

17. The Faith and Order Committee: Section B

Responses requested by the Conference

The Committee has offered the following responses to specific Conference resolutions relating to the work of the Committee:

1. Pastoral Care

The 2008 Conference in Scarborough adopted Recommendation 13.9 in the report entitled *With Integrity and Skill* [Resolution 18/2], and invited the Faith and Order Committee “to consider whether now is the time to develop a theological statement on the nature of Pastoral Care in the Methodist Church...” The following response by the Pastoral Issues Resources Group was discussed by the Committee:

The last report adopted by the Methodist Conference entitled Pastoral Care was in 1993. This report was prepared by a working group on Spirituality and Pastoral Care and focussed on the important relationship between these, suggesting ways forward in the areas of pastoral prayer, pastoral space and pastoral sharing. Subsequently, there have been a number of reports which have addressed pastoral care issues: *With Integrity and Skill* (2008), *Created in God's Image* (2008), *Creating Safer Space* (2007), *Domestic Violence and the Methodist Church* (2002), *Marriage in the Methodist Church* (2002) and others which have reflected on the theological questions arising from these issues e.g. *Tracing Rainbows Through the Rain* (2006), *Presbyters and Deacons Affected*

by Impairment (2004). All of these have made valuable contributions to developing the Methodist Church's theological and pastoral response in the changing climate of pastoral care during the last 15 years.

It is evident that during this time both the context and nature of pastoral care has undergone many changes. Changes in both church and society have challenged models of pastoral care and the practice of pastoral care. They have also precipitated fresh theological thinking energised by the development and growth of practical theology. With the emergence of the broad field of practical theology new resources are available to inform our understanding of the particular theological emphasises which have shaped and underpinned various approaches to pastoral care. Although there is a lot of common theological ground with other denominations in this area we recommend that any report should be a Methodist Report focussing on the theological basis for the practice of pastoral care within Methodism. This needs to include current issues such as the role of lay people, oversight and pastoral care, fresh expressions and discipleship and pastoral care. There is no doubt that this is an important topic for the Methodist Church to give attention to at this time.

The Pastoral Issues Resource Group for the reasons above is in support of developing a statement on the nature of pastoral care in

17. The Faith and Order Committee: Section B

the Methodist Church, but wants to emphasise that this work must only be undertaken with clearly defined Terms of Reference. This is a very substantial piece of work and its aims and objectives need to be defined carefully and within reasonable limits. We also recommend that a working group be convened to agree these Terms of Reference and work on this project. In the absence of a member of the Connexional Team with specific responsibility for pastoral issues, careful thought will need to be given as to how such a working party will liaise with the Connexional Team, several members of whom will

have areas of responsibility in which pastoral issues feature prominently. The Pastoral Issues Resource Group would be happy to both contribute to and advise the working group as well as scrutinise any material produced.

The Faith and Order Committee endorsed the report and therefore recommends that the Conference establish a working party on this subject with involvement from the Faith and Order Committee, appropriate members of the Connexional Team, and a number of people drawn from the Connexion.

***RESOLUTION

- 17/2.** The Conference resolved to establish a working party to develop a statement on the nature of pastoral care in the Methodist Church and to report through the Faith and Order Committee and the Methodist Council to the Conference of 2011.

2. Membership

The Committee has established a working party in response to Memorial 55 (2007). This working party is currently engaged in some primary research on membership within the Methodist Church, as well as exploring our liturgies on entry into the church, the ecumenical implications of membership and the sociological trends relating to membership in contemporary society. The working party includes members of the Faith and Order

Committee, Connexional Team members and an ecumenical representative from the Church of England. The working party is also aware of similar work being undertaken by the Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England and the Joint Implementation Commission. There will need to be appropriate interaction between these bodies to ensure that each is aware of what the other is saying. The Conference is requested to allow the working party to report back in 2010.

***RESOLUTION

- 17/3.** The Conference adopted the Report.