

63. Memorials to the Conference

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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,

63. Memorials to the Conference

the deadlines for which can be found in the First Report of the Conference Business Committee on page 7-11 of the Agenda. However, members are urged to give notice of their intention to move an amendment as early as possible and not to wait until the deadline.

If the Conference rejects a reply, an acceptable alternative must, then or later, be put to and agreed by the Conference. In addition, any two members of the Conference may, by notice of motion submitted on the first day of the relevant session, propose that, instead of dealing with the committee's recommended replies in the ordinary course of business, the Conference shall debate a resolution based on one or more of the memorials.

This year, the Memorials Committee has recommended to the Conference Business Committee that the replies to any memorials which relate to other items of business in the Agenda be taken at the same time as that business. The committee recommended that the remaining replies should be placed in the *en bloc* business of the Conference, unless the Business Committee feels that they should be debated. Any recommended reply to a memorial which is the subject of an amending notice of motion will automatically be removed from *en bloc* business (see Standing Order 134A(1)(c), Agenda page xiii).

Members of the Conference with questions on any matter affecting memorials and the procedures described above should consult the convener. For example, if any member wishes to change the recommended reply of the committee, the Convener 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.

3. Resolution 62/2 of the 2025 Conference: Memorials and other ways of engaging with the Conference and the wider Connexion

The Memorials Committee notes the relatively low number of Memorials presented this year compared with previous years.

In its report to the Conference last year, the committee raised the proposition that the recent changes to governance and oversight in the Church might have altered the ways in which Circuits and Districts could participate in decision-making in the wider Church, placing greater reliance on Memorials to the Conference and Notices of Motion. This, in turn, the committee noted, might present challenges such as time pressure, lack of clarity in submissions and limited opportunity for detailed consideration on the floor of the Conference. The committee suggested possible solutions, for example, introducing a

63. Memorials to the Conference

triage system and offering earlier guidance, and recommended that these be explored in more detail.

The Conference therefore passed Resolution 62/2 directing the Memorials Committee and the Conference Planning Executive in consultation with others as appropriate to bring detailed proposals about the issues to the Conference of 2026.

For various reasons, this work has not been done and will be kept under review.

The committee does not wish to discourage Circuits and Districts from bringing Memorials but also urges them to contact the Connexional Team as much as possible during the year to help resolve questions or concerns that can easily be dealt with in other ways rather than through the Memorials process.

4. Convener and Chair of the Memorials Committee

Standing Order 138(2) currently requires the Conference to appoint two separate people to fulfil the roles of convener and chair of the committee. However, for this year's Conference the convener and chair are the same person, and the committee wonders whether this could be made a permanent arrangement. The committee therefore asks the Conference to direct the Law and Polity Committee to advise on possible amendments to Standing Order 138 to merge the two roles into one.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 63/1. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 63/2. The Conference directs the Secretary of the Conference to keep under review the issues raised by Resolution 62/2 of the 2025 Conference and to bring proposals to address these issues to a subsequent Conference if necessary.**
- 63/3. The Conference directs the Law and Polity Committee to bring to the 2027 Conference Standing Order amendments which address the proposal to enable the roles of convener and chair of the Memorials Committee to be undertaken by the same person.**

63. Memorials to the Conference

M1 Training Programme for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders

The Dane and Trent Circuit Meeting (present: 48; voting: 48 in favour, 0 against) wishes to share our concerns regarding the training programme for local preachers and worship leaders. We are aware that the Conference has already received a number of Memorials at previous Conferences and has referred this matter to the Ministries Committee. However, we wish to share our own experience in order to reinforce what other Circuits have experienced.

We note in particular:

- the lack of any acknowledgement of any prior theological learning and experience in participating/leading in worship
- a lack of effective introduction to the structure, aims and objectives and learning outcomes of the course from the outset
- the heavy workload imposed by the current course, leading to new preachers feeling overwhelmed and discouraged
- the lack of viable cohorts, which leaves those in training feeling isolated. Perhaps Districts and the Learning Network could be encouraged to be more strategic in this area
- a lack of support for those coming from a non-academic background, with too many assumptions made about their prior learning
- the sense of disempowerment for those with limited IT skills
- the complex nature of the course, which makes it impossible to complete in a realistic timeframe for those with demanding jobs and family commitments
- the dropout rate in this Circuit has been high and not because of a healthy discernment process (which the course should facilitate) but because of the nature of the course itself, as highlighted above. This has been extremely costly personally and pastorally and also disempowering for a Circuit that has tried to exercise oversight in a responsible way

The Circuit recognises that the course has been revised and refined over time and that serious attempts have been made to make the course more accessible and inclusive. We also want to stress that as a Circuit we encourage those responsible for leading worship to be theologically literate and committed to preparing worship that is of a high standard, culturally relevant and creative.

However, we do feel that it is now urgent to make a more radical overhaul of this training programme and we ask the Conference to direct the Ministries Committee to consult widely with Circuits and Districts in order to prepare a training programme that is challenging and encouraging, inclusive and transforming for those wanting to explore a call to local preaching and worship leading.

63. Memorials to the Conference

The Dane and Trent Circuit would be supportive of any such review and would ask the Conference to agree a process and timeline for this to take place.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Dane and Trent Circuit Meeting for its memorial and is grateful for its constructive and helpful approach and recognition of the importance of high quality training for those who lead worship, to ensure it is of a high standard, culturally relevant and creative.

In 2025, three memorials (M17, M18, M19) were presented to the Conference expressing similar concerns. The Conference's response to the memorials directed the Ministries and Learning Team to work with Districts and Circuits to undertake a systematic review of Worship: Leading and Preaching (WLP) 3 in the light of wider actions around worship renewal.

A very wide-ranging review of the current WLP course has been undertaken by the Ministries and Learning Team, who spoke to the Circuits who sent memorials to the 2025 Conference and reviewed 265 feedback forms about WLP3. Additionally, there were two focus groups of students and tutors from across the Connexion, correspondence with a number of local preachers' tutors, and reviews of the equivalent courses in other denominations. 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:
 - a. Reducing the content by identifying what is core and optional.
 - b. 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 Methodist Church in Great Britain (MCGB).
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 across the Methodist Connexion:

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.

63. Memorials to the Conference

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 Methodist Church, including those who lead local arrangements, and church musicians.
3. Additionally, the Ministries and Learning Team is working with Cliff College to develop a pilot course, with the intention of offering different models of training for local preachers. The Conference acknowledges that clarity will need to be given to students on the current WLP3 course. Full guidance will be provided.

The Conference again wishes to affirm the work of all tutors, mentors, local preachers and worship leaders, and thank them very sincerely for their hugely valued and significant contribution to leading God's people in worship.

The Conference therefore accepts the principle of new training courses for worship leaders and local preachers and is pleased to note that the actions suggested are already underway, following the response to M17, M18 and M19 at the 2025 Conference. The Conference also notes the importance of working with Circuits and Districts in the design of new courses. Finally, the Conference supports the principle of setting out a process and timeline for this, and notes that under SO 565, the Ministries Committee or a committee delegated by the Ministries Committee, is responsible for training programmes (in this instance the Board of Studies); therefore it is the role of the Board of Studies to oversee the development of training programmes under its terms of reference.

