

Yn Agglish Haasilagh ayns Mannin



The Methodist Church

in the Isle of Man

Twinned with the Methodist Church of Sierra Leone

**Minutes of the Special Synod held at St John's Methodist Church.
Saturday January 11th 2020, at 12.30 pm**

Following the fellowship meal, Rev. Richard Hall welcomed everyone to the meeting, outlined the proceedings for the afternoon and led a service of Holy Communion.

Present were: Rev. Richard Hall, (Chair), John Binns, (Secretary), Rev. Andy Fishburne, Rev. Rebecca Ingrouille, Rev. Steve Ingrouille, Rev. Bryan Yardy, Rev. Richard Hooton, Rev. Chris Belfield, Rev. David Shirliff, Pat Costain, (Circuit Steward), Sue Montgomery, (Circuit Steward), Phyllis Jackson, (Circuit Steward), Harvey Garton, (Circuit Steward), Gareth Moore, (Circuit Steward), Eddie Teare, (Circuit Steward), Caroline Salmon, (MWiB President), Panda Dooley, (Lay employee), Rita Norrey, (Lay employee), Linda Eccles, (Lay employee), Benjamin Hulme, (Lay employee), Marion Watterson, (Abbeylands), Dorrie Garton, (Abbeylands), Mike Simm, (Agneash), Hilary Simm, (Agneash), David Clague, (Baldrine), Pat Godby, (Baldrine), Jean Wilkinson, (Ballafesson), Linda Belfied, (Ballafesson), Simon Young, (Ballagarey), Sue Young, (Ballagarey), Hilary Sewell, (Ballakilpheric), Ann Quayle, (Barregarrow), Chris Fairgreave, (Bride), Stewart Fairgreave, (Observer), Claire Quayle, (Bride), Lily Chapman, (Castletown), Jayne Mort, (Colby), Kevin Mort, (Colby), Jennifer Corrin, (The Cooil), Joy Creer, (The Cooil), Sinclair Gelling, (Crosby), Julia Sharples, (Glen Maye), Paul Craker, (Glen Maye), Shirley Harper, (Kirk Michael), Marilyn Cannell, (Kirk Michael), Fiona Cracknell, (Laxey), Helen Norton, (Laxey), Connie Collister, (Onchan), Eileen Mellows, (Onchan), Bert Quayle, (Peel), Lesley Motley, (Peel), Andrew Wedgewood-Mayne, (Peel), Jane Foxon, (Port Erin), Peter Ledsom, (Port Erin), Betts Wallis, (Port St. Mary), Bruce Wallis, (Port St. Mary), Hollie Johnston, (Promenade), Frank Cowin, (Promenade), Christine Sugden, (Ramsey), John Craine, (Ramsey), Jo Reville, (Sandygate), Pauline Lyall, (Sandygate), Stephen Bradley, (St. John's), Margaret Kennaugh, (St. John's), Yvonne Cresswell, (St. John's), Henry Gorry, (Sulby), Derek Jones, (Sulby), Kelly Haynes, (The Howe), Nicci Cain, (The Howe), David Holmes, (Trinity), Leon Roome, (Trinity), Elaine Christian, (Trinity), Paul Craine, (Trinity), David Quayle, (Union Mills), and Chris Lyon, (Union Mills),

It was noted that the attendance represented 87% of eligible voting members, compared to a normal attendance at Circuit Meetings/Synod of around 60%.

Apologies were received from: Geoff Collier, Keith Watterson, Norman Kneen, Howard Pilley, and Norma Owen

There was no Lay representation from: Ballabeg and Pulrose

Paul Craine, Jane Foxon, Pat Costain and Rev. Bryan Yardy were appointed as scrutineers.

The meeting progressed to a consideration of the provisional resolutions and voting on each.

The record of voting and key points of the discussions as sent to the Connexional Office is reproduced below.

God in love unites us: Provisional Resolutions submitted to the Synods under SO 122

District: Isle of Man 15

Number of voting members present: 73

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]).

