

## 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 the Methodist Council is required to appoint a Memorials Committee made up of representatives from Districts 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 either 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 13 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.

#### 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, the deadlines for which can be found in the First Report of the Conference Business Committee on page 23 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, and 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 13).

Members of the Conference with questions on any matter affecting memorials and the procedures described above should consult the Memorials Secretary, Catherine Dixon. For example, if any member wishes to change the recommended reply of the committee, the Memorials Secretary would be happy to advise on how and when to propose either an amendment or the substitution of a different reply.

The Memorials Secretary will notify each Synod and Circuit of the reply the Conference has made to its memorial.

#### **M1 Reimbursements for stipends of ministers on long term sick leave**

The Yeovil and Blackmore Vale (26/5) Circuit Meeting (Present: 31; Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference to amend Standing Order 365 so that responsibility for the stipend of a minister on long term sick leave does not revert to the Circuit from the Methodist Church Fund should a minister still be on sick leave after eighteen months.

#### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Yeovil and Blackmore Vale Circuit for its memorial and for drawing the attention of the Conference to the difficult issue of the financial support of presbyters and deacons who are on long-term sick leave.

SO 365 aims to take from the Circuit some of the responsibility for the provision for ministers who are unwell. The Circuit is right to note that the assumption of responsibility for the stipend is time-limited to a period of twelve months ('the eligible year'). This, effectively, offers a twelve-month period in which the minister can be helped back to full time work or explore other possibilities.

There have been a number of ministers unable to work for a considerable period over the last few years. The Strategy and Resources Committee has expressed concern that this is a part of the budget which cannot be predicted and is difficult to manage. Since the last revision of SO 365, statutory provision has changed and an employer (as which for these purposes the Methodist Church is classified) can no longer recover sick pay.

Members of the Connexional Team have been working at the behest of the Ministries Committee reviewing the support that is offered to ministers to prevent ill-health and through periods of absence and it is clear that this is a serious and complex problem of which finance is one aspect.

The Conference therefore encourages these pieces of work. The Conference notes that the stipend is not a salary and that a minister's need for support is no less (and can be greater) in periods of illness than in health. During such periods, it is incumbent on the Church to ensure both that the minister is supported and, as far as possible, free from additional stress through financial worry, and that the Circuit, or other body is able to offer ministry in the stead of that of the incapacitated minister.

In light of the ongoing work the Conference declines the memorial but directs the Council to ensure the policy for the payment of stipends and the provision of a manse for ministers on sick leave as set out in SO 365 and SO 801(4) is reviewed and a report made to the Conference no later than 2021.

## **M2     Amendment of Standing Order 365**

The Salisbury (26/12) Circuit Meeting (Present: 25; Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference to amend Standing Order 365 so that responsibility for the stipend of a minister on long term sick leave does not revert to the Circuit from the Methodist Church Fund should a minister still be on sick leave after eighteen months.

### **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M1.*

## **M3     Property Levy for the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF)**

The Liverpool North (18/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 20; Voting: 18 for, 1 against) feel that, when trustees dispose of a property on which a levy is chargeable under Standing Order 970, the suggested figure in SO 972 of 20% on the first £100,000 is no longer relevant because of the change in property values since the levy was set. We suggest to the Conference that Standing Order 972 be amended so that the 20% levy covers the first £200,000 with 40% above £200,000 and that adjustments be made on an annual basis in light of the fluctuation in property values.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Liverpool North Circuit for its memorial.

The Conference notes that property values across the Connexion have increased significantly since the introduction of the levy, The Circuit will be aware that under Standing Order 973 a replacement project can be designated so that the levy is not paid or only paid in part. The Methodist Council over the last two connexional years has had a number of discussions on the criteria for replacement projects and how that criteria should be amended to reflect the connexional property strategy adopted by the Council in October 2018. The Methodist Council has authorised the Property Development Committee to grant exceptions to the application of the replacement project criteria during this connexional year, which should assist managing trustees who feel frustrated by the current criteria.

A review of the CPF levy and replacement project criteria was directed by the Methodist Council in light of the connexional property strategy. The Conference is therefore inclined to allow this review to be completed rather than to simply increase the level at which 40% has to be paid.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial but directs the Methodist Council to report to the Conference in 2020 on the outcome of the review into the application of the connexional priority fund levy and the replacement project criteria.

#### **M4 Revision of guidelines in relation to Standing Order 955**

The Manchester and Stockport District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 144; Voting: 141 for, 3 against) draws the Conference's attention to Standing Order 955, regarding payments from circuit model trust funds to the District Advance Fund and asks the Conference to note that, under sub-clause b(iii) "a contribution is not payable on any disposition completed within the last five years, so far as they are employed in or towards a replacement project and consent to the disposition has been granted under Section 93 on that basis."

The Synod further draws attention to the current practice whereby a contribution to the district advance fund is taken from the disposition until such time as a replacement purchase is given consent.

The Synod believes that the current practice is in conflict with the Standing Order and invites the Conference to instruct the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice to revise the guidance, such that contributions are not made to the District Advance Funds from dispositions made as part of a replacement project, until the five-year limit has been exceeded.

#### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Manchester and Stockport District Synod for this memorial relating to Standing Order 955 and replacement project classification.

The Conference appreciates the reasons for the District raising these concerns. However, in practice it is not possible to exclude from the circuit model trust fund an unknown amount. In the case to which the memorial refers, the cost of a replacement manse was not known until a new manse had been found and this will be the same where the costs of a redevelopment are unknown until plans are finalised. It is also not possible to know at the point that proceeds of sale go into a circuit model trust fund whether a replacement project will definitely occur even if this is the initial intention or that the replacement project will be given district and connexional authority consent.

The Conference therefore refers the memorial to the Methodist Council to consider the policy issues raised and, if appropriate, to consult the Law and Polity Committee on any amendments to Standing Orders.

#### **M5 Amendment of Standing Order 931(5)(i)**

The Exeter Coast and Country (24/3) Circuit Meeting (Present: 67; Voting: 55 for, 3 against) requests that Standing Order 931(5)(i) should be amended to specifically exclude enforcement of Parking Charge Notices.

A number of local trustees with responsibility for church car parks are facing increasing problems relating to car park management including long-term, unauthorised parking, abuse and threats. The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) interprets this Standing Order as requiring local

trustees to seek the permission of the Methodist Council for each enforcement of a disputed Parking Charge Notice; thereby, in practice, making local agreement with registered parking enforcement companies impossible. Following clamping scandals, parking enforcement on private land has become highly regulated and without its earlier stigma. A number of companies will offer contracts where only vehicles reported to them by local trustees, and supported by photographic evidence, will incur penalty charges and will manage enforcement on behalf of the trustees.

Amendment of Standing Order 931(5)(i) as proposed will allow local trustees to make suitable arrangements with appropriate companies in order to preserve limited car parking availability for intended purposes.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Exeter Coast and Country Circuit for its memorial and for the consideration they have placed on the best use of Methodist property, both physical and monetary.

Given the current uncertainty as to aspects of the legal position, it would be premature to formulate the guidance which has been requested, but the Conference notes the significant practical difficulties facing churches in such circumstances and refers the memorial to the Methodist Council for further consideration of the issues raised.

### **M6 Alcohol on Methodist premises**

The Liskeard and Looe (12/19) Circuit Meeting (Present: 31; Voting: 20 for, 4 against), notes that in recent years a number of memorials (eg M28 (2018); M26 (2013)) have presented compelling arguments as to why alcohol on Methodist premises, in a controlled manner, might be considered for churches besides those involved in conference centre work. We note that the response to such memorials has been to suggest that in all contexts, beyond the conference centre exception, events are able to take place without the need for alcohol being consumed. This Circuit suggests that the arguments that allow the current exception are no more compelling than those made by many other societies who wish to pursue their mission and outreach by allowing limited use of alcohol, in a controlled way. We feel that an exception for a minority that overrides principles that the majority of smaller, less influential churches have to conform to is inconsistent with our connexional principles. Churches which are not conference centres could also be required to justify their reasons for such changes and ensure the safeguards already deployed are used in their context. Consequently we ask that the Conference amends SO 922(3A)(i), so that, should their Church Councils so desire, all churches throughout the Connexion are treated with equanimity and consistency in this matter.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Liskeard and Looe Circuit for its memorial. As highlighted, the 2013 Conference declined Memorial 26 requesting that exceptions be made with regard to the provision of alcohol in areas where the Methodist premises is the only community centre in the area, on the basis that this would significantly increase the number of Methodist premises able to supply, sell, and use alcohol.

The Conference notes the point raised in this memorial about a minority of churches benefitting from the exception and that this creates inconsistency. However, even those churches that have been designated conference centres, of which there are only a very small number, are not able to offer alcohol as part of their community outreach and mission. SO 922(3A)(ii) is clear that the supply of alcohol can only be offered as part of a conference centre event taking place on the premises.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

### **M7 Opening and Closing of Churches**

The Harrow and Hillingdon (35/36) Circuit Meeting (Present: 38; Voting: 33 for, 3 against) draws the Conference's attention to the situation regarding the opening and closing of churches in circuits.

Even though the Circuit is the primary unit of mission in Methodism, Circuits currently have no power to shape that mission by closing churches and redirecting human and financial resources to other areas of work in the Circuit. Church Councils may understandably be reluctant to face the decision to close a church where members have an emotional investment in a local building and congregation, even when it is obvious to all concerned that a particular congregation has a limited future, and to keep a church open would use up valuable resources that could be used for mission elsewhere in the Circuit.

However, to keep a church open is not always in the best interests of its members or the wider community. There is nothing sadder and more damaging to the message that Christianity has something dynamic to offer to a community than to see a building and a congregation dwindle in appearance and significance. The question of transferring power to close churches to Circuit Meetings has been considered at the Methodist Conference in previous years and congregations have been encouraged to think about an end of life plan or a growth plan.

Therefore, the Circuit Meeting asks the Conference to make the necessary changes to Standing Orders that would allow the transfer of powers to the Circuit Meeting, after due consultation, to close churches in order that Circuits could be more flexible in assessing the location and potential of Local Churches in serving local communities, identifying new opportunities for mission, and redistributing human and financial resources more effectively to meet those criteria.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Harrow and Hillingdon Circuit for its memorial.

In 2018, the Conference received Notice of Motion 201 and directed the Methodist Council to 'explore alternative models of managing trusteeship and bring to the Conference no later than in 2020 proposals that would enable other bodies [such as the Circuit Meeting] to more easily hold trusteeship of Local Churches, after due process.' This was on the basis that as the 'primary unit of mission policy,' the Circuit has 'a particular responsibility to ensure the faithful deployment of resources.'

The Harrow and Hillingdon Circuit will be aware of the significant work that has been undertaken over the last three years in respect of property support for managing trustees and the establishment of an Evangelism and Growth team within the Connexional Team. The Conference directs the Circuit to resources recently produced by the Evangelism and Growth team to assist managing trustees in considering whether their mission has been fulfilled. The Conference also hopes that Districts will be

able to support the decisions of managing trustees through the adoption of a District Development Plan as directed by the Connexional Property Strategy.

Whilst the Conference recognises the issues raised by the Circuit, the Conference considers it appropriate to await the proposals of the Council to the Conference in 2020 before giving consideration to Standing Orders amendments.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

## **M8 District Assessment**

The Melton Mowbray (23/12) Circuit Meeting (Present: 26; Voting: 23 for, 0 against) notes that other organisations which prepare for the future have strict cost controls for overheads.

The district assessment per member in the Northampton District has increased by 46% over and above inflation over 4 years placing an unsustainable burden on congregations. It is recommended that the necessary cost controls and restructuring are put in place at connexional, district and circuit level to return the cost per member to the level of 2013 plus an allowance each year for consumer price index (CPI) inflation.

Cost controls need to be a focus for circuit finances to ensure that the cost per member is not put beyond the members. A CPI based formula is recommended.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Melton Mowbray Circuit for its memorial and for raising this issue that affects many churches and Circuits within the Connexion.

The Conference recognises the need for strict cost control and is being asked to approve an assessment increase for the Connexional Central Services Budget of just 1% this year. This represents a real terms cut in funding when costs are rising by approximately 2.5%. Whilst it is understood that some in the church may regard this expenditure as an overhead, the majority of the expenditure goes directly to funding the mission and ministry of the Church as expressed in *Our Calling* with the remainder being used for the important task of administering the work of the Church. In relation to stipend increases, they are also subject to annual review through a process that has been in place for some years and was reaffirmed at the 2018 Conference.

The specific request of this memorial to limit the cost per member to the 2013 level (uplifted for CPI inflation) is a pragmatic request based on the challenges our churches face, particularly where membership numbers are in decline. However, to constrain the budget in the way requested could simply perpetuate the problem: fewer members, less resources, less investment in ministry and mission leading to even fewer members. The Methodist Council adopted a Financial Strategy (MC/18/73) in October 2018 that seeks to break this financial cycle of decline. The aim of the strategy is to reduce the reliance on the assessment through the more effective use of the resources we already have. Whilst the strategy does not provide all the answers, it does signal a way forward for the finances of the Methodist Church.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

## **M9 Financial Circumstances**

The Cleveland and Danby (13/7) Circuit Meeting (Present: 45; Voting: unanimous) is grateful to and wishes to express thanks for the work of the Methodist Church at both district and connexional levels. However, this Circuit faces difficult and challenging financial circumstances due to age profile and decreasing membership. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Cleveland and Danby Circuit is not alone in this.

A significant percentage of the Circuit's annual budget comprises of district assessment and the financing of the Methodist Church Fund, we believe this to be a pattern replicated throughout the Connexion.

With these considerations we ask the Methodist Conference/Council to consider these financial implications in the following three ways:

- A rethinking of the balance between the local and wider connexional implications of the resourcing of mission and service.
- A rethinking and strategic discussion of the present policy of levies on the sale of property within a Circuit and by implication circuit long-term strategic thinking.
- To continue and strengthen theological thinking and reflection on the wider implications of resourcing of mission at 'local' and 'connexional levels' and the balance between the two.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Cleveland and Danby Circuit for its memorial and for raising this issue that affects many churches and Circuits within the Connexion.

The Conference recognises the need for strict cost control and is being asked to approve an assessment increase for the Connexional Central Services budget of just 1% this year. This represents a real terms cut in funding when costs are rising by approximately 2.5%. Whilst it is understood that some in the church may regard this expenditure as an overhead, the majority of the expenditure goes directly to funding the mission and ministry of the Church as expressed in *Our Calling* with the remainder being used for the important task of administering the work of the Church. In relation to stipend increases, they are also subject to annual review through a process that has been in place for some years and was reaffirmed at the 2018 Conference.

The levy on sale of properties is kept under regular review and income to Connexional Funds is used to resource Connexional Priorities. In particular, 45% of levies are used to fund the Pension Reserve Fund, without which all Circuits would be obliged to pay a higher contribution for ministers' pensions; a further 25% is made available to Districts through the District Advance Fund; the remainder is largely used to fund other connexional priority projects.

During this last connexional year the Council has worked deliberately against a set of its own agreed objectives; taken as a whole these objectives all relate to the reaffirmation of *Our Calling* which is providing the focus for supporting the whole Church in making decisions about how best we resource and theologically reflect on the mission which God calls us into. Work is underway for a strategy for Evangelism and Growth to come before the 2020 Conference which is hoped to continue this thinking.



The Methodist Council adopted a Financial Strategy (MC/18/73) in October 2018 that seeks to address both local and connexional funding issues. The aim of the strategy is to reduce the reliance on the assessment through the more effective use of the resources we already have, again both locally and connexionally. Whilst the strategy does not provide all the answers, it does signal a way forward for the finances of the Methodist Church.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

#### **M10 Funding a non-separated Chair**

The Isle of Man District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 47; Voting: 46 for, 0 against) draws the Conference's attention to the matter of the cost of funding a non-separated Chair.