M2 Concerns about the training of Methodist Local Preachers

From the Birmingham (West) and Oldbury Circuit Meeting (present: 26; voting: 24 in favour; 0 against). This memorial arises out of the day-to-day experience of local preachers on trial within our Circuit, together with those charged with mentoring and supporting them. In recent years aspirant local preachers – all mature individuals with a proven commitment to proclaiming the Good News and serving the worshipping life of the Church – have found the current local preacher training scheme so demanding in terms of time, energy, and academic expectation that a significant number have felt compelled to withdraw.

The result is that although many such individuals continue to serve faithfully within their own churches as worship leaders, their gifts, enthusiasm, experience, knowledge, and skills are thereby unavailable to the wider Circuit through inclusion on the full preaching

63. Memorials to the Conference

plan as accredited local preachers. One in five of our planned Sunday morning services are now local arrangements, placing additional pressures on our stewards and worship leaders. We understand that this is an issue in many other circuits.

The Circuit is aware of Paragraphs 12 to 14 of Item 19 in the Agenda of the Conference in 2025, and of the replies in the same year to Memorials 17, 18 and 19 which raised some similar concerns. It is convinced, however, that the current policies are no longer adequate to meet the needs of the Circuit and the work of God. In particular:

1. The academic standard required within the present scheme appears to be pitched at a level more appropriate to undergraduate study, and in some cases may be perceived as a precursor to ministerial training, rather than being designed for candidates who are often middle-aged and in full-time employment. It may be more realistic to aim at the equivalent of a BTEC National, Level 3 NVQ or one "A" level.
2. The requirements for attendance at "Explore" sessions, together with the expectation of detailed written reflections on each act of worship, place a heavy and sometimes disproportionate burden upon candidates.
3. The level of commitment now required of mentors has increased to such an extent that there is an insufficient pool of experienced local preachers and ministers willing and able to undertake this vital role, to the detriment of both candidates and Circuits.

The Circuit therefore respectfully requests that the Conference directs the Connexional Team

1. to undertake a thorough and urgent review of the current local preacher training scheme, with particular attention to the level of its academic demands, time commitments, and pastoral sustainability; and
2. to bring forward, within a reasonable timescale, alternative proposals that will better enable Circuits to identify, encourage, and support potential local preacher candidates in fulfilling their calling, while maintaining appropriate standards for the preaching ministry of the Methodist Church.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Birmingham (West) and Oldbury Circuit Meeting for its memorial and wishes to express its concern that a number of aspirant local preachers have had to withdraw from the Worship and Local Preaching (WLP) course.

The Conference offers the same reply as M1.

63. Memorials to the Conference

M3 Delivery of online and offline training

The Kidderminster and Stourport Circuit Meeting (present: 34; voting: 34 in favour; 0 against) appreciates the vital importance of Safeguarding and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and aims to be an inclusive Circuit where all are not only welcome but also experience safe practice.

It also recognises the need for training and resources to be provided by the Connexion in these matters. Such training and resources need to be provided in ways that are themselves safe and inclusive, and accessible to as wide a range of local church members and officers as possible.

The Circuit's experience of how these are now presented is that they can often exclude people. A significant number of members and officers do not have access to the internet or are unable mentally to process ever changing patterns of working with technology, or increasingly demanding reading matter.

Where in-person training is offered but only bookable through internet applications such as Eventbrite, their desire to be well-equipped through undertaking training is hampered or even prevented by the inaccessibility of the training on offer.

The Circuit therefore asks that the Conference direct the Resourcing Committee to ensure that all essential training makes allowance for people of differing abilities and resources and in particular that:

- a. for any training deemed to be essential the possibility of in-person versions of the course be made available at times and venues negotiated with the Circuit, as well as the content of the course being fully accessible whether undertaken on-line or off-line.
- b. where in person training courses are offered, potential participants be able to register for them by more traditional means as well as through internet applications or, if this would be too labour intensive or expensive, that one person may be able to make block bookings for several others via the internet.
- c. where local members or officers are suitably qualified, avenues for equipping them to lead essential in-person training be made available, thereby releasing learning network officers to serve where they are needed most.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Kidderminster and Stourport Circuit Meeting for this memorial and for drawing the attention of the Conference to the importance of ensuring that essential training in Safeguarding and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion remains accessible to members and officers across the Connexion, regardless of their access to or confidence with digital tools.

63. Memorials to the Conference

The Conference recognises the concern that training delivered solely through digital channels can exclude those for whom internet access is limited or for whom changing patterns of digital working are difficult to navigate, and notes that a number of members and officers across the Connexion are in this position. The Conference also notes that for many other members and officers - those with caring responsibilities, those for whom travel to, and or participating in, onsite events is itself a barrier; those whose wellbeing and access needs, work, family or pastoral commitments prevent or significantly restrict their ability to attend onsite in-person training – digital provision is precisely what enables their participation. Both realities are real and both must be held together. Well-designed digital training, properly resourced, can in many circumstances widen access rather than narrow it, provided that clear alternative routes remain in place for those who are significantly challenged in accessing online training.

The Conference notes that much of the provision the memorial calls for either already exists or is under development across the work of the Connexional Team. For example, the principal local preachers' and worship leaders' training course is available via downloadable PDF. The EDI training and unconscious bias training courses are also available in downloadable PDFs, designed for small groups; the EDI training includes 'study group notes'. Telephone bookings are possible through event leads, and the block bookings through the central Eventbrite system have always been available and a single person may register several others; this is regularly made use of in online learning and development events. Centrally licensed video conferencing infrastructure supports in-person onsite training where it is provided; remote, online attendance to onsite events is a wide occurrence, and 'hybrid' events are offered, for example, Bible Month training. The Conference recognises that, where these alternative routes exist, they are not always clearly communicated to Circuits, and that the substantive gap is often one of awareness and signposting rather than the absence of provision itself.

The Conference further recognises that the Connexional Team's resources are finite, that in-person onsite delivery across the Connexion is by its nature more resource-intensive than the digital alternatives and is often less well attended, that travel to onsite events often significantly increases carbon emissions, and that the realistic shape of provision must reflect these constraints. Where there is sufficient demand for in-person onsite delivery, and or where a particular and significant need requires onsite delivery, the Connexional Team will continue to use its resources to respond appropriately and continue to support it contextually, in inclusive, accessible and justice-centred approaches.

The Conference therefore refers the questions raised by this memorial to the Connexional Council, to be considered as part of the wider work of the Connexional Team.

63. Memorials to the Conference

M4 Governance for Circuits and Churches

The North Bedfordshire Circuit Meeting (present: 40; voting: 40 in favour; 0 against) brings before the Conference our concern regarding the increasing burden of policies, procedures, and compliance requirements placed upon our circuits, churches and ministers. While we recognise the importance of good governance, accountability, and safeguarding in the life of the Church, we believe that the current volume and complexity of regulations are becoming counterproductive, hindering rather than enhancing the mission and ministry to which we are called.

