

Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission

MC/23/48

Date of meeting	25-27 March 2023
Contact name and details	The Revd Dr Jonathan H Pye, Co-Chair of the Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission Jonathan.pye@methodist.org.uk
Action required	For decision
Resolutions	48/1. The Council receives the report. 48/2. The Council directs the Faith and Order Committee to prepare liturgical material for a mutual recognition of Ministries, for a united and interchangeable ministry, as set out in the Mission and Ministry in Covenant report of 2019.

1. The Anglican-Methodist Covenant reaches its 20th anniversary this year. Since 2019, there has been something of an impasse in the formal work to bring the two churches into the closer relationship envisaged and committed to in the Covenant. Recent meetings between the President and Vice President of the Conference and the Archbishops of Canterbury and York as well as senior staff of both churches have resulted in a warm and mutual commitment to moving forward with the Covenant relationship. The Archbishops have both spoken of their deep commitment to ecumenism in general and to our Covenant partnership in particular.
2. The 'Life In Covenant' Group which now has oversight of work related to the Covenant, bringing together leaders committed to the work, ecumenical officers, and representatives of MAPUM, as well as the Faith and Order bodies of both churches, met for the first time in February this year.
3. The Church of England's General Synod decision in 2019 to defer its decision-making over the next steps in Anglican-Methodist unity for a period of up to five years, and the Methodist Council's subsequent decision not to commit further resources or Faith and Order time to work in this area until the Church of England had indicated a positive commitment to future steps towards the visible unity, to which each partner had committed in the Anglican-Methodist Covenant, led to a challenging situation.
4. The Covid-19 pandemic and changes in ecumenical staff teams of both churches have resulted in a fallow period for developments in the Covenant. However, the Covenant still stands and its fruit can be seen in many contexts locally. MAPUM is committed both to supporting and learning from contexts on the ground, where the outworking of the Covenant can be seen. With a commitment in both the Methodist Conference and the General Synod to come to the work of 'Life in Covenant' with renewed vigour, it seems that the time is right to pick up the momentum once again and for the Methodist Council to offer its support.
5. MAPUM has considered this situation both honestly and prayerfully, and notwithstanding the difficulties of the task at hand, has heard the call to unity afresh. It therefore resolved to ask the Methodist Council to unlock the impasse by directing that prayers be produced for the service of mutual recognition of Ministries, as set out in the Conference report of 2019. To take this forward, of course, requires further joint work by the Methodist Faith and Order Committee and the Church of England Faith and Order Commission.
6. Permission for time and resources to be dedicated to this work would set the agenda for the next steps in the Methodist-C of E conversations. Without such directions the continuation of the conversations will inevitably be impaired. Certainly, MAPUM needs the conversations to be unlocked so that a direction and a path can be opened, allowing the work in the area of mission cooperation to go forward.

7. The re-building of ecumenical dialogue after what seems like a long '*ecumenical winter*'¹ will require a renewed commitment by both denominations, with appropriate resourcing, but if this is so then we may reasonably look not only to a thaw but a new ecumenical spring in our relations with the Church of England, offering not just 'new shoots' but the promise of growth.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

48/1. The Council receives the report.

48/2. The Council directs the Faith and Order Committee to prepare liturgical material for a mutual recognition of Ministries, for a united and interchangeable ministry, as set out in the Mission and Ministry in Covenant report of 2019.

¹ Archbishop of Canterbury's speech at the World Council of Churches (WCC) meeting in Karlsruhe (07.09.22) – '*...the time of ecumenical winter and the habits of division, of living separately, is past.*'