

## Memorials to the 2018 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 12 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, Martin Harker. 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 Local ordained ministry**

The Sutton (35/39) Circuit Meeting (Present: 30; Voting: unanimous) notices that there is a significant number of lay people in many Circuits who feel called to local ordained ministry, often non-stipendiary, and a lack of itinerant presbyters for stationing, and recognises that God may be challenging us to respond to this. It asks the Conference to act with urgency to select, train and ordain the people God is calling to the ministry that God's mission is demanding.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Sutton Circuit Meeting for its memorial and for the affirmation that there are significant numbers of people feeling a call to ordained ministry in their local context.

Although the Methodist Church in Britain does not offer avenues through selection specifically for those offering for ordained local ministry, non-stipendiary ministry or self-supporting ministry, the Church welcomes offers from those who feel called to presbyteral ministry but also called to remain in their locality. In the candidating process, a Superintendent has a conversation with the candidate to establish "what might reasonably be expected of the candidate's future availability for stationing and the terms and conditions of service under which she or he might serve" (Standing Order 710(3)(b)). Where a candidate indicates that that availability might be severely limited, the Circuit and District are asked to consider offering in outline a proposal to station the accepted candidate locally at the end of her or his initial training. It is worth also noting that under Standing Order 801(6) ministers can elect not to receive a stipend.

As part of the response to a similar memorial in 2011, the Ministries Committee was asked by the Conference to review these questions. The Ministries Committee agreed that this discussion should form part of the Faith and Order Committee's work on *Ministry in the Methodist Church* which is reported to this year's Conference. It is clear that in a number of places there are people who feel that God is calling them to ordained ministry but also to remain where they are. That feeling, however, is not the end of the discernment process and sometimes in the testing of a sense of call a different attitude to itinerancy emerges. The report on *Ministry in the Methodist Church* identifies some of the issues that need to be explored as this discernment continues, not only in the life of the individual but by the whole Church as we reflect on our understanding of the ministry of the people of God.

The Conference therefore declines this memorial but asks the Ministries Committee to continue to bear in mind the issues raised in this memorial in the light of the *Ministry in the Methodist Church* report.

The Conference is also aware of the changes in the Connexional Team that have been reported to the Methodist Council and which include the creation of the Ministries: Vocations and Worship Team. That team is already engaged in producing material to encourage members of the Church to consider a call to ordained ministry and that should include encouragement to those who see their call as local and self-supporting to explore that with others and to offer for ministry in ways that are already open to them (as outlined in the response to memorials M2 and M3 in 2017). The Conference therefore refers the content of this memorial to the Ministries Committee, directing it to report to the Council in 2019 on the progress that has been made in this area.

### **M2 Local options for ministerial training**

The Cumbria District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 76; Voting: 74 for, 0 against) wishes to express its gratitude for the work undertaken by the Faith and Order Committee since memorial M3 of 2017. The Synod would however like to express its deep concern that no additional work has been undertaken in relation to the encouragement of the Methodist people to consider vocational exploration

for self-supporting ministry and appropriate options for training for such ministry at a time where many Districts are facing a shortage of ministers.

The Synod believes that the *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* report offers a timely opportunity for the Conference to consider how Methodism may benefit from a form of ministry that is so widely used by our Anglican colleagues through their non-stipendiary ministers. At a time when the numbers offering for Methodist ministry are so worryingly low we believe that there is a great deal to learn from the Church of England and the increase in candidates that they are seeing. In addition, the Synod strongly believes that local training is an important part of this imbalance in Methodist/Anglican ministry statistics.

The Synod therefore asks the Conference to:

- (a) Instruct the Ministries Committee to explore the possibility of a trial whereby Cumbrian candidates for ordained ministry be allowed to train with their Anglican colleagues on the Common Awards Scheme training run by Cumbria Christian Learning.
- (b) Instruct the Discipleship, Ministries and Learning Network/Ministries Committee, in light of the Faith and Order report to the 2018 Conference, to prepare material encouraging the Methodist people to consider the vocational opportunities offered by self-supporting ministry.

### **Reply**

The Conference is grateful to the Cumbria District Synod and understands the urgency with which it believes that this issue needs to be addressed. The memorial touches on a number of pieces of business that are to be considered by this Conference. *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* invites us to explore areas that relate to the mutual recognition of ordained ministries; *Ministry in the Methodist Church* asks the Church to consider the role of the ordained within the ministry of the whole people of God and raises questions about our understanding of itinerancy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; the report of the Methodist Council in response to the Review of Training considers whether or not initial ministerial training could or should be offered in more than one institution. The view of the Ministries Committee is that the low numbers of accepted candidates make it inappropriate to make any immediate change in the number of institutions through which initial formation is offered. The report on initial ministerial training the Ministries Committee presented to the Conference includes details on the non-residential training options that are open to accepted candidates.

The Conference accepts the first of the requests and directs the Ministries Committee to consider a possible pilot or pilots for training on local common award scheme courses, and how such training may be integrated with the Queen's Connexional Course.

The Conference is also aware of the changes in the Connexional Team that have been reported to the Council and which include the creation of the Ministries: Vocations and Worship Team. That team is already engaged in producing material to encourage members of the Church to consider a call to ordained ministry and that should include encouragement to those who see their call as local and self-supporting to explore that with others and to offer for ministry in ways that are already open to them (as outlined in the response to memorials M2 and M3 in 2017). The Conference therefore accepts the second part of the memorial and directs the Ministries Committee to report to the Council in 2019 on the progress that has been made in this area.

### **M3 Pioneer ministry**

The Southend and Leigh (34/10) Circuit Meeting (Present: 47; Voting: unanimous) asks that the Church address its lack of coverage of pioneer ministry in its official documents as indicated in CPD overall and specifically in the stationing code of practice. The aim being to ensure that we recognise the contribution of and cater for, the different forms of ministry with which God is blessing the Church.

## Reply

The Conference thanks the Southend and Leigh Circuit Meeting for its memorial and celebrates the growth of opportunities for pioneer ministry in all its forms, which are described in the report to the Conference of the Methodist Council (part 3, Section N, Conference Agenda page 218). As that report indicates, the Ministries Committee hopes that pioneering will come to be embedded in the Church's mission and ministry. The contribution of the small number of ordained pioneers has been a significant part of that growth and embeddedness.

However, the ordained are only a small part of the pioneer community and circuit appointments whose main or only focus is on pioneering are rare. Those ministers who are stationed to such appointments remain under the same stationing discipline as others. A number of circuit appointments differ from what is described as "normal" in the memorial, not just appointments with a pioneering focus. All circuit appointments, however they vary, are encompassed by the first of the categories in Standing Order 780 ("a circuit appointment in a home district"). CPD does not differentiate according to the focus of ministry within a circuit appointment.

Clearly, we live in an age where the demands of God's mission are changing and challenging some of our common understandings of ministry, as described in the 2018 report of the Faith and Order Committee *Ministry in the Methodist Church*. In its report the Faith and Order Committee asks the Conference to direct "the Ministries Committee to continue to give attention to pioneer ministry and to ensure that there is a gathering of learning and opportunities for collaborative reflection on questions of practice, policy and theology". However, the Conference does not believe that pioneer ministry necessitates separate definitions in Standing Orders. The Conference therefore declines the memorial but, in the light of the Southend and Leigh Circuit's experiences, directs the Stationing Committee to look again at the Code of Practice for Stationing to ensure that the guidance about invitations is appropriate to all ministers in circuit appointments and that guidance is provided on setting up and reviewing an appointment with a pioneering focus.

## M4 Worship: Leading and Preaching

The Newcastle upon Tyne District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 143; Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference to provide local preachers and worship leaders in training and local preacher tutors with a hard copy of the course *Worship: Leading and Preaching* for those who need and request it. This is so that those with visual and specific learning needs and those living in areas where internet connection is poor are still able to access and engage with the course material and an equal opportunity is being afforded to all who feel called to serve God in these ways. To have this available by the 2020 Conference or sooner if at all possible would be beneficial to all those in training and teaching.

## Reply

The Conference thanks the Newcastle upon Tyne District Synod for its memorial and acknowledges the difficulties that some people have experienced in using *Worship: Leading and Preaching*.

The development of *Worship: Leading and Preaching* as an online course has had a number of benefits in enabling flexible learning and appealing to a number of different learning styles. Over the past year, new additional needs support has been developed, making full use of the opportunities that the online technology permits. Two videos have been produced which support learners with little previous experience of online learning in using the materials. For those with slow broadband speeds or for whom online access is difficult the video material is also available on a USB flash drive ('memory stick') although in two years fewer than five have been requested. The Ministries: Vocations and Worship Team is currently working with Moodle developers to make printing from the Moodle site easier for those who need it. It should also be noted that integral to the course are the reader materials. Our copyright permissions allow for one copy per user to be made locally but does not allow for mass distribution or production. Occasional print production has been investigated but would be prohibitively expensive. New, more accessible course

documentation is being developed; three of the four planned parts have already been published. Plans are underway to redevelop the whole platform to make it easier to use.

A print version of the course would not contain a number of resources key to fulfilment of the learning outcomes. *Worship: Leading and Preaching* was always envisioned as a course which would continue to evolve and a mechanism already exists through the Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Studies Board for feedback to be received and reflected upon as improvements are made, including on issues of use and accessibility.

The Conference, therefore, declines the memorial but directs the Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Studies Board to take account of it in the future development of the course, paying particular attention to the accessibility of the course to people with specific learning needs.