We acknowledge that many of these requirements are grounded in legal obligations and external regulatory frameworks over which the Methodist Church has limited or no control. Safeguarding, data protection, health and safety, and charity governance all demand compliance to statutory standards, and we are committed to upholding these responsibilities with integrity.

Nevertheless, across our Connexion, many ministers and church leaders express frustration and exhaustion due to the overwhelming administrative expectations. Instead of being freed to focus on preaching, pastoral care, discipleship, and community engagement, they find themselves entangled in bureaucratic processes that often seem disproportionate to the realities of local church life. As a result, morale is suffering, and some faithful servants of the Church are being driven towards burnout and disillusionment.

Furthermore, local churches, particularly smaller congregations, struggle to keep up with compliance obligations. Many dedicated volunteers, who serve with great faithfulness, feel ill-equipped to navigate complex policies, leading to a sense of discouragement and even disengagement from roles they once fulfilled joyfully. The weight of excessive governance is stifling the very vitality and flexibility needed for churches to flourish in their unique contexts.

We urge the Conference to acknowledge these concerns and take decisive steps to redress the balance. Specifically, we ask that:

1. A commitment be made to simplify and streamline administrative expectations, ensuring they are proportionate and genuinely necessary, even where legal compliance is required.
2. Greater emphasis be placed on equipping and resourcing churches in a practical and accessible manner, reducing the strain on volunteers and ministers.
3. Consultation be undertaken with grassroots church leaders before implementing further policies, ensuring that their voices and experiences shape the decision-making process.

63. Memorials to the Conference

The heart of our Methodist tradition calls us to “spread scriptural holiness” and serve our communities with love, grace, and practical action. We fear that, unless urgent action is taken, we risk being burdened by structures that hinder rather than enable this calling.

We submit this memorial in the hope that the Conference will prayerfully consider these concerns and take steps to ensure that our governance structures serve the mission of the Church, rather than the other way around.

Reply

The Conference thanks the North Bedfordshire Circuit Meeting for this memorial highlighting the sense of bureaucratic overload in our churches and Circuits, whilst committing the Circuit to meeting its statutory responsibilities with integrity. The memorial echoes concerns that the Council has heard and has begun to explore: see Report 32 on Connexional Policy Options elsewhere in the Agenda.

The Conference, like the Circuit, recognises that many of the regulatory demands come from sources over which the Church has limited or no control, and that as these have increased the number of volunteers able to fulfil the tasks of governance has declined. The task then becomes a matter of finding ways in which people in local situations can be supported and helped so that they are not overwhelmed. To this end the Connexional Council has set out a clear strategy for the Church which includes a goal “To have safe, effective and efficient structures which enable good governance at the level appropriate to our size. These will facilitate change and support the Church to operate in a simpler way with a smaller number of people.” The Connexional Team is already engaged in identifying ways in which it can ease the burden of compliance on trustees and provide support in the areas where doing things once and at a national scale make most sense.

In addition, the paper that is before the Conference on the “Missional Use of Property” asks whether different governance mechanisms from those currently in place at local church and circuit level might be more effective in enabling managing trustees to make missional decisions about their property. Further work about this is proposed in Section P of the Law and Polity Committee’s report elsewhere in this Agenda. Exploring alternative models of trusteeship may also be helpful as a means of meeting the challenges that trustee bodies may face in opening bank accounts if they have what the banks deem to be excessive numbers of trustees. In addition, Section P of the Law and Polity Committee’s report refers to some existing ways by which the regulatory burden may be managed and proposes further consideration of their effectiveness.

So far as the Church’s own order and polity are concerned, all of these items of work raise deep issues that need to be addressed. The Law and Polity Committee is therefore already engaged in work to review the Constitutional Practice and Discipline (CPD) of the Church with a view to recommending how it could be simplified, while also making clear

63. Memorials to the Conference

what is mandatory and what is guidance. The aims are to create a CPD more suited to the Church as it is and as it is being called to become, rather than to what it was, and to support managing trustees with compliance. There is a report on this project at Section L of the Law and Polity Committee's report elsewhere in this Agenda.

The Conference wishes to reassure the Circuit that it takes the Circuit's concerns very seriously. It accepts the spirit of the memorial and refers it to the Connexional Council and the Law and Polity Committee for consideration in the work outlined above.

M5 Standing Order 943

The West Sussex (Coast and Downs) Circuit Meeting (present: 39; voting: 39 in favour; 0 against) draws the attention of the Conference to SO 943, which can create difficulties for the timely sale of disused buildings and the consequent cost to Methodism.

SO 943(1) prevents the discontinuance of services or the removal from the circuit plan until permission has been given by the Synod (on the recommendation of Local Managing Trustees, Circuit Meeting and the District Policy Committee). No steps may be taken by the trustees towards the sale of a chapel until Synod has given its consent (SO 943(2)).

Churches and Circuits are not always able to align requests to close churches or sell church buildings with the dates of Synod. Where such requests materialise within days of the Synod having met this means that no work towards marketing or sale of property can take place for almost six months. The costs of maintenance and insurance can be excessive during this period, and unused buildings are prone to deterioration. The accumulated costs of these delays likely cost Methodism a six figure sum each year, and locally restricts the funds available for mission, at least in the short term.

The circuit requests that the Conference reviews and amends SO 943 to accelerate the decision-making process to enable more timely marketing of surplus property.

Reply

The Conference thanks the West Sussex (Coast and Downs) Circuit Meeting for this memorial which draws attention to difficulties in the timely sale of disused buildings. The memorial notes that under Standing Order 943(1) "public services may not be discontinued in any chapel or preaching place, ..., until permission has been given by the Synod on the recommendation of the managing trustees, the Circuit Meeting and the district Policy Committee".

63. Memorials to the Conference

The Conference bears in mind that the requirement in SO 943(1) for the Synod to give permission to cease public services in a chapel is not primarily a polity matter. This is a pastoral moment in the life of the District, where the wider Methodist Church wishes to stand alongside a Local Church and not only give thanks for the life and work of that church, but also to pray for individuals to find new homes within the life of the Church.

However, the Conference also recognises that the current procedures can appear cumbersome, particularly with regard to how they fit in with the timetable of the Synod which may only meet twice or even once a year.

One solution currently available to managing trustees is for the Chair of District to invoke the powers provided under Standing Order 411(5) and call additional meetings of the Synod to deal with these matters. Such meetings can now take place in electronic or hybrid form thus making this a practical option. Another solution is for the Synod to appoint a panel from whom three or five people can be drawn to form an Approval Group to deal with each request for permission to close a chapel on behalf of the Synod on a case-by-case basis. For this latter option, the case and the decision should in due course be reported to the Synod as part of the Synod's general oversight under Standing Order 412(1) of the work of God in the District.

A third possibility (which would involve a change in Standing Orders) might be for the final decision to be made by the District Policy Committee in the light of that committee's responsibilities under Standing Order 962 to formulate and keep a development masterplan for the Methodist church buildings and circuit staffing of the District. The Conference notes that this third option would remove the current requirement for the district Policy Committee to make a recommendation to the Synod, meaning the decision would be assessed by that committee solely on the recommendation of the local managing trustees and the Circuit Meeting.

