around the connexion.

7 The Ministries Committee approved a revised Appeals Guidance document for use in any appeals made following the DOV2 process in January/February 2026. The Committee appointed the Appeals Panel. It delegated authority to the Ministerial Coordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries (MCOOM) and the Assistant Secretary of the Conference to appoint further individuals to the Appeals Panel as appropriate. The Ministries Committee further agreed to establish a working party to respond to the requirements of Resolution 19/10 from the 2025 Conference to bring detailed proposals concerning the processes of how appeals are reported to the Conference. The Committee has been unable to undertake the detailed work on this and delegated authority to the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Ministries Committee and the MCOOM to bring names for the proposed membership of the working party, for electronic approval by the Committee.

8 The Committee received the **Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Annual Report** including updates to staffing and the structure of the team. As of January 2026, there were 4267 active local preachers; in 2025, 44 local preachers were admitted (2024: 56).

9 Under the terms of SO 250(2), the Committee co-opted the Revds Anna Bishop, Dr George Bailey, Nicola Martyn-Beck and Dr Simon Leigh to the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation.

10 **Reviewing *With Integrity and Skill*** – the Task Group established to review the 2008 report concerning confidentiality in the Church has begun its work. Given the extent of change that has taken place in the Church and worldwide since 2008, the Committee agreed that the Task Group should begin work on a full updated report rather than an Appendix to the original report. The new report will be presented to the Conference of 2027.

11 **Stationing Review Task Group** – the Committee has established a Task Group to work on the matters referred to the Ministries Committee from the report made to the 2025 Conference. The Task Group has begun its work and will report further to the Committee and the Conference in the next connexional year.

12 The Council received an interim report from the Ministries Committee concerning the review of processes relating to ministers of other Churches and Conferences (MOCCs). However, a number of matters remain outstanding and cannot be determined until other work has been completed. The aspect of the review that relates to the stationing of MOCCs is dependent on the recommendations arising from the stationing review, and this is not yet complete. The working group which prepared the interim report had also identified areas of further work, which can now be undertaken before the report is presented to the Conference.

*****RESOLUTION**

29/1. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION I
MINISTERIAL FLOURISHING

Introduction

In recent years, much concern has been expressed about ministerial wellbeing and flourishing in the context of the increasing demands placed upon those in ministry (both lay and ordained) by the rapidly changing context of ministry. The 2025 Conference, in response to a District Resolution brought by three Districts, affirmed its commitment to the wellbeing of all ministers in Full Connexion, and directed 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.

Twenty-one ministers have had to take recuperative years since August 2022. Below are the numbers of ministers in each year and costs related to these. A significant aim of a ministerial flourishing must be to support ministers before they reach a point where they have no option but to take a recuperative year. Corin Pilling was appointed in 2025, in a newly created post, to lead this work aiming to develop 'upstream' solutions to both reduce the number of ministers reaching crisis point, and to improve ministerial wellbeing and flourishing more widely, to build on and complement the comprehensive, ongoing and existing work overseen by the Wellbeing Managers.

Connexional year	Number of ministers	NI/stipend	Other costs (eg counselling, utilities)	Total
2022/23	4	**£170,973.40**	**£50,641.94**	**£221,615.31**
2023/24	8	**£324,147.63**	**£96,637.82**	**£420,785.45**
2024/25	8	**£326,750.61**	**£71,854.30**	**£398,604.91**
2025/26 (to date)	1	**£21,168.56**	**£18,650.40**	**£39,818.96**
Total (2022/23 to 2025/26 to date):				**£1,080,824.63**

More widely, many ministers have struggled with wellbeing and flourishing. This concern led to important research being undertaken in 2019, and wide-ranging recommendations made around ministerial wellbeing, some of which have been implemented and some not.

Summary

The Council received a ministerial flourishing strategy with a summary of some of the key work to date. Ministerial wellbeing and flourishing are complex matters, encompassing both systemic and individual issues. Thus, a carefully thought-through theory of change, based on a) evidence and research from the field of ministerial flourishing and wellbeing, b) research from across the Connexion, and c) application to the specific problems, administrative structures and ways of working of MCB, has been developed. This theory of change allows for pilot schemes and upscaling, short-term actions which can have impact, structural and individual approaches but, most importantly, long-term and sustainable change.

Work to date

As noted in the summary above, significant work has been undertaken to enable a thorough understanding of the state and situation of ministerial wellbeing and flourishing across the Connexion. These actions include:

- Systematic evaluation of the evidence-base around the interventions that are most effective and have most significant impact in ministerial flourishing.
- Systematic conversations/ listening exercises with all Districts. Conversations have been had with all District Chairs, with Superintendents and other ordained colleagues in a number of Districts and at the Superintendents' Conferences, and with some lay employees too. The focus to date has been on those who are ordained, but a future stage of the project will be to widen this work for lay people. Additionally, more detailed work has been undertaken with some Districts such as Lincolnshire (ongoing development of systems and interventions to support ministerial wellbeing over a period of months), and work with Superintendents in the London District. These deeper interventions have also given the opportunity for evaluation and refinement of ideas.

