

63. Faith and Order Committee Report (2)

Contact name and details	The Revd Dr Nicola Price-Tebbutt Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee price-tebbutt@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	<p>63/1. The Conference receives the Report.</p> <p>63/2. The Conference directs the Methodist Council to oversee the process of producing guidelines for the authorisation, training and supervision of those seeking to engage in deliverance ministry and report to the 2021 Conference.</p> <p>63/3. The Conference directs that, for the interim until further guidance is prepared, no member of the Methodist Church:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) has the authorisation of the Methodist Church for participating in, or encouraging others to participate in, any act that might reasonably be interpreted as constituting the exorcism of a person or persons; or (ii) shall otherwise participate in, or encourage others to participate in, such an act in circumstances where no relevant system of support, consultation and accountability acceptable to the Methodist Church, is in place.

Revision of Guidelines on Exorcism

1. The Faith and Order Committee has continued to explore various aspects of deliverance ministry of which exorcism forms a part. Although relatively few members of the Methodist Church participate in deliverance ministry it continues to be part of the Church's ministry of healing and the Committee is working towards producing some new guidance.
2. The Faith and Order Committee has shared in conversation with a variety of Methodists who have experience of deliverance ministry and notes the increasing complexity of concerns about safe practice, particularly with regards to exorcism and working with vulnerable people. Particular caution needs to be exercised when ministering to someone in a disturbed state who is understood by some or claims to be afflicted by a power of evil or evil spirit. The Committee is aware of the need for further consultation with other safeguarding, medical and social care bodies, and that this consultation should form a part of our ongoing practice.
3. It is clear that alongside guidelines for deliverance ministry in the Methodist Church, there needs to be appropriate and robust systems of support and accountability, including adequate training, supervision, clarity about where responsibility lies, and a process for discerning whether someone has the appropriate charisms for this ministry. The Committee therefore recommends that the Methodist Council explores how these can be put in place and that it considers what resources are required to support this ministry. Some joint working with ecumenical partners may be possible and there will be further conversations about this.
4. Until such structures and resources are put in place there is the question of how the Methodist Church ensures safe practice. Exorcism of a person is only one aspect of deliverance ministry and there are a range of pastorally appropriate responses to such a request. It is therefore recommended that the Methodist Church temporarily withdraws its authorisation for the practice of exorcism of a person or persons until the guidance and systems of accountability are in place.

5. The Faith and Order Committee intends to bring the revised guidance to the 2021 Conference. Until such time, if a situation arises to which the existing guidelines apply (<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/reflecting-on-faith/faith-and-order/guidelines-for-deliverance-ministry/>), then the Chair of District should be consulted to explore referral to another Church.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

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