

## AUTHORISATIONS TO PRESIDE AT THE LORD'S SUPPER (1996)

### Introduction

- 1 The Conference of 1994 received a report, Lay Authorisations, prepared by the General Purposes Committee and the Faith and Order Committee and commended it to Districts, Circuits, and Local Churches for discussion. The report had been written in response to Suggestion 52(S) (1992) and to Memorial M52 (1993):

The Southampton Synod (R) (Present 232. Vote: 185 for, 47 against) suggests that the first paragraph of SO 011 be amended to read: "A Circuit which considers that (\*any of its churches\*) SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF A CHURCH'S MEMBERSHIP OR OF CHRISTIANS IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY are deprived of reasonably frequent and regular celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (\*through lack of ordained ministers\*) may apply for the authorisation of persons other than ministers to preside at that sacrament when appointed to do so on the circuit plan, or on other occasions when authorised by the Superintendent." [Suggestion 52(S)]

The Cornwall Synod (R) (Present 180. Vote 114 for, 58 against, 8 neutral) sends the following Memorial to Conference: "All Lay Workers appointed under SO 581(1) to pastoral and/or evangelistic work, and who are Fully Accredited Local Preachers, may have a dispensation to administer the sacraments whilst so appointed, if so commended by their Circuit Meeting." [Memorial M52]

- 2 The 1994 report indicated the way in which the Methodist Church had dealt with the question of lay authorisations since 1932, set out a variety of views about the question which exist among Methodists, and made a number of recommendations:

that the Conference should re-affirm the principle of 'Extended Communion' and encourage Circuits to consider how 'Extended Communion' may enhance eucharistic ministry within Local Churches and in homes and hospitals. (A resolution to this effect was adopted by the Conference.)

that the Conference should direct the Faith and Order Committee to prepare suitable liturgical material for 'Extended Communion' and to report to the Conference of 1995. (A resolution to this effect was adopted by the Conference and a form of service for 'Extended Communion' was authorised by the 1995 Conference.)

that the Conference should invite Districts, Circuits, and Local Churches to send their comments on the issues raised in the report to the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee not later than 31 December 1995 and that the Faith and Order Committee should present a further report, in the light

of the comments received, to the Conference of 1996. (A resolution to this effect was adopted by the Conference.)

- 3 The report indicated some of the questions which the General Purposes and Faith and Order Committees hoped would be addressed by correspondents.

Among the questions which need to be considered are the following.

***Are our existing procedures adequate to meet the eucharistic needs of a Church in which the Lord's Supper is increasingly valued and in which patterns of lay and ordained ministry are continuing to change and develop?***

***Is the way in which S.O. 011 is applied in practice satisfactory?***

S.O. 011 regards 'deprivation' as the only acceptable ground for application for lay authorisation, and for this reason that Standing Order has a rather negative tone. ***Is it possible or desirable to frame a Standing Order in more positive terms? Are there positive rather than negative reasons for the granting of lay authorisations?***

#### **Comments from Districts, Circuits, Local Churches and Individuals**

- 4 The Faith and Order Committee is grateful to those who responded to the Conference's invitation to send comments on the issues raised by the report. 58 letters were received:

- 1 summarising a District Synod discussion;
- 1 on behalf of a District Ministries Committee;
- 3 on behalf of Circuit Meetings;
- 1 on behalf of a Circuit Staff;
- 1 from a Circuit Meeting Secretary on behalf of several local churches;
- 1 on behalf of a Circuit Ministries Committee;
- 1 on behalf of a Circuit Local Preachers' Meeting;
- 1 on behalf of a Church Council;
- 1 on behalf of a General Church Meeting;
- 47 from individuals.

