

62. Memorials to the Conference

As the memorial notes, at the time that the cut was announced, the President and Vice-President of the Conference joined leaders from the Baptist Union, and United Reformed Church and Church of Scotland in lamenting the decision. Their statement went on to state that “Our Churches have strongly encouraged and supported the UK in its commitment to international development, not only as a way of showing care to our global neighbours, but in recognition of the UK’s historic and ongoing responsibilities to address the causes of global injustice, poverty, forced migration, climate change and conflict. It is a source of deep regret to see a backing away from that responsibility.”

The cut follows the decision made by the previous government in 2020 to reduce the international development budget from 0.7% to 0.5% of GDP, initially as a temporary measure. Previously, the 0.7% target had been met every year since 2013, and enshrined in law since 2015. The 0.7% target has its origins in an initiative of the World Council of Churches in 1958, before being adopted by the United Nations in 1970.

The memorial points out that there are many options available to the government for funding the international development budget at previous levels, and that this cut is therefore a reflection of political priorities and choices. The Conference reiterates its support⁷ for a more progressive approach to taxation, and endorses the principle that at a time of increased pressure on public finances, ways should be found to more fairly tax the UK’s increasing – but inequitably distributed – wealth.

The Conference accepts the memorial, will write to the government as requested, and would encourage individual members and churches to also raise this issue with their MPs.

M2 Overseas Budget

The North Yorkshire Coast Circuit Meeting (Present: 38; Voting: unanimous)

- (i) Requests the Conference to consider the recent cuts to the British government’s Overseas Aid budget.
- (ii) With the Conference’s approval, requires the Conference to ask the government to commit to restoring the Overseas Aid budget to a target of 1% of GDP within the lifetime of the current parliament.
- (iii) and also ask the government to take immediate steps towards achieving the target

7 https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf2011-pc-11-poverty-and-inequality-0812_fgKlh9i.doc

Reply

The Conference thanks the North Yorkshire Coast Circuit Meeting for its memorial. It notes that the UK's international development budget has never reached 1% of GDP, but that the previous 0.7% target was set as a result of long campaigning by the Churches and others. It adopts as its reply the reply to memorial M1.

M3 Housing

The London District Synod (present: 151; voting: 150 for, 0 against) draws the attention of the Conference to the current housing crisis in the UK. A shortage of truly affordable homes is pushing more people into homelessness than ever before.

Record numbers of people are stuck for years in temporary accommodation that harms their health. This includes over 164,000 children in England who are growing up in unsafe conditions, restricting their life chances and trapping them in poverty.

People are being forced to sleep on friends' sofas, fearing they have overstayed their welcome, and thousands are left to face the danger of sleeping on the streets.

This is all having a huge impact on wellbeing, health, employment, education, community cohesion and it is happening in every part of the UK, affecting all the communities we serve, whether they are urban, rural or coastal, or in areas of affluence or deprivation.

The chronic and longstanding shortage of affordable housing is the key factor driving London's homelessness emergency that requires London boroughs to spend £4m a day on providing temporary housing for the 183,000 Londoners who are currently homeless.

It should be recognised that this housing crisis harms us all and that The Methodist Church can play its part in responding to the housing need, particularly in so far as it affects the poorest and most marginalised in our communities.

Such a response by the Methodist Church would strengthen communities, combat poverty, reduce destitution, and increase wellbeing and flourishing. Everyone needs a safe, secure, affordable and warm home in order to live well.

However, there are currently legal limitations for churches, circuits, and districts who wish to respond by selling or leasing land or buildings to provide accommodation. An increased provision of accommodation for those affected by the shortage of genuinely affordable housing and of good quality emergency provision including modular requires more flexibility to facilitate this work.