

28. Ecumenical Report

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Subject and aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the Ecumenical Report received by the Conference in 2016 that outlined the scope of the Methodist Church's ecumenical relationships. • Inform the Conference about the review of the EMU Partnership in Scotland. • Inform the Conference about the Covenanted Churches in Wales. • Recommend an amendment to SO 334(5).
Consultation	Ecumenical Stakeholders' Forum

1. Introduction

- 1.1. *Priorities for the Methodist Church* begins, "In partnership with others wherever possible ...". The ecumenical dimension of our worship and mission is one expression of being in partnership with others, and Local Churches, Circuits, and Districts are all encouraged to carry out their work ecumenically. The forms of partnership as well as the partners are many and varied: they range from the informal to the formal and from new churches to long established ones; they include food banks and Churches Together groups, Christian Aid Week and chaplaincy partnerships, Hope¹ and Single Congregation LEPs, Lent meetings and the Gather network², street pastors and Thy Kingdom Come,³ and offering hospitality to other Christian churches and congregations.⁴ In such ways and many more, in partnership with others, we proclaim and affirm our conviction of God's love in Christ, for us and for all the world, and renew confidence in God's presence and action in the world and in the Church.
- 1.2. This report offers examples of ecumenical activities and relationships which relate to, interact with, and resource those at local, circuit, and district levels.

2. The World Council of Churches (WCC)

- 2.1. The World Council of Churches continues to encourage Christians and its more than 340 member churches to be involved in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace that was launched at the Busan Assembly in 2013. Among other work, the Commission on Faith and Order is examining the theological foundations of the pilgrimage.
- 2.2. The material for next year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, jointly sponsored by the WCC's Commission on Faith and Order and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), has been produced by Christians of the Caribbean Conference of Churches. It focuses on the Song of Moses and Miriam in Exodus 15 and relates the text to the Caribbean experience of slavery, colonialism, and liberation.
- 2.3. The WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) is preparing for the first World Mission Conference since Athens in 2005. The conference theme is 'Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship'. More than 700 delegates from churches around the world are expected to gather in Arusha, Tanzania for the event, hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, in March 2018. Our Methodist representative on CWME, the Revd Dr Janet Corlett, chaired the first meeting of the Conference Working Group in Arusha last November

¹ www.hopetogether.org.uk/Groups/32586/HOPE.aspx

² www.gather.global

³ www.thykingdomcome.global

⁴ For example, under the provisions of paragraph 14(2A) of the Model Trusts.

and will convene the Spiritual Life Committee as it prepares the prayers, worship, and Bible study for the conference. Last December, a joint CWME/Methodist Church consultation was held at Cliff College on 'Engaging with Global Mission Statements: Relevance and Response in the British Methodist Context'. The three key texts were the WCC's *Together Towards Life*⁵ (TTL), Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*,⁶ and the Lausanne Movement's *Cape Town Commitment*.⁷ Key contributors included Steve Bevans SVD (Louis J Luzbetak Professor of Mission and Culture at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, USA) and Jooseop Keum, the Director of CWME.

3. The Conference of European Churches (CEC)

- 3.1. The next General Assembly of CEC shall take place in May-June 2018, in Novi Sad, Serbia. In addition to its ongoing work, a number of consultations and conferences are preparing for that assembly, exploring the changing context of the life and mission of the churches.

4. The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)

- 4.1. The triennial General Assembly of CCME meets 21-25 June in Prague. Immediately before the Assembly, a conference will address the churches' role in the integration of refugees and migrants. The Assembly itself will consider the Commission's work programme for 2018-2020, membership applications, and closer cooperation with CEC.

5. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)

- 5.1. This past year, CTBI has provided, as usual, resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity ('Crossing Barriers', which was adapted from material prepared by the churches in Germany), Racial Justice Sunday ('Justice for All', observed in February for the first time), and Lent ('Returning Home: Christian Faith in Encounter with Other Faiths').
- 5.2. CTBI's Faith and Order Reference Group convened a well-attended conference last November in Edinburgh, 'Called to be One: A conference exploring the meaning of visible unity'. The two key note speakers were Professor Grace Davie and Dr Stephen Holmes who addressed, respectively, 'Religion in Modern Britain: Some Sociology Perspectives and Implications for Unity' and 'Unity Concerns and the Sacrament of Baptism'. Many others explored the theme from a variety of perspectives and contexts; recordings and other material from the conference are available on CTBI's website.⁸
- 5.3. Migration continues to be a very significant concern for churches around the world and CTBI's list of some of the responses from the churches and of initiatives by Christian aid agencies is a valuable resource for information and inspiration.

