

Faith and Order Committee Report to the Methodist Council 2016

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Status of Paper	Final
Draft Resolutions	63/1. The Council receives the report.
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	None

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	The work of the Faith and Order Committee 2015-2016
Main Points	Ways of working Responses required by previous Conferences Scrutiny and consultation work Work being brought to Conferences 2015 and 2016
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	The Faith and Order Committee reports to the Methodist Conference, and annually provides a briefer report to the Council.

The Work of the Faith and Order Committee 2015-2016

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 Council and Conference, offers advice on issues related to the Faith and Order of the Methodist Church, 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 2016 and 2017.

1. Ways of Working

- 1.1 The Committee has met three times since the 2015 Conference: in September for a day meeting; in November for a 24-hour residential meeting in London; and in March for a 24-hour residential meeting in Leeds.
- 1.2 The Liturgical Sub-Committee has met once since the 2015 Conference. It meets according to need, and utilises electronic ways of working.
- 1.3 A Joint Subgroup, appointed by the faith and order bodies of the Methodist Church and the Church of England, continues to take forward the work on ministry and oversight. A joint meeting of the faith and order bodies will take place in June 2016 to discuss this work.
- 1.4 The Committee continues to pay attention to 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 SO330. It has continued to re-establish the Faith and Order Network, an approved panel of people with relevant skills and gifts who may be called upon to support the Committee in its work; and it is giving particular attention to how such skills may be nurtured and developed. The Secretary is always glad to be informed of the names of individuals, lay or ordained, who have particular proven theological skills and a good understanding of Methodist theology, doctrine and polity.
- 1.5 The Faith and Order Executive has been appointed to make some decisions on behalf of the Committee between meetings. It has particular responsibility for appointing people to the Faith and Order Network and recommending people for faith and order working parties and other pieces of work.
- 1.6 All reports, questions and communication to the Committee should be sent in the first instance to the Secretary of the Committee. The Committee have agreed a protocol for Faith and Order representation and consultation. As a general principle no one speaks on behalf of the Faith and Order Committee, except for the Secretary, unless they are specifically authorized to do so. Whilst those representing the Faith and Order Committee on other bodies cannot act on behalf of the Committee they shall endeavour to: articulate faith and order perspectives and highlight questions and concerns as appropriate; encourage a shared engagement in theological reflection; liaise with the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee; and make reports or raise issues with the Committee as required.

1.7 The appointment of the Faith and Order Committee is the responsibility of the Methodist Conference. The Committee expresses its thanks to those members who will be standing down from Committee membership at the end of this connexional year.

2. Responses required by previous Conferences

2.1 The Committee shall bring to the 2016 Conference a response to the 2013 Conference resolution 44/11 concerning the *Theology and Ecclesiology Underpinning the Diaconate*. The response shall be in the form of a substantial interim report, with further work to be undertaken as part of the work on *Ministry in the Methodist Church*.

2.2 The Committee shall bring to the 2016 Conference an interim report on the work on *Ministry in the Methodist Church* (resolution 35/2, Conference 2014). The written report shall be a brief review of the agenda for the work and the approach that has been adopted. The Conference will have an opportunity for conversation and further reflection on the work through a bible study and workshops.

2.3 The Committee shall also bring to the 2016 Conference reports on the progress of the following pieces of work:
Issues arising from the General Secretary's Report 2011 ("God's 'worship' and our worship", resolution 2/5, Conference 2011);
Holy Communion Mediated Through Social Media (resolution 37/1, Conference 2015).

3. Scrutiny and Consultancy Work

3.1 The Committee has engaged with various issues, projects and Council papers, providing specific responses to paperwork, continuing involvement in the support of working groups, or commentary on the development of reports. Where appropriate, specific responses have been sent directly to the authors of reports, or to those providing the lead in relevant areas of work.

3.2 Under SO330(10) the Faith and Order Committee has a specific role in scrutinising all matters directly concerning the faith and order of the Church presented to the Conference by other bodies. Such scrutiny requires consultation with the full committee, and often some collaborative working, and the Committee is therefore grateful for early conversations to establish effective and constructive ways of working and reflecting as the work develops.

3.3 The Committee continues to reflect on how it might best support members of the Connexional Team, and those undertaking work (individuals and working parties) on behalf of the Methodist Council and the Conference, to think about how their work might be theologically resourced and what it means to theologically reflect in the context of the Methodist Church in Britain.

3.4 The Committee continues to consider how it might best work with others in order to fulfil its remit under SO 330(3) to "seek to stimulate theological reflection and study throughout the Church", and will continue to give this attention during the next connexional year.

4. Work being brought to the 2016 and 2017 Conferences

The Faith and Order Committee's reports to the Conferences of 2016 and 2017 will include the following major pieces of work:

Conference 2016:

- The Theology and Ecclesiology Underpinning the Diaconate

Conference 2017:

- Issues of Connexionalism
- Matters of Ministerial Remuneration

*****RESOLUTION**

63/1. The Council receives the report.