The situation with regard to non-separated Chairs has remained the same for some decades now. But it has become clear that the demands, especially those regionally and connexionally, have markedly increased their workload. We celebrate our partnership with the Districts in our region, and with the Learning Network. We recognise, however, that these, and other connexional commitments, take the Chair out of the District far more often than was the case a decade ago.

At present the second superintendents allowance paid to non-separated Chairs is paid from connexional funds, but the entirety of the rest of the stipend is paid by the District/Circuit in which the minister is stationed. Expenses are paid in the same way as any other District.

The Synod asks the Conference to consider contributing to the stipend from connexional funds on a 50/50, half connexional and half district/circuit basis. We believe that this would further re-enforce the Chair's role as a connexional person and release other district/circuit resources to make up the shortfall in ministerial provision.

#### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Isle of Man District Synod for the memorial.

The Synod is correct that the position regarding the funding of the stipend of a non-separated Chair has remained the same for some time. The Connexional Allowances Committee last year considered the situation as a part of its extensive review of allowances above the basic stipend and recommended that there be no change. Given, as the Synod notes, the non-separated Chair's allowance has been set at the same rate as a Superintendent's allowance (under SO 428(2)), it therefore rises to 10% in 2019.

The Synod argues that the allowance was set in a time when the expectations of a Chair was less than it now is. Non-separated Chairs participate in meetings of Chairs and the Connexional Leaders' Forum, share in all stationing matching, and contribute with their peers to the life of the Connexion in various ways. There are some responsibilities (eg, to serve on the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee or to represent returning Mission Partners in stationing) that have by custom fallen to the Island Chairs. The Conference is minded to agree that 10% of basic stipend seems a disproportionately small contribution in recognition of this.

The Conference therefore accepts the principle of the Memorial and mandates the Secretary of the Conference to instigate a review of the funding of the stipend arrangements for non-separated Chairs.

### **M11 Funding a non-separated Chair**

The Channel Islands Synod, Representative Session (Present: 37; Voting: unanimous) draws the Conference's attention to the matter of the cost of funding a non-separated Chair when they live on one Island (and therefore in one Circuit) but serve both the District and the Connexion and asks the Conference to take the following action:

The situation with regard to non-separated Chairs has remained the same for some decades now. But it has become clear the demands, especially those connexionally and regionally, have markedly increased their workload. We celebrate our increasing partnership with neighbouring Districts, including in matters of safeguarding, complaints and discipline, candidates and probationers and regionally with the Learning Network. We recognise that these, and other connexional commitments, take them out of the District far more often than a decade ago. At present, the second superintendents allowance paid to non-separated Chairs is paid by central funds, but the entirety of the rest of the stipend is paid by the Circuit the minister is resident in. Expenses are paid in the same way as any other District.

The Synod therefore asks the Conference to consider contributing to the stipend from central funds. This could be funded 50/50, half connexional funds and half from the Circuit. We believe that this would further re-enforce the Chair being a connexional person whilst also recognising locally that this is a shared appointment.

#### **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M10.*

### **M12 Substitute District Chair**

The Birmingham District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 118; Voting 117 for, 0 against) asks the Conference to make necessary changes in Standing Orders (principally SO 426) for there to be a substitute for the Chair of District recommended by the District and approved by the Methodist Council who can act for and behalf of a District Chair if she or he is unable by reason of health or some other reason to fulfil her or his responsibilities in the District and the Connexion. The named person should be approved by the Methodist Council so as to be able to attend the Conference, the Connexional Leaders' Forum, District Chairs' Meetings including extraordinary meetings and to receive minutes of all such meetings and communications relating to District Chairs. Where appropriate copies of such communication could also be sent to the substantive Chair if she or he chooses.

#### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District for its memorial.

Standing Order 426(4) makes provision for the appointment of a temporary deputy Chair in the event of the Chair being unable to exercise her or his responsibilities on account of ill-health or other cause. The responsibility for making such an appointment lies with the Synod or the District Policy Committee (or the President should it be in an emergency). Unlike the provision (SO 426(2)) for the appointment of a permanent deputy or deputies, there is no exclusion of particular functions detailed in the Standing Order. It therefore appears to the Conference that in general the request that the District makes can already be met.

There are, however, some specific restrictions which can impinge on these arrangements. The membership of the Conference is determined under clause 14 of the Deed of Union and includes (v) the Chair or Chairs of each home district. Therefore, when the Conference designates a presbyter to be a Chair of District it effectively elects that person to be a member of the Conference and the understanding of the Conference has been that that membership is not transferable.

The purpose of the Connexional Leaders' Forum (CLF) is described in SO 230 as being 'to watch over one another in love in order to support each person in the exercise of her or his particular responsibilities.' Whilst it might be helpful to a deputy Chair to attend the Forum to receive such support, the CLF is not constituted as a body in which the views of a District are represented but rather as a collegial gathering the nature of which is enhanced by consistency of membership throughout the year.

SO 230A makes provision for the Chairs' Meeting. The Chairs meet by custom with the Secretary of the Conference and the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. The Meeting is for 'the discussion of stationing and other matters of mutual concern and for reflection on the work of God in the Districts and Connexion.' It might be that the Chairs agree that it is useful for a deputy to join them if one of their number is unavailable and that the minutes of their meeting might be shared with a deputy; such an agreement might be influenced by (if it can be forecast) the length of time that the deputy is expected to exercise the responsibilities of the Chair. The Conference therefore urges the Chairs' Meeting and the Secretary of the Conference in respect of the membership of the CLF to consider this memorial and to determine relevant processes with regard to temporary deputy Chairs.

The Conference referred the Memorial and its draft reply to the Methodist Council to consider, in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee, the policy issues raised and to report the Conference in 2020.

### **M13 3Generate Voting**

The Cumbria Synod, Representative Session (Present: 74; Voting: unanimous) rejoices in the growth of 3Generate and wishes to thank all those who make this possible. However, the Synod asks for a reconsideration of the process by which young people are elected as representatives from 3Generate to give young people a voice both within and beyond the church.

At present, all delegates to 3Generate have a vote in the election of the Youth President, and representatives to the Conference, the Methodist Council, World Council, British Youth Council and Ecumenical and Social Justice representatives. It is inevitably easier to arrange for large groups to attend from areas of high population than it is to send one or two young people where they are dispersed across a wide area. Also wherever 3Generate is located, for some areas of the Connexion it will simply be too far away. Therefore the voices of young people from rural churches and the more remote parts of the Connexion are inevitably underrepresented. These young people are often in 'ones and twos' both as young people in their Local Church and as Christians in their day to day context. The Synod believes they have insights to share that are ever more relevant for the whole church as we seek to bridge growing cultural divides.

The Synod therefore requests that the process of voting at 3Generate be reviewed, with a view to making it more representative of the whole Connexion, either by giving each District an allocation of

'voting representatives' at 3Gen to be drawn from among those attending, and/or introducing remote voting so that areas without young people attending 3Generate can be fairly represented.

### **Reply**

The Conference welcomes this memorial and thanks the Cumbria Synod for bringing to the attention of the Conference questions of representation in the voting procedures at 3Generate.

In accordance with Standing Order 250 the Children and Youth Assembly has the power to regulate its own procedures, and endeavours to ensure wide representation among members of the Assembly. Tickets are reserved for each District until 30 October after which any remaining are made generally available. In 2018 only three Districts sent no representatives and this was across two regions.

The current 3Generate members of the Conference will be facilitating a session at 3Generate 2019 to review issues around representative voting. The outcomes of the review will be implemented in the election process for 3Generate 2020.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial.

### **M14 Reinstatement of October data collection**

The Teddington (35/37) Circuit Meeting (Present: 31; Voting: 30 for, 0 against) requests that the Conference directs that the collection of the number who attended Sunday and mid-week worship during the first four weeks of October be reinstated as from the 2019 return.

The Teddington Circuit Meeting notes the change in the data collected during the annual returns from Local Churches for the Statistics for Mission return.

The Circuit Meeting particularly notes the change from collecting the number who attended Sunday and midweek worship during the first four weeks of October, to now collecting only the annual "average attendance (all ages) at a main worship service".

The Circuit Meeting notes that such a change in data collected can frustrate attempts to gain an accurate appreciation of long-term trends and disregards some of the excellent work being done through Fresh Expressions and other non-traditional forms of worship.

The Teddington Circuit Meeting therefore requests that the Conference directs that the collection of the number who attended Sunday and midweek worship during the first four weeks of October be reinstated as from the 2019 return.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Teddington Circuit for its memorial.

The Conference considered the collection of statistics in its response to memorial M13 to the 2018 Conference where it agreed that the amount of statistical data should be reduced (the collection of membership data be collected every three years, rather than on an annual basis) so that churches, Circuits and Districts could spend the time saved on missional activity. The reply reiterated that:

*...It has ...been a constant refrain from Circuits and Districts that the process of collecting these statistics (the October count) is a burdensome piece of process that Local Churches are struggling to carry out. With the growth in items of data being collected this has put further pressure on churches at a time when people want to focus on activities that encourage growth. It therefore seems that, in the light of the renewed emphasis on Our Calling, it would be helpful to reduce substantially the data collection requirements.*

*The Conference therefore agrees that only minimal data should be collected, and that this data should consist only of membership numbers (which need to include transfers in and out as well as new members) and normally an average attendance figure...*

The Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) received a report in September 2018 reviewing the collection and use of statistics, which noted the Conference's reply to M13 (2018). The review worked from the first principle that the statistics and the work undertaken in collecting them, particularly locally, must not be so demanding as to detract from the main priority of the mission of God. The purpose of the statistics must be to inform the particular form of that mission and enable the Connexional Team to support and resource it.

The report stated that the challenge remains of ensuring that the breadth of the Church's mission in the variety of contexts is known about, so that it can be supported and resourced, whilst at the same time reducing the administrative burden. However, it was felt that the burden of the 'October count' on Local Churches must be significantly reduced. It was also felt that in the light of the renewed emphasis on *Our Calling*, membership needs to be restated as the important measure signifying a sense of belonging and commitment to the Local Church.

While some Circuits have requested that more data be collected, it has been far easier to obtain statistical returns with the reduced level of data collection, as we now have a very impressive overall response rate. It is accepted that this may make it difficult to make meaningful comparisons, however churches can retain their own statistical data for such purposes if they so wish.

In reaffirming *Our Calling* the Conference has continued to express hope and confidence in the life and ministry of the Methodist Church. By doing so, it has encouraged such expressions of newer ways of being church that the memorial has specified, as well as Sunday morning worship attendance and other forms of worship, ministry, mission and evangelism that are taking place across the Connexion. The Conference therefore encourages churches, Circuits and Districts to move away from focusing on statistical trends and to ensure emphasis is on fulfilling and responding to *Our Calling*.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

#### **M15 Recording of Statistics at LEPs**

The West Norfolk (14/20) Circuit Meeting (Present: 43; Voting: 37 for, 1 against) is concerned about the way in which Methodist statistics are recorded in Local Ecumenical Partnerships. The wording on the statistical returns website is as follows:

*Please indicate how many LEP members (if any) are specifically members of the Methodist Church, ie not "joint" or "ecumenical" members, or members of other denominations. If all LEP members are "joint" or "ecumenical" members write "0" (zero).*

The West Norfolk Circuit Meeting is concerned about this for two reasons.

- i) There would appear to be a potential risk that "joint" or "ecumenical" members are not included in our Methodist statistics at all.
- ii) The use of the word "specifically". Members received into the Methodist Church at a joint Anglican/Methodist confirmation service are just as much Methodist members as those received through traditional Methodist confirmation/reception into membership. So, a minister in our Circuit sharing in a confirmation service with a bishop (and following the guidelines in CPD and the advice of the Connexional Ecumenical Officer) would always, immediately following the confirmation, explicitly and specifically before the gathered congregation receive those who have been jointly confirmed as members of the Methodist Church. Because of the way in which the word "specifically" is defined above an LEP in our circuit does not record members received through "joint confirmation" as Methodist members. Hence the risk referred to in i) above.

The Circuit invites those responsible for the statistical returns, the Connexional Ecumenical Officer and the Faith and Order Committee to consider these questions and to respond.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the West Norfolk Circuit for its memorial and for drawing attention to the misleading wording on the statistical returns website.

Those received into Methodist membership who are also members of other Christian communions, whether or not in the context of a Local Ecumenical Partnership are members of the Methodist Church and should be counted as such.

The Conference therefore accepts the substance of this memorial and notes that the wording on the statistical returns website has been amended to ensure that all Methodist members are included in the statistical count.

## **M16 Membership**

The Tavistock (24/7) Circuit Meeting (Present: 29; Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference to consider redefining the concept of membership in the Methodist Church. There are two reasons within our Circuit for requesting this.

The first is that a number of very active and committed people within the Local Church choose not to join. The main reason is that they know themselves to be already members of God's church through their Baptism. The concept of membership of a particular denomination is unnecessary and indeed contradictory to most of these people's understanding of being a member of the whole body of Christ.

The second reason is that we have, within the Circuit, a pioneering context that is ecumenical in nature. The other denominations represented are not local to this isolated community and therefore it is

impossible to establish a Memorandum of Understanding. The Methodist members make up the minority of the congregation but are currently the only ones allowed to vote on church matters.

Our current concept of membership is isolating people in the one case and disempowering the formation of a church in the other. We therefore ask the Conference to replace the concept of membership with that of Baptism into the Christian faith and adherence to the local congregation.

## Reply

The Conference thanks the Tavistock Circuit for highlighting current questions about the concept of membership in the Methodist Church. The Conference notes that the issue of membership has been the subject of reports on several occasions, particularly *Discipleship and Church Membership* (2002) and the *Report of the Membership Working Party of the Faith and Order Committee* (2010). The latter included reflection on a wider consultation about how Methodists view and experience membership, and noted the emphasis placed on the more general theme of discipleship. It concluded:

“That *Called to Love and Praise* in 1999 and then again the Methodist Worship Book in 1999 expressed the mind of the church with regard to the centrality of Membership within the Methodist experience has led the committee to conclude that the notion of membership is not only faithful to Methodism, but is a valuable expression of the individual’s relationship with the church catholic. All of this requires promotion and celebration for the understanding of membership as it is presently articulated not only reflects the development of discipleship in Methodism, but also articulates the way in which the people called Methodists live and crucially offer a way of living in the household of God to wider society. Far from being about an individualistic expression of belonging, it is at one and the same time the most local expression of being in connexion with a wider body, and a clear and unambiguous expression of the role of the local community in the church catholic. If the core elements of membership are not clearly understood, then there is much to be done by way of promotion and education, for by that a vital expression of Methodism will be celebrated and expressed.”<sup>1</sup>

It is important to distinguish the Methodist concept of membership from Baptism. Baptism is a sacrament of the Church. It marks entry into the one holy catholic and apostolic church, of which the Methodist Church is a part. Baptism marks a new relationship with the Church of Christ and is a rite of initiation, the ritual beginning of a journey of faith.

The Methodist service of Confirmation and Reception into Membership marks a significant point along the journey of faith, which starts with Baptism. Confirmation reminds us that we are baptised and that God continues to be at work in our lives: we respond by affirming that we belong to Christ and to the whole people of God. At a Service of Confirmation, baptised Christians are also received into membership of the Methodist Church and take their place as such in local congregations.<sup>2</sup> If a candidate for membership in the Methodist Church has not been baptised then that sacrament should be administered either before or in connection with the service of reception and confirmation. Confirmation occurs only once. Christians who belong to other churches, including those confirmed in other traditions, may be received into membership of the Methodist Church by transfer or extension. It is therefore possible to belong to other churches as well as being a member of the Methodist Church.

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Membership Working Party of the Faith and Order Committee* (2010), 4.5.

<sup>2</sup> As stated in the *Methodist Worship Book*, 1999, pp.60-61.