Immediate future work

- Work carefully to ensure that this work builds on, and is linked with, the strong pre-existing work offered by the Wellbeing Managers in the Connexional Team, and appropriately signposts their work and the support offered.
- Continue/begin to draw to a close work in the first phase, ensuring a nuanced understanding of ministerial wellbeing and flourishing across The Connexion.
- Development of action plans to develop the work in the next phase.
- Pilot scheme with three Districts of actions identified with evaluation and refinement.
- In parallel, development of connexional resources to support ministerial wellbeing and flourishing. These can include: coaching, bespoke digital resources, co-support groups, workshops, development of information sharing, and culture-building such as newsletters.

Suggested Key Performance Indicators for immediate future work

- Pilot schemes running and interim report to October 2026 Ministries Committee meeting, outlining progress.
- New connexional resources available to support flourishing and wellbeing, with others in development; interim report to October 2026 Ministries Committee meeting, outlining progress.

- Reference Group established to offer critical oversight and advocacy
- Connexion-wide regular communications via mailing list to showcase resources and build profile, and refreshed web pages.

*****RESOLUTION**

29/2. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION J
DISCERNMENT FOR SENIOR LEADERSHIP

Background

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 2025 Conference received a report from the Connexional Council which reported the work undertaken so far, including pilot schemes for new and incoming District Chairs.

Work has been underway to develop the course itself, also ensuring that it complements the wider leadership support and training offered by the Connexional Team and others. In particular, care has been taken to ensure that this course builds on The Leadership Learning Space (LL-S) and links with work being undertaken with, for example, the 18-30 Leadership Year, and new District Chairs to build as coherent a programme of leadership development as possible. Careful thinking about approach and pedagogy has also been undertaken.

The Senior Leaders' Discernment Course

This will be a 15-month course, open to both lay and ordained participants, using the definition of senior leaders which the Council set out in its report to the Conference in 2024, with the addition of those holding significant roles within Districts. Indicative criteria for those who might wish to apply have been developed, recognising the importance of linking this work with the JDS Strategy.

Its content will be shaped around five characteristics drawn from research presented to the 2024 Conference, and contained within the Council's report around the qualities and needs of senior leaders. These include:

- Spirituality
- Self-awareness
- Working with others/leading teams
- Leadership models and awareness of diversity
- Strategy/connexional ways of working

Some 'golden threads' run through all the leadership programmes offered within the life of The Methodist Church, and close attention has been paid to ensure that these are also core to the course. These threads are:

- Character and values
- Leading in complexity and change
- Empowering others through leadership

As well as this, a variety of modes of learning will be offered. These include:

- Asynchronous learning
- Online live learning
- In-person days, including two short residentials.
- Practical learning through a leadership project in context, designed to have an impact on both the participant and the place in which it happens.
- Journalling
- Mentoring
- Peer support groups
- Visits to see other leaders in both church and other contexts.

Important, too, is the opportunity that participants will have to hear from senior leaders working in a variety of other contexts, and the shared learning which that can offer.

Applications to participate in the discernment course opened in March, with discernment meetings with applicants planned for late spring, and the course beginning in summer 2026. A review and evaluation of the course to date will be presented at the February 2027 Ministries Committee meeting.

*****RESOLUTION**

29/3. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION K
LEARNING FOR MINISTRY REVIEW

During the year, the committee has overseen the work of the Review of Learning for Ministry which was authorised by the 2024 Conference (https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/22._Methodist_Council_Part_2.pdf).

The committee received a report, summarising the extensive consultation that has taken place and outlining a number of options which would provide greater connectivity whilst assuring theological grounding and capacity to meet the needs of the Church for effective ministry.

The committee had a favoured option which it recommended to the Council. The Council noted that there is work to be done in determining the feasibility and other aspects of the preferred option and delegated this work to a small group of three Council members and senior members of the Team.

*****RESOLUTION**

29/4. The Conference receives the Report.

SECTION L
WORSHIP: LEADING AND PREACHING REVIEW

The Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' training course is a vital resource in the life of the Church, and it is important that it is rigorous yet accessible to all who are called to preach and lead worship. In recognition of the fact that it is now over ten years since WLP 3 began, and in response to a number of memorials that came to the 2025 Conference, a wide-ranging review of the current WLP course was undertaken. The Ministries Committee received the review in February 2026.

The review makes a number of recommendations, which include:

1. Ensuring that the current WLP course requires appropriate time commitments by:
   - Reducing the content by identifying what is core and optional.
   - Reviewing and reducing the number of assignments.

2. The creation of new Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Courses, and for those leading Local Arrangements, which respond to the current needs and context of the Church.

3. Improved connexional resources for those who lead worship and for congregations, including weekly worship resourcing.

In response to this, and to support wider worship renewal in the Church:

1. The Ministries Team will work with The Board of Studies, which has oversight of Local Preachers' training programmes, to respond to the recommendations about the current course to make changes as soon as practicably possible.

2. The team responsible for oversight of worship within the wider Ministries and Learning Team is being strengthened. The team will oversee the rapid development of rigorous, but proportionate, new training courses, as well as the development of wide-ranging resources to support all those who lead worship in MCGB, including those who lead local arrangements, and church musicians.

*****RESOLUTION**

29/5. The Conference receives the Report.