- 5 Of the 47 individual letters,
- 31 were from lay people, of whom 12 identified themselves as Local Preachers and 7 indicated that they were or had been Lay Workers;
  - 15 were from Ministers; and
  - 1 was from a Deaconess.
- 6 12 correspondents made explicit reference to the 1994 report. 35 letters indicated that they had been written in response to a short article, 'Presiding at Communion', published in "Connect" and written by the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee to make the invitation to comment more widely known. 4 letters addressed only the issue of 'Extended Communion' and said nothing about authorisation to preside at the Lord's Supper.
- 7 9 writers were firmly against any extension of authorisations for persons other than ministers to preside (2 of whom were opposed to any such authorisations in any circumstances).

- 8 17 correspondents cited the doctrine of 'the priesthood of all believers' in support of lay authorisations.
- 9 Most of the letters advocate change, but, not surprisingly, there is no unanimity about the nature of that change. Most of the suggestions can be loosely grouped together in three categories. (Where more than one correspondent made the same suggestion, this is indicated by a number in brackets.)
- 10a) Those arguing that the current system (authorisation by the Conference in accordance with SO 011) should be retained but modified:

Deprivation should be defined less rigidly (2);

To talk of deprivation is too negative; it would be better to speak positively of opportunity (2);

A better mathematical formula for calculating deprivation should be found;

Though the Conference should continue to grant authorisations, the Lay Authorisations Committee should give more weight to the recommendations of the Districts (4);

Though the Conference should continue to grant authorisations, District Synods or Policy Committees should be able to deal with their renewal;

The Lay Authorisations Committee should give more weight to the pastoral relationship that exists between a local church or churches and the person for whom authorisation is sought; if a Lay Worker exercises pastoral care and leads worship regularly in a local church, this should be regarded as a compelling argument for an authorisation to be granted (3);

Authorisations should not be restricted to particular groups of people, for example Local Preachers;

Conversely, everyone to whom an authorisation is granted should be a Local Preacher (2);

All Probationers, Deaconesses, Deacons, and Probationer Deaconesses and Deacons should have the automatic right to preside;

Conversely, Deacons and Deaconesses should not be granted authorisations, because this blurs the distinction between presbyteral and diaconal ministry;

No-one whose offer for presbyteral ministry has not been accepted should be granted an authorisation.

- 11b) Those arguing that authorisations should be granted other than by the Conference:

District Committees should be appointed to consider and, where appropriate, grant authorisations;

Districts or Circuits should have the right to grant authorisations;

Where a Church Council and the Superintendent agree that there is need, the Superintendent should be able to grant an authorisation for one occasion only (2);

Circuit Meetings should have the power to grant authorisations, subject to the District Chairman's approval;

Circuit Meetings should have the power to grant authorisations, just as they approve the accreditation of Local Preachers;

Superintendents should be able to authorise suitable people to preside on occasions like Christmas Midnight and Easter Day when it would not otherwise be possible to meet the eucharistic needs of every local church (2);

Church Councils should have the right to appoint people to preside at the Lord's Supper for midweek celebrations in housegroups, nursing homes, etc.

12c) Those arguing that the notion of limited authorisation should be abandoned:

There should be no authorisations to preside; it should be agreed that any Christian has a right to do so. Authorisations should be for local churches to opt out of lay presidency, for example in a Local Ecumenical Partnership;

Every Local Preacher who wishes to do so should have the same authority to preside as to preach, as appointed by the Superintendent (4);

Lay Workers who are Local Preachers and have pastoral charge should have an automatic right to preside;

Local Preachers should be allowed to preside after five years' service.

13 Certain other suggestions, which do not fit into the three categories, were made:

An optional training course should be produced in a "Faith & Worship" style for Local Preachers and others (3); such a course should be mandatory for those authorised to preside;

Proper attention should be given to the fact that some people testify to a sense of call to exercise a sacramental ministry but not to a sense of call to other aspects of presbyteral ministry (2).

14 Four correspondents suggested that Ministers regarded their virtually exclusive right to preside at the Lord's Supper as a mark of status and that discussion of lay authorisation made them defensive. Several suggested that ecumenical considerations were not all on one side of the argument and that the Methodist Church should do what it believed to be right, regardless of such considerations.

