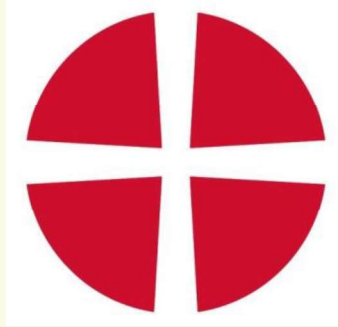




EDI Officer Newsletter

Issue Six

25 September 2026





Dear District EDI Officers,

Welcome to the latest edition of the EDI Officer Newsletter,
and best wishes to you all for the new Connexional year.

A new year brings fresh energy, new possibilities and an opportunity to renew our shared commitment to creating a more just, inclusive and welcoming Church.

There is much to take forward together, including responding to the decisions of the Methodist Conference and supporting the next phase of the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Strategy.

This year, we would also like the newsletter to become a more interactive space for EDI Officers across the Connexion. We hope it will help us to share what is happening in our districts and circuits, exchange practical ideas, ask questions and encourage one another.

This and future editions will include opportunities to share local stories, celebrate progress, highlight useful resources and seek advice from fellow officers. We would love to hear about what is working well in your area, the challenges you are encountering and the support that would help you in your role.

Your experiences and ideas can offer real encouragement to others facing similar situations.

Thank you for the commitment, care and energy you continue to bring to this important work. I hope you will enjoy this edition, contribute to future ones and help us develop a stronger network of EDI Officers who can learn from and support one another.

May the new Connexional year bring renewed hope, fruitful partnerships and many opportunities to make a meaningful difference together.

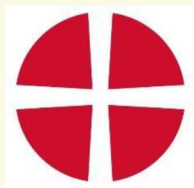
With every blessing,

Kim Medford-Vassell - JDS Programme Coordinator

Contents:

- Conference 2026: Key Updates for District EDI Officers
- Share your stories for The EDI Toolkit
- Help Grow our Solidarity Circles
- The Discrimination and Abuse Response Service (DARS)
- Reparative Justice: Join the Conversation
- District and Circuit EDI Officers: Contacts
- Your EDI Exchange
- Notice Board / Links / Contacts
- Dates for your diaries
- A Thought for the day





Conference 2026: Key Updates for District EDI Officers

JDS remains a core priority: The five-year review found real progress, although implementation remains uneven across districts, circuits and local churches. Priorities include stronger accountability, practical local resources, deeper theological engagement, greater awareness of DARS, and sharing stories of positive change.

JDS Sunday: Conference affirmed that a JDS Sunday should be observed across the Connexion on a locally chosen date. EDI Officers can help districts, circuits and churches plan and promote this.

Inclusive decision-making: Equality Impact Assessments and efforts to improve diversity in leadership were recognised as important developments. EDI Officers are encouraged to continue promoting their use in policies, projects and decision-making.

Inclusive worship and language: New principles for Methodist liturgy call for language that is accessible, inclusive and expansive, with care around gendered and ableist language. Preachers and worship leaders are encouraged to reflect on the language they use.

Children and young people: Circuits and districts were encouraged to provide more accessible, age-appropriate worship, involve young people in leading, and create more opportunities for local gatherings and biblical exploration.

Online participation: Conference provisionally agreed that online Holy Communion should generally be permitted. District Synods will be consulted before a final decision in 2027. Circuits are also encouraged to develop skills for inclusive and effective online worship.

Reparative justice: Research identified Methodism's historical silence, entanglement and complicity in the enslavement economy. A proposed statement, apology and initial actions will come to Conference in 2027, informed by continuing work with Global Partners.

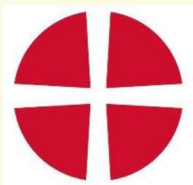
Supporting ministers: Conference directed the Connexional Council to establish coordinated support for ministers experiencing hate crime, harassment, discrimination or malicious conduct.

Assisted dying: Further work will include a broader range of people with lived experience, with a new report due in 2028. The Church's historic opposition to assisted dying remains, while the 1974 statement has been withdrawn.

Listening to lived experience: The Safeguarding Committee emphasised that survivors' voices must be heard at every level of the Church. District Chairs and other senior leaders will be required to complete new safeguarding training.

Economic justice: Work continues on how ministry and mission can be funded more fairly, particularly in communities experiencing poverty and economic marginalisation. A further report is expected in 2027.

Artificial intelligence: Conference agreed that guidance should be developed on the responsible use of AI, including ethical concerns, data protection, environmental impact and its use in pastoral, worship and administrative settings.



Share your stories for the EDI Tool kit

As part of our ongoing review of the EDI Toolkit, we are refreshing and strengthening the resources already available across the Connexion. A key part of this work is ensuring that the toolkit continues to reflect the lived experiences of our churches in honest and practical ways.

