

35. Composition of the Conference

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Resolutions	See end of the report.

1. The 2022 Conference adopted the following resolution:
The Conference resolved that, from the Conference of 2024, the total voting membership of the Conference shall be 225. The Conference directed the Methodist Council, in collaboration with the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee, to determine the distribution of seats and directs the Law and Polity Committee to bring draft Standing Orders to the 2023 Conference. The Conference further directed that the proportion of members of the Conference elected by the Synods shall not be less than 70%.
2. The Methodist Council appointed a task group (which included a member of the JDS Committee, along with members of the Council and the Conference Secretariat) to undertake this work and to recommend to the Council the distribution of the 225 seats which will make up the full voting membership of the Conference from 2024. The task group reported to the Council in March; the Council agreed the allocation of seats as set out below and recommends this to the Conference.
3. Factors that impact on the distribution of seats include the decisions of the 2022 Conference which resolved that Synod-elected members of the Conference should be no less than 70% of the overall body whilst resolving not to receive section F of the Oversight and Trusteeship Report which recommended a reconfiguration and reduction in the number of Districts. It can be seen that these decisions together limit the possibility of particular categories of representative continuing to be accommodated within the membership of the Conference. This will in turn place greater responsibility on the Synods to ensure that the Conference membership is appropriately representative (SO 417(2)).
4. The Council recommends that the category of Conference-elected be abolished, to be replaced by members of the Connexional Council. It is important that a relationship of trust and mutual understanding be established between the Conference and the Connexional Council as the new body comes into being. Having most, if not all, of the members of the Council as members of the Conference would facilitate that relationship. It is hoped that the continuity and experience currently offered by the Conference-elected representatives would, in future, be provided by the members of the Connexional Council. This proposal

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would ensure that a good proportion of the Connexional Council were members of the Conference, particularly once those who are representatives in other capacities are taken into account, whilst not requiring it of each member of the Council. In the table below, the Council is represented by seven of its members plus its Chair. Those currently serving as Conference-elected representatives would fulfil their terms of office; the Conference will be asked to suspend parts of SO 103 and, no further elections would then need to take place save for one in 2023 for a presbyter to serve in the 2024 Conference. This will be necessary because of the requirements specified in the Deed of Union concerning the proportion of deacons, presbyters and lay people who are to make up the Conference-elected category. Where there are future reductions, then the total number of representatives will be achieved by an increase in the synod-elected category.

5. It is proposed to reduce the current representation from the Irish Conference from four to two members of the Conference. This has been brought following consultation with the Methodist Church in Ireland's Governance Board. The Irish Lay Leader is elected for two years, so the proposal that they or the President represent the MCI Conference alongside the Secretary gives scope for each Lay Leader to be present at least once. Subsequent work remains to be done to ensure that provision is in place symbolically to indicate the continued importance of the close relationship between the British and Irish Conference, for example, as now, through the prayer which the Irish President traditionally offers at the beginning of the Conference.
6. The proposed reduction in the representation of the Irish Conference and the proposed removal of Conference-elected representatives will both require changes to the Deed of Union. These changes could therefore not come into effect before 2025. However, the Connexional Council will not be in place by the 2024 Conference, and it is therefore assumed that the 2024 and 2025 Conferences will be transitional years, whilst still maintaining the total number directed by the Conference as well as the representation of the Synods. This is shown in the table below, although the precise numbers are indicative only as the final number of Synod representatives cannot be determined until the number of dual qualifications is known.
7. The Strategy and Resources Committee has recommended to the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group that the post of Connexional Treasurer will no longer be required when the Resourcing Committee has been established. Interim arrangements will need to be made for 2023-24 but the assumption has been made that however those duties are being covered it will not be necessary for the Connexional Treasurer to be a member of the Conference in 2024.

