

Resolution for the Representative Synod, 24 April, 2021
- Regarding the Report 'God in Love Unites Us'.

1. In Section 5.2 of the report 'God in Love Unites Us', the Task Group which submitted the Report recommends that Standing Order 011A Marriage be amended to reflect the conclusions of the Report.

2. Standing Order 011A (1) as it currently stands states that:
'The Methodist Church believes that marriage is a gift of God and that it is God's intention that a marriage should be a life-long union in body, mind and spirit of one man and one woman'.

3. The Report in section 10/9 (1) suggests that the beginning of 011A should read:
'The Methodist Church believes that marriage is 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 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'.

4. These proposed changes in the wording of Standing Order 011A constitute a change in the doctrine - a statement of what the Methodist Church believes - about the nature of marriage, and the ceremony which establishes it.

5. In the Deed of Union (1932) as amended in 1976 in 'Section 2, Operative Clauses, Purposes and Doctrines (4) Doctrine' states that the Methodist Church:
'loyally accepts the fundamental principles of the historic creeds and of the Protestant Reformation' and that Methodism was raised up 'to spread scriptural holiness through the land by the proclamation of the evangelical faith.'

6. The teaching of the Methodist Church on marriage is contained in the rubrics to the 'Marriage Service, Declaration of Purpose' in *The Methodist Service Book* (1975) and in 'The Marriage Service, The Preparation' in *The Methodist Worship Book* (1999).

This teaching reflects and affirms the teaching of the English Protestant Reformation from the time of the *Prayer Book of King Edward VI* (1549).

7. As the proposed rubric in the Report's Section 10/9 (1) to the Marriage service constitutes a change in the historic doctrine and teaching of the Methodist Church, the constitutional provisions of *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church* must be applied.

8. The 'Methodist Church Act 1976, Section 5 - Amendment of the Deed of Union', states: '(2) Subject to the provision of the next following subsection, the Conference shall make any amendment of the Deed of Union by deferred special resolution if the doctrinal standards are thereby affected but other wise by special resolution'.

9. In Standing Order 126 'Special Resolutions' subsections (3), (5) and (6) indicate that each church council, circuit and district must indicate their approval or disapproval of any proposed changes in doctrine.

10. Therefore, the following resolution is put forward to this Synod:

'The Sheffield Synod judges that the Resolutions of the Report (items 10/3, 10/7, 10/8, 10/9) before it for decision from the "God In Love Unites Us" Report that Conference received in 2019 constitute significant changes to Methodist doctrine. Consequently, it asks Conference that, should it confirm these Resolutions, it shall immediately commence the procedure required to deal with changes of doctrine before they are implemented.'

Revd. James H. Grayson (Proposer)

Revd. Stephen Clark (Seconder)