

SECTION B. TEXTS

B1. *Memorial 32 (2007) – A Service of Recognition for those authorised to preside at the Lord’s Supper.*

The Worship and Liturgy Resource Group has developed an appropriate liturgy, scrutinised and further amended by the main Committee at its Spring Meeting. The following text represents the agreed order.

A SERVICE OF RECOGNITION FOR THOSE AUTHORISED TO PRESIDE AT THE LORD’S SUPPER

INTRODUCTION

All Methodist congregations should have reasonably frequent access to a celebration of The Lord’s Supper.

Where there is an established case of a congregation or a group of congregations being deprived of regular celebrations of the Lord’s Supper, through lack of an ordained presbyter, the Methodist Conference grants an authorisation to a named individual to preside at The Lord’s Supper, within a specified circuit, for a period of time determined by the Conference.

The occasions, within a Circuit, when those so authorised preside at The Lord’s Supper is determined each quarter by the superintendent minister.

NOTES

- 1 There are generally *three* categories of person to whom an Authorisation may be given by the Conference to preside at the Lord’s Supper.
- 2 The *first* category consists of Probationers for Presbyteral ministry who are giving pastoral care to one or more congregations.
- 3 The *second* category consists of lay persons to whom the Circuit and the circuit superintendent are giving responsibility for the pastoral care of one or more congregations.
- 4 The *third* category are lay persons, without a specific responsibility for pastoral care, but whose names the Circuit has submitted to the Conference to receive an authorisation to preside at the Lord’s Supper.
- 5 The public recognition of an authorisation for a presbyteral probationer is dealt with in paragraph 14 of the service for *The Welcome of Ministers*.
- 6 The public recognition of an authorisation for a lay person being placed in a position of pastoral care of one or more congregations is dealt with by adding paragraph 14 of the service for *The Welcome of Ministers* at the end of paragraph 10 of the service for *The Commissioning of Lay Workers*.
- 7 The service below, for *The Recognition of those Authorised to Preside at the Lord’s Supper*, is intended for use when a lay person’s

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presidency at The Lord's Supper is not linked to their being given pastoral care of particular congregations.

- 8 The Recognition Service should be part of a circuit celebration of Holy Communion at which the circuit superintendent or a deputed and ordained presbyter presides.

Any appropriate *Order of Holy Communion* from the *Methodist Worship Book* may be used.*

THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

- 1 Greeting or scripture sentence
- 2 Hymn
- 3 A prayer of confession and declaration of forgiveness may be said.
- 4 The collect should be that of the day, or the first or second collect for Maundy Thursday which relate to the gift of Holy Communion.

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

- 5 Either two or three readings from scripture follow, the last of which is the Gospel.

The readings should relate to the season of the Christian Year or to the significance of Holy Communion. Suggested readings on the theme of Holy Communion include John 6.52-58 and 1 Corinthians 11.23-26.

There may be psalms, canticles, hymns, songs or periods of silence between the readings.
- 6 Sermon.

It is appropriate for the sermon to deal with some aspect of the gift of Holy Communion.
- 7 A hymn is sung.

THE RECOGNITION OF AUTHORISATION

- 8 The presiding minister says:
Sisters and brothers,
in order that none of our people should be deprived of the frequent and regular celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper,
the Methodist Conference authorises *NN.*, to preside at Holy Communion
within the life of this Circuit.

(* underlined text will be printed in red)

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9 The person whom the Conference has authorised is invited to the front of the church.

All stand.

10 The presiding minister says to the authorised person:

N.,

we recognize the joy and privilege
that will be yours as you preside at the Lord's Supper.

As you receive your authorisation I ask:

Will you exercise your presidency at the Lord's Supper
under the direction of the Superintendent Minister?

Answer With God's help I will.

Will you be prayerful and diligent in your preparation
for each service of Holy Communion at which you preside?

Answer: With God's help I will.

11 The presiding minister says to the Congregation:

Since *N* has been authorised to preside at the Lord's Supper in
this Circuit, will you support *him/her* with your prayers?

Answer With God's help, we will.

12 The presiding minister says:

Let us pray:

Gracious God,

we give you thanks that on the night in which he was betrayed
your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, bequeathed to the church
the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.