15 The correspondence does not reveal a groundswell of opinion in favour of any single change, except, perhaps, a change towards greater flexibility, however understood. The letters do, however, raise the following issues, which this report will seek to address:

- a) The relevance of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers to this discussion;
  - b) Presbyteral ministry and the Lord's Supper;
  - c) The relationship between pastoral charge and presidency at the Lord's Supper;
  - d) Ecumenical considerations;
  - e) The future of SO 011.
- 16 Another issue which arises from the correspondence is that of discipline and authority. Almost a tenth of the letters refer to breaches of the spirit, and sometimes the letter, of our usage. Four lay people, not authorised to preside at the Lord's Supper, mentioned that they had done so during visits to the sick or on other occasions. One mentioned that a person with an authorisation to preside had in fact done so at a circuit united service, at which Ministers were present. From all this, it could be argued that our discipline is being eroded because it does not make sense to people and that it should therefore be revised. Two correspondents argued that case. An alternative view, argued by another correspondent, is that there is a need to recognise that discipline is a vital part of discipleship and that the Church should not amend it in response to particular cases in which it has been ignored.

### Two Further Memorials

- 17 The 1995 Conference received two further Memorials on the subject of lay presidency:

**M17:** The Dorking and Horsham (3/20) Circuit Meeting (Present 41. Vote: 36 for, 5 ag) have noted the report adopted by the 1994 Conference on Lay Authorisations, but believing the practice of Extended Communion not to be applicable in all cases, such as times when the local church has not celebrated Holy Communion in the previous week, requests Conference to ask the Faith and Order Committee, in preparing its report for the 1996 Conference, carefully to consider whether there might be situations in which it could be appropriate to grant a Lay Authorisation specifically to permit lay presidency in the cases of Holy Communion in homes and other residential accommodation, without such an Authorisation including Sunday Church Worship.

**M18:** The Ashbourne (22/11) Circuit Meeting (Present 17. Vote: Unan.) request Conference to ask the Faith and Order Committee to re-examine the theological justification for restricting authority to preside at the Lord's Supper to ordained ministers and those lay people granted a dispensation by the Conference, and to consider whether discretion should be granted to Superintendent Ministers to appoint any fully accredited local preacher to preside, in view of: 1. the need to witness to the priesthood of all believers; 2. the increasing demand for the celebration of the sacrament; 3. the close link between the ministry of the word and sacrament; 4. the problems caused during the illness of ministers and other authorised persons; the difficulty of singling out a local preacher from his/her peers to be nominated for a dispensation.

- 18 The Conference referred both these Memorials to the Faith and Order Committee for consideration and report in the context of the present report.

### **The Priesthood of All Believers**

- 19 The reference to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers in Clause 4 of the Deed of Union was cited by several correspondents (several more referring to the doctrine without reference to the Deed). The relevant words are:

The Methodist Church holds the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and consequently believes that no priesthood exists which belongs exclusively to a particular order or class of persons but in the exercise of its corporate life and worship special qualifications for the discharge of special duties are required and thus the principle of representative selection is recognised.

All Methodist preachers are examined tested and approved before they are authorised to minister in holy things. For the sake of church order and not because of any priestly virtue inherent in the office the ministers of the Methodist Church are set apart by ordination to the ministry of the word and sacraments.

