

**Minutes of the Methodist Church in the Isle of Man
Circuit Meeting/Synod
held at St. Ninian's Church on Saturday, 11th September 2021.**

'God for All' Launching a year of discernment – 10.30 -12.30

Rev Dr Janet Corlett opened Synod with welcomes and introductions and then led the opening devotions from John 15 with thoughts about abiding in Christ and being fruitful. We sang: 'Sing to the Great Jehovah's Praise' and 'I am the vine'.

The morning session of Synod was spent considering how we are developing in mission and evangelism. This time was led by Deacon Eunice Attwood, Church at the Margins Officer in the Connexional Team. Eunice introduced the 'God for All' vision and explained the concept of having a 'Year of Discernment'. We were encouraged to pray and listen to God for to discern the signs of the Kingdom and possibly new directions for us as we are obedient to God's calling in mission. The session was interspersed with testimony (from Karen Norton, Jen Casson and the 3GEN youth) and time for reflection. The session closed with singing and prayer.

12:30 – 13:15 Lunch

13:15 – 13:45 Devotions with a focus on Sierra Leone - Great Big Green Week - COP26 and the Covid-19 Pandemic

Paul Craine led a time of devotions with a focus on Sierra Leone - Great Big Green Week - COP26 and the Covid-19 Pandemic. Paul explained the initiative to provide 'Climate Crisis for Beginners' books for school libraries on the Island. Individuals were encouraged to donate £10 to cover the cost of the book. Paul concluded the devotions with 3 prayers from Christian Aid's 'Rage and Hope' book.

District Business: 13:45-14:30

Revd Dr Janet Corlett welcomed everyone. Janet also asked individual churches to check the Directory and let Charlton know of any changes. He will then be able to produce an up-to-date Directory.

Membership/apologies/dispensations/scrutineers/letters of greeting

Present Revd Dr Janet Corlett (Chair), Revd Andy Fishburne, Revd Rebecca Ingrouille, Revd Steve Ingrouille, Revd David Shirliff, Revd Sean Turner, Revd Bryan Yardy, , Helen Norton (Secretary), Pat Costain (Circuit Steward), Sue Montgomery (Circuit Steward), Harvey Garton (Circuit Steward), Gareth Moore (Circuit Steward), Eddie Teare (Circuit Steward/Treasurer), Gary Corlett (Circuit Steward), Caroline Salmon (MWiB President), Panda Dooley (Lay employee), Jen Casson (Lay employee), Keith Watterson (Abbeylands, apologies for morning session), Dorrie Garton (Abbeylands), Mike Simm (Agneash), Brenda Kinnish (Agneash), Simon Young (Ballagarey), Sue Young (Ballagarey), Dorothy Faragher (Ballakilpheric), Claire Quayle (Bride), Alice Fairbairn (Castletown), Alwyn Collister (Castletown), Joan Collister (Castletown), Katherine Corkish (Colby), Julia Gilbert (Colby), Joy Creer (The Cooil), Julia Sharples (Glen Maye), Paul Cracker (Glen Maye), Shirley Harper (Kirk Michael), Fiona Cracknell (Laxey), Eileen Mellows (Onchan), Bert Quayle (Peel), Jane Foxon (Port Erin), Rosemary Cooil (Port St Mary), Amanda Walker (Promenade), Frank Cowin (Promenade), Tim Norton (Promenade), John Caine (Ramsey), Christine Sugden (Ramsey), Sue Collier (morning only), Margaret Kennaugh (St John's), Henry Gorry (Sulby), Derek Jones (Sulby), David Holmes (Trinity), Elaine Christian (Trinity), Paul

Craine (Trinity), David Quale (Union Mills), Chris Lyons (Union Mills) Ann Craine, Sue Yardy, Ruth Gorry, Jonathan Ayres, Sara Ayres, Norma Cowell morning only, Karen Norton, Geoff Collier morning only

Apologies Revd Richard Hooton, Kevin Mort, Marion Watterson, Pat Godby, Hilary Sewell, Sue Collier (Sue was present in the morning session), Jayne Mort, Jennifer Corrin, Alison Lynch, Marilyn Cannell, Gill Cocker, Celia Marshall, Norma Owen, Judy Matthews, Anne Cowell, Yvonne Cresswell, Leon Roome, David Quayle.

There were no Dispensations

There was no lay representation from Baldrine, Ballabeg, Ballafesson, Barregarrow, Sandygate, or The Howe

Revd Dr Janet Corlett stated that scrutineers were unlikely to be needed. However, if they were needed as the meeting progressed then they would be appointed.

