

Minutes

Minutes of a meeting of the Methodist Council held online on 29-30 January 2024

Present: The President, the Vice-President and 47 voting members as follows:
Joanne Anderton, the Revd Richard M Andrew, Stephen Arnold, Marianne Barrett Rogers, the Revd Moira Biggins, Mark Braithwaite, the Revd Helen D Cameron, the Revd Deborah L Caulk, Gill Dascombe, Eleanor Dixon (for items 24.1.6-24.2.11 and 24.1.29-24.1.30), the Revd Simon C Edwards, the Revd Ann Fox, the Revd Andrew W Fyall, the Revd Jennifer M Gill, Carolyn Godfrey, Doug Godfrey-Swanney, Peter Gregson, Matthew Hays, the Revd Sonia M Hicks (Chair), Bet Holmes, Carolyn Hothersall, the Revd Stephen Ingrouille, the Revd Jonathan R Hustler, David James, the Revd Naomi Kaiga, the Revd Marie-Anne Kent, Joseph Lambert, David Matthews, Val Mayers, Deacon Karen McBride, Daleep Mukarji, Keith Norman, the Revd Charity Nzegwu, Hellen Okello, the Revd Romeo R Pedro, Sheila Pollard, Bridget Quint (except for items 24.1.13-24.1.15), the Revd Calvin T Samuel, the Revd S Mark Slaney, the Revd Luke G S Smith, Sandie Smith, the Revd Rebekah Stennett, the Revd Howard J Stringer (except for items 24.1.16-24.1.30), Jenny Taylor, the Revd Marcus Torchon (except for items 24.1.16-24.1.30), Elizabeth Ward, the Revd Michaela A Youngson

Apologies: Anne Bolton, the Revd Steven Cooper, the Revd Joanne Cox-Darling, the Revd Helen Kirk, the Revd Graham Thompson

Observers: The Revd Philip Brooks (the United Reformed Church), Tom Hart (Youth President), the Revd Mark Rowland (Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee), Richard Armiger (Head of Ministries and Learning), Jude Levermore (Head of Mission), Matthew Tattersall (Executive Director of Finance and Resources), Jillian Moody (Director of Communications), Alan Kershaw (Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee) (for items 24.1.6 and 24.1.7)

In attendance: Jane Bates (Minutes), Sharon Hassanali (Administration)

Letters: The Council sent a letter of gratitude to the Joseph Rank Trust, as indicated in MC/24/27.

The Secretary of the Conference clarified the understanding of confidentiality in respect of the Council's papers, confirming that those papers which are not on the website are to be understood as being confidential. For this meeting, that applied to MC/24/1, MC/24/2, MC/24/5, MC/24/10, MC/24/18, MC/24/29 and MC/24/30.

24.1.1 Minutes

Noting that the heading for minute 23.4.9(a) should read Appointment of JDS Programme Coordinator, the Council approved the minutes of the meeting held on 19-20 October 2023 as a correct record.

24.1.2 Report of the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) [MC/24/1]

The Chair of the SRC presented MC/24/1.

1/1. The Council received the report.

1/2. The Council directed the Connexional Team to undertake the work required to fulfil the recommendation that All We Can and Southlands are unconsolidated from the Accounts.

24.1.3 Risk Management update and Corporate Risk Register [MC/24/2]

The Connexional Secretary presented MC/24/2, including the updated corporate risk register.

2/1. The Council received the report.

24.1.4 Pension Schemes [MC/24/5]

The Executive Director of Finance and Resources presented MC/24/5.

5/1. The Council received the report.

5/2. The Council approved the early payment of its PASLEMC deficit contributions for 2024-2026 during 2024 to facilitate the insurance buy-in on the scheme.

5/3. The Council approved a contingency budget of £1m, to be funded from the Pension Reserve Fund, to facilitate the insurance buy-in and potential insurance buy-out of the PASLEMC.

- 5/4. ***The Council approved the reappointment of Fred King and Anne Fairchild as directors of the Methodist Lay Employees' Pension Trust Limited for a period of three years commencing 1 September 2024.***
- 5/5. ***The Council agreed to recommend to the Conference the reappointment of Fred King and Anne Fairchild as directors of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Trust Limited for a period of three years commencing 1 September 2024.***
- 5/6. ***The Council approved the reappointment of Capital Cranfield Pension Trustees Limited, represented by Richard Hubbard, as Director of the Methodist Lay Employees' Pension Trust Limited and the Methodist Ministers' Pension Trust Limited for a period of three years commencing 1 September 2024.***

24.1.5 Nominations for Connexional Council [MC/24/21]

The Secretary of the Conference presented MC/24/21.

- 21/1. ***The Council received the report.***
- 21/2. ***The Council approved the process as set out in the report, and agreed that it will consider nominations to the Connexional Council for electronic decision prior to the next meeting of the Council.***

24.1.6 Annual report and accounts [MC/24/3]

The Executive Director of Finance and Resources presented MC/24/3, noting that there was an additional note from the auditors to be added to the Letter of Representation in respect of Notes 16a and 16b.