- 20 The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was discussed in the Faith and Order Committee's report on diaconal ministry which was adopted by the Conference of 1995. It receives further discussion in another Faith and Order report, section E of this *Agenda*, which will be before the present Conference. It is an important doctrine, drawn from the New Testament, emphasised during the Protestant Reformation, and cited in the Deed of Union. But what is the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers?
- 21 One correspondent wrote: "The Methodist Church believes in the priesthood of all believers, so anyone should be able to do it (i.e. preside at the Lord's Table)". The Faith and Order Committee would be failing in its duty if it did not emphasise in this report that no such conclusion can properly be drawn from the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, as it appears in the New Testament and as it is expounded by the Reformers.
- 22 In the New Testament, the priesthood of the body of believers is stressed. I Peter 2:9 does not address the question of individual priesthood but rather the priesthood of the whole Christian community, derived from that community's sharing in the high priesthood of Christ himself. Elsewhere, and particularly in the Pauline letters, individuals are seen to have individual gifts from the Spirit and each has his or her own task to fulfil.
- 23 The 16th century reformers say less about the priesthood of all believers than is commonly supposed. Though they rejected the notion that a priestly intermediary was necessary in order that a believer might have access to God, they did not deny the distinctiveness of the ordained ministry. Luther argued that the latter was of dominical appointment and of the *esse* of the Church. Similarly, Calvin, while affirming the priesthood of all believers, insisted that the ordained presbyteral ministry was essential to the Church:

Neither are the light and heat of the sun, nor meat and drink, so necessary to sustain and cherish the present life, as is the apostolic and pastoral office to preserve a Church in the earth. (*Institutes*, 4.3.2.)

- 24 An appendix on 'The Priesthood of All Believers' accompanies a recent United Reformed Church report, *Patterns of Ministry*. After setting out the New Testament and Reformation contributions to the doctrine, the appendix continues:

It should now be abundantly clear (in Gordon Rupp's words) that the priesthood of all believers did not mean for the reformers what it tends to mean for us, "an otiose ministry and an omnicompetent laity". The reformers did not think that anyone could do anything in church, far from it.

- 25 The Conference of 1960 adopted a statement, *Ordination in the Methodist Church*, which is quoted elsewhere in this *Agenda*. It states clearly that the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers 'does not mean that every Christian has the right to exercise every function and administer both sacraments'. To say that every believer is a priest because he or she belongs to the priestly body is to state that each shares in the priesthood of Christ. We offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice. The doctrine 'is not an assertion of claims, but a declaration of our total obedience'.

- 26 The 1960 statement goes on to affirm that Ministers are priests in the same way that all God's people are priests, but that this does not mean that every believer, every priest, is a Minister. This is an important point to make in connection with the matter under review. It is not as priests that Ministers normally preside at the Lord's Supper, but as Ministers, as representative persons, "set apart by ordination to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments" (*Deed of Union*).

- 27 Our doctrinal standards undoubtedly allow for a distinctive ordained presbyteral ministry, though equally clearly they reject the notion that any exclusive priesthood is inherent in it. Some are set apart by ordination "for the sake of church order". A number of correspondents have suggested that this phrase means nothing more than "so that things might be done decently". They allege that, while this may have been necessary in 1932, it is not necessary now. Local preachers, they write, nowadays could be trusted to preside properly at the Lord's Table. But this is to misunderstand the phrase, "for the sake of church order". In the first place, if it had meant what these correspondents understand it to mean, it would surely have been grossly insulting to those pre-union churches where lay presidency was practised and would not have been acceptable to them. In the second place, "church order" is about much more than "doing things decently". It is about how the Church is structured, what is proper to its life, how things should be. On this understanding, some are set apart by ordination to a sacramental ministry because the order of the Church requires that they should be. "In the exercise of its (the Church's) corporate life and worship special qualifications for the discharge of special duties are required and thus the principle of representative selection is recognised". Ministers share the priesthood of all God's people, but, in addition, they are set apart for a particular ministry. The point about

“order” in this connection is that ordination to the ministry of the word and sacraments is a matter of church order, though such ordination must not be interpreted as conveying any exclusive priestly virtue.

- 28 The argument that the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers requires that Methodism should abandon its usage that presidency at the Lord’s Supper should normally be by an ordained presbyter cannot be sustained. Neither the New Testament, nor the Reformers, nor the Deed of Union supports it.

