

# Conference Business Digest: A report for local churches about the business of the 2026 Methodist Conference



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The 2026 Methodist Conference, held at Telford International Centre:  
Presbyteral Session 25–26 June; Representative Session 27 June – 1 July.

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## **Induction of the President and Vice-President for 2026/2027**

On Saturday 27 June, the Revd Mark Slaney was elected and inducted as President of the Conference, and Caroline Stead as Vice-President. Their addresses were on the theme of 'Sorrow and Joy' and are available to read here:

[methodist.org.uk/about/structure-and-governance/the-methodist-conference/conference-2026/presidency/](https://methodist.org.uk/about/structure-and-governance/the-methodist-conference/conference-2026/presidency/)

## **Reception into Full Connexion and Ordination Services**

During the Sunday worship, 13 presbyters and two deacons were received into Full Connexion with the Conference, along with three presbyters by transfer, and one presbyter by reinstatement.

Having been received into Full Connexion on Sunday morning, those presbyters and deacons not already ordained travelled to churches around the region with their families and friends for the ordination services.

## **Connexional Council**

The Council presented reports from the Ministries, Mission, and Resourcing Committees, along with other matters of report or for decision.

The Council also brought an update on the Economic Justice Working Group, which was established in 2024 to develop a process by which ministry and mission can be funded where the need is greatest, to practise the connexional principle and to tackle inequality and poverty.

This interim report set out the process by which the group will prepare its report for the 2027 Conference.

The Council brought a report on the Missional Use of Property, emphasising the need for clarity about the relationship between a Local Church as an entity, its trusteeship and any building/s associated with it. The Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee, in consultation with others as appropriate, to develop and articulate a clear and theologically informed understanding of the Local Church and report to the Conference in 2027. The Law and Polity Committee was directed to produce detailed proposals for how models of trusteeship might work in practice.

The Council reported on the work undertaken by the Ministries Committee concerning ministerial flourishing. Significant work has been done to ensure a thorough understanding of the needs and the systemic and complex issues which cause concern. Pilot schemes are being established in three Districts and connexional resources are being developed. An interim report will be brought to the Ministries Committee in October 2026..

The Council brought its reflections on the strategic direction of the Church, flowing from the strategies already adopted by the Conference. The Council has identified two key strategic objectives for the wider Church as key to fulfilling *Our Calling*: to increase the number of accountable disciples, by making members, and to enrich the fidelity of those disciples to God through excellence in worship. The

Council has also identified the following specific change areas that it believes are necessary to achieve those objectives: governance structures, support of those in ministry, and the opportunities of a digital age. The Conference affirmed these two strategic objectives and three change areas and directed the Secretary to oversee a process which will present a draft statement to replace 'Our Calling' to the Conference of 2028.

### **Update on the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) Strategy**

The Conference received an update on the implementation of the JDS Strategy, since it was adopted in 2021. Key developments include new oversight bodies, practical resources, dedicated inclusion roles, Equality Impact Assessments, and efforts to diversify leadership. Training has been expanded through the Learning Network, alongside initiatives such as Solidarity Circles, inclusive worship pilots and the Discrimination and Abuse Response Service. While significant progress has been made, implementation remains uneven across districts, and the report stresses that full transformation requires JDS to shape every aspect of Church life. The Conference affirmed the observance of a JDS Sunday on a locally chosen date across the Connexion.

### **Review of the Conference**

The Law and Polity Committee brought a report setting out its concerns about the length of the Conference. The Conference agreed to bring forward the next review of the Conference and to widen its scope to include matters of length and structure as well as the number of members of the Conference. The Conference approved terms of reference for a task group to undertake the review, directing that it report to the Conference of 2027 with recommendations.

### **3Generate and the Voices of Children and Young People**

3Generate 2025 was the largest yet, with over 1,700 young attendees. Young people expressed to the Conference how much they value worship, community and faith development, but shared their concerns that church practices do not fully

meet their needs, desiring more accessible and age-appropriate worship, greater involvement in leading services and clearer teaching of the Bible. The Conference encouraged circuits and districts to enable those involved in ministry with children and young people to support them in biblical exploration and explore more frequent opportunities for local gatherings.

### **Assisted Dying**

The Conference considered a report on assisted dying, which had been requested by last year's Conference following the long-standing public debate of this issue, and the legislative developments in the various jurisdictions covered by the Methodist Church in Britain. The Conference referred the report back for further work, requesting that a broader range of people with lived experience be included in the work, and that a new report be brought to the 2028 Conference. The Conference agreed to remove the status of Conference Statement from its previous statement which dated from 1974. It agreed to maintain its historic position of opposition to assisted dying, noting that this does not place any restriction on resolutions that may be brought to the Conference as part of future work.

### **Budget**

The Conference adopted the connexional central services budget for 2026/2027, and noted that some progress has been made to reflect concerns of economic justice through changes to the Assessment formula. Despite some progress in addressing the deficit over the last year, decisive action will be required to reduce the deficit between now and 2029. This will include a review of every area of the budget, including the costs of the Conference.

### **Triennial Membership Returns**

The Conference received the membership returns, alongside data that had been collected on attendance at worship and other forms of engagement within the life of the Church. The total membership figure (adjusted for missing data) stands at 129,697 with total attendance (including online) at 99,813. The figures were received in the

context of the Church's strategy for evangelism and growth and the signs of numerical growth in some places, alongside the ongoing work towards a programme for digital transformation.

