

YEOVIL AND BLACKMORE VALE CIRCUIT
Charity Registration Number 1158290

CIRCUIT MEETING – TUESDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 7.30PM
TO BE HELD BY ZOOM DUE TO COVID RESTRICTIONS

AGENDA

Devotions – Deacon Rebekah-Joy Spinks

1. Attendance (*particularly important to know who is present and entitled to vote (SO 514[2]) and any who may be attending who are entitled to speak, but not vote (SO 514[3] {c}) and apologies....*)
2. Agree that this 'Virtual' meeting is legally constituted.
3. **Minutes of Last Meeting** – 15th September 2020
4. **Matters Arising**
 - a) Matter Arising will be taken at the Circuit Business Meeting – Tues 23rd March '21.
5. **Finance Report:**
 - a) Approval of 2019/20 accounts and Trustees Annual Report
 - b) Approval of 2020/21 reserves policy
6. **Methodist Conference Report: 'God in Love Unites Us'**
 - a) 'God in Love Unites Us' - The text of the Provisional Resolutions to be voted on at Conference 2021: (*see appendix #1**)
 - b) Results from Church Council discussions: Two Church Councils (S. Newton & Tisbury) and one Church Meeting (Bell St.) took representative votes on the five Provisional Resolutions and request that Circuit Meeting is informed of the results: (*see appendix #2**)
 - c) Resolution from Bell St. Shaftesbury Church Meeting: (*see appendix #3**)
 - d) Memorial to Conference from Ibberton, Hazelbury Bryan and St Mark's: (*see appendix #4**)
 - e) Circuit Memorial to Conference: (*see appendix #5**)

(*All Appendices are listed below...)

7. **Any Other Business**
 - a) **Change in lay Rep to Synod: Change Sarah James to Lewis Buckwell** (other reps remain: Margaret Whitford, Colin Farrant, Christine Lydford, Kate Rawlins, Sarah Upshall)
8. **Dates of next meetings:** 23rd March 2021, 7.30pm Virtual: 'Zoom' (*Devotions:?.*)

Closing Prayers

Zoom log-on details:

You are invited to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Y&BV - Circuit Meeting

Time: Feb 23, 2021 07:00 PM London (Meeting begins at 7.30pm)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81828499713?pwd=ZEdUZ0pGSIRCWEEwRHB6REdUSWg5Zz09>

Meeting ID: 818 2849 9713

Passcode: 949826

For those joining by phone – you may use any of the following numbers:

Dial by your location

+44 203 481 5237 United Kingdom

+44 203 481 5240 United Kingdom

+44 203 901 7895 United Kingdom

+44 131 460 1196 United Kingdom

+44 203 051 2874 United Kingdom

Appendix #1

RESOLUTIONS APPROVED BY THE CONFERENCE AS PROVISIONAL RESOLUTIONS

10/2. The Conference adopts the recommendation in paragraph 2.2.5 that it affirm the following summary understanding of the principles or qualities of good relating:

- All significant relationships should be built on self-giving love, commitment, fidelity, loyalty, honesty, mutual respect, equality and the desire for the mutual flourishing of the people involved.
- It is through that self-giving, rather than through self-seeking, that the self flourishes and begins to experience life in all its fullness (though it needs to be recognised that the universal Church's historic emphasis on self-sacrifice has often been misunderstood and misused [eg by abusive partners] in a way that is destructive of the wellbeing of the ones abused [often women]).

10/3. The Conference adopts the recommendation in paragraph 2.6.4 that it affirm the following summary understanding of cohabitation:

- The Church recognises that the love of God is present within the love of human beings who are drawn to each other, and who enter freely into some form of life-enhancing committed relationship with each other, whether that be through informal cohabitation or a more formal commitment entered into publicly.
- As a Church we wish to celebrate that the love of God is present in these circumstances, even if that grace is not responded to or even discerned by the people concerned.
- The Church has an important calling, therefore, to point to the presence of God's love within such relationships, and to encourage people to respond to it in the renewing and deepening (by whatever means) of their commitment.

10/7. The Conference adopts the *Guidance on the Understanding of Marriage* set out in paragraph 5.1.2 and directs that it be included in the Guidance section of CPD.

G1 The Methodist Church welcomes everyone, whether or not a member, who enquires about an intended marriage in any of its places of worship. It looks for an openness to God in them, not necessarily a developed understanding of the Christian faith.