#### **Presbyteral Ministry and the Lord’s Supper**

- 29 It was mentioned in 14 above that some correspondents had suggested that Ministers regarded their virtually exclusive right to preside at the Lord’s Supper as a mark of status and that discussion of lay authorisation made them defensive. That may well be the case. It would not be surprising if some Ministers felt it wrong that a central part of the ministry which they had been called, trained and ordained to fulfil could, as a matter of course rather than in exceptional circumstances, be fulfilled by others. But ministerial feelings are unreliable guides to church order. Status is an ambiguous concept. If some ministers believe that their ordination gives them a special importance and makes them superior persons, then such a belief is deplorable. But if the reference to status is actually an acknowledgment that to preside at the Lord’s table is an activity which a Minister has been authorised and charged at ordination to fulfil, then the discussion is quite properly back in the context of church order.
- 30 The God whom we worship and serve is revealed in Jesus Christ, in whose ministry ‘status’ is not denied but redefined. Jesus is revealed as God’s Son at the moment when he identifies himself with sinful humanity by submitting to baptism. Jesus says, “You call me Master and Lord, and rightly, for so I am”. Yet this Master and Lord washes the feet of the disciples as an example of the way in which they are to serve one another. It is in this context that all ministry, lay, presbyteral or diaconal, is to be understood and exercised. Surely no Local Preacher would ever think, “What an important person I am” as he or she stands in the pulpit, but rather “I am here, by God’s grace, to serve him and his people as I lead worship”. Leadership and service go together. Similarly, a Minister, standing at the Lord’s table, will be humbled by the thought that he or she has been called and ordained to exercise a ministry of which such presidency forms a part. It should not be a matter of personal pride, still less an assertion of personal status, but rather one way of fulfilling that vocation of service to Christ and his Church which the Minister has been made a Minister to fulfil. Just as the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers ‘is not an assertion of claims, but a declaration of our total obedience’, so presidency at the Lord’s Supper is not a declaration of personal status but an act of obedient service.
- 31 It follows that it is not appropriate to talk about the ‘right’ to preside. No-one has such a right. Those who preside are authorised by the Church to do that which, in themselves, they have no right to do. Ministers are so authorised by their ordination; others may be authorised by the act of the Conference.

### **Pastoral charge and presidency at the Lord's Supper**

- 32 There is a widespread assumption among Methodists that there is a close connection between pastoral charge and presidency at the Lord's Supper. This is to be expected, because in most Methodist churches the person who normally presides is the Minister in pastoral charge. It is the pattern to which most Methodists are accustomed. This normal arrangement, however, cannot operate when most if not all of the pastoral oversight of a local church is entrusted to someone who is not a Minister or Probationer. Unless that person has an authorisation to preside, a Minister from another section of the circuit must be appointed to preside at celebrations of the Lord's Supper. For many years, there have been those who have claimed that to bring in a Minister from elsewhere is inappropriate; the Lay Worker, Deacon or Deaconess with pastoral responsibility should be authorised to preside, on the grounds that a pastoral relationship exists in a way that it does not with a Minister from another part of the Circuit. A number of correspondents have made this point.
- 33 The Conference's response has been to point out that local churches belong to Circuits, that Ministers are appointed to Circuits, and that only deprivation of the Lord's Supper and missionary opportunity, rather than the desire to have one's 'own' pastor presiding, are reasonable grounds for the granting of authorisations. To put too much emphasis upon local pastoral charge, whether by a Minister or by someone else, may indicate a weakening of the sense of the importance of the Circuit and the way in which resources of all kinds are shared within it. A couple of correspondents referred to Ministers from other parts of their Circuits as 'strangers'. In earlier times, such a notion would have been inconceivable. It is true that the long process of more and more 'sectionalization' of Circuits has brought many advantages, including the possibility of more continuity in preaching. But it is regrettable when a Minister from the same Circuit can be regarded as a stranger, rather than as part of a Circuit staff team.
- 34 There is, however, a case to be made for the view that a qualified stranger is to be preferred to an unqualified friend. (This assumes, as suggested earlier, that to be 'qualified' normally means to be ordained. It is not to suggest that others cannot, and do not, preside competently when authorised to do so, but rather that they are not 'qualified' in the normal way.) In many branches of the Church, where lay authorisation is not allowed in any circumstances, worshippers are grateful for the eucharistic ministry of visiting clergy, whom they may never previously have met, when there is a vacancy or other absence. What matters is that there is someone to preside, not whether he or she has a pastoral relationship with them. What constitutes appropriate presidency is seen as a matter of order, rather than of relationship.
- 35 This way of thinking does not appear to be very widely shared by Methodists. But it seems likely that a considerable increase in the number of lay authorisations would result in a pastoral relationship, regardless of deprivation, were regarded as a telling argument for authorisation. This would tend to blur the distinction between particular callings and ministries. Within the ministry of all God's people, as we have seen, the New Testament speaks of particular gifts and tasks. The Methodist Church can rejoice in all manner of lay ministries, in diaconal ministry and in presbyteral ministry, without imagining

