



# THE METHODIST CHURCH IN SCOTLAND

## Reports of District Representatives

to the METHODIST CONFERENCE, SCARBOROUGH  
2008



Each year Representatives attend Conference on behalf of the District and usually report back to Synod at it's autumn meeting. In an attempt to share the issues and experience more widely this year I have asked them each to write a short article and these will be sent to churches in three stages in September, October and November. We hope that these personal insights together with the Connexional leaflets will prompt a wider discussion and response to current issues and policies which are important to our discipleship and mission.

I hope you enjoy reading what we have written and are able to catch something more of the atmosphere and work of Conference.

Lily Twist

District Chair

## WHY GO TO CONFERENCE?

When at Conference you soon realize that, although we are a small church in Scotland, there are very many Methodists in the British Isles and indeed throughout the world all connected together in the Methodist Church. It is wonderful to be amongst so many different people but to know that you have something in common with all of them.

This year the singing and the prayer times were very meaningful to me. We sang both heartily and quietly, with great feeling and emotion. We sang ancient hymns, modern choruses and world church songs, all in appropriate places throughout the business sessions. Whenever a debate was concluded or if something was difficult to decide, prayers were said before moving on. After a particularly sensitive issue, the prayer was reflective, thoughtful and thought provoking.

Business was dealt with informally and with a light touch, but when the matter in hand was gravely serious, it was dealt with in the manner it deserved.

I thoroughly enjoyed Conference, especially because I know that we belong to a worldwide church that grows in many different ways,

## A BUS FOR ZIMBABWE

After the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe heard that the offering at Sunday worship was to be for them, an email was received by the President, Rev Stephen Poxon, saying that they would like to buy a lorry. The offering raised £9000 but the lorry costs £30,000! The Fund for World Mission was to buy the lorry but the fund is still open to try and raise that money. What can you do—in your church, in your circuit or in the District?

*Tricia Laurie*

## **Emma Haggis (Youth Representative) writes:**

This time last year, Methodist Conference seemed like something that happened once a year in the distance which didn't really affect me and I had no idea Youth Conference existed. Now, with experience from both Conference and Youth Conference has given me a whole new perspective.

Last year, Youth Conference was held in Cardiff. Youth Conference gives young people an opportunity to discuss issues which concern us and talk about things we feel could be changed or improved within the church and the church community. The resolutions which are brought forward before the Youth Conference are either passed, given to the Youth Executive team to work on or taken to Methodist Conference to be taken further. This year it was down to me and three other Young representatives to take these issues to Conference.

This year there were four resolutions which were taken to Conference. These resolutions were: request for Burma to be remembered in our prayers; request for Bibles to be made available for new Christians and those seeking to know more about the Christian faith; request for Methodist Council to establish a new project to investigate the roles churches play in addressing the issues resulting in Youth Violence and finally, a request to have more support made available for young local preachers in their calling. Some of our resolutions encouraged more discussion than others but after much hard work by all, our four resolutions were passed by Conference.

Despite all the hard work which we had to put into Conference week, having lack of sleep and the nerves I suffered while standing up in front of three hundred people to propose a resolution with the feeling that my heart was about to burst out of my chest, I thoroughly enjoyed myself and come home feeling refreshed and full of enthusiasm. It is an experience I would be more than happy to repeat and to share with others.

## Created in God's Image

The words in the Genesis creation story "Then God said, Let us make humankind in our own image" (1.26) lie at the heart of our Christian understanding of the relationship between the creator and the creation. They also shape our understanding of the unique position humanity plays within the whole of the created order, shaping our thinking on our responsibilities to God and each other.

It is not surprising then, that the report brought to Conference this year by the working group on Human Embryology and Early Human Life used the title 'Created in God's Image'. It deals with matters which we hear about on television or read in the press, but which we've probably labelled as 'things the scientists get up to'. Among the big issues the report deals with are Abortion and Stem Cell Technologies. It also explores the theological, ethical and pastoral thinking that should shape our response to these medical developments, including our understanding of God in these issues as well as our attitudes to screening embryos and whether we are open enough to having people with impairments living around us.

All these are very much issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century dealing with such things as the needs of childless couples and those who could be helped by genetic engineering, but touching on the dilemma of whether humans should 'play god' or not. Such issues are hotly debated in the printed and broadcast media, and in most R.E. classrooms in the country. Here is the church dealing with up to the minute problems.

So far the report has only been received by Conference, which means we are all asked to contribute to the church's thinking on these matters. Conference did instruct that discussion material should be produced by summer 2009 to enable church groups and individuals to study the issues raised. Why not plan to include this in the programme of your study group or house group when it is published? Or, if you have no such group yet, try finding a few folk who'll share the thinking with you. Invite some young people – they may be more clued up than you think!!

*Rev Alan Anderson*