

Conference Business Digest

The 2016 Methodist Conference

Methodist Central Hall Westminster, London, Thursday 30 June to Thursday 7 July.

www.methodist.org.uk/conference

The 2016/2017 President and Vice-President



The President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd Roger Walton and Rachel Lampard.

The Revd Dr Roger Walton and Rachel Lampard were duly elected by a Standing Vote as President and Vice-President respectively. The theme for their year is holiness and justice.

Their addresses to the Conference can be found on the Methodist website at <http://bit.ly/spread-holiness> and <http://bit.ly/vp-address>

Ethical investment

The Conference received a report from the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI), which explained that in addition to ensuring that the Church's finances are invested ethically, the Church is also able to influence the way companies behave (such as paying the Living Wage, or being transparent about dealings with local communities.)

JACEI updated the Conference about its work on funeral poverty, climate change, Nestlé and breast milk substitutes, farm animal welfare and companies that operate in Israel and Palestine, human rights, water, mining and tax justice.

Ordinations of presbyters and deacons

After the Reception into Full Connexion with the Conference on the Sunday morning, seven ordination

services took place across London and in Chelmsford on Sunday afternoon.

Connexional Finances

The Conference agreed to increase the Methodist Church Fund (MCF) assessment by a fixed amount of 1% per annum for three years starting in September 2017. The Conference was informed that the total assessment equates to around £1.25 per member per week, or £65 per member per year.

The total income of the funds for 2014/15 included in the Central Services Budget was £30.4 million versus expenditure of £29m. The budgeted income for 2015/16 is £29.1m and the budgeted expenditure is £36.2m. The District Allocations to the MCF for 2016/17 is £13m.

Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice

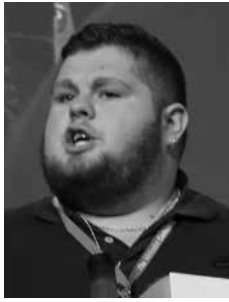
The Conference adopted recommendations arising from a review of the Mission Alongside the Poor Programme (MAPP). This included a relaunch and renaming of the MAPP as Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice (MAPJ), in order to promote the availability of grants and to encourage the Methodist people to be innovative in tackling poverty.

The recommendations also noted the continuing and growing need for grants to fund work with those experiencing poverty and inequality of resources. A connexional launch of MAPJ was approved to promote the availability of grants and to inspire the Methodist people to be innovative and bold in seeking new ways to serve their communities.

Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group

The Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group (JCAMG), the body which helps the Methodist Church and the Church of England grow deeper into their covenant relationship, updated the Conference about its work over the past year and proposed a Covenant Champions' network to work at District and Diocesan level to support Anglican-Methodist proposals about episcopacy and interchangeability of ministries.

3Generate



The Conference responded to the call from Methodist children and young adults to help them explore issues of faith and society.

The Conference considered manifestos from those who attended the 3Generate event for worship, fellowship and to learn, and to make decisions about how

the Church should represent them. The manifestos included items such as the environment, poverty, bullying, accessibility and the refugee crisis.

The subjects highlighted in the report will be explored by the Connexional Leaders' Forum (CLF) and the Methodist Council under the overall theme of Wonderfully Made, explored through topics named Wonderful Me, Wonderful Church, Wonderful World and Wonderfully Prophetic.

Over the coming years these themes will also be reflected in the programmes for future 3Generate events.

Faith and Order Committee

In addition to the committee's general report the Faith and Order Committee presented an interim report to the Conference about the theology and ecclesiology underpinning the Diaconate. The report explored the changing role of the deacon (and deaconess) and their relationship to the Methodist Church, the ways in which diaconal ministry has been expressed as the Church has sought to discern the will of God and to be faithful to its calling , and the nature and place of the Methodist Diaconal Order (MDO) within the Methodist Church in Britain.

The Conference directed the Methodist Council, with the MDO and the Faith and Order Committee, to consider whether the religious order should be opened to receive into membership lay people or presbyters. It also directed them to consider whether those ordained as deacons should continue to be required to become members of the religious order and report to the Conference of 2018.

Homophobia guide

The Conference welcomed the resource *Homophobia: Definition and Guidance* that had been requested by the Conference of 2014. Prepared by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, in consultation with the Marriage and Relationships Task Group, it offers a definition of what is, and is not, homophobia. The resource states that homophobic attitudes, words and behaviours are inconsistent with the nature of Christian

conduct and a violation of the worth and dignity of all people. The guide can be found at <http://bit.ly/homophobia-guide>

Marriage and relationships

Following consultations with thousands of people across the connexion on the subject of marriage and relationships overseen by a Task Group the Conference directed that a new Statement of the judgement of the Conference on marriage and relationships should be prepared and that, as part of the process, the definition of marriage should be revisited. A new Task Group was appointed to oversee this work.

Refugee crisis

The Conference, through presentations and discussions led by the President and Vice-President, reflected on the current refugee crisis.

The 2017/2018 President and Vice-President



The Conference designated the Revd Loraine N Mellor to be President and Jill Baker to be Vice-President of the Methodist Conference 2017/8.

