

COMMITMENT TO MISSION AND UNITY (1998)

Standing Order 330 requires the Faith and Order Committee to scrutinise all matters concerning the faith or order of the Church presented to the Conference by other bodies, and in particular to consider and report upon matters which arise in connection with ecumenical proposals. The Committee has therefore given careful attention to *Commitment to Mission and Unity*, the report of the Informal Conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church.

It is not the responsibility of the Faith and Order Committee to present that report to the Conference, nor to propose resolutions in respect of it, but, in fulfilment of the requirements of Standing Orders, the Committee offers the following observations:

- 1 The report describes 'a common goal of visible unity' and presents a picture of a 'visibly united Church' in terms which are entirely consistent with previous Methodist statements. The reminder that unity in Christ 'is given in and with diversity' is important, as is the reference to the wider ecumenical endeavour to which both churches are committed.
- 2 Although the goal of visible unity is described, *Commitment to Mission and Unity* does not propose a unity scheme. Rather, it seeks to initiate a process, involving formal conversations, with a view to resolving some outstanding issues, and leading to mutual recognition, solemn commitment to each other, and the finding of ways in which the two churches can more effectively carry out their mission in the world by acting together and by being seen to do so. The Faith and Order Committee believes that the report is correct in proposing this 'step by step' approach.
- 3 *Commitment to Mission and Unity* identifies ten 'issues to be resolved', most of which relate to ordained ministry. In each case, the positions of the two churches are briefly though accurately explained and the task that would face those engaged in formal conversations is described. There is no doubt that some of these issues will prove exceedingly difficult to resolve, though to consider any of them incapable of resolution would be to display inadequate faith in the Holy Spirit's power to lead and guide. The Faith and Order Committee is convinced that, while the issues are being addressed, the mutual recognition and solemn commitment described in chapter IV could and should lead to closer co-operation and public awareness of it.

- 4 The Faith and Order Committee rejoices in the fact that the Methodist Conference has, during the last half century, consistently been positive in its response to proposals for unity schemes and covenants. The Committee strongly urges the Conference to make a similarly positive response to the resolutions about *Commitment to Mission and Unity* which will be put to the Conference, and which reflect the resolutions adopted by the General Synod of the Church of England.

RESOLUTION

The Conference receives the report.

(Agenda 1998, pp.128-129)