## **M5     Worship leader training**

The Kennet and Test Valley (26/03) Circuit Meeting (Present: 33; Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference to re-evaluate the complex requirements placed upon those training to be worship leaders within their local context. Whilst the variety of assessment methods are appreciated, the volume of work and the technical expertise needed to submit portfolios is acting as a disincentive to some who feel a call to lead worship. There appears to be a disparity between what worship leaders are being asked to do in worship and the demands of the training course. The Circuit Meeting is concerned that if this is not addressed, there will be even more pressure on Circuits where local arrangements are a regular occurrence and where there is little prospect of encouraging new worship leaders due to the level of study and its 'only available online' format.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Kennet and Test Valley Circuit Meeting for its memorial. Since the inception of *Worship: Leading and Preaching* it has been regarded as ideal for worship leaders to train alongside local preachers. It has been recognised that the demands on worship leaders across the Connexion vary considerably and with it the need for assessment. Therefore, the Ministries Committee recommended a change to the guidelines for assessment of Worship Leaders:

Worship leaders are a local appointment, commissioned to take a leading and significant role in the conduct of worship in a Local Church. We recognise that Local Churches will make different demands on their worship leaders requiring different amounts of training. The accredited standard is modules 1-4 of *Worship: Leading and Preaching*. On the successful submission of a portfolio to the required standard a certificate is issued by the Ministry Team. However, in some contexts a Church Council may deem that this amount of training will not be beneficial to the worship leader or congregation. In these situations the local tutor should recommend to the Local Preachers' Meeting selected parts of modules 1-4 to be studied. These should be selected to best meet the needs of the potential worship leader and local congregation. In these cases it is still the responsibility of the Local Preachers' meeting to monitor the candidates' progress in and completion of training and probation and the assessment of their suitability for appointment (SO 680(1)(iii)).<sup>1</sup>

Since April 2018 new, streamlined, requirements for assessment submission for both worship leaders and local preachers have been issued and submission processes simplified. The Ministries: Vocations and Worship team is currently working with the providers of the online platform to simplify the process further.

Online submission remains vital to enable a smooth moderation process, to ensure the integrity of work by being able to check for plagiarism, and to reduce costs to the Church. Whilst there has always been the facility to print each module section, in effect the technology has often led to disappointing results and a

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://www.methodist.org.uk/wl>

lot of wasted paper. The Ministry Team is working with Moodle developers to create a print version – which could be easily printed locally.

Whilst declining the memorial, the Conference welcomes and notes the importance of the work that is ongoing and urges the Ministries Committee to recognise the urgency of the concerns in this memorial as it oversees progress in this area.

## **M6 Use of clear language**

The Amersham (23/28) Circuit Meeting (Present: 24; Voting: 23 for, 0 against) believes that God’s Mission is seriously compromised by the use of jargon, which ordinary members of the public do not understand. A survey of about one hundred people revealed that only 3 per cent knew the meaning of the term “Presbyter”, for example. The Circuit Meeting, therefore, asks the Conference to encourage the use of clear contemporary language across the Connexion.

## **Reply**

The Conference is grateful to the Amersham Circuit Meeting for its memorial and for the reminder about the importance of clarity in our communications. The Methodist Church’s calling to share the good news of God’s love in Christ can be seriously compromised if the language that we use is understood neither by those who are members of the Church and agents of God’s mission nor by those whom we seek to reach.

However, the Conference has some reservations about the content of this memorial. If by “jargon” the writers mean “special words or expressions used by a profession or group that are difficult for others to understand” (*Oxford Dictionary of English*), the Conference notes that those engaged in the work of the Church need sometimes to use special words or expressions. In Part B of its report on *Ministry in the Methodist Church* the Faith and Order Committee reminds us that:

All human communities develop their own language and the language we use is shaped by our history, experience and dialogue with others. Some of our theological language comes from Scripture, some from tradition and some from contemporary society. Readers will come from different perspectives and backgrounds and understand theological language in different ways. Some terms will be familiar and we may therefore bring assumptions about what they mean; some terms may be new or feel obscure. Yet theological language is part of our striving for a deeper relationship with, and a better understanding of, God, and the terms we use have developed through dialogue and discernment. Theological language provides important insights and conveys shared wisdom. It says something about our identity as part of the people of God and is shaped by our particular history as well as by that of the wider Church. Christians from different traditions and Methodists from different cultural contexts sometimes use theological terms in different ways. Although different Churches use similar words to describe particular ministries they do not always mean the same thing.<sup>2</sup>

We have particular language which seeks to be precise both in delineating any purpose, role or activity under discussion and in reflecting the theological beliefs that underpin that purpose, role or activity. The use in the memorial of the example of the term “presbyter” illustrates this.

In 2008 the Conference received the report *Ministers, Presbyters and Deacons: Signalling Vocation, Clarifying Identity* and adopted its central recommendation:

.... that throughout the Church, informally and formally, we commit ourselves to use a clear and consistent vocabulary when speaking of those who exercise their ministry on behalf of the Methodist Church in Britain (which has traditionally been described as being ‘in full connexion with the Conference’):

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<sup>2</sup> 2018 Conference Agenda, pages 371–372, paragraph 1.6.

‘presbyter’ when we mean someone ordained into the Order of Presbyters in the Church of God, i.e. to the ministry of word, sacraments and pastoral responsibility;

‘deacon’ when we mean someone ordained into the Order of Deacons in the Church of God, i.e. to the ministry of witness through service, and who is also a member of a religious order, the Methodist Diaconal Order;

‘minister’ when we mean an ordained person, irrespective of whether they are a presbyter or a deacon.<sup>3</sup>

In framing their recommendations, the writers of that report noted that many people find it difficult to know how to address an ordained person but concluded that that did not matter greatly. It was, however, important that within the Church the language used is clear, inclusive, consistent and appropriate and a series of changes to the Deed of Union and Standing Orders was made from 2009 onwards to implement the recommendations of the report. As the report stated, whilst “it is asking too much for the subtleties of Methodist order to be accessible to the generality of people going about their everyday business ...” within the Church “... the situation should be different, in both informal and formal settings. The use of proper forms of address should be part of the respect that the whole Christian community gives to its office holders, lay and ordained.”

The Conference, in accepting the memorial, urges all Circuits to ensure that language used is clear and consistent and that efforts are made to assist everyone to understand the terminology that has been deemed to be appropriate.

More broadly, the Conference gladly encourages the use of clear contemporary language across the Connexion and has endeavoured to do so. Members of the Connexional Team are offered resources to assist them in writing in a manner that is succinct, clear, and informative, and are advised to avoid long words or complex sentences. The Conference further recognises that it is important to give attention to the kind of language that may be appropriate in different contexts. All Methodists are encouraged to consider how best to express their faith, and the kind of language they use to talk about God, in different contexts and diverse communities. Some new resources (called *Time to Talk of God*) are being produced to help people think about their faith and how they talk about God in different situations. The first part, *Talking of God Together*, will be available shortly.

## **M7 Reports to the Conference**

The Wimbledon (35/26) Circuit Meeting (Present: 26; Voting: unanimous) notes that major reports that have come before the Conference in recent years have sometimes been considered in less than ideal circumstances. In some cases this has made it difficult for members of the Conference to assess the merits of proposals or to have full confidence as to what the best decision for the Church should be, for example if reports are published with little time for consideration or lacking in detail. On the contrary, other issues have been dealt with very well, due to careful consideration of the relevant issues by both the authors of the report and the members of the Conference.

The Circuit Meeting does not want to reopen any past issues, but wishes to help the Conference to embed best practice for future debates on important issues by highlighting features that allow the best possible decision-making due to careful planning and adequate provision of information.

Therefore, the Circuit Meeting invites the Conference to endorse the following principles:

- (a) Any report proposing a significant change in the Church’s theology, policy, practice, organisation or finances should put forward two or more options for the Conference to consider.
- (b) The report should clearly lay out the implications of each option as fully and widely as can reasonably be anticipated, proportionate to the importance of the decision, so that these can be compared by the Conference.

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<sup>3</sup> 2008 Conference Agenda, page 558

- (c) Where the options are expected to have materially different financial consequences, the expected difference in costs or savings should be included.
- (d) The status quo can be one of the options (ie there is often a simple choice between a change and no change), but in a situation where the current situation is not sustainable and so no change is not an option (as, for example, was the case in the *Fruitful Field* process), then at least two other alternatives must be put forward.
- (e) One option may be to defer a decision for a further year whilst more work is conducted. If this would have financial implications these should also be made clear.
- (f) The authors of the report should be free to decide whether to endorse one option or not. In some cases they may not wish to do so, for example on some theological questions (an example being the 2011 report *The Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows Including the Use of Water*). In other cases, for example proposals with large financial implications, they may rightly wish to very strongly support one option and discourage the alternatives.
- (g) Authors of reports should be encouraged to anticipate possible criticisms of their reports and alternative opinions. Where they are aware of alternative proposals or suggestions that they do not agree with, they should very carefully consider including thorough consideration of such counter-proposals within their report. This allows them the opportunity to compare the pros and cons of the alternatives to their preferred option and explain the reasons why they believe them to be on balance less preferable. It should also decrease the likelihood of a notice of motion being proposed at the Conference to bring forward an alternative option, which the Conference is then forced to consider with little time and less information than if the proposal had been anticipated in the original report.
- (h) Members of the Conference should exercise restraint in bringing notices of motion, and should in general not bring a notice of motion at the Conference proposing a new option where a report has considered possible alternatives as thoroughly as reasonable, especially where there has been an opportunity to contribute to the work at an earlier stage.
- (i) Reports proposing major changes should be published, in either final or draft form, at least three months before the Conference to allow members time to read and consider them carefully, and ideally to discuss them with other church members.
- (j) All reports should be scrutinised by the Methodist Council before being taken to the Conference (other than reports from the Faith and Order, Law and Polity, and Memorials Committees). If the Council believes that alternative points of view have not been sufficiently included, it should ask the authors to add additional consideration of these.