6. Scotland

- 6.1. The Scotland District has, once again, been represented at many of the Assemblies or Synods of partner churches in Scotland. Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) has been reviewing its work and developing a five-year strategy.
- 6.2. Following the review of the Episcopal, Methodist, URC (EMU) Partnership, the synods of the parties to it have been asked to consider the following proposal about its future:

⁵ www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes

⁶ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

⁷ www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment

⁸ <https://ctbi.org.uk/called-to-be-one-conference-2223-nov-2016>

Giving thanks for the companionship, faithfulness, creativity and prayers of each of the Partners hitherto for their colleagues, and believing that the common work which has been possible and the friendships made still form a basis for continuing to strive for enhanced ways of working ecumenically in Scotland, the EMU Partners undertake during the next 2 years to work, with a sharpened focus,

- (a) to produce realistic proposals for identifiable progress in specifically identified areas of work, particularly those impacting locally, such as recognition of ministries, learning and training, creative mission initiatives,

and

- (b) to open a process of conversation with ACTS regarding the relationship of the formal EMU Partnership to and within ACTS and, in the light of outcomes under (a), the ways in which EMU can contribute to and enhance ACTS' own agenda, life and work.

nb The outcome of these considerations were reported to the 2017 Conference. It has since been reported that the synods of the three partners have agreed to the proposal.

7. England

- 7.1. Churches Together in England (CTE) now has 45 member churches and, in March, its Enabling Group accepted Action for Children as a new Body in Association. Bishop Angaelos of the Coptic Orthodox Church is now the Orthodox President of CTE. Last November saw the first National Pentecostal Symposium: the papers given illustrated the breadth and depth of Pentecostal experience and scholarship; the symposium was followed by a celebration led by the London Community Gospel Choir and CTE's Pentecostal President, Bishop Eric Brown of the New Testament Church of God.⁹
- 7.2. During the last year, CTE's Enabling Group has marked the 300th anniversary of Russian Orthodoxy in the British Isles and the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, received presentations about new unity movements, the URC, and Congregational and Lutheran churches, engaged in Bible study led by a Roman Catholic and a Moravian, been reminded of the situation of Christians and churches in the Middle East, considered some aspects of Pentecostal and multicultural relations (including modern day slavery and violence against women), received responses to a new framework for local mission in unity, and discussed *Doing Good: A Future for Christianity in the 21st Century*.¹⁰
- 7.3. Theos (the Christian think tank) has been carrying out a review of CTE that is due to be presented to the Enabling Group in September; it is hoped that it will help the churches discern the role for the national ecumenical instrument for England for the next five to ten years.
- 7.4. The 2018 Forum is entitled, 'I am with you always'. The Revd Ruth Gee is the Moderator and Ms Hilary Topp (Religious Society of Friends) is the Deputy-Moderator. It is hoped that young people will be integral to the Forum and churches are to be asked to include them among their representatives.

9

www.cte.org.uk/Groups/284285/Home/Resources/Pentecostal_and_Multicultural/Pentecostal_Symposium_2016/Pentecostal_Symposium_2016.aspx

¹⁰ www.theosthinktank.co.uk/publications/2016/12/14/doing-good-a-future-for-christianity-in-the-21st-century

8. The Free Churches Group (FCG)

- 8.1. The work of the Free Churches Group continues to be focused on education and on healthcare and prison chaplaincy. The Welcome Directory was launched last October; it is a directory of faith communities that have identified themselves as places that will provide a genuine welcome and appropriate support for people leaving prison.¹¹ A Public Affairs Adviser has been appointed to promote the work of the FCG and to connect it with key partners. The Group has continued to discuss its governance arrangements.

9. Wales

- 9.1. Last year, it was reported to the Conference that the Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales was considering how to continue to address serious theological issues whilst looking to strengthen ecumenical relationships and encourage working together in local mission. The Commission is still struggling to find a way forward following the lack of support for the recommendations following the 'Gathering' meeting in October 2012. The situation is made more complex by significant changes in leadership currently underway in two of the partner denominations, namely the Church in Wales and the Presbyterian Church of Wales. In the meantime, it has been agreed that the Faith and Order Panel of the Commission examine what is already possible under existing agreements in terms of the interchangeability and sharing of ministry, rather than launching any new process of consultation. Currently, there are no plans for a second 'Gathering' as originally envisaged, as it is not clear what purpose such a meeting might serve.
- 9.2. Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales has established a working party on Wales and Europe to look at Wales' relationship with the rest of Europe in the light of 'Brexit'.

