

JIC Briefing Document

Basic Information

Contact Name and Details	Ken Howcroft, Assistant Secretary of the Conference, 020 7467 5147; howcroftk@methodistchurch.org.uk
Status of Paper	n/a
Action Required	Group discussions
Draft Resolution	n/a
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	n/a

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	See paper
Main Points	See paper
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	See paper
Consultations	Parallel conversations going on with volunteered and selected Districts, Circuits and Local Churches

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	n/a
Faith and Order	n/a
Financial	n/a
Personnel	n/a
Legal	n/a
Wider Connexional	Parallel consultations being held – see above
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Consultation is about one of our ecumenical partnerships
Risk	Reputational and practical risks if we renege on our commitments by not responding to the consultation process.

Briefing Document

An Anglican-Methodist Covenant Embracing the Covenant – 2008 report of the JIC Consultation at the Methodist Council September 2009

The Conference of 2009 agreed that the Methodist Council should undertake a detailed consideration of the 2008 Report of the Joint Implementation Commission (JIC), entitled *Embracing the Covenant*, at its meeting in September 2009 (Conference Agenda p. 505 (8)).

The JIC suggests that the Methodist Council considers three key areas (chapters 2, 4 and 5 of *Embracing the Covenant*), where it would value feedback. These are: the nature of the unity we seek under the Covenant; joint decision making; and proposals concerning episkope and episcopacy.

It is proposed that after a plenary introduction, the Council discuss this in groups. Each group will be asked to deal primarily with one of the key areas, but may also comment on the others. To facilitate this each member of the Methodist Council is being sent in a separate mailing a paper copy of one of the three chapters in order to prepare before the Council meeting. If Council members wish to consider other parts of the report, Embracing the Covenant can be found on the Methodist Church website at <http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=opentogod.content&cmid=1570> or by following the links Home/Open to God/About the Methodist Church/ Relationships with other Denominations/An Anglican-Methodist Covenant.

The background to this consultation is set out in the 2009 Conference Agenda, pp. 504-7, at <http://methodistconference.org.uk/downloads/51-resp-ang-meth-cov-110609.pdf>.

KEY AREAS

1. “The Unity We Have and the Unity We Seek” (chapter 2)

This chapter deals with something which is fundamental to the rest of the report. In this chapter the JIC laid out its vision of “full visible unity/communion”. It is important to note that this is not a scheme for structural unity, for two churches becoming one, but is a pilgrimage or journey where by being faithful to the Spirit the outcome should be “full visible communion”. To achieve this, the JIC believed, would be an enormous step forward for ecumenism.

Some points which the Council might discuss:

There are 4 dimensions of the “full visible unity of the Church of Christ” (pp. 30 and 34 of *Embracing the Covenant*).

- *How far are these being met between the Church of England and the Methodist Church in your particular situation?*
- *What would be necessary to meet them all?*
- *Do you think it is possible to achieve them?*
- *If achieved, there would be full visible unity in the sense of “full visible communion” between the Methodist Church and the Church of England – what do you think would or should happen then?*

2. “How Can Decision Making be Shared” (chapter 4)

This chapter contains some recommendations about:

- Boundaries (section 6.1, pp. 74-75);
- Deployment of clergy/ministers (6.2, pp. 75-76);
- Mission Initiatives (6.3, p. 77);

- Training for Ministry (6.4, p. 79);
- Public Affairs (6.5 p. 80).

The Council is asked to comment and advise on these recommendations which are its proper concern, referring where appropriate to relevant connexional bodies such as the Connexional Leaders' Forum and the Stationing Committee.

Some other points for consideration:

The Comparative Table of the Churches' Structures shows how authority for different areas of our life is distributed in our two churches (pp. 56-73).

- *Are these structures so incompatible that shared decision-making is unattainable?*

The Report suggests that we must always seek to ask "what are the implications of this decision for our covenanting partner?" (p. 50, line 2) and repeats the question at the end of the chapter (p. 83).

- *In what specific situations would it be important to ask this question of ourselves?*
- *What are the decisions which would need to be taken, for instance, in a rural situation where a parish and local Methodist church should come together in terms of mission?*

3. "Episkope and Episcopacy and our Churches in Covenant" (chapter 5)

In this chapter the JIC was seeking to be true to its mandate. The chapter makes clear that under an Anglican-Methodist Covenant the JIC was expected to continue to explore how oversight is expressed in our churches and how *episkope*, including personal *episkope* or episcopacy, is expressed. The Conference of 2007 encouraged the JIC to offer some specific proposals in its quinquennial (and final) report. Hence the present proposals in chapter 5. The JIC recognised that both churches have difficult issues to face regarding bishops: the Church of England in ordaining women to the episcopate and the Methodist Church in having bishops at all. In either church there are those who do not wish to see such changes. The JIC urges all, however, to consider carefully its proposals in this chapter. Clearly they have enormous implications for the Methodist Church, but are offered faithfully in the search for that fuller visible communion between our two churches which is an important stage on the ecumenical pilgrimage.

Some points which the Council might discuss:

- *Does the office of President of the Methodist Conference have some of the marks of a bishop as outlined on pp. 92-95?*
- *Ordaining Presidents as bishops, as suggested, would maintain much that is at the heart of Methodism, but would also enable greater ecumenical cooperation, especially with the Anglicans. What are the arguments for and against such a step, and particularly how would taking such a step affect future ecumenical relationships?*

ADDITIONAL MATTERS

It should also be noted that the 2009 Conference recorded in open session that certain issues which it had discussed in closed session "required renewed and urgent consideration" (Daily Record 8/19, Report from the Closed Session). These concerned the interchangeability of Ordained Ministries, Reciprocal Arrangements for Licensing Specific Ministries, a Liturgy of Reconciliation, and Episcopal Ordination, and are in fact highly relevant to the implementation of the Covenant. The JIC and the Faith and Order Committee were asked to pursue these matters further.

The Co-Chair of the JIC, Professor Peter Howdle, and the Co-Convenor, the Revd Kenneth Howcroft, will introduce the business at the Methodist Council.