The Methodist concept of membership is an expression of a common discipline of Christian life, which stems from our theology, history and ecclesiology. It “offers a structured way in which to nurture, encourage and care for individuals whilst making clear that this is a corporate responsibility of the whole community of faith”<sup>3</sup>, a reminder of the corporate nature of discipleship. There are many contemporary challenges to understandings of belonging. Such questions, some similar to those raised in this memorial, were explored in a recent reconsideration of connexionalism. The 2017 Conference adopted the report *The Gift of Connexionalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* and reaffirmed connexionalism as a central tenet of Methodist ecclesiology.

Questions about aspects of our understandings of membership and belonging, however, continue to be raised, and the idea of ‘membership’ more broadly is understood differently in different contexts, cultures and communities, with various assumptions often being brought to the Methodist concept of membership. Whilst there are resources to help further reflection (for example, *Called By Name*) these do not always adequately convey the distinctive way in which Methodists understand membership and what it means to be a member of the Methodist church, nor do they directly address more recent questions raised, including those from fresh expressions of church. In the light of *The Gift of Connexionalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* and these continuing questions and challenges regarding the concept of membership in the Methodist Church, it would be helpful and timely for there to be a review of the Methodist understanding of membership. The Conference therefore declines the particular action suggested in this memorial but directs the Faith and Order Committee to explore issues of membership in the Methodist Church and bring a report to the 2021 Conference, which outlines the Methodist understanding of membership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **M17 Application of policies**

The Melton Mowbray (23/12) Circuit Meeting (Present: 26; Voting: 21 for, 1 against) raises concerns that the Methodist Church has become too bureaucratic.

Whilst recognising the need to comply with statutory legislation and acknowledging past mistakes, the Methodist Church’s current requirements for churches in relation to safeguarding, data protection (GDPR) and Premises Hire Licenses are so complex and time consuming that they impact on the real work of the Church of mission, worship and outreach. The duties of Safeguarding, Data Protection Officers are so onerous that it is increasingly difficult to find members willing to fulfil these roles. Churches and Circuits are resorting to employing staff to do them which uses scarce resources and again impacts on the Church’s ability to fulfil its purpose.

Fundamental principles are that all procedures and documentation should be user friendly and minimise administration time. We ask the Conference to reconsider the application of these policies in practice and the negative impact they are having on the work of the Church and its members.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Melton Mowbray Circuit for its memorial and for raising the important issue of support for managing trustees in respect of data protection, safeguarding and licenses.

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<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Membership Working Party of the Faith and Order Committee (2010), 2.2*



The Conference recognises the ever increasing regulatory burden placed on managing trustees and the need to employ people for roles that might have once been undertaken by a volunteer. This situation is not however unique to the Methodist Church nor is it Methodist policies that are necessarily leading to all the increased burdens. The Connexional Team makes every effort to assist managing trustees in meeting the regulatory compliance and best practice through precedent documents and policies. The Conference reaffirms that safeguarding work is a vital part of the Methodist Church's response to the love of God. It is an integral part of the Methodist Church's witness to God through Jesus Christ as it seeks to be a community marked by love and care for one another and for all whom it encounters.

It is not within the power of the Conference to remove the regulatory burdens or legal compliance from managing trustees. However, the 2018 Conference directed the Methodist Council in response to Notice of Motion 201 to consider alternative models of managing trusteeship and to bring proposals to the Conference in 2020.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial but directs the Council to consider the concerns raised by Melton Mowbray Circuit in this memorial when reviewing alternative models of managing trusteeship.

### **M18 Ministerial Workload**

The East Anglia District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 115; Voting: unanimous) notes the ever increasing pressures brought on ministers, Districts, Circuits and Local Churches by the increasing demands made by the Conference and the Connexional Team in addition to increasing statutory regulation. In some Circuits there are no suitable people available to carry out existing responsibilities, never mind new work.

The Synod notes that the Connexional Team recently convened 'a listening day' on 'ministerial workload' with representatives from almost all parts of the Connexion. This initiative was appreciated.

The Synod also notes that when a report with proposals is brought to the Conference it includes information about the financial implications and availability of connexional staff time to carry them out. This is very helpful information.

The Synod requests that similar arrangements be made in respect of draft reports to the Conference, whereby clear information on the amount of extra work expected of ministers, Districts, Circuits and Local Churches be given in each case. Similarly, suggestions might be made as to existing work which could cease.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the East Anglia District for its memorial and for its appreciation of the work being done by the Connexional Team to address issues around ministerial workload.

Along with many other occupations and professions, those in ordained ministry have witnessed considerable changes in the demands that are made on their time over the last decade. Developments in technology, statutory requirements, and the ageing demographic of the Church are all cited as factors which have changed the ways in which ministers are expected to work. The picture is not one of a

simple increase but the result of the 'listening day' was to confirm the impression that many ministers feel under pressure to achieve more than they have the time to achieve.

It is unfortunate that some of that pressure is perceived as coming from the Connexional Team; the role of the Team is to implement that which is asked of it by the Conference or the Council or to offer guidance in response to the demands of statutory agencies.

The Synod is right that the Conference needs to bear this in mind as it leads the Church in fulfilling *Our Calling*. The additional time that is required by any development in the life of the Church is often hard to gauge, but the Conference agrees that it should be considered and therefore:

- (a) asks those writing reports for the Conference or the Council which involve new work to be aware of this issue; and
- (b) directs the Council to ask members of the Connexional Team who provide guidance in report-writing to ensure that this is one aspect writers and committees are asked to consider.

The Conference also reminds itself to be mindful of the impact on ministerial workloads when passing notices of motion and responding to memorials.

The Conference accepts the memorial.

### **M19 Chinese Ministry**

The Newcastle District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 144; Voting: unanimous), celebrates the growth of mission amongst Chinese communities in the North East, especially amongst Chinese students. The Darlington and Newcastle Districts, in shared work over a number of years, have witnessed the growth of Chinese Methodist congregations in Middlesbrough, Durham and Newcastle and the development of local, lay leadership including the ministries of local preachers.

The Synod notes the shortage of Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking ministers across the Connexion and the need to nurture the call to ordained ministry amongst Chinese and other ethnically based congregations in a contextual and incarnational way. The Synod also notes and is grateful for recent connexional work on vocations and on a Circuit Based Learning Pathway (CBLP) at The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham. The Synod asks the Conference to direct the Ministries Committee, working closely with Queen's, to explore options for developing the CBLP in a way which nurtures the call to presbyteral and diaconal ministry in ethnically based congregations and enables them to train for ordained ministry in a way which reflects the particular incarnational and contextual character of their ministry and takes note of distinctive language requirements in training and deployment.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Newcastle District for its memorial and joins with the District in celebrating the growth of Chinese congregations in Britain.

Members of the Connexional Team and District Chairs have worked in various ways with representatives of Chinese Methodists to support and encourage their ministry. This has included the provision of resources for the training of local preachers into Mandarin and arrangements with the Sarawak Conference of the Methodist Church in Malaysia who have identified ministers to serve here. However, the future leadership of the Chinese communities will come from those communities themselves; the Chinese ministers' group has set itself targets to encourage vocations to worship leading, preaching, and

ordination over the next few years. The Connexion's Vocations Strategy has included work with the Belonging Together Ministers' Group on how we develop vocational discernment opportunities for ministers from BAME backgrounds.

The opportunities presented by the Circuit-Based Learning Pathway have proved beneficial to students since the programme was developed three years ago. It is important to note that students are appointed to Circuits and not to particular churches; the programme seeks to develop ministers who will be able to serve widely in the British Connexion. For those whose first language is not English or those who are willing to learn another language to engage with a particular group an appropriately structured CBLP might be the right pathway in initial formation.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial and directs the Ministries Committee to work with the CBLP working group to investigate where appropriate possibilities might be found.

## **M20 Chinese Ministry**

The Darlington District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 85; Voting: 84 for, 0 against) celebrates the growth of mission amongst Chinese communities in the North East, especially amongst Chinese students.

The Darlington and Newcastle Districts, in shared work over a number of years, have witnessed the growth of Chinese Methodist congregations in Middlesbrough, Durham and Newcastle and the development of local, lay leadership including the ministries of local preachers. The Synod notes the shortage of Mandarin and Cantonese speaking ministers across the Connexion and the need to nurture the call to ordained ministry amongst Chinese and other ethnically based congregations in a contextual and incarnational way.

The Synod also notes and is grateful for recent connexional work on vocations and on a Circuit Based Learning Pathway (CBLP) at The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham, and asks the Conference to direct the Ministries Committee, working closely with Queen's, to explore options for developing the CBLP in a way which nurtures the call to presbyteral and diaconal ministry in ethnically based congregations and enables them to train for ordained ministry in a way which reflects the particular incarnational and contextual character of their ministry and takes note of distinctive language requirements in training and deployment.

### **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M19.*

## **M21 Vocations**

The Bolton and Rochdale District, Representative Session (Present: 58; Voting: unanimous) welcomes the work done by the Connexional Team and the Ministries Committee on the Vocations Strategy. Given the current concern about provision of ministry throughout the Connexion, the Synod requests that the relevant officers be given the resources and time to explore this area as a matter of urgency so that the learning and proposals may be shared across the wider church.

### **Reply**

The Conference is grateful to the Bolton and Rochdale District for its memorial and its enthusiasm for the emerging Vocations Strategy. The Conference shares the District's sense of urgency and notes that (as reported by the Methodist Council) the Strategy and Resources Committee has already allocated additional resources to this piece of work. The Conference also welcomes the appointment of a Connexional Vocations Advisor.

The Conference notes that the implementation of the Vocations Strategy will involve a number of connexional initiatives but also that challenging disciples to consider a call to a form of ministry happens in individual conversations and in meetings and services in Local Churches. In accepting the memorial, the Conference encourages all Districts, Circuits and churches to engage with the materials produced and to be increasingly bold in challenging our members to consider what it is to which they are called as part of the Body of Christ.

## **M22 Amendment to Standing Order 731**

The Southend and Leigh (34/10) Circuit Meeting (Present: 40; Voting 37 for, 0 against) requests the Conference to amend Standing Order 731 so that former Salvation Army officers are specifically included among those 'Former Ministers of other Churches' eligible to apply for reception into Full Connexion.

The requested amendment would remedy an inconsistency in the way that the *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church* recognises the ministry of Salvation Army officers.

Standing Order 730 legislates for ministers of other churches to 'transfer' into ministry in the Methodist Church. Here, 'officers of the Salvation Army' are specifically included among those ministers of other churches eligible to apply to be received into Full Connexion. The Standing Order requires Salvation Army officers to be ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament upon being received into Full Connexion.

Standing Order 731 legislates for 'former ministers' of other churches to apply to be received into Full Connexion. In this case, however, former officers of the Salvation Army are not eligible to apply to be received into Full Connexion.

Apparently, because Salvation Army officers are not ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament, there is considered to be no justification for exemption from the candidature process (*Conference Agenda* 1986, p. 807). In effect, Standing Order 731 withdraws the recognition of the ministry of Salvation Army officers conferred in Standing Order 730.

Besides the importance of being theologically consistent with regard to the recognition of the ministry of Salvation Army officers, there are practical implications to adopting such an amendment. In particular, the Southend and Leigh Circuit Meeting:

- Recognises the continuing shortage of Methodist presbyters available for stationing;
- Affirms the positive experience within this circuit of pastoral ministry exercised by former officers of the Salvation Army;
- Believes that implementing this Memorial would encourage former officers of the Salvation Army no less than former ministers of other churches, where appropriate, to apply to be received into Full Connexion and (after ordination) stationed as presbyters in circuit appointments.

We assure members of the Conference of 2019 of our prayerful support in their conferring.

## Reply

The Conference thanks the Southend and Leigh Circuit for its memorial and for the assurance of its prayerful support.

The Conference joins with the Circuit in giving thanks to God for the ministry that has been exercised in many capacities by former officers of the Salvation Army and recognises the sense of distress that has been felt by some of those who have sought to transfer into the presbyteral ministry of the Methodist Church in Britain and discovered that because they no longer have a ministry with the Salvation Army that route (via SO 731) is not open to them.

The Circuit alludes to the key Conference decision which was taken in 1986. It is helpful to be reminded of the context of that decision which was the introduction (in response to a memorial of 1984) of the provision in what is now SO 731 enabling those who had formerly been in ministry in another Conference or Church to transfer into the ministry of the Methodist Church. Why this could not apply to former officers of the Salvation Army was explained:

*It is our custom to receive Salvation Army officers, and others not yet ordained, by transfer as probationers, with ordination following in due course. This is appropriate because the applicant has been in pastoral work equivalent to ordained ministry and there has been no intervening stage between ministry in another church and acceptance by the Conference. But where a former officer of the Salvation Army or an unordained pastor of another church has allowed that standing to lapse (or been deprived of it) and has in the interval become a member of the Methodist Church, the normal process of candidature should be followed, with whatever allowances for examination, etc, the Candidates Committee might grant. It is the fact of ordination into the ministry of the church of God by the laying on of hands with prayer, which the Methodist Church recognises as having universal standing, which makes the candidature process inappropriate, and justifies the alternative procedures we are proposing, but where such an ordination has not taken place and the applicant is no longer in a pastoral relationship to his own church, no special procedures are justified.<sup>4</sup>*

It is not therefore the case that the recognition of the previous ministry is withdrawn; rather, it is that there is no continuing status that can be considered. One of the questions that the Candidates Selection Committee (or its Secretary) asks when considering applications under SO731 (or indeed under SO730) is 'has this person been ordained with permanent intent'. With Salvation Army officers, as with any minister from another Church who has not been ordained, there is no permanent intent and therefore, if the minister has ceased to be a minister with that denomination, no status to transfer. Should such ministers find themselves in a Methodist church they do so as lay people and therefore should be invited to become members. They are eligible to become Local Preachers (SO 566A) and (after a period of time) to candidate for ministry. As the General Purposes Committee argued in 1986, the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee can make particular recommendations about the length of initial formation and probation taking into account the training for and experience in ministry that the candidate brings.

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<sup>4</sup> Conference Agenda 1986, pp806f.

The Conference believes that the decision made in 1986 remains the appropriate response to these cases and is in accord with our understanding of the significance of ordination. It therefore declines the memorial.

### **M23 Obituaries**

The Isle of Man Synod, Representative Session (Present: 47; Voting: unanimous) welcomes the report received by the 2018 Conference on Ministry in the Methodist Church, and the affirmation of the ministry of the whole people of God contained within it. We note however that when the Conference publishes obituaries for presbyters and deacons, the historic form of language used at the conclusion of each includes the phrase “in the xxx year of their ministry”, counting from the year of that person’s ordination.

Recognising that many of our presbyters and deacons enter ordained ministry having previously served in lay ministry as local preachers, or with experience of being in other forms of lay ministry whether formally employed by the church or not, counting back to a date of ordination to determine the ‘year of their ministry’ stands at odds against our belief in the ministry of the whole people of God.

We therefore request that the Conference affirms its belief that many of our presbyters and deacons have had an equally valid and valued period of ministry prior to their ordination, and directs that for the sake of clarity on this matter, future obituaries conclude with the modified statement “In the xxx year of their **ordained** ministry” and encourages other publications bearing the Methodist name to follow suit.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Isle of Man District for its memorial and for its prayerful engagement with the report on Ministry in the Methodist Church. The Conference concurs that the phrase at the end of the obituary does appear to offer a more limited definition of the word ‘ministry’ than that which the report invites us to celebrate.

The obituaries recognise that the ordained offer particular and sometimes sacrificial service to the Church and that a phase of that ministry begins at the point that a minister enters her or his first appointment. The solution that the District offers to clarify this point would require a revision of the current practice. The ‘nth year of her/his ministry’ is calculated from the year of travel shown in the *Minutes*, which is not usually the year in which the presbyter or deacon was ordained but commonly that in which she or he was first stationed. A more exact phraseology might be ‘in the nth year of their **presbyteral/ diaconal** ministry’.

