

METHODIST CONFERENCE 2002 REPORT

An Anglican-Methodist Covenant (resolutions only)

An Anglican-Methodist Covenant: Common Statement of the Formal Conversations between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England

1. The Report of the Formal Conversations, *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant*, was published on 12 December 2001 and launched with a joint press conference. The Conference is invited to give initial consideration to the Report and formally to encourage the process of study and response that is well under way informally. The Conference is asked to direct the appropriate bodies within the Connexion to vote on a resolution approving the proposed covenant set out in paragraph 194 of the Report. It is also asked to invite responses by way of comment from other parts of the world Methodist community and the ecumenical instruments in Britain. These would prepare the way for further consideration and decision by the Conference next year.

2. The Report of the Formal Conversations is not a scheme for union but proposes a significant step in the direction of greater visible unity and closer collaboration in mission between our two Churches. It is intended to lead into a further phase of dialogue on issues that the Formal Conversations were not expected to resolve, including interchangeability of ministries. The Report provides an overall framework for the developing relationship between our two Churches.

3. The language of covenant is central to the Report. It takes up the language of covenant that is familiar from the many local ecumenical partnerships that are based on a covenanted relationship between the participating Churches. Those partnerships, like the proposed Anglican Methodist Covenant, are not merely covenants between two or more contracting parties. Ecumenical covenants are entered into within the covenant between God and his people:

In Scripture, God's covenant with his people is made by grace. It includes forgiveness and healing. It survives the ups and downs of human nature and human experience, for it is God who calls and enables and God who keeps faith. (*Foreword to the Report*, p. vi)

4. The resolutions that follow relate to sections 1 to 4 of the Recommendations contained in paragraph 195 of the Report. Sections 5 to 7 of the Recommendations in paragraph 195 would be dealt with as follows:

Section 5: This refers to preparation for the Conference and the General Synod of the Church of England in the summer of 2003. The joint liaison group (provided for in Resolution 6 below in accordance with Section 4 of paragraph 195) would do the work required to bring appropriate resolutions.

Sections 6 and 7: If appropriate, resolutions would also come to Conference 2003 setting up a Joint Implementation Commission and providing its terms of reference.

Resolutions

4/1. The Conference receives the Common Statement of the Formal Conversations between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England, *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant*.

4/2. The Conference encourages the study of the Common Statement in the Districts, circuits and churches and urges that such study should be done ecumenically, with Anglicans and others, where that is possible and appropriate.

4/3. The Conference directs each District Synod and Circuit Meeting and Y Gymnfa to vote on the following resolution and to send the results of their voting and any associated comments (in the case of circuit meetings via the Districts) to reach the Conference Office before 17 April 2003:

"The (name) Synod/(name) Circuit Meeting/Y Gymnfa approves the Anglican-Methodist Covenant, consisting of a preamble and mutual affirmations and commitments, as set out in paragraph 194 of the Common Statement."

4/4. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee and the Law and Polity Committee and invites the Youth Conference to comment on *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* (responding to the Conference Office before 17 April 2003).

4/5. The Conference invites the Methodist Church in Ireland, other partner Methodist and United Churches, the United Reformed Church¹, other ecumenical partners with whom we are in dialogue, the appropriate bodies within Churches Together in England and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, and the Ecumenics and Dialogue Committee of the World Methodist Council to study and comment on *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* (responding to the Conference Office before 17 April 2003).

¹There is a further resolution relating specifically to the United Reformed Church in connection with the Report *Conversations on the Way to Unity* (elsewhere in this Agenda).

4/6. The Conference appoints the following persons to serve as the Methodist members of the joint liaison group to receive responses and propose resolutions to the Conference of 2003 and the General Synod of the Church of England meeting in July 2003:

- The Revd John D Walker (Co-Chair) (District Chair, Chester and Stoke District)
- The Revd Peter Sulston, Ecumenical Officer (Co-Secretary)
- The Revd Dr Jane V Craske (Faith and Order nominee)
- Mrs Susan R Howdle (Law and Polity nominee)
- Deacon Jane Middleton (Convenor, Committee for Local Ecumenical Development)
- The Revd Dr Martin Wellings (Synod Secretary, Oxford and Leicester District)