10. The Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission (MAPUM)

- 10.1. MAPUM has continued with the work identified in last year's report. Regarding the new framework for local unity in mission, the Panel has made a significant contribution to the responses of both the Church of England and the Methodist Church to CTE and is now engaged on the work needed to implement the framework, including awareness raising. Regarding its work under the Covenant with the Church of England, the Panel is considering the differences interchangeability of ministry could make to the worship, life, and mission of the two churches. Members of MAPUM have also been involved with the recruitment of Covenant Champions.¹²

11. The Methodist-United Reformed Church Liaison Group (MURCLG)

- 11.1. The Liaison Group has met only once since the last Conference and meets again in July. It focused on how the two churches were responding to the document on a new framework for local unity in mission and on a number of topics relating to ordained ministry, including services of welcome/induction, alternating and shared ministry in single congregation LEPs, termed appointments for URC ministers, and authorised elders in the URC.

12. The British Methodist-Roman Catholic Dialogue Commission

- 12.1. This past year, the Commission has focused on the social teaching of the two traditions with particular input from a Scottish perspective at the residential meeting near Glasgow; it has

¹¹ www.welcomedirectory.org.uk

¹² For further information, see the report of the Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group to the 2016 Conference (<http://methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-2016-36-Joint-Covenant-Advocacy-and-Monitoring-Group.pdf>).

also considered *Hope in God's Future: Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change* alongside Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

- 12.2. *The Call to Holiness: From Glory to Glory* was launched last summer at the British Conference and the World Methodist Council in Houston. This, the tenth report of the International Commission for dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, has been discussed in the British Commission and by others, including the Theology and Unity Group of CTE.

13. Methodist Ecumenical Office, Rome (MEOR)

- 13.1. The Revd Dr Tim Macquiban continues to develop the work of the MEOR (including a number of courses) and its relationships with others (including Churches Together in Rome, the Anglican Centre, Caravita, and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity). The appointment of a One Programme intern has been a significant enhancement for the Office. Highlights of the past year include a visit by the President of the Conference which coincided with the 50th Anniversary of the Anglican Centre, the visit of Pope Francis in February to All Saints Anglican Church in Rome, and, the following month, the first celebrations of Anglican Choral Evensong at Caravita and St Peter's Basilica. The MEOR has also been involved in the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in a series of events and conferences.¹³

14. District Ecumenical Officers (DEOs)

- 14.1. The Anglican-Methodist Ecumenical Officers' Consultation last November focused on the new framework for unity in mission and the work being done under the Anglican-Methodist Covenant. This year, the consultation is replaced with a conference on 'Responding to the Reformation'. Recently appointed DEOs are offered an induction-day and a residential course run in conjunction with CTE and Cytûn.

15. 500th Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation

- 15.1. This anniversary year has already provided many opportunities to mark and reflect on the Lutheran Reformation and its legacy. Last year's Conference agreed to invite the Council of Lutheran Churches to appoint one of the six ecumenical associate members of this year's Conference. The Council of Lutheran Churches' special website has many pages of information, reflection, resources, and pictures alongside a list of events running through to December.¹⁴

16. List of Ecumenical Partnerships and Sharing Agreements

- 16.1. Standing Order 334(5) requires the ecumenical officer to compile a list of all new schemes approved by the Synods under Standing Order 412(2) and of all sharing agreements authorised by him or her, and ensure that they are reported to the Conference. In recent years, the ecumenical officer has provided a more detailed list, including information about those sharing agreements that have come into effect.
- 16.2. Given the length and detailed nature of the list, and the limited time for its compilation and scrutiny between the meetings of the District Synods and the date for the submission of reports for the Conference Agenda, it is recommended that the list be reported to the Methodist Council in each connexional year.

¹³ For regular reports on the MEOR, see www.methodist.org.uk/who-we-are/relationships-with-other-denominations/ecumenism-in-europe/the-methodist-ecumenical-office-rome

¹⁴ www.reformation500.uk/events.htm

*****RESOLUTIONS**

28/1. The Conference received the Report.

28/2. The Conference adopted the recommendation in paragraph 16.2 of the Report and amends Standing Order 334 as follows:

334 Local Ecumenical Development.

...

(5) The ecumenical officer shall compile a list of all new schemes approved by the Synods under Standing Order 412(2) and of all sharing agreements authorised *or signed* by him or her, and ensure that they are reported to the ~~Conference~~ **Methodist Council**.