

18. Guidelines for Joint Confirmation

Contact name and details	The Revd Dr Nicola Price-Tebbutt Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee price-tebbutt@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	18/1. The Conference receives the Report. 18/2. The Conference adopts the guidance for Joint Confirmation set out in paragraph 7. 18/3. The Conference directs that the guidance for Joint Confirmation set out in paragraph 7 shall replace the 1976 guidelines on Joint Confirmation and that it be included in the guidance in Part 13 of Book VII of the <i>Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church</i> , replacing the existing paragraph on Joint Confirmation.

Summary of content

Subject and aims	To provide revised guidance for services of Joint Confirmation.
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Joint Confirmation Services

1. In response to the decision of the House of Bishops of the Church of England in 1975 that Joint Confirmation be permitted, the Conference gave guidance as to its use and commended the practice. Much has changed in the ecumenical landscape since the previous guidance was issued in 1976 and there are now many forms of local ecumenical cooperation in which Christians share together in God's mission, including Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs). In these circumstances, some updating of the previous guidelines is necessary and revised guidelines can be found in paragraph 7. Attention should also be paid to guidance issued by other participating churches.
2. The Church of England has also been updating its guidance for services of Joint Confirmation. Methodists have been a part of that conversation to ensure that there is an appropriate level of consistency between the guidance issued by the Church of England and guidance issued by the Methodist Conference.
3. A central principle of the guidelines is that candidates for Joint Confirmation should be jointly prepared, and that all those to be confirmed in a service of Joint Confirmation should be jointly confirmed. This has not always been the case in practice, but the guidelines reaffirm that it should be ecumenical throughout.
4. Within Methodist discipline probationers may not administer confirmation and an authorisation to preside at the Lord's Supper does not extend to confirmation. This is reaffirmed in the guidelines and may be an important point in some ecumenical contexts.
5. The guidelines reaffirm that the normal minister of confirmation in the Methodist Church is the presbyter in pastoral charge. There may be contexts in which another arrangement is necessary; for example where the local minister in an LEP is an Anglican priest who is Authorised to Serve as a Methodist presbyter but who would be prevented by the discipline of the Church of England

from administering confirmation, or where the local minister is a presbyteral probationer. In such circumstances it would be appropriate for the Superintendent to preside.

6. The guidelines refer to the Joint Liturgical Group's liturgy for baptism and confirmation, which the House of Bishops of the Church of England has commended pursuant to Canon B43. This can be found at www.jlg.org.uk/Resources/Baptism-Confirmation.pdf

7. Guidance for Joint Confirmation

1. Joint Confirmation is appropriate in ecumenical contexts where there is a formal agreement in place for some form of local ecumenical cooperation.
2. An appropriate liturgy for confirmation should be used, which is acceptable under the practice and discipline of the participating churches. This may be the Joint Liturgical Group's liturgy for baptism and confirmation,¹ an order from *The Methodist Worship Book* which includes Confirmation and Reception into Membership, or an appropriate liturgy authorised by another participating church. There should be a presiding minister from each participating church at a service of joint confirmation. The presiding ministers share in presiding over the whole service.
3. Whatever liturgy is used, it must include the laying on of hands and a prayer of confirmation in which the presiding ministers join together, such as:

Lord, confirm your servant *N* by your Holy Spirit that *she/he* may continue yours forever. **Amen.**

4. Confirmation, as practised by Methodists, is always accompanied by Reception into Membership. If the intended liturgy does not include the act of reception into the membership of the Methodist Church, it should be added after the prayer of confirmation. A form such as the following should be used:

N and N (N), we receive and welcome you as members of the Methodist Church.²

This is followed by the offering of the hand of fellowship.

5. Where candidates are to be baptised and confirmed, it is highly desirable that this should take place in the same service.
6. The Conference requires all candidates for confirmation to be properly instructed in the teaching and discipline of the Methodist Church. Those to be jointly confirmed should be jointly prepared. The Church Council of the appropriate Local Church should have approved the admission of candidates to membership before the service of confirmation and reception into membership takes place. In the case of Methodist independent schools, attention is drawn to Standing Order 050(3).
7. In Methodist discipline, confirmation is administered by a presbyter (Deed of Union clause 8(b)). Normally, this should be the presbyter with pastoral charge of the Local Church whose

¹ This has been commended by the House of Bishops of the Church of England pursuant to Canon B43.

² The 2003 Conference agreed that on the reception into Methodist membership at joint confirmations the reception should be shortened by omitting the words "and of the church in this place".

Church Council has approved the admission to membership of the candidates³.

8. At a service of joint confirmation, all the candidates for confirmation should be jointly confirmed.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

18/1. The Conference received the Report.

18/2. The Conference adopted the guidance for Joint Confirmation set out in paragraph 7.

18/3. The Conference directed that the guidance for Joint Confirmation set out in paragraph 7 shall replace the 1976 guidelines on Joint Confirmation and that it be included in the guidance in Part 13 of Book VII of the *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*, replacing the existing paragraph on Joint Confirmation.

³ There may be contexts in which another arrangement is necessary; for example where the local minister in an LEP is an Anglican priest who is Authorised to Serve as a Methodist presbyter but who would be prevented by the discipline of the Church of England from administering confirmation, or where the local minister is a presbyteral probationer. In such circumstances it would be appropriate for the Superintendent to preside.