

Faith and Order Committee Report: *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*

Contact Name and Details	The Revd Dr Nicola Price-Tebbutt Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee price-tebutt@methodistchurch.org.uk
---------------------------------	---

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on the implications of the Council's decisions regarding <i>Mission and Ministry in Covenant</i>. • Request for further guidance regarding relationships with the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<p>An Anglican-Methodist Covenant (2002) https://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-anglican-methodist-resolutions-only-2002.pdf Methodist Council report MC/19/42, April 2019 <i>Mission and Ministry in Covenant</i>: Church in Wales and Scottish Episcopal Church https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/11043/counc_mc19-42_mmic-ciw-and-sec_apr_2019.pdf</p>

Faith and Order Committee report: *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*

1. Introduction

Following the Methodist Council decision in October 2019 regarding *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, the Faith and Order Committee notes the responses and implications of this (section 2) and seeks further guidance regarding relationships with the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC) (section 3).

2. Implications of the decisions regarding *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*

- 2.1. At its meeting in October the Methodist Council considered a variety of pieces of further work necessary to progress the work related to *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*. It did not direct the Faith and Order Committee to undertake any of the work that had been identified, feeling that time and resources should not be committed to further work on these specific proposals until there was a clearer indication of approval for them in both churches. It therefore directed the Faith and Order Committee to bring the proposals to a future Conference and once the General Synod has begun the legislative process. The General Synod, however, had already asked for the further work in order to help it make the decisions about beginning the legislative process. It is, therefore, now unclear how the *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* process could continue, although neither the Methodist Conference nor the General Synod have made the decision to halt it.
- 2.2. As part of sharing the Council's decision with colleagues in the Church of England and considering where that now leaves the *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* process, there has been some general reflection on how we have reached this point and what the implications are. The Church of England has taken seriously the reasons for and the implications of the Council's direction and has expressed the hope that this will not exclude a willingness to explore ways of indicating support for further conversations, through whatever means seem to the Methodist Council and Church to be appropriate. It has been noted that this has always been a process in which a series of decisions would need to be made. From the beginning both churches supported the principle that 'the Church of England should decide first', but an unintended consequence of that has been that the Church of England has shaped the timing and nature of decisions. In July, the General Synod could have abandoned the *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* proposals or left them in abeyance, but it chose not to. Instead it asked for some further work to help work through some of the concerns which had been expressed. The Methodist Council declined to support this further work, acknowledging some of the continuing concerns about the proposals in the Methodist Church and feeling that further time and resources should not be given to additional work until there was a clearer consensus for the proposals in both churches. As such consensus in the Church of England could only be achieved through the further work, it is not clear where the *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* process goes from here.
- 2.3. As the *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* process is now effectively halted, the faith and order bodies of both churches acknowledged that this raises questions about the first commitment of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant: "We commit ourselves, as a priority, to work to overcome the remaining obstacles to the organic unity of our two churches, on the way to the full visible unity of Christ's Church. In particular, we look forward to the time when the fuller visible unity of our churches makes possible a united, interchangeable ministry." This, in turn, raises questions about the Covenant relationship itself and our commitment to the full visible unity of Christ's Church. These are significant questions, and they are spiritual questions; relating to how we understand ourselves as part of a community called into being by God to

participate in God's mission, witness to divine grace, and proclaim the kingdom of God as Jesus did.¹

- 2.4. Any conversation about these questions is broader than the remit of the Faith and Order Committee and, it is hoped, would involve a range of people with different experiences and perspectives. The Faith and Order Committee would welcome and seek to support opportunities for these broader questions to be explored in joint conversation with the Church of England, and it awaits further reflections from the Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group.

3. **The *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* process and the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church**

- 3.1. In response to a direction of the Methodist Council in April 2019 the Methodist Church invited the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church to participate in the *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* process (MC/19/42, Resolution 42/2). The Council further directed the Faith and Order Committee "to explore interchangeability of ministry with the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church as part of its work on *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* and to report on progress to the Council in April 2020."
- 3.2. In the light of the decisions relating to work with the Church of England, the Faith and Order Committee would be grateful for further direction from the Council as to whether it wishes it to continue to explore interchangeability of ministry with the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church and, if so, the extent to which that is reliant on the *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* proposals. Two resolutions are therefore offered to the Council so that a clear direction may be given.

***RESOLUTIONS

14/1. The Council receives the report.

14/2. The Council directs that the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church be updated on the *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* process, which delays any further conversations.

OR

14/3. The Council directs the Faith and Order Committee to explore interchangeability of ministry with the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church.

¹ *Called to Love and Praise* (1999), 2.1.1, 2.1.7; *Ministry in the Methodist Church, Part B*, (2018), 2.2.3.