that all are the same. The Methodist Diaconal Order is not enthusiastic about deacons and deaconesses being authorised to preside, though it is recognised that this is sometimes necessary when local churches might otherwise suffer eucharistic deprivation, fearing that such authorisations might lead to confusion between the two types of ordained ministry. If it is agreed that it belongs to the office and work of a presbyter, rather than to any believer, to preside at the Lord's Supper, then it will be only in exceptional circumstances, and in cases of pressing need, that others will be authorised to preside. A desire that the eucharistic president should be the person in pastoral charge cannot be regarded as an indication of need or potential deprivation.

- 36 The 1994 report offered a number of reasons why Memorial M52 (1993) should not be adopted. The Faith and Order Committee concurs with that judgement, not least in view of what has been written above about the relationship between presiding at the Lord's Supper and pastoral care.

### **Ecumenical considerations**

- 37 As the 1994 report pointed out and some correspondents have mentioned, ecumenical considerations are relevant to this discussion, though they cannot be conclusive. For instance, some of our partner churches do not themselves in any circumstances authorise people other than presbyters to preside at the Lord's Supper. In some Local Ecumenical Partnerships, members of churches which adopt this policy are unable in conscience to accept the sacramental ministry of a person authorised by the Conference to preside. In others, such members are prepared to accept the sacramental ministry of a person duly authorised according to the discipline of a partner church. Other churches are prepared to grant lay authorisation more readily than the Methodist Church and may regard our procedures as cumbersome or negative.
- 38 It is obvious that ecumenical considerations are not in themselves giving the Methodist Church a strong indication that it should reconsider its policy on this matter or move in any particular direction.

### **The future of S.O. 011**

- 39 One of the questions posed by the 1994 report was "Is the way in which S.O. 011 is applied in practice satisfactory?" Few correspondents offered direct answers to this question, and of those who did, most described their dissatisfaction with the recommendations of the Lay Authorisations Committee in particular cases.
- 40 Taking up the first question posed in 1994 (see 3 above) some correspondents suggested that the weakness of the Standing Order is its negativity. To talk of deprivation is too negative; it would be better to speak positively of opportunity – for more frequent celebrations of the Lord's Supper in church and in homes and hospitals. Some added that deprivation should be defined less rigidly, allowing for the fact that housebound people may be deprived of the Lord's Supper even if the active members of their local churches were not so deprived.
- 41 Though reference to deprivation may seem to be a negative approach to the subject, the thinking behind it is positive: every Methodist should have the

opportunity to share regularly in this sacrament. It is assumed that this will normally be possible because there will be sufficient Ministers to preside at celebrations. If there are not, a state of deprivation exists and the Conference authorises others to preside.

