

CLT

4<sup>th</sup> December 2019

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lincoln Circuit

Consultation on the proposals in “God in love unites us” (v1)

(The report on marriage and relationships considered at Conference 2019)

Most of you will be aware by now that Conference received the report “God in Love unites us” on marriage and relationships when they met earlier in the year. Some of the recommendations were accepted as resolutions: others were provisionally adopted with final decisions to be made at the 2020 Conference after a process of consultation. If adopted they will change the approach of the Connexion in several areas of doctrine and practice relating to relationships.

The circuit leadership team (CLT) and the lay synod representatives think it would be helpful to explain this process in writing: although it was explained at the recent round of church councils it is quite a complex process but one to which everyone can make a contribution as individuals, groups within churches and churches themselves.

The resolutions themselves can be found in the report which is available on the Connexional website <https://www.methodist.org.uk> (enter “God in love unites us” in the search box) or as a hard copy from your church. The resolutions are at the end of the report: they have to be formally worded and need to be read carefully.

Many churches are making arrangements for house groups etc. to discuss the report using the study guide which has been produced. It would be good if you could read the report for yourself, though it is quite long. Other resources are also available.

Connexion has decided that the formal part of the consultation should be at District level. (for us, all the 10 circuits in Lincolnshire including Grimsby and Scunthorpe). The members of District Synod will vote on the provisional resolutions at their April meeting: the results from every District will then be put together and presented to the 2020 Conference who will in turn vote themselves. If the provisional resolutions are confirmed they will become part of Methodist faith and practice.

Consultation at circuit and church level will not involve any formal votes but so it is very important that the circuit representatives at Synod should be able to understand the views held across the circuit in order to help them decide how they should vote. However, the representatives (who are

listed later) will decide for themselves how they should vote: they are not bound by majority opinion in the circuit. The same applies at Conference – those present will carefully consider the views from Districts but are not bound to follow them.

How then should you make your views known? (whether as an individual, a group within a church or as a whole church)?

First, you can contact your synod representatives (all ministers apart from supernumerary ones are automatically synod members and in addition there are several circuit lay members: their contact details are listed at the end of the letter). This may be particularly useful if you want to preserve confidentiality as an individual.

Second, you can take part in whatever discussion your church decides on. The outcome of these can then be discussed with your minister who can share them with CLT and the non CLT synod representatives.

Third, you can attend any or all of the 3 District wide consultation meetings (though you will only be able to speak at one of them). Again, the details of time and place are at the end of the letter. If you want to speak you will have 1-2 minutes and District will take anonymised notes in advance so that contributions can be put together to present to Synod. However, you need to be aware that these meetings are not debates; they are for sharing comments, thoughts and experience in an atmosphere of love, listening and mutual respect. The outcome of these meetings will be presented to the Spring synod so those present can gain a District-wide view as well as understanding the views of their own circuits.

And even if you do not want to share your thoughts you can still make a vital contribution in prayer. There is no doubt that this matter is the most challenging issue the “people of God called Methodists” have faced in many years and we all need wisdom from God.

Yours in Christ

CLT and the lay circuit appointed representatives

#### Notes

- 1) List of lay synod reps and contact details

Dr Ian Lacy [ian3105@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ian3105@yahoo.co.uk)

Mrs Brenda Walters [bc.walters@ntlworld.com](mailto:bc.walters@ntlworld.com)

Dr Brian Scott [drbbscott@aol.com](mailto:drbbscott@aol.com)

Mr David Stubbs [david.dianne.stubbs@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:david.dianne.stubbs@hotmail.co.uk)

- 2) Details of the District meetings and how to contact District if people want to speak.



# The Methodist Church

Lincolnshire District

Serving locally, connecting the county

## Marriage & Relationships Consultation

*This is not about changing beliefs  
but hearing one another in love*

It is strongly recommended that before engaging in discussions participants look at the resources relating to the Report of the Marriage and Relationships Task Group 2019 which are now available to download from the Methodist Church website, [www.methodist.org.uk/MandR19](http://www.methodist.org.uk/MandR19).

These include:

- The full report
- The study guide
- The film of the Marriage and Relationships Task Group members reflecting on the process of working on the report to give context for your discussions

The following resources will follow soon:

- Individual prayerful reflection
- Managing group discussions
- The leading of worship around those topics covered in the report.

Churches and Circuits may wish to hold conversations at house groups etc leading up to the District Consultations which will enable exploration of the report through the study guide referred to above. There is no need to take a vote on any of these occasions.

**There will be three District consultations in Lincolnshire:**

- Brigg Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2.30 – 4.00pm,
- Sleaford Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> February 7.30 – 9.30pm
- Horncastle Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March 10.30 – 12 noon.

People can attend more than one consultation but will not be permitted to speak at more than one.

### **Aims of the Consultation:**

- To enable a range of views to be expressed and stories to be shared in a Spirit of love and respect.
- To provide a safe space in which to be heard.
- To raise awareness of the diversity present within the Body of Christ.
- To inform representatives of Synod which would enable them to consider how they might vote at Synod.
- It is not about changing beliefs.
- It is not an open debate.
- It is not about decision.
- It is not about promoting a particular perspective.

Young people will be welcome at any or all of the consultations but there will be an additional consultation for young people themselves.

Each consultation will begin with worship and prayer.

Several elements of the report will be considered at each consultation, one of which will be the possibility of same sex marriage services in churches.

- In order to help time the consultation, if participants could indicate their wish to speak beforehand that would be helpful; but attendees may on the occasion itself feel moved to share their story or perspectives.
- Participants will be invited to speak for a limited period of time (likely to be 2 or 3 minutes) once on each element if they wish.
- Speakers will address the consultation from the front, introduce themselves and state which church they attend. (Only those attending Methodist Churches in the District will be allowed to speak)
- Speakers will be expected to use appropriate language and respect other speakers of a different view/belief.
- It would be helpful to not repeat what others may have said earlier in the consultation.
- Notes will be taken but will not be attributable and speakers will be invited to capture their presentation in a few sentences if they wish. This will form the basis of a report to Synod reps.

**Booking is essential – through Alison Godfrey on 01522 370126 or**  
[pa@lincolnshiremethodist.org.uk](mailto:pa@lincolnshiremethodist.org.uk)

**A debate and vote on the recommendations of the report will be held at the Spring Session of the Representative Synod.**