

10 July, 2008

Methodist Conference 2008 Roundup

The Methodist Conference met from 5-10 July in Scarborough. Revd Stephen Poxon was inducted as President of the Conference, and Mr. David Walton as Vice President. Conference also ordained 55 new Methodist ministers (50 Presbyters and five Deacons).

Conference addressed a number of contemporary issues, including knife crime, Burma, Zimbabwe, stem cell research and abortion.

Time was spent looking at the Youth Participation Strategy (YPS), a major new initiative aimed at increasing the involvement of people aged 16-23 in the running of the Church both nationally and locally. The YPS will see an investment of more than £4 million over the next five years. The Youth Conference also brought its concerns, including knife crime, Burma and the pressures on young people combining church activities with further education or work.

Conference also committed the Church to fresh ways of expressing its mission. The successful Fresh Expressions scheme, a joint venture with the Church of England, has been renewed by both churches for a further five years. The Methodist Conference also gave its support to a new Pioneer Ministries scheme, in which the Church will invest over £4 million to establish new congregations across the country, aimed especially at young adults and those who have had no prior contact with any form of church.

Conference received a major report on early human life, looking at issues such as stem cell research, fertility treatments and abortion. The report offers guidance on how to approach these complex and often highly personal topics. It also recognises that attempts to respond to particular medical developments can easily be quickly out of date as the technology moves on. Conference has commended for study the report which says that embryos should not be created solely for the purpose of research, but that it is acceptable for embryos created during fertility treatments to be used for research. The Conference also voted to review the Church's current stance on abortion.

Conference affirmed the Covenant with the Church of England, signed in 2003, and supported the creation of a new body to continue the work of implementing it. This new body will for the first time include representation from the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church, in recognition that the Methodist Church serves all of Great Britain. The United Reformed Church will also be invited to continue to participate. Conference offered prayer and support to the Church of England's General Synod (meeting almost simultaneously in York) as it addressed major issues.

For the first time, live video of Conference proceedings was broadcast via the Conference website, and a video archive is also available. Live audio was also broadcast in partnership with Premier Christian Radio. Conference also elected its President and Vice-President for 2009-10. The Revd David Gamble were designated to serve as President and Dr Richard Vautrey as Vice President at next year's Conference.

ENDS

Notes

1. For more information about the Methodist Conference visit www.methodistconference.org.uk.
2. For information about the Church's current stance on abortion visit <http://methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=opentoworld.content&cmid57>.

About The Methodist Church

The Methodist Church is one of the largest Christian churches serving Great Britain, with nearly 300,000 members and regular contact with over 800,000 people. It has about 5,800 churches in Great Britain, and also maintains links with other Methodist churches totalling a worldwide membership of 70 million. Its activities, both alone and with ecumenical and secular partners, are based on four aims known as Our Calling:

- *To increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love*
- *To help people to grow and learn as Christians through mutual support and care*
- *To be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice*
- *To make more followers of Jesus Christ.*

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