The question is whether such a change is really necessary. Although we affirm the ministry of the whole people of God, it is still our common parlance to speak of both presbyters and deacons as ‘ministers’, following the usage of *Signalling Vocation, Clarifying Identity* (2012 Conference, following the adoption of the proposals by the 2008 Conference). In short, we know what we mean by the phrase which has been used in this context for many years, before and after the Conference adopted ‘The Ministry of the People of God’ in 1988.

The Conference accepts that this is a practice that would benefit from review and refers this memorial to the Ministries Committee directing it to consult with the Faith and Order Committee and to make a recommendation to the Conference of 2021.

## **M24 Process of submitting portfolios for worship leading and preaching**

The Wirral (18/9) Circuit Meeting (Present: 59; Voting: 53 for, 0 against) requests the Conference to direct that the process of submission of portfolios for the Worship: Leading & Preaching course includes the facility to submit in hard copy as an alternative to the current requirement to upload digital documents to Moodle. This request arises for three reasons;

First, the degree of technology literacy required. We are finding, especially in this Circuit, and partly due to the age demographics of those currently on trial or training as worship leaders, that many are really struggling, not with the course material and content, but with the technology.

Secondly, a significant number of those training as Worship Leaders are opting not to submit a portfolio. Again this is not because of the work, but because of difficulties with the technology, thus limiting the scope of their recognition solely to their Local Church.

Thirdly, we consider it discriminatory to insist on presentation of portfolios being by electronic means, given that many people (across many age and socio-economic groups) do not have personal IT facilities or the funds with which to obtain them or maintain broadband internet. Our experience of offering support through making facilities available in churches etc is that this is not conducive to effective personal study.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Wirral Circuit for its memorial and for its commitment to help worship leaders and local preachers proclaim the good news.

*Worship: Leading & Preaching* was conceived and has been developed as a blended learning course, delivered (and regularly updated) online. Being online enables much of the content of the course to be presented as video, audio or pictorial material, which would not be possible in a paper-based format. We recognise that for some computer technology can be a barrier. With this in mind Ministries: Vocations and Worship staff are working hard to develop the course to make it easier for those who are less familiar with computers to access the materials, as part of this; a new website design will be introduced in the autumn.

In parallel with most educational institutions portfolio submission is required to be submitted electronically. This ensures that materials can be checked for originality, and that assessment and moderation can be carried out efficiently and fairly and ensure that we are using the church's resources well. This applies particularly to the essential forms and cover sheets that contain the core reflections of the student. However, it is acceptable for some items in portfolios to be handwritten, provided a scanned copy is made to include in the portfolio for moderation. This process, if facilitated by the Circuit should not interrupt the process of personal study.

The Conference takes seriously any concerns about discrimination. The Conference accepts that there are some who for various reasons will find it difficult to undertake *Worship: Leading & Preaching* without additional financial or practical support. Recognising that is not simply the submission of portfolio material that depends on access to the internet and computer equipment, the Conference declines the memorial but refers the issues contained within it to the Ministries Committee and to the Board of Studies, asking

- that guidance be produced for Circuits about practical assistance for those who find it difficult to study and submit through electronic media;
- that Circuits be made aware of possible sources of funding to support those unable to buy equipment;
- that the electronic platforms used are as accessible as they can be to those with particular needs and varying levels of experience in using computers.

## **M25 Development of Worship Leaders and Preachers**

The Yorkshire North and East District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 145; Voting: 110 for, 20 against) acknowledges the significant investment of resources in developing *Worship: Leading & Preaching* as the training course for local preachers and worship leaders. It also notes the recent introduction of peer review for local preachers, which has clarified and codified a requirement for mutual support, accountability and lifelong learning, as well as the requirement to attend an annual service of re-affirmation. The enhanced training for worship leaders has enabled them to develop and ground their call.

The Synod acknowledges and celebrates the ongoing and vital ministry of local preachers and worship leaders in delivering worship and in contributing in many other ways to local church and circuit life. It pays tribute to all those who have responded and continue to respond to God's call, recognising the significant cost to themselves and their families.

Noting also the need for new worship leaders and preachers, the Synod urges the Conference to ensure that their work is made more visible and central within the life of the Connexion and to enhance the ways that they are valued and affirmed by the Connexion as follows:

1. To require an annual report to the Conference from the Connexional Officer responsible to the Ministries Committee for the development of the ministry of worship leaders and local preachers which should include:
  - a. an account of the development, activities and reflections of local preachers and worship leaders as reported by the returns submitted by Local Preachers' Meeting Secretaries.
  - b. updates on the continuing refinement and development of *Worship: Leading & Preaching*.
  - c. reflections on the impact of peer review.
2. To require the report also to indicate:
  - a. the numbers of worship leaders and local preachers in training, numbers successfully submitting portfolios A and B, and the numbers admitted as local preachers.
  - b. the names of those to whom long-service certificates have been awarded and those local preachers who have died in the previous year.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Yorkshire North and East District Synod for its memorial and for their wish to celebrate the ministry of worship leaders and local preachers.

The Conference welcomes the suggestion that the work of worship leaders and local preachers, and in particular their initial training and ongoing development will be reported to the Conference. In future, this information should be included in the reports of the Ministries Committee to the Council.



The information requested in the memorial will be made available through the quarterly Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' News and other communications.

The Conference accepts the memorial.

## **M26 Safeguarding Training**

The North Lancashire (21/16) Circuit Meeting (Present: 49; Voting: unanimous) affirms the Methodist Church's commitment to safeguarding and to making our churches safe places for all, and recognises the vital importance of safeguarding children, vulnerable adults and indeed all those who are part of the church in any way, and we are thankful for the commitment and dedication of all those involved in safeguarding. However, we ask the Conference to reconsider the requirement agreed at the 2016 Conference and Methodist Council 2017 which states that all local preachers and worship leaders are required to attend Advanced Module safeguarding training.

The safeguarding training contained within the Methodist Church's approved Foundation module, which all local preachers and worship leaders must complete, contains the central message that all concerns should not be investigated but passed on to key people, we support and affirm this principle. Safeguarding concerns should be sensitively handled by a small number of people with significant skills and training and with an appropriate approach and, as such, Advanced Module safeguarding training has a significantly higher expectation from its participants. Local preachers and worship leaders may not be the right people to have an advanced level of training and may not have the necessary skills and gifts required.

The North Lancashire Circuit Meeting is concerned that rather than making the church a safer place, by expecting local preachers and worship leaders to take on this additional responsibility, we may in fact be introducing a greater risk to our communities. We, therefore, ask the Conference to remove local preachers and worship leaders from the list of people required to attend Advanced Module safeguarding training – in so doing, we believe that safeguarding would be strengthened rather than weakened.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the North Lancashire Circuit for its memorial and affirmation of support for enabling the church to fulfil its promise to be a safe space for everyone. At the 2016 Conference, and subsequently endorsed by the Council, which investigated the arguments further, it was agreed that it was appropriate for local preachers and worship leaders to be included in office holders who should undertake both Foundation and Advanced Module training.

Reviewing these again, the Safeguarding Committee has concluded that it would not be advisable to change the Church's policy in this area for the following reasons:

- The Methodist Church believes safeguarding is a theological issue and that all those responsible for speaking of God through leading worship and preaching reflect a theology of safeguarding by how they speak of God, human nature, sin and the divine/human relationship.
- Local preachers and worship leaders are often looked upon as leaders within the church by nature of the role they play and the status and symbolic and representative power they may be

ascribed by others. As such it is important that the Church recognises this and ensures that those fulfilling this office are adequately informed and trained to be able to respond appropriately to safeguarding situations

- Not all safeguarding situations require an emergency response where either District Safeguarding Officers or external agencies are contacted. There are a number of safeguarding situations that require time, careful listening and understanding in order to support, encourage and assist members and visitors to Methodist worship and activities. This can particularly be the case when someone is considering sharing sensitive information which may ultimately lead to a safeguarding investigation but in the early stages is more about the approach, attitude and accessibility of the officer the person chooses to speak to
- The Advanced Module is not designed to create experts in safeguarding. The Church already has clear procedures about who is responsible for this within Circuits and Districts and this is made very clear in the course
- The Advanced Module ensures that those who hold an office of leadership and responsibility in the Church have sufficient knowledge of Methodist safeguarding procedures, key developments in safeguarding understanding and practice, and how this relates to our theological understanding
- The overwhelming feedback from those who have undertaken the Advanced Module course, including a number of local preachers and worship leaders, is highly positive that the course is informative, helpful and appropriate to the needs of leaders within the Church
- Given the focus on safeguarding within society and particularly involving sister denominations at the current time, it would be perceived negatively for the Methodist Church to appear to be reducing its commitment to safeguarding training having implemented all the findings of the Past Cases Review.

Part of the concern expressed in the Memorial is the time that is demanded through training. Within the Connexional Team, staff in the Learning Network, Safeguarding and Ministry Development work together to enable training to be offered in ways that are suitable for Circuits and Districts. Superintendents can work with regional staff to explore how their Circuits' needs can best be met. However, the Safeguarding Committee remains persuaded that training is best offered as a discrete event (rather than integrated, eg, into a Local Preachers' Meeting), and that it is vital that there is a consistent approach in what is offered across the Connexion.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

## **M27 Safeguarding Advanced Module, Required Attendance List**

The Newcastle upon Tyne District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 144; Voting: 141 for; 3 against) notes that in 2016 the Conference adopted resolution 34/2 which directed the Methodist Council to: *review the required attendance for the Leadership Module of Creating Safer Space with a view to amending the list to:*

- a) include those lay persons who are appointed to exercise pastoral leadership within a local church;*
- b) remove the local preachers and worship leaders;*
- c) remove Safeguarding Officers Church and include in the warmly invited but not mandatory list for the Leadership Module.*

*Daily Record 7/9/2, 2016 Conference page 34*

In responding to this resolution in MC/17/13 the Methodist Council declined to remove local preachers and worship leaders from the list of those required to attend the then Leadership, now Advanced, module. In explaining their decision, the Council said *'the reason for including these categories in the mandatory list is to recognise that in many cases Local Preachers and Worship Leaders play other roles in churches beyond worship leading and their very designation means that many people will assume that they are leaders by nature of their prominence in worship and organisational positions'* and *'in order to fulfil these responsibilities they need resourcing, supporting and encouraging. Further training in safeguarding beyond initial foundation module gives expression to the promise made at accreditation to continue to study and learn.* (MC/17/13 para 2.1.5). In paragraph 2.1.4 the Council also stated that the Leadership Module would be 5 years old next year and be revised.

During the current connexional year, members of the Synod have begun attending the new Advanced Module. Those who have attended the new course have found the training helpful, particularly those parts relating to Safer Recruitment, Online Grooming and Safeguarding Contracts. Those who have attended the course, however, felt strongly there was very little content which related to those who are Local Preachers or Worship Leaders and those parts which do, for example how survivors may engage in different contexts including worship, could be delivered in the Local Preachers' Meeting.

In light of the fact that when the Council passed the resolutions in MC/17/13 they did not know the content of the new Advanced Module, the Synod now asks the Conference to:

- 1) remove local preachers and worship leaders from the Required Attendance list for the Advanced Module from the 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2019 as the Synod believes it does not provide relevant *'further training in safeguarding beyond initial foundation module'* for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders as the Council had intended,
- 2) direct the Methodist Council to consider whether relevant parts of the Advanced Module could be provided as short courses to be delivered within the Local Preachers' Meeting on an annual basis to enable local preachers to keep their safeguarding training up to date as part of their *'expression to the promise made at accreditation to continue to study and learn'* as the Council hoped for in MC/17/13.

### **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M26.*

### **M28 Streamlining Discipline Processes with regard to Safeguarding Panel Outcomes following Risk Assessments**

The Newcastle upon Tyne District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 144; Voting: 143 for, 1 against), asks the Conference to review the process and relevant Standing Orders connected to the failure of a member or minister of the Methodist Church to comply with the outcomes of a safeguarding panel following a risk assessment.

Where a person who has been subject to a risk assessment and consideration of that assessment by the Safeguarding Committee under SO 232 but declines to comply with the direction of the Committee, a complaint can be brought against that person. However, the Complaints Process, which has at its heart healing and reconciliation, seems manifestly unsuitable for a safeguarding process which is designed to ensure compliance and the management in light of the decision of the Safeguarding Committee.

Therefore, the Synod asks the Conference to consider a more streamlined process, which enables the discipline of the Methodist Church, as exercised by the Safeguarding Committee, to be more easily upheld by reference to a Connexional Discipline Committee, in cases where a person refuses to comply with the discipline of the Church.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Newcastle upon Tyne District for its memorial and for drawing the attention of the Conference to some of the difficulties inherent in the Church's processes for complaints and discipline where safeguarding matters are concerned. The Synod is right to note that there can be a tension between the aims of our complaints process (which is to achieve reconciliation so that God's people can experience healing and go on together to follow our calling) and safeguarding (which aims to ensure that all God's people are protected from harm) though the two are complementary rather than contradictory.

In other cases, a complaint can be brought against an individual of the Church if they refuse to comply with recommendations following a risk assessment. It would be then be for the local complaint officers to decide how best to proceed. The Standing Orders allow for the appropriate use of the power of suspension in Standing Order 013 if the necessary delay means that the risk is still to be addressed.

Nevertheless the Conference accepts that it may be possible to streamline the process and directs the Law and Polity Committee to consider the inclusion of a provision for immediate referral to the Connexional Complaints Panel in such circumstances. The Conference also directs Law and Polity Committee to review Standing Order 1120(4) and (5) and to consider making additional provision for a direct referral to the Connexional Complaints Panel where the complaint is about non-compliance with a direction under SO 232(2)(i).

The Conference accepts the memorial.

## **M29 Streamlining Discipline Processes with regard to Safeguarding Panel Outcomes following Risk Assessments**

The Darlington District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 85; Voting: 83 for, 2 against) asks the Conference to review the process and relevant Standing Orders connected to the failure of a member or minister of the Methodist Church to comply with the outcomes of a safeguarding panel following a risk assessment.

Where a person who has been subject to a risk assessment and consideration of that assessment by the Safeguarding Committee under SO 232 but declines to comply with the direction of the Committee, a complaint can be brought against that person. However, the complaints process, which has at its heart healing and reconciliation, seems manifestly unsuitable for a safeguarding process which is designed to ensure compliance and management in light of the decision of the Safeguarding Committee.

Therefore, the Synod asks the Conference to consider a more streamlined process which enables the discipline of the Methodist Church as exercised by the Safeguarding Committee to be more easily upheld by reference to a Connexional Discipline Committee, in cases where a person refuses to comply with the discipline of the Church.

## **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M28.*

### **M30 Supervision for Lay Employees**

The Newcastle upon Tyne Synod, Representative Session (Present: 144; Voting: unanimous) appreciates the important work already done through the Interim Supervision Policy and acknowledges the many benefits experienced by ministers engaging in supervision.

The Synod wishes to express its concern to extend supervision to some lay office holders or employees as agreed at the January 2019 meeting of the Methodist Council.

Whilst accepting the differences between line management and supervision, we believe that effective line management and lay employee management groups should be providing the type of support that supervision brings.

The supervision process for ministers is still not adequately staffed in many Districts and in addition, the pressure on District Chairs to manage the process has added another task to what is already a very full commitment.

The supervision process is still in its infancy and further research is being carried out to ascertain the most effective ways forward. Whilst that happens, the Synod believes the interim aim should be the consolidation of what is currently in place, rather than extending the scheme before the evidence is there to support it or the trained supervisors to implement it.

The Synod therefore requests that the Conference does not yet amend the Interim Supervision Policy to extend supervision to any lay office holders or employees or to include this in the Supervision Policy being brought to the 2020 Conference.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Newcastle upon Tyne District for its memorial and its affirmation of the work of the Supervision Reference Group (SRG). The introduction of pastoral supervision for all ministers in a consistent way has been a significant development in the life of the Methodist Church in Britain and is a very large piece of work. One of the major drivers for its introduction was the conclusion of the Past Cases Review that the introduction of supervision for all ministers would be a step towards a safer Church.

