

Israel / Palestine

Following a request of the 2009 Conference, a major report was presented this year on Israel/Palestine. It was required that the report should be based on international law and previous Conference resolutions. The report begins with an overview of the relevant Christian theology asking the Faith and Order committee to undertake further work on the theological issues, particularly Christian Zionism. Following a history of the conflict, the report goes into some detail on the suffering caused by Israel's Occupation of the Palestinian territories, with sections on the Separation Wall, military checkpoints in the West Bank, the illegal Israeli settlements, demolition of Palestinian homes, detention without trial and the situation in Gaza. Crucial to the whole report and the recommendations is the Kairos Document of December 2009, produced by Palestinian Christian leaders, which calls for sanctions on and a boycott of Israel to pressurise them to end the Occupation. The Conference debate was very dignified and note was taken of representations against the report from some in the Jewish community as well as messages of support from the World Council of Churches, United Church of Canada and other Jewish groups. The Conference stated clearly its criticisms of the Israeli Government in its continued defiance of international law. All the resolutions, including a specific call for a boycott of goods from illegal Israeli settlements on Occupied land, were passed overwhelmingly. The Conference commends the report for study, calls for lobbying against the Occupation and siege of Gaza and also calls on Districts, Circuits and Churches to support and sign the Just Peace for Palestine initiative of the Amos Trust <http://www.justpeaceforpalestine.org/>.

Stephen Leah

Stationing

The processes of 'Regrouping for Mission' have led to significant changes in the structure and size of circuits and some circuits have a different model of superintendency. As a result there will be a change to the matching arrangements for presbyters for September 2011. Both superintendency and other presbyteral appointments will be considered at each of the matching group meetings with no *separate* phase for superintendencies. Conference approved the creation of 'Ministry Deployment Figures', this being the full-time equivalent of ordained and probationer ministers (presbyters and deacons) in the district, to replace circuit establishment figures. The Stationing Committee declined any change in the present arrangements for the advertising of ministerial appointments, believing that the matching process provides an excellent basis for the appointment of appropriately skilled and experienced presbyters to be Superintendents in large circuits. In exceptional circumstances the Committee continues to be willing to explore the question of an advertisement following the submission of a reasoned statement from the circuit.

Kate Woolley

THE METHODIST CONFERENCE



Portsmouth 2010

Newsletter Prepared by Representatives from York and Hull District

Representatives

Revds Sue Pegg, Andy Lindley, Sue Swires, Dr Stephen Leah, Mrs Kate Woolley, Mrs Tricia Mitchell, Mr William Swires and Mrs Heather Shipman

One of the highlights of any Conference is the Reception into Full Connexion of the ordinands on the Sunday morning, and their ordination at various venues during the afternoon. This year we were delighted to support our three ordinands, Susan Greenhart, Mike Poole and Neville Simpson. As we stood and applauded them we were very conscious of their calling and of their unhesitating response to all that has been demanded of them in reaching this point. We were also reminded that on the Monday morning when the representative session of Conference begins, we would be responsible as both lay and ordained people for the governance of our Church in the coming year, and that in order to do that well, we must work together in harmony, with Christ at the centre of all we do.

This very brief newsletter can only give you a flavour of some of the discussion at Conference. I know it is Stephen's wish, as Chair of the District, that we seek to share as much of Conference with you as possible. All District Chairs are automatically present at Conference and he will be delighted if you make as much use of your representatives as possible. We will all be at Synod in September with red badges on. Please do contact us. For the first time this year, we were lobbied by various groups. This we took as an excellent sign. We are your representatives, not delegates, to Conference. Please make use of us.

Heather Shipman

Youth at Conference

This conference saw us wrestle with some large financial and political issues, but once again, it is the young people in our church who I felt led the way in wrestling with their personal discipleship. The Youth Assembly last year, was over-subscribed, yet had been a huge success. Its questions about faith and sexuality, tabled last year, were answered at the Assembly by David Gamble, who played the role of connexional 'sex expert'. This year the Assembly sought the advice of the Methodist theology team on cohabiting, an issue relevant to them, and as conference pointed out to people of all ages in the church. I wonder why they ask the questions and we don't? – Are we afraid to hear the answers? The other headline change was to the Youth Participation project; many people were angry that funding had been decreased by Methodist Council, even before it had been given a chance to prove its worth, a decision that impacted on our own District plans this year. Reluctantly the conference endorsed the decision, as there simply is not the money to do everything. Sadly that means only 1 in 3 districts can have a young person connexionally funded, as a 'One Program Participant' [OPP], which is a shame as last year they did some amazing things. The training and mentoring support is, however, still available. This means that if we are willing, we can underwrite the cost, even if our own funding bid next year is not successful. I hope you have your thinking caps on for possible placements for 2011. Finally, I hope that everyone connected with children and young people will access the new Methodist website www.childrenandyouth.org.uk/workers. The team, and our young people, are seeking to enable better communication between us, so register and receive information on resources for you at source.

Andy Lindley

Safeguarding

For the first time an ecumenical working group has been the compiling body for the safeguarding proposals. It has proposed a handbook to guide work with Vulnerable Adults. Conference paid tribute to the authors including Alison McDonald from our own District. The guide will be available electronically and will include safeguarding principles, the underpinning theology as well as appendices to give guidance on implementation.

Conference directed that Districts should appoint a Safeguarding Adults Group and a coordinator for Safeguarding Adults, and that Circuits appoint, support and resource a Safeguarding Adults Coordinator who should report to the Circuit Meeting.

We were reminded that this is an area which will continue to evolve and we must remain vigilant with regards to our processes. The Conference Report will be issued as a handbook to guide local churches, circuits and districts.

Tricia Mitchell

Missing Generations Research

The issue of the 'missing generation' i.e. 25-40 age group has been raised frequently by previous conferences and conference members broke into groups to identify what can/has been learnt from their experiences and discern whether there are lessons that could help other churches. This is extremely relevant to the theme of discipleship which has been adopted as the motif for the work of the Connexional Team and notes from the workshops are to be used in the missing generation research and published on the Methodist Church website - watch this space!

Will Swires

Personnel Files for Ministers

Conference adopted the principle of developing and maintaining personnel files for presbyters and deacons. The process should begin in September 2010, based on details currently available in Minutes of Conference and the existing connexional database, with personnel files for every deacon to be established 2010-2011.

Sue Swires

A brief summary of other items (not because they are less important, just short of space)

Singing the Faith

A new hymn book will be available for 2011 with on-line resources.

Ministers' Pension Provision

Conference voted to retain the Defined Benefit Scheme. The accrual rate for future service for Ministers will revert to 1/80th of final stipend for each year of pensionable service.

The Presidency

Conference resolved that it did not want to make a decision on the future of the Presidency of the Methodist Church until it had been discussed by District Synods. Options for the future will be outlined at the Autumn Synods and reported back to the Conference of 2011.

Discipleship, Fresh Expression and Evangelism

Sue Pegg is your representative who will answer questions on these reports.

Please remember that any of your Conference Representatives will be very happy to answer your questions or assist in any way in bringing the work of Conference to the attention of Circuits and Churches.

Heather Shipman