

## Update on work from the Conference

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<b>Resolutions</b>	70/1. The Council receives the report.

The Council is asked to note the following updates on work from the 2021 Conference and previous Conferences.

### 1. Notice of Motion 2021/204: Immigration

*The Sovereign Borders Bill will be brought to the UK Parliament in July 2021, the UK Government having released their New Plan for Immigration which introduces a new ‘two-tier’ system for how we treat people fleeing persecution and conflict. Many of the measures outlined risk creating more injustices in the UK’s asylum system which will increase the trauma and pain experienced by asylum seekers attempting to reach safety in the UK.*

*They also undermine our obligations under international law. July 2021 will mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Refugee Convention, which specified the rights of refugees and the responsibilities of governments to offer sanctuary. However, the UK Government’s proposals are at risk of contradicting the important standards set by the UN Refugee Convention. Ahead of the Convention’s 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary next month, it is more important than ever that we recognise and champion the rights and dignity of people fleeing persecution and conflict.*

*The Methodist Church joined “Together with Refugees” (<https://togetherwithrefugees.org.uk>) in May 2021. As part of this new coalition, we have committed to recognise that how we treat refugees reflects who we are. The hostility with which the government’s new plans propose to treat refugees contradicts our commitment to uphold the dignity of all people. As a Church which is committed to a biblical imperative of welcoming the stranger, we cannot tolerate policies which risk creating conditions which contradict this calling. As a Church which seeks to offer sanctuary, witness to God’s love and stand for justice, we must speak up for human dignity and flourishing.*

*The Conference:*

- (i) Requests the President and Vice-President to write to the Home Secretary to highlight the potential injustices of the two-tier system, the obligations under international law and the need for human dignity and flourishing to be upheld.*
- (ii) Commends the initiatives being progressed by “Together with Refugees” and the Joint Public Issues Team.*
- (iii) Encourages churches, circuits and districts to engage with local MPs on these issues as the Sovereign Borders Bill makes its way through Parliament.*

The President and Vice-President have written to the Home Secretary as requested, and this has been highlighted through the Methodist News and social media platforms.

### 2. Notice of Motion 2021/205: COP26

*On 14 June 2021 the Young Christian Climate Network’s relay to COP26 left the G7 Meeting in Cornwall to start its journey to Glasgow where COP26 is taking place in November 2021.*

*COP26 workers based all over the world (including those based in the UK – James Appleby and Mollie Pugmire) have done great work in bringing issues of climate justice to the attention of governments and the media in the run-up to the event.*

*There is a strong call from young people to engage with climate justice and to address the issue of loss and damage, not least from the Youth President and 3Generate representatives, with climate change and environmental stewardship always featuring heavily in each year's gathering.*

*The Conference:*

- (i) asks the President and Vice-President to write to the President of COP26 calling on COP to make bold decisions and to listen to the voices of young generations;*
- (ii) commends the work of the COP26 workers;*
- (iii) sends a greeting and message of support to the Young Christian Climate Network's relay to COP26;*
- (iv) encourages all churches, circuits and districts to engage with COP26 before, during and after the event including holding a Climate Sunday service ahead of COP26.*

The President and Vice-President wrote to the President of COP26 as requested.

### **3. Notice of Motion 2021/203: Foreign Aid**

*The Conference notes with concern the UK Government's cut to the foreign aid budget from 0.7% to 0.5% of Gross National Income. As a justice-seeking church, we believe that it is right that richer nations financially support initiatives to tackle global poverty, address injustices, and encourage sustainable development. Methodists were highly active in the 2005 Make Poverty History campaign and the Conference is disappointed that its aims still have not been adequately met. COVID-19 has highlighted the world's inequalities and therefore this is not the time for the government to be cutting an aid programme which has in previous years been assessed to be of high quality.*

*Under the UK Government's plans, overseas aid spending has been reduced from 0.7% to 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI), meaning the international development budget has fallen by around a third, from £15.2 billion in 2019 to around £10 billion in 2021. The 0.7% target had been met every year since 2013, enshrined in law since 2015, and was a commitment of all the main political parties at the last General Election. As a justice-seeking church we believe that this is simply inappropriate and Christians must speak out about this.*

*The World Health Organisation has claimed that this budget cut will put the poorest countries at risk of neglected tropical diseases with tens of thousands likely to die as a result.*

*The Conference thanks the Revd Richard Teal and Mrs Carolyn Lawrence for signing letters on our behalf on this, and for the work of JPIT on this and many issues.*

*It resolves:*

- 1. That a letter be sent from the Conference to the Prime Minister and to the Foreign Secretary requesting an urgent reversal of this policy on the grounds of justice and human rights.*
- 2. That all Methodist societies be requested to contact their MPs as a body.*
- 3. That all Methodist members are encouraged to write to their MPs to oppose these cuts. (The latest information and a template letter are offered at [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/aid](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/aid).)*

A letter was sent to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary as directed.