The SRG has wrestled with what it means to ensure that all ministers are supervised. Considerable progress has been made towards ensuring that all probationers and ministers (and those recognised and regarded as being) in Full Connexion in circuit appointments are appropriately supervised and developments are in train to ensure that ministers in other appointments and other ordained ministers who exercise ministry in the name of the Methodist Church are also brought within the interim policy.

In many places, ministry is offered by lay people on behalf of the Methodist Church. Much of that ministry is pastoral in nature and therefore requires appropriate supervision. The complexity of the implementation of the policy in this area has been noted by the Council which has yet to approve guidelines under which lay roles that require supervision can be identified. The Synod rightly raises

questions about the relationship of line management to supervision and about the capacity of the Church to deliver supervision of the quality that is required to all lay people in pastoral roles as well as all presbyters and deacons.

However, in some areas lay people work in parallel roles to the ordained and the most helpful approach to the implementation of supervision is to include them as soon as possible after the ordained.

In January, the Council authorised research on the interim policy; the SRG has indicated that in order for the findings of this research to be evaluated and incorporated it intends to bring the final policy to the Conference in 2021 rather than in 2020. The clear intention is that the Church will have confidence that all offering ministry in its name will do so with adequate and proportionate supervision.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial but asks the Supervision Reference Group to take into consideration the points that the Synod raises as it considers the development of the Church's Supervision Policy.

### **M31 Authorisations for Lay Persons to preside at the Lord's Supper**

The Rotherham and Dearne Valley (25/17) Circuit Meeting (Present: 46; Voting: unanimous) draws the Conference's attention to the procedure for seeking authorisation for lay persons to preside at the Lord's Supper.

Currently a Circuit cannot apply for such an authorisation in respect of lay employees who have some pastoral responsibility for a local congregation. This however is not made clear in the relevant Standing Orders and, as a result, has led to time wasted in seeking authorisations for those who are in this position.

The Rotherham and Dearne Valley Circuit believes that the decline in the number of presbyters in the stationing system and of those candidating for presbyteral ministry will continue to cause issues of deprivation in the provision of the Lord's Supper and that more flexibility is needed in relation to SO 011(2)(b) to permit Circuits to request authorisations where necessary for lay employees who are also members of the Circuit and local preachers, either fully accredited or in training.

This would be particularly beneficial for the provision of the Lord's Supper in churches where a lay employee, with the status of local preacher/local preacher in training, has a pastoral and preaching role.

The Circuit therefore asks the Conference to make the following amendment to SO 011(2)(b) that the words "or Local Preacher, or employees of the Circuit", be inserted after the phrase "member in the Circuit". SO 011(2)(b) would then read:

*"(b) Persons nominated for authorisation to preside at the Lord's Supper shall be members in the Circuit or local preacher or lay employees of the Circuit, or deacons or probationers appointed or expected to be appointed to it. The district Policy Committee shall be provided with information as to the suitability of all persons so nominated, and shall make its recommendations to the Synod. Such information shall be provided by the Circuit Meeting in the case of members in the Circuit, by the appropriate member of the Connexional Team in the case of presbyteral probationers, and by the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order in the case of deacons and diaconal probationers."*

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Rotherham and Dearne Valley Circuit for its memorial and for its consideration of the question of authorisation to preside at the Lord's Supper.

The question of the relationship between an authorisation for a lay person to preside and the exercise of a pastoral role within a congregation has been one which has exercised the mind of the Conference on a number of occasions in recent years. On each occasion, the Conference has referred back to the report it adopted in 1996 which asserted the principle that the authority to preside is as a representative person entrusted with responsibility by the wider Church and not because of any pastoral relationship with the congregation celebrating the Eucharist at that service. In the response to a memorial from the Borders Mission Circuit which the Conference received in 2016 it was stated that:

*The Conference has already refused that possibility of granting authorisations in circumstances such as lay employees appointed to have significant pastoral responsibility in a local congregation. The issue is most closely addressed in the 1996 report to the Conference Authorisation to Preside at the Lord's Supper, where the reason for refusing the automatic link between presidency at communion and pastoral relationship to a congregation is declared as that the Circuit and the Connexion are the context in which all congregations and Christian communities operate within Methodism, ie this is the kind of church we are. The provision of ministry in Methodism (see The Missional Nature of the Circuit, 2010) is made by the Conference through the Circuit – including provision for the ministry of word and sacrament. The Conference wishes to reaffirm its view that the relationship between a lay person undertaking pastoral work with a congregation and the members of that congregation does not require or make it appropriate that that person presides at the Lord's Supper in that congregation.*

The report of the Authorisations Committee to the 2018 Conference addressed this issue and suggested that the position should be clarified:

*... the Committee feels that we now need clearer direction with regard to the situation of lay employees who lead pastoral care within congregations. A Conference Statement in 1996 stated that authorisations are granted for a Circuit as a whole, and are not related to any pastoral relationship between the person with an authorisation and particular congregations. The reply to Memorial M10 in 2016 reiterated this principle. While recognising that among many Methodist people there would seem to be a natural link between who presides at communion and who has responsibility for leading in pastoral care, the current position is that this cannot be used as grounds to strengthen any application. There is now some uncertainty about whether it is ever appropriate for a person named as a lay employee with pastoral care of congregations to be given an authorisation. Up to now, this has not been an active consideration within the Committee's work, and indeed, there are already a number of situations where lay workers who lead pastoral care within a congregation also hold an authorisation; some of these are long-standing. The Committee sought clarification from the Districts as to the number of individuals in this situation and it is a total of six. Given the changing patterns of authorisation applications we believe it would be helpful to clarify the position in this regard, and to include a statement about this within the criteria.*

The Conference therefore revised the criteria in Book VI, Part 3 to include:

*4A. Authorisations are granted for someone to assist across a Circuit, except in the case of the missional criteria outlined above. They are not related to the relationship of pastoral care which any individual has with particular congregations. While it is possible for an application to be made for someone who carries*

*pastoral responsibilities for congregations within a Circuit, such relationship is not part of the criteria and does not strengthen an application in any way. In circumstances where the committee judges that such an arrangement might lead to a blurring of the distinctions between particular callings and ministries, the Authorisations Committee may decline to recommend an authorisation for a given named individual even when the other criteria are met.*

The Conference has previously noted that ‘an employee is in a very different kind of relationship with the Church ... and would, by an act of the Conference, represent the Church in a particular way in being granted an authorisation that is inconsistent with an employee-employer relationship’; but it has also recognised that this warrants further exploration. In 2018 the Conference directed that the Faith and Order, Ministries and Stationing committees address a number of questions relating to changing patterns of ministry (under the direction of the Secretary of the Conference), including, in consultation with the Authorisations Committee, ‘to explore issues regarding lay employees being granted authorisations to preside at the Lord’s Supper, and report to the 2020 Conference.’ The Conference therefore declines the particular amendment suggested in the memorial and directs that the issues raised in this memorial are considered as part of that joint work.

### **M32 Publishing Inclusivity**

The Stoke-on-Trent North (11/15) Circuit Meeting (Present: 38; Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference to ensure that Methodist Publishing meets its obligations under law to provide alternative formats for people with sight problems and to make it clear in their published material where such formats can be found. This is to ensure that we are as inclusive as possible and to avoid the possibility of prosecution for failure to do so and the subsequent damage to the reputation of the church.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Stoke-on-Trent North Circuit for its memorial concerning compliance by Methodist Publishing with the Equality Act 2010, which requires reasonable adjustments to ensure any disabled individuals are not put at substantial disadvantage in the delivery of goods and services.

In order to reach as many people as possible with the gospel of God’s love, the Conference seeks to ensure that an increasingly wide range of communication channels/platforms are utilised that will accommodate the needs of many impairments, including visual, and take into consideration the speakers of Welsh and other languages. While Methodist Publishing are still involved in their editing and design, key resources are often made available online, which particularly increases access control. The recently redesigned Methodist Church website is optimised for accessibility on all devices, and online it is possible to create larger print versions of downloadable documents or have web page content translated and or read out.

Methodist Publishing is open to considering the case for alternative formats or translation of any new print publication where the need is demonstrable. We are pleased to be able to work also with the Torch Trust, who give us invaluable support with providing large print, Braille and audio versions. They are currently working on a large print edition of *Talking of God Together*, for example. Methodist Publishing will continue to consider alternative formats on a case-by-case basis and list alternative ways to access the content on our websites and in the standard print version of the publication where relevant.



The Conference assures the Circuit, therefore, that the Methodist Publishing and connexional communications teams are mindful of their responsibilities in this matter and accepts the memorial.

### **M33 Same Sex Marriage**

The Gornal and Sedgley (28/14) Circuit Meeting (Present: 30; Voting: 29 for; 0 against) recognises marriage between a man and a woman as a creation ordinance, instituted by God, and does not believe that the church has the right or ability to redraw the biblical definition of marriage. (Genesis 2:24-25 and Matthew 19:4-6.)

Considering the perceived direction of travel within the Methodist Connexion, and the Conference's instruction to discuss redefining the traditional understanding of marriage in opposition to scripture and tradition, we ask the Conference to re-affirm its continued commitment to 'scriptural holiness.'

Should the Marriage and Relationships Task Group recommend a change to Methodist practice we ask the Conference to answer the following questions.

1. What will be the position of any society that cannot in conscience accept any change in doctrine and practice?
2. Will societies who cannot accept a change of doctrine and practice be permitted to withdraw from the Methodist Connexion with their buildings?
3. Will stationing take into account the position of ministers who cannot serve in stations that offer same sex marriage?
4. Will stationing take in to account the position of societies who cannot accept ministers who perform same sex marriages?
5. Would ministers who could no longer answer the annual question 'do you continue to believe and preach our doctrines' find themselves under discipline?
6. Has the Conference considered the difficulty Local Churches will encounter if office holders (local preachers and stewards) and members resign over this issue?
7. Because of the divisive nature of this issue, we ask the Conference to consider raising the threshold on this vote (as it can do under the Deed of Union clause 34) beyond a simple majority to, for example, a two-thirds majority, before agreeing to any change in doctrine or practice.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Gornal and Sedgley Circuit for its memorial and for having travelled prayerfully with the Connexion in its journey around these issues. The Conference has repeatedly recognised how difficult it can be to live with contradictory convictions and thanks God for the grace that has enabled us to do so.

Many of the questions that the Circuit raises are directly addressed in the report 'God in love unites us'. The working party lays out with care why it believes that the recommendations it makes do not ask the Church to depart from a proper understanding of the authority of Scripture. The conclusions of the report before the Conference do not constitute a change in our doctrines as those are laid out in clause

4 of the *Deed of Union*. Having accepted that this is an area in which ministers' consciences and the consciences of lay people might differ, and recognising that we have lived with different understandings of Scriptural authority, the Conference does not believe that the changes proposed in the report will prevent any minister making the assertion that is annually required of him or her or require societies or individual members to accept a change in our doctrines.

The Circuit raises a number of practical questions about the consequences of the recommendations of the report if they are adopted. Some of these questions will be answered by the report contained in volume 1 of the Conference agenda. The report and provisional resolutions contained in it, if adopted in 2019, will be subject to extensive consultation. Whilst the Conference appreciates the Circuit raising these practical questions it believes that it is premature for the Conference to respond to such queries at this stage of deliberation. For now the consideration of the Conference and, if the resolutions contained in the report are adopted in 2019, the Synods must be about what God is calling the Church to do. To try too early to anticipate what arrangements might be made for those who cannot reconcile themselves to a decision of a Conference in the future risks prejudicing the process of discerning God's will in which the Church is engaged. The Conference does however note the need for consideration to have been given to these practical matters when the provisional resolutions return to the Conference in 2020.

The Conference determined last year to make the recommendations of the report a Provisional Resolution under SO 122. The recommendations, if adopted as such by the 2019 Conference, will therefore be widely discussed in the Connexion over the forthcoming year and will not take effect unless confirmed by the 2020 Conference. The Conference last year did not indicate that it wished to depart from a simple majority (as set out in clause 34 of the Deed of Union) on the vote to be taken either this year or at the Conference of 2020.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

#### **M34 Votes on resolutions regarding Marriage and Human Relationships**

The Doncaster (25/14) Circuit Meeting (Present: 67; Voting 61 for, 3 against) is conscious of the complex nature of the decisions to be taken on Marriage and Human Relationships at the 2019 Conference and to be finalised at the 2020 Conference and is thankful for the opportunity to have engaged in informal conversations on the subject during the connexional year 2018/2019. However, in order to have a quantifiable view of the opinions of all Methodists, it urges the Conference to ensure that local Church Councils and Circuit Meetings, and not just Synods, vote on resolutions coming to the 2020 Conference, and that such votes are fully taken into account.

#### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Doncaster Circuit for its memorial and for its eagerness to engage in the debate about this important matter. The Conference agrees that the subject is complex and that there will be differing opinions. It hopes that Methodists across the Connexion will engage prayerfully with the content of the report and the recommendations it contains.

The 2018 Conference was minded that this was a decision of 'such significance that it ought to be considered by the Synods.' This is the way in which the Conference that year enabled the 2019

Conference to make a decision about the course of action that it believes to be right for the Church and to have that view confirmed (or otherwise) by the Connexion through the Synods. In this way, the Synods will serve as a link between the Conference and the Circuits (as they are called to do in SO 402).

When the Conference resolves that a matter needs consideration by the Synods, it assumes that the Synod will operate in a representative manner, having given due and careful thought to what serves the work of God. It is for the District Policy Committee (DPC) to determine how that is achieved; the DPC may arrange for such consultation as it thinks fit (SO 122(4)). The Conference encourages DPCs to engage in consultation across the Districts and believes that it would be wholly appropriate for Church Councils and Circuit Meetings to consider the matter and to report their conclusions to the DPC so that those views might be shared with and inform the discussion at the Synod.

The Conference believes that, in determining that the decision should be the subject of a provisional resolution, it was the intention of the 2018 Conference that there should be wide and informed discussion across the Connexion. Such discussions would inform the voting at the Synod whilst still enabling the Church to come to a mind within a year. Therefore, the Conference declines the Memorial.

### **M35 Same Sex Marriage**

The Angus, Dundee and Perthshire (31/11) Circuit Meeting (Present: 16; Voting: 15 for; 0 against) draws to the Conference's attention that in September 2018, 3,000 people attending Dundee Pride directly encouraged the Methodist Church to remember that "God's love is for all people". In seeking to respond to this the Circuit Meeting affirms that all are welcome in its churches including those who identify as LGBTQI+ and as such resolves to visibly work to welcome all. As part of this, the Circuit Meeting requests that the Conference pass a resolution in the following form:

The Conference resolves, for the purposes of the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 as amended by the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014, that Methodist ministers, probationers or members may be nominated by the Methodist Church in Scotland to the Registrar General in Scotland to be registered to solemnise same sex marriage. The Conference further resolves that same-sex marriages may be solemnised on Methodist premises in Scotland if the managing trustees so permit and all other relevant legal requirements have been satisfied.

Passing such a resolution would bring the Methodist Church into line with its ecumenical partners in Scotland under the EMU agreement (Episcopal, Methodist and United Reformed Churches). Both the Episcopal Church in Scotland and the United Reformed Church permit ministers and churches to conduct same sex marriages. The resolution would allow ministers who feel called to conduct same-sex weddings to be able to do so and similarly churches who felt this was part of their mission to permit such marriage on the local church premises. This would be for each minister and each church to apply as they felt led by the Spirit.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Angus, Dundee and Perthshire Circuit for its memorial and for highlighting the different legal position in respect of the solemnisation of marriage in Scotland. The Circuit is directed to the report *God in Love unites us* contained in Volume 1 of the Conference Agenda for 2019. The Conference does however note the need to ensure that any provisional resolutions adopted by the 2019 Conference must take into account the different legal jurisdictions.

