

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

The Methodist commitment to engagement with economic life was underlined by the presentation of a resource book 'Let Your Light Shine'. The presentation reminded the Conference of the extensive work which takes place by workplace/industrial chaplains as they seek to help people discover the riches and support of the Christian tradition. ♦

ACTION POINT: Use 'Let your Light Shine', available from Methodist Publishing House, and at www.methodist.org.uk/information/light.htm to learn more of the work of workplace chaplains and engagement with the industrial and economic issues.

HOLY COMMUNION

The Conference received the report 'His Presence Makes The Feast: Holy Communion in the Methodist Church'. The report draws on a wide-ranging consultation process which reflects the diversity of views and practices within the Methodist Church. Inclusion in the report of theological understandings of Holy

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This Conference Bulletin was edited by the Revd Gareth J Powell

It is a special edition of *Sharing News*, a regular supplement of Connexional news

Produced by the Communication Office, Methodist Church Connexional Team

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The Methodist Church

Communion provides opportunity for vibrant reflection in this important aspect of Christian experience. ♦

ACTION POINT: The Faith and Order Committee invites your reflections on the report by 31 October 2004. The report, along with a presentation pack, will be available in September. Read the report at: www.methodist.org.uk/information/03communion.htm

THANKS

The Conference expressed thanks to the Secretary of the Conference, The Revd Nigel Collinson who retires this summer after 40 years service as a Methodist Minister and five years as Secretary of the Conference. ♦

2004.....

The Revd Will Morrey and Deacon Myrtle Poxon have been designated as President and Vice-President of the Conference of 2004 which will meet in Loughborough. ♦

Conference News

METHODIST CONFERENCE 2003 LLANDUDNO

The Methodist Conference of 2003, hosted by the three Welsh Districts, met in Llandudno. The Revd Dr Neil Richardson and Mrs Judy Jarvis were inducted as President and Vice-President of the Conference for 2003-4. Prior to the Representative session of the Conference (28 June-4 July) the Ministerial Session was held on 26-27 June and the Diaconal Session on Friday 27 June. This year the Conference welcomed guests from 61 partner churches following a World Church consultation marking the tercentenary of the birth of John Wesley.

CHRISTIANS IN DIALOGUE

The Conference devoted time to exploring a number of issues relating to relationships with other Churches.

Roman Catholic

The Faith and Order Committee made a report outlining over thirty years of conversations between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church. The Conference was encouraged to hear of this work as well as listening to stories of local initiatives that have enabled closer co-operation between Methodists and Catholics. Read the report at www.methodist.org.uk/information/03romancatholic.htm

Church of England

Following a 3-hour debate, which expressed a range of hopes and concerns, the Conference resolved by 277 votes to 86 to enter a Covenant with the Church of England. A Joint

Implementation Commission was appointed to oversee further work and ensure that the range of issues raised by the whole church during the consultation process will be taken into account.

United Reformed Church

'Towards an appropriate Pastoral Strategy for the three nations which we serve' is the title of a process by which the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church are seeking to explore the most effective ways of working together. Details of the process were sent to all churches in the spring of 2003. How will your church respond?

Scottish Churches Initiative for Union.

The proposals and recommendations from the Scottish Church Initiative for Union were welcomed and accepted. This allows the Methodist Church to continue detailed unity discussions with the Scottish Episcopal Church and the United Reformed Church. ♦

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RACIAL JUSTICE

As part of an ongoing commitment to racial justice in the Methodist Church, the Conference calls upon all areas of church life to:

- ▶ Identify and eliminate unlawful discrimination
- ▶ Address and remove institutional racism and racialised practices
- ▶ Promote equality of opportunity
- ▶ Promote good race relations.

ACTION POINT: Is your church committed to these principles? Read the whole report at www.methodist.org.uk/information/03racial.htm

LEADERSHIP

The Conference endorsed a revised pattern of leadership of the Connexional Team at Methodist Church House – a General Secretary and six co-ordinating Secretaries. In the coming year the Connexional Leadership Team will explore how best to assist communication and the sharing of good practice across the Connexion, linking the Districts, the Connexional team, the Diaconal Order and the roles of President and Vice-President. ♦

ACTION POINT: Read the report at: www.methodist.org.uk/information/03leadership.htm

WHERE ARE WE HEADING

The Conference spent time considering what priorities the Methodist Church as a whole should set itself for future work. An open session saw representatives express a range of views reflecting the concerns of church and world. ♦

ACTION POINT: Read the report at www.methodist.org.uk/information/03heading.htm

A resource will be provided to help your conversations. Please contribute to the consultation process by raising this issue at your church council and ensuring that the views of all Methodist people are sent to 'Priorities' Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR, or E-mail: priorities@methodistchurch.org.uk

FINANCE

Financial Matters before the Conference included:

- ▶ Approving the Connexional budget for 2003/4 which will require further savings of £100,000 if a balanced budget is to be achieved
- ▶ Adopting the Connexional accounts for 2001/2
- ▶ Agreeing that the shortfall in the Methodist Ministers' Pension Fund should be met by an increase in the Church contribution.

MINISTRY MATTERS

In thinking about various aspects of ministry the Conference

- ▶ Adopted selection criteria for Ordained Ministry in the Methodist Church
- ▶ Approved a liturgy for the commissioning of Evangelists
- ▶ Approved the principle of closer co-operation for the Local Preachers Mutual Aid Association and the Local Preachers Office
- ▶ Accepted guidelines for Lay Workers Appointments
- ▶ Received the report of research on opinions about the Stationing of Presbyteral ministers
- ▶ Further strengthened Safeguarding procedures which will extend the need for enhanced disclosures to be obtained by other categories of workers in the church.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

Responding to the diverse international situation the Conference:

- ▶ Expressed deep concern over the inhuman system of caste discrimination as practised in India, South Asia and some African countries
- ▶ Supported the efforts of the Trade Justice Movement and urged Districts, Circuits and local churches to support trade justice issues
- ▶ Congratulated the Wesley Guild Nigeria Health Care Project on raising over £500,000
- ▶ Received a report containing resources for discussion and study on the situation in the Holy Land
- ▶ Encouraged Methodists to write to MPs expressing concern about human rights abuses in Myanmar
- ▶ Expressed support for the people and churches of Zimbabwe
- ▶ Called on the British Government to ban the use of cluster bombs by UK forces and initiate an international campaign to prevent their future use
- ▶ Urged churches to speak openly and courageously about HIV/Aids.

Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF)

The report of the Fund included details of grants to 42 projects in 23 countries totalling £940,000. The annual report is available from MRDF at the Methodist Church House address or at www.mrdf.org.uk