- 3/1. ***The Council received the Annual Report and Consolidated Accounts.***
- 3/2. ***In accordance with SO 212(1), the Council approved the Annual Report and Consolidated Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2023, and directed that a unified statement of connexional finances be presented to the Conference as required by SO 360.***
- 3/3. ***The Council authorised the Chair of the Council to sign the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities and, along with the Connexional Treasurer, the Letter of Representation addressed to the external auditors and the Balance Sheet within the financial statements.***
- 3/4. ***The Council authorised the Chair of the Council and the Connexional Treasurer to make any non-material changes to the presentation of the financial statements subsequent to Council approval.***

24.1.7 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee report [MC/24/4]

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee presented MC/24/4.

- 4/1. ***The Council received the report of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.***

24.1.8 Connexional Team report [MC/24/8]

The Connexional Secretary presented MC/24/8, noting that since the report had been prepared, the following updates could be brought:

- the Revd Dr Jonathan Dean, Director of Learning for Ministry, is to be nominated to the London District Synod and then the Conference as Chair for the London District from 1 September 2024;
- the appointment of a Pensions Manager is now in progress.
- events are being planned to mark the 21st anniversary of the signing of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant;
- materials are being prepared to mark 50 years since women were ordained to the presbyterate in the Methodist Church.

The Connexional Secretary also updated the Council on progress with the building work at Tavistock Place.

- 8/1. ***The Council received the report.***

24.1.9 Investors in People [MC/24/9]

The Connexional Secretary presented MC/24/9. Members of the Council congratulated the Connexional Secretary and the Director of HR on the signal achievement that the report represented.

9/1. The Council received the report.

24.1.10 Confidentiality Guidelines in CPD [MC/24/20]

The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice presented MC/24/20.

20/1. The Council received the report.

20/2. The Council agreed that the Guidelines for Good Practice in Confidentiality and Pastoral Care should be reviewed and directed the Secretary of the Conference to appoint a task group (corresponding to the list in paragraph 6 of the report) to undertake this work and to report to the Conference no later than 2026 with recommended updates.

24.1.11 Action for Hope grants criteria [MC/24/6]

The Executive Director of Finance and Resources presented MC/24/6, with the Action for Hope Implementation Officer, Hamish Leese, in attendance for this item.

The Council considered the discussion questions at the end of Appendix 1 in smaller groups and provided feedback on the paper.

6/1. The Council received the report.

6/2. The Council directed that £3m be allocated to districts from the Connexional Priority Fund for Action For Hope grants.

6/3. The Council approved the draft connexional grant criteria and delegates oversight of the Action For Hope grant-giving process to the Strategy and Resources Committee.

6/4. The Council supported a review of the replacement project criteria to ensure that they are consistent with the Church's net-zero aspiration.

24.1.12 Embedding the Justice-Seeking Church [MC/24/7]

The Director of Social Justice and Social Action, Rachel Lampard, presented MC/24/7. The Council considered the following questions in small break out groups:

1. What parts of the strategy could best support justice-seeking that is happening already in your context? (church, circuit, district, other)
2. What elements of the strategy could make the biggest difference to churches' engagement with justice-seeking?

7/1. The Council received the report.

24.1.13 Lay and ordained appointments in the Connexional Team [MC/24/10]

The Secretary of the Conference presented MC/24/10.

10/1. The Council received the report.

10/2. The Council approved the policy principles as set out in the report.

24.1.14 Safeguarding

The Director of Safeguarding, Tim Carter, and the Chair of the Safeguarding Committee, Judith Davey-Cole, were welcomed to the Council. The Chair of the Safeguarding Committee updated the Council on the present situation in respect of the backlog of DBS checks for ministers and advised the Council that this situation carries with it some significant risk – both in terms of potential harm to individuals but also in terms of reputational risk.

(a) Foundation training module updates [MC/24/11]

Judith Davey-Cole presented MC/24/11.

11/1. The Council received the report.

11/2. The Council approved the updated training module.

(b) Senior leadership training [MC/24/12]

Judith Davey-Cole presented MC/24/12. The Council expressed the wish that the policy on this make clear that it is to apply to the Presidency as well as District Chairs and other key connexional leaders, both lay and ordained.

12/1. The Council received the report.

12/2. The Council approved the proposals for senior leadership safeguarding training as set out in the report.

(c) Responses to the recommendations from safeguarding reports on senior leaders [MC/24/29]

Judith Davey-Cole presented MC/24/29.

29/1. The Council received the report.

29/2. The Council directed that work continues as set out in the report.

24.1.15 Standing Orders governing safeguarding duties of churches and circuits [MC/24/13]

The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice presented MC/24/13. In response to a question about the role of superintendents, it was noted that a paper which the Safeguarding Committee is preparing for the next meeting of the Council concerning independence in safeguarding processes has a bearing on this work.