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8. The remaining non-District representative categories represent those groups within the life of the Church who by dint of the nature of their role are highly unlikely to be elected by synods (ie Forces Chaplains and Mission Partners), and those who represent a special relationship between the Church and our partners (ie UMC and Irish Methodist Conference representatives). It is hoped that as the JDS strategy is embedded in the life of the Church and Districts elect diverse groups of representatives, it will become unnecessary to have a separate category for EDI concerns and the Youth Assembly, however the Council accepted the recommendation that it remains helpful to the church at this time to retain these categories, though reduced from their current size.
9. The Conference has valued the presence of representatives of other Conferences and Churches. The 2022 Conference received a report which recommended that as the size of the Conference is reduced, the constituency should be reduced from 20 (18 of whom are associate members) to 14 (12 of whom would be associates). That recommendation is carried into this report and represented on the table below.

10.

Role/Category	2023	2024	2025	Deed of Union change
Presidency	6	6	6	
Secretary	1	1	1	
Assistant Secretary	1	1	1	
COLCP	1	1	1	
Record Secretary	1	1	1	
Journal Secretary	1	1	1	
Memorials Cttee Convenor	1	1	1	
Chair of Rep Session Business Committee	1	1	1	

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Role/Category	2023	2024	2025	Deed of Union change
Chairs of District	25 [<i>this number is reduced due to dual qualifications</i>]	26 [<i>assuming some dual qualifications</i>]	28 <i>This number may drop by 2025 to approx 22</i>	
Warden of the Diaconal Order	1	1	1	
Irish Methodist Church Reps	4	4	2	Yes
Global Relationships	2	2	2	
UMC Reps	2	2	2	
Conference Elected	9	7	3	Yes
Connexional Council	0	0	7	
Youth Assembly	4	2	2	
Chair of the Methodist Council	1	1	0	
Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee	1	1	0	
Connexional Council Chair	0	0	1	
Forces Chaplain	1	1	1	
Connexional Treasurer	1	0	0	

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Role/Category	2023	2024	2025	Deed of Union change
Connexional Secretary	1	1	1	
Mission Partners	2	1	1	
EDI representatives	6	3	3	
Representative of Faith and Order	1	1	1	
Law and Polity	1	1	1	
Stationing Committee	1	0	0	
Methodist Women in Britain	1	0	0	
Synods	229	158	158	
Totals	306	225	225	

Ecumenical Associate Members 4
 Global Relationship Associate Members 12

11. Standing Order 100(2) requires that the constitution of the Conference be reviewed every five years, therefore the next review shall take place no later than the connexional year 2027/2028.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 35/1. The Conference receives the Report.**
- 35/2. The Conference approves the allocation of seats at the Conference as set out in the table at paragraph 10 of the Report.**
- 35/3. The Conference directs that the membership of the Conference of 2024 be constituted as set out in the middle column of the table, and amends Standing Orders as follows:**

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100 Numbers. (1) The Representative Session shall number ~~306~~ **225** persons...

102 Representatives of Connexional and Other Bodies

(1) The connexional committees, funds and institutions to be represented in the Conference pursuant to clause 14(2)(x) of the Deed of Union and the representation of each shall be as follows, any representative not otherwise identified being appointed by the body in question:

(i) Methodist Council

(b) ~~The connexional Treasurer~~

....

(f) ~~Two persons, each of whom~~ **One person who** is serving overseas under the direction of the council or is a minister whose ministry is based on an overseas appointment under Standing Order 780(1)(vi)

(g) Six **Three** persons representing the concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion, ~~at least two of whom shall represent the concerns of racial justice and at least two of whom shall be under the age of 26 at the date fixed for the commencement of the Conference.~~

(iv) Stationing Committee One representative.

(vii) Methodist Women in Britain One representative.

(5) The Methodist Children and Youth Assembly shall be represented by the Youth President together with three lay persons **one lay person** elected at the preceding Methodist Children and Youth Assembly in accordance with Standing Order 250(11).

35/4. The Conference directs that, subject to the confirmation of Resolution 35/7 at the Conference of 2024, the membership of the Conference of 2025 and thereafter be constituted as set out in the right-hand column of the table, and directs the Law and Polity Committee to bring the necessary amendments of Standing Orders to the Conference of 2024.