The Conference declines the memorial with the proposed resolution but notes that the Conference Law and Polity Sub-Committee will present the appropriate provisional resolutions to the Conference that address the concerns raised in this memorial.

### **M36 Same Sex Marriage**

The Scotland Synod, Representative Session (Present: 57; Voting: 39 for, 14 against) reminds the Conference that the history of marriage in Scotland is very different to England and Wales. This is reflected in the different obligations laid on churches and ministers in Scotland compared to England. For example, marriages can take place anywhere in Scotland, churches are not registered, and churches do not hold wedding registers.

Same-sex marriage was legalised in Scotland in 2014. Recognising the pilgrimage of faith the Methodist Church has been engaged upon for the past 25 years and the strength of Christian conviction across the spectrum of Methodist people, the Synod proposes a compromise that allows some flexibility for the Methodist Church in its approach to same sex marriage.

Since 2010 the Methodist Church in Scotland has been developing closer working relationships with the United Reformed Church and Scottish Episcopal Church under the EMU agreement. Both the Episcopal Church in Scotland and the United Reformed Church now permit ministers and churches to conduct same sex marriages if they wish. This has allowed our ecumenical partners to continue their pilgrimages whilst remaining intact.

At the first ever Pride event in Dundee over 10,000 people joined the march and 3,000 people attended the rally in the city square. Not only did those people remind the Methodist Church that “God’s love was for all people” but after the event some young people were in tears because they said they had “never heard the church speak openly and positively about gay people” and that it meant so much to them. The Synod’s proposal would allow ministers in Scotland who feel called to conduct same-sex weddings to be able to do so and similarly churches who felt this was a vital part of their mission to permit such marriage on the local church premises. As this would require an active seeking of permission the status quo would be that ministers and churches would not be able to conduct same sex marriages. Each minister and each church would apply as they felt led by the Spirit. As such the Synod requests that Conference pass a resolution in the following form:

The Conference resolves, for the purposes of the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 as amended by the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014, that Methodist ministers, probationers or members may be nominated by the Methodist Church in Scotland to the Registrar General in Scotland to be registered to solemnise same sex marriage. The Conference further resolves that same-sex marriages may be solemnised on Methodist premises in Scotland if the managing trustees so permit and all other relevant legal requirements have been satisfied.

### **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M35.*

### **M37 Situation in Palestine**

Following the commitment in *Our Calling* to challenge injustice, the Wales Synod, Representative Session (Present: 82; Voting: 66 for, 1 against) expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation for Palestinians - Muslim and Christian – in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We note:

1. UN Security Council Resolution 2334, for which the UK Government voted in 2016, relating to the Occupation of Palestinian land by Israel in contravention of International Law;
2. the continual building of settlements on Palestinian land has rendered the prospect of a 'two-state' solution almost impossible;
3. the present Israeli Government's open hostility to the creation of any form of Palestinian State – in opposition to the preferred international resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict;
4. the continuing blockade of Gaza;
5. the distress and injuries caused by rockets fired from Gaza and the disregard for the human rights of residents of Gaza by Hamas, the elected administration of Gaza, especially in regard to women's rights;
6. with sadness that during April-May 2018 128 mostly unarmed Palestinians were killed in Gaza by Israeli fire (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA);
7. with sadness, both the number of Palestinian fatalities in the 11 years from 2008 to 2019 has been 5,426, and the number of Israeli fatalities has been 229 (OCHA).

The above illustrates the extreme imbalance of power which exists in Israel/Palestine, and which enables the State of Israel to display almost complete disregard for the human rights of the Palestinian people living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We acknowledge the shameful history of anti-Semitism and Britain's part in all that has led to the current state of affairs and affirm that Methodists long for a peaceful and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, based on human rights and respect for International Law.

We therefore call upon the Conference:

- a) to encourage connexional staff to make clear our opposition to all human rights abuses in Palestine/Israel, and our commitment to working for a just peace in the land of Jesus' birth.
- b) to ensure that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) works with the Central Finance Board (CFB) to revise its 2016 Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine to reflect better the current situation, taking into consideration the new ecumenical Sabeel-Kairos guide *Investing for Peace*, and the recently-declared investment policy of Quakers in Britain.
- c) to urge the CFB to divest immediately from any company which profits from the Occupation and is unwilling to change its practices.

We call upon the Methodist people, individually and in churches to:

- pray for peace-with-justice in Israel/Palestine and for those working there, including in the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel;
- seek a greater understanding of the situation in Israel Palestine;
- avoid purchasing goods produced in Israeli settlements, as resolved by Conference in 2010. Such goods should be identifiable through the EU labelling guidelines of 2015.

## Reply

The Conference thanks the Wales Synod for its memorial and for highlighting concern about the deteriorating situation for Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza.

In 2006 the Methodist Conference received the recommendations of the Methodist Council, based on advice provided by The Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI), with respect to

investment in Israel and Palestine. This led to the identification of criteria that guides the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church (CFB) in a progressive policy, which begins with constructive engagement related to these key concerns and which ultimately could lead to selective divestment. The Israel/Palestine Investment Policy was reviewed by JACEI in 2016 and, with minor updates, was considered to represent an appropriate implementation of previous Methodist Conference resolutions.

The Conference commends the work of JACEI in this area, noting that JACEI's annual reports to the Methodist Conference since 2007 outline the CFB and Connexional Team's engagement with several companies. This has variously ranged from engagement through correspondence to extensive discussions with senior executives. In the case of every engagement so far, JACEI has reported that the company concerned has changed its practice in relation to activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, although companies typically do not cite ethics, international law or the occupation as their motivation for such change. The report of JACEI to the 2019 Conference includes a reference to JACEI's engagement with HeidelbergCement with respect to the Nahal Raba quarry in the West Bank near the Palestinian village of al-Zawiya and the Israeli settlement of Elkana. The Conference notes a statement of intent by HeidelbergCement that its operating company, Hanson Israel, will divest itself of the Nahal Raba quarry enterprise.

As indicated by the Wales Synod in its memorial, the situation of Palestinians living in the West Bank has significantly worsened since the original adoption of the CFB investment policy in 2006. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that 5,733 demolition orders were executed on Palestinian properties in the West Bank between 2009 and 2018 ([www.ochaopt.org/content/west-bank-demolitions-2009-2018](http://www.ochaopt.org/content/west-bank-demolitions-2009-2018)). The Conference expresses profound regret over the continued expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the establishment of new settlements that are cutting off Palestinian communities, restricting freedom of movement, and further jeopardising the attainment of a two-state solution.

Against this backdrop, companies operating in Israel face increasing challenges as a result of changes to Israeli state law. These include the introduction of 'The Basic Law: Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People' in 2018 that states the importance of "development of Jewish settlement as a national value" and downgrades the status of Arabic as a national language. The 2011 'Law for the Prevention of Damage to the State of Israel through Boycott' has introduced legal risks to companies and other organisations whose policies with regard to the West Bank and protection of human rights might be interpreted as a limited 'boycott'.

The Conference reiterates its longstanding position that a return to the borders of 1967 and a status for Jerusalem as a place for two nations and three faiths, with parity and esteem, is the real basis upon which trust can be built between different communities. The Conference deplores all forms of violence in relation to the conflict, including the rocket attacks originating from Gaza. It acknowledges the imbalance of power and the daily abuses of human rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories that take place without access to effective legal recourse for those affected. The Conference notes that the 2016 United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334, to which the Wales Synod refers, calls upon all States "to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and territories occupied since 1967" and calls for affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse the negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-state solution.

The Conference appreciates the concerns raised by the Wales Synod and welcomes its call to support in prayer and in practical ways all working in the region, including those in the Methodist Liaison Office in

Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. The Conference determines that the Investment Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine revised in 2016 adequately reflects existing Methodist Conference positions.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

### **M38 Israel/Palestine**

Following the commitment in *Our Calling* to challenge injustice the Birmingham (West) and Oldbury (5/6) Circuit Meeting (Present: 23; Voting: 21 for, 2 against) expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation for Palestinians - Muslim and Christian - in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We note:

1. UN Security Council Resolution 2334, for which the UK Government voted in 2016, relating to the Occupation of Palestinian land by Israel in contravention of International Law;
2. the continual building of settlements on Palestinian land has rendered the prospect of a 'two-state' solution almost impossible;
3. the present Israeli Government's open hostility to the creation of any form of Palestinian State – in opposition to the preferred international resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict;
4. the continuing blockade of Gaza;
5. with sadness that during April-May 2018 128 mostly unarmed Palestinians were killed in Gaza by Israeli fire (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA);
6. with sadness, both the number of Palestinian fatalities in the 11 years from 2008 to 2019 has been 5,426, and the number of Israelis fatalities has been 229 (OCHA).

The above illustrates the extreme imbalance of power which exists in Israel/Palestine, and which enables the State of Israel to display almost complete disregard for the human rights of the Palestinian people living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We acknowledge Britain's part in all that has led to the current state of affairs and affirm that Methodists long for a peaceful and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, based on human rights and respect for International Law.

We therefore call upon the Conference:

- a) to encourage connexional staff to make clear our opposition to all human rights abuses in Palestine/Israel, and our commitment to working for a just peace in the land of Jesus' birth;
- b) to ensure that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) works with the Central Finance Board (CFB) to revise its 2016 Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine to reflect better the current situation, taking into consideration the new ecumenical Sabeel-Kairos guide *Investing for Peace*, and the recently-declared investment policy of Quakers in Britain;
- c) to urge the CFB to divest immediately from any company which profits from the Occupation and is unwilling to change its practices.

We call upon the Methodist people, individually and in churches to:

- pray for peace-with-justice in Israel/Palestine and for those working there, including in the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel;
- seek a greater understanding of the situation in Israel/ Palestine;
- avoid purchasing goods produced in Israeli settlements, as resolved by the 2010 Conference. Such goods should be identifiable through the EU labelling guidelines of 2015.

## Reply

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M37.*

### **M39 Israel and Palestine**

Following the commitment in *Our Calling* to challenge injustice the Blackpool (21/12) Circuit Meeting (Present: 16; Voting: unanimous) expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation for Palestinians - Muslim and Christian - in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We note:

1. UN Security Council Resolution 2334, for which the UK Government voted in 2016, relating to the Occupation of Palestinian land by Israel in contravention of International Law;
2. the continual building of settlements on Palestinian land has rendered the prospect of a 'two-state' solution almost impossible;
3. the present Israeli Government's open hostility to the creation of any form of Palestinian State – in opposition to the preferred international resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict;
4. the continuing blockade of Gaza;
5. with sadness that during April-May 2018 128 mostly unarmed Palestinians were killed in Gaza by Israeli fire (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA);
6. with sadness, both the number of Palestinian fatalities in the 11 years from 2008 to 2019 has been 5,426, and the number of Israeli fatalities has been 229 (OCHA).

The above illustrates the extreme imbalance of power which exists in Israel/Palestine, and which enables the State of Israel to display almost complete disregard for the human rights of the Palestinian people living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We acknowledge Britain's part in all that has led to the current state of affairs and affirm that Methodists long for a peaceful and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, based on human rights and respect for International Law.

We therefore call upon the Conference:

- a) to encourage connexional staff to make clear our opposition to all human rights abuses in Palestine/Israel, and our commitment to working for a just peace in the land of Jesus' birth;
- b) to ensure that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) works with the Central Finance Board (CFB) to revise its 2016 Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine to reflect better the current situation, taking into consideration the new ecumenical Sabeel-Kairos guide *Investing for Peace*, and the recently-declared investment policy of Quakers in Britain;
- c) to urge the CFB to divest immediately from any company which profits from the Occupation and is unwilling to change its practices.

We call upon the Methodist people, individually and in churches to:

- pray for peace-with-justice in Israel/Palestine and for those working there, including in the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel;
- seek a greater understanding of the situation in Israel Palestine;
- avoid purchasing goods produced in Israeli settlements, as resolved by the Conference in 2010. Such goods should be identifiable through the EU labelling guidelines of 2015.

## Reply

*The Conference adopts the same reply as M37.*



## **M40 Israel and Palestine**

Following the commitment in *Our Calling* to challenge injustice the Cheshire South (11/8) Circuit Meeting (Present: 59; Voting: 34 for, 6 against) expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation for Palestinians - Muslim and Christian - in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We note:

1. UN Security Council Resolution 2334, for which the UK Government voted in 2016, relating to the Occupation of Palestinian land by Israel in contravention of International Law;
2. the continual building of settlements on Palestinian land has rendered the prospect of a 'two-state' solution almost impossible;
3. the present Israeli Government's open hostility to the creation of any form of Palestinian State – in opposition to the preferred international resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict;
4. the continuing blockade of Gaza;
5. with sadness that during April-May 2018 128 mostly unarmed Palestinians were killed in Gaza by Israeli fire (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA);
6. with sadness, both the number of Palestinian fatalities in the 11 years from 2008 to 2019 has been 5,426, and the number of Israeli fatalities has been 229 (OCHA).

The above illustrates the extreme imbalance of power which exists in Israel/Palestine, and which enables the State of Israel to display almost complete disregard for the human rights of the Palestinian people living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We acknowledge Britain's part in all that has led to the current state of affairs and affirm that Methodists long for a peaceful and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, based on human rights and respect for International Law.

We therefore call upon the Conference:

- a) to encourage connexional staff to make clear our opposition to all human rights abuses in Palestine/Israel, and our commitment to working for a just peace in the land of Jesus' birth;
- b) to ensure that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) works with the Central Finance Board (CFB) to revise its 2016 Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine to reflect better the current situation, taking into consideration the new ecumenical Sabeel-Kairos guide *Investing for Peace*, and the recently-declared investment policy of Quakers in Britain;
- c) to urge the CFB to divest immediately from any company which profits from the Occupation and is unwilling to change its practices.

We call upon the Methodist people, individually and in churches to:

- pray for peace-with-justice in Israel/Palestine and for those working there, including in the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel;
- seek a greater understanding of the situation in Israel Palestine;
- avoid purchasing goods produced in Israeli settlements, as resolved by Conference in 2010. Such goods should be identifiable through the EU labelling guidelines of 2015.

## **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M37.*

## **M41 Situation in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza**

The Newcastle upon Tyne (West) (20/2) Circuit Meeting (Present: 46; Voting: 34 for, 1 against) expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza.

We note that the continual building of settlements on Palestinian land has made the prospect of a 'two-state' solution almost impossible and we are concerned about the continuing blockade of Gaza. There is a power imbalance in Israel/Palestine which has led to a disregard for the human rights of Palestinian people.

We acknowledge Britain's part in all that has led to the current state of affairs and affirm that Methodists long for a peaceful and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, based on human rights and respect for international law.

We therefore call upon the Conference:

- to make clear the Methodist Church's opposition to all human rights abuses in Israel/Palestine and our commitment to working for a just peace in the land of Jesus' birth;
- to ensure that the Methodist Church reflects on policies and principals of investment and considers immediately withdrawing support from any company which profits from the Occupation and is unwilling to change its practices.

We call upon the Methodist people, individually and in churches:

- to seek a greater understanding of the situation in Israel/Palestine;
- to pray for peace and justice in Israel/Palestine and for those working there, including in the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel.

## **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M37.*

## **M42 Israel and Palestine**

Following the commitment in *Our Calling* to challenge injustice the Tamworth and Lichfield (5/9) Circuit Meeting (Present: 37; Voting: 19 for; 3 against) expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation for Palestinians - Muslim and Christian - in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We note:

1. UN Security Council Resolution 2334, for which the UK Government voted in 2016, relating to the Occupation of Palestinian land by Israel in contravention of International Law;
2. the continual building of settlements on Palestinian land has rendered the prospect of a 'two-state' solution almost impossible;
3. the present Israeli Government's open hostility to the creation of any form of Palestinian State – in opposition to the preferred international resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict;
4. the continuing blockade of Gaza;
5. with sadness that during April-May 2018 128 mostly unarmed Palestinians were killed in Gaza by Israeli fire (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA) and that many Israelis live in fear due to rockets fired from Gaza;
6. with sadness, that the number of Palestinian fatalities in the 11 years from 2008 to 2019 has been 5,426, and the number of Israeli fatalities has been 229 (OCHA).

