

38. Faith and Order Committee Report

Contact Name and Details	The Revd Nicola Price-Tebbutt Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee price-tebbuttn@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	38/1. The Conference receives Part A of the Report. 38/2. The Conference adopts the guidance set out in Part B of the Report and directs the Secretary of the Conference to ensure that it is made available to Superintendent Ministers.

Summary of Content and Impact

Subject and Aims	To provide a report on the work of the Faith and Order Committee
Main Points	Part A: General Report Part B: Guidance to Superintendents Regarding Local Arrangement Services
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	Part B: Memorial M16 (2011) – see Appendix.

38. Faith and Order Committee Report

Part A: General Report

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 to the Conference.

In this report, the Committee outlines the main areas in which it has been working during the present connexional year.

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 November for a 24-hour residential meeting; and in March for a 24-hour residential meeting.
- 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 as directed by the 2014 Conference and the General Synod following the recommendations of the Joint Implementation Commission.
- 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 (albeit in a different form), 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 an 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 regularly 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 to 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 the Revd Neil Cockling, the Revd Sylvester Deigh, the Revd Albert Gayle and the Revd Dr Stephen Mosedale who will be standing down from Committee membership at the end of this connexional year.

2. Responses required by previous Conferences

The Faith and Order Committee has been working on a number of responses to specific Conference resolutions relating to the work of the Committee.

2.1 Statement on Pastoral Care

The 2014 Conference varied its previous directions and the Statement on Pastoral Care will not now become a Conference Statement in pursuance of SO 129. The Statement, as contained in paragraphs 1-30 and the first two sentences of paragraph 31 of the 2011 report *The Theology of Pastoral Care*, has already been received by the Conference and the Faith and Order Committee is not recommending any further revisions to the text.

2.2 Hospitality Between Orders of Ministry and Different Forms of Church (resolution 35/5, 2012)

The ways in which the Methodist Church can promote further hospitality, collaboration and mutuality between new and established forms of church were considered as part of the Faith and Order Committee's response to Notice of Motion 103 (2013) and reported to the Methodist Council. The Council has directed the Law and Polity and the Faith and Order Committee to ensure that work is undertaken with regards to the oversight and governance of Fresh Expressions.

2.3 M16 (2011): Preaching at Local Arrangement Services

The Faith and Order Committee brings a response to this memorial in Part B of this report.

2.4 Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

The Committee continues to work with the Equalities and Diversity Adviser to provide a theological underpinning for work on issues of equality, diversity and inclusion. This will be further developed during the piloting of the EDI Toolkit, and the Committee will bring a further report to the Methodist Council in October.

2.5 The following responses are brought as separate reports:

- *M13 (2011): Communion Mediated Through Social Media;*
- Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith including the use of water;
- Issues of Connexionalism in the 21st Century (*resolution 35/10, 2013*);
- A response to *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 these areas of work.

- 3.2 Under SO 330(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 Conference and Methodist Council, 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.

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

The Faith and Order Committee’s report to the 2016 Conference is expected to include the following major piece of work:

- The Theology and Ecclesiology Underpinning the Diaconate.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

38/1. The Conference received Part A of the Report.

Part B

Guidance to Superintendents Regarding Local Arrangement Services

1. The 2011 Conference asked the Worship and Liturgy Resource Group of the Faith and Order Committee to look at providing guidelines to clarify what is meant by “preaching element” in SO 569(1) and how best to support local arrangements, with a view to clarifying the Standing Orders as required. As the Resource Groups have ceased to exist, the matter has been considered by the Faith and Order Committee.
2. The Faith and Order Committee does not recommend any changes to the Standing Orders, and offers the guidance below.

Guidance Regarding Services not led by a Presbyterian or Local Preacher

The Preaching Element

3. Historically, Methodism has always drawn a distinction between preaching, testimony and exhortation. It is appreciated that the boundaries may sometimes be unclear or indistinct, but the difference is captured in the traditional phrase ‘taking a text’. All are welcome, and encouraged, to share their personal experience of God’s grace (testimony) and to make this a basis for urging others to respond to the Gospel (exhortation). Preaching often includes these features, but it goes further, by reflecting on and expounding Scripture, in the light of the faith of the Church and the needs of the world. All Christians are called to bear witness to the hope that is in them; not all are called to preach.

Local Arrangement Services

4. Occasional Local Arrangement services are a healthy thing for most churches, as they offer a chance for the wider membership or groups within the life of the church to lead worship. In this, new vocations for worship leading, local preaching, and ordained ministry may be developed and discerned.
5. In more subtle ways, occasional Local Arrangement services may also help to foster a culture of worship owned and actively engaged in by the congregation. Strategically used and supported, they make real the statement “Worship is the work of the whole people of God: a congregation is not an audience or a group of spectators.” (*Methodist Worship Book (MWB)*, Preface, p. vii)
6. However for this to happen, attention must be given to offering training and reflection for those leading Local Arrangement services. Leaders of worship (authorised or not) are called to “...encourage and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to enable the whole Body of Christ to participate fully”. (*MWB*, Preface, p. vii) Opportunities for reflection on the implications of this for planning and leading worship should ideally be offered as part of the regular pattern of discipleship and learning within Local Churches, Circuits and Districts.
7. It is suggested that Superintendents keep a record of those who take responsibility for Local Arrangements and, where appropriate, encourage the Local Preachers’ Meeting to offer support and training. Where people are frequently taking responsibility for Local Arrangements then the following guidance is offered:
 - a. They should be approved by the Church Council;
 - b. Their name should be passed on to the Superintendent;
 - c. They should go through the Safeguarding processes applicable for local preachers;

- d. They should receive direction on what is meant by the “preaching element”;
- e. They should be required to take the Worship Leaders’ Training Course (or an adapted version of it);
- f. They should be encouraged to consider whether they have a call to worship leading or to local preaching;
- g. The Church Stewards should be asked to present a report to the Church Council from time to time on those who regularly take responsibility for Local Arrangement services and any feedback on their services.

