

## INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE (1989)

The Conference of 1987 referred to the Faith and Order Committee for consideration and report the following resolution:

‘The Conference appoints a working party to look at inclusive language within the whole context of the position of women within Methodism, taking account of the work of other denominations and bodies, and to report to the Conference of 1989 as part of our response to the Decade of Solidarity 1988-1998.’

The Faith and Order Committee itself referred this resolution to a working party, whose report to the Main Committee in January 1989 included a proposal that a working party should be set up to carry out an ‘audit’ of Methodism in relation to the place of women and men within the Church which could then be presented to synods, circuit meetings, church councils and other bodies to provoke self-examination and suitable response. The Main Committee, while not dissenting from this proposal, felt that it should be referred to the President’s Council which for some years has been exploring the community of women and men within the Church.

The working party also proposed that a group should be appointed to produce a resources pack which would enable sections of the Church to look at themselves and discover new possibilities. The Faith and Order Committee judged that this proposal would most satisfactorily be dealt with by referring it to the Inter-Divisional Resources and Publications Committee.

The Faith and Order Committee believes, therefore, that the proposals of the working party naturally find a place within the remit of other bodies, and therefore confines its present report to the Conference to those aspects of inclusive language for which it has a particular responsibility.

The Committee remains committed to the principle of inclusive language. The orders of service presented to the Conference in Section C of this report conform to that principle. As the Committee reported to the Conference of 1987, it is hoped that ecumenical texts, not directly under the Committee’s control, will have been revised to render their language inclusive by the time that *The Methodist Service Book* is replaced.

To date, the Committee’s commitment to inclusive language has been related to the very important issue of the words we use for human beings, male and female. The Committee has now resolved to explore a much more difficult question: it has set up a working party to consider our language and imagery about God within the framework of our concern for inclusivity and in relationship with our understanding of male and female in God’s image. It is clear that the working party will need time to deal in depth with this sensitive question and that both the Committee and the Conference will in due course need to give careful consideration to the working party’s findings; but it is also clear that there is an unresolved issue here that must be thoroughly explored before a new service book is authorized.

### RESOLUTION

The Conference adopts the report on Inclusive Language.

(*Agenda 1989, pp.102-103*)