Case studies are designed to do more than describe a situation. They invite reflection, deepen understanding, and encourage action. They often begin with a real or realistic story from church life, followed by questions that help individuals and congregations think about experience, learning, and change.

We would really value your help in shaping more of these.

What kind of case study are we looking for?

We are looking for short, story-based examples from church life that:

- Reflect a real situation involving inclusion, exclusion, or misunderstanding
- Help others step into someone else's experience
- Prompt reflection through gentle questions
- Encourage practical action within a church setting

These do not need to be perfect examples. Situations that were challenging or unresolved are often the most helpful.

An example might be:

Amira is a teenager who recently began attending a local Methodist church with her family. English is not her first language, and she often finds it difficult to follow the service and conversations afterwards. While people are friendly, most interactions remain brief, and no one has taken time to help her feel more included. Over time, Amira has become quieter and less engaged, and her family have started to attend less regularly.

Questions for reflection:

- Experience: What might Amira and her family be experiencing in this situation?
- Learning: What assumptions might be shaping how others respond?
- Action: What small, practical steps could the church take to help Amira feel more included and able to participate?

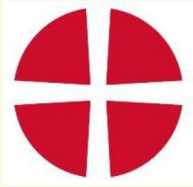
What you might include?

- A short, realistic story from your context (this can be anonymised or adapted)
- A focus on someone's experience within church life
- 2–3 reflective questions under headings such as Experience, Learning, and Action

A brief contribution will be more than enough. The aim is to create space for reflection and to support churches in thinking differently about how inclusion is lived out day by day.

Your insight will help ensure the toolkit remains grounded, relevant, and shaped by the voices of those actively engaged in this work across the Connexion.

If you would like to contribute, please do send your case study to equality&diversity@methodistchurch.org.uk



Help grow our Solidarity Circles

A new rolling recruitment campaign for the Methodist Church's Solidarity Circles will launch next week, creating ongoing opportunities for people across the Connexion to express an interest in becoming involved.

Solidarity Circles provide spaces where people with shared experiences can connect, support one another and help shape the Church's understanding and response to issues affecting their communities. They are particularly important in creating opportunities for voices that have often been underrepresented or less frequently heard within the life of the Church.

The campaign aims to:

- Raise awareness of Solidarity Circles within local churches;
 - Engage people who may be interested in becoming involved;
 - Build a stronger sense of local ownership; and
 - Help the Circles reflect the diversity of the Methodist Church and the communities it serves.
- ❖ The recruitment information will be available on the Methodist Church website from next week. This will include the advertisement, an explanation of the available roles and further information about the purpose and work of the Solidarity Circles.
 - ❖ Information will also be sent directly to EDI Officers and Circuit Superintendents. We encourage you to share it through your local networks, newsletters and social media channels, and to display it on church and circuit noticeboards.

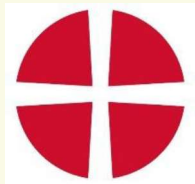
We are especially keen to reach members of local Methodist churches, people who feel underrepresented or whose voices are less often heard, and those with a commitment to equality, justice and inclusion. Church leaders and other local contacts can play an important part by identifying and encouraging people who may have valuable experiences and perspectives to contribute.

Our LGBT+, Racial Justice and Rural Communities Solidarity Circles are currently active. The Disability and Women's Circles are without coordinators at present, and we are working towards recruiting new coordinators and re-establishing these important groups. We hope

the rolling recruitment campaign will help us welcome new people, renew these spaces and strengthen all our Solidarity Circles.

Please help us spread the word throughout the Connexion.

A personal invitation or a conversation may be all that someone needs to recognise that their experience, insight and voice could make a valuable contribution.



The Discrimination and Abuse Response Service (DARS)

**The Discrimination and Abuse Response Service (DARS)
is being temporarily paused while a review of the service takes place.**

DARS was established to offer pastoral accompaniment to people who had experienced discrimination or abuse within the Methodist Church. Through careful listening and confidential support, its accompanists helped individuals consider the options available to them and navigate relevant Church processes. The service did not provide counselling or legal advice, and it operated separately from formal complaints and safeguarding procedures.

During the review period, DARS will not take forward new enquiries. This pause will allow the Church to reflect carefully on what has been learned and consider how future support can be provided in a clear, effective and pastorally sensitive way.

We recognise that seeking support following an experience of discrimination or abuse can take considerable courage. Anyone requiring help during this period should continue to use the appropriate safeguarding or complaints processes. Where there is an immediate risk of harm, the relevant emergency services should be contacted. Individuals may also wish to seek pastoral support from someone they trust.