The Conference has also considered the Circuit's comments about Standing Order 943(2) which currently prohibits managing trustees from taking any steps towards the sale of a chapel until the Synod's decision to discontinue services has been made. The Conference understands the Circuit's concerns about the ongoing costs of maintaining a building pending the Synod's decision, and therefore refers the possibility of modifying Standing Order 943(2) to enable some initial steps to be taken to the Connexional Council for consideration, together with the other matters outlined above, in the ongoing conversations referred to in the 'Missional Use of Property' report found elsewhere in the Agenda, with a view to detailed proposals being brought in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee to a future Conference.

63. Memorials to the Conference

M6 Supernumeraries chairing Circuit Meetings

Wales Synod Cymru (present: 95; voting: 83 in favour; 2 against) notes that Standing Orders distinguish between those presbyters or deacons who are “appointed to” (SO 005(iv)) a Circuit in the active work and those who are “stationed in” (SO 005(vii)) a Circuit. Supernumerary presbyters and deacons fall into the latter classification. Functionally these classifications affect the ministry that supernumeraries are able to offer in the life of the Church. For example, a supernumerary may serve as a deputy on behalf of a Superintendent in chairing a Church Council (SO 502(1)(b)(ii)) but not a Circuit Meeting (SO 502(1)(b)(i)).

Given the ever-increasing pressure on presbyters and deacons in the active work and the ever-decreasing pool serving in that capacity, we would propose that consideration is given once again to the ministry that supernumeraries are able to offer to the church. It is also recognised that these pressures are not unique to single station Circuits but may be exacerbated in such circumstances.

We recognise that this is not simply a question of function and that careful consideration must be given to pastoral charge and what it means to be appointed by the Conference to a particular context. However, we would ask the Conference to direct the Faith and Order and the Law and Polity Committees to explore whether changes can be made to Standing Orders to further the ministry that supernumeraries are able to offer to the Church in the challenges we face today.

Reply

The Conference thanks Wales Synod Cymru for raising this matter. The Synod rightly recognises that there is a distinction between presbyters and deacons who are appointed to a Circuit and those who are stationed in it. The former are directly under discipline and actively accountable for fulfilling ministerial duties in the particular Circuit to which they are sent (hence ‘in the active work’). For presbyters and especially the Superintendent this involves exercising pastoral charge. Supernumerary presbyters and deacons are by definition not ‘in the active work’ and, although still stationed, are released from the discipline of stationing and the specific ministerial duties that accompany it into a more general accountability for their ministerial conduct.

The reason why supernumeraries cannot normally chair a Circuit Meeting is that since the Conference of 2013 they have not automatically been members of the Circuit Meeting and able to exercise trusteeship in that meeting. The Methodist Council report to the 2013 Conference included a section which proposed the change [2013 Agenda Item 44 Section 5, https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf-2013-44-methodist-council_htBzYwz.doc]. The stated aim was to reduce the categories of

63. Memorials to the Conference

officeholder and therefore the number of managing trustees. The Conference adopted the proposal and amended Standing Orders accordingly.

Since then, supernumeraries have been able to opt in to being members (and therefore trustees) of the Circuit Meeting, rather than having to opt out if they did not wish to serve in this way (as had previously been the case). If they opt in, they have all the same rights and responsibilities as all the other members (and trustees) of the meeting, except in one regard. As currently drafted, Standing Order 502(1)(b)(i) allows lay people who are members in the Circuit, presbyters and deacons appointed to the Circuit, and even presbyters and deacons appointed in the active work to other Circuits, to deputise for the Superintendent in chairing the Circuit Meeting. In doing so, they are deputising for the Superintendent and clearly accountable through the Superintendent for how they conduct themselves in the role. Supernumeraries however are denied the same opportunity.

Wales Synod Cymru rightly points to a potential anomaly here. At the same time there may be questions of both theological order and practical polity raised if the situation were changed.

The Conference therefore refers the issues raised to the Faith and Order Committee and the Law and Polity Committee for them to consider their implications and report back with any proposals that emerge.

M7 SO 510(1)(vii) – Church Treasurer membership of Circuit Meeting

The Northampton District Representative Synod (present: 86; voting: 85 in favour; 1 against) draws the attention of the Conference to issues created when a local church treasurer is unwilling or unable to serve on the Circuit Meeting.

This situation creates an unfairness because it means that the church has one fewer representative at the meeting than another church of the same size. Churches and Circuits cannot correct the inequity by appointing an additional person under 510(1)(ix) because the appointment of such representatives must be based on the relative size of churches under 510(6).

This problem has increased in recent years. The larger geographic spread of Circuits, the relative age of many church treasurers, and the increased use of a member of another church to act as church treasurer, together mean that it is increasingly common for the church not to have “their” treasurer representing them at the Circuit Meeting.

Whilst Local Churches primarily see this as a problem of fairness, there is a more serious problem of trusteeship. SO 510 appoints the church treasurer as a trustee of the Circuit

63. Memorials to the Conference

(which in many cases is a substantial charity) whilst knowing that they will not exercise any trustee responsibility.

The District asks the Conference to direct the Law and Polity Committee to amend SO 510, so that when a local church treasurer is unwilling or unable to ever attend the Circuit Meeting, an extra representative from the Local Church may be appointed to the Circuit Meeting.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Northampton District Synod for its memorial, which highlights the difficulties that many Local Churches and Circuits are experiencing in not being able to find suitable volunteers to hold essential offices within the life of the Church. As reported elsewhere in the Agenda, the Connexional Council is aware of these difficulties and has set out a clear strategy for the Church which includes a goal *“To have safe, effective and efficient structures which enable good governance at the level appropriate to our size. These will facilitate change and support the Church to operate in a simpler way with a smaller number of people.”*

The Conference notes the importance of ensuring that the Circuit Meeting has access to sources of informed understanding about the financial situation of all the churches in the Circuit. This is especially the case where a Circuit comprises one or more multi-site churches and the treasurer for the multi-site Church Council is dealing with the combined finances of several congregations meeting regularly on different sites. Those congregations can rightly expect to be represented at the Circuit Meeting by a Church Council member who has knowledge of and responsibility for their finances. If the Local Church treasurer is not able to be present at the Circuit Meeting, the Conference recommends that the church steward or other Local Church representative(s) on the Circuit Meeting are properly briefed on the Local Church’s financial matters in order to speak appropriately about those matters at the Circuit Meeting.

The Conference understands that financial matters are one of the major responsibilities of managing trustees and this fact is reflected in current Standing Orders, which require all Local Church treasurers to be representatives to the Circuit Meeting (and therefore managing trustees) under Standing Order 510(1)(vii). Accordingly, if a church member is willing to be a Local Church treasurer (and thus a member of the Local Church Council and one of the managing trustees), the Conference believes at present the treasurer must also accept the requirement to be a member of the Circuit Meeting and the corresponding responsibilities as a managing trustee.