## Reply

The Conference thanks the Wimbledon Circuit Meeting for its consideration of how major decisions are presented to, debated at and decided upon by the Conference.

The Conference has previously expressed some concern about these and other related matters and directed that work be done to increase accessibility to the Conference, including its decision-making processes. The working party established for this purpose in 2015 reported its recommendations to the Methodist Council, which referred them to the Conference Business Committee for detailed consideration. The Business Committee presented a full report on each recommendation to the January 2018 meeting of the Methodist Council, and the outcome of the Council's deliberations can be found in the Methodist Council's report (part 1) to this Conference, at section C (Agenda, p34).

The Conference does not believe that the provision of two options for every major decision would be helpful in providing clarity about the decision that it is being asked to make, particularly when a working party has as part of its work undertaken considerable reflection on a variety of options. Furthermore, a series of options could make it more difficult to bring notices of motion in relation to particular items of business, and would increase the possibility of procedural complexity if there were two sets of resolutions to be worked through. This would not be beneficial to those unfamiliar with the procedures of the Conference.

The Conference notes that, in preparing reports for discussion and decision, there are several competing pressures. In reality, there is very little turnaround time between the last meeting of the Methodist Council



in each year and the printing deadlines for the Conference Agenda. The current pattern of meetings for the Council and its existing workload does not enable the Council to consider every major report that is to be put to the Conference. Such a practice would in any case significantly change the nature of the Council's role if it was to be asked to scrutinise the work of a group whose work had been directed by the Conference. The preparation time for such working groups would be dramatically reduced if they were required to meet the deadlines for meetings of the Council. It is difficult to envisage how the Council could make more time available for the scrutiny of reports at the level of depth that this memorial requests. That said, the Conference is aware that working parties appointed by the Conference are strongly encouraged to take soundings from the Council if they are likely to make proposals that have considerable resource implications.

It is already the case that attempts are made to make reports available online ahead of the production of the printed Agenda for the Conference. All the papers for the meetings of the Methodist Council are available online (unless it is agreed that they need to be confidential), and representatives to the Conference are encouraged to look at these, as they can give a good indication of the material that is likely to be brought to the Conference in a given year. However, they would not be available three months ahead of the Conference if they were required to be scrutinised by the Council (which meets for the last time before the Conference in April). In the interests of accessibility, it would not be desirable for representatives to spend a long time reading draft reports, only to find that the substance of the proposals had changed significantly before they reached the Conference.

The reply to the memorial is therefore contained within the resolutions of the Conference relating to Section C of the Methodist Council report.

## **M8 Circuit strategies**

The Bradford North (27/32) Circuit Meeting (Present: 42; Voting: unanimous) notes that many churches, finding themselves with decreasing and ageing membership, are having to consider their future viability. The number of ministers available for stationing is also decreasing. The Circuit Meeting proposes that each District sets up a small team to consider with Circuits their strategy for the next 5–10 years. The team to be independent, including one person qualified to judge the suitability of buildings, one person with an understanding of Methodism and co-opting one person with a knowledge of the circuit geography and transport links. Rather than individual churches making decisions and to avoid piecemeal closures, let's merge for mission – not just from necessity.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Bradford North Circuit Meeting for its memorial which rightly diagnoses some of the effects of decline and the needs for churches to consider their viability. The Circuit's proposal for a district team to assist each church to consider its future is akin to ways in which a number of Circuits and Districts have used their resources to assist churches in the difficult task of discerning their calling in challenging circumstances. Such a practice has been very helpful and embodies the spirit of Standing Order 431(i) which requires that the district Policy Committee assists "Local Churches and Circuits having exceptional problems."

Whilst there would be advantages in each District adopting the strategy proposed in this memorial to offer that assistance, the Conference does not consider it wise to prescribe the creation of such teams in every District given the disparity of resources and particular needs across the Districts. However, this does not diminish the need for Circuits and Districts to pay careful attention to the need for the development of mission plans. To that end, the Methodist Council is committed, under the re-articulation of *Our Calling*, to develop strategies for the whole Connexion that will enable the sort of support which this memorial envisages. Such support requires not only a rediscovery of the vision of a Local Church, but also Connexion-wide methods of nurture that bring together the ability to give a renewed articulation to evangelism, a coherent use of property and finances and patterns of oversight that enable coherent mission plans across each Circuit, which is the primary unit of mission.

To this end, while declining the specific proposal contained within the memorial, the Conference welcomes the concern within it and directs the Methodist Council to continue its consideration of how Districts can more effectively be resourced and the connexional principle of support articulated, and where managing trusteeship of Local Churches and Circuits can most effectively reside.

### **M9 Substitutes at Circuit Meetings**

The Dane and Trent (11/5) Circuit Meeting (Present: 49; Voting: unanimous) requests that the Conference reviews Standing Order 510(7) regarding the status of Church Council substitutes at Circuit Meetings. The Standing Order makes clear that substitutes can attend and speak but not vote or propose resolutions. In other words they are afforded no more rights than any Methodist member who chooses to attend a Circuit Meeting, when in fact they have the representative authority of their Church Council. At the moment they are debarred from voting and from sharing in closed session business. This could put Church Councils at a disadvantage.

The Circuit Meeting recognises that there are complications regarding charity and managing trusteeship status. The Circuit Meeting asks the Conference to direct the Law and Polity Committee to explore with the Charity Commission the possibility of extending trustee status to substitutes. It may be permissible, for example, if substitutes are appointed to serve for a connexional year and not on an ad hoc basis.

The spirit of this memorial is to further strengthen the authority of the Circuit Meeting by extending Church Council participation, thus enabling wider consultation and greater ownership of Circuit Meeting decisions. For those members attending Circuit Meetings in a private capacity the existing Standing Order would still apply, ie they would be able to participate in discussions but would not be able to vote or propose resolutions and would be excluded from any closed sessions.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Dane and Trent Circuit Meeting for this memorial and the consideration given to the important matter of the representation of Local Churches at the Circuit Meeting.

As the memorial notes, issues around trusteeship complicate the matter that the memorial understandably seeks to address. The duties of a trustee pertain throughout the year and trustees are collectively responsible for decisions made. It is inappropriate for someone to carry trustee responsibilities for a whole year when the basis on which they are being appointed is that they would attend meetings on an ad hoc basis. Such a practice would give rise to trustees voting on matters having not been a party to previous discussions in the course of that year.

Substitutes are able to play an active role at the Circuit Meeting through speaking. The substitute, as the memorial points out, has a clear representative role within the Circuit Meeting. It is this representational aspect that has created the possibility of substitutes; a Church Council can ensure that it is represented within the Circuit Meeting's deliberations. Substitutes are, however, not able to vote or attend closed sessions due to the occasional nature of their involvement. For a trustee body to exercise its duties effectively, those who make decisions should be those who have been involved in or are informed about previous discussions and with whom responsibility lies.

Should the Circuit Meeting be concerned that there is a danger that a church will fail to have adequate representation because of the small numbers involved and the likelihood of substitutes attending in lieu of trustees, it has the power under Standing Order 510(1)(viii) and (ix) to increase the number of its members.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.

### **M10 Membership of Church Councils by presbyters**

The West Hertfordshire and Borders (34/14) Circuit Meeting (Present: 35; Voting: 34 for, 1 against) is concerned that under Standing Order 610(4) there remains the obligation to include within the

membership of every Church Council the Superintendent plus (where they exist) two additional presbyteral ministers from the Circuit (always including the presbyter in pastoral charge of that church).

Standing Order 610(4) states that the presbyteral ministers on each Church Council “shall” include:

“(i) the Superintendent and any other presbyters and presbyteral probationers appointed to the Circuit or, if there are more than two such other presbyters and presbyteral probationers, two of them, selected by the Circuit Meeting, but so that the presbyter in pastoral charge shall always be a member;”

For the following reasons we believe this obligation to be unhelpful, unfair and unrealistic:

- In most Circuits today it is neither practical nor realistic for presbyters to attend regular meetings of Church Councils relating to churches beyond their pastoral charge. Chairing or attending the Church Councils within their own section is burden enough. To oblige them to do more than this is unhelpful.
- It is plainly wrong to place the responsibilities of being a legal trustee upon the shoulders of anyone we know will rarely – if ever – be able to attend the related trustees’ meetings. To oblige them to hold such responsibilities is unfair.
- For the aforementioned practical reasons, it seems likely that many – if not all – Circuits are currently operating in direct breach of Standing Order 610(4), so the time is ripe to exchange this unrealistic rule for one that properly reflects our more realistic practice.

The West Hertfordshire and Borders Circuit Meeting therefore requests that Standing Order 610(4) be redrafted accordingly.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the West Hertfordshire and Borders Circuit Meeting for its memorial.