EDI Officers are asked to be mindful of the temporary pause when signposting people to sources of support which can be the following:

Contact the Connexional Safeguarding Team using the contact details here:

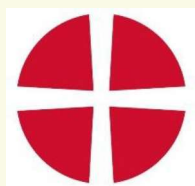
www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-contacts/contact-the-connexional-safeguarding-team/

Alternatively, to find out who your local Regional Officer for Safeguarding is and make contact, please follow this link:

www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-contacts/contact-your-regional-safeguarding-officer-ros/

Further information will be shared once the review has been completed and the next steps have been agreed.

We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to DARS, including its accompanists and those who have shared their experiences with the service. Their insights will be important in helping to inform its future direction.



Reparative Justice

Join the conversation on Reparative Justice: [Get involved - The Methodist Church](#)

How could the Methodist Church respond to its historical links to the transatlantic trade in enslaved African people and their ongoing impact today? Have your say this autumn, as part of a consultation taking place across the Methodist Church. This will feed into work that is being brought to the Methodist Conference in 2027.

- Run your own local discussion, using the guided session materials that are now available on the Methodist Church website
- Take part in an online discussion (15 October and 11 November)
- Join a free, in-person event in York (10 October) or Bristol (14 November)
- Share your views through our online survey

You can book a place at any of our events, or download resources, here: [Get involved - The Methodist Church](#)

With thanks

Hannah Fremont-Brown

Deputy Director of Justice Seeking Church | The Connexional Team

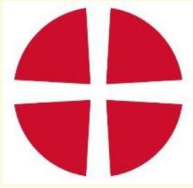


Get Involved

How should the Methodist Church respond to the transatlantic trade in enslaved African people?

-  Take part in a Connexion-wide consultation across the Methodist Church in Britain
-  Online events
In-person events in York and Bristol
-  Resources available for local discussion sessions
Online survey

 Find out more at methodist.org.uk/ReparativeJustice



Spotlight On...

EDI and DEI, what's the difference?

EDI is not the same as DEI.

You may have heard reports on the news and social media of people dismissing equalities legislation as unfair to the majority population. Also, some people are using the letters DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) rather than EDI for the UK, and this is not helpful or accurate.

The tendency to dismiss equalities recruitment policy as unfairly favouring minorities, has mainly come from the USA, and arises from a key difference between UK EDI and US DEI policies.

That key difference is that UK Equalities legislation and processes **do not allow** competed for appointments to be given in preference to someone from a minority. The post must be given on merit to the candidate who scores highest on the Person Specification requirements.

So, **Positive discrimination** in favour of disadvantaged candidates **is illegal in the UK**, most recently restated in the 2010 Equalities Act, but allowed in the US.

The only time a minority candidate can be specifically appointed in the UK is if the nature of the post requires it - a Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR).

So, thinking about recent controversy over academic worthiness, it can probably be argued that a professorship in black theology has a Genuine Occupational Requirement for the candidates to be black theologians, and it can be so advertised.

Alternatively, if an open recruitment were to be made, a requirement of the post in the Person Specification might be 'experience of formulating theology in a Black majority church or similar context'. The lived experience of that as a Black person would almost always score more highly than a white person's experience. That would then have to be weighed against other requirements for an academic post, such as 'a wide and detailed knowledge of Black theological writing and ideas'.

Positive action - e.g. in terms of processes that are inclusive and proactive such as advertising in certain channels to ensure minorities are aware of posts and can apply - is allowed in the UK.

The UK approach (which was argued about pretty vehemently before it was settled) was taken precisely to avoid any suspicion of unfairness or that a person might be appointed to a post on anything but carefully assessed merit.

It feels to me as if people who have come into positions making appointments since the 1980/90s/early2000s, when the EDI practice was being formulated and introduced in the UK, have maybe forgotten that key difference between UK EDI and USA DEI, or never been taught it.

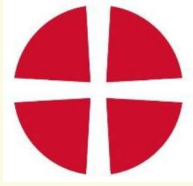
So firstly, we really mustn't use the term DEI about the UK situation, and think it means the same as EDI. Nor must we appoint people to advertised posts unless they are clearly the best candidate assessed against open criteria.

They are different policies and different approaches.

We need to understand, implement and defend UK's EDI policy as distinct from the US DEI approach. EDI is I believe a safer (although slower) way than the US DEI framework, to make sure that more people from within all nine of the protected characteristic groups, gain employment and positions of authority where they are clearly the best candidate for the post, by merit and not favour.

Erica Dunmow

EDI Officer, Sheffield Methodist District



District and Circuit EDI Officers

Keeping our EDI Officer Contact List up to date

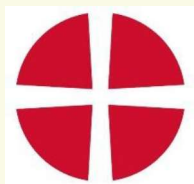
Please let me know as soon as possible about any changes to EDI Officers within your District or Circuits.

