

Memorials Committee Resolutions from Districts

Dublin District

1. The Dublin District Synod requests Conference to direct the Home Mission Department and the Department of Youth and Children's Work to conduct a thorough investigation into the possibility of further developing and better co-ordinating Third Level Chaplaincy.

Recommendation of the Memorials Committee

Memorials Committee recommends that this be referred to General Committee for consideration in consultation with Home Mission Department.

Midlands and Southern District

2. The Midlands and Southern District Synod requests the Conference to investigate fully how best Third Level Chaplaincy can be developed, and to bring a report to the Conference of 2005. This investigation should include consultation with Third Level Institutions, other Churches, our own Chaplains, the Home Mission Department and the Department of Youth and Children's Work.

Recommendation of the Memorials Committee

See reply to Memorial (1).

3. The Midlands and Southern District Synod requests that Conference give serious consideration to basing at least one member of DYCW staff in the Republic of Ireland, to ensure that its work there is culturally relevant and more easily accessible. The possibility of working in co-operation with other Churches in this respect should also be explored.

Recommendation of the Memorials Committee

Memorials Committee recommends this be referred to Department of Youth and Children's Work for consideration and report.

Enniskillen and Sligo District

4. The Enniskillen and Sligo District is concerned about the increasing incidence of health problems among ministers, and suggests that Conference ask the relevant Connexional Committees to consider how the health of our ministers can be monitored regularly.

Recommendation of the Memorials Committee

Memorials Committee recommends this be referred to General Committee

North West District

5. The North West District Synod requests Conference to direct the Department of Youth and Children's Work to conduct a thorough investigation, in consultation with the Home Mission Department, Third Level Institutions, other Churches and our own Chaplains, into the possibility of developing a coordinated approach to Third Level Chaplaincy, and to bring a report to the Conference of 2005.

Recommendation of the Memorials Committee

See reply to Memorial (1).

6. The North West District Synod requests Conference to evaluate the pension provision from M.R.F. & R.B.S. schemes which will require considerable future funding to sustain. The Synod requests Conference to compare the pension provision of these

schemes with an alternative personal pension scheme for individual ministers funded by Circuits and ministers with a view to producing the best return on investment.

Recommendation of the Memorials Committee

The Memorials Committee have made enquiries concerning the present scheme structures as represented by the IMMRF and the RBS concerning their continuing suitability for the funding of benefits for ministers and their widows/widowers.

The IMMRF is the vehicle used for providing these benefits for ministers who were aged sixty and over when the RBS was introduced in 1984 (or who had retired before then). The benefits are discretionary and are set by the Conference from year to year. It is a closed fund and therefore the funding requirement will reduce as time goes on. No change can therefore be recommended.

The RBS is a “defined benefit scheme” (also known as “final salary scheme”) which bases the members benefits on their stipend at retirement date and their years of pensionable service to the church. The advantage of such a scheme is the degree of certainty given to the members promised level of benefits, the predictability of these benefit levels, and the fair, equitable and consistent treatment of members by reason of a common formula for all. It is the church and not the members which carries the investment risk.

The alternative scheme referred to in the Memorial as a “defined contribution scheme” (known also as a “money purchase scheme”) works in a different way. Here it is the contribution rate which is guaranteed but the benefit level is not. Such a scheme provides each member with an investment account into which the member and church contribute at a pre-determined level and whatever is in this account at retirement date is used to buy the pension. The benefits accruing to each member would therefore depend on the chosen investment fund’s performance during membership and annuity rates at the date of the member’s retirement. So members with equal stipend and service histories and equal member/church contributions could end up with significantly different levels of benefit depending on the investment vehicle they chose and the timing of their retirement. It is the member, not the church, who carries the investment risk and the benefits are not predictable.

The experience of the last three years has exposed the weakness of such a scheme. Falling stock markets combined with a weakened annuity market, the latter brought about by increased longevity and historically low interest rates, have thrown up some serious problems for those retiring during this period.

The Memorials Committee is therefore persuaded that to impose such uncertainty on the members would be unacceptable. Should it emerge at some future date that the costs have become untenable then a solution should still be sought within the structures of a “defined benefits” scheme if at all possible.

Down District

7. “In the light of the different arrangements for Conference in Dublin 2004, the Synod asks Conference to consider the financial and practical implications for future Conferences.”

Recommendation of the Memorials Committee

Memorials Committee recommends this be referred to General Committee.

8. The Ministerial Session of the Down District Synod requests that the Christian name of each minister’s spouse be recorded in brackets in the Minutes of Conference.

Recommendation of the Memorials Committee

The Conference directs that this matter be referred to the meeting of the District Superintendents for consideration.

9. The Ministerial Session of the Down District Synod requests that membership and financial statistics be recorded in the Minutes of Conference by Society.

Recommendation of the Memorials Committee

The Conference directs that this matter be referred to the General Committee.

Portadown District

10. "In the light of the current shortage of itinerant ministers in the Methodist Church in Ireland and our increasing reliance upon lay workers in many of our Circuits, we resolve that the proposed 'Legislation for Categories of Lay Workers' should in no way affect the continued employment of existing lay workers or exclude the recruitment of suitably experienced men and women with a clear call from God."

Recommendation of the Memorials Committee

The Memorials Committee recommends that this matter be referred to the General Committee for consideration.

Banbridge and Donaghcloney Circuit:

11. Memorial from Banbridge and Donaghcloney Circuit relating to Para.201 in the proposed "Legislation for Categories of Lay Workers"

'All Lay Workers with preaching responsibilities should be either:

(a) fully accredited Local Preachers; or

(b) have the experience and qualities deemed necessary by the Quarterly Board of the Circuit in which they are employed.

It is the Circuit's responsibility to monitor progress of all Lay Workers and to encourage study and training where necessary.

Recommendation of the Memorials Committee

See reply to Memorial (10).