The Conference notes the District’s request to amend Standing Order 510 to enable an extra representative from the Local Church to be appointed to the Circuit Meeting in place of the treasurer.

63. Memorials to the Conference

The Conference is aware that the current provisions of Standing Order 510(7) enable Local Churches to appoint substitutes (without voting rights) to stand in for the Local Church representatives appointed under Standing Order 510(1)(viii), but that there are no corresponding provisions enabling substitutes to be appointed for the church steward and church treasurer appointed under SO 510(1)(vii).

The Conference is also aware of the proposals reported in Section P of the Law and Polity Committee's report elsewhere in the Agenda to explore alternative models of trusteeship as a means of meeting the challenges that large representative bodies such as Circuit Meetings may face in ensuring effective governance and proper exercise of trustee responsibilities. It is possible that this work may lead to a change in the number and category of persons appointed as trustees to manage a Circuit's affairs in future.

The Conference therefore refers the memorial to the Connexional Council and Law and Polity Committee for consideration in the work outlined above.

M8 Denomination of sanctuary

The Sheffield Circuit Meeting (present: 69; voting: 68 in favour, 0 against) proposes that the Methodist Church should explore becoming a Denomination of Sanctuary.

The national City of Sanctuary network has grown from a simple initiative in the ministry of former President of the Conference the Revd Inderjit Bhogal in the Sheffield District and has spread across Britain and Ireland as a vision of welcome, hospitality and sanctuary in our challenging times. It is being taken up by many organisations including universities, schools, libraries and theatres.

A Church of Sanctuary commits to the basic criteria of intentionally growing a culture of learning, embedding welcome, and sharing good practice.

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) have invited the Revd Inderjit Bhogal to assist churches in prioritising the development and promotion of this concept which is being taken up by congregations across all denominations. To this end the book *Hospitality and Sanctuary for All*, by Inderjit Bhogal has been published and released by CTBI as a guide for congregations.

The Conference commits to exploring the idea of the Methodist Church in Britain becoming a Denomination of Sanctuary. In practice this means the Conference

- expresses support for the City of Sanctuary movement
- encourages all congregations in the Connexion to explore being Churches of Sanctuary

63. Memorials to the Conference

- directs them to supporting resources.
- directs the Connexional Council to explore the idea further and to bring to Conference 2027 a report with recommendations for ways ahead, including the resources required for implementation.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Sheffield Circuit Meeting for its memorial and for drawing attention to the important work of the City of Sanctuary movement, especially at a time of rising hostility towards refugees and people seeking asylum in the UK. The Conference affirms its support for the City of Sanctuary movement and recognises the significant contribution of Revd Inderjit Bhogal in its foundation.

The Conference adopted a resolution about Church of Sanctuary in 2022 (Notice of Motion 2022/204), which urged all Local Churches to consider what it would mean to become a Church of Sanctuary and to take deliberate steps to become recognised as such, and directed that information about it be made available on the Methodist Church website. The Conference notes that resources for churches wishing to explore becoming a Church of Sanctuary are therefore already available on the Methodist Church website under the Social Justice section (<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/social-justice/church-of-sanctuary>), and that resources are also provided to mark Sanctuary Sunday and Refugee Week.

Seeking justice for refugees is one of the five justice priorities identified in the A Justice-Seeking Church report adopted by the 2023 Conference. The Conference encourages participation in the Church of Sanctuary scheme as one way that Local Churches can pursue that priority and grow a culture of welcome, hospitality and safety. Following the conferring session on this justice priority at the 2025 Conference, the Connexional Priority Collaboration Group on refugees also began to explore the possibilities for making a further denomination-level commitment to becoming a Church of Sanctuary. However, there is currently no framework for such a scheme, and so it was felt that energies would be better focused on encouraging and supporting participation in Church of Sanctuary by local congregations. The Conference directs the Connexional Council to ensure that Church of Sanctuary continues to be regularly promoted and participation encouraged.

The Conference recognises that the commitments embodied in Church of Sanctuary are in any case already reflected in existing commitments of the Conference. The Justice-Seeking Church strategy, the God for All strategy, and the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) Strategy together provide a strong framework through which the Church connexionally is living out its calling to work towards welcome, hospitality and justice. Absent the possibilities of becoming a denomination of sanctuary, the Conference accepts the memorial in part.

63. Memorials to the Conference

M9 Israel - Palestine: Rethinking Two-State Solution

The Isle of Man District Synod (present: 33; voting: 32 in favour; 0 against) notes with growing concern the continued building of illegal settlements and rise in Settler Violence affecting Palestinian communities under the current Israeli government.

We are greatly disturbed by the stated desire of the current Israeli government to move towards annexation of the West Bank, and the recent decision of the US Embassy to offer consulate services within the illegal settlements of Efrat and Beitar Illit.

The facts on the ground, and the raft of discriminatory laws passed by the Knesset since 2008, are leading many influential voices from Palestine and Israel to now state that the two-state solution as originally envisioned in the Oslo Accords of 1993 and 1995 is effectively dead.

The Isle of Man Synod therefore believes that continuing to tie the desire of the Palestinian people for self-determination exclusively to the vision of a future two-state solution now hinders the recognition of other pathways to peace which may be equally or more desirable for both the Palestinian and Israeli people.

We believe that a change of position is needed to ensure the Methodist Church avoids a colonial attitude as we listen carefully to voices from the region, both Palestinian and Israeli, who speak from their current lived experience and prayerfully consider all potential pathways to a just and lasting solution.

The Isle of Man District therefore calls upon the 2026 Conference to:

1. Rescind previous Conference statements which hold us to a position stating that the two-state solution is the preferred pathway to peace.
2. Reaffirm its commitment to supporting the need for self-determination, the right to return, and equal human rights for both Israeli and Palestinian peoples as the minimum requirement for a just solution.
3. To urge the UK Government and other Jurisdictions to do the same.

Reply

The Conference expresses its gratitude to the Isle of Man District Synod for submitting this memorial.

In 2002, when considering the deteriorating situation in Israel and Palestine, the Methodist Council concluded that Conference's response to a Notice of Motion in 2001 most accurately summarised the position of the Methodist Church in Britain as follows:

63. Memorials to the Conference

“A return to the 1967 borders, alongside a status for Jerusalem as a shared city for two nations and three faiths, with parity of esteem, constitutes the most viable basis for building trust among the different communities.”

This position reflected the Conference’s support for a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, as envisaged in the 1993 Oslo Accords. Despite the challenges posed by the Second Intifada, there remained a measure of hope that the Oslo process could lead to a just and lasting peace, and the Methodist Church reaffirmed its commitment to this framework.

In the intervening twenty-five years, however, circumstances on the ground have altered significantly. By 2023, more than half a million Israeli settlers were living in over 144 illegal settlements* in the West Bank. The current Israeli Government has authorised a further 103 settlements, alongside a marked increase in settler violence, frequently followed by the establishment of new outposts.

As a result, there is growing debate within both Israeli and Palestinian societies regarding whether a two-state solution remains viable or represents the most appropriate pathway to a just peace.