G2 Legally, marriage is a contractual relationship entered into by two people who make solemn vows and commitments to each other, without either the nature of the marriage or the nature of the commitments being

further defined under the law of the land. In the understanding of the Methodist Church, marriage encompasses that but is also deeper and richer. The Methodist Church believes that marriage is a covenant relationship between two people, within God's covenant of love with them. Through it, they may experience, explore and express God's gracious love.

G3 The Methodist Church believes that marriage is an exclusive relationship, freely entered into with a life-long intention of uniting two people in body, heart, mind and soul in ways that are appropriate to each partner. In it, God's Spirit enables both partners to know the security of love and care, bringing to each other comfort and companionship, enrichment and encouragement, tenderness and trust. Through such marriage children may be nurtured, family life strengthened, and human society enriched.

G4 The Methodist Church recognises that amongst its members different views are held about the interpretation of the Bible and Christian tradition as to whether those being married may be any two people, or may only be a woman and a man. The Methodist Church has decided to respect and make practical provisions for both positions.

G5 A marriage service or a service of blessing of a marriage that has been previously solemnised may only be conducted in a Methodist place of worship when it can be shown that the requirements of the legislation in the appropriate jurisdiction have been met.

G6 Where there is a desire to use places of worship for marriage services or for services of blessing for a marriage previously solemnised, the managing trustees of those premises should actively consider whether they wish to do so solely for marriages of mixed-sex couples, or for marriages of same-sex couples as well as mixed-sex couples. The managing trustees should re-consider the question of the use of the place of worship for such services every five years or sooner.

G7 Where the managing trustees wish to use a place of worship for marriage services, and the legislation of the relevant jurisdiction requires church buildings or personnel to be registered or authorised for the solemnisation of marriages, the managing trustees should take the relevant steps to comply.

10/8. The Conference consents in principle to the marriage of same-sex couples on Methodist premises throughout the Connexion and by Methodist ministers, probationers or members in so far as the law of the relevant jurisdiction permits or requires and subject to compliance with such further requirements, if any, as that law imposes.

10/9. The Conference amends Standing Orders as follows:

011A Marriage (1) ~~The Methodist Church believes that marriage is a gift of God and that it is God's intention that a marriage should be~~ *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 one man and one woman 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.***

(2) The Methodist Church welcomes everyone, whether or not a member, who enquires about an intended marriage in any of its places of worship.

011B Divorce, Remarriage, Marriage of Same Sex Couples and Respect for Conscience

~~(2)~~**(1)** Divorce *in a court of the land* does not of itself prevent a person being married in any Methodist place of worship.

~~(3)~~**(2)** Under no circumstances does the Conference require any person ~~authorised to conduct marriages~~ who is subject to the discipline of the Church as a minister, probationer, **officer** or member to officiate at **or participate in** the marriage of a particular couple, should it be contrary to the dictates of his or her conscience to do so.

~~(4)~~**(3) When:**

(i) ~~A~~ **a** minister ~~or~~ **probationer is stationed in a new appointment;** or

(ii) it is proposed that a member who is should become authorised to conduct marriages

~~but who~~ **and he or she** for reasons of conscience will never officiate at the marriages of couples in particular circumstances, shall refer such couples to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented **the person concerned shall participate in a pastoral conversation on the matter with the District Chair and the Superintendent of the relevant Circuit (if he or she is not the Superintendent). Every effort shall be made to ensure that no individual is placed under any pressure to act against the dictates of conscience.**

(4) Whether or not the law of the relevant jurisdiction requires that Methodist premises must be registered for same-sex marriages before such marriages can take place, no same-sex marriage may take place on Methodist premises unless the managing trustees or, if none, the trustees, have approved the use of the premises for that purpose and taken any steps which may be necessary under the applicable law.

(5) A minister, probationer or member who is asked to officiate at the marriage of a mixed-sex couple in Methodist premises which are appropriately registered for the purpose (where registration is required) but who is prevented from officiating for reasons of conscience shall refer the couple to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented.

(6) A minister, probationer or member who is asked to officiate at the marriage of a same-sex couple in Methodist premises which are appropriately registered for the purpose (where registration is required) but who is prevented from officiating for reasons of conscience shall notify the District Chair, who shall refer the couple to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented.

(7) A couple who seek to be married in Methodist premises which are not appropriately registered for the purpose shall be referred, if registration is required, to the persons responsible for the conduct of marriages at premises which are so registered, preferably in the same circuit. If the person receiving the request is not willing for reasons of conscience to make such a reference, he or she shall so inform the District Chair, who shall make the reference in that person's place.