Resources and Support for those Leading Local Arrangement services

8. The *Methodist Worship Book* is a key resource for the planning and leading of Local Arrangement services. The full First or Second service may be used with minimal preparation. Even if the congregation does not have copies of the *Methodist Worship Book* available, a leader may use the book and adapt the services, using familiar or simpler congregational responses. The leader may also use the order of either service, but use prayers or elements of worship from other sources.
9. In addition to the full services, the *Introduction* before the First Service (*MWB*, p. 26) and the *Guidance for Ordering a Morning, Afternoon, or Evening Service* (*MWB* p. 51) provide a framework where leaders of a Local Arrangement service do not wish to use the material in the Worship Book, but do need support for the order and elements.
10. When SO 569(2) applies then careful consideration should be given to the choice of the elements of worship. For example, a Local Church may choose to use the order described in the Guidance notes on p. 51 of the *Methodist Worship Book*, but work with members of a junior church, class or house group, independent site user or tenant congregation (licensed under Model Trusts paragraph 14(2A)) to write prayers appropriate to lead the congregation, or make creative or visual or other artistic leads into prayer or action in response to the reading of scripture.
11. Other resources are widely available in a variety of media: the published and authorised liturgies of ecumenical partners, including the Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland; Common Worship and other printed and online resources from the Church of England; Worship from the United Reformed Church; and myriad specialist or themed collections of prayers and liturgies.
12. The Faith and Order Committee makes available a number of ‘Readers’ Services’ available for use or adaptation. These can be downloaded from www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/local-preachers/readers-services and will be regularly updated.
13. Where Local Arrangement services are prevalent in a Circuit, churches may be encouraged to work together with members of the Local Preachers’ meeting to plan a series of fully worked out services which can be shared across a number of weeks in a Circuit. For example, a Circuit that struggles to fill the months of July and August might choose to have a six week local arrangement, where full services (hymns, prayers, music and media, action and weekly Bible study/preparation) are prepared well in advance and made available to the stewards in any congregation wishing to use them. A number of Circuits have adopted approaches like this or others, and in some cases examples of these are available on Circuit or District websites. This is in accord with the guidance of SO 539.
14. While church stewards retain responsibility for resourcing Local Arrangement services, there may be others within Circuits and Learning Regions who can further support Local Churches with both resources and reflection. The goal is always to allow Local Churches greater confidence in adapting traditional structures and orders so as to enliven their experience of God in worship, in line with SO 569.

*****RESOLUTION**

38/2. The Conference adopted the guidance set out in Part B of the Report and directed the Secretary of the Conference to ensure that it is made available to Superintendent Ministers.

Appendix

M16 (2011) Preaching at Local Arrangement services

The Kidsgrove (11/16) Circuit Meeting (Present: 38. Voting: unanimous) asks the Conference to remove the words “and shall not normally include a preaching element” from SO 569(1). The Circuit believes that the value gained by people discovering a call to preach by beginning to do so and the fact that a Local Preacher is to provide guidance for such a service more than outweighs the concern that such preachers will be unaccountable.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Kidsgrove Circuit for its memorial. The Methodist Church holds the ministry of its preachers in high regard. It has sought, since the beginning of the Methodist movement, to provide appropriate training and support for all its preachers. Work to provide enhanced and more flexible training and support for Local Preachers is currently being undertaken as part of the Fruitful Field project, as outlined elsewhere in the Conference Agenda. Moreover, as an indication of the importance which the Methodist Church attaches to the ministry of its Local Preachers, the Conference continues to monitor the standards of worship and preaching in our pulpits in a number of ways – not least through the Superintendent’s oversight of the plan, the fellowship of the Local Preachers’ Meeting and the process of Continuing Local Preacher Development.

The restriction noted in SO 569(1), to which the memorial refers, seeks to respect the role of preachers and, implicitly, to acknowledge the proper degree of training and support which the Conference would seek to offer to those who exercise a preaching ministry within the life of the Church. As such, the restriction is proportionate and reasonable.

However the Conference notes the continuing need for Local Arrangements, as well as the need to enable, support and encourage a range of ministries to serve the needs of all our local churches and Circuits. This has led to some confusion about what is meant by ‘preaching element’ and how best to support local arrangements. The Conference therefore believes that guidelines around this subject as well as a review of the relevant Standing Orders is required.

Consequently, the Conference declines this memorial but requests that the Worship and Liturgy Resource Group of the Faith and Order Committee look at producing guidelines with a view to clarifying the Standing Orders as required.