35/5. The Conference resolves, for the purposes of achieving the reduction in the number of Conference-elected representatives whilst complying with the current requirements of the Deed of Union in that regard, to elect one such presbyteral representative at this Conference, and therefore suspends such parts of Standing Order 103 as is necessary to achieve this reduction, as follows:

Resolution for suspension to be brought on the Order Paper

35/6. The Conference adopts the allocation of seats for associate members of the Conference as set out at the foot of the table in the Report, with effect from the Conference of 2024, and amends Standing Order 107 as follows:

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- (1) The associate members of the Conference to be appointed under Clause 14(4) of the Deed of Union shall be as follows:
- (i) ~~six-four~~ persons appointed by other churches and Christian bodies which are members of an ecumenical body or association in Great Britain of which the Methodist Church is also a member;
 - (i) ~~twenty-fourteen~~ persons appointed by other autonomous conferences, other Methodist churches and united churches in which Methodists have joined.

Special Resolution [resolution as to the form of appropriate consultation to be brought on the Order Paper]

35/7. The Conference amends the Deed of Union as set out below:

14 The Representative Session

(2) **Membership.** The Conference in its Representative Session shall comprise:

- (i) the persons who when it commences its sitting hold office as the President, the Vice-President and the Secretary of the Conference;
- (ii) the persons who last held office as the President and the Vice-President of the Conference;
- (iii) the President-Designate, the Vice-President Designate and (if any) the Secretary-Designate nominated by the last preceding Conference;
- (iv) assistant secretaries and other officers of the Conference, as prescribed by Standing Orders;
- (v) the Chair or Chairs of each home District;
- (vi) the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- (vii) the President **or the Lay Leader** of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Secretary of the Irish Conference;
- (viii) the members and associate members appointed by or on behalf of other conferences, churches and Christian bodies as prescribed in sub-clauses (3) and (4) below;
- ~~(ix) the conference-elected representatives, as prescribed below;~~
- (x) **such** representatives of **the Connexional Council and of** connexional committees, funds and institutions, **and such other connexional officers, as are** prescribed by Standing Orders;
- (xA) representatives, as prescribed by Standing Orders, of a Methodist Youth Assembly to be established in accordance with Standing Orders;
- (xB) *[deleted]*
- (xi) members elected by the Representative Sessions of Synods, as prescribed below.

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(3) **The Irish Conference and the The General Conference of the United Methodist Church.** The Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the General Conference of the United Methodist Church shall each be entitled to appoint annually to the Conference two persons.

(5) **Conference-elected Representatives.** (a) The conference-elected representatives shall be elected by the Conference. One shall be a deacon and the remaining members shall consist of equal numbers of presbyters and lay persons.

(b) Subject to (a) above, the numbers, term of office and other matters concerning the election and service of conference-elected representatives shall be prescribed by Standing Orders.

(c) Any conference-elected representative who becomes incapable of acting or unfit to act or ceases to be a member of the Methodist Church or, being a presbyter or deacon when elected, ceases to be such shall be disqualified from being a conference-elected representative and his or her office shall forthwith become vacant.

(d) Casual vacancies occurring from time to time in the number of the conference-elected representatives shall be filled by the Conference.

17 Substitutes. (a) The Conference shall have power to elect a substitute for any member who is unable or unwilling to attend except the President **or the Lay Leader** of the Methodist Church in Ireland or the Secretary of the Irish Conference or a member or associate member appointed under clause 14(3) or 14(4) above, but in the case of a member elected by the Representative Session of a Synod only upon nomination in accordance with Standing Orders:

- (i) if the member is a deacon, by the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order; or
- (ii) otherwise, by an officer or officers of that Synod.

43 The Irish Conference.

...

(c) Ministers and lay members of the Methodist Church in Ireland may be appointed members of the Conference, of the Missionary Committee or of any other committee of the Conference of the Methodist Church.