Kairos II, a statement by Palestinian Christians published in November 2025, does not promote a two-state solution. Instead, it expresses the following vision:

“Our hope is for a civil, democratic state grounded in a culture of pluralism – not numerical dominance – that recognises the goodness and worth of every person who belongs to this land. Such a culture, rooted in the commandment of love, obliges us to confront all forms of extremism and racism in our land – rich as it is in the diversity of its peoples, culture and religions – on the basis of equality before the law and full citizenship.” (*Kairos II*, 4.4)

The document concludes:

“We declare our commitment to work for the good of this land and of all humanity on the basis of our shared humanity until the day we live free in our land together with all the inhabitants of the land in true peace and reconciliation founded on justice and equality for all God’s creation, where mercy and truth meet, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. (Psalm 85:10).” (*Kairos II* 4.5)

Similarly, the One Democratic State Campaign, a joint Israeli and Palestinian venture launched in 2018, explicitly rejects a two-state solution, advocating instead for a single democratic state free from occupation and colonialism, grounded in justice and equality across historic Palestine.

63. Memorials to the Conference

As the memorial itself makes clear, it is not the role of this Conference to prescribe a specific political settlement. The historical and ongoing involvement of the United Kingdom in the region has contributed to present realities. A post-colonial perspective therefore underscores the importance of refraining from imposing political outcomes, and instead supporting the right of those most directly affected to determine their own future.

Acceptance of this memorial would not diminish the Conference's commitment to a just peace in the Holy Land. Our commitment remains that such peace must be grounded in equal human rights for both Palestinians and Israelis and must include, at a minimum, the principles of self-determination and the right of return for Palestinians.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial, though it notes that the original position on a two-state solution was not expressed in a formal Conference statement and so does not need to be formally rescinded by this Conference.

** Israeli settlements in the West Bank are widely regarded as illegal under international humanitarian law, which prohibits an occupying power from transferring its civilian population into occupied territory.*

M10 Palestine – Kairos II Response

The Isle of Man District Synod (present: 33; voting: 33 in favour; 0 against) thanks the 2025 Conference for endorsing the World Council of Churches statement on Palestine and affirming the commitment of the Methodist Church to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people by naming the Reality of Apartheid, Implementing Sanctions and Accountability, Affirming Palestinian Rights and Freedoms, and Supporting the resilience and witness of Palestinian Christian churches and communities (Notice of Motion 2025/201).

We are grateful for the ongoing commitment to listen to the stories of the Palestinian people and hear both their song of lament and their call for justice. In supporting the resilience and witness of Palestinian Christian churches and communities, we therefore draw Conferences attention to the Kairos II statement released by Palestinian Christians on 14th November 2025 and highlight the following:

1. Whilst the language of Genocide may be jarring and uncomfortable to hear, this is spoken from the lived reality of the Palestinian people and affirmed by many respected International (including Israeli) bodies.
2. Whilst the use of the term Genocide refers to the assault on Gaza, the settler-colonial policies of the Israeli government being implemented in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank continue to bring immense hardship

63. Memorials to the Conference

and pressure to the Palestinian people as detailed in Part 1 of the Kairos II Document.

3. The ongoing need for Sanctions and Accountability is clearly stated - as is the need to support those grass-roots organisations within both Israeli and Palestinian society which actively seek peace, reconciliation, and justice for all peoples (Parts 2 and 3)

The Isle of Man District therefore calls upon the Conference to:

1. Build on the work of the 2025 Conference by naming the Reality of Genocide in Gaza alongside the Reality of Apartheid in the occupied territories
2. Encourage the study of the Kairos II document at all levels of the Methodist Church and identify appropriate actions where our solidarity can be put into practice.
3. Continue to implement sanctions and call for accountability at local, regional, national, and international levels.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Isle of Man District Synod for submitting this memorial and for drawing attention to the lived experience of Palestinian sisters and brothers within the body of Christ, as expressed through the Kairos Document.

The use of the term genocide in relation to Israel's military action in Gaza has been widely debated. As the memorial observes, a number of respected international bodies have applied this designation. Like apartheid, genocide has a specific definition under international law. In September 2025, the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel concluded that Israel had committed acts of genocide in Gaza. The Commission found that Israeli authorities and security forces had carried out four of the five acts defined as genocidal under the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm; deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction of the Palestinian population in whole or in part; and imposing measures intended to prevent births. The Commission also identified evidence of intent, drawing on statements made by politicians, journalists, and military personnel.

Listening to the voices of lived experience lies at the heart of the Methodist Church's Justice-Seeking Church policy. While engaging with such testimonies can be challenging, they are an essential lens through which to understand injustice. Encouraging Methodist

63. Memorials to the Conference

people to engage with the Kairos Document is therefore one important means of hearing an authentic Palestinian Christian perspective. A comprehensive UK-based study guide for the Kairos Document, including suggested actions, is available through Sabeel Kairos.

The Methodist Conference's position on Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions is to invite Methodist people to engage with the principles put forward by the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and to discern how best to implement specific actions in ways that advance, rather than hinder, justice for all.

The Kairos II report has already been considered by the Mission Committee and the Connexional Council. The Connexional Council's considered response to Kairos II is set out in the relevant Conference report (30. Connexional Council, part three: Mission, Section N). Accordingly, the response to this memorial is contained within the resolution brought to the Conference by the Connexional Council.

M11 Kairos II

The West Midlands District Synod, Representative Session (Present:123; Voting: 81 for, 2 against), urges Conference to draw the attention of the Methodist Church in Britain to the new Statement by the Christian Palestinian Initiative, Kairos Palestine, 'A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide' (November 2025).

Kairos Palestine II: The document is written out of the lived experience of Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and Gaza. The current context sees Palestinian deaths growing beyond 75,000 in Gaza, with no solution in sight, and increasing settler violence and Israeli Defence Force operations in the West Bank resulting in deaths, injuries and loss of land for Palestinian families and communities. The Israeli government thus continues its annexation of the West Bank, illegal under international law.

The West Midlands Methodist District also draws the Conference's attention to a Study Guide to the Kairos II document prepared by the US Presbyterian Church, United Methodists for Kairos Response, and Friends of Sabeel North America - Study Guide for Kairos Palestine II, and asks the Conference to encourage the study of Kairos II through this Study Guide by UK Methodist Churches, Circuits and Districts.

Reply

The Conference thanks the West Midlands District Synod for its memorial, and the Conference offers the same reply as M10.

63. Memorials to the Conference

M12 JTC Group

The Ely and Newmarket Circuit Meeting (present: 28; voting: 28 in favour; 0 against) draws the Conference's attention to the current situation regarding the fund formerly administered by the Central Finance Bureau and now, since September 2025, transferred to the JTC Group. Statements of those accounts no longer provide any information about transactions beyond a 'contract number'. This is an issue for treasurers who need, on a monthly basis, to enter the details of all transactions on a receipts and payments basis into our accounts. An individual CFB Transfer Contract Note is emailed on most occasions (not every time) that a transaction occurs and that contract note does include the necessary information, so it is hard to understand why this cannot be included in the statement instead of the contract number.

