

MARRIAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Decisions of the 2018 Conference and Process for the Conferences of 2019 and 2020

1. The Conference adopted Resolution 27/1, to receive the Interim Report of the Marriage and Relationships Task Group (Item 27 of the Agenda of the 2018 Conference) [Daily Record 7/17/1]. Resolution 27/2 about a proposed way of proceeding to future Conferences was withdrawn and replaced with what follows below [Daily Record 7/17/5].
2. The Conference adopted as Resolution 27A/1 to receive the Additional Report from the Marriage and Relationships Task Group (Item 27A of the Agenda as printed in the Order Paper and in the Daily Record) [Daily Record 7/17/2 and 7/17/3].
3. The Conference adopted as Resolution 27A/2 the way of proceeding set out in paragraph 5 of the Additional Report [Daily Record 7/17/4]. That paragraph states that

Of the matters referred to the Task Group the most pressing issues concern the Church's understanding of relationships and marriage. Such matters could be dealt with by a report to the Conference that sets out a number of theological arguments. A report would not be as detailed as a Conference Statement, but would enable the Conference to reach a view on how the church defines marriage and for that view to be the subject of connexion wide consultation. The same report could include any changes to standing orders were the definition of marriage to change. Such a report would be treated as provisional resolution under SO 122. It would be submitted to the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee for approval, disapproval, or approval with amendments. This would take place during the year 2019-2020. The Conference of 2020 would then be in a position to make a final decision with any provisions implemented with immediate effect. None of this prevents a Statement of the Conference being presented at a later stage.

4. The procedure under Standing Order 122 means that the report submitted by the Task Group to the 2019 Conference will contain a number of recommendations or proposed changes to Standing Orders which will each be the subject of a specific resolution which would be submitted to the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee (as indicated above).
5. As paragraph 6 of the Additional Report goes on to say, "Nothing would prevent Local Churches, Circuits and individual members of the Methodist Church feeding in opinions through their Synods". The 2019 Conference will be asked to encourage them to do so. The Connexional Team will work with the Task Group to provide resources to support that process. Those resources will be available in the summer of 2019, following the Conference.
6. It is therefore important that Local Churches, Circuits and others plan now, in the light of the date of their Synod at which the voting on the provisional resolutions will take place, for any meetings or consultations that they wish to hold.
7. Informed conversation and engagement with some of the underlying issues in this debate, and of their potential implications, can also begin during this coming connexional year leading up to the 2019 Conference. In the light of the positive response to the Workshops at the 2018 Conference, the Task Group will work with the Connexional Team to provide resources to support this.
8. If the voting meeting of some Synods is in Spring 2020 and does not allow sufficient time for the Task Group's report on the voting to be printed in Volume 1 or 2 of the Agenda for the Conference in 2020, it will have to be published separately.

Timetable

9. Task Group meets 07 August 2018
10. August 2018: Connexional Team works with Task Group to provide resources for information/consultation on particular issues.
11. August 2018: Synod Secretaries to be informed of the process set out in this paper, for them to inform Synod members, and also start planning in the District for the consultation process in 2019-20.
12. 15-16 October 2018: Methodist Council to be informed of the process set out in this paper and any updates; and advised that text of the report to the 2019 Conference will not be brought to the Council.
13. August – December 2018: Task Group works to produce first draft of report to 2019 Conference.
14. December 2018: Faith and Order Committee
15. January – March 2019: Task Group revises and rewrites the report to produce the final version.
16. January to March 2019: Connexional Secretary, Assistant Secretary of the Conference, and Chair of the Task Group oversee collaboration between Task Group, Connexional Team and Secretariat to produce presentational material to accompany the report when it is published, and resources for the consultation period following the 2019 Conference.
17. End of March 2019: final version of report submitted for printing in Volume 1 of the Conference Agenda
18. May 2019: Report Published in Volume 1 of the Conference Agenda
19. End of June – beginning of July 2019: Methodist Conference
20. July – August 2019: production of resources to support consultation process
21. September 2019 Presentation of report at Synods with explanation of consultation process
22. September 2019– Spring 2020: Consultation period
23. Autumn 2019 Law & Polity Committee
24. March/ April/ May 2020 votes in Synods
25. May – June 2020: production of report to 2020 Conference on voting etc
26. July 2020: Methodist Conference – final decision.