

24. Faith and Order Committee Report

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Resolution	24/1. The Conference receives the Report.

Summary of content

Subject and aims	To provide a report on the work of the Faith and Order Committee
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The work of the Faith and Order Committee 2018/2019● Responses required by previous Conferences● Scrutiny and consultation work● Work being brought to the 2020 Conference

The Work of the Faith and Order Committee 2018/2019

1. The Faith and Order Committee is appointed by the Methodist Conference, and reports annually to the Council and, whenever its business requires to the Conference. On behalf of the Conference, it helps to ensure that what the Methodist Church says and does is true to its self-understanding, mission and purpose. It therefore seeks to encourage a deepening of theological understanding, engagement with the Methodist tradition, and shared critical reflection in order to help discern Methodist perspectives and responses in all aspects of the Church's life.
2. The remit of the Faith and Order Committee is contained within Standing Order 330. It is directed, for example, to encourage reflection on the theological implications of all the work undertaken by the Connexional Team, to undertake specific tasks of theological scrutiny, and to stimulate theological reflection and study throughout the Church. The Committee seeks to fulfil its responsibilities by offering theological consultation for work being conducted throughout the Connexion and theological scrutiny for the work of the Conference and the Connexional Team. 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. Its roles in offering encouragement and in undertaking scrutiny sit alongside each other, and the Committee continues to give particular attention to how it might best help to stimulate, resource and encourage theological reflection throughout the Church.

3. In this report, the Committee outlines the main areas in which it has been working during the present connexional year and indicates the main items which it intends to bring to the Conference in 2020.

4. Responses required by previous Conferences

- 4.1. The Faith and Order Committee has been working on responses to specific Conference resolutions, and draws the attention of the Conference to the following:

- a. *The Theology and Ecclesiology Underpinning the Diaconate and the Methodist Diaconal Order*

Within the universal Church, deacons in the British Methodist Church are in the distinctive position of belonging to both an order of ministry and a religious order. The 2013 Conference found that the time was ripe for further reflection on the theology and ecclesiology underpinning this distinctive model of ordained diaconal ministry, and the 2016 Conference further requested exploration of the relationship between the order of ministry and the religious order. A report on this work is presented elsewhere in the Agenda.

- b. *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*

In 2018 the Methodist Conference and the Church of England's General Synod both debated the *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* report and asked for additional work in some specific areas. The faith and order bodies of the two churches are in the process of finalising a report detailing this further reflection. It is hoped that this can be made available as soon as possible as part of the process of discernment and discussion, and it is anticipated that the *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* proposals will come to the 2020 Conference for debate and decision.

- c. *Revision of Guidelines on Exorcism*

The Methodist Church's guidelines on exorcism (from 1976) are dated and in need of revision. Having undertaken some initial work, it is clear that some further reflection and conversation (including with ecumenical partners) would be helpful. A report and some revised guidelines will therefore be brought to the 2020 Conference. In the meantime some further information and guidance can be found on the Faith and Order Committee's page of the Methodist Church's website.

- 4.2. A draft Conference Statement was included as part of the Faith and Order Committee's *Ministry in the Methodist Church* report to the 2018 Conference. This has been commended to the Connexion for study, discussion and response. Districts, Circuits and Local Churches are invited to send comments on the draft Statement

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to the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee to arrive no later than 1 February 2020. The Committee will bring the Statement, with any revisions, for adoption as a Conference Statement at the 2020 Conference.

- 4.3. The Worship and Liturgy Sub-Committee has developed a liturgy for commissioning a lay pioneer or welcoming an ordained pioneer. This has been approved by the Faith and Order Committee and is available on the Additional Methodist Liturgies page of the Methodist website.

5. Scrutiny and consultancy work

- 5.1. The Committee has engaged with various issues, projects and Council papers, providing 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.

- 5.2. 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 through advising the Secretary of the likely need for consultation.

6. Work being brought to the 2020 Conference

The Faith and Order Committee's report to the Conference of 2020 will include the following pieces of work:

- *Ministry in the Methodist Church*
- *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*
- Theology of safeguarding
- Revision of guidelines in relation to exorcism
- The nature of leadership in the Methodist Church

*****RESOLUTION**

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