The above illustrates the extreme imbalance of power which exists in Israel/Palestine, and which enables the State of Israel to display almost complete disregard for the human rights of the Palestinian people living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We acknowledge Britain's part in all that has

led to the current state of affairs and affirm that Methodists long for a peaceful and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, based on human rights and respect for International Law.

We therefore call upon the Conference:

- a) to encourage connexional staff to make clear our opposition to all human rights abuses in Palestine/Israel, and our commitment to working for a just peace in the land of Jesus' birth
- b) to ensure that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) works with the Central Finance Board (CFB) to revise its 2016 Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine to reflect better the current situation, taking into consideration the new ecumenical Sabeel-Kairos guide *Investing for Peace*, and the recently-declared investment policy of Quakers in Britain
- c) to urge the CFB to divest immediately from any company which profits from the Occupation and is unwilling to change its practices

We call upon the Methodist people, individually and in churches to:

- pray for peace-with-justice in Israel/Palestine and for those working there, including in the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel;
- seek a greater understanding of the situation in Israel Palestine including study of *Investing for Peace and Time for Action*;
- avoid purchasing goods produced in Israeli settlements, as resolved by Conference in 2010. Such goods should be identifiable through the EU labelling guidelines of 2015.

## Reply

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M37.*

### **M43 Israel/Palestine**

Following the commitment in *Our Calling* to challenge injustice the Sheffield (25/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 82; Voting: unanimous) expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation for Palestinians - Muslim and Christian - in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We note:

1. UN Security Council Resolution 2334, for which the UK Government voted in 2016, relating to the Occupation of Palestinian land by Israel in contravention of International Law;
2. The continual building of settlements on Palestinian land has rendered the prospect of a 'two-state' solution almost impossible;
3. The present Israeli Government's open hostility to the creation of any form of Palestinian State – in opposition to the preferred international resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict;
4. The continuing blockade of Gaza;
5. With sadness that during April-May 2018 128 mostly unarmed Palestinians were killed in Gaza by Israeli fire (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA);
6. With sadness, both the number of Palestinian fatalities in the 11 years from 2008 to 2019 has been 5,426, and the number of Israeli fatalities has been 229 (OCHA).

The above illustrates the extreme imbalance of power which exists in Israel/Palestine, and which enables the State of Israel to display almost complete disregard for the human rights of the Palestinian people living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We acknowledge Britain's part in all that has led to the current state of affairs and affirm that Methodists long for a peaceful and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, based on human rights and respect for International Law.

We therefore call upon the Conference:

- a) To encourage connexional staff to make clear our opposition to all human rights abuses in Palestine/Israel, and our commitment to working for a just peace in the land of Jesus' birth;
- b) To ensure that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) works with the Central Finance Board (CFB) to revise its 2016 Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine to reflect better the current situation, taking into consideration the new ecumenical Sabeel-Kairos guide *Investing for Peace*, and the recently-declared investment policy of Quakers in Britain;
- c) To urge the CFB to divest immediately from any company which profits from the Occupation and is unwilling to change its practices.

We call upon the Methodist people, individually and in churches to:

- Pray for peace-with-justice in Israel/Palestine and for those working there, including in the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel;
- Seek a greater understanding of the situation in Israel Palestine;
- Avoid purchasing goods produced in Israeli settlements, as resolved by the 2010 Conference. Such goods should be identifiable through the EU labelling guidelines of 2015.

## Reply

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M37.*

## M44 Israel/Palestine

Following the commitment in *Our Calling* to challenge injustice the Shropshire and Marches (28/3) Circuit Meeting (Present: 65; Voting: 56 for, 0 against) expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation for Palestinians - Muslim and Christian - in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We note:

- UN Security Council Resolution 2334, for which the UK Government voted in 2016, relating to the Occupation of Palestinian land by Israel in contravention of International Law;
- the continual building of settlements on Palestinian land has rendered the prospect of a 'two-state' solution almost impossible;
- the present Israeli Government's open hostility to the creation of any form of Palestinian State – in opposition to the preferred international resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict;
- the continuing blockade of Gaza;
- with sadness that during April-May 2018 128 mostly unarmed Palestinians were killed in Gaza by Israeli fire (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA);
- with sadness, both the number of Palestinian fatalities in the 11 years from 2008 to 2019 has been 5,426, and the number of Israeli fatalities has been 229 (OCHA).

The above illustrates the extreme imbalance of power which exists in Israel/Palestine, and which enables the State of Israel to display almost complete disregard for the human rights of the Palestinian people living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We acknowledge Britain's part in all that has led to the current state of affairs and affirm that Methodists long for a peaceful and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, based on human rights and respect for International Law.

We therefore call upon the Conference:

- to encourage connexional staff to make clear our opposition to all human rights abuses in Palestine/Israel, and our commitment to working for a just peace in the land of Jesus' birth;

- to ensure that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) works with the Central Finance Board (CFB) to revise its 2016 Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine to reflect better the current situation, taking into consideration the new ecumenical Sabeel-Kairos guide Investing for Peace, and the recently-declared investment policy of Quakers in Britain;
- to urge the CFB to divest immediately from any company which profits from the Occupation and is unwilling to change its practices.

We call upon the Methodist people, individually and in churches to:

- pray for peace-with-justice in Israel/Palestine and for those working there, including in the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel;
- seek a greater understanding of the situation in Israel Palestine;
- avoid purchasing goods produced in Israeli settlements, as resolved by the 2010 Conference. Such goods should be identifiable through the EU labelling guidelines of 2015.

## Reply

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M37.*

## M45 Israel and Palestine

Following the commitment in *Our Calling* to challenge injustice the Barton and Brigg (17/11) Circuit Meeting (Present: 35; Voting: unanimous) expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation for Palestinians - Muslim and Christian - in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We note:

1. UN Security Council Resolution 2334, for which the UK Government voted in 2016, relating to the Occupation of Palestinian land by Israel in contravention of International Law;
2. the continual building of settlements on Palestinian land has rendered the prospect of a 'two-state' solution almost impossible;
3. the present Israeli Government's open hostility to the creation of any form of Palestinian State – in opposition to the preferred international resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict;
4. the continuing blockade of Gaza;
5. with sadness that during April-May 2018 128 mostly unarmed Palestinians were killed in Gaza by Israeli fire (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA) and that many Israelis live in fear due to rockets fired from Gaza;
6. with sadness, that the number of Palestinian fatalities in the 11 years from 2008 to 2019 has been 5,426, and the number of Israeli fatalities has been 229 (OCHA).

The above illustrates the extreme imbalance of power which exists in Israel/Palestine, and which enables the State of Israel to display almost complete disregard for the human rights of the Palestinian people living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We acknowledge Britain's part in all that has led to the current state of affairs and affirm that Methodists long for a peaceful and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, based on human rights and respect for International Law.

We therefore call upon the Conference:

- a) to encourage connexional staff to make clear our opposition to all human rights abuses in Palestine/Israel, and our commitment to working for a just peace in the land of Jesus' birth;
- b) to ensure that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) works with the Central Finance Board (CFB) to revise its 2016 Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine to reflect

- better the current situation, taking into consideration the new ecumenical Sabeel-Kairos guide *Investing for Peace*, and the recently-declared investment policy of Quakers in Britain;
- c) to urge the CFB to divest immediately from any company which profits from the Occupation and is unwilling to change its practices.

We call upon the Methodist people, individually and in churches to:

- pray for peace-with-justice in Israel/Palestine and for those working there, including in the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel;
- seek a greater understanding of the situation in Israel Palestine including study of *Investing for Peace and Time for Action*;
- avoid purchasing goods produced in Israeli settlements, as resolved by the 2010 Conference. Such goods should be identifiable through the EU labelling guidelines of 2015.

### **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M37.*

### **M46 Israel/Palestine**

The Newcastle upon Tyne District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 144; Voting: 111 for, 3 against) expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza.

We note that the continual building of settlements on Palestinian land has made the prospect of a 'two-state' solution almost impossible and we are concerned about the continuing blockade of Gaza. There is a power imbalance in Israel/Palestine which has led to a disregard for the human rights of Palestinian people.

We acknowledge Britain's part in all that has led to the current state of affairs and affirm that Methodists long for a peaceful and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, based on human rights and respect for international law.

We therefore call upon the Conference:

- to make clear the Methodist Church's opposition to **all** human rights abuses in Israel/Palestine and our commitment to working for a just peace in the land of Jesus' birth;
- to ensure that the Methodist Church reflects on policies and principles of investment and considers immediately withdrawing support from any company which profits from the Occupation and is unwilling to change its practices.

We call upon the Methodist people, individually and in churches:

- to seek a greater understanding of the situation in Israel/Palestine;
- to pray for peace and justice in Israel/Palestine and for those working there, including in the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel.

### **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M37.*

## M47 Israel/Palestine

The Birmingham (5/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 89; Voting: 86 for, 2 against) expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation for Palestinians - Muslim and Christian - in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We note UN Security Council Resolution 2334, for which the UK Government voted in 2016, relating to the Occupation of Palestinian land by Israel in contravention of International Law, and that the continual building of settlements on Palestinian land has rendered the prospect of a 'two-state' solution almost impossible. This meeting records its dismay over both the present Israeli Government's open hostility to the creation of any form of Palestinian State – in opposition to the preferred international resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, and the continuing blockade of Gaza. It notes with great sadness that during April-May 2018 128 mostly unarmed Palestinians were killed in Gaza by Israeli fire, and that the number of Palestinian fatalities in the 11 years from 2008 to 2019 has been 5,426, and that of Israelis 229 (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs).

The above illustrates the extreme imbalance of power which exists in Israel/Palestine, and which enables the State of Israel to display almost complete disregard for the human rights of the Palestinian people living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, and for the views of the international community. We acknowledge Britain's part in all that has led to the current state of affairs and affirm that Methodists long for a peaceful and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, based on human rights and respect for International Law.

We therefore call upon the Conference to -

- a) encourage all connexional staff who are engaged with issues relating to Israel and Palestine to be constantly aware of both the Occupation and this severe imbalance of power, seeking both to expose it and to offset it in any way they can, and well-briefed and publicly opposed to all human rights abuses in Palestine/Israel;
- b) ensure the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) works with the Central Finance Board (CFB) to revise its 2016 Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine to reflect better the current situation, taking into consideration the new ecumenical Sabeel-Kairos guide *Investing for Peace*, and the recently-declared investment policy of Quakers in Britain;
- c) urge the CFB to divest immediately from any company which profits from the Occupation and is unwilling to change its practices.
- d) work with the international community to end the devastating 12 year illegal blockade by air, sea and land of Gaza

We also call upon the Conference to encourage:

- i) wider study of the situation in Israel/Palestine by our members and Churches, in particular the issues of injustice relating to the Occupation, eg through *Investing for Peace*, or *Time for Action* if not yet studied;
- ii) individual Methodists to avoid purchasing goods produced in Israeli settlements, which should be identifiable through the EU labelling guidelines of 2015;
- iii) churches and individual members to pray for peace-with-justice in Israel/Palestine and for those working there, including in the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem.

We believe that these steps are fundamental to the challenging of injustice required by *Our Calling* in our contemporary world.

## Reply

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M37.*

#### **M48 Israel/Palestine**

Following the commitment in *Our Calling* to challenge injustice the Sheffield District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 67; Voting: 41 for, 9 against) expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation for Palestinians - Muslim and Christian - in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We note:

1. UN Security Council Resolution 2334, for which the UK Government voted in 2016, relating to the Occupation of Palestinian land by Israel in contravention of International Law;
2. The continual building of settlements on Palestinian land has rendered the prospect of a 'two-state' solution almost impossible;
3. The present Israeli Government's open hostility to the creation of any form of Palestinian State – in opposition to the preferred international resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict;
4. The continuing blockade of Gaza;
5. With sadness that during April-May 2018 128 mostly unarmed Palestinians were killed in Gaza by Israeli fire (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA);
6. With sadness, both the number of Palestinian fatalities in the 11 years from 2008 to 2019 has been 5,426, and the number of Israeli fatalities has been 229 (OCHA).

The above illustrates the extreme imbalance of power which exists in Israel/Palestine, and which enables the State of Israel to display almost complete disregard for the human rights of the Palestinian people living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We acknowledge Britain's part in all that has led to the current state of affairs and affirm that Methodists long for a peaceful and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, based on human rights and respect for International Law.

We therefore call upon the Conference:

- a) To encourage connexional staff to make clear our opposition to all human rights abuses in Palestine/Israel, and our commitment to working for a just peace in the land of Jesus' birth
- b) To ensure that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) works with the Central Finance Board (CFB) to revise its 2016 Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine to reflect better the current situation, taking into consideration the new ecumenical Sabeel-Kairos guide *Investing for Peace*, and the recently-declared investment policy of Quakers in Britain
- c) To urge the CFB to divest immediately from any company which profits from the Occupation and is unwilling to change its practices

We call upon the Methodist people, individually and in churches to:

- Pray for peace-with-justice in Israel/Palestine and for those working there, including in the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel
- Seek a greater understanding of the situation in Israel Palestine
- Avoid purchasing goods produced in Israeli settlements, as resolved by the 2010 Conference. Such goods should be identifiable through the EU labelling guidelines of 2015.

#### **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M37.*



## **M49 Israel/Palestine**

Following the commitment in *Our Calling* to challenge injustice the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 94; Voting: 86 for, 0 against) expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation for Palestinians - Muslim and Christian - in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We note:

1. UN Security Council Resolution 2334, for which the UK Government voted in 2016, relating to the Occupation of Palestinian land by Israel in contravention of International Law;
2. The continual building of settlements on Palestinian land has rendered the prospect of a 'two-state' solution almost impossible;
3. The present Israeli Government's open hostility to the creation of any form of Palestinian State – in opposition to the preferred international resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict;
4. The continuing blockade of Gaza;
5. With sadness that during April-May 2018 128 mostly unarmed Palestinians were killed in Gaza by Israeli fire (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA);
6. With sadness, both the number of Palestinian fatalities in the 11 years from 2008 to 2019 has been 5,426, and the number of Israeli fatalities has been 229 (OCHA).

The above illustrates the extreme imbalance of power which exists in Israel/Palestine, and which enables the State of Israel to display almost complete disregard for the human rights of the Palestinian people living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We acknowledge Britain's part in all that has led to the current state of affairs and affirm that Methodists long for a peaceful and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, based on human rights and respect for International Law.

We therefore call upon the Conference:

- a) To encourage connexional staff to make clear our opposition to all human rights abuses in Palestine/Israel, and our commitment to working for a just peace in the land of Jesus' birth;
- b) To ensure that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) works with the Central Finance Board (CFB) to revise its 2016 Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine to reflect better the current situation, taking into consideration the new ecumenical Sabeel-Kairos guide Investing for Peace, and the recently-declared investment policy of Quakers in Britain;
- c) To urge the CFB to divest immediately from any company which profits from the Occupation and is unwilling to change its practices.

We call upon the Methodist people, individually and in churches to:

- Pray for peace-with-justice in Israel/Palestine and for those working there, including in the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel;
- Seek a greater understanding of the situation in Israel Palestine;
- Avoid purchasing goods produced in Israeli settlements, as resolved by the 2010 Conference. Such goods should be identifiable through the EU labelling guidelines of 2015.

## **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M37.*

## **M50 Israel/ Palestine**

Following the commitment in *Our Calling* to challenge injustice in our contemporary world the

Birmingham District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 118; Voting: 114 for, 3 against) expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation for Palestinians - Muslim and Christian - in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza.