Letters of greeting were requested for

Louise Whitelegg and her husband Colin

Noel Cringle's family

New governor Lieutenant General Sir John Lorimer.

Revd Dr Janet Corlett then led us in a time of prayer for friends who have recently died. We prayed for Colin Clark, Tim Wilson and Noel Cringle and their families.

1) Conference 2021 Report given by Revd Bryan Yardy and Caroline Salmon on the Highlights of Conference

Bryan: Bryan shared that this year's Methodist Conference due to Covid restrictions - was an incredibly challenging task. Conference met in hybrid form - with 64 people in the hall of the National Conference Centre, Birmingham, and 242 people participating from around the Connexion and the globe by Zoom.

For those on Zoom they had to learn how to request permission to speak, how to vote and how not to confuse the two! The team did an excellent job – however, we did miss the usual atmosphere of being at Conference in person. Bryan showed a slide with photos of Revd Sonia Hicks and Barbara Easton – New President and Vice-President of Conference.

Revd Sonia Hicks

Her story is quite incredible, and she shared it in her Conference address, with her theme for the year, "God's table: an invitation for All." Sonia reflected on the racism and marginalization she and her family have experienced – and how the Church can respond to injustice and division in society today.

Barbara Easton

In her address, Barbara drew on her experience as a quilter to address the Conference on a range of issues regarding diversity, the environment and ecumenical relations.

You can read a general overview of the business of the Methodist Conference in the 'Conference Business Digest.

Holy Communion and online worship

Conference received a report from the Faith and Order committee on Holy Communion and online worship. This was in response to the pandemic and last year's Conference calling for further study into online communion.

Conference agreed that Methodists be allowed to celebrate online Communion during a “period of discernment” until the 2024 Conference. It was stressed, however, that the period of discernment did “not represent a free-for-all.” Online Communion is to be limited to a common time – live – as opposed to a recorded service. Circuits and Districts will be encouraged to feed back their experience by 31-JAN-2023.

Ministry in the Methodist Church

Conference received a report on Changing Patterns of Ministry, which addressed the understanding and challenges of itinerant ministry and the particular impact it has on the stationing process.

Within the same report Conference recognized and agreed that a new office of Local Lay Pastor is to be created in the Methodist Church. It is envisaged that this new role, based in Circuits, could enhance the mission and pastoral ministry of the Church at a time of uncertainty and stretched resources. Lay-Pastors will be locally appointed by a circuit meeting for a specific period of time, within a framework of specific competencies and criteria. They will have to complete core training but will also be licensed locally for the period of their appointment.

Other parts of the report looked at the role of church stewards, with the recommendation to produce a new stewards’ handbook.

Caroline: Budget

In the Synod papers our Treasurer has outlined that we are being asked to give 15% of reserves from district, circuit and our individual churches to cover a short-fall in the pension reserve provision. It is in these accounts that the vast majority of Methodism’s money is located and these amounts have generally not diminished during the pandemic. (see later discussion)

Marriage and relationships

Following on from the 2019 report on marriage and relationships, ‘*God in Love Unites Us*’ and the subsequent consultation, Conference received a report on the results of the Synod votes (showing 29 out of 30 Synods confirming their support for all the resolutions). Caroline wanted to highlight how thoughtful, how loving, how prayerful was this debate. After much debate and prayerful consideration the Methodist Conference voted to confirm the resolutions on the principles of good relating, cohabitation, and same sex marriages conducted on Methodist premises. Caroline stated that it was a privilege to be part of this discussion. Many contributors, both in the Conference Hall and online, made calls for the Church to hold together and continue to work together despite the varied opinions.

What do local churches need to do to register their church premises for same-sex marriage? The Conference Office is in contact with the General Register Office (GRO) about the exact requirements. Once confirmed, step-by-step guidance will be produced. This will have to be followed up separately to conform with Manx legislation.

Also, the Conference recognises the differing views across the Connexion on the issue of same-sex marriage. The fact that the Conference has consented in principle to the marriage of same-sex couples on Methodist premises does not change this, and it is vital that local churches understand that they are under **no obligation** to register. They are entitled to decide against doing so if they wish, or even to decline to consider the

issue altogether. Caroline stated what a witness it is if we can hold together even though we hold differing views.

Safeguarding + EDI

Caroline spoke on The theology of Safeguarding and Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity. You can read what is written about it on the digest.

Caroline led the Synod in some minutes of stillness, quietness and awareness of the breath of life.