The Circuit therefore requests that the Conference press JTC to move quickly to a situation where statements of those accounts, whether sent out monthly to treasurers or downloaded by them via the online portal, include narrative text which indicates the source or destination of receipts and payments, as the CFB statements did prior to September 2025.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Ely and Newmarket Circuit Meeting for this memorial highlighting the challenges faced by treasurers across the Connexion with the new operating model adopted by the Central Finance Board (CFB) of the Methodist Church in relation to the CFB Deposit Fund.

The CFB very much regrets and apologises for the inconvenience that church treasurers have been subject to following the change of their operating model. The CFB's failing legacy systems required urgent replacement and one of the country's leading providers of investor record keeping was appointed to provide registrar and related activities, including the provision of a new client portal. The appointed firm, JTC, work with the UK's fund community and have had to enhance their reporting services to meet the needs of the CFB Deposit Fund and its clients. These enhancements have taken longer to deliver than was expected, causing distress to church treasurers who have had to contend with incomplete information. A significant upgrade will be delivered by the end of July 2026 which will include more detailed narratives on statements and "enquiry only" access. It is hoped this will ease the burden on treasurers as the end of the financial reporting year approaches.

The CFB is confident that the forthcoming portal enhancements, together with JTC's expertise, will not only resolve current issues but also lay the foundations for a more resilient and future proofed service for church treasurers.

63. Memorials to the Conference

The Conference notes that the relationship with JTC is a contractual one held by the CFB and not by the Conference or the Council. Whilst the Conference is sympathetic to the contents of the memorial, it notes the work already in hand by the CFB to resolve the situation and in any event, the Conference is not in a position to “press JTC to move quickly”. Therefore, the Conference declines the memorial.

M13 Menopause Policy and Guidance

The Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire District Synod (present: 74; voting: 74 in favour; 0 against) believes that the Methodist Church in Britain requires a menopause policy, guidance and related resources to promote greater awareness and provide appropriate support for those affected.

In recent years there has been an increase in understanding the effects menopause and perimenopause may have on those who experience them. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including (but not limited to) mood changes, loss of memory and concentration, headaches, panic attacks, heavy or light periods, anxiety, loss of confidence, sleep difficulties/fatigue, depression, hot flushes, joint and muscle stiffness, and out of character behaviour. Symptoms may last for several years.

Research shows that about 70% of those going through menopause experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms, and it has been found that approximately 60% find their working life negatively affected by symptoms.

Each person will be affected in different ways and to varying degrees over long or short periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partner, families and colleagues.

A lack of understanding and support can cause people experiencing menopause to:

- Lose confidence in their skills and abilities.
- Feel like they need to hide their symptoms.
- Reduce their productivity.
- Take more absences and sick days.
- Suffer mental health problems such as stress, anxiety and depression.
- Leave their job.

However, with the right support and awareness those who experience menopause can continue to work, in a paid or voluntary capacity, with their wealth of experience and skills and continue to be valued members of their local church community.

As part of its commitment to inclusivity, justice for all, dignity of all and solidarity with all, the Methodist Church requires a menopause policy and guidance to help Methodists develop and promote an environment and culture that supports those experiencing

63. Memorials to the Conference

the menopause, so they can feel confident about raising issues relating to their symptoms and, for those in roles within the church, ask for reasonable adjustments to be made regarding how they carry out their role and perform their duties without fear of discrimination.

Some national churches have already produced a menopause policy and guidance, including the Church of England and Church of Scotland. However, despite the Signpost for Ministry Women's Health Project in 2022, the Methodist Church has yet to develop a menopause policy, guidance or related resources.

The Synod believes that the Methodist Church requires:

- A menopause policy that will develop and promote an environment and culture which support those experiencing the menopause and allow for working patterns to be adapted as appropriate.
- Resources to raise awareness among Methodists about those experiencing menopausal symptoms so good pastoral care can be provided.
- Resources to signpost the availability of medical/wellbeing support for those experiencing symptoms.
- Guidance and information to debunk some associated myths and assumptions about menopause.

The Synod therefore requests that the Conference direct the Connexional Team to produce a menopause policy, guidance and resources for the Methodist Church as soon as possible, preferably within the next year.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire Synod for the memorial.

Since the initial launch of the Women's Health Project in 2022 there has been much work undertaken in the background to scope out the content of any policy. Some of this work has included:

- Provision of menopause awareness sessions through an external provider where the need was identified; this included the signposting of following sessions to additional information.
- Seeking and receiving from a range of stakeholders their menopause experience to feed into development of a policy.

Unfortunately, due to lack of capacity within the wellbeing team due to an ongoing increase in demands on their time this work has not moved forward as was originally intended. However, with the recruitment of two additional new wellbeing caseworkers,

63. Memorials to the Conference

this work will now be fast tracked to produce a policy and the signposting of resources which are already available from a range of providers. It is the view of those involved in this work that there is a range of resources already available that would negate the need for the Connexional Team to produce its own, but that clearer signposting should be provided.

The aim is for this to be completed by end of this connexional year. World Menopause Day and Menopause Awareness Month fall in October and the Team would hope that the policy and signposting will be completed by then.

The Conference accepts the memorial in part.

M14 Menopause Policy and Guidance

The London District Synod (present: 158; voting: 114 in favour; 0 against) believes that the Methodist Church in Britain requires a menopause policy, guidance and related resources to promote greater awareness and provide appropriate support for those affected.

In recent years there has been an increase in understanding the effects menopause and perimenopause may have on those who experience them. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including (but not limited to) mood changes, loss of memory and concentration, headaches, panic attacks, heavy or light periods, anxiety, loss of confidence, sleep difficulties/fatigue, depression, hot flushes, joint and muscle stiffness, and out of character behaviour. Symptoms may last for several years.

Research shows that about 70% of those going through menopause experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms, and it has been found that approximately 60% find their working life negatively affected by symptoms.

Each person will be affected in different ways and to varying degrees over long or short periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partner, families and colleagues.

A lack of understanding and support can cause people experiencing menopause to:

- Lose confidence in their skills and abilities.
- Feel like they need to hide their symptoms.
- Reduce their productivity.
- Take more absences and sick days.
- Suffer mental health problems such as stress, anxiety and depression.
- Leave their job.

63. Memorials to the Conference

However, with the right support and awareness, those who experience menopause can continue to work, in a paid or voluntary capacity, with their wealth of experience and skills and continue to be valued members of their local church community.

As part of its commitment to inclusivity, justice for all, dignity of all and solidarity with all, the Methodist Church requires a menopause policy and guidance to help Methodists develop and promote an environment and culture that supports those experiencing the menopause, so they can feel confident about raising issues relating to their symptoms and, for those in roles within the church, ask for reasonable adjustments to be made regarding how they carry out their role and perform their duties without fear of discrimination.

Some national churches have already produced a menopause policy and guidance, including the Church of England and Church of Scotland. However, despite the Signpost for Ministry Women's Health Project in 2022, the Methodist Church has yet to develop a menopause policy, guidance or related resources.