Bless your servant, *N.*, in the sacred ministry now laid upon
her/him

and strengthen *her/him* with the gift of the Holy Spirit;
through the same Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

13 The presiding minister reads out and hands over the Conference's authorisation

14 The Service of Holy Communion continues with the prayers of intercession.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

15 It is appropriate that the newly authorised person assists with the distribution of the elements.

***RESOLUTION

17/2. The Conference adopts the report and authorises for use the service of
Recognition of those Authorised to Preside at the Lord's Supper.

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B2. *Memorial 55 (2007) – Membership.*

After receiving an initial report outlining the work needed, a small group has been put together to develop an appropriate response to this memorial and will report to Conference 2009. A paper outlining the issues which need to be addressed by this group has been included in the appendix to this section of the report (Appendix BI).

*****RESOLUTION**

17/3. The Conference receives the report.

B3. *Statement on the Status of Liturgical Texts.*

As part of the Terms of Reference for the new network, the Committee has agreed a statement on the Status of Liturgical Texts within the Methodist Church. The following text represents the agreed Statement:

A Statement on the Status of Liturgical Texts

Authorised: those liturgical texts which have undergone the scrutiny of the whole Church, through the Methodist Conference and its Faith and Order Committee, and are thus authorised by the Conference as the normative texts of the Methodist Church in Britain. Such liturgies include those published by the Methodist Church in the Methodist Worship Book (2000), and in its predecessors and successors. These texts express the corporate doctrinal/liturgical mind of the Conference.

Commended for use: those liturgical texts which have been commended for use by the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church, usually after they have undergone the scrutiny of the Worship and Liturgy Resources Group, or which have been created by them. These texts shall not have undergone the scrutiny of the Methodist Council or of the Methodist Conference itself.

Received for use: liturgical texts which have their origins in a variety of places and which have been reviewed by the Worship and Liturgy Resources Group as a whole, or members of it on behalf of the group. The report of such a review may be reported to the full Faith and Order Committee, but the Committee is unlikely to have engaged in the review itself. Such liturgies are those published by the Connexional Team or from external sources and offered for use on the Connexional Website for Special Sundays. Any material that is placed on the developed liturgical resources page of the Connexional website falls into this category.

*****RESOLUTION**

17/4. The Conference adopts the report.

B4. Extended Communion.

The Secretary was asked to compile some advice concerning the issue of Extended Communion as practiced in a particular District. The advice was collected from existing material on Extended Communion and on various Statements and Reports of the Conference. It concludes that where Local Preachers were conducting services including Extended Communion in local churches, in public acts of worship, this practice was contrary to the practice of the Methodist Church. The advice covers all instances of Extended Communion and not just those performed by Local Preachers, but can be extended to those performed by deacons and probationers without authorisation. The advice also points out that the normal procedure to address the deprivation of sacraments is not through Extended Communion but through the process for Lay Authorisation as set out in SO 011. The complete text of the response is included in the Appendix to this section of this report (Appendix BII).

***RESOLUTION

17/5. The Conference receives the report.

Appendix B

BI: Membership Working Party: Memorial 55

Memorial 55 Nature of Membership (Blackpool 2007)

The St Albans and Welwyn (34/13) Circuit Meeting (Present: 38 Vote: 34 For, 0 Against), in the light of recent sociological change and the range of understandings of missiology, entry into the church and the nature of church membership, invites Conference to assess whether the concept of membership best expresses the relationship individuals hold with the church catholic, the Methodist Connexion and local churches.

Reply

The Conference notes that the issue of membership has been the subject of reports on several occasions. The most substantial recent report *Discipleship and Church Membership* was in 2002 (Agenda 2002, pp609-622). However, changes of the sort mentioned in the memorial continue apace and developments such as Fresh Expressions of Church also raise questions about our understandings of membership and belonging.

The Conference refers the Memorial to the Faith and Order Committee for consideration and to report back to the Conference no later than 2009.

Identify the scope of the task required

It is important to identify the scope of the work being suggested by *Memorial 55*. It is about whether the Methodist concept of Membership, as it is presently embodied in existing statements and documents, best expresses the manner in which people actually relate to the Church in general, the wider Methodist Church, and the local church at which they attend worship. The Memorial suggests that the question is posed within the

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broader sociological understanding of the topic, as well as in the context of the multiplicity of missiological and ecclesiastical models of understanding. The manner in which we understand the process of entry into the Church is cited as an area of specific concern to the writers of the Memorial. The reply, from the Conference to *Memorial 55*, additionally identifies the developments of Fresh Expressions of Church as having significant impact upon the understanding of membership in the Methodist Church.

