

MEMORIAL TO SHEFFIELD DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE SYNOD,
APRIL 2021

POSTPONING THE VOTE ON 'GOD IN LOVE UNITES US.'

When the 'God in Love Unites Us' (GILUU) consultation resumed in early 2021 – after being suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic – District Synods had yet to vote on the Resolutions. By January, the pandemic resurged, resulting in another National lockdown in England on 4 January. The Lockdown impacted church congregations' fellowship, witness and mission. Against this backdrop, the Methodist Church has been pressing ahead with its GILUU District Synods, using video conference technology (primarily, Zoom) to conduct the meetings.

Zoom meetings disenfranchised those unable or unwilling to use such technology, which disproportionately affected many church members, especially the elderly. Church statistics show that most members are in this age group.¹ It is also true that support for same-sex marriage amongst older members is much less prevalent than it is amongst people in younger age groups², implying that the conversations favour the pro-Proposals viewpoint. **This bias does not sit comfortably with the policy of the Methodist Church on inclusion**³. Such discrimination cannot be accepted when making decisions on proposals that could profoundly affect the church's doctrine and practice in marriage and relationships.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been traumatic across the country, with significant increases in levels of anxiety and other mental health conditions⁴. Countless thousands are feeling the pain of loss, with families having little or no opportunity to grieve their loved ones together at a service of farewell. The church family is as much affected as anyone else. The church will come out of the Lockdown in shock and great weakness. It reflects a profound lack of compassion for the church to push ahead with these significant changes when so many of its members and those it serves are suffering so deeply.

The Methodist Church of Great Britain is the Mother Church of Wesleyanism worldwide. Many other denominations do not welcome the proposals in GILUU. Some other denominations envisage a split over this issue such as the United Methodist Church in the USA.⁵ With the church worldwide in such a fragile state, how can it make sense at this time to drive through proposals which will likely bring denominations into conflict and cause further (self-inflicted) harm?

Therefore, Sheffield Synod respectfully requests Conference to postpone the decision on the provisional Resolutions in the GILUU 2019 Report until the 2022 Conference to allow time and opportunity for all across the Connexion to engage in the conversations and for the focused scrutiny that will only be possible once the wounds from the COVID-19 pandemic have begun to heal.

Proposer: Daniel Mwilu

Seconder: Anne Dyer

Footnotes

1. ['Methodism in Numbers – Statistics at a Glance'](#), July 2018. Taken from the Methodist Church in Britain website.
2. "Among the over 65s, just 30 per cent were in favour of same-sex marriage, and 48 per cent said it was wrong. Conversely, 71 per cent of 25-49-year-olds agreed with same-sex marriage, and 17 per cent were opposed. 18-24-year-old church members are most likely to support same-sex marriage than any other age category, with 74 per cent showing positive views." ['There are now more people in the Church of England who support same-sex marriage than oppose it'](#) (pinknews.co.uk, taken from a YouGov poll conducted in February 2020).
3. "The Inclusive Methodist Church ... represents the diversity of the Methodist Church throughout its life and structures and affirms that there is no place for discrimination in our processes of selection, discernment and appointment." [The Inclusive Methodist Church Strategy](#). Taken from the Methodist Church in Britain website.
4. "During the pandemic, about 4 in 10 adults in the U.S. have reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder, a share that has been largely consistent, up from one in ten adults who reported these symptoms from January to June 2019." [The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use](#) (kff.org).
5. "Church leaders (in the United Methodist Church) revealed a plan that would divide its roughly 13 million members worldwide by creating a new "traditionalist Methodist" denomination that maintains a strict ban on ordaining LGBTQ clergy and same-sex marriage." [The Methodist Church split over same-sex marriage](#) (vox.com). This split will take place following the next General Conference of the United Methodist Church, and would bring into being the Global Methodist Church. See the Global Methodist Church's website www.globalmethodist.org.