

Faith and Order Committee Report

The Faith and Order Committee offers theological consultation for work being conducted throughout the Connexion, and theological scrutiny for the work of the Conference and the Connexional Team. A Connexion-wide network of Methodist people, who volunteer their skills and expertise, supports the Committee in its work. The Committee drafts, scrutinises and comments on reports from its own members or from other parts of the Methodist Church, makes recommendations to the Council and the Conference, offers advice on issues related to the Faith and Order of the Methodist Church, responds, or drafts responses to documents from ecumenical partners or other bodies, and reports directly to the Methodist Conference.

In this report, the Committee outlines the main areas in which it has been working during the present connexional year and the main items which it intends to bring to the Conference in 2014 and 2015.

1. Ways of Working

- 1.1 The Committee continues to review its ways of working in order to provide a theologically rich, robust and also cost-effective way of fulfilling the remit of the Committee under Standing Order 330. The Conference of 2013 agreed changes to the Committee's ways of working and the implications of these are being worked through. During the next few months a priority will be building up the broader network of Methodist people who support the work of the Committee through their specialist skills and theological expertise.
- 1.2 The Committee has met three times since the Conference of 2013: in September for an afternoon meeting to establish items for consideration through the year; in November for a 24-hour residential meeting in London; and in March for a 24-hour residential meeting in Leeds.
- 1.3 The Liturgical Sub-Committee has been appointed and has met once since the Conference of 2013. It will meet according to need, and utilise electronic ways of working.
- 1.4 In September 2013, the Committee held a joint meeting with the Church of England's Faith and Order Commission. The meeting explored current issues of relevance to both committees and were able to comment on each others' items of business. The meeting offered an excellent example of joint working and reflection.
- 1.5 All reports, questions and communication to the Committee should be sent in the first instance to the Secretary to the Committee.
- 1.6 The appointment of the Faith and Order Committee is the responsibility of the Methodist Conference. The Committee expresses its thanks to members of the Committee who will be standing down from Committee membership at this year's Conference.

2. Responses requested by previous Conferences

- 2.1 The Committee shall bring to the 2014 Conference responses to the following Conference resolutions:
General Secretary's Report 2011: sections 31-45 (ministry) (resolution 2/3);
The Liturgical Role of Deacons (resolution 35/4, Conference 2012);
Hospitality Between Orders of Ministry and Different Forms of Church (resolution 35/5,

Conference 2012);
NOM205 (2013): resource on cohabitation

- 2.2 The Committee shall report to the 2014 Conference the responses it has made with regards to the following pieces of work:
The Joint Implementation Commission long report;
Diaconal Presidency at the Lord's Supper (resolution 46/2, Conference 2013)
- 2.3 The Committee shall bring to the 2014 Conference reports on the progress of the following pieces of work:
Equality and Diversity theological statement;
General Secretary's Report 2011: section 61-64 (resolution 2/5);
The Theology of Pastoral Care (resolutions 7/2 and 7/3, Conference 2011);
Memorial M13 (2011): communion mediated through social media
The Church Towards a Common Vision: the World Council of Churches convergence statement on ecclesiology;
Issues of Connexionalism in the 21st Century (resolution 35/10, Conference 2013);
Theology and Ecclesiology Underpinning the Diaconate (resolution 44/11, Conference 2013);
NOM103 (2013): the ecclesiological implications of the way we record fresh expressions.
- 2.4 The Committee will bring to the 2014 Conference a response to the World Methodist Council-Roman Catholic Dialogue Commission report *Encountering Christ the Saviour: Church and Sacraments*.

3. Scrutiny and Consultancy Work

- 3.1 The Committee has engaged with the following issues, projects and Council papers, offering specific responses to paperwork, continuing involvement in the support of a working group, or commentary on the development of reports. Where appropriate, specific responses have been sent either to the Cluster Head/Strategic Leader, or directly to the authors of specific reports, or to those providing the lead in these areas of work:

- A Generous Life
- Working Party on Marriage
- Navigate Bible resource
- Closure of Church Buildings report
- Pioneer Ministry Pathway
- Local pastoral ministry
- Proposals from the Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales
- Projects - in development or under review
 - Practice Based Formation
 - Local Preachers/Worship Leaders pathway
 - Equalities and Diversities Toolkit

3.2 *Local Preachers/Worship Leaders Pathway*

- 3.2.1 The Faith and Order Committee wishes to affirm the collaborative approach and high level of commitment of those presently involved in the development of the pathway for local preachers and worship leaders. The Committee notes the significant progress made in the last few months, which provides an indication of what can potentially be achieved.
- 3.2.2 Local preachers and worship leaders play a significant role in the life of the Methodist Church, and it is therefore crucial that any pathway which supports the training and development of local preachers and worship leaders is of high quality and fit for purpose.

3.2.3 The pathway is being developed within a very tight time frame and, through involvement in the continuing process, the Faith and Order Committee have increasing concerns as to whether oversight and scrutiny are therefore able to be adequately exercised. The Committee would welcome further opportunity to support the identification of core benchmarks and learning outcomes and skills, and further time for the construction of a programme which is accessible, deliverable, and of sufficient rigour to support the kind of quality worship towards which the 2011 General Secretary's Report rightly aspires.

4. ***Work being brought to Conferences 2014 and 2015***

The Faith and Order Committee's reports to the Conferences of 2014 and 2015 will include the following major pieces of work:

Conference 2014:

- Response to *Encountering Christ the Saviour: Church and Sacraments* (Report of the International Commission for dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, 2011).

Conference 2015:

- Equality and Diversity theological statement;
- The Theology of Pastoral Care;
- Response to Memorial M13 (2011): communion mediated through social media;
- Response to the World Council of Churches statement *The Church Towards a Common Vision*;
- Issues of Connexionalism in the 21st Century.

*****RESOLUTION:**

50/1. The Council receives the report.