

17. The Faith and Order Committee: Section D

Scrutiny and Consultancy Work

The Committee has engaged with the following issues in particular and, where appropriate, offered responses directly to the authors of reports or those providing the lead in these areas of work:

- *Theological Preface on Supervision for the Annual Development Review (ADR) Handbook* – the Committee discussed a possible preface on a number of occasions, both in Committee and through its officers, and signalled some concerns with the process to relevant members of the Connexional Team, including issues about oversight and supervision, and the need to discuss the theological principles of supervision in a wider context than through an appraisal or annual review process. The Committee proposes to work on an appropriate preface to the ADR Handbook when it is needed, but to do a more substantive exploration of the theological principles of supervision at an appropriate point in the near future.
- *Birmingham Diaconal Conversations* – over the last two years the Committee has been part of a multilateral exploration of diaconal ministry hosted by the Methodist Diaconal Order (MDO) in Birmingham between Faith and Order (Methodist), Faith and Order Advisory Group (Church of England), the Joint Implementation Commission and the MDO. These conversations centred around *What is a Deacon?, The Mission and Ministry* of the Church, and the diaconal ordination services for both the Methodist Church and the Church of England. The conversations sought to explore the similarities and differences between diaconal ministry in the two traditions. These conversations will now continue under the guidance of the Joint Implementation Commission and with the continued involvement of both the Faith and Order Committee and appropriate representation from the MDO and the Discipleship and Ministries Cluster of the Connexional Team.
- *Probationers and Authorisations* – the Committee was asked to review a paper presented to MCPOC about the possible amendment of SO 011 relating to the Conduct of the Lord's Supper and the authorisation of persons other than presbyters to preside at that sacrament, especially in relation to presbyteral ordinands stationed in probationary appointments outside the direct control of the Church. The Committee re-affirmed that, as lay persons, such probationers should not be given authorisations where the criteria of deprivation were not met according to the existing Guidance in CPD Book VI Part 8: *Criteria for Authorising Persons other than Ministers to Preside at the Lord's Supper*. As such, the Faith and Order Committee would want to resist an alteration of SO 011 on the grounds suggested in the paper they saw. In resisting any amendment, the Committee were especially conscious of the ecumenical implications of any

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change with particular reference to our Covenant Relationship with the Church of England. The Committee wanted to encourage the appointment of probationers, both presbyteral and diaconal, wherever possible to stations where they can continue to test their calling within the collegiality of a ministry team.

- *JIC* – the Committee has sought to provide theological consultancy for the Joint Implementation Commission through Faith and Order members serving on the group and through the Secretary acting as a consultant to the group. In the coming months, the Committee will be drafting a response to *Embracing the Covenant*.
- *Music resources Group (MRG) and the New Hymn Resource* – in line with the Conference's adoption of the *Statement on the Status of Liturgical Texts*, and directly reflecting the processes of authorisation which were used for *Hymns & Psalms* in the early 1980s, the Committee continues to work with MRG to ensure that “the new baseline collection in succession to *Hymns & Psalms*” will undergo the same level of scrutiny as “authorised hymnody” in accordance with the established practice of the Methodist Church. The Committee was grateful to provide detailed comments in writing to MRG, which can be found incorporated in the Music Resource Group's Report elsewhere in the Agenda.

It is clear that a number of issues

will need to be addressed by the Conference in relation to the hymn collection. While broadly supportive of the need constantly to review our authorised hymnody, the Committee was keen to ensure that any editing of existing texts showed sensitivity to the artistry and iconic status of specific texts and embraced a rich diversity of expression. In particular, the Committee was somewhat wary of a criterion for exclusion about removing ‘outdated and inappropriate metaphor and theological expression’ without further discussion of which metaphors or theological expressions were regarded as ‘outdated’. Some have expressed the need to avoid a hymn collection which is confined to contemporary prosaic expression and removes all sense of mystery and long-standing tradition from our musical heritage. The Committee will also be keen to see how particular Methodist charisms are represented in the new collection or supplement, including Arminianism, assurance, perfect love, social holiness.

Faith and Order have been pleased to work with representatives from the Music Resource Group and the Connexional Team to explore positive ways of completing the project and wherever possible to promote collaborative ways forward.

