



The Methodist Church

The Shaw & Royton Circuit
The Oldham & Saddleworth Circuit

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Dear friends,

The Methodist Conference has been meeting this week in Birmingham. The Methodist Conference is the place where the business of the Methodist Church is conducted, it is the place where we confer together, it is the primary place where governance of the church is exercised and our way of being expressed. The Methodist Conference gathers up conversations that have taken place in local churches, Circuits and Districts and seeks to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to the wider church. Many people across the Methodist Church have been awaiting the Methodist Conference to gather up the conversations about marriage and relationships, as enabled through the *God in Love Unites Us* report, and to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Methodist Church on these matters.

At its meeting this week, the Methodist Conference did resolve to amend the definition of marriage from being the union of one man and one woman to become the union of two people. This makes it possible for local Methodist Churches to be registered for the conducting of same-sex marriages. The decision whether or not to register as a place in which same-sex marriages may be solemnised rests with the local Church Council in each place.

I recognise that whilst for some people this change is cause for consternation, I also recognise that for some other people it is cause for celebration. We continue to live with contradictory convictions on this matter. I ask that, whatever our personal conviction, we respond with grace. All of our views are rooted in scripture, we are all seeking to be disciples called by Christ. Behind all of this is what we know it is truly about. It is about the lives, identities and deeply held beliefs of many people, all seeking to be true and faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, exploring what it means to be in Christ as individuals and as the church. Let us choose to remain in fellowship with one another, seeking together to discern what the Spirit is saying to the church.

May God bless us, as we move forward, with broadness of vision and abundance of grace that we may be Christ-like in our relating with one another.

Peace be with you that blessings may abound.