(8) No minister, probationer or member may agree to conduct a same-sex wedding without first notifying the District Chair.

(9) The managing trustees or, if none, the trustees of any Methodist premises which are registered for the solemnisation of the marriage of same-sex couples shall ensure that the District Chair is notified of such registration.

~~(5)~~**(10)** The Methodist Church opposes discrimination on the basis of **sexuality**, gender or race. Accordingly, if a couple is seeking to be married in a Methodist place of worship no objection to the performance by a particular minister, probationer, **officer** or member of any duty in respect of their proposed marriage shall be entertained on such a ground. No minister, probationer, **officer** or member shall perform the relevant duty or duties in place of the other person concerned or otherwise assist the couple to make the objection effective.

Appendix #2

Results of voting from STURMINISTER NEWTON CC:

Resolution 10/2	8 Agree	1 Disagree
Resolution 10/3	7 Agree	2 Disagree
Resolution 10/7	5 Agree	4 Disagree
Resolution 10/8	2 Agree	7 Disagree
Resolution 10/9	5 Agree	4 Disagree

9 people were present and voting

Results of voting from TISBURY CC:

Resolution 10/2	5 Agree	0 Disagree
Resolution 10/3	1 Agree	5 Disagree
Resolution 10/7	0 Agree	5 Disagree
Resolution 10/8	0 Agree	5 Disagree
Resolution 10/9	0 Agree	5 Disagree

6 people present and voting

Results of voting from BELL STREET Church Meeting:

Resolution 10/2	9 Agree	2 Disagree
Resolution 10/3	9 Agree	2 Disagree
Resolution 10/7	9 Agree	2 Disagree
Resolution 10/8	7 Agree	4 Disagree
Resolution 10/9	7 Agree	4 Disagree

6 people present and voting

Appendix #3

Resolution from Bell St. Shaftesbury Church Meeting *'Bell Street United Church proposes that the Circuit Meeting should hold its own votes on each of the five individual resolutions contained in the 'God in Love Unites Us' report that are being put to the 2020 Conference, and that the Circuit's views on these resolutions should subsequently be shared with District, prior to District Synod in April.'*

Proposed: Lewis Buckwell, Minutes Secretary, Bell Street United Church

Seconded: Martin Forsyth, Contact Steward, Bell Street United Church

Appendix #4

Memorial to Conference from Ibberton, Hazelbury Bryan and St Mark's

'We, the (Ibberton / Hazelbury Bryan / St Mark's Methodist Church) Church Council, wish the following to be put to the meeting of the Yeovil and Blackmore Vale Methodist Circuit for onward transmission in the form of a memorial to the Methodist Conference of 2020.

Ibberton - Proposed: Adam Miller; Seconded: Sue Sloper.

Hazelbury Bryan - Proposed: Terry Miller; Seconded: Carole Miller.

St Mark's - Proposed: Trevor Kirk; Seconded: Daniel England.

'That the Methodist Church remains faithful to the present definition of marriage as set out in Standing Order 011A (1) – 'The Methodist Church believes that marriage is a gift of God and that it is God's intention that marriage should be a life-long union in body, mind and spirit of one man and one woman'. And the conviction that such marriage is the only appropriate context for sexual intimacy. That the Methodist Church does not redefine marriage to include same sex marriage, nor authorise the solemnisation or blessing of same sex marriages or relationships on Methodist Church premises. That the Methodist Church does not affirm cohabitation.'

Appendix #5

Yeovil & Blackmore Vale Circuit (26/05) Memorial to Conference:

Text of memorial:

The issues raised in the 'God in Love Unites Us' report are pastorally very sensitive within churches and potentially divisive. In view of this, Conference should agree by a majority of two-thirds or more to the changes proposed. Similarly, if individual churches are asked to vote, any change should be agreed by two thirds or more of those eligible to vote.

Background or supporting statement:

(This is not required and will not be printed in the Conference Agenda. However, the opportunity is available to provide anything that may assist the Memorials Committee in drafting a reply for consideration by the Conference).

The Yeovil & Blackmore Vale Circuit asks Conference to consider their Memorial before any conversation and votes take place considering the report 'God in Love Unites us.'

The reason for the Memorial is because of the concern in the Circuit of any close vote in this issue. Conference knows the sensitivity of the issue and it has been welcomed that in most situations the conversation, whilst difficult, has been held sensitively.

However, when Conference changes policy in a sensitive and potentially divisive area such as human sexuality, this Circuit Meeting believes this should only be done on a two-thirds majority at both Conference and individual church level.