When notifying me, please include the officer's name, role, Circuit or District, and email address.

This will help us keep our contact list up to date and ensure that information, invitations and support reach the correct people.

Please send updates to: medford-vassellk@methodistchurch.org.uk

Thank you for helping us stay connected.



Your EDI Exchange

This is **your** space to connect with EDI Officer colleagues across the Connexion, share experiences and learn from one another.

In each edition, we invite you to contribute in one or more of the following ways:

Share with us| What you could contribute?

A local story| Tell us about an EDI initiative, conversation or event in your District or Circuit.

Progress to celebrate| Share a positive development, however large or small, that may encourage others.

A practical resource| Recommend training, guidance, an activity or another resource you have found helpful.

A question or challenge| Seek ideas or advice from fellow EDI Officers who may have faced something similar.

Contributions can be brief, a few sentences or bullet points are welcome. Photographs may also be included where appropriate and where permission has been obtained.

Please send your contribution, together with your name, role and District or Circuit, to: medford-vassellk@methodistchurch.org.uk

Thank you!

Your experiences could provide exactly the encouragement or practical help another EDI Officer needs.



Notice Board

Zoom and Teams User Guides

Click on the link below for a quick guide to run and participate in inclusive meetings on Zoom and Microsoft Teams, with steps for hosting, access, sharing and follow up.

[EDI Newsletter 270326- Zoom and Teams Guide.pdf](#)



Links to Webpages and Newsletters

Follow the links below to Methodist items of interest.

If you would like to add links from your Circuit or District to this section, send an email to the following address – equality&diverity@methodistchurch.org.uk

JDS Pages - [Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity - The Methodist Church](#)

The Learning Network Pages - [About the Learning Network - The Methodist Church](#)

Methodist News - [News - The Methodist Church](#)

The Connexion Magazine - [The Connexion magazine - The Methodist Church](#)

Prayer for Today - [A prayer for the day](#)

Methodist Publishing, order free A5 size copies of the booklet for you and your local church
- [Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity](#)



Contacts

Contact the Team on the email addresses below:

Hartwell Mhunduru - Director for Inclusion

mhunduruh@methodistchurch.org.uk

Kim Medford-Vassell - JDS Programme Coordinator

Medford-vassellk@methodistchurch.org.uk / Equality&Diversity@methodistchurch.org.uk

Stuart Watkin - EDI Learning & Development Officer

Watkins@methodistchurch.org.uk

Roxanne Bainbridge – Learning & Development Officer

bainbridger@methodistchurch.org.uk

Natalie Hastings - Administrator

hastingsn@methodistchurch.org.uk



Dates for your diary...

2026 EDI Officer Meetings, online via Zoom 19:00-20:30:

26 November

2026 EDI Newsletter Publication dates

19 December (deadline for submissions 4 December)

2026 Inclusion and Awareness dates, October to November:

October

- ❖ Black History Month, theme: Honouring our Communities
- ❖ ADHD Awareness Month
- ❖ 1 October: International Day of Older Persons
- ❖ 10 October: World Mental Health Day
- ❖ 18 October: World Menopause Day and Anti-Slavery Day

November

- ❖ 8 to 15 November: Inter Faith Week
- ❖ 13 to 19 November: Trans Awareness Week
- ❖ 16 to 20 November: Anti-Bullying Week, theme: Break the Silence
- ❖ 19 November: International Men's Day and Carers' Rights Day
- ❖ 19 November to 19 December: UK Disability History Month
- ❖ 20 November: Transgender Day of Remembrance
- ❖ 25 November: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women



Thought for the day..

A Season of Renewal

The beginning of a new Connexional year invites us to pause, take a breath and look ahead with hope. It offers a moment to reflect on what we have learned, give thanks for the progress made and renew our commitment to the work still before us.

Renewal does not always arrive through dramatic change. Often, it begins quietly: in a conversation where someone feels truly heard, a meeting where a different voice is welcomed, or a decision that considers people who may previously have been overlooked. These moments may seem small, but together they can transform the culture of our Church.

The work of equality, diversity and inclusion can sometimes feel challenging, particularly when change takes longer than we had hoped. In those moments, we can draw strength from one another and remember that each thoughtful action helps to move us forward.

As we enter this new season, may we remain curious, courageous and open to learning. May God renew our energy, deepen our compassion and guide us as we work together to create communities in which every person can feel welcomed, respected and valued.

Let us begin the year with hope in our hearts, encouragement for one another and confidence that, together, we can make a meaningful difference.

Thank you for all that you continue to do in your districts, circuits, and local communities. Your ministry matters, and your contribution to the life of the Church is deeply valued.

If you would like support, guidance, or simply a conversation, please do not hesitate to contact the JDS Team or speak with colleagues within the Learning Network.