#### **4. Notice of Motion 2020/104: Report 22, Section K - EDI Data Collection, Monitoring and Analysis**

*Report 22, Section K introduces the Conference to 'The Inclusive Methodist Church' strategy, where one of the elements is defined: 'Represents the diversity of the Methodist Church throughout its life and structures and affirms that there is no place for discrimination in our processes of selection, discernment and appointment.'*

*The Conference notes that it is impossible to know if the diversity of the Methodist Church is represented throughout its structures without accurate data to assist in this assessment.*

*The Conference recognises that for several years, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee has repeatedly asked for the production of EDI statistics without success.*

*In addition in para. 2.3, Section G (Resourcing Leadership) of the Methodist Council (Part 2) report to the 2016 Conference (Overcoming Barriers to Participation). The report called for:*

*The development of EDI profiling across a variety of offices, lay and ordained, through both records and statistics, to identify where there are particular issues and where resources may need to be prioritised.*

*A piece of research which looks at barriers affecting people from a number of backgrounds from offering for particular offices in the Church, including ordained ministries to support the Ministries Committee, Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee (MCPOC) and Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee (MCSC), in developing a wider and coordinated approach to these issues.*

*Although the Conference recognises the underrepresentation of women and people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds in leadership positions and strategic committees, in the absence of accurate data and statistics it would be difficult to say what real representation would look like.*

*Reports from Public Health England and the Office for National Statistics on the impact of COVID-19 make clear the disproportionate impact the disease has had on BAME communities. In addition, following the unlawful killing of George Floyd in the United States and the stance taken by the Methodist Church in Britain to show solidarity with the ensuing 'Black Lives Matter' protests, it is imperative that the Methodist Church monitor, collect and analyse appropriate EDI statistics.*

*The collection and analysis of appropriate EDI data is critical in forming an evidence-based approach necessary to address issues of representation and disproportionality, making informed decisions and allocating resources equitably, to reflect all aspects of diversity.*

*Resolutions:*

- 1. The Conference directs that the directory returns for all ministers and probationers include ethnic monitoring, and that online stationing profiles include the monitoring of all aspects of diversity.*
- 2. The Conference urges all members of the Conference and the Council to complete monitoring forms fully.*
- 3. The Conference also directs that all key committees record and monitor the range of diversity present in the make-up of the committee.*
- 4. The Conference encourages all Methodist employing bodies to conduct the monitoring of all aspects of diversity, for all recruitment campaigns under their control.*

5. *The Conference directs the Methodist Council to determine how the data to which resolutions 1-4 refer are to be most effectively recorded and analysed.*

The Council is asked to note that items 2, 3 and 4 above are underway, and the diversity data that is collected through this monitoring has been reviewed and updated. However, in order to respond to the concerns expressed about elements of unconscious bias present in the stationing matching process, it is felt that diversity monitoring cannot be included in the online stationing profiles. Item 1 therefore requires some further consideration to ensure that there is appropriate diversity monitoring whilst fulfilling the commitment to challenge unconscious bias wherever it is felt to be present. There is also a need to ensure that systems are consistent and joined up, and this is being addressed through the ongoing systems review. Work on item 5 continues in the light of this.

#### **5. Memorial M23 (2018): Community Land Trusts**

*The London District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 194; Voting: 192 for, 0 against) expresses its great concern about the cost of housing in our cities, towns and villages throughout the country. London CLT has pioneered the first urban community land trust in the UK. This community benefit society is not for profit and provides homes, which are affordable by linking their value to local incomes. Their homes sell at between one third and one-half of the open market price. The importance of community land trusts is that the homes are permanently affordable and cannot be sold on the open market. The London District Synod believes that Methodist Church land can be used to provide homes which are affordable in perpetuity and that this is an important part of our gospel mission to bring good news to the poor. The District is supporting a pilot project on church land in Wembley to provide homes on this basis for the local Church and its community.*

*The London District requests the connexional Property Development Committee to include community land trust developments as part of the Church's strategic approach to using church land for affordable homes throughout the Connexion where there is need; and to report to the 2020 Conference.*

#### **Reply**

*The Conference thanks the London District Synod for drawing to its attention the problems of affordable housing and the contributions made by community land trusts to making affordable housing more easily available.*

*As part of the development of a connexional Property Strategy, the Property Development Committee has already given some initial consideration to how the Methodist Church might be able to work in partnership with existing trusts or establish its own community land trust. As part of the Methodist Church's commitment to working in partnership with others, the Committee is already undertaking further work on this matter so as to ensure the most faithful, effective and life-enhancing use of Methodist property for all God's people. It is hoped that the connexional Property Strategy will be considered by the Methodist Council in October 2018.*

*The Conference therefore accepts the memorial, directing the Property Development Committee to report on this work as part of its own reporting to the Methodist Council as soon as possible.*

The Property Development Committee explored this area, obtaining legal advice, and acknowledging the constraints of Model Trust 20, and the complications that not all community land trusts are charities. The view of the Committee is that it is not able to pursue this option, given all the constraints, at this time.

#### **\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

#### **70/1. The Council receives the report.**