

Faith and Order Committee Report to the Methodist Council 2015

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Status of Paper	Final
Draft Resolutions	59/1. 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 2014-2015
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.
Consultations	N/A

The Work of the Faith and Order Committee 2014-2015

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 the Council and the 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 2015 Conference and the 2016 Conference.

1. Ways of Working

- 1.1 The Committee has met three times since the 2014 Conference: in July to reflect on its work relating to ministry in the Methodist Church; in November for a 24-hour residential meeting in Leamington Spa; and in March for a 24-hour residential meeting in Leeds.
- 1.2 The Liturgical Sub-Committee has met twice since the 2014 Conference. It meets according to need, and utilises electronic ways of working.
- 1.3 In March 2015, the Committee held a joint meeting with the Church of England's Faith and Order Commission. A joint Sub-Group has been established to take forward the work on ministry and oversight.
- 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 Standing Order 330. It has begun 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.
- 1.5 The Committee has appointed a Faith and Order Executive that can make some decisions on behalf of the Committee between meetings. It has responsibility for appointing people to the Faith and Order Network and recommending people for faith and order working parties and other pieces of work. The Executive has met twice since the 2014 Conference and utilises electronic ways of working.
- 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 has 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 authorised 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 Committee has drawn up person specifications for members of the Committee and the Faith and Order Network. 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.
- 1.8 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 will bring to the 2015 Conference responses to the following Conference resolutions:

Memorial M13 (2011): communion mediated through social media;
Memorial M16 (2011): guidance regarding Local Arrangement services;
Order for the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith (resolution 35/6, 2012);
Hospitality Between Different Forms of Church (resolution 35/5b, 2012);
Issues of Connexionalism in the 21st Century (resolution 35/10, 2013).

- 2.2 The Committee will bring to the 2015 Conference reports on the progress of the following pieces of work:

Equality and Diversity theological underpinning;
NOM103 (2013): the ecclesiological implications of the way we record fresh expressions;
Ministry in the Methodist Church (resolution 35/2, Conference 2014);
Reconciliation of Methodist and Church of England Orders of Ministry (resolution 21/3, Conference 2014);

- 2.3 The Committee will bring to the 2015 Conference a response to the World Council of Churches convergence statement on ecclesiology: *The Church Towards a Common Vision*. A pdf download of the original WCC document can be found at:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-church-towards-a-common-vision>

3. Scrutiny and Consultancy Work

- 3.1 The Committee has engaged with various issues, projects and Council papers, offering 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 reflect theologically in the context of the Methodist Church in Britain.
- 3.4 The Committee has begun 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.
- 3.5 **Local Preachers/Worship Leaders Pathway**

The Faith and Order Committee is writing to the Ministries Committee to express its deep concern that the material being produced is strong on personal experience but often lacking in engagement with the Bible, Christian theology and Methodist traditions; and that students are not being given the tools or the information they need if they are to learn or to deepen their understanding to prepare them for a life-long commitment to leading the Methodist people in worship and preaching the Gospel.

4. **Work being brought to the 2015 Conference and the 2016 Conference**

The Faith and Order Committee’s reports to the 2015 Conference and the 2016 Conference will include the following major pieces of work:

The 2015 Conference:

- Response to Memorial M13 (2011): communion mediated through social media;
- Order for the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith;
- Issues of Connexionalism in the 21st Century;
- Response to the World Council of Churches statement *The Church Towards a Common Vision*.

The 2016 Conference:

- Theology and Ecclesiology Underpinning the Diaconate

*****RESOLUTION**

59/1. The Council receives the report.