- *Hope in God's Future* – a draft of the report was presented to the Faith and Order Committee for comment at its January meeting and a number of suggestions for amendment were

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made which were presented to the Climate Change and Theology working group. These suggestions were reviewed and the amended report was then presented to the Faith and Order Committee at its March meeting. The Committee warmly welcomed the amendments made to the report and the working group's willingness to engage with the issues raised.

- *Equality and Diversity* – the Committee has been represented on the Equality and Diversity Theology Group through its Secretary and two other members of the Committee. The group continue to work through a number of issues relating to this subject and Faith and Order are seeking to provide appropriate theological consultancy to facilitate the process.
- *Covenant Relationship* – the Committee worked on a response to this report which sought a further clarification of the use of covenant language based on the Biblical use of the term. The response noted that in Biblical terms, covenants are made between God and God's people. As such, any secondary use of the language needed to be wary of power imbalances and use appropriate caveats. Indeed, covenant language could be used inappropriately to explore relationships on a horizontal plane and between different sections of one body. The response suggested a move towards an appropriate understanding of the relationship between minister and Church as one

of specific vocational responsibilities within a more general covenantal community.

- *Job Titles* – the Committee was asked to comment on a Council report concerning job titles for Connexional Team members and raised issues about the exploration of hierarchy and status within the use of titles for various posts.
- *Embracing the Covenant* – the Committee is currently developing a response to the report in general which should be ready for the new Connexional Year and will feed into the formal consultation process outlined elsewhere in the agenda.
- *Joint Anglican-Methodist Working Party on the Ecclesiology of Emerging Expressions of Church (JAMWPEEC)* – in collaboration with the Faith and Order Advisory Group, and after considerable conversation with members of the Fresh Expressions initiative, the Fresh Ways working party and members of the Connexional Team working in this area, Faith and Order has now established a two year joint working party on this subject. It is hope that meetings of the group will begin in the early summer. The Methodist terms of reference and introduction to the work of this group are found below along with the membership of the working party. A complementary document will be forthcoming from the Church of England.

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As a movement and an organisation within both the Methodist Church and the Church of England *Fresh Expressions* calls for theological analysis and policy strategies.

At the Methodist Conference of 2007 in Blackpool, a report was received outlining a number of issues which needed further exploration. This report included the following paragraphs:

In 2004 the Methodist Church became a partner with the Church of England in the Fresh Expressions initiative in response to the Priority for the Methodist Church 'encouraging fresh ways of being church'. Fresh Expressions is an ecumenical partnership which has worked with people at all levels of the Methodist Church, from local churches to the Connexional Team. It is a benefit of the Covenant relationship between our churches that we can learn from each other's experiences as we respond to the same changing society...

At this point in the life of the initiative it would be helpful for the Conference to affirm what is happening across the connexion and commend these developing resources to the Methodist people.

The development of fresh ways of being church as part of a 'mixed economy' – valuing both the new and the established – raises questions which are as yet unanswered. How do we value and encourage both the new and the old while making room for the new? What is the relationship between a fresh expression and a Local Church, Circuit or District sponsoring it? How can we encourage a fresh expression to maturity? How can we station a minister who is called to develop a fresh expression? How do we test that call? How do we test, recognize and enhance the ministries of the people God is calling to work in fresh expressions of church, particularly those pioneers not already ordained who have a proven track record of starting churches?

Further work in these areas is required. We therefore ask the Conference to direct the Methodist Council to ensure that the encouragement of new ways of being church in general and the work of the Fresh Expressions team continues to be properly resourced and supported. The Council should further ensure that the key issues being raised are addressed and appropriate guidance is brought to future Conferences.

The resolutions following from this report established a Fresh Ways Working Party which is exploring the ways in which fresh expressions can be encouraged throughout

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the Methodist Connexion, while also looking at the theological rationale of fresh expressions and the practical ministry implications of fresh expressions. Moreover, Fresh Expressions have held a *Mission-Shaped Questions* tour which has begun to explore some of the more detailed and strategic questions about fresh expressions and ecclesiology.

There are other issues, especially related to ecclesiology and integration of fresh expressions, which need further exploration and which also impact on both our Churches. These questions were initially explored within a Faith and Order Committee meeting in November 2007. The conversation raised a number of questions centering on the role of a fresh expression as an expression of the Church? Is it a new form of the Church or rejuvenated/recontextualized Church or a mission venture or part of the existing ministry of the Church? Do we talk of new Churches or of renewed or reformed Churches? When does a fresh expression become a church or an ecclesial community? How do we introduce or offer an understanding to fresh expressions of their role and valued status within the universal church? How do we express sacramental reality appropriately within our different traditions and within what are often appropriately lay-led, sometimes anti-institutional expressions? And how do we do this without squashing the life out of the fresh expressions with ecclesiological bureaucracy? What is the ecclesial density of a particular fresh expression and how is this measured? Is it established church structures doing more missional things? Is it right to see the fresh expression movement as similar to the birth of Methodism? If so, how do we avoid secessionism? What are the implications for ecumenical collaboration?

