

***RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE CONFERENCE

- 10/1.** The Conference received the Report and commended it to the Connexion for study and prayerful discussion.
- 10/4.** The Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee to review the provision of liturgical resources in the light of this report, including the question of whether there should be one marriage service or two in the *Methodist Worship Book*, the preparation of a draft service of celebration for civil partnerships, and the preparation of any other draft liturgical resources that may be required. The Conference further directed the Faith and Order Committee to report to the 2020 Conference, on the understanding that the bringing of any draft liturgies and proposed amendments to the *Methodist Worship Book* for approval by the Conference would depend upon the results of consultation on the resolutions of the 2019 Conference and any resolutions of the 2020 Conference that result from it.
- 10/5.** The Conference adopted the recommendation in paragraphs 3.2.6 and 5.4.2, and directed the Faith and Order Committee to explore producing liturgical resources and relevant guidance for use at the ending of a marriage.
- 10/6.** The Conference adopted the recommendation in paragraph 3.4 that the Methodist Church offer more support for marriage, alongside other committed relationships; and directed that the Methodist Council ensure resources be produced to help provide this support drawing on the theological insights of the purposes, qualities and patterns for good relating set out in the report.
- 10/10.** The Conference directed that Resolutions 10/2, 10/3, 10/7, 10/8 and 10/9 be treated as Provisional Resolutions under Standing Order 122.
- 10/10A.** Resolutions 10/8A and 10/8B shall have effect conditionally upon the confirmation of resolution 10/8 by the Conference of 2020 in the same or substantially similar form and from the date upon which the confirmed resolution takes effect.
- 10/8A. For the purposes of section 26A of the Marriage Act 1949 (as inserted by section 4(1) of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013) the Conference consents to the marriage of same sex couples and accordingly authorises the managing trustees or, if none, the trustees, of any Methodist building in England and Wales capable of registration under section 43A of the Marriage Act 1949 (as amended by paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 to the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013) to register that building under that section.
- 10/8B. For the purposes of the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 as amended by the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014, the Conference resolves that Methodist ministers, probationers or members may be nominated by the Methodist Church in Scotland to the Registrar General in Scotland to be registered to solemnise same sex marriage and that same-sex marriages may be solemnised on Methodist premises in Scotland if the managing trustees so permit and all other relevant legal requirements have been satisfied.

10/11. The Conference directed the Secretary of the Conference to convene a group of persons representing the Law and Polity Committee, the Faith and Order Committee and the Marriage and Relationships Task Group, to receive the **reports of the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee and to report to the Conference of 2020** with appropriate resolutions, including a statement of the ecumenical implications as required under Standing Order 121(2).

*****RESOLUTIONS APPROVED BY THE CONFERENCE AS PROVISIONAL RESOLUTIONS**

10/2. The Conference adopts the recommendation in paragraph 2.2.5 that it affirm the following summary understanding of the principles or qualities of good relating:

- All significant relationships should be built on self-giving love, commitment, fidelity, loyalty, honesty, mutual respect, equality and the desire for the mutual flourishing of the people involved.
- It is through that self-giving, rather than through self-seeking, that the self flourishes and begins to experience life in all its fullness (though it needs to be recognised that the universal Church's historic emphasis on self-sacrifice has often been misunderstood and misused [eg by abusive partners] in a way that is destructive of the wellbeing of the ones abused [often women]).

10/3. The Conference adopts the recommendation in paragraph 2.6.4 that it affirm the following summary understanding of cohabitation:

- The Church recognises that the love of God is present within the love of human beings who are drawn to each other, and who enter freely into some form of life-enhancing committed relationship with each other, whether that be through informal cohabitation or a more formal commitment entered into publicly.
- As a Church we wish to celebrate that the love of God is present in these circumstances, even if that grace is not responded to or even discerned by the people concerned.
- The Church has an important calling, therefore, to point to the presence of God's love within such relationships, and to encourage people to respond to it in the renewing and deepening (by whatever means) of their commitment.

10/7. The Conference adopts the *Guidance on the Understanding of Marriage* set out in paragraph 5.1.2 and directs that it be included in the Guidance section of CPD.

G1 *The Methodist Church welcomes everyone, whether or not a member, who enquires about an intended marriage in any of its places of worship. It looks for an openness to God in them, not necessarily a developed understanding of the Christian faith.*

G2 *Legally, marriage is a contractual relationship entered into by two people who make solemn vows and commitments to each other, without either the nature of the marriage or the nature of the commitments being further defined under the law of the land. In the understanding of the Methodist Church, marriage encompasses that but is also deeper and richer. The Methodist Church believes that marriage is a covenant relationship between two people, within God's*

covenant of love with them. Through it, they may experience, explore and express God's gracious love.