In response to the *Modified Circuit Constitution* report, the 2011 Conference directed the Methodist Council to undertake further work to explore reducing the categories of officeholders required to be managing trustees on a Church Council or Circuit Meeting. In response to this work, the 2013 Conference amended Standing Order 610(4)(i) and (iv) to its present form, thereby limiting the number of presbyters, presbyteral probationers, deacons and diaconal probationers on a Church Council and removing the requirement for all ministers and probationers appointed to the Circuit to be members of every Church Council in the Circuit.

The Conference recognises that in practice often only the presbyter in pastoral charge is in attendance, with other presbyters attending at the specific request of a colleague or a Superintendent exercising their right to attend, not always in the chair.

Recognising that the draft code of conduct is currently in a period of consultation, the Conference directs the Methodist Council to be aware of the impact under ‘leadership and collaboration’ in the ‘functioning’ column:

All ministers should (as set out in Standing Orders or as required in order to implement them):

- Attend and contribute to the meetings of which they are members.

The Conference is concerned that presbyters should not be further tied up in meetings, and directs that amendments to Standing Orders are considered. This consideration should include exploration of whether further amendments to Standing Order 610(4) are required.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial, but directs the Council to consider the issues raised.

### **M11 Ecumenical constitutions for united areas**

The South East Northumberland Ecumenical Area (SENEA) should be registered as a charity with the Charity Commission because of its financial turnover. SENEA has been seeking to register for several years but is unable to do so as an ecumenical constitution for united areas is still not agreed between the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church (who are our main partner). The SENEA (20/6) Area Meeting (Present: 41; Voting: unanimous) therefore respectfully requests the Conference to direct the Law and Polity Committee to resolve this as a matter of urgency as SENEA is currently operating outside the requirements of charity law.

The SENEA Area Meeting further requests that a process is put in place as a matter of urgency to ensure that ecumenical constitutions can be prepared and agreed in a timely manner for other areas in similar situations so that ecumenical areas abide by UK law.

#### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the South East Northumberland Ecumenical Area for its memorial. The Conference shares SENEA's concern that a model constitution is not currently available, for ecumenical areas involving partnership with the United Reformed Church, that would enable the Conference to give a direction under Standing Order 512(1) regarding the meeting responsible for the general management of the area becoming the Circuit Meeting, for the purposes specified therein.

The Conference understands that the Methodist–United Reformed Church Liaison Group has discussed this matter a number of times, considered various approaches, and held a consultation with the relevant Areas; it also understands that several attempts have been made to draft such a model constitution. There has been a need to deepen mutual understanding regarding each other's ecclesiologies and polities in order to produce a model that honours both traditions as fully as possible and complies with charity law.

The Conference also understands that the Liaison Group gave detailed consideration to the latest draft at its meeting in April, that the Group believes it is in the final stages of its work on the document, and that the Group expects that a model constitution will be available by the end of this calendar year following approval by the Methodist Council and the URC's Mission Council.

The Conference accepts the second request of the memorial and directs the Methodist Council to ensure in consultation with the Methodist members of the Liaison Group that the model constitution is finalised and available for use by SENEA and other united areas as a matter of urgency.

### **M12 The registration of shared premises for same-sex marriage**

The Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 115; Voting: 100 for, 8 against) requests that the Conference direct that the necessary legal steps be taken to enable the Methodist Church to give its "consent to use" in order that any application may be made, by another party, for registration of a building shared with a consenting denomination for the purpose of the solemnisation, by the rites of that denomination, of a same-sex marriage.

#### **Reply**

The Conference thanks for the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District Synod for its memorial.

In 2016, memorial M33 (Authorisation of same-sex marriages in LEPs) noted the principle that "in Local Ecumenical Partnerships it is normally the case that any authorised service of any partner [church] is permitted"; it also noted that, in the case of same-sex marriages, "further authority is required". This "further authority" is due to the provisions of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 which applies to England and Wales. M33 (2016) asked the Conference "to authorise the registration of buildings for Same-Sex Marriage on request of a Congregational Church Meeting where a partner church in an LEP would permit it, and where the building is owned by that partner church, providing such registration is done only

in the name of the partner denomination.” The 2016 Conference said that the reply to this memorial was contained within the resolutions of the Conference relating to the Marriage and Relationships Task Group report (as outlined below).

The current memorial asks the Conference to do something different: to take the necessary legal steps “to enable the Methodist Church to give its ‘consent to use’ in order that any application may be made, by another party, for registration of a building shared with a consenting denomination for the purpose of the solemnisation, by the rites of that denomination, of a same-sex marriage.”

To understand the difference between these two memorials, it is helpful to set out the ways in which the Methodist Church relates to church buildings in England and Wales that might be registered for the solemnisation of marriages, including same-sex marriages:

1. Methodist owned buildings that are on the Model Trusts;
2. Methodist owned buildings that are not on the Model Trusts;
3. Methodist owned buildings (whether on the Model Trusts or not) that are shared either through a sharing agreement under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969 or less formally (for example, under the provisions of Model Trust 14(2A));
4. buildings belonging to another Church that the Methodist Church shares (usually through a sharing agreement under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969);
5. buildings (in whomever vested) that are jointly owned and shared by the Methodist Church and others through a sharing agreement under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969, where there are trustees, managing trustees, or company directors appointed by a Methodist body; and
6. buildings that the Methodist Church uses which are not owned by any Church.

Memorial M33 (2016) referred to buildings in point 4 above, whereas the current memorial refers to buildings in points 4 and 6 above.

The Conference considers it helpful to recall what has been said about the registration and use of church buildings in reports to the Conference on same-sex marriage since 2014. In that year, the Working Party on Marriage and Civil Partnerships set out the legal changes brought about in England and Wales by the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013.<sup>4</sup> The Working Party noted that:

- No such registration [for same-sex marriage ceremonies] can take place unless
- the “relevant governing authority”, ie in our case the Methodist Conference, has given consent for this; and
  - the application is made by the “proprietor or trustee” of the building; on analogy with marriage registration at present, that would mean that, in respect of a Local Church, the Church Council as managing trustees would have to agree.<sup>5</sup>

The Working Party enlarged on the ecumenical implications of the legislation, saying:

A particular issue arises for Methodism in the many instances where we are in partnership with other churches locally, and particularly in the sharing of buildings. The situation to which we refer arises if the Conference were to decide not to revisit the definition of marriage or opt in to the use of Methodist buildings for solemnizing same sex marriages. There would then still be questions about buildings used by, but not owned by, the Methodist Church. There are various different settings in which this could happen, involving various legal provisions under the Act [e.g. multi-denominational settings such as higher education chaplaincies]<sup>6</sup>

The 2014 Conference adopted Resolution 40/4(b)(viii), directing the Marriage and Relationships Task Group to:

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<sup>4</sup> For the situation in Scotland, see Conference Agenda (2014), page 426, paragraph 13.

<sup>5</sup> Conference Agenda (2014), page 425, paragraph 10.

<sup>6</sup> Conference Agenda (2014), page 463, paragraph 135.

consider further the implications of the same sex marriage legislation for shared buildings not held on Methodist trusts and for those working in wider ecumenical contexts, and report to the Conference of 2015 on any action recommended to be taken;<sup>7</sup>

The Task Group reported to the Conference in 2015 as follows:

The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 requires all churches sharing premises under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969 to 'opt in' before shared premises can be used for the solemnization of same sex marriage, regardless of the ownership of the premises. The Marriage and Relationships Task Group has considered the implications for shared premises if there are differences of view between ecumenical partners. Following consultation with the Connexional Ecumenical Officer it has been confirmed that partner denominations respect the need for the Conference to consider this matter in its own time.<sup>8</sup>

The Task Group continued its work in 2015–16 and reported to the Conference in 2016:

Consideration has been given by the Task Group to the question of whether the Conference could 'opt in' to the legislation for the purposes of allowing other sharing denominations to hold same sex marriages on premises, where such premises are not Methodist premises. There was much discussion around this issue and whilst it would be possible for the Conference to 'opt in' with the limitation being that it was only for non-Methodist premises, the task group concluded such an action at this stage could be viewed as pre-empting any discussions to be held on the definition of marriage.<sup>9</sup>

Until the Conference has had an opportunity to consider a draft text of a new statement of the judgment of the Conference on marriage and relationships, it continues to agree with the conclusion of the Task Group that reported to the 2016 Conference on this matter. The Conference, therefore, refers this memorial to the Marriage and Relationships Task Group and directs it, in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee, the Law and Polity Committee, and the Connexional Ecumenical Officer, to:

- (a) consider the request the memorial contains;
- (b) consider any other matters raised by memorial M33 (2016);
- (c) consider any matters raised regarding buildings that are jointly-owned (ie, those described in point 5 above);
- (d) clarify what the "relevant governing authority" is in each of the churches or denominations with which the Methodist Church shares buildings in England and Wales through a sharing agreement under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969 and whether each is willing to give "consent to use";
- (e) consider any analogous matters in jurisdictions other than England and Wales that are served by the Methodist Church;

and report to the 2019 Conference.

### **M13 Statistics for mission**

The Newcastle upon Tyne District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 143; Voting: 142 for, 1 against) acknowledges the important work done through the collection of Statistics for Mission. The in-depth, connexional-level statistical reports prepared for the Methodist Conference are admired by other denominations and serve to update and inform the Church.

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<sup>7</sup> Resolution 40/4(b)(viii), Daily Record (2016), 7/8/2. This resolution was originally numbered 40/4(b)(ix); see Conference Agenda (2014), page 483.

<sup>8</sup> Conference Agenda (2015), page 501, paragraph 2.3.