13/1. The Council received the report.

13/2. The Council noted the policy requirement for each church and circuit to have a designated safeguarding officer and asked the Law and Polity Committee to bring to the Conference the necessary amendments to Standing Order to reflect this.

24.1.16 Conference Business Committee

The Council was informed that a ministerial vacancy had arisen on the Conference Business Committee for the 2024 Conference. Members of the 2024 Conference had been invited to consider whether they might offer to serve on the Committee, and three expressions of interest had been received. The Council conducted an election using the single transferable vote method, and the Revd Andrew W Fyall was duly elected and appointed by the Council under the terms of SO 136(1C).

24.1.17 Appointments [MC/24/22]

22/1. The Council appointed the Hope in God's Future Review Group as set out in the report.

22/2. The Council appointed the Revd Matt Finch to the Authorisations Committee.

22/3. The Council adopted the nomination by Methodist Academies and Schools Trust Trustees of the Revd Paul Martin as co-opted trustee for a period of one year concluding 31 August 2024.

22/4. The Council adopted the nomination by Methodist Independent Schools Trust trustees of Mr Stephen Holliday as trustee for a period of two years concluding 31 August 2025.

22/5. The Council appointed Sally Sudworth as a non-executive director of Methodist International Centre Limited.

22/6. The Council co-opted the following members to the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation under the terms of SO 320(2A): Mark Carrick, Simon Edwards, Helen Hickson, Vivienne Smith, Eva Walker.

22/7. The Council appointed the following to the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee: the Revd Andrew Brazier, Deacon Jonathan Miller, the Revd Adrian Roux, the Revd Dr Karl Rutledge.

24.1.18 Global Partner representation at the 2024 Conference [MC/24/23]

23/1. The Council received the report.

23/2. The Council agreed that the Eglise Protestante unie de France be invited to send a representative as an Associate Member of the 2024 Conference.

24.1.19 EDI data for the Council [MC/24/24]

24/1. The Council received the report.

24.1.20 Matters arising [MC/24/25]

25/1. The Council received the report.

24.1.21 Decisions made by the Council since its last meeting [MC/24/26]

26/1. The Council received the report and ratified the actions reported.

24.1.22 Joseph Rank Trust [MC/24/27]

27/1. The Council noted with thanks the grants provided by the Joseph Rank Trust in 2022 and 2023 as detailed in the report.

24.1.23 Standing Order 494 – Candidates in the Welsh language work [MC/24/28]

28/1. The Council received the report.

28/2. The Council agreed to recommend to the Conference that Standing Order 494 be deleted.

24.1.24 Consultation with the Manchester and Stockport District [MC/24/14]

David Matthews presented MC/24/14, on behalf of the Council scrutiny group.

14/1. The Council received the report.

14/2. Under the terms of SO 401(2), the Council agreed to recommend to the Conference that the Manchester and Stockport District forms part of the North West England District, which comes into being on 1 September 2024.

24.1.25 Changes in the composition or modified constitutions of Districts [MC/24/15]

The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice presented MC/24/15.

15/1. The Council received the report.

15/2. The Council approved the policy recommendations as set out in paragraphs 1 to 3 of the report, and agreed to recommend to the Conference the adoption of the amendments to the Standing Orders in paragraph 4.

24.1.26 Financial planning [MC/24/16]

The Executive Director of Finance and Resources presented MC/24/16.

16/1. The Council received the report.

16/2. The Council approved the financial planning parameters.

16/3. The Council approved the proposed way forward for the funds listed in Appendix 1 and noted that, where required, formal resolutions to bring effect to the changes will be brought to a subsequent Council meeting.

24.1.27 JDS Committee [MC/24/17]

The Revd Charity Nzegwu, co-Chair of the JDS Committee, presented MC/24/17.

17/1. The Council received the report.

24.1.28 CONFIDENTIAL SESSION

24.1.29 Update on Part 11 review [MC/24/18]

The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice and the Complaints and Standards Consultant, Dave Orford, presented MC/24/18 which the Council considered in groups.

18/1. The Council received the report.

18/2. The Council endorsed the recommendations in this report and directed the Part 11 Review Task Group to continue its work to enable the recommendations to be presented to the 2024 Conference.

24.1.30 Minutes of the Conference and Directory of the Methodist Church [MC/24/19]

The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice presented MC/24/19.

19/1. The Council received the report.

19/2. The Council agreed that the recommendations in this report are to be applied to the distribution of and payment for the Minutes of the Annual Conference and the Directory as separate volumes.

19/3. The Council directed the Law and Polity Committee to bring a revised draft of SO 124 to the next meeting of the Council, in order that the Council can propose it to the Conference.

19/4. The Council directed the Connexional Team to consider whether the Minutes should be published online.