

Methodist Council

The Council met for its spring meeting on the 2nd – 4th April via Zoom.

Gill Baker's term of office as Chair of the Council comes to an end at the end of this connexional year, the Council agreed to nominate the Revd Sonia Hicks to the Conference as successor from 1st September 2022 for a four year term.

A report on the work of the Task Group for Regional and District Structure Planning was received, this work is ongoing but it is hoped that a final report will be brought to this year's Conference. This is likely to recommend a reduction in the number of Districts to 12 or 14 corresponding approximately to the current regional groupings. The resulting reduction in the number of District Chairs would make a saving of £321k in the Connexional Budget, however it was pointed out that some jobs in the Districts currently being undertaken by volunteers would become too large, resulting in the need to establish paid posts therefore shifting some costs to the Districts rather than making savings.

A reduction in the size and length of the Representative session of the Conference is proposed from 2024. The proposed reduction from 306 to 220 voting members is mainly achieved by reducing the number of Synod reps. by 73 from 224 to 151. It is also proposed to reduce the associate membership from 24 to 16. It is proposed that the Representative Session run from Saturday afternoon until the following Wednesday afternoon rather than Thursday afternoon. The Conference Business Committee is asked to consider questions on how we confer including a shift to language that uses words such as conversation rather than debate.

The Council recommended the final report of the Candidating Review Group to the Conference of 2022. The report proposes three phases of vocation exploration in discerning the calling of a candidate to a particular ministry. Progression to phase 3 would be for those testing a call to ordination. The new process will be open to any who are baptised and have been in active membership of the Methodist Church for one year, they will no longer need to be accredited preachers, there will be no vote at their Circuit Meeting and no District Candidates Committee.

The Council agreed to the presentation to the 2022 Conference of *The Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers*. Local members need to be made aware of this Covenant Relationship as it's not only about what the Church expects of its ministers but also what it expects of its members too.

Council heard that the voluntary appeal for contributions to the Pension Reserve Fund totalled £6.2M as of 31st March. It was agreed to keep the appeal open through 2022/23. The Council also recommended that circuit contribution to the Methodist Ministers Pension Scheme is increased to 29.5% from 1st September 2022.

The Council affirmed that every entity under its control is required to work towards net-zero carbon emission, and also adopted an *Action for Hope* plan and a revised travel policy. The council agreed that its annual carbon footprint report for travel and energy use should **not** include churches, circuits and districts.

Full reports of non-confidential business are available on the Methodist Church website

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-conference/methodist-council/latest-council-papers/>

David Burton

Methodist Council Representative