



# GOD IN LOVE UNITES US

## NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE METHODIST CIRCUIT

### Introduction

Last Summer, the Methodist Conference discussed the Report on Marriage and Relationships called 'God in Love unites us'. This is the latest in a long line of reports stretching back to 1979, on different aspects of marriage and divorce, relationships, singleness, and family life. Sadly, they have not been widely read.

The latest report is a response to questions raised by the Conference in relation to the changes in marriage law in Scotland, England and Wales, and the changing pattern of relationships that we have witnessed since the last official Statement on Marriage in 1992. The working party set up to look at these came up with a set of recommendations for the Conference to consider including attitudes to cohabitation (people living together either before or after marriage), the marriages of people of the same sex, and how we live with Christians who profoundly disagree with us.

The vote at Conference was provisional which means the Synods now have a chance to discuss, change and vote on the proposals and advise the Conference who must vote again in 2020. Even if the proposals go through, it will still be up to each local Church's managing trustees to decide whether their building should be registered for the marriages of same-sex couples. It will be entirely up to the members of the church council whether or not to do this and it will not affect the church's standing with the rest of the Connexion, no matter what is decided.

The proposals recognise that, despite four decades of discussions, Methodists still hold different views on the subject of marriage. The proposed new rules on marriage affirm that belief in marriage between one man and one woman only, remains perfectly acceptable. Alongside that, those who affirm marriage as open to any couple are also affirmed. This model has been called the 'Mixed Economy' and seeks to allow everyone to follow their consciences, whilst respecting those who do not share their views. It is far from perfect, but may be the best way to help the Church live with contradictory convictions.

**So, what is all this about?**

***The Marriage and Relationships Task Group presented a report to the 2019 Methodist Conference with recommendations about various issues to do with relationships in general and marriage in particular. Those recommendations are being submitted to the wider Church for consultation, with a final decision being made at the July 2020 Conference.***

**Watch the film:** <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/marriage-and-relationships-2019/film-the-work-of-the-marriage-and-relationships-task-group/>

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## ***How is our Circuit Engaging with Discussions about Cohabitation and Same-Sex Marriage in the Report from The Methodist Conference?***

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### **Through:**

#### **1. Prayer**

Please pray for one another, and for our church in this process of discernment and decision making. The Methodist website provides some prayer resources for each day of the week <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/marriage-and-relationships-2019/god-in-love-unites-us-prayer-guide/>

#### **2. Provisional Legislation**

The Methodist Conference 2019 voted for provisional legislation which would change our approach to marriage and relationships. This was through a report called: *God in Love Unites Us*. <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/12606/3240-10-amended-marriage-and-relationships-report.pdf>

As a result, we are now discussing this across the District in preparation for a vote at our Synod on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

The vote will be on five resolutions as set out in this document downloadable from the Circuit website:

Our votes from synod and responses will then go forward to Methodist Conference 2020 for a final decision.

#### **3. Conversations**

Our conversations will seek to achieve two things:

1. a full open conversation between people coming from different perspectives;
2. to inform the District Synod of the range of views within the District.

#### **Opportunities to engage in the conversation across the District:**

**Saturday 8 February 2020 at 10:00am at Frodsham, WA6 6BA**

**Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 at 7pm Temple St, Fenton, ST4 4NW**

**Wednesday 25 March 2020 at 7:30pm at Trinity Congleton, CW12 4BA**

#### **Resources to help**

Connexional materials can be found at [www.methodist.org.uk/MandR19](http://www.methodist.org.uk/MandR19)

You can access various documents and study guides below.

Find the full report here: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/12606/3240-10-amended-marriage-and-relationships-report.pdf>

Or in large print here: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/12624/3240-10-amended-mr-report-large-print-002.pdf>

And here is the official Methodist Church study guide: *God in Love Unites Us Study Guide*  
Cumbria District have produced an extended study guide which includes some helpful resources for looking at what Biblical sources about marriage and relationships have to say.

Find their study guide here: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/14704/marriage-and-relationships-study-guide-colour.pdf>

**Methodist Evangelicals Together** provide resources from a traditional perspective. Find their website here:

[https://www.methodistevangelicals.org.uk/Groups/296798/Marriage\\_and\\_Relationships.aspx](https://www.methodistevangelicals.org.uk/Groups/296798/Marriage_and_Relationships.aspx)

**Dignity and Worth** provide resources from a perspective which looks for change in our current practice. Find their website here: <https://dignityandworth.org.uk/resources/>

Other resources are available from the Methodist Church in Britain website here: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/marriage-and-relationships-2019/>

#### **4. Feedback**

The Circuit is gathering and collating any comments on the report either from churches or individuals and will forward them to the District in advance of the Spring Synod.

**All responses should be sent to The Circuit Office  
or directly to John Palmer by Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April at the latest.**

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***Please Note: information that your church needs printing from any of the links will be supplied by the Circuit Office upon request.***

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**If individuals wish to talk about their concerns then please speak to your minister  
or the superintendent minister.**