Past Cases Review

A year after the publication of *Courage, Cost & Hope - the report on the Past Cases Review (PCR)*, the Conference received an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the Review.

These included: the establishing of a survivors' reference group to ensure that all policies and guidelines and training materials produced as part of the recommendations would be informed by the perspective of survivors and victims; significant progress on a system of structured supervision for ministers, including a pilot programme in two Districts; a draft code of conduct of ministerial practice, which will be presented to 2017 Conference.

All recommendations will be implemented in full, or with a clear process and timetable for completion, by the Conference of 2017.

Larger than Circuit

In receiving a report from the Larger than Circuit Co-ordinating Group established in 2013 the Conference directed the Secretary of the Conference

- to oversee a review of the roles performed by the District Chair and title given to District Chairs.
- to review the processes for the selection of District Chairs with the aim of increasing gender and ethnic diversity among this group
- to work with Synod Secretaries to convene District Commissions before new District Chairs are appointed or invitations extended to serving Chairs of District to review the life of the District.

Pensions

Noting the increases to pensions from 1 September this year, the Conference agreed that from September 2018, increases to pensions for ministers will be linked to the Consumer Price Index, which measures changes in the price level of consumer goods and services purchased by households, rather than the Retail Price Index, a measure of inflation, which is no longer being fully monitored by the Office of National Statistics.

The Methodist Council

The Methodist Council is charged with responsibility to keep in constant review the life of the Church, to study its work and witness throughout the Connexion, to advise on changes to make the work of the Church more effective, and to give it spiritual leadership.

In its report, adopted by the Conference, the Council updated the meeting about:

- the appointment of a Connexional Vocations Officer, part of the work of its Resourcing Leadership Working Party;
- the establishing of a Property Development Committee, to help the Connexion face the challenges in respect of property;
- the research project *Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission*, including the definitions of what defines a large Circuit;
- discussions about revised selection criteria for candidates;
- the continuing work of embedding Fresh Expressions in the Church;
- the ending of the URC-Methodist Reciprocal Arrangement for use of investment funds after the sale of shared buildings;
- informed the Conference about the 75th anniversary of MHA in 2018 and the 150th anniversary of Action for Children in 2019;
- Condition of Manses.

Collection



The offertory received at Conference Worship on Sunday raised £9,192, which will be divided between All We Can – Methodist Relief and Development and Action for Children. *Pictured is the Assistant Secretary of the Conference the Revd Helen Cameron.*

Notices of Motion

The Conference adopted a variety of Notices of Motion on issues including:

- a review by the Stationing and Ministries Committees of the methods of funding and deployment of ordained ministry;
- building community cohesion;
- ways in which the Church can further engage with Prospects Ministries, which reaches 3,000 adults each week with learning difficulties;
- a request to local churches to help save Pacific Island States from drowning by taking the Eco Church challenge;
- affirming the priority of evangelism and church growth;
- encouraging the Methodist people to hear the voice of God specifically to listen to a call to preach or lead worship;
- Meeting as the Chilcot Report was released, the Conference adopted a motion remembering all those who died in the invasion of Iraq, including 179 service personnel and at least 650,000 civilians.

Safeguarding

The Conference approved the change in frequency for designated training for the Creating Safer Space Foundation and Leadership Modules from five to every four years, with effect from July 2017.

Memorials

Memorials are messages from Circuit Meetings and District Synods to the Conference. They play a vital

part in enabling the Conference to hear and respond to concerns from across the Connexion.

This year the Conference considered 39 Memorials on topics including; the criteria for candidating for the ministry, stationing, the vocation of supernumeraries, sabbaticals, advice and assistance in obtaining UK visas, support for ministers or their partners requiring care, authorisations to preside at the Lord's Supper, support for circuit stewards, lay employees' pension contributions, Methodist charitable funds, circuits in tragedy and crisis, the order of service for baptisms, TMCP, use of church buildings, arms exports and support for refugees.

World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation

The Conference encouraged all Methodists to join with their sisters and brothers in the Catholic and Orthodox Churches in observing the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation on 1 September.

Prayer and worship resources are produced by **Churches Together in Britain and Ireland** and are commended for wider use.

Connexional Allowances

The Conference agreed to the increase of the annual standard stipend from 1st September this year to £23,184. A variety of allowances above stipend were revised, especially for those serving in island Districts, and some were discontinued.

A cross and a crown, reflections from Gareth J Powell

After his first year in office as Secretary of the



Conference, the Revd Gareth J Powell, pictured, offered his reflections to the Conference.

Read the full text of his reflections here:
<http://bit.ly/cross-and-crown>

After the Referendum: National Life

The Conference adopted a report about the uncertainty in the UK following the referendum on EU membership.

The report said that there was a need for leadership which seeks the common good and encourages all people to work together, to respect one another and to uphold the dignity of all.

It also stated that racism was a denial of the gospel, and that Methodists should challenge racism and discrimination.

The Conference directed the report to be sent to the Prime Minister, all MPs and national media, and that it be read out in all Methodist Churches. The report also encouraged Methodists to wear an empty safety pin as a badge symbolising solidarity against racism (below).

You can read the full report and write to your MP at www.methodist.org.uk/nationallife

