

42. Response to Notice of Motion 206 (2012)

Contact Name and Details	The Revd Dr Martyn Atkins, Secretary of the Conference and General Secretary; Doug Swanney, Connexional Secretary, swanneyd@methodistchurch.org.uk
Status of Paper	Final
Resolutions	42/1. The Conference receives the Report. 42/2. The Conference extends to the General Secretary of the World Methodist Council the invitation to attend the Conference as an observer at least once every three years.

Summary of Content and Impact

Subject and Aims	To present the Conference with the response to Notice of Motion 206 to the 2012 Conference.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Six specific areas for development• Progress made since 2012• Next steps
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	Notice of Motion 206 to the 2012 Conference
Consultations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, ecumenical Bishop for the Council of Bishops (UMC)• Steve Sidorak (UMC Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns)
Impact	Highlights existing relationship with the UMC

42. Response to Notice of Motion 206 (2012)

Methodist Church in Britain - Notice of Motion 206 (2012):

In response to particular concerns expressed during our World Church Relations Pre-Conference Consultation:

1. *The Conference, eager to promote true unity between Methodists in every part of the world, directs the Secretary of the Conference/General Secretary to pursue a dialogue with the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church to further develop the Concordat agreement of 1968, and present a progress report to a future Conference, no later than 2015;*
2. *The Conference directs the World Methodist Committee, in consultation with our Partner Churches, to deepen and broaden the conversation within the World Methodist Council on protocols for mission within countries where more than one Member Church operates – sometimes with an unhelpful ethos of competition.*
3. *The Conference, affirming its commitment to being interdependent with our world partners in mission, directs the Methodist Council to explore with our World Church partners the most appropriate means of deepening and broadening:*
 - a. *our dialogue with our World Church partners regarding the ongoing development and implementation of our mission strategies beyond Britain; and*
 - b. *the input of our World Church partners into the ongoing development and implementation of our mission strategies for Britain;*

and annually report progress to future Conferences and review the process in 2015.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 “Members of the same family belong together; and the British and American Methodists are of the same family” is the opening preamble to the report to the 1968 Conference on the British-American Commission.
- 1.2 That Commission took to the British Methodist Conference and to the American Methodist General Conference the basis of a concordat which has existed between the two churches since that time.
- 1.3 Whilst the Commission was originally set up in 1964 to examine the possibility of union between the two traditions, the outworking of a Concordat sought to be sensitive to the contextual ecumenical conversations that were happening for each Church at that time. The Concordat committed each to a number of features of the relationship that was desired in order to further our shared mission. These included: cross representation on a number of our governing bodies, transfer of ministers, cross fertilisation of personnel and policies between the Board and Departments to facilitate good use of resources, ministerial exchanges, and a sharing of developments of both Churches throughout their own memberships.
- 1.4 In the intervening 47 years since the concordat was adopted both Churches, the world, and the context of our shared mission has changed beyond what might have been imagined at that time. Some of what the original Commission indicated was to happen contextually for the denominations did not come to pass, and other matters did.
- 1.5 In the time since the Concordat was agreed the Methodist Church in Britain (MCB) has no overseas Districts whilst the American Methodist Church is now The United Methodist Church

(TUMC) with annual Conferences stretching across the globe, including a strong presence on mainland Europe.

2. The Notice of Motion

2.1 In response to the Notice of Motion a series of conversations between the TUMC and MCB have taken place relating to the Concordat. The main points of contact have been between the Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships (an office within the Council of Bishops of TUMC) and the Office of the General Secretary. The conversations have been further supplemented by the General Secretary's continuing engagement with the Council of Bishops.

2.2 From these conversations the following was noted:

The Concordat itself remains a useful document in 2015 and consequently it is not thought that time should be spent reworking that document, but rather that the focus should be on developing the original desires and intentions contained within it (some of which had not yet come to fruition).

Six areas of development were identified at the outset of these conversations as being possible areas for future focus:

- i) Ensure cross-representation on the Faith and Order Committees of the two Methodist traditions.
- ii) Encouragement of inter-agency work between the General and Global Boards of TUMC and the Connexional Team (and other groups) of the MCB.
- iii) Exploration of how the two Methodist traditions could offer further resource and support to the European Methodist Council and the World Methodist Council.
- iv) Continued focus on migrant church communities being created within both TUMC and MCB 'areas' with particular reference to oversight, language and recognition.
- v) Exploration of the best places for officers of the traditions to be in conversation and attendance to ensure opportunities and mission are shared.
- vi) Exploration of regularising mutually enriching contacts between the Council of Bishops (TUMC) and the Connexional Leaders' Forum (MCB) that have begun in recent years.

3. Relationship with the European and World Methodist Councils

3.1 During the conversation about the Concordat both denominations were conscious of keeping our roles within both European and Global Methodist bodies in mind as we thought about the future. Conversations continue with the Executives of both these bodies as to how we might ensure optimum working between all of us as we seek to fulfil God's mission for Methodism. Within MCB work has recently been implemented by the Council to develop a coherent strategy for engaging with a variety of global bodies to ensure we make the most of the opportunities they each present. At European level work is underway to identify what resources may be needed to ensure the European Methodist Council can be most effective for its members. This matter is referred to in the General Secretary's report.