<sup>9</sup> Conference Agenda (2016), page 268, paragraph 2.4.2; the Task Group also reported on its consideration of the situations and varying priorities of our ecumenical and world church partners in relation to the matter of the marriage of same-sex couples (page 282, paragraph 3.4.1).

All recent Conference reports confirm the current trajectory of decline. The Methodist Church knows and acknowledges this decline and the Synod therefore requests that the annual membership return to connexional officers is no longer requested and that it take place only in every third year, the next collection of membership data from all churches, Circuits and Districts taking place in October 2021. Particularly as the returns are only collated into a Conference report every three years.

Partially as a result of the 2017 Statistics for Mission report, the Conference recognised the urgent need to focus more on mission. The collecting of yearly statistics demands a vast amount of work hours that could be redirected towards missional activity.

## Reply

The Conference thanks the Newcastle upon Tyne District Synod for its memorial.

The Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) initiated a review of all the statistical data that are currently being collected from Local Churches and Circuits last year and work has been progressing on that over this last connexional year. A report is being prepared for the SRC in September which is expected to make broadly the same proposals as this memorial.

The Conference commends the work that has been undertaken over many years in ensuring that our collection of statistics is a true record of the state of the life of the Methodist Church. Recently, the data have been made even more relevant by ensuring they are available through the web mapping facility on the Church's website.

It has however 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 next triennial report to the Conference is due in 2020, but in order for the figures to be as complete as possible it is still worth asking for much-reduced reporting in 2018/2019 and 2019/2020.

This will mean that subsequent counts will be of a greatly reduced scale and the Conference encourages Circuits and churches to use the time saved to look at their local mission plans and priorities.

The Conference therefore:

- (a) accepts the memorial;
- (b) directs the Methodist Council to make the necessary arrangements for it to be enacted;
- (c) and amends Standing Order 305(2) as follows:

The Team shall prepare every three years a report on the ~~annual~~ membership returns for presentation to the Conference in the Presbyteral and Representative Sessions. ***The Conference, on the advice of the Methodist Council, shall determine the frequency of the collection of the membership returns.***

## M14 Payment for manse water supplies

The Great Harwood (21/03) Circuit Meeting (Present: 13; Voting: 11 for, 0 against) asks the Conference to consider transferring the cost of manse water supplies from the Circuit or District to the incumbent. This will bring water into line with other utilities, ie electric and gas. The increasing use of water meters means water is no longer a fixed cost.

It is suggested that stipends are increased by an amount equal to the average water charge, about £500. Such an increase will then avoid penalising presbyters and deacons living in manse.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Great Harwood Circuit Meeting for this memorial. As it states, if ministers were to be responsible for the payment of manse water supplies, as with other utilities, then an increase in stipend would indeed be required.

There are two areas of major concern about this proposal.

First, an annual increase in stipend of “about £500” does not take into account the variation in costs of services provided by water companies across the UK and other jurisdictions and, unlike the other utilities, customers have no choice of supplier. If the stipend were to be increased, it would need to be at the higher end of the scale so that ministers were not worse off, and it may be more than the £500 indicated. The present system enables Circuits, rather than ministers, to absorb this variation. Moreover, the stipend increase – which must be the same for all ministers – would need to accommodate the needs of a minister, spouse and (say) two children, whereas ministers with fewer household members currently cost the Circuits less: if the overall average cost to Circuits is less by about £120 to £150 – which seems a reasonable range estimate – then the cost to the Church would be of the order of £200,000 per year.

Secondly, an increase in stipend would be subject to tax, NI and pension contributions, and therefore need to be grossed up to enable the net increase to be covered. Also, the Circuit’s contribution to NI and the ministers’ pension scheme would increase as a result of the increased stipend. It is calculated that the impact of these factors would increase Circuits’ costs by 130% of any stipend increase. This is a wholly unnecessary additional cost burden upon Circuits, not least at a time when many are already under financial pressures.

Taking the estimate of a suggested stipend increase of £500, and both adverse elements outlined above into account, the actual additional cost to the whole Church would be of the order of £1.25m per year. The present arrangements should be retained in order to avoid this. The Conference therefore declines the memorial. The Conference does, however, encourage circuit stewards to investigate the use of water meters.

## **M15 The stationing process**

The Burnley and Pendle Circuit (21/1) Meeting (Present: 55; Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference to urgently review the stationing process and implement improvements to ensure a fair allocation of presbyters to ‘must fill’ and other vacant appointments.

In the light of the current trend, where there are fewer available presbyters than vacant posts, and as a result of our difficulty in attracting presbyters to fill our appointments, the Burnley and Pendle Circuit would like to provide some feedback, and bring the following issues, encountered during the stationing process, to the attention of the Conference:

- ‘Must fill’ appointments. Matching rather than appointing available presbyters to the ‘must fill’ positions results in critical appointments remaining unfilled. Filling these appointments before starting the rest of the stationing matching would ensure that these positions are filled and avoid a crisis management situation of moving a Superintendent from another Circuit into the role, thus creating a gap elsewhere.
- Very few presbyters expressed in their profiles that they were willing to be sent where there is the greatest need.
- If a presbyter is matched with a Circuit but has no real heart to take up the position, it would be preferable for the presbyter to decline a visit – the time, money and resources can be used elsewhere.



- If, and when, a presbyter visit is unsuccessful for whatever reason, feedback on the reasons for declining a position by a presbyter, or rejection by the Circuit of a presbyter, is essential to continually improve the process. The introduction of a formal feedback form/process will aid the Circuit to improve schedules for visit days and provide crucial feedback to the stationing team to improve the stationing process.
- The amount of effort by the circuit invitation committee to create a list of 'selected presbyters', without knowing if those presbyters are interested in our Circuit, is considerable, and, following the matching process can be completely superfluous.
- The PDF file of presbyter profiles, circulated to the invitation committee, does not enable structured analysis; it is difficult to quickly eliminate those who have no interest in our area, nor the required skills, experience or interest required for the appointment. A more structured template would allow better analysis.
- The probationer and deacon appointments process seems disconnected from the presbyter appointments process and is inflexible to changing requirements.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Burnley and Pendle Circuit Meeting for its memorial which reflects views that might be widely shared in other Circuits. The Stationing Committee (as its report to the Conference makes clear) has wrestled with the difficulty of identifying how best to match the available presbyters to the appointments in a way that makes the best use of the presbyters' gifts, honours the Conference's duty of care to each presbyter by taking into account restrictions on their geographical deployability, and meets the needs of mission in the Church where those needs are most critical. The Conference is grateful to those in the Burnley and Pendle Circuit who have reflected on the issue and offered some constructive suggestions.

Much of the work that the memorial requests is already being undertaken by the Stationing Committee so the Conference refers to that Committee the suggestions from the Circuit as part of its continuing work, but declines to initiate an additional urgent review of the stationing process.

### **M16 The stationing process**

The Beverley (29/8) Circuit Meeting (Present: 23; Voting: 19 for, 1 against) has concerns about the appropriateness of the stationing matching process to the needs of the Connexion, and in particular the impact on Circuits and Local Churches. Whilst acknowledging a shortage of ministers being available to be matched to Circuits for 2018, the Circuit is concerned that this has impacted in some Districts more than others. We are concerned that the current stationing process no longer works for ministers or Circuits, and creates a great deal of uncertainty, which many people find unnecessarily stressful. We are also concerned that some ministers in the stationing matching process place such tight geographical limits around their options that it brings into question the nature of itineracy. Therefore, we ask the Conference to direct the connexional Stationing Committee to undertake an urgent review of the stationing matching process, in order to ensure that appointments can be looked at much more holistically. We also ask the Conference to commission a review of the nature of itineracy, and ideas to strengthen and enable new models of local ministry as part of the stationing process.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Beverley Circuit Meeting for its memorial, which makes two requests of the Conference. As the report of the Stationing Committee makes clear, the Committee has been engaged in a review of stationing matching and continues to consider how it might enable the best possible deployment of the Church's ministers at a time when the number of Circuits seeking to invite a presbyter outweighs the number of presbyters available. Since the work is already in hand, the Conference declines to direct the Stationing Committee to undertake an additional urgent review of the stationing process.

The second request identifies a frequently mentioned issue which features in many interpretations of the difficulties that are currently encountered in stationing and the low numbers in candidating. The Conference notes that this is an issue that is explored and opened for discussion in the Faith and Order Committee's report *Ministry in the Methodist Church* and, urging members of the Beverley Circuit to participate in conversations around that report, therefore declines that part of its memorial.

## **M17 Supervision**

The Bristol District Synod, Presbyteral Session (Present: 93; Voting: 43 for, 19 against) recognises the significant benefits of supervision for all presbyters. However, for this to be effective we urge the Conference to reconsider the current guidelines to ensure that supervision at all levels is done by qualified, accredited supervisors independent of other roles in the relevant body.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Bristol District Synod for its memorial and recognises the concerns that underpin it. The decision by the 2015 Conference to accept the recommendation of the report on the Past Cases Review that a system of structured supervision for ministers be instituted has entailed a major commitment of resources by the Church at all levels. The Conference received the report of the working party in 2017 and adopted the interim policy. That report contained recommendations that were based on the pilot projects with two Circuits.