Safeguarding and having a strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity is a fundamental part of the church's response to God and sharing in God's mission in the world. God's outgoing all-embracing love for the whole of creation (God's mission) began with the act of creation itself. As part of this, God created humanity in God's image to be in a loving relationship with God, others and the whole of creation. The mission of God is focused in a new way in Jesus, through and in whom God's kingdom is established (although it is still to come in all its fullness), and through and in whom God offers hope, transforming love and new life. In a broken world God calls the whole of humanity to become God's people, living in communion with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. (Quoting from the 1999 conference report Called to Love and Praise; and used in Ministry in the Methodist church 2018.)

As a connexion wide church and here on the island we want to grow in creating safe as possible spaces, diversity in all areas of our church and to learn more and be changed by God through encounter with each other. We want to grow together in awareness of racism, gender, disability and LGBT+ issues and we want to hear from anyone who is interested in helping as we seek to bring in structures, processes, practices and training to ensure that everyone is treated with justice and dignity. This is to try to ensure that we are growing in our likeness of Christ. That the church is more fully reflecting God's kingdom of justice and joy, more fully reflecting the light of Christ and more able to demonstrate in word and action God's outgoing all-embracing love for the whole of creation.

Revd Dr Janet Corlett thanked Bryan and Caroline for their reports and enthusiasm. Janet informed the meeting that Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) is the new name for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). It occurs in our agenda as EDI.

2) Appointments – Representatives to Conference 2022

Revd Dr Janet Corlett proposed that Rev. Sean Turner be the Staff representative and Helen Norton the lay representative to Conference. Helen was nominated by Caroline Salmon and Fiona Cracknell. This was agreed by the meeting.

Other District Appointments (see booklet)

Revd Dr Janet Corlett informed the meeting that we need a replacement for District Candidates' secretary. John Binns has held this post for 12 years.

We also need a District disability advisor.

3) The **District Policy Committee** have not met since the June Synod so there is no report.

4) **TMMCP updates.**

TMMCP have not met since the June Synod so there is no report.

5) North West and Mann Learning Network (see booklet) We watched a video of Alison Hulse (The Learning Network Team officer aligned to Isle of Man District). Alison informed us that the Learning network events will be online to enable more people to attend. Alison introduced the other members of the team and explained their roles. She informed us that we can sign up to a newsletter and can look online at North West and Man calendar which is regularly updated.

6) AOB - No AOB

Circuit Meeting:

14:30 – 15:20

1) Minutes of the last meeting – see booklet .The minutes were agreed.

2) Staffing – verbal update from Circuit Stewards

Pat Costain spoke about staffing in the West. Currently the West has no presbyter; Revd Dr Janet Corlett is standing in where necessary. Pat asked that we all pray for the developing situation in the West. In a couple of weeks things may be clearer. Janet is going to be at St John's chapel on Monday so congregations from the West are invited to come and express their views.

One option being considered for stationing September 2022 is for a new presbyter to cover Trinity, Promenade and the four churches in the West. So, the new presbyter would work in a team alongside Revd Dr Janet Corlett and Rev Richard Hooton.

There will be a meeting on Tuesday 14th September at St John's to discuss this. They are asking for two representatives from each of the relevant churches to attend. Pat asked us to keep praying for the West and Douglas churches.

3) Appointments (Circuit Stewards, Treasurer, Auditor)

Gary Corlett has agreed to stand as a new Circuit Steward.

The meeting agreed to appoint Gary and reappoint the existing stewards Pat Costain, Gareth Moore, Sue Montgomery and Harvey Garton.

The meeting agreed that Grant Thornton continues as Circuit Auditor.

Eddie Teare is stepping down as Treasurer. The meeting thanked Eddie for his hard work. Janet implored that someone would volunteer for the positions of Property Secretary and Treasurer. Janet informed the meeting that she is in discussion as to whether the Isle of Man remains as a District at a time when other Districts are combining. It will be difficult to push for the Island to remain a District if we have no treasurer. Eddie has put good systems in place and is there to support a new Treasurer.

4) **Inclusive Church** – planning for an EDI forum. Revd Dr Janet Corlett told the meeting that a forum for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (previously EDI) was being set up. Janet would take the lead but invited anyone interested in joining the EDI forum to speak to her. The forum would receive help from the Learning Network.

5) **Leaders of Worship and Preachers Meeting** – no report.