3.2 One area that has been raised from the World Methodist Council is that we currently do not invite a representative from the Council to attend our Conference from time to time. Attendance at the Conference is one of the best ways for partners to hear wide reflections on the work and strategy of the individual churches and bodies. MCB send a healthy number of delegates to the World Methodist Council and Conferences and it would be useful to reciprocate this. It is therefore suggested that the General Secretary of the World Methodist

Council is offered the opportunity to attend our annual Conference at least once every three to four years as an observer.

- 3.3 The protocols for mission which were raised in the Notice of Motion have been the subject of conversations with the Officers of the World Methodist Council in the last year. Both the MCB and TUMC are working together to coordinate missional presence around the world but the difficulties arise when the 'sending' church is either one large Church (although within the traditions but working independently) or when autonomous churches outside of the two traditions begin their missionary work in a place where we are already present. At times this happens because of a lack of awareness that the Concordat exists and there is strategic work happening around placement of mission partners. This matter will be raised again at the World Methodist Council in 2016 in an attempt to encourage wider cooperation.

4. Reflections on the six development areas since 2012

- 4.1 Since these areas were identified we have continued in ongoing conversations to evaluate how matters were progressing. The following have so far been noted:

- i) Ensure cross-representation on Faith and Order Committees of the two traditions.

This has not been taken forward by either of the bodies concerned but this is not due to a lack of interest but related to the time needed to do long term planning. Concern has been expressed from the MCB as to how this is more than a 'hit and run' engagement but has ongoing conversations built in. TUMC are very keen to have this exchange in place so further work will be done to make it happen in the best possible way.

- ii) Encouragement of inter-agency work between the General and Global Boards of the UMC and the Connexional Team (and other groups) of the MCB.

There has been good conversation in the last few years between the General Global Board of Ministries (GBGM) and the MCB World Church Relationships team. This has been a continuation of positive working together which flowed from work done in 2000 to flesh out the Concordat as it was seen then. These recent conversations have opened up discussions around possible joint mission appointments as well as the possibility of the MCB joining the mission intern scheme of TUMC.

There are also emerging conversations between MCB Public Issues Team and the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS). It is hoped that this will be taken forward into some concrete sharing during 2015.

GBCS hosted staff from the MCB Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network while they were at a Conference in Nashville. Work through the European Methodist Youth and Children (EMYC) is leading to some consideration of youth interns and youth placements. Further links between the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN) and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) are hoped for.

- iii) Exploration of how the two traditions could offer further resource and support to the European and World Methodist Councils (WMC).

Conversations with the General Secretary and the Executive of the WMC have been positive and encouraging about how we might develop a stronger European presence through both our traditions. Work is currently being undertaken on this in tandem with

a working group of the European Methodist Council who will take proposals to the European Methodist Council in September 2015.

- iv) Continued focus on migrant church communities being created within both UMC and MCB 'areas' with particular reference to oversight, language and recognition.

This is an area of ministry increasingly recognised as fertile and significant for joint action. A gathering to reflect on good practice and good mission listening and learning from Methodists around the world would be highly useful. Work is currently being undertaken in the MCB but it is recognised that various models, working effectively to different degrees, already operate throughout the world.

The work in southern Italy in relation to migrants coming to Europe from Africa is a stunning and emerging piece of mission that clearly requires ownership wider than is possible by Opera Per Le Chiese Evangeliche Metodiste In Italia (OPCEMI – Methodist Church in Italy). The General Secretary will be visiting this work in May.

- v) Exploration of the 'Connectional Table' of TUMC as a possible place for engagement between the two traditions.

Recognising that 'points of relational contact' are key and must be sustained, this conversation has continued over the years and we continue to try out different models to see what produces the results. TUMC has suggested that the Connexional Secretary would be the most appropriate to be present at their 'Connectional Table' and work is underway to make this happen.

- vi) Exploration of regularising mutually enriching contacts between the Forum of Active Bishops (TUMC) and the Connexional Leaders' Forum (MCB) that have begun in recent years.

Bishop Robert Schnase (UMC Bishop of the Missouri Conference) attended the Connexional Leaders' Forum in January 2015 which is a positive outworking of conversations.

5. Engagement between the two denominations

- 5.1 Ensuring continuity and an openness to exchange of information and ideas between the two Conferences is important. Elsewhere in the Agenda the Conference will be asked to nominate its delegation to the General Conference of the TUMC and the names offered to the Conference offer some continuity between the conversations from the last two years. Similar conversations about continuity of membership are being raised within TUMC.
- 5.2 The Ecumenical Staff Officer of TUMC (who is also Head of the Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships) is undertaking the presentation of this document to the most relevant body in TUMC to ensure parity of communication.
- 5.3 Ongoing conversations will be facilitated through the Connexional Secretary and the Ecumenical Staff Officer of TUMC. One suggestion has been that we mark 50 years of the Concordat in some way in 2018 and some thoughts are developing around this theme.
- 5.4 At this stage particular thanks are given to Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, the ecumenical Bishop for the Council of Bishops, whose interest and support has been invaluable.

6. Working with World Church Partners

- 6.1 The Methodist Church is fully committed to engaging with world church partners as strategies continue to be delivered and developed. Since the All Partners Consultation in 2010 there has been ongoing consultation and listening to the needs of our partners and much of this is reflected in the decisions made about 'One Mission' and the future.
- 6.2 The Methodist Council spent time at its April meeting looking at World Church strategy and engagement and more work will be undertaken in the year ahead to ensure that the best ways of hearing and working with partner churches are open to us.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

42/1. The Conference received the Report.

42/2. The Conference extended to the General Secretary of the World Methodist Council the invitation to attend the Conference as an observer at least once every three years.