The Synod believes that the Methodist Church requires:

- A menopause policy that will develop and promote an environment and culture which support those experiencing the menopause and allow for working patterns to be adapted as appropriate.
- Resources to raise awareness among Methodists about those experiencing menopausal symptoms so good pastoral care can be provided.
- Resources to signpost the availability of medical/wellbeing support for those experiencing symptoms.
- Guidance and information to debunk some associated myths and assumptions about menopause.

The Synod therefore requests that the Conference direct the Connexional Team to produce a menopause policy, guidance and resources for the Methodist Church as soon as possible, preferably within the next year.

Reply

The Conference thanks the London District Synod for its memorial, and the Conference offers the same reply as M13.

63. Memorials to the Conference

M15 Menopause policy

The West Midlands District Synod, Representative Session (present: 123; voting: 90 for; 0 against) believes that the Methodist Church in Britain requires a menopause policy, guidance and related resources to promote greater awareness and provide appropriate support for those affected.

In recent years, there has been an increase in understanding the effects Menopause and Perimenopause may have on those who experience them.

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including (but not limited to) mood changes, loss of memory and concentration, headaches, panic attacks, heavy or light periods, anxiety, loss of confidence, sleep difficulties/fatigue, depression, hot flushes, joint and muscle stiffness and out-of-character behaviour.

Symptoms can last for several years.

Research shows that about 70% of those going through menopause experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms, and it has been found that approximately 60% find their working life negatively affected by symptoms.

Each person will be affected in different ways and to varying degrees over long or short periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partner, families and colleagues as well.

A lack of understanding and support can cause people experiencing menopause to:

- Lose confidence in their skills and abilities.
- Feel like they need to hide their symptoms.
- Reduce their productivity.
- Take more absences and sick days.
- Suffer mental health problems such as stress, anxiety and depression.
- Leave their job

However, with the right support and awareness, those who experience menopause can continue to work, in a paid or voluntary capacity, with their wealth of experience and skills and continue to be valued members of their local church community.

As part of its commitment to inclusivity, justice for all, dignity for all and solidarity with all we believe the Methodist Church requires a menopause policy and guidance to help Methodists develop and promote an environment and culture that supports those experiencing the menopause, so they can feel confident about raising issues relating to their symptoms and, for those in roles within the church, for reasonable adjustments to be made regarding how they carry out their role and perform their duties without fear of discrimination.

63. Memorials to the Conference

Some national churches have already produced menopause policies and guidance, including the Church of England and the Church of Scotland. However, despite the Signpost for Ministry Women's Health Project in 2022 gathering information, the Methodist Church has yet to develop a menopause policy, guidance or related resources.

The Synod believes that the Methodist Church requires:

- A menopause policy that will develop and promote an environment and culture that supports those experiencing the menopause and allows for working patterns to be adapted as appropriate.
- Resources to raise awareness among Methodists about those experiencing menopausal symptoms, so good pastoral care can be provided.
- Resources to signpost the availability of medical/well-being support for those experiencing symptoms.
- Guidance and information to debunk some associated myths and assumptions about menopause.

The Synod therefore requests that the Conference direct the Connexional Team to produce a menopause policy, guidance and resources for the Methodist Church as soon as possible, preferably within the next year.

Reply

The Conference thanks the West Midlands District Synod for its memorial, and the Conference offers the same reply as M13.

M16 Maternity Policy

The Yorkshire West District (present: 97; voting: 96 in favour; 1 against) recognises that the current policy of the Methodist Church is to follow the statutory provision for maternity pay. This entitles an employee to six weeks Statutory Maternity Pay at 90% of their average weekly earnings (before tax), before reducing to £187.18 (£194.32 from 6 April 2026) a week or 90% of average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks. The impact of this is that a full-time lay employee earning £15 per hour for a 36-hour week, will see a drop in income from £2,340 gross pay per month to £811 (£842 from 6 April 2026) per month, from week 7 to 39. This has significant impact on a household and risks a family falling into poverty.

While the Yorkshire West Methodist District does offer an enhanced occupational provision of 90% of average weekly earnings for a further 7 weeks, connexionally many circuit and church employing bodies will default to the standard Methodist Church policy.

63. Memorials to the Conference

In the UK between 63.5% and 74% of employers care for their employees by offering some sort of enhanced maternity package, but the Methodist Church is not one of these. The Conference should consider how this is consistent with our Justice Seeking Church strategy and what impact its policies have on deterring some from applying for roles. The Methodist Church is rightly a Real Living Wage employer, and this is mandated across the Connexion as a sign of our commitment to just rewards for employment. What does this mean for our other employment policies where we default to the statutory requirement, rather than interpret the potential gospel imperative?

The Yorkshire West District asks the Conference to direct the Connexional Council to review the current policy for Maternity Pay and consider the possibility of enhanced terms, reporting to the Conference of 2027 with a view to mandating any recommendations. The District hopes that such a review might also consider comparative policies around adoption leave, paternity leave, shared parental leave, and sickness etc.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Yorkshire West District Synod for raising the issue of maternity pay provision across the Connexion.

The Lay Employment Resource Maternity Leave Policy template has been developed to support Local Churches, Circuits, Districts, and other local employing bodies in the development and agreement of their own maternity leave policies. This policy is intended to act as a guidance framework that reflects the minimum legal maternity entitlements. Local employing bodies are encouraged to adapt the template to reflect their own budget, size, structure, and operational requirements.

Any provision for voluntary enhanced terms (eg adoption leave, paternity leave, shared parental leave, sickness benefits) must be agreed locally, with full consideration given to the associated budgetary implications. Existing policy templates may be adapted to offer alternative enhanced options in addition to statutory entitlements, provided that local employing bodies formally agree to the policy terms, with due regard to affordability and ensure that any such provision is applied consistently. This is necessary to maintain fairness and transparency across the employing body.

However, the Conference also notes that in 2010 the Methodist Conference agreed that the rates of the Living Wage, as published by the Living Wage Foundation, should form the minimum basic salary for people employed by a District, Circuit or a Local Church. This policy also includes young people below the age of 18

The resolution of the 2015 Conference confirmed that the implementation of the Living Wage (based on LWF rates, or the equivalent in other jurisdictions) is now mandatory

63. Memorials to the Conference

in all but the most extreme and exceptional circumstances and that all outstanding exceptions must continue to be reviewed by the appropriate District Policy Committee. It would therefore be recommended that the Guidance provided to district, circuit or a local church regarding Maternity Adoption/Paternity Pay use the Living Wage Foundation rate (or equivalent in other jurisdictions) as the mandatory minimum basis for all calculations with the same caveat allowing already approved exceptional circumstances to remain aligned with the statutory rates.

Undertaking the wider review suggested would be a significant piece of work at a time when the Connexional Council is having to reshape the work of the Connexional Team to focus on the Church's key priorities. It is also unclear how affordability would be factored into any proposals, given the wide variation in circumstances across the Connexion.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial in relation to amending the guidance but not to undertake further work.