The report noted that a "key concern raised by many has been the impact upon the time supervision takes, especially for those supervising colleagues." It would be easy and anecdotal (but not therefore necessarily unhelpful) to respond that time expended in supervision has in many professionals' experience turned out to be a wise investment which has repaid itself in more effective practice. The interim report took seriously the issue and recommended that the minimum requirement for a minister should be six 90-minute sessions per year, that by mutual consent a video conversation might be substituted for a face-to-face meeting, and that no minister should supervise more than eight people including lay employees. This would mean that the minister should expect to commit to nine hours per year plus preparation and travel and that the maximum time commitment for any supervisor (including the Chair) would be 72 hours (plus preparation and report-writing; the common practice is that the minister travels to the supervisor). Districts were also encouraged to choose a model of implementation that "makes use of the gifts of others including lay people and supernumerary ministers." In drawing up the implementation plan for their Districts, Chairs will seek to ensure that the expectation on each supervisor is proportionate and realistic.

The issue of external supervision is one that is repeatedly raised in discussions on this issue. As the Synod notes, the advantages are clear in giving the practitioner freedom to discuss issues in a situation where other processes (such as stationing) cannot be affected. However, the working group reflected on the feedback from the pilots and concluded that there are benefits of supervision happening within the team. Issues of dual role and the handling of power need careful attention (and these matters are addressed in the mandatory training for those who will supervise under the policy). The purposes of supervision are described in the interim policy as being normative, formative, and restorative; qualified and independent supervisors might be able competently to address issues in the latter two areas, but there is much to be said for the practice outlined in the policy which ensures that normative issues are discussed in a supervisory relationship that either is or has a clear reporting line to the oversight relationship.

The Conference is grateful for the extensive work that has been done so far on training supervisors. The training has been well-received by those who have undertaken it. It is rigorous (and requires the trainee supervisor to demonstrate that she or he is competent to supervise), it is resourced by professional supervisors and leading figures in the field of pastoral supervision, and it draws on the considerable pastoral skills that those who are in ministry bring into the task of supervision.

The Conference notes the freedom that each District has in developing its own implementation plan and urges the Bristol District to consider how that plan best can reflect its own circumstances. The interim policy was adopted by the Conference in expectation that a revised policy would be presented in 2020. The

Conference therefore declines this memorial but refers the memorial and reply (and supporting information supplied by the District) to the Supervision Reference Group for consideration in the drafting of the 2020 policy.

### **M18 Authorisations for deacons to preside at communion**

The Rugby and Daventry (23/14) Circuit Meeting (Present: 34; Voting: unanimous) asks the Conference to further amend the “Criteria for Authorising Persons other than Presbyters to Preside at the Lord’s Supper” as under consideration by the Connexional Authorisations Committee and Faith and Order Committee (memorial M1 2015). The present position of deacons in relation to presiding at the Lord’s Supper is anomalous.

This is where a deacon (who may also be a local preacher) is appointed with pastoral care of a congregation but the deacon is only allowed to receive an authorisation to preside under exceptional circumstances. This is anomalous (and to some offensive), since an application may be made for an authorisation for a local preacher, or indeed anyone in good standing, in the same church but is effectively a bar for a deacon. Removal of this bar would present a more even playing field and allow congregations to receive communion from the one who is charged with their care, if the deacon is prepared to preside.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Rugby and Daventry Circuit Meeting for its memorial. Questions about Eucharistic presidency have been raised many times over the years and the Conference has consistently affirmed that presidency at the Lord’s Supper belongs to the office and work of a presbyter. In exceptional circumstances, and on the ground of deprivation of reasonably frequent and regular celebration of the Lord’s Supper, the Conference can authorise another appropriate person to preside at that sacrament within a particular Circuit for a period of 12 months.

The Conference has established that “no-one has a right of themselves to preside, but only those who are authorised by the Church to do so”.<sup>10</sup> It is a matter of discernment for a Circuit as to who, within that Circuit, might be suitable person to propose for such an authorisation, and evidence of their general competence, gifts and graces in leading worship and to their understanding of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper has to be presented to the District Policy Committee.<sup>11</sup> Although a deacon may have the necessary competence, gifts, graces and understanding of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, the nature of the ministry to which they are ordained is a fundamental consideration.

Deacons are ordained to a ministry of witness through service and pastoral care, seeking to equip God’s people for service in the world and assisting God’s people in worship and prayer. In the 1996 report, *Authorisations to Preside at the Lord’s Supper*, it was acknowledged that the question of authorising a deacon to preside at the Lord’s Supper involved the potential blurring of the distinction between particular callings and ministries and that the Methodist Diaconal Order (MDO) feared “that such authorisations might lead to confusion between the two types of ordained ministry”.<sup>12</sup> This concern has continued to be expressed. In 2012, following consultation with the Methodist Diaconal Order, the Faith and Order Committee found that there was consensus that deacons should generally resist taking authorisations unless there are very exceptional circumstances.<sup>13</sup> The MDO agreed that:

... if the ministry of a deacon is also to equip and enable God’s people for service in the world, then surely this must include supporting and enabling appropriate lay people in the local context to take such an authorisation if needed.

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<sup>10</sup> *The Faith and Order Committee*, 2012 Conference Agenda, page 517, Section B, paragraph 1.17(b) (also in 1996 report).

<sup>11</sup> *Criteria for Authorising Persons other than Presbyters to Preside at the Lord’s Supper*, CPD Book VI, Part 3, paragraph 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Authorisations to Preside at the Lord’s Supper*, 1996 Conference Agenda, paragraph 35.

<sup>13</sup> *The Faith and Order Committee*, 2012, Section B, pages 519–521, paragraphs 2.2.2–2.2.4.

Therefore, it could be argued that the Conference is unwise to ask a deacon to take an authorisation because it creates a conflict between a commitment to serve the church wherever it asks and the enabling of lay ministry. It also makes it harder to maintain the distinctiveness of diaconal ministry if the deacon is asked to take what many perceive to be a presbyteral role, especially when linked to a ministry of pastoral care.

The Warden generally resists requests for deacons to take an authorisation unless there are very exceptional circumstances because of the wish of the Order to honour its commitment to enabling lay ministry as well as honour the office of a presbyter.<sup>14</sup>

The consultation highlighted the reasons as to why requests for deacons to take authorisations should occur only in very exceptional circumstances. It further raised some questions about the liturgical role of deacons, which the Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee to explore, and it is anticipated that the result of this work will be reported to the 2019 Conference as part of the final report on the theology and ecclesiology underpinning the diaconate.

The memorial also refers to the question of the relationship between a particular congregation and the person authorised to preside at the Lord's Supper. This has been considered by the Conference previously, most recently in 2016.<sup>15</sup> The Conference has consistently affirmed the position that authorisations are granted for the Circuit as a whole and are not related to any relationship between the person with an authorisation and particular congregations. The Circuit and the Connexion are the context in which all congregations and Christian communities operate within Methodism. It is the Conference that decides whether or not an authorisation should be given and to whom. The authority of the Conference is an expression of connexionalism, a key principle of Methodist ecclesiology which was re-affirmed in 2017.<sup>16</sup> As the 2012 Faith and Order Committee report noted:

"The circuit context is also crucial. Provision for ministry, including the ministry of word and sacrament, is made to and by Circuits. All Christian congregations and communities that want to be identified as Methodist are linked to one another in this way. We do not privilege the local congregation to the extent that some other Churches do."<sup>17</sup>

Local Churches belong to Circuits, and it is the Circuit which is responsible for ensuring that there is the provision of reasonably frequent and regular celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for its churches, church members and other Christians in the local communities. What constitutes appropriate presidency is seen as a matter of order, rather than relationship.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial and confirms that deacons should only be asked to take an authorisation in very exceptional circumstances and after consultation with the Warden of the Order. It further reaffirms its view that the relationship between a person undertaking pastoral work with a congregation and the members of that congregation does not require that that person presides at the Lord's Supper in that congregation.

## **M19 Complaints and discipline procedures**

The Darlington District Synod, Presbyteral Session (Present: 38; Voting: 27 for, 5 against) asks the Conference to review its procedures for complaints and discipline as they are applied to presbyters and deacons and to amplify the principles stated in Standing Order 1100(3) (ii) and (iii).

- (ii) there should be no difference in principle between the ordained and lay people in the way in which complaints against them are dealt with;

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<sup>14</sup> *The Faith and Order Committee*, 2012, Section B, pages 519–520, paragraph 2.2.2.

<sup>15</sup> For example, in the 1996 Statement *Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper*, paragraphs 32–36; in *The Faith and Order Committee*, 2012, Section B; and in the response to memorial M10 in 2016.

<sup>16</sup> See *The Gift of Connexionalism*, 2017 Conference Agenda, pages 383–391.

<sup>17</sup> *The Faith and Order Committee*, 2012, Section B, page 515, paragraph 1.6.

- (iii) the possibility of reconciliation should be explored carefully in every way in which that is appropriate;

The Connexional Office currently provides a template for the terms and conditions applicable to the appointment of lay employees. These terms and conditions include disciplinary procedures.

In addressing an employee's faults, the disciplinary procedures set out a sequence of stages:

- Confidential discussion between line manager and staff member
- A warning and an opportunity to improve
- First written warning
- Final written warning

These procedures prioritise putting things right over punishing the person at fault.