There has been previous work on Church Membership

There have been a number of previous reports on Membership in the Methodist Church. The report on *Discipleship and Church Membership* (Wolverhampton 2002)¹ is the most recent piece of work and locates membership within the broader challenge to discipleship as expressed in *Our Calling*. This report specifically identifies the need for the disciples to continue to learn and grow and recognises the need for the Church to provide resources for learning and growth. Previous reports on Membership in the Methodist Church have explored a number of aspects of our understanding. *Recognition, Reception and Confirmation* (1993)² introduced a number of amendments to the *Deed of Union* specifically dealing with Admission to Membership. This report followed on from *Recognition, Reception and Confirmation* (1992)³ which responded to a variety of Notices of Motion and Suggestions which began to question whether the use of the term 'Confirmation' ought to replace the reference to 'Full Membership' in our liturgy. This report discusses the implications of such a suggestion in terms of the permanence of Confirmation as opposed to the transient nature of membership. After rehearsing the possibility of abandoning the 'traditional' Methodist concept of membership, or clarifying our understanding of the relationship between confirmation and membership, the report proposes the changes to the *Deed of Union* which were ratified by the 1993 Conference. The changes emphasise that whilst the Church Council receives people into membership it is in the liturgical act of Reception into Membership that they are Confirmed.

Prior to 1992/3, Conference reports and statements on Membership are rather few and far between. There were statements on *Joint Confirmation Service* (1976)⁴, *Reception of Members from Other Communion* (1970)⁵, and *Dual Membership* (1970)⁶ which deal with a variety of ecumenical issues relating to our understanding of Church Membership. The Conference paper, *The Use of the Term 'Confirmation'* (1962)⁷ does as its title suggests and reflects upon the relationship between

1 *Agenda* (Wolverhampton 2002) p609-622.

2 *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order*, Volume Two 1984-2000, Methodist Publishing House 2000, p118.

3 *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order*, Volume Two 1984-2000, Methodist Publishing House 2000, p112-117.

4 *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order*, Volume One 1933-1983, Methodist Publishing House 1984, p70-71.

5 *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order*, Volume One 1933-1983, Methodist Publishing House 1984, p69.

6 *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order*, Volume One 1933-1983, Methodist Publishing House 1984, p68.

7 *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order*, Volume One 1933-1983, Methodist Publishing House 1984, p67.

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the term Confirmation and the Methodist understanding of Church Membership. Whilst accepting that there are some resemblances between Methodist Membership and Confirmation in other traditions, the report concludes that there are enough differences for the terms not to be regarded as interchangeable. The report does accept, though, that ‘when properly understood... [the terms] refer to different aspects of a complex whole.’⁸ The *Report of Church Membership* (1961)⁹ was a substantial discussion on the nature of Membership on the Methodist Church. This report was the result of the direction of the Conference of 1958 which directed the Faith and Order Committee to ‘consider and report on the place of our baptized young children in the body of Christ, defining clearly the conditions under which they should be received into membership.’¹⁰

This project is broader and deeper than previous studies

Memorial 55 requires a study of greater breadth and depth than any of the previous studies. It requires theology to be in dialogue with sociology and anthropology. It is commonly asserted that we live in an age where people do not join organisations. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Church stands alongside all manner of secular organisations, from the political parties to the local choral society, in struggling to encourage people to committed membership. Is there empirical evidence to confirm, or refute, this anecdotal perception? Does the response of the Faith and Order Committee need to consider this situation before moving onto the wider questions of membership of the Church?

Philip Richter and Leslie Francis, *Gone but not forgotten*¹¹, published in the late 1990’s offers a study on church attendance and seeks to assess why people were leaving Church. *Methodism and the Future*¹² contains chapters which address similar question from within the Methodist context. *Tear Fund* have also recently released the results of their large study on church attendance. In addition to the statistical material that is available, a study using the tools of social anthropology could help us to understand what membership means for people in practice today. Many members of the Church have second homes in other parts of the country and regularly spend time away from their permanent home and so from their ‘home church’. There is a significant group of other people who are similarly ‘transient’ in their church attendance, such people as students, weekly commuters, people working away from home, the rising number of ‘national’ congregations rising in a number of cities. What impact does this have on our concept of membership? The movement of families further apart, the (apparent) break-up of the nuclear family, the need for members of families to move to another area for work, the increasing demands upon our time on Sundays along with the heightened opportunity for ‘competing’ activities, all have an

8 *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order*, Volume One 1933-1983, Methodist Publishing House 1984, p67.