- 42 Suggestion 52(S) (1992) sought to extend the purposes for which authorisations might be granted – to meet the eucharistic needs of sick and housebound people in their own homes, in nursing homes, or in hospital. The 1994 report suggested that Extended Communion may well be the answer to these needs in many cases. A service for Extended Communion was adopted by the Conference of 1995.
- 43 Correspondents who commented on this suggestion in the report were divided in their reactions. Some regarded Extended Communion as an exciting possibility which they had not previously considered but which could well solve many problems. Others regarded it as theologically suspect or unhelpful in practice: visits to those who would wish to receive bread and wine could not always be timed to follow celebrations in church.
- 44 A theological defence of Extended Communion appears in the 1994 report and the Faith and Order Committee continues to believe that this practice is not only compatible with our doctrines but also a means of providing eucharistic ministry in many of the cases of deprivation outlined in 42 above. Nevertheless, there are exceptions, and the Committee is persuaded that an amended form of Suggestion 52(S) (1992) may help to meet needs where Extended Communion is not regarded as suitable or possible.
- 45 It is proposed, therefore, that deprivation should continue to be the principal ground for authorisation, but that the understanding of deprivation should be widened, as in the Southampton District's Suggestion. The connexional Committee responsible for recommending authorisations to the Conference would need to scrutinise applications, as it does at present, but would in addition have to take into account the needs and opportunities for home and hospital communion. Only when it was clear that such needs and opportunities could not be met by ordained or probationer Ministers, or by the practice of Extended Communion, would the Committee recommend the granting of an authorisation. Resolution 2 seeks to extend the circumstances which may be regarded as deprivation.
- 46 Some correspondents expressed the opinion that the body entitled to grant authorisations should be the District Synod, the Circuit Meeting, or even the Church Council. The Faith and Order Committee, however, believes that the present arrangement should continue. Everyone authorised to preside at the Lord's Supper in the Methodist Church is directly or indirectly authorised to do so by the Conference – indirectly in the case of Ministers, whose authorisation stems from their reception into full connexion and ordination; directly in the case of others. It seems right to the Faith and Order Committee that this should continue to be the case.

### **Other Matters**

- 47 The Committee responsible for advising the Conference on authorisations is known as the 'Lay Authorisations Committee'. In view of the affirmation of the 1993 and 1995 Conferences that the Methodist Church has received from God two orders of ministry, the presbyteral and the diaconal, it is not appropriate for deaconesses and deacons to be described as 'lay', though it is desirable that applications for authorisations for members of the diaconate to preside should be considered by the same committee that considers other applications. For this reason, the Faith and Order Committee recommends that in future the Committee should be known simply as the 'Authorisations Committee'. Resolution 3 seeks to amend S.O. 011(3) to this effect.
- 48 As to the questions posed in 3 above, this report has already addressed the third, arguing that taking steps to compensate for deprivation is in fact positive. Little evidence has been offered to suggest that the way in which S.O. 011 is applied in practice is unsatisfactory, which answers the second question. The first question was, 'Are our existing procedures adequate to meet the eucharistic needs of a Church in which the Lord's Supper is increasingly valued and in which patterns of lay and ordained ministry are continuing to change and develop?' The consultation exercise cannot be said to have revealed a need for major change, though it has been suggested in 45 above that the criteria for authorisation need to be broadened.

### **RESOLUTIONS**

The Conference adopts the report and resolves that it shall be the Conference's reply to Memorials M17 and M18 (1995) and its further reply to Suggestion 52(S) (1992) and to Memorial M52 (1993).

The Conference amends S.O. 011(1) to read:

"A Circuit which considers that any of its churches or a significant number of church members or other Christians in the local community is deprived of reasonably frequent and regular celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper through lack of ordained ministers may apply for the authorisation of persons other than ministers to preside at that sacrament when appointed to do so on the circuit plan, or on other occasions when authorised by the Superintendent."

The Conference amends S.O. 011(3) by deleting "Lay" (three times) and by substituting 'an' for 'a' after 'convener of' in line 3.

*(Agenda 1996, pp.192-204)*