Significant points raised in the Synod debate:

- The only relationship that the Church should be concerned with is the individual's relationship with Jesus. By implication, the Church should not be voting on a definition of human relationships.
- The wording of part 2 of the resolution was strongly welcomed because of the emphasis that the church has sometimes given in the past to staying in an abusive marriage.

Amendments:

*If amendments are voted on by the Synod, please indicate the **text of each of those amendments** and the numbers voting for and against them.*

No amendment was proposed.

Voting figures:

For Against

Substantive Resolution:

Please record the text of the resolution which the Synod voted on if amended and the voting figures.

Voting figures:

For **65** Against **7**

God in love unites us: Provisional Resolutions submitted to the Synods under SO 122

District: Isle of Man 15

Number of voting members present: 74 (An additional member arrived late due to a delayed flight)

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.

Significant points raised in the Synod debate:

- No reference is made in the bible to cohabitation, and so the Church should not be considering the issue
- Many young people, including Christians, choose to cohabit because traditional marriage is perceived to promote sexism and the subservience of women.
- One presbyter commented that he had never conducted a wedding for a couple who had not already been cohabiting.
- The quality of good relationships should be taken into account far more than sexual attraction, because it is the former which we seek to recognise, celebrate and affirm
- One church celebrates amongst their membership a couple in their 90s who have never married.

Amendments:

*If amendments are voted on by the Synod, please indicate the **text of each of those amendments** and the numbers voting for and against them.*

No amendment was proposed.

Voting figures:

For Against

Substantive Resolution:

Please record the text of the resolution which the Synod voted on if amended and the voting figures.

Voting figures: For 60 Against 14

God in love unites us: Provisional Resolutions submitted to the Synods under SO 122

District: Isle of Man 15

Number of voting members present: 74

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.*

Significant points raised in the Synod debate:

- Jesus is the head of the Church, and endorses a definition of marriage going back to the book of Genesis. This proposal is that we disregard a creation ordinance, and we should consider where we are in our relationship with Jesus.
- There was a general acceptance of the legitimacy and value of different types of relationship, and a desire to offer blessing and affirmation to such relationships, but some disquiet that these unions should be defined as marriage.
- We are called to love all unconditionally
- This is a resolution to respect differences of opinion and interpretation regarding approach to the scriptures,
- The one true marriage that is found in the book of Revelation is a model of marriage which transcends gender. We are all that bride, whatever our sexual identity.

Amendments:

*If amendments are voted on by the Synod, please indicate the **text of each of those amendments** and the numbers voting for and against them.*

No amendment was proposed.

Voting figures:

For Against

Substantive Resolution:

Please record the text of the resolution which the Synod voted on if amended and the voting figures.

Voting figures:

For **58** Against **15**

God in love unites us: Provisional Resolutions submitted to the Synods under SO 122

District: Isle of Man 15

Number of voting members present: 74

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.

Significant points raised in the Synod debate:

- People might change their view on this resolution if it concerned a member of their own family. One synod member spoke movingly about her daughter's same-sex relationship and the loving and supporting environment in which her grandchildren are being brought up. The word 'marriage' might be a stumbling block for some.
- Some people have chosen to put God first, at the expense of family relationships.
- Allowing for a difference of opinion does not mean a compromise of an individual's own faith and beliefs.

Amendments:

*If amendments are voted on by the Synod, please indicate the **text of each of those amendments** and the numbers voting for and against them.*

No amendment was proposed.

Voting figures:

For Against

Substantive Resolution:

Please record the text of the resolution which the Synod voted on if amended and the voting figures.

Voting figures:

For **54** Against **20**

God in love unites us: Provisional Resolutions submitted to the Synods under SO 122

District: Isle of Man 15

Number of voting members present: 74

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 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.*

Significant points raised in the Synod debate:

It was understood that this resolution would follow on from assent to resolution 10/8 and the vote reflects the importance placed on respecting the conscience of individual ministers and Church Councils.

Amendments:

*If amendments are voted on by the Synod, please indicate the **text of each of those amendments** and the numbers voting for and against them.*

No amendment was proposed.

Voting figures:

For

Against

Substantive Resolution:

Please record the text of the resolution which the Synod voted on if amended and the voting figures.

Voting figures:

For

62

Against

12