### **Action for Hope**

The Conference received an update on the aspiration to become net zero. The Conference noted that progress has been made across the Connexion, but parts of the Church have struggled to develop a robust strategy to meet the target. With regret, the Conference agreed to the refocusing of the work to an ongoing carbon reduction plan, with the removal of the 2030 target date.

### **Online celebrations of Holy Communion**

The Conference, following a period of discernment since 2021, provisionally decided that online celebrations of Holy Communion should be generally permitted in the Methodist Church; the views of the Synods will be sought and a final decision will be made by the 2027 Conference. In the meantime, the period of discernment has been extended for a further year.

### **Revision of Authorised Liturgies**

The Conference adopted principles for liturgical style and language to guide the work in the revision of its authorised liturgies. These principles emphasise the need for language that seeks to be inclusive and expansive, recognises a variety of traditions, and uses different registers where appropriate. The new collection will be called *Praying the Faith: Authorised Liturgies for Methodist Worship*. All Methodist preachers and leaders of worship are encouraged to study the report and to reflect on the language they use in worship.

### **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

In response to a memorial brought to the Conference in 2024, a report was received considering the implications of AI and its practical and theological impact across the Methodist Church. Recommendations adopted by the Conference include working towards issuing appropriate guidance that would be available across the Connexion and directing the Ministries Committee to consider how material on

theological, ethical and practical implications of AI can be included within training for ordained and lay ministries.

### **Kairos II**

Father Fadi Diab, Rector of the Anglican Parish in Ramallah in the West Bank, presented the Kairos II document, *A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide*, calling for greater costly solidarity with the Palestinian people. The Conference asked for a study resource to be produced for churches. It also asked the President to write to the UK Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, and the governing bodies of other jurisdictions in which the Methodist Church in Great Britain has a presence, urging them to uphold international law and to take the actions outlined in the Time to Act campaign.

### **Reparative Justice**

The Conference considered the issues raised by the work undertaken to uncover and understand the extent to which Methodist churches might have benefited directly or indirectly from the traffic in enslaved African people. The Conference heard that the research exposes both the silence and the complicity of Methodism's early leaders and of the Methodist Church during its first century. A statement, apology and initial actions will be brought before the Conference for approval in 2027, recognising that these will be informed by ongoing work with Global Partners and will not preclude additional statements, apologies and actions alongside Global Partners as further work unfolds.

### **Safeguarding Committee**

The report of the Safeguarding Committee was presented to the Conference by the Chair, Judith Davey-Cole, and Vivien Almond, a representative from the Methodist Survivors' Advisory Group. The Conference agreed to a possible change in how often refresher sessions of advanced safeguarding training are required, from every four years to three.

### **Ecumenical**

The Conference adopted a formal response to the eleventh report of the Joint International Commission for Dialogue between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church.

The Conference commended the report – *God in Christ Reconciling: On the Way to Full Communion in Faith, Sacraments, and Mission* – to the Methodist people for study and discussion.

A report from the Life in Covenant Group reviewed the progress and future direction of the shared work of the Methodist Church and the Church of England to advance the commitments of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant (2003). Work is now underway towards drafting a formal declaration of communion, liturgies for an inaugural joint service, an ordination rite for a President-bishop, and guidelines for ministers serving across traditions. Subject to the agreement of the Church of England's General Synod, it is envisaged that this work will be achieved within the next five years.

The Conference recommended renewal of the Life in Covenant Group for a further five years and directed the Faith and Order Committee to work in collaboration with the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England to bring full implementation proposals by 2031.

The Conference received a report from the Methodist-United Reformed Church Liaison Group, welcomed the proposed consultative meeting between District Chairs and Synod Moderators, and directed that a report come to the 2027 Conference concerning the vision and shape of future possible collaboration.

#### **Report of the Chairs' and Warden's Meeting**

The District Chairs and Warden of the Diaconal Order asked the Conference to make an urgent response to hate crime, harassment, discrimination and malicious conduct directed towards ministers. The Conference directed the Council to establish

a process to provide coordinated support in such instances, drawing on relevant expertise as necessary.

#### **Memorials**

Memorials are requests from Circuit Meetings and District Synods to the Conference. The Conference replied to 16 memorials on topics including the training of local preachers and worship leaders, delivery of offline and online training, governance for circuits and churches, Standing Order 943, supernumeraries chairing Circuit Meetings, Church Treasurer membership of Circuit Meetings, denomination of sanctuary, Israel-Palestine and Kairos II, the JTC group (as it relates to the Central Finance Board), menopause policy and guidance, maternity policy.

#### **President and Vice-President designated for 2027/2028**

The Conference designated the Revd Dr Jennifer Smith to be President and Daniel Keen to be Vice-President of the Conference 2027/2028.

#### **Appointments**

The Conference made a number of appointments and reappointments, including:

- the Revd Romeo Pedro as Chair for the Yorkshire North and East District from 1 September 2026;
- Deacon Claire Gill as Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order from 1 September 2026;
- the Revd Dr Janet Corlett as Chair of the Isle of Man District for a further period of three years from 1 September 2027;
- the Revd Faith Nyota as Chair for the London District for a further period of five years from 1 September 2027.

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## **Future dates of the Conference**

The Methodist Conference will meet in Telford from 24–30 June 2027.

  
**The Methodist Church**

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