G3 The Methodist Church believes that marriage is an exclusive relationship, freely entered into with a life-long intention of uniting two people in body, heart, mind and soul in ways that are appropriate to each partner. In it, God's Spirit enables both partners to know the security of love and care, bringing to each other comfort and companionship, enrichment and encouragement, tenderness and trust. Through such marriage children may be nurtured, family life strengthened, and human society enriched.

G4 The Methodist Church recognises that amongst its members different views are held about the interpretation of the Bible and Christian tradition as to whether those being married may be any two people, or may only be a woman and a man. The Methodist Church has decided to respect and make practical provisions for both positions.

G5 A marriage service or a service of blessing of a marriage that has been previously solemnised may only be conducted in a Methodist place of worship when it can be shown that the requirements of the legislation in the appropriate jurisdiction have been met.

G6 Where there is a desire to use places of worship for marriage services or for services of blessing for a marriage previously solemnised, the managing trustees of those premises should actively consider whether they wish to do so solely for marriages of mixed-sex couples, or for marriages of same-sex couples as well as mixed-sex couples. The managing trustees should re-consider the question of the use of the place of worship for such services every five years or sooner.

G7 Where the managing trustees wish to use a place of worship for marriage services, and the legislation of the relevant jurisdiction requires church buildings or personnel to be registered or authorised for the solemnisation of marriages, the managing trustees should take the relevant steps to comply.

10/8. The Conference consents in principle to the marriage of same-sex couples on Methodist premises throughout the Connexion and by Methodist ministers, **probationers or members in so far as the law of the relevant jurisdiction permits or requires and subject to compliance with such further requirements, if any, as that law imposes.**

10/9. The Conference amends Standing Orders as follows:

011A Marriage (1) The Methodist Church believes that marriage is a gift of God and that it is God's intention that a marriage should be given by God to be a particular channel of God's grace, and that it is in accord with God's purposes when a marriage is a life-long union in body, mind and spirit of one man and one woman two people who freely enter it. **Within the Methodist Church this is understood in two ways:**

that marriage can only be between a man and a woman; that marriage can be between any two people. The Methodist Church affirms both understandings and makes provision in its Standing Orders for them.

(2) The Methodist Church welcomes everyone, whether or not a member, who enquires about an intended marriage in any of its places of worship.

011B Divorce, Remarriage, Marriage of Same Sex Couples and Respect for Conscience

(2)(1) Divorce *in a court of the land* does not of itself prevent a person being married in any Methodist place of worship.

(3)(2) Under no circumstances does the Conference require any person ~~authorised to conduct marriages~~ who is subject to the discipline of the Church as a minister, probationer, *officer* or member to officiate at *or participate in* the marriage of a particular couple, should it be contrary to the dictates of his or her conscience to do so.

(4)(3) When:

- (i) *As a minister or, probationer is stationed in a new appointment;* or
- (ii) *it is proposed that a member who is should become* authorised to conduct marriages

but who and he or she for reasons of conscience will never officiate at the marriages of couples in particular circumstances, shall refer such couples to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented the person concerned shall participate in a pastoral conversation on the matter with the District Chair and the Superintendent of the relevant Circuit (if he or she is not the Superintendent). Every effort shall be made to ensure that no individual is placed under any pressure to act against the dictates of conscience.

(4) Whether or not the law of the relevant jurisdiction requires that Methodist premises must be registered for same-sex marriages before such marriages can take place, no same-sex marriage may take place on Methodist premises unless the managing trustees or, if none, the trustees, have approved the use of the premises for that purpose and taken any steps which may be necessary under the applicable law.

(5) A minister, probationer or member who is asked to officiate at the marriage of a mixed-sex couple in Methodist premises which are appropriately registered for the purpose (where registration is required) but who is prevented from officiating for reasons of conscience shall refer the couple to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented.

(6) A minister, probationer or member who is asked to officiate at the marriage of a same-sex couple in Methodist premises which are appropriately registered for the purpose (where registration is required) but who is prevented from officiating for reasons of

conscience shall notify the District Chair, who shall refer the couple to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented.

(7) A couple who seek to be married in Methodist premises which are not appropriately registered for the purpose shall be referred, if registration is required, to the persons responsible for the conduct of marriages at premises which are so registered, preferably in the same circuit. If the person receiving the request is not willing for reasons of conscience to make such a reference, he or she shall so inform the District Chair, who shall make the reference in that person's place.

(8) No minister, probationer or member may agree to conduct a same-sex wedding without first notifying the District Chair.

(9) The managing trustees or, if none, the trustees of any Methodist premises which are registered for the solemnisation of the marriage of same-sex couples shall ensure that the District Chair is notified of such registration.

(5)(10) The Methodist Church opposes discrimination on the basis of **sexuality**, gender or race. Accordingly, if a couple is seeking to be married in a Methodist place of worship no objection to the performance by a particular minister, probationer, *officer* or member of any duty in respect of their proposed marriage shall be entertained on such a ground. No minister, probationer, *officer* or member shall perform the relevant duty or duties in place of the other person concerned or otherwise assist the couple to