9 *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order*, Volume One 1933-1983, Methodist Publishing House 1984, p55-66.

10 *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order*, Volume One 1933-1983, Methodist Publishing House 1984, p55.

11 Philip J Richter and Leslie J Francis, *Gone but not Forgotten: Church Leaving and Returning*. DLT 1998.

12 Jane Craske and Clive Marsh (Eds), Cassell 1999.

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impact upon church attendance and so upon membership. A church member will not now very often attend church three times on a Sunday in the way that our forebears would have taken for granted. Church members might now not even be in church every Sunday!

The rise of Fresh Expression of Church, on the edges of established churches and Circuits and sometimes well beyond their fringes, is an exciting development in the life of the Church. Such a rise, though, does challenge our concept of membership and raises questions about the manner in which we measure and test 'commitment'. The 'traditional' understanding of only Members of the Church being eligible for office does begin to break down in many of these Fresh Expressions of Church. The challenge is to discover ways in which the believing people who gather in so many of these Expressions can be brought into belonging. How do these Fresh Expression relate to, and so challenge and re-invigorate, the older expressions of the Church? What do they do to our ecclesiological model as previously stated in *Called to Love and Praise*¹³ and what missiological model(s) do such developments presuppose? It is important for this piece of work to make contact with the Fresh Ways of Being Church/Fresh Expressions working party who are looking at the same issues. It is, additionally, important that this work locates and makes reference to any similar discussions that are taking place ecumenically, in Scotland and Wales as well as amongst our Church of England covenant partners.

The way of making progress with this project

The production of the report which shall respond effectively to *Memorial 55* will be a broad-ranging project requiring the interaction between theology, sociology and social anthropology. The theological aspects of the report shall need to cover the Church's understanding of itself in the broadest terms and of Methodist Connexionalism in specific terms. Questions of entry to the Church, the nature of Confirmation and Membership and how those concepts relate to the governance of the local church will need to be addressed. There needs to be some reflection upon the nature and understanding of mission, especially as it relates to the development of Fresh Expression of Church, and how those Expressions interact with, conflict with, or complement, the ecclesiological model presently understood.

It is suggested that a group of people, holding between them the necessary knowledge in missiology, ecclesiology, sociology and social anthropology, be put together in order to make progress.

BII: District Enquiry concerning Extended Communion

The issue:

In one (or more) of the Circuits in a District, local preachers (one or more?) have been authorised by their Church Councils to distribute extended communion within Sunday evening worship. They argue that the Standing Orders allow for such practices in nursing homes and hospitals/hospices where attendance may be much in excess of the normal evening congregation. As such, is there anything different from distributing the

13 Methodist Conference Agenda 1999.

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elements at an act of worship making use of the liturgy for extended communion? There is a hint that this is happening elsewhere in the Connexion. Is it permissible?

Research:

His Presence Makes the Feast:

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Aspects of the Methodist Church's present practice are embodied in Standing Orders 011 (which deals with the procedures for authorisation by Conference of named lay persons to preside in cases of deprivation) and 609 (which deals with the practice of 'Extended Communion,' whereby elements set aside at a previous celebration of Holy Communion are received during acts of worship in homes - including nursing and retirement homes -, hospitals and hospices). Question 49 of *A Catechism for the use of the people called Methodists* describes the Lord's Supper in terms of Christ's presence with his worshipping people, receiving him by faith and with thanksgiving as they eat the bread and drink the wine: the service is an act of thanksgiving, recollection, proclamation, unity sacrifice and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.

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A report of 1984 commended the practice of *Extending Communion*. One of the arguments put forward for an extension or relaxation of the rules for lay authorisation concerns the needs of people unable to attend normal celebrations of Holy Communion because of sickness or infirmity. Extended Communion is when a layperson authorised by the Church Council takes the bread and wine from a public celebration presided over by a minister to those who are sick or housebound. The Conference has authorised an appropriate form of service, emphasising that Extended Communion is not a service of Holy Communion as such, but an extension of the celebration of the local church, in which bread and wine set aside at an earlier service of Holy Communion are shared.