6) **Manor Ark** (see booklet). Panda Dooley thanked everyone as it is the ninth year that she has given her report on Manor Ark. She said this is a credit to the Methodist Church. 11 young people had attended the overnight event (30 hours) at Mallmore last week with the Youth President and Roxy the Youth Council Representative for NW and Mann. Panda is keen for all secondary school students from the various churches to come along to the events that are organised. She hopes to take a big group from the Isle of Man to 3Generate 2021 which is to be held at NEC Birmingham, Friday 29 – Sunday 31 October. Panda then showed us the 3Gen video. 3Generate 2021 is open to 8 – 23-year-olds and, in an exciting new development for this year, are welcoming 4 to 7 year olds and their parents/carers or significant adults into their own 3Generate space. Janet said that people could also volunteer as helpers. Also, Janet hoped that the District/Circuit would financially support the young people attending.

7) Prayer bus – to be on agenda of the next meeting.

8) Methodist Women in Britain (see booklet)

Caroline mentioned the joint MWIB, Christian Aid, Fairtrade and Amnesty International One World Centre Fairtrade meal on Friday 24th September at St. John's Methodist Hall. There is a meal at 6pm followed by talks at 7pm. Caroline wants us to support this event and the service on September 19th for the start of "Great Big Green Week" especially as Louise Whitelegg has put so much effort into these events. Tickets were available at the back of the church, and we were encouraged to take some to sell in our churches.

9) Covid response – risk assessments 'because we love you'.

Revd Dr Janet Corlett spoke about the comparison of the UK which has strict Covid regulations in the churches (put in place by church councils) to the Island churches where few mitigations were in place. Janet said that the vulnerable are not always considered. Some are avoiding churches because they don't feel safe. She went on to say that the most vulnerable were vaccinated first so their immunity is now diminishing. Each church councils should do a risk assessment for their church. This risk assessment can be simple and structured around the 'Hands, Face, Space, Fresh Air' advice from the government.

We do need to consider how we are meeting when the risks of Covid levels are high.

10) Finance and property (see booklet)

i) Kerrokell chapel. Eddie asked if there were any questions. He said that items need to be removed from Kerrokell as the place needs clearing out before it is sold. Please see Eddie or Pat Costain if you want the items mentioned in the Synod report.

ii) Pension shortfall in Connexional Pension Fund

Eddie explained that there are two pension funds: one for ordained staff and one for lay staff. There is a potential deficit hence this agenda item. This will be discussed at depth at the next Circuit Meeting.

Eddie Teare informed the meeting that the UK Pensions Regulator has drawn to the attention of all Pension schemes, a new Consultation document. The Pension Regulator is conscious of any potential demand on the pension 'lifeboat' in the UK. The Regulator is concerned to mitigate any potential risk to Pension Funds by limiting the amount of Pension

assets invested in riskier investments like stocks and shares. There is a movement to rebalance investments portfolios by investing a higher proportion of monies in British Government security bonds, gilts and other low risk investments. We now need to await recommendations from this Consultation. In future, the Pensions Regulator may require collateral e.g. property to cover any short fall in pension funding.

Question. What is pension fund made up of and how do they measure the liability?

Answer. Currently, investments include 60% risk assets (stocks, shares and equities). This percentage may need to be reduced. One consideration in calculating the pensions liability is the longevity of those receiving the pension. Both males and females are living longer but females are outliving males. There is a formula for calculating longevity/pension liability.

Question. Could valuations go up again?

Answer. Investments are volatile. In March 2020 investments plummeted but now investments have recovered. Valuation of the Methodist Pension Investments are undertaken triennially.

Question. In regard to the proposal by Conference that Churches, Districts and Circuits voluntarily give 15% of their cash reserves to generate the pension reserve fund, would this money be refundable if not required?

Answer. This needs further investigation.

iii) Peel Manse

Eddie congratulated Rev Fishburne Andy on his appointment with Connection. Eddie reported Connection is looking for a home for Andy in Peel but in the meantime, Andy is living in the Peel Manse. Eddie asked the meeting for agreement to let the Peel Manse to Connection and then, when a new home is purchased for Andy, for permission to let the manse again on the open market until June/July next year. Legal advice would need to be sought beforehand.

Eddie proposed that the meeting agree to the Circuit stewards having permission to lease the Manse until needed to be vacated for the new Minister. Janet seconded the proposal and the meeting agreed.

There was a comment made that if the property was leased to Connection until for example February the period left would be too short to lease to someone else. The Circuit Stewards needed to consider this before deciding a date with Connexion.

11. Safeguarding (see booklet) no report

12. Events (see booklet)

13. AOB

Asbestos- Pat Costain urged all chapels to get in touch with Ferncroft

Environmental to get their buildings surveyed for asbestos. This work needs to be done as Legislation is coming in that all buildings have to be checked. If chapels have already been surveyed then this does not need repeating.

Rev Dr Janet Corlett led a short time of prayer before the meeting ended with singing 'Give me the faith which can remove'.