

JOINT CONFIRMATION SERVICES (1976)

The Conference of 1975 noted that, by a ruling of the House of Bishops (Minute 18 of 20.3.75), Joint Confirmation Services might be held in Areas of Ecumenical Experiment, with the agreement of the diocesan bishop, provided that the services included a form of confirmation authorised by the Church of England. The Conference commended the practice, in Areas where the Church of England and the Methodist Church were involved, of adding as a preface to any such service a 'note on its meaning' taken from the Anglican-Methodist Joint Liaison Commission Agreed Statements of 21.6.73, and directed the Faith and Order Committee 'to explore the matter further with a view to giving advice to Methodists involved in Areas of Ecumenical Experiment' (*Daily Record*, 21f, 48).

The Committee has examined the service at present in use in the Bristol District and commends it as a good example of a Joint Confirmation Service. The Committee suggests that, wherever it is used, careful attention should be given to the following notes and guidelines:

1. This service has been commended by the Conference, for use in Areas of Ecumenical Experiment, as a good example of a Joint Confirmation Service, by which those who are confirmed are received into communicant membership of all the participating Churches.
2. The House of Bishops has declared that, if the diocesan bishop agrees, Joint Confirmation Services may be used in Areas of Ecumenical Experiment.
3. It is stipulated by the House of Bishops that the confirmation prayer must be in one of the forms authorised for use in the Church of England; that is, in practice, the form to be found in Series Two. This service complies with this stipulation.
4. It is because some of the words of the confirmation prayer may cause difficulty for Methodists that a note on the interpretation of the service is included as a Preface. The note is an agreed statement of the Anglican-Methodist Joint Liaison Commission, and must be printed entire.
5. If alterations are made to enable Baptists with their different baptismal beliefs and practices to participate, the alterations should be in harmony with notes 3 and 4 above. A further paragraph at the end of the Preface expressing and safeguarding Baptist doctrine might be considered.
6. It is laid down by the Conference and the House of Bishops, and is required by all the Churches, that there be proper instruction in the teaching and discipline of each Church before the confirmation. The full procedure of the Methodist Church in relation to those received into full membership should be followed, and their names placed on the membership roll of the appropriate society. Each Church will wish to follow its own procedure in this matter.
7. The Methodist officiating minister may be the local minister, the Superintendent of the Circuit, or the Chairman of the District.
8. Any arrangement by which people from outside the Area of Ecumenical Experiment receive 'ordinary' confirmation on the same occasion should be avoided.

9. This service of Joint Confirmation should be used in an Area of Ecumenical Experiment even when all those to be confirmed are of the same denomination.

Copies of the service used in the Bristol District and of these notes and guidelines are available from the Secretary of the Connexional Ecumenical Committee or from the Convener of the Faith and Order Committee.

(Agenda 1976, pp. 295f)

Further reports on the relationship between reception into membership and Confirmation are to be found in Volume 2, pp. 112-120.