We note:

1. UN Security Council Resolution 2334, for which the UK Government voted in 2016, relating to the Occupation of Palestinian land by Israel in contravention of International Law;
2. the continual building of settlements on Palestinian land has rendered the prospect of a 'two-state' solution almost impossible;
3. the Israeli Government's announcement to annex settlements in the West Bank and the open hostility to the creation of any form of Palestinian State – in opposition to the preferred international resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict;
4. the continuing devastating 12 year blockade of Gaza by air, sea and land;
5. with sadness that during April-May 2018 128 mostly unarmed Palestinians were killed in Gaza by Israeli fire (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA);
6. with sadness, both the number of Palestinian fatalities in the 11 years from 2008 to 2019 has been 5426, and the number of Israelis fatalities has been 229 (OCHA).

The above illustrates the extreme imbalance of power which exists in Israel/Palestine, and which enables the State of Israel to display almost complete disregard for the human rights of the Palestinian people living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We acknowledge Britain's part in all that has led to the current state of affairs and affirm that Methodists long for a peaceful and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, based on human rights and respect for International Law.

We therefore call upon the Conference:

- a) to make clear our opposition to all human rights abuses in Palestine/Israel and our commitment to working for a just peace in the land of Jesus' birth;
- b) to encourage all connexional staff who engage with issues relating to Israel and Palestine to be constantly aware of both the Occupation and the severe imbalance of power, seeking both to expose it and to offset it in any way they can;
- c) to ensure that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) works with the Central Finance Board (CFB) to revise its 2016 Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine to reflect better the current situation, taking into consideration the new ecumenical Sabeel-Kairos guide *Investing for Peace*, and the recently-declared investment policy of Quakers in Britain;
- d) to urge the CFB to divest immediately from any company which profits from the Occupation and is unwilling to change its practices.

We also call upon the Conference to encourage Methodist people, individually and in churches to:

- i) seek a greater understanding of the situation in Israel Palestine, in particular the issues of injustice relating to the Occupation, eg. through *Investing for Peace*, or *Time for Action*.
- ii) avoid purchasing goods produced in Israeli settlements, as resolved by the 2010 , which should be identifiable through the EU labelling guidelines of 2015.
- iii) pray for peace-with-justice in Israel/Palestine and for those working there, including in the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme.

## **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M37.*

## M51 Tax Justice

The Stratford and Evesham (5/15) Circuit Meeting (Present: 26; Voting: unanimous) requests that the Conference welcomes the setting up of Church Action for Tax Justice (CATJ), which builds on the earlier work of the Methodist Tax Justice Network. It notes that taxes fund vital public services, help to redistribute wealth, can reprice goods the market does not price fairly (such as carbon) and should ensure every citizen has food, shelter and clothing. It therefore urges the Conference to support CATJ as a mission imperative towards creating a fairer global tax system - thereby reducing inequality at home and abroad, changing behaviour and patterns of consumption, and helping to address climate change - in the following ways:

- a) encouraging the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), World Church Relationships, the Learning Network and other relevant parts of the Church's structures to continue their engagement with the issue of Tax Justice, and support CATJ by any means they find appropriate and possible;
- b) encouraging the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) and the Central Finance Board to continue actively their work on this issue, including with the Church Investors Group, with the particular aims of urging companies in which we invest to address Tax in the spirit rather than letter of the law, and to adopt either the UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investment on Policy, Governance and Performance in relation to Tax, or the Fair Tax Mark, or both;
- c) encouraging the government to ensure a public register of beneficial ownership of trusts in the British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies; also to set a sensible level of corporation tax, around 25% and therefore similar to larger EU countries, so ending the demeaning 'race to the bottom' over against those countries;
- d) encouraging churches at local and circuit level to mark a Tax Justice Sunday, preferably on 7 July or nearby, as part of Fair Tax Week, using, where helpful, materials provided by CATJ and Fair Tax Mark, and to consider becoming a Tax Justice Congregation (see website [www.catj.org.uk](http://www.catj.org.uk));
- e) encouraging individual Methodists to study CATJ's basic statement *Tax for the Common Good* - including its suggestions for 'green taxes', to follow its work via social media or the website, to raise the tax question with companies in which they invest - directly or indirectly - and to contribute if so moved to CATJ's work.

## Reply

The Conference thanks the Stratford and Evesham Circuit for its memorial and for raising a vitally important issue.

In 2015, in reply to a memorial from the Birmingham District Synod, the Conference noted that companies and private individuals that engage in tax avoidance deprive countries of financial resources needed to meet their educational, health, social and other needs. On behalf of the Methodist Church, the President-Designate spoke at the launch of Church Action for Tax Justice in April 2018.

The Conference welcomes the work of Church Action for Tax Justice and encourages Methodists to work alongside others to create a fairer global tax system. While it is imperative to "avoid the race to the bottom" caused by tax competition it can be argued that the appropriate rate of Corporation Tax may vary greatly in different places and times. The Conference accepts the memorial and directs the Methodist Council to encourage the relevant members of the Connexional Team to continue their work in this area.

## **M52 Tax Justice**

The London District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 172; Voting: 163 for, 0 against) welcomes the setting up of Church Action for Tax Justice (CATJ), which builds on the earlier work of the Methodist Tax Justice Network, and challenges injustice as required of us in *Our Calling*. The Synod notes that taxes fund vital public services, help to redistribute wealth, can reprice goods the market does not price fairly (such as carbon) and should ensure every citizen has food, shelter and clothing. The Synod therefore urges the Conference to support the work of CATJ as a mission imperative towards creating a fairer global tax system in the following ways:

- a) Encouraging the Joint Public Issues Team, World Church Relationships Team and the Learning Network to continue their engagement with the issue of Tax Justice, and to support CATJ by any means they find appropriate and possible.
- b) Encouraging the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment and the Central Finance Board to continue actively their work on this issue, including with the Church Investors Group, and to use the Investor Guide on Evaluating and Engaging on Corporate Tax Transparency of the UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investment to urge the companies to adopt best practice in their tax affairs, and also to adopt the Fair Tax Mark.
- c) Encouraging the government to ensure that there is a public register of beneficial ownership of trusts in the British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies; also to set a sensible level of corporation tax, around 25% and therefore similar to larger EU countries, so ending the demeaning 'race to the bottom' over against those countries.

## **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M51.*

## **M53 Tax Justice**

The Birmingham Synod, Representative Session (Present: 118; Voting: 114 for, 3 against) requests the Conference to welcome the setting up of Church Action for Tax Justice (CATJ), which builds on the earlier work of the Methodist Tax Justice Network, and challenges injustice as required of us in *Our Calling*. It notes that taxes fund vital public services, help to redistribute wealth, can reprice goods the market does not price fairly (such as carbon) and should ensure every citizen has food, shelter and clothing. It therefore urges the Conference to support CATJ as a mission imperative towards creating a fairer global tax system (thereby reducing inequality at home and abroad, changing behaviour and patterns of consumption, and helping to address climate change) in the following ways:-

- a) encouraging the Joint Public Issues Team, World Church Relationships, the Learning Network and other relevant parts of the Church's structures to continue their engagement with the issue of Tax Justice, and support CATJ by any means they find appropriate and possible;
- b) encouraging the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment and the Central Finance Board to continue actively their work on this issue, including with the Church Investors Group, and to use the Investor Guide on Evaluating and Engaging on Corporate Tax Transparency of the UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investment to urge the companies to adopt best practice in their Tax affairs, and also to adopt the Fair Tax Mark;
- c) encouraging the government to ensure a public register of beneficial ownership of trusts in the British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies; also to set a sensible level of corporation tax, around 25% and therefore similar to larger EU countries, so ending the demeaning 'race to the bottom' over against those countries;
- d) encouraging churches at local and circuit level to mark a Tax Justice Sunday, preferably on 7 July

- or nearby, as part of Fair Tax Week, using, where helpful, materials provided by CATJ and Fair Tax Mark, and to consider becoming a Tax Justice Congregation (see website [www.catj.org.uk](http://www.catj.org.uk));
- e) encouraging individual Methodists to study CATJ's basic statement *Tax for the Common Good* - including its suggestions for 'green taxes', to follow its work via social media or the website, to raise the Tax question with companies in which they invest - directly or indirectly - and to contribute if so moved to CATJ's work.

### **Reply**

*The Conference adopts the same reply as to M51.*

### **M54 Eco Church**

The Stamford (23/15) Circuit Meeting (Present: 29; Voting: unanimous) recognises that we live in a changing world where the use of the earth's finite natural resources cannot be sustained at the present level. In order to safeguard God's wonderful world for future generations and recognising the voice of 3Generate's current manifesto regarding the environment, the Stamford Circuit applauds the work of the Methodist Church in Britain's partner, Eco Church.

We are proud of Stamford Methodist Church's recognition during the past year as the 1000<sup>th</sup> Eco Church to have signed up for the scheme. Given our extremely positive experience, we want other churches to share in this vital work.

The Stamford Circuit therefore requests the Conference to challenge every Local Church to take appropriate action in their use of renewable energy and recycling and to register their desire to do so through Eco Church.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Stamford Circuit for its memorial. The rate at which Methodist Churches in England and Wales are achieving awards has been increasing since the launch of Eco Church in 2016. The Eco Church award can be achieved by completing a simple on-line survey. Churches satisfying the minimum criteria will be awarded a Bronze, Silver or Gold award.

The Conference notes that in 2018 the Methodist Council endorsed the concept of Eco Districts and Eco Circuits and encouraged work to be undertaken with A Rocha to develop awards along lines similar to those of the Church of England Eco Diocese award and the equivalent in the United Reformed Church. In March 2019 the President and Vice-President of the Conference announced the launch of the Methodist Eco Circuit and Eco District award. The Conference endorses their call for every church, Circuit and District in England and Wales to take appropriate action and aspire to become an Eco Church, Eco Circuit and Eco District while in Scotland the Eco Congregation scheme is similarly available to Methodist churches.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial.

### **M55 Declaration of Climate Emergency**

The Bristol Synod, Representative Session (Present: 89; Voting: unanimous) notes that the scientific evidence is overwhelmingly pointing to climate breakdown. The cause is clearly human-generated greenhouse gas emissions, of which a large portion of historical emissions has been from the UK. In the

spirit of concern for justice which is at the heart of the Methodist movement – evidenced by campaigns such as those against the slave trade – the Synod requests that the Conference declares a climate emergency and:

- acknowledges that we face an existential threat without precedent, and that this requires actions without precedent
- notes the urgency; that the atmosphere already contains more than the safe level of CO<sub>2</sub> (350 ppm, compared with the 413 in 2019), and encourages the setting of SMART targets to reduce personal and corporate emissions to limit temperature rises to below 1.5 degrees
- expects churches to engage in regular and concerted prayer regarding climate issues
- expects ministers and preachers to engage in a fresh effort in discerning a biblical response to the threat; to communicate it, and to challenge responses that amount to ‘business as usual’
- implores all church members to urgently address their personal impacts in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, noting that for each person, the earth can absorb little more than 2 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>.
- calls on the government, in response to Parliament’s own declaration of a climate emergency to urgently review all legislation, taxation and subsidies in 2019, especially with relation to businesses and fossil fuels, to ensure that immediate emission reductions are achieved consistent with the most current peer reviewed science in order to avoid climate breakdown.

## Reply

The Conference thanks the Bristol Synod for this memorial and for highlighting the urgency of the calls for action on climate change. Recent months have seen an increase in public awareness of the impact that climate change is already having around the world, and the reducing time we have to make changes in order to have a chance of avoiding catastrophic climate change.

The Methodist Church’s statement on climate change, *Hope in God’s Future: Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change*, remains relevant and offers a theological and biblical approach.

In April 2019 the Methodist Council urged the UK government to set a target and establish policies to achieve net zero emissions in the UK well before 2050, therefore increasing the ambition of the targets outlined in *Hope in God’s Future*. The Council also encouraged Circuits and Districts to consider registering their intention to become Eco Circuits or Eco Districts, and the Conference echoes this.

The memorial urges ministers, preachers and members to preach and pray about the climate. There are many resources to support this, including those at *Singing the Faith Plus*, those produced during the month of September, sometimes recognised as Creationtide, and for the proposed Climate Sunday which will happen in the run up to the UN COP26 climate change talks in 2020. The Conference encourages all Methodists to use these and other resources to inspire and challenge their prayer and preaching.

A climate emergency has been declared by the UK Government, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and a number of local councils. The intention behind such declarations is to increase the impetus needed to implement significant policy changes. Many Methodists have lobbied their MPs, and were invited to participate in a mass lobby of Parliament on 26 June 2019.

Faced with a climate emergency, the Conference joins with Pope Francis and the Anglican Communion in endorsing the call for urgent action. It welcomes the declarations by the parliaments of the UK,

Scotland and Wales and encourages members to pray, to reduce their own emissions, and to continue to ask MPs to support the robust policies needed to achieve net zero emissions.

## **M56 Year of Prayer 2020/21**

The Northampton District Synod, Representative Session (Present 137: Voting: unanimous) notes that it is 15 years since the 2004 Conference agreed to a year of continuous prayer, which was entitled 'Pray Without Ceasing' (which ran for 14 months 2005-2006). It further notes that the year of prayer was an enriching time of spiritual growth, giving a sense of connexional unity, as the beacon of prayer travelled around the Districts. In the light of the exciting connexional developments in the area of evangelism, it would seem appropriate and timely to consider another year of prayer 'without ceasing' so that all of our Circuits are given encouragement and resourcing to seek God's will and underpin all of our mission strategies with God-centred worship and prayer.

The Synod therefore requests that the connexional year 2020/2021 be declared a year of prayer for the Methodist Church in its outreach and growth and that consideration is given to the production of resources to support the year.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Northampton District for this invitation to a year of intentional prayer so that our renewed commitments to evangelism, church growth, mission with those who are poor, and pioneering and church planting will flow from a deep, contemplative orientation to God's grace, voice, and will for us and the world.

A sign of the Holy Spirit reverberating across the Connexion is that the emerging Connexional Evangelism and Growth strategy, to be launched in 2020 with a bold and expansive vision for change, has been being built consciously and consultatively on the explicit foundations of (1) communal and individual prayer and (2) an experiential, subjective undergoing of the Good News that God calls us to speak of, listen for, and live out.

One of the particular gifts of the people called Methodists to the Church of Jesus Christ is a Gospel insistence that prayer and evangelism, contemplation and action, should never be separated in the *Missio Dei* [the "mission of God"] and the *Missio Ecclesiae* [the "mission of the Church"]. They are two sides of the same coin. As we seek to be a church more fully alive with grace and truth, we are asked at the same time to call upon the Lord, to wait upon the Lord in silence and attentiveness, to confess and repent and seek forgiveness, and to trust God to transform us by God's grace.

The 1820 Wesleyan Methodist Conference, alarmed at the decline in church membership only a generation after the death of John Wesley, articulated in its minutes (commonly referred to as the "Liverpool Minutes 1820") a strategy to grow again and reach more people. Two sections of that 19<sup>th</sup> century strategy seem appropriate to quote as we seek to be a prayerful and growing church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

**XII. Cottage Prayer Meetings.** *Let us encourage Prayer Meetings in the houses of our friends at such times as will not interfere with attendance at our Chapels and other preaching-places. ...*

*[S]uch services are productive of much good among the poor; and have often proved the means of grace and salvation to many who could not, at first, have been reached in any other way.*

**XVI. Opening New Places.** *In every Circuit, let us try to open new places.... And with a view to a revival and extension of the Word of God, let us have recourse, even in our old-established Circuits, to the practice of preaching out of doors; seeking, in order to save that which is lost.*

As the 2020 Conference prepares to meet in Telford on the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “Liverpool Minutes 1820” and there to launch a new Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth, the Conference gratefully accepts the memorial, integrating its call to prayer into the Strategy for Evangelism and Growth, so that our prayer and our action are always held together.

The Conference accepts the memorial.