While acknowledging that ministers are not employees but office-holders, nevertheless it seems appropriate that the stages of disciplinary procedures should be applicable in the discipline of ministers and the same scriptural principle which prioritises putting things right over punishing the person at fault.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Synod of the Darlington District for its memorial. As the Synod rightly notes, Standing Order 1103(3)(iii) is key to the approach that the Church has taken throughout the development of its complaints and discipline processes. These have been framed in such a way that there is at every stage the possibility of reconciliation and an invitation to those who are dealing with complaints to look for solutions that are imaginative and creative. Part 11 of CPD does not aim to "punish" those who are found to have done something amiss; the Standing Orders avoid the language of penalty and only speak of "sanction" when a case reaches a discipline committee.

Part 11 is not the only part of the Standing Orders where a minister's inadequate practice can be addressed. In Standing Order 040, the process by which "a failure to fulfil obligations" is addressed seeks to put things right. The task of the committee in this process is to recommend remedies by which failures can be addressed and their repetition avoided. The process contained within Section 04 is one of encouragement and nurture offering a much deeper attention to patterns of behaviour than an employment process might afford.

Part 11 of CPD does not only apply to ministers. A complaint might be made against a lay office holder (eg a church steward) and would be dealt with under the provisions of Part 11 rather than through a discipline process akin to that for an employee, since the Standing Orders on Complaints and Discipline are intended to regulate relationships within the Church. The terms and conditions for lay employees (who might or might not be members of the Church) serve a different purpose in regulating the expectations of an employing body of an employee.

The ruling of the Supreme Court in 2013 emphasised that ministers are not employees; it would not be appropriate, therefore, for the Conference to treat them as if they were under a process of discipline parallel to that for lay employees. There is no contract between ministers and the Conference; rather there is a covenant relationship as outlined in Standing Orders 700 and 701. The Conference believes that the provisions of Part 11 and Section 04 enable any behaviours that breach the expectations of those in a covenant relationship to be fairly, compassionately and proportionately addressed, and therefore declines the memorial.

## **M20 Circuit model trust fund annual distributions to district Advance Funds**

The West Hertfordshire and Borders (34/14) Circuit Meeting (Present: 39; Voting: unanimous) is concerned that the sliding scale by which annual levies from circuit model trust funds to district Advance Funds are calculated is inequitable because it makes no allowance for the now large variation in the size of Circuits.

As currently drafted, Standing Order 955(6) states that:

- (a) ... a contribution shall be made annually to the relevant district Advance Fund from the model trust capital money held in each Circuit at the end of the year, as follows:
- (i) up to £100,000 or the first £100,000 2½%;
  - (ii) on any excess over £100,000 but not exceeding £250,000 5%;
  - (iii) on any excess over £250,000 7½%.

We are in full agreement with the original purpose of this sliding scale, which was to encourage Circuits to release surplus funds for mission by “taxing” more heavily those funds where the most excessive amounts were being held. We believe, however, that the current sliding scale fails to reflect the fact that what is an excessive fund balance for a small Circuit may be an inadequate fund balance for a very large Circuit.

The Mapping A Way Forward initiative has led to a much wider variation in the size of Circuits. Alongside small Circuits with less than 500 members, there are now a number of very large Circuits with more than 1500 members. We believe the time now is right for the calculation of annual levies to more fairly reflect the great differences that now exist in the size of Circuits.

The West Hertfordshire and Borders Circuit Meeting therefore requests that Standing Order 955(6) be redrafted to produce a more equitable formula for the calculation of annual levies.

## Reply

The Conference thanks the West Hertfordshire and Borders Circuit Meeting for this memorial and for raising the importance of Circuits managing their finances effectively for mission and ministry.

The key to the effective use of each circuit model trust fund is the implementation of an appropriate reserves policy, which should reflect the circuit plans for mission and evangelism. SO 955(6) has additional sub-clauses designed to enable Circuit Meetings to modify the amount of the levy to district Advance Funds based on firm plans within the Circuit as shown below:

- (b) Sub-clause (a) above does not apply:
- (i) to capital money held for long-term investment to yield income used for the work and mission of the Circuit in accordance with a circuit policy approved by the district Synod, nor
  - (ii) to money raised by any appeal specifically for the acquisition of land or the erection or alteration of any building, nor
  - (iii) to the proceeds of any disposition completed within the last five years, so far as they are to be employed in or towards a replacement project and consent to the disposition has been granted under Section 93 on that basis.

Anecdotal evidence shows that very few Circuit Meetings have considered these provisions as part of their reserves policy and applied for these exemptions and the Conference would strongly encourage them to do so. The levy is intended to ensure that money not being used within circuit model trust funds is made available across Districts via their Advance Funds. However, sub-clause (b) of the Standing Order enables Circuit Meetings with a clear plan for mission and for the development of property to support it can apply to exclude those sums from the levy calculation.

The Conference also draws attention to SO 955(7) which states:

The district Policy Committee shall from time to time (and at least once every three years) review the state of circuit model trust funds and their distribution throughout the District and may propose to the relevant Circuit Meeting projects for the application or use anywhere within the District of the capital money of or income from any such fund. The outcome of any review shall be reported to the Synod.

This provides a mechanism by which district Policy Committees can proactively engage with the distribution of financial assets across the District. The issues raised within the memorial would potentially be a part of any such discussions.

The Conference declines the request to amend SO 955(6) and encourages Circuit Meetings and district Policy Committees to engage with the entirety of SO 955. This would ensure that reserves policies are effective in the support of mission and evangelism.

### **M21 Standardised formula for assessments**

In the light of recent consultations on the Isle of Man, the Isle of Man District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 44; Voting: unanimous) requests the Conference to revisit the formula for the calculation of local church assessments at circuit level with a view to providing a universal formula to be used by all Circuits. Currently this administrative task is fraught with difficulties and complications. A formula which provided a common method across all Circuits would give a sense of equity and impartiality which would benefit all Circuits and remove the need for constantly revisiting this matter at the local level.

### **Reply**

The Conference recognises the challenges faced when deciding how to apportion assessments between Local Churches or Circuits and thanks the Isle of Man District Synod for raising this issue.

The Conference last considered this question in response to memorial M21 in 2014, and the Conference continues to hold the same view.

The Church works on the principle that decisions should be taken as near as possible to the point of impact, in order to maximise the freedom for mission and ministry to be carried out effectively. For this reason Districts are able to determine the formula by which assessments are apportioned between Circuits, which are in turn able to determine how they are apportioned between churches. This enables a flexible approach across the whole Connexion, with agreements that are suited to local circumstances. District Treasurers are encouraged to share their experiences and best practice at their annual Practitioner Forum and informally through their network, but this informs voluntary decision-making, rather than supporting a compulsory structure.

Naturally this approach brings challenges, but the Conference considers that these are more than outweighed by the freedom that currently exists for formulae to be adopted that suit each context. A wide range of methodologies is in use, and for the Conference to force change to a single connexional approach would bring significant change, and thus work, across the Connexion for little discernible overall benefit in terms of mission and ministry.

The memorial is therefore declined.

### **M22 Accounting software**

In view of the continuing difficulty of finding volunteers with sufficient accounting experience to take on the role of church and circuit treasurers, the North Hertfordshire (34/15) Circuit Meeting (Present: 37; Voting: 36 for, 0 against) believes that the Conference should investigate the availability of suitable accounting software or, if there is no suitable package, commission a suitable accounting system, such that accounts can be prepared by accounting novices to the standard required by the Methodist Church and the Charity Commission. As a parallel approach the Conference should consider providing accountancy services to Circuits at a low cost, reflecting their likely widespread take-up, either directly or via suitable accountancy establishments. The aim of this memorial is to ensure that trustees can discharge their responsibilities and concentrate on mission.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the North Hertfordshire Circuit Meeting for its memorial, and for raising the important issue of how Circuits can be supported in the task of preparing accounts to the standards that are now required.

Following a memorial (M21) to the 2016 Conference, work is underway to identify an appropriate way forward. The Methodist Council was informed of the progress so far at its meeting in April 2018, noting that there had been some unavoidable delays in taking the matter forward. The Council will receive an update in relation to these matters at its meeting in October 2018.

The Conference therefore believes that this issue is being addressed.

## **M23 Community land trusts**

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

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

## **Reply**

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

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

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

## **M24 Support for refugees**

The Birmingham District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 115; Voting: unanimous) draws the Conference's attention to the Syrian crisis and the abject plight of refugees from many different parts of the world and asks the Conference to encourage the Methodist people to respond appropriately. In particular we urge Methodists to engage with the Home Office approved "Community Sponsorship" programme, which offers sanctuary and life changing pastoral care to a Syrian family or individuals.



The Birmingham District has a project under the “Community Sponsorship” programme, and would be happy to offer advice about the practicalities to others interested in it.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Birmingham District Synod for its memorial and for highlighting again the plight of those who have been forced from their homes by conflicts in so many parts of the world. It also thanks the District for offering advice to others considering involvement in the Community Sponsorship programme.

The Conference commends the work done by Circuits and churches in many parts of the Connexion in response to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, and encourages others to respond as best they can to local needs. Examples include Community Sponsorship in Muswell Hill, London as well as in Birmingham, drop-in centres in Hull (Open Doors) and elsewhere, and practical help with access to local services, English language support, or simple befriending.

A short guide to Community Sponsorship is available through the CTBI “Focus on Refugees” website, <http://focusonrefugees.org/community-sponsorship-guide/>.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial.

## **M25 Yemen**

The Yorkshire North and East District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 171; Voting: 169 for, 1 against) draws the attention of the Conference to the continuing tragedy of the war in Yemen, as well as to UK arms supplies to Saudi Arabia, one of the participants in that war.