It was felt that these questions were already present within *Mission-shaped Church*, as well as within other literature associated with the fresh expressions movement, as highlighted in the critiques written by both John Hull and Roland Riem¹ and that they have also been explored in *Mission-Shaped Questions*. A number of the issues raise for Methodists the question of what we mean by 'the Church' – a question which has been comprehensively worked out through *Called to Love and Praise* (1999).

The meeting resolved, with the agreement of Paul Avis, General Secretary of the Council for Christian Unity, present as the Anglican observer, to ask the Conference to establish a working party to explore ecclesiological dimensions of the concept of fresh expressions, especially in the context of the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain as established forms of ecclesial practice. We were aware that the conversation needed to be limited consciously to these two traditions in order to avoid confusion with different issues which this subject raises in other denominational settings. (It may be, however, that similar issues may arise

¹ John Hull, *Mission-shaped Church: A Theological Response* (London: SCM Press, 2006) and Ronald Riem, 'Mission-shaped Church: An Emerging Critique', *Ecclesiology* 3.1 (2006), pp.125-139

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within the Roman Catholic Church and within the United Reformed Church.) The Faith and Order Committee recommended the establishment of a joint working party of Faith and Order (Methodist Church) and the Faith and Order Advisory Group (Church of England) to explore the ecclesiology of fresh expressions; ascertain whether, and if so, in what ways fresh expressions might be seen as an expression of the Church and to determine ways in which traditional ecclesiology might challenge fresh expressions ecclesiology and vice versa. Moreover, the working party should determine what measures need to be taken to incorporate fresh expressions into the mainstream of church practice, even through the reformation of existing structures and patterns, and to avoid the proliferation of new 'ecclesial communities'.

The aim of the working party will therefore be to undertake a critical study of the explicit and implicit ecclesiology of the phenomenon of fresh expressions, and to produce recommendations or guidelines for ongoing work or change to existing structures that are credible and workable within the traditions of both the Methodist Church and the Church of England. These conclusions will seek to enhance our unity as one body in Christ, consistent with our traditions' understandings of the Church and interpretations of Scripture, while at the same time being alert to the new directions in which the Holy Spirit directs God's people. Such an ecclesiology should empower the Church's mission and resource the work of those involved in the ministry of Fresh Expressions.

As a joint Faith and Order and Faith and Order Advisory Group project, the working party will be co-chaired by a member from each group with the Secretaries of FOAG and F&O acting as facilitators or secretaries as needed. A link needs to be established with the new Missiology and Evangelism Resource Group and with the relevant members of the Evangelism, Spirituality and Discipleship sub-cluster and Discipleship and Ministries cluster of the Connexional Team.

The group will need to be small enough to work efficiently but large enough to have a broad membership across both churches and it is suggested that four members from each denomination be selected, with a number of others being given 'consultant' or 'corresponding member' roles.

The Working Party should, if possible, begin their work before Summer 2009. It is envisaged that the group be given an initial two year period to develop their report and that this timetable be reviewed after 18 months by both F&O and FOAG. The group should meet 3 or 4 times per year, at least one of which per year should be residential. Costs and expenses will be supported equally by F&O and FOAG.

An initial piece of work would be to collate ecclesiological references in existing Anglican and Methodist fresh expressions reports and papers including

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Mission-shaped Church and to produce a paper on the assumed ecclesiology of these documents. This would need to apply to both reports.

The membership of the working group will be:

	Methodist Church	Church of England
Chairs:	Mr David Walton	The Rt Revd Alan Smith
Convenors:	The Revd Dr Peter Phillips	Dr Martin Davie
Members:	Ms Chris Elliott	The Revd Canon Professor Loveday Alexander
	The Revd Dr David Chapman	Ms Rachel Jordan
	The Revd Graham Horsley	The Revd Canon Dr Roland Reim
	The Revd Angela Shier-Jones	

***RESOLUTION

17/6. The Conference received Section D of the Report.