Holy Communion in the Methodist Church (2005) Report (F&O Report B.14)

14. One small but significant correction needs to be made to what is printed in *His Presence Makes the Feast*. The description of Extended Communion in paragraph 130 is inaccurate, and the third sentence should therefore read: **'Extended Communion is when the bread and wine from a public celebration are taken by the minister or a deacon or layperson authorised by the Church Council and received by a person who is sick or housebound.'**

15. It has also come to the Committee's notice that there is a discrepancy between Standing Order 609 (Extended Communion) and the text of the Methodist Worship Book. The latter includes presbyters among those who may lead such a service, whereas they are not included in the Standing Order. Whereas in many, perhaps most, situations when a presbyter is available it would be appropriate to conduct a full service of Holy Communion, there is no good reason to exclude presbyters from leading

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Extended Communion when that would be the appropriate thing to do. The Committee therefore brings the proposed amendment to Standing Order 609.

609 Extended Communion. (1) Deacons stationed in the Circuit and persons authorised to preside at the Lord's Supper under Standing Order 011 may lead acts of worship in homes (including nursing and retirement homes), hospitals and hospices during which elements set aside at a previous celebration of the Lord's Supper are received. In addition a Church Council may annually appoint lay persons to lead such acts of worship.

(2) Persons so appointed by the Church Council shall, unless already instructed in the conduct of such services, be instructed by the Superintendent or by a minister appointed by him or her, the form of service for 'Extended Communion' authorised by the Conference being used as a basis of instruction.

Notes from Methodist Worship Book re Extended Communion

1 This service is an act of worship during which the participants receive elements previously set apart at a service of Holy Communion.

2 This service may be led by a presbyter, or by a deacon stationed in the Circuit, or by a lay person with an authorisation from the Conference to preside at the Lord's Supper, or by a lay person duly prepared and trained for the purpose who has been so appointed by the local Church Council in accordance with Standing Orders.

(Standing Order 011 refers to 'the authorisation of persons other than ministers' - the issue being whether ministers might also be permitted to offer Extended Communion, or whether they should always conduct a full ('Self-standing') service.)

Response:

The cited practice of conducting worship as Extended Communion reflects, in some ways, the Anglican practice of Extended Communion and **not** Methodist practice.

In the Anglican practice of Extended Communion, it is permissible for the elements to be consecrated in one act of worship and then to be transported to another venue and administered by a non-priest (usually a deacon) in order to ensure that communicants are not deprived of the sacraments. However, this action must be authorised by the Bishop and is seen as an issue in multi-cure parishes. The norm is for a Eucharistic celebration to be led by the priest and for Extended Communion as an *in extremis* measure.

In the Methodist Church, Extended Communion is analogous to the Anglican rite of Distribution of Holy Communion at Home or in Hospital. In other words, it is an extension of a eucharistic act of worship to cover an individual or individuals who are unable to attend the public celebration of Communion because of ill-health or some other infirmity. This is made clear in the correction to "His Presence Makes the Feast", received by the 2005 Torquay Conference (p.188 of the Agenda Volume 1), in which Extended Communion is an act of worship held in a non-public

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environment such as a hospital or nursing home, *specifically for those who are unable through infirmity or illness* to attend a public celebration of Communion usually in a local church or chapel. Extended Communion is not intended to meet an issue of Eucharistic deprivation, i.e. where there are insufficient presbyters or others with authorisation to preside to provide Eucharistic celebrations for churches.

Notably, both the Anglican and Methodist practices of Extended Communion maintain presidency at the original act of worship – in other words, the main celebration is at the originating act of worship and the minister presiding at that service must be duly authorised to administer the sacrament of communion. The subsequent distribution of the elements does not mean that the new officiating person is presiding at an act of communion.

As reported, the local preachers are conducting public services which include Extended Communion in actual churches/chapels. **This practice is contrary to the current understanding of the Lord's Supper within the Methodist Church.**

If there is a genuine case for deprivation of the sacraments, then the Circuit should apply for lay authorisation in accordance with SO 011. However, if there is no case for deprivation, then it must be assumed that there are sufficient opportunities for the communicants to share in an appropriate Eucharistic celebration without resorting to the need for Extended Communion.