The Synod notes that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights says that as of 22nd March 2018, 6,100 civilians have been documented as being killed due to the conflict in Yemen, although “the actual numbers of casualties are likely to be far higher”. In March 2018 Amnesty International reported to the UN Human Rights Council that over 2,000,000 people have been internally displaced. It also noted that “Yemen is now enduring the world’s largest humanitarian crisis, with at least 22.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and more than 1 million suspected cases of cholera.” Furthermore, the World Food Programme, reports that “3.3 million children and pregnant or nursing women are acutely malnourished, including 462,000 children under 5 suffering from severe acute malnutrition.”

Yemen was already one of the poorest countries in the Arab world, but the war has made this situation worse.

The Synod further notes, with concern, the intervention of other countries in the conflict, through support given to combatants, through blockades as well as through direct attacks by their own forces. The Synod is particularly concerned about arms sales by the UK, alongside the US and France, to Saudi Arabia, whose forces are believed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Amnesty International, and others to have engaged in attacks on civilians. It is reported, for example, that UK-made cluster bombs have been used by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. The Synod notes the terms of the UN Arms Trade Treaty, which the UK has ratified, that no weapons shall be sold if there is a significant risk that the arms or items would be used in “attacks directed against civilian objects or civilians”.

The Synod therefore:

- (a) Requests that the Conference supports the recent call by Amnesty International for the British Government to cease arms supplies to Saudi Arabia “until there is no longer a substantial risk that the arms will be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of human rights or international humanitarian law.”
- (b) Requests that the Conference asks the British Government to put pressure on all sides in the conflict to declare an immediate ceasefire, so that through properly mediated negotiations a peaceful and just solution to the conflict may be found.

- (c) Requests that the Conference encourages prayer throughout the Connexion for lasting peace with justice for the people of Yemen.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Yorkshire North and East District Synod for its memorial and expresses dismay over the continuing conflict in Yemen that has created a humanitarian crisis described by the UN Secretary General as the world's worst.

The situation in Yemen was previously brought to the Conference's attention in 2016, through memorial M34 (2016). In response, the President and Vice-President of the Conference wrote to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in December 2016 requesting suspension of arms sales to Saudi Arabia and other parties to the conflict. Briefings and other resources were produced by the Joint Public Issues Team and members of the Methodist Church have continued to demonstrate their concern through correspondence with MPs, direct action and in other ways. The East Africa Famine appeal, launched by All We Can with the support of the Methodist Church, has also helped local partners to address the cholera outbreak and provided emergency food supplies to vulnerable families.

The dilemma faced by Her Majesty's Government is illustrated by the statement of the former Secretary of State for Defence, Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP, to the Defence Committee on 25 October 2017. He said that Parliamentary criticism of Saudi Arabia might jeopardise the order of a further 48 Typhoon aircraft.

While appreciating that defence sales provide employment in the UK, the Conference nevertheless endorses the request of the Yorkshire North and East District Synod that the British Government cease arms supplies to Saudi Arabia and directs the Secretary to write accordingly to the Foreign Secretary. A suspension of arms supplies would demonstrate unequivocal compliance with the Arms Trade Treaty and with international norms regarding the protection of civilians in conflict.

The Methodist Conference further invites the Methodist people to pray for the effective alleviation of the humanitarian suffering of the Yemeni people, for an international independent inquiry into the allegations of possible war crimes committed on all sides and for peace talks managed under the auspices of the United Nations.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial.

## **M26 Anti-Semitism**

The Lincolnshire District Synod, Representative Session (Present: 61; Voting: 52 for, 0 against) notes that the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) is celebrating its 75th year.

CCJ was founded during the dark days of the Second World War as reports were reaching the UK of atrocities against Jews in occupied Europe at the hands of Nazis and their accomplices, the vast majority of the perpetrators being baptised Christians. Since then CCJ has grown to be one of the world's leading exponents for building better relations between Christians and Jews both here and abroad.

The founders of CCJ included Archbishop Temple, Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz and, amongst others, Methodist ministers the Revd Bill Simpson and the Revd Henry Carter.

The 1943 Methodist Conference adopted the following statement as part of its response to the persecution of Jews:

The Conference affirms that anti-Semitism is utterly incompatible with the Christian doctrine of man [sic], and is a denial of the Christian Gospel. Malicious gossip and irresponsible charges against Jews, no less than active persecution, are incompatible with Christian standards of behaviour. Accordingly, the Conference calls upon the Methodist people everywhere to resist attempts to rouse antagonism or prejudice against the Jewish people.

Judeophobia, in its many guises, is again on the rise in the UK and elsewhere across Europe. In 2017 The Community Security Trust recorded the highest level of anti-Semitic hate incidents in the UK since it began gathering such data in 1984. This included a 34% rise in violent assaults against Jewish people.

The Lincolnshire District Synod calls upon the Conference to again reaffirm its abhorrence of attempts “to rouse antagonism or prejudice against” Jews and further calls on the Conference to draw attention to the definition of anti-Semitism found in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion toolkit: “Any belief, policy or action that discriminates against or incites hatred toward Jewish people, either by race or religion, or caricatures Jewish people and culture. This can include denying the right of Israel to exist or to judge it by standards not applied to other nations.”

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Lincolnshire District Synod for its memorial. It commends the continuing work of the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) in its work on promoting conversation and notes the award of a connexional grant to CCJ earlier this year for a project entitled “Listening and learning together”, aimed at promoting dialogue on difficult issues.

According to the Community Security Trust, 1,382 anti-Semitic incidents were recorded nationally in 2017. The Conference deplores all such attacks and absolutely condemns anti-Semitism as evil and wrong.

In accepting the Memorial and noting the definition of anti-Semitism that the EDI toolkit provides, and the context and guidance accompanying it, the Conference also joins with the Home Affairs Select Committee report of October 2016 in emphasising that “it is not antisemitic to criticise the Government of Israel, without additional evidence to suggest antisemitic intent.” As the EDI Toolkit expresses, the actions of the Government of Israel should be judged consistently with those of other nations and the political actions of a Government should not be attributed to the Jewish people or faith. The Toolkit further encourages Christians, together with Jews and people of neither faith, to consider how to promote understanding, community cohesion and peace between different communities.

The Conference welcomes informed debate on the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians in order to encourage a just peace for all.

The Conference reiterates its opposition to anti-Semitism and encourages the continuing use of the EDI Toolkit (<http://www.methodist.org.uk/for-ministers-and-office-holders/guidance-for-churches/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/edi-toolkit/>) based as it is on the principle that all humankind is made in God’s image, and therefore worthy of dignity and respect.

## **M27 Plastic**

The North Lancashire (21/16) Circuit Meeting (Present: 61; Voting: 53 for, 5 against) requests that the Methodist Church demonstrates leadership and commitment by:

- examining our actions and resolving to cease using anything that requires unnecessary plastic packaging or unnecessary disposables;
- encouraging tradespeople with whom it has business to seek alternatives to the unnecessary use of plastic;
- taking a lead in campaigning against the unnecessary use of plastic and instead seeking the promotion of sustainable alternatives.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the North Lancashire Circuit Meeting for its memorial.

The Conference welcomes the pledge of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to a ‘Blue Charter’ to protect the world’s oceans, and notes the ambition expressed by the UK Government to ban

“avoidable” plastic waste by the distant target date of 2042. The Conference believes that more urgent action is required to reduce substantially the amount of new plastic produced in the UK.

The Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) reports that the use of plastics in packaging is an aspect of its engagement with companies in the food and beverages sectors (see [www.methodist.org.uk/jacei](http://www.methodist.org.uk/jacei)).

The Conference therefore invites Circuits, Districts, the Methodist Council and the Methodist people individually to study the proposals set out in the Memorial and consider how to act on them.

The Conference encourages all Conference representatives, and in particular future Conference Arrangements Teams, to take conscious practical steps to reduce the use of plastic and creation of waste. It encourages everyone to think reduce, reuse, recycle.

The Conference accepts the memorial.

## **M28 Alcohol**

The Bradford North (27/32) Circuit Meeting (Present: 40; Voting: 17 for, 10 against) asks the Conference to make possible, with local Church Council approval, the serving (not retail sale) of alcohol in situations where the current prohibition is counter to genuine hospitality, potential partnerships, and opportunities for outreach.

This request comes from the experience of Baildon Methodist Church, for whom a promising partnership with a local initiative to bring isolated people together for a meal on Christmas Day, staffed by a combination of community and church volunteers, and hosted on church premises, was not able to take place when it was realised that a glass of wine could not be served.

## **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Bradford North Circuit Meeting for its memorial.

Amendments were made to Standing Order 922 in 2004 that enable alcohol to be consumed on Methodist premises where the District Policy Committee is satisfied that a significant part of the mission and activity of the Methodist Church carried out on the premises involves use of the premises as a conference centre.

The 2012 Conference declined memorial M31, which sought to insert “community” into Standing Order 922(3A)(i), on the basis that this would significantly increase the number of Methodist premises able to supply, sell and use alcohol. On a similar basis, the 2013 Conference declined memorial M26, which sought to amend Standing Order 922(3A)(i) to allow the consumption of alcohol where the Methodist premises is the only community centre in the area. The Conference affirms local initiatives such as that which is described in the memorial and believes that such events are able to take place without the need for alcohol being consumed. The Conference continues to hold the view that such a widening of Standing Order 922 would not be appropriate given the public concern over the ready availability of alcohol and the Church’s commitment to providing a safe place for everyone attending church premises.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial.