

THE MINISTRY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD (1986)

INTRODUCTION

The Faith and Order Committee reported to the Conference of 1983 that a working party had been set up to study *The Ministry of the People of God*, 'taking account of all the work already done in this area by the Division of Ministries and the committee's own study on Vocation' (*Agenda* p.62).

In 1984 the Conference accepted the suggestion of the President's Council, commenting on a diversity of views regarding the introduction of episcopacy into Methodism after the failure of the Covenanting proposals, that the period following the judgment of the Conference concerning the report on *The Ministry of the People of God* 'will provide an appropriate context for discussing the possible acceptance within Methodism of various forms of ministry that are compatible with the understanding of ministry that the Conference has adopted' (*Agenda* p.14).

The report of the President's Council noted in the same context that the Conference was committed to making a response in 1985 to the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* statement. In similar vein, the Division of Ministries reported to the Conference of 1984 that the policy of its Board was that 'no further recommendation for the diversification of ministries be brought to Conference until it had defined its response to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* and the report on *The Ministry of the People of God* to be brought by the Faith and Order Committee' (*Agenda* p.210).

SECTION A: THE CONTEXT OF THE DISCUSSION OF MINISTRY

001 The Conference last adopted a report on ministry in 1974. It was entitled *Ordination*. That theme highlighted a recurrent concern which, because of its very complexity, merits reconsideration a decade later. A number of developments and concerns lead us to a fundamental re-examination of the ministry of God's people. We set out a number of items which, we believe, indicate the direction in which the Spirit is moving the church.

002 **Emerging creative pressures**

(a) A positive pressure is the church's increasing concern for and confidence in pursuing its mission. The emergence of a multi-faith society in the UK and more acutely the developing awareness of the secularity of the modern world have drawn forth new resources of imagination and courage. The Conference report *Sharing in God's Mission* (1985) examines the meaning of the church's mission and encourages the church to devise strategies for mission. This programme will require the use and development of all the manifold gifts of the whole people of God. Many Methodists aspire to understand their

ministries in fresh ways; to explore new forms of Christian community and Christian proclamation; or to offer themselves to the church's mission for full-time or part-time paid employment. In this last instance, the offer of paid service may not fall along the lines of our traditional authorised ministries (ordained minister, local preacher, class leader or pastoral visitor, or worker with children or young people; see SO 581 (1) and (2)).

003 (b) The emergence of the charismatic movement in Methodism has 'encouraged Christians to expect and use the many gifts the Spirit gives, for building up the Body of Christ, and for witness and service to Christ in the world. These gifts include some which have been commonly neglected or under-valued in the church – for example, gifts of healing, prophecy, discernment and speaking in tongues. The most balanced exponents of the movement have, however, stressed that these in some ways more spectacular gifts must not detract from the centrality of gifts of caring, ministry, and humble service' (Dr J. Newton, *The Charismatic Movement in the Life of the Church*, a paper commissioned by the President's Council; *Agenda*, 1983, p.17).

004 (c) One significant aspect of the church's rediscovery of the priority of mission is summarised in the phrase 'Mission Alongside the Poor'. In calling for new awareness of the church's responsibility to share God's 'bias to the poor' and new resources to fund the programme of work, the Conference has introduced into Methodism an emphasis which may produce a radical redeployment of our *normal* resources of personnel and finance. If stationing policy should be significantly altered better to express a strategy for mission, we shall need new ways of understanding how God calls into new life the latent skills, commitment and personal qualities of all his people. Only in this way, with limited resources, can we both initiate the new things God lays upon us and nurture the treasures in our contemporary church life.

005 'Ministry' and 'Vocation' – issues only for the ordained?

The following are some of the issues raised when Methodists consider the calling to the ordained ministry. (a) How do we know how many ordained ministers we shall need in the future? What picture of the church and of the ordained ministry is presupposed? (b) The impression is too easily conveyed that 'vocation' is peculiar to ordination, and plays no part in the self-understanding and choices about work of those who are not ordained. (c) Is 'minister' a useful piece of short-hand for an ordained person? Does it not imply that those who are not ordained are not ministers?

006 The heritage of ecumenical debates about ministry

Church unity discussions have occupied much time and energy in recent decades. The failure of the Anglican-Methodist Unity Proposals (1983) may to an extent be attributed to problems in the theology of ordination unsolved for centuries.

007 In 1985 the Conference formulated its response to the WCC statement, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. While welcoming much of the material about ministry in this statement, it judged that 'too much space is devoted to the ordained ministry', and affirmed 'greater attention to the ministry of the

whole people of God might have revealed a convergence that would have facilitated discussion of the vexed questions relating to ordination' (*Agenda*, pp.572, 581).

008 **Haphazard developments in non-ordained ministries**

Without systematic reflection on the ministries of the non-ordained, the church is left with pragmatic, *ad hoc* developments. Methodism has had a goodly number of these in recent years. For example: the decision not to recruit further to the Wesley Deaconess Order (1978); the emergence of lay pastoral assistants working full-time or part-time in circuits under the direction of the Superintendent and within the terms of an agreed contract; the participation of non-ordained people with ordained persons in leadership teams and in experimental local church constitutions; and the confused discussion of the proposal to create an order of deacons within Methodism.

009 **Haphazard developments in ordained ministry**

While so much energy has been diverted to discussion of ordination in inter-church debate, little energy has remained for careful reflection upon the development of ordained ministry *within* Methodism. The result is a confusing array of discussions, decisions and developments. For example,

(a) The 1978 Conference refused to institute a local ordained ministry but agreed a notice of motion which declared that 'the coming great church will be congregational, presbyteral and episcopal in its life and order.' In 1981 the Conference recommended for study a report on *Episcopacy in the Methodist Church*, and this matter has not yet been resolved (*Agenda*, 1984, pp.14-16).

(b) In many parts of the church's life, team ministries or collaborative ministry has become an important theme. But CPD offers no definition of team ministry, nor any insight about the relationship of team ministry to circuit ministry. The HM Division recognises certain team ministries (SO 540(3)), but the Stations do not.

(c) Conversely, informal evidence suggests that in many circuits ministers have become increasingly confined to the section of their circuit where they have pastoral charge, and decreasingly 'circuit conscious'.

(d) Women have been ordained in the Methodist Church since 1974, but there has been little discussion of how our understanding and practice of ordained ministry should be influenced by our experience of the ordained constituting a community of women and men.

SECTION B: EXPLORING THE TRADITION

010 **In this section we examine notions such as ministry, vocation and leadership, giving special attention to the way these and related themes occur in the Bible and touching on aspects of their development in the history of the church. These discussions provide a pattern of thinking with which to review our understanding of ordination.**

B.1 MINISTRY

011 The ministry of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the revealer and focus of God's mission in and to the entire created order. Jesus Christ proclaimed and enacted God's saving love for creation; he articulated and lived out the human response which God desires and God's love makes possible – love of God and love of one's fellow human beings (Mark 12:28-31; Matt 5:43-48). The words of Jesus, his actions, his passion and death on the cross together constituted his ministry (Mark 10:45).

012 In the ancient world, the word 'ministry' represented menial and lowly tasks; originally a minister was a waiter at table. Jesus consistently emphasised that the proclamation of God's kingdom and obedience of God's will required humble and costly love (Luke 22:25-27; John 13:1-17).

013 The ministry of the church

The church of Jesus Christ has come into being as a result of God's free and sovereign choice (Eph 1:4). God's spirit creates, sustains and guides the church. The aims of the church on earth are:

to worship God who has graciously revealed himself and effected salvation for the world in Jesus Christ (Col 3:16-17);

faithfully to participate as a community in God's continuing mission to the world (Matt 28:18-20; 1 Peter 2:9).

to enable its members to build up one another in faith, hope and obedient love (1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4:11-13).

These aims constitute the church's ministry. The authenticity of the church's ministry is judged by its desire and capacity for witnessing to Jesus Christ.

014 Faith and ministry

The church comprises all who respond in faith to God's mercy in Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:4-10). By faith we become new beings in Christ; we enter a new life in the Spirit and in the fellowship of God's people. The Spirit sanctifies us (1 Cor 6:11; 1 Thess 5:23), makes us God's saints, set apart for God's service (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2). Our service, or ministry, is the life of love for God and for others which the Spirit makes possible (Rom 5:5). Thus every Christian at the time of being called to faith (1 Cor 1:26) is called also to ministry. This is the *general calling into ministry of the people of God*: all Christians, in receiving God's grace, hear also God's demand to become transformed into the image of Christ, who is Lord and who is perfect love (2 Cor 3:18; 1 Cor 13:1-14:1; Mark 10:42-45; Gal 5:13).

015 Ministry in the world and in the church

In the New Testament period, converts heard the apostolic preaching and became linked with the worshipping community. Baptism was the way of entering the church; it also focused powerfully the relationship between God's saving grace, the response of faith and the commissioning which all Christians receive to a life of love and service (para. 014; Acts 2:38, 10:37-38;

Rom 6:1-14; 1 Cor 12:13). Within the continuing worship of the churches, the early Christians experienced activities and relationships which symbolised life in the kingdom of God. Prominent among them were the generous sharing of gifts and possessions (Rom 12:8; Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-37); slaves and free persons sharing equally in the Lord's supper (1 Cor 11:23-34); and the welcome of Gentiles and Jews into the people of God on the same terms (Acts 10-11; Gal 2:1-9, 3:28). None of these was without controversy (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor 11:17-22; Gal 2:11-21).

- 016 The community at worship provided metaphors which illuminated God's call to ministry in daily life and work, as well as in the church. Obedience to God in the world was perceived as a sacrificial offering to God (Rom 12:1-2; 1 Pet 2:18-21), analogous to the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving in the worship of the church (Heb 13:15). In general, cultic language was transferred to the total life of the whole people of God. All Christians without distinction were by one author called priests (Rev 1:6), or were said by another author to constitute a priesthood (1 Pet 2:5, 10). Christians as Spirit-filled individuals or as a spiritual community became God's temple (1 Cor 3:16-17; Eph 2:21-22). This theme was built upon the insight that God's presence was not confined to the church at worship, but was available everywhere (John 4:20-24), so that traditional distinctions between sacred and profane were transcended (Hebrews, *passim*), or at least drastically altered (2 Cor 6:14-7:1; Matt 7:6).
- 017 There were, however, practical distinctions between the outworking of Christian ministry in the world and in the church. In the world, Christians were dispersed and involved in groups and institutions dedicated to ends other than the glory of God in Jesus Christ (section B.2). Each church was a gathering in community of Christian believers, with its own internal needs and distinct functions in the service of God's mission (Section B.3).

B.2 CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES IN DAILY LIFE AND WORK

018 The New Testament picture

The New Testament letters gave more attention to the nurture of the church than to Christian discipleship in the world. This emphasis reflected the early churches' most urgent needs; it reflected also the minority status of Christians in the secular world, and their expectation in the near future of the Lord's return and the consummation of God's kingdom. General ethical advice was given about life in the world (Rom 12:14-21, 13:1-7), which in some writings was expressed almost as codified Christian wisdom for living within secular institutions (Col 3:18-4:1; Eph 4:21-6:9; 1 Pet 2:18-3:7). Paul was especially concerned for Christians to make a good impression in the world (1 Thess 4:11-12; 1 Cor 6:1-6, 10-32).

019 Historical perspectives

In the early centuries of the church, discussion of daily life and work continued largely to emphasise the general notion of being a Christian wherever the individual happened to be in society (para. 014). As far as the evidence allows us to judge, relatively little attention was given to helping

individual Christians to face the question of where God wanted them to be and what God wanted them to do in society (a specific 'secular vocation', i.e. a vocation as a Christian centred upon daily life and work in the world); or to become aware of distinctive gifts which God had given them for the service of others (a specific ministry in society).

- 020 In the medieval period 'vocation' tended to develop a sense referring to God's call to a life of holiness which could be practised only by the ordained clergy or in the religious orders. The religious orders were open to the non-ordained, but over the centuries the membership of the male orders became increasingly clerical. To avoid this contraction of the idea of vocation Martin Luther encouraged the abolition of the religious orders.
- 021 Luther also maintained the view that a person's social position, civic duties and daily work were a gift of divine providence. He argued that the word 'vocation' should refer to every Christian, ordained and non-ordained alike. Christians were thus encouraged to see that their occupations were to be performed in Christian love as an act of obedience to God. This way of thinking was one aspect of the notion of the priesthood of all believers. Within the Lutheran Church 150 years were to pass before Philipp Spener developed that theme on a considerable scale and gave it particular expression in Pietism.
- 022 In other streams of Protestant thought, notably the Reformed tradition, importance was attached to the discernment of and the honest and undistracted pursuit of a Christian's calling, which was now identified with paid employment. This sometimes left little room for sympathy with the plight of the unemployed or of those who were able to obtain only casual employment.
- 023 In Lutheran and Reformed thought a strong sense of vocation attached to the person who was called to pastoral charge of a congregation. In him vocation in its highest sense, pastoral charge and a revised notion of 'clerical order' came together. This clear picture of the ordained person was less characteristic of the Church of England, which continued to have a body of ordained persons who were not in pastoral charge, a lingering echo of medieval traditions. Methodism has cause to be grateful for this phenomenon, because it gave us John and Charles Wesley.
- 024 Methodism after the Wesleys largely adopted the Protestant pattern in which a strong sense of vocation is attributed to an ordained person who is set apart full-time in pastoral charge. Understanding of ordained ministry in Methodism has been influenced by many diverse developments in social life and theological fashion, and its deployment has been amended accordingly. A corporate discipline linked to the idea of an 'order' has provided continuity.
- 025 Methodists, however, have not normally followed classical Protestantism in using the vocabulary of 'vocation' to refer to the self-understanding of non-ordained church members as they reflected on the relation of their faith to their daily work, and increasingly to their daily leisure. This does not mean that patterns of occupation and leisure activity did not emerge which were characteristic of Methodists. They made significant contributions to the development of the trade unions, to social reform and political life at all levels;

they found their way, as did many other Christians, into the developing 'caring' professions, such as teaching, medicine and nursing. In their leisure they worked with children and young people, and showed a special care for the elderly and the destitute.

026 **Secular vocation today**

In contemporary society a bewildering range of opportunities and frustrations face Christian people as they attempt to discern particular jobs or activities about which they say, 'God has called me to this.' That all life should be dedicated to the way of humble and costly love is clear (para. 014). But how are choices to be made between one career and another? On what criteria does a mother or father balance competing claims between career development and bringing up a family? How does paid employment relate to leisure or to community service? What meaning can be given to a potential career cut short by unemployment or the rapidly changing needs of society?

- 027 The church needs constantly to develop pastoral skills to assist its members in dealing with questions of these kinds, and in connecting such answers as may emerge to the Christian vocabulary of vocation.
- 028 Each individual brings to the discussion of secular vocation a rich and complex personal story. However, there are certain general patterns of response which Christian people in fact make, and the statement of these may provide useful guidelines for clarifying for each individual the meaning of vocation.
- 029 (i) A Christian reflects on a specific activity where he or she has found, or expects to find, the freedom to respond to need in society, which may also give a sense of personal fulfilment. In relation to this activity there is discovered, if only occasionally, an awareness of powers, gifts and potentialities within the personality crying out for development and coherent expression. The Christian feels an obligation to develop these gifts and powers to the full; and to find a context where the resultant skills can be practised so as to amplify the possibilities of witnessing to Jesus Christ and of serving the well-being of human society and the natural order.
- 030 From the perspective of faith, *these experiences constitute a vocation from God.*
- 031 It is important to affirm the enormous range of activities (incorporating paid work, voluntary service and family relationships) which can become for Christian people an authentic secular vocation.
- 032 Secular vocations for Christians vary in length; some Christians are given a secular vocation which is life-long; others find a short-term vocation, and when it is complete or ended by circumstances, they must be open to discerning a new vocation from God.
- 033 (ii) Sometimes, however, Christians feel keenly restrictions and constraints preventing significant choices in life. Personal capacities (e.g. physical strength, intellectual abilities, practical skills) are severely limited. Economic

necessities, or arbitrary circumstances of birth and upbringing, may drastically limit possibilities. Many Christians in such situations then accept as graciously as possible the limits of the contribution they can make to the well-being of society and the natural order; what tasks can be done are gladly performed to the glory of God. In such circumstances, however, the language of vocation is not normally appropriate; but the gospel leaves such Christians in no doubt of their worth as persons, nor of their general calling into a life of love and service (para. 014).

B.3. ECCLESIAL MINISTRIES¹

034 To build up the church

‘Let all things be done for edification’ (1 Cor 14:26) is a theme which underpins all the particular ministries in the church for which God chooses or sets apart individuals. Because the church is part of human history, it is exposed to the dangers of false teaching, the intrusion of worldly values and the ravages of sin (Gal 1:6-9; 1 John 2:18-25; 1 Cor 5:1-5; Matt 13:24-30). Individual Christians err and fail, and conflicts arise between Christian brothers and sisters. Christians therefore need to minister to one another (Matt 18:15-20); and the church as a whole, embodying the richness of the grace manifested in Christ (Eph 4:11-16), must guide, support and discipline its members (1 Cor 5:4; 1 Thess 5:19-22), and assess critically its continuing relationship to the gospel message (1 Cor 15:1-2; Gal 1:6-9). Only those who know their need of God’s grace and humbly receive ministry from their fellow Christians can be channels of God’s self-giving love (John 13:1-10).

035 All Christians are ministers

In the Pauline churches it was taken for granted that each individual Christian was given a specific ecclesial ministry. In 1 Cor 12 each Christian is said to receive a gift or gifts from the one Spirit, and these gifts constitute the varied functions within the body (also Rom 12:4; 1 Cor 16:1-4; Eph 4:7-16). Certainly the worship of the church was the corporate responsibility of all the participants (1 Cor 14, especially vs. 26). It is not clear whether this picture was taken for granted by all the NT authors and churches; but our conviction is that the church is most truly what God wants it to be when each Christian, with the help of the Christian community, discerns, develops and uses the Spirit’s gifts in ministry.

¹ We prefer ‘ecclesial’ to ‘ecclesiastical’ because the latter tends to carry with it a picture of the church as a settled, rather inward-looking and bureaucratic institution. An ‘ecclesial’ ministry, properly understood, is a fluid concept which refers to a wide range of imaginative forms of service which clarify and strengthen the Christian identity of the church as a human community and which furthers the church’s outreach into every facet of the world’s life.

036 **Discerning vocation to ecclesial ministries**

The matching of gifts to individuals with their tasks in and for the church is a subtle and sensitive procedure, involving discernment and testing. The following patterns have been evident in the church throughout its history:

the whole church, together with the individual concerned, recognises in a person the gifts needed for a particular piece of work or long-term task.

The church recognises in an individual the gifts and graces needed for a specific ministry; even though the individual concerned may be unaware of his or her potential in that area of service or reluctant to offer himself or herself for the work required, the church calls that individual to fulfil this ministry.

An individual is inspired by the Spirit to initiate a particular project or serve a need; the church fails at the time to discern the Spirit's work and only belatedly recognises and honours such a prophetic ministry.

The church has important needs which on the surface seem incapable of being met with the limited talents of its members; God through his Spirit gives the gifts through which the church may continue and grow in its mission.

037 **Varied in length and nature**

There is a rich diversity of words and phrases in the NT (30 in all) used to describe the tasks of individual Christians. Specific forms of church service were diverse in nature (1 Cor 12:5; Rom 12:6-8) and in length. For example:

the Seven were chosen to attend to the needs of the neglected widows in Jerusalem (Acts 6:3-5), so that their work was limited in scope.

Others were appointed to short-term tasks, such as those who gathered up the collection for the Jerusalem church (2 Cor 8:17-19).

Paul was set apart for the life-long task of preaching the gospel among the Gentiles (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:15; Acts 9:15).

- 038 (a) There is nothing in the NT which implies that the importance of a specific ministerial task is related to *the time that must be devoted to it* for its proper fulfilment.
- 039 (b) The importance of particular ministries is not judged on whether or not *they merit income* for the ministers from the wider church community. In the NT period some ministers did receive payment; others did not (1 Cor 9:3-18; Gal 6:6; 1 Tim 5:17).
- 040 (c) It is also unwise to discriminate rigidly between ministries in terms of *the form of commissioning* used for any specific task. In the NT churches there was a wide range of acts of commissioning. These included: verbal commissioning (Mark 3:14; John 20:17, 21-23); negotiated agreements sealed with the right-hand of fellowship (Gal 2:9); election by show of hands (2 Cor 8:19); prayer and casting lots (Acts 1:23-26); and prayer and laying-on of hands (Acts 6:6), accompanied sometimes by fasting (Acts 13:2-3). In the last

mentioned category we can discern in the Pastoral Letters the beginnings of the custom which in the later church became the regular method of ordaining elders (1 Tim 4:14, 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6). We must recall, however, that the NT is silent about the form of commissioning used in a wide range of varied ministries. And even some of the well-established forms carried subtle variations of meaning and significance in different contexts in the rapidly developing life of the churches in the first century. Imposition of hands, for example, expressed not only the idea of appointment, or ordination, to office in a congregation, but also, in different situations, the meanings of blessing (Mark 10:16), healing (Acts 9:17) or conveying the Spirit to new converts (Acts 8:17).

041 Leadership

Issues of *authority and leadership* were inevitably part of the church's experience from the beginning (1 Thess 5:12-13). Leadership is among the relatively small handful of ecclesial ministries given great prominence in the NT (Acts 1:15-26; Rom 10:14-17, 12:6-8, 15:16; 1 Cor 12:28-30; Eph 2:20, 4:11-13; Heb 13:7, 17). 'There can be no church community without a leader or team of leaders'.²

042 Leadership is given by the Spirit. Thus

(a) In the Christian view, attention is focused on the personal and spiritual qualities of those with a vocation to lead. Autocracy, authoritarianism, self-seeking and manipulation of other people are unacceptable. Servanthood, modelled on the ministry of Jesus, is basic (Mark 10:42-45; John 13:1-17). Leadership is a *ministry*. In Paul's experience (2 Cor 4:1-12) leadership involved the capacity to enter deeply into another human being's weakness, hurt and confusion, and to speak creatively out of the leader's own vulnerability so that the other person found new life and courage.

043 (b) Leadership cannot be confined to those formally authorised as leaders. Leadership can arise spontaneously or from an unexpected quarter when a situation demands that an initiative be taken (1 Cor 6:5, 12:28, 16:15). Those formally authorised as leaders exercise their oversight by encouraging church members to contribute their gifts and, where appropriate, to take initiatives, and to enable and sustain the gifts of their partners in ministry. They also carry responsibility for the church remaining true to its nature and mission (2 Cor 11:28; Phil 1:9-11).

044 NT examples of leadership

(a) Paul the apostle

Paul's primary task as an apostle was to pioneer the life of Christ in new places (Rom 15:20-21). His particular vocation to preach to the Gentiles (Rom 15:16) was part of a larger task of proclaiming the gospel and creating Christian communities among Jews as well as Gentiles (Gal 2:9; Rom 11:13ff), and of drawing all into one in Christ (Gal 3:28).

² A paraphrase by Schillebeeckx of Jerome's dictum, *Ecclesia non est quae non habet sacerdotes* ('There is no church which does not have priests').

045 Paul's authority derived from: his sense of call from God through the risen Christ (2 Cor 4:1; Gal 1:12-16); his sharing in the common tradition of faith (1 Cor 15:1-11); the recognition given to his work by other accredited authorities (Gal 2:9); his founding of churches (1 Cor 9:2; 2 Cor 11:2); and the sincerity and integrity of his life (2 Cor 1:12, 4:2). He embodied the life and the dying of Christ (2 Cor 4:11; Gal 6:14, 17). So he could address the church: 'Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ' (1 Cor 11:1).

046 Paul did not work alone. His co-workers were indispensable assistants (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 8:6); he always relied upon material and prayerful support from existing congregations (Phil 4); he expected other ministries to overlap with and complement his own (1 Cor 1:14-17, 3:5-9).

Paul gave no thought to any successor to his apostolic work, because he assumed the end of all things was at hand (Rom. 13:11-12).

047 (b) Elder

The Greek word *presbuteros* is a fluid word which, in different contexts, can take one of a range of meanings. It can mean 'old', 'venerable' or 'elder/presbyter'. Thus in 1 Tim 5:1-2 older persons are referred to; in 1 Tim 5:17 'elder' is the most natural translation. Behind this flexibility of meaning lies an assumption taken for granted in the ancient world, that wisdom and leadership belonged naturally to the older members of society. Greater age elicited greater deference. Longevity thus becomes an aspiration because it merited respect, influence and authority (Ps. 91:16). In the Jewish synagogue the elders played their part as leaders because of their social standing in the wider community. At least by the end of the first century and possibly earlier, some Christian churches were organising local leadership on a similar pattern.³

048 Elders operated a team leadership (1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5); and it may be that the 'Bishop' referred to in 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7 was head of the team of elders. Appointment was by laying on of hands (1 Tim 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6). Although the institution of elders may have owed much to Jewish precedents, it was given a distinctively Christian colouring: elders must display high moral qualities (Tit 1:5-6; 1 Pet 5:1-11); leadership must be open to all, as God calls, and not just to the elderly (1 Tim 3:1, 4:12); their authority depends on their faithfulness in handing on the apostolic tradition of faith and teaching (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14, 2:2).

049 The trend of historical developments

Within the NT, churches began moving at different rates and along different routes from communities which expected an imminent end to history towards settled institutions preparing for a long-term future. When a single descriptive name is used for a particular ministry, we cannot assume that within the literature in the NT, still less in later Christian literature, the name carries a fixed meaning. The Greek word *diakonos*, for example, is variously translated in different contexts as 'minister', 'servant' and 'deacon'. In the second and

³ Church leaders are referred to as elders in the NT as follows: Acts 11:30, 14:23, 15:2,4,6,22, 16:4, 20:17, 21:18; 1 Tim 5:17-19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 2 John 1; 3 Jn 1.

third centuries there continued to be diverse patterns of leadership and varied theological understandings of leadership (including some whose origin lay outside the NT). Increasingly, however, a single pattern of ordained leadership emerged of bishops, presbyters and deacons. This represented the church's experience that those ministries which point to the true nature of the church and its mission were: leadership combined in various ways with the *ministries of the word, the sacraments and pastoral care*. The fact that these ministries were integral to the church's life did not negate the truth that in local situations there were always other important and needful ministries determined by local circumstances; or that in different periods a rich variety of groups and communities arose to witness to aspects of Christian faith in danger of being neglected.

050 **Methodist styles of leadership**

- (a) One of the distinctive features of Methodism is its adoption of *collective forms of leadership*, most notably in the Conference (regularly called 'the supreme authority' in CPD), in the Circuit Meeting (S.O. 512) and in the Church Council, whose responsibilities are defined as follows: 'The general oversight of the Local Church shall be undertaken by the Church Council, exercising leadership over the whole field of the church's concern' (S.O. 616).
- 051 (b) *Individual forms of leadership* find their place and purpose within the representative decision-making groups. For example, S.O. 623 defines the general responsibilities of church stewards as follows: 'The church stewards are corporately responsible with the minister or probationer having pastoral charge of the Local Church for giving leadership and help over the whole range of the church's life and activity. They are particularly charged to hold together in unity the variety of concerns that are contained within the one ministry of the Church. To this end it is their responsibility to uphold and act upon the decisions and policies of the Church Council.'
- 052 (c) Significant and distinctive leadership is provided by *ordained ministers* who have 'a principal and directing part' within the great duties of being 'Stewards in the household of God and Shepherds of His flock' (CPD, pp.61-62).
- 053 (d) *The key to effective leadership* in the church is to see that the aims of the church (para. 013) are understood, agreed and owned by all members of the church; leadership of this kind gives to all members an equal responsibility in achieving the church's aims, and liberates them to take initiatives in pursuing these aims. It cannot be stressed too strongly that good *leadership releases, encourages and facilitates the putting to good use of the enormous variety of gifts among all God's people in the service of the church*.
- 054 (e) A neglected form of leadership is the *ministry of visitation*. In the biblical tradition the verb 'to visit' characteristically describes God's looking up individuals or the people with a concern for their welfare. His visitation was focused in Jesus (Luke 1:68, 1:78, 7:16, 9:1-10); it brought blessings to the weak and disadvantaged (Matt 25:36, 43; Jas 1:27), but judgement to the disobedient and blind (Luke 19:43-44). The ministry of visitation to churches is practised by a leader (or team of leaders) who visits a church from outside to

bring a fresh and critical perspective to its understanding of its life and work (Acts 11:22-24, 15:36).

055 John Wesley exercised such a ministry to the earliest Methodist societies. The ordained ministers carried on this tradition through the short-term itinerancy and the particular responsibility of the quarterly visitation of the classes (S.O. 525(1)). Visiting preachers made an informal contribution. However, contemporary Methodism does not have a widespread system of classes which meet; and expectations about length of appointments of ordained ministers have changed considerably in recent decades, as have the expectations about the relationship of an ordained minister to the locality where he or she resides and to churches in his or her pastoral charge.

056 **Ministries of word, sacraments and pastoral care in the Methodist tradition**

The Ministry of the Word. This has many aspects. It includes:

witness and evangelism in secular contexts, by which men and women are called to faith;

the creation of new Christian communities and groups in situations where Christ is not known or honoured;

study and exposition of the scriptures;

preaching the gospel and teaching within the worship of the church;

parents in the home and teachers in Junior Church teaching children about God;

the work of theologians (an increasing number of whom are not ordained).

057 **The ministry of the sacraments.** Baptism and holy communion are corporate acts of celebration involving the whole congregation. Participation by a range of individuals in the preparation of these services (e.g. church and communion stewards, baptismal roll secretary) and in their conduct (reading from the Bible, preaching, leading intercessions, accompanying hymns, assisting in the distribution of bread and wine) enhances the corporate nature of the event. In Methodist practice and discipline it is normal for an ordained person to administer the sacrament of baptism and to preside at the celebration of the Lord's Supper; Conference makes arrangements for variation from this rule (MSB, p.A3, para.12; SO 011; 'Lay Presidency at the Lord's Supper', *Agenda*, 1984, pp.24-7).

058 **The ministry of pastoral care.** Pastoral care involves Christians in God's continuing work of healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling and enabling people to co-operate for the well-being of human communities and in the struggle for justice, freedom and peace. This ministry too takes many forms, and is strengthened by many and various contributions, formal and informal, from church members. One main purpose of pastoral care is to enable Christians to develop as ministers in the general sense, i.e. increasingly to dedicate their lives to the way of loving service. Necessarily, therefore, pastoral care includes the help given to Christian people to discern their

charismatic gifts and to discover their vocations, in the church and in the world.

059 **General observations** on the ministries of word, sacraments and pastoral care.

(a) *Each of these ministries is normally exercised in a variety of ways by a large number of Christians both in the world and in the church.*⁴ Preaching, for example, can happen informally when a Christian bears testimony to his or her faith; or it can happen more formally when an accredited local preacher or ordained minister delivers a sermon. Thus the exercise of these crucial ministries should be viewed as a collaborative activity.

060 (b) *Each of these forms of ministry needs its own leadership.* A leader of such a ministry carries great responsibilities. It is therefore vital for the well-being of the church that such a leader be clearly accountable to the church as a whole. This requires a rigorous discipline and proper authorisation for leaders in these ministries, but not necessarily for all who share in these ministries with the leader. Thus, in the circuit situation it is obviously right to give connexional recognition and commissioning to a local preacher after appropriate training and examination. It seems right also to continue the established custom in local churches of formally recognising and commissioning class leaders, pastoral visitors, and workers with children and young people. In general terms, however, we discourage formal commissioning in a liturgical setting of other specific ministries within the church. (For informal acknowledgement of ministries see para. 062).

061 (c) *Leadership* in the ministries of word, sacraments and pastoral care needs to be exercised in a manner which *encourages church members to share in them.* (See again note 4). The impression is sometimes given, both to those authorised to these ministries and also to members not so authorised, that the performance of these ministries, which are crucial to the church's identity and purpose, may be left to those formally recognised and commissioned. Then proclaiming God's word is *confined* to the local and ordained preachers, pastoral care to class leaders, and so forth. Gifts and insights of diverse and enriching kinds in the congregation lie unused; or church members lose confidence in the value of their informal contributions. By encouraging its members to share in these important ministries, the church broadens the ways in which they may be understood. Gifts of healing or teaching, for example, widen the church's experience of pastoral care and the ministry of the word respectively (paras. 056-058). The quiet, supportive and prayerful ministry which many church members give to those who carry specific responsibilities or who initiate new ministries is an invaluable contribution in itself; it is also a means of sharing in those tasks upon which the church's identity and purpose rest.

⁴ The exception to this might be the ministry of the sacraments. In the Deed of Union it is explicitly declared that no-one has an exclusive title to the preaching of the gospel or the care of souls. Discussion of sacraments takes place at a different point in the Deed of Union, and no attempt is made to discuss whether or not ordained persons have an exclusive title to preside over the sacraments. Our practice and discipline are summarised in para. 057.

062 (d) We believe it would be valuable if churches could *recognise in informal ways* the many and various ministries which the church needs and needs to release. The Covenant Service is one appropriate context for this; in addition particular persons and specific ministries could be mentioned regularly in the prayers of the church.

063 The relation between leadership ministries and the ministries of word, sacraments and pastoral care

It is not *necessary* for those appointed to positions of leadership (e.g. church and circuit stewards, Divisional Secretaries⁵) also to exercise formal and accredited roles in the ministries of word, sacraments and pastoral care; though they may do so.

064 Ordained ministers may, in the first instance, be defined as those persons who are called by God to a ministry which combines a ministry of oversight (which may be exercised at circuit, district or connexional level) with formal leadership in the ministries of the word, sacraments and pastoral care.

065 The meaning of ordination

The office, or role, of the ordained minister focuses the calling of the church as a whole (see paras. 013, 043).

066 Those whom God calls to the ordained ministry cannot expect adequately to fulfil the role, either individually or collectively. However, to point as accurately as possible to the ideal, the church tests a vocation to ordained ministry at every level of its life, looking for appropriate gifts or the potential to develop appropriate gifts, and seeking also evidence of personal Christian maturity and openness. It trains accepted candidates and places them under discipline with respect to stationing, character, fidelity and competence (S.O.481 (iii)). In the Methodist Church, commitment to the ordained ministry has been understood to be life-long.

067 The 1974 report on *Ordination* summed up the theology of ordination as follows: 'As a perpetual reminder of (the calling of the people of God) and as a means of being obedient to it, the Church sets apart men and women, specially called, in ordination. In their office the calling of the whole Church is focussed and represented, and it is their responsibility as representative persons to lead the people to share with them in that calling. In this sense they are the sign of the presence and ministry of Christ in the Church and through the Church to the world.' (para. 14).

068 The focus of the church's ministry: individual and corporate

The ordained ministry, like every other ecclesial ministry, must be set firmly within the church and its aims. Some account must therefore be given of the precise relationship between ordained ministry and the focal significance for

⁵ Thus the Conference of 1980 adopted the proposal of the President's Council (*Agenda* pp.8-9) that a lay person may be appointed as a General Secretary of a Division. No conditions were set forward in the report, nor in SO 302, regarding the experience or status of any candidate for such an appointment.

the church of non-ordained leadership in the ministries of the Word and of pastoral care⁶ and of all other ministries of leadership. Distinct emphases may be discerned in the Methodist tradition.

069 Some have seen *the ordained minister as an individual always leading and focusing the diverse leadership ministries in the church.*

070 Others have seen *the ordained ministry in partnership with all other leadership ministries together focusing in each context the calling of the whole church.*

071 We wish to underline our belief that the pluralist nature of the contemporary Methodist Church and the history of the Methodist tradition can be used creatively only when the church *enables to flourish both those who discern the church's calling in a focal person and those who perceive the church's calling in conciliar or collaborative models of leadership.*

072 Our conviction is that the ecclesial ministries of all God's people will be served if the church expresses these theological understandings in church structures which encourage those who espouse different understandings of leadership to learn from one another. We believe that this conviction coheres with para. 26 of the section on Ministry in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, which expounds the thesis: 'The ordained ministry should be exercised in a personal, collegial and communal way.'

073 **Professionalism and the ordained ministry**

In recent generations the professionalisation of the ordained ministry has increased in line with the professionalisation of much of society. The emergence of the professions has been a mixed blessing. The benefits to the ordained ministry have been demonstrated in a deeper concern for standards of training, levels of competence in the performance of tasks, and accountability of ordained ministers to one another. These gains have derived from an understanding of professionalism which stresses that skills and knowledge are developed among professionals with a view to the professionals working with other people and enabling others to take a responsible share in appropriate tasks. However, there are familiar difficulties which arise in all professions from the fact that members of a profession do acquire a body of knowledge and experience which is quantitatively and often qualitatively greater than that which is available to the non-professionals. Thus: the gap between the training and competence of the professional and the relatively undeveloped gifts and skills of those who are not professionals is so large that co-operation becomes difficult if not impossible; professional groups are constantly tempted to believe that they are the sole guardians of expertise and insight in their area of competence; professions can therefore become defensive, self-perpetuating, oppressive and indifferent to the needs and wisdom of those they are intending to serve; and conversely, non-professionals easily become unduly dependent upon professional expertise and lose confidence in their own gifts and skills.

⁶ See note 4 and para. 059.

- 074 The benefits and the difficulties of the professionalisation of the ordained ministry are evident within Methodism. We believe the difficulties can best be helped both by wider and more critical discernment of these difficulties throughout the church, and by development of professional practice among ordained ministers with a clearer focus upon its purpose in the life of the church and the world. Issues to be faced in the pursuit of collaborative styles of leadership include the following:
- 075 (a) **New styles of leadership.** The highly professionalised style of leadership in the (predominantly male) ordained ministry should not provide the only model of leadership.⁷ Alternative styles of leadership must be enabled to flourish. We mention particularly the insights pressed upon us by women, ethnic minority groups and social classes other than the predominant male middle class.
- 076 (b) **Using conflict creatively.** In a highly institutionalised community like Methodism with established professional leadership in the ordained ministry, it is difficult for leaders also to be self-critical, and thereby to fulfil a prophetic ministry.
- 077 Leaders in secular communities have frequently recognised the value of the person without status who brings a profoundly critical perspective to the prevailing values and concerns of those in authority; hence the jester in the king's court, the clown in the circus, or the role of the investigative journalist in modern society. Ordained ministers in particular need structures where they can listen attentively to others, especially the young, as well as to experience and styles of leadership outside their normal world-view.
- 078 (c) **Liberating ordained ministers from destructive levels of stress.** Ordained ministers do not carry responsibility for the church. Ultimately God himself carries responsibility for the church. That responsibility he graciously shares with all his people. Leadership in the church, itself a collaborative ministry of ordained and non-ordained, operates well when it is set within this context and is therefore able to operate within reasonable boundaries (para. 053). Ordained ministers have much to learn from many church members who have to cope with inordinate levels of stress in contemporary society.
- 079 Ordained persons have many other duties and interests besides those which are strictly to do with their ministry: they may be married, have hobbies, political commitments, etc. So long as these aspects of life are given no theological meaning, they are perceived as intrusions into a life intended to be devoted without any distraction to ordained ministry, and may provoke unnecessary guilt or resentment. Alternatively, ordained ministers may be tempted to insist that non-ecclesiastical dimensions of their lives are aspects of their ordained ministry. A strong and distinct sense of ecclesial vocation which is indispensable for ordained ministry must not deny opportunity for leisure and domestic and civic life. Nor must the call to the ordained ministry be thought necessarily to exclude the experience of personal fulfilment and renewal in these 'non-ministerial', secular aspects of life.

⁷ On the contribution of women to the ministry, see para. 009.

080 (d) **All Christians represent Christ.** The church flourishes when all its members, ordained and non-ordained, affirm one another as representatives to the world of Christ and the church and as signs of the presence and ministry of Christ in the church. When the strong in the church (who usually include the ordained ministers) defer to and encourage the weak, and when the weak bear their testimony to the strong, the collaborative ministry of the whole church is enriched.

SECTION C: MINISTRY & CHURCH STRUCTURES

C.1 CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

081 The basic structures which have served Methodism throughout most of its history, focused in the local church and the circuit, will continue into the foreseeable future (SO 600). These structures can be used imaginatively to nurture the ministry of all God's people. At appropriate levels of the church's life, significant adaptations of Methodist Church structures and disciplines may be necessary.

082 Church structures can frustrate or encourage individual Christian discipleship. Supportive structures are those which cohere with the insights about ministry, vocation and leadership which are widely subscribed to in the church. Section B attempts to summarise these insights.

083 There is no simple way of deducing appropriate church structures from a limited statement about the church and Christian ministry. In practice structures evolve from what may be learned from the Bible, Christian history and current developments and pressures both in the churches and in non-ecclesiastical institutions. In what follows we set forward outlines of what we believe to be the next important stages in the development of Methodist Church structures. We are not offering rigid blueprints to be imposed on the church, but guidelines within which appropriate groups may be able to envisage possibilities for themselves. In the not too distant future we expect that the Conference will receive further recommendations, for which these current proposals will be seen as having prepared the way.

C.2 A METHODIST ORDER FOR MISSION AND MINISTRY⁸

084 In the Methodist tradition there are two primary levels of the church's life where individual members are encouraged to discern and practise their ecclesial ministries: the local church and circuit; and the connexion. Prominent examples at the local level are the ministries of the ordained and of local preachers. At connexional level significant contributions are made by ordained ministers and church members in Conference and connexional committees. Our structures provide fewer opportunities for Methodist members to make their gifts and time available for the church's mission and

⁸ These proposals have been formulated in the light of discussions of the report 'The Diaconate and other authorised Lay Ministries' (1983), which was referred back to the Division of Ministries.

ministry at district level.⁹ A district strategy for mission will be served by the creation of a new order, the outlines of which are now to be sketched.

085 We envisage an order¹⁰ open to members of the Methodist Church consisting of the following:

(a) **Church members in the paid service of the church employed** whole-time or part-time in evangelistic or pastoral work according to the provisions of SO 581 (1)-(10) shall be members of the order.

(b) **Voluntary unpaid workers.** Church members who wish to serve the church on a voluntary basis, part-time or whole-time, in ways which cannot appropriately be done under existing offices in the church, may apply to be members of the order.

(c) **Deaconesses** who wish to take appointments within the church will do so by being also members of MOMM. (See also para. 087). MOMM will thus receive the contribution that can be provided by the Wesley Deaconess Order from its rich experience of belonging together and hence of living under a discipline which operates at a level wider than that of the local church and circuit.

086 The order will operate as follows:

(a) **Aim.** The aim of the order will be to bring cohesion and structure to the ministry and mission of the church in each district, in accordance with the policy for mission approved by the district synod. The order will thus bring together church members who will be committed to one another as well as to the service of Christ in society and in the church. Members of the order will perform a wide range of tasks, including pioneering Christian presence in non-ecclesiastical institutions, evangelism, pastoral care, administration and specialised forms of community service; but because they are not ordained ministers, they will not be in full pastoral charge of churches.

(b) **Eligibility.** The order will be flexible enough to welcome and use a variety of commitments to the order itself. The minimum commitment will require a member of the order to remain in membership for as long as he or she is performing a task approved by the district synod. Some, however, will wish to join the order with a life-long commitment; others will wish to put themselves at the disposal of the order to be deployed according to strategic needs, whether for a limited period or on an open 'contract'.

(c) **Entry.** The testing of vocation and of the capacity of a candidate to use and develop appropriate gifts will be the responsibility of the district, working collaboratively with the circuit in which a candidate has his or her membership. Entry into the order will be authorised by the Conference after a

⁹ If the present district structure of Methodism should be reviewed, it would be appropriate to devise strategies for mission, including the administration of a Methodist order, over a region determined by geographical factors and by central and local government units of administration.

¹⁰ In the history of the church the word 'order' has often implied lifelong commitment (e.g. para. 020); but this is not necessarily the case. We envisage an order in which some may offer a life-long commitment, but most will not.

suitable period of testing and preparation, and confirmed by a service of recognition and commissioning.

(d) **Discipline.** The order will be under the authority of the Conference, which will serve the order through a divisional committee drawn jointly from the Home Mission Division and the Division of Ministries, but which reports to Conference through the Board of the Division of Ministries. The divisional committee will recommend candidates to the Conference for entry into the order; recommendation will be based upon the examination of the candidate at district level. The order will be encouraged to create its own governing Council which will set ideals and standards for all its members, will regulate its own affairs and, particularly at its formation, foster the connexional and distinctive identity of the order (e.g. an appropriate name and symbol). Much of the administration of the order, and the oversight of its members, will devolve upon district authorities. Some responsibilities will have to be borne by the staff of the Division of Ministries, and it is envisaged that this will be achieved by some reorganisation of portfolios within that Division.

(e) **Training and development.** Members of the order will be required successfully to undertake training of a style and character appropriate to the work they will do. The Conference, through its divisional committee, will approve standards of training. Members of the order must be willing to develop and commit themselves to a common spiritual discipline of a flexible kind; and to meet with fellow-members of the order within the district at an agreed frequency, for mutual support and encouragement.

(f) **Transferability.** Arrangements will be made for membership of the order to be transferable from one district to another.

087 **Some consequences** of the creation of a Methodist Order for Mission and Ministry:

(a) **Deaconesses.** If Conference were to judge it right to direct the WDO to begin again to recruit to its membership those who intended to offer lifetime service, we would regard this as not inconsistent with the proposals of this report. We would, however, add a proviso that membership should be open to both men and women and the arrangements be subject to review when the other suggestions in this Report have been developed and experience of them has been assessed.

088 (b) The Order after Stephen in Service (OASIS) and other similar groups will also be able to maintain their traditions and identity under the auspices of MOMM.

089 (c) Until some clearer light, perhaps resulting from an ecumenical consensus, is available, the use of the term deaconess/deacon should not be extended beyond the WDO; though the ministries exercised by members of MOMM link with what has traditionally been diaconal ministry.

090 (d) The requirement of SO 581 (3 (III)) that all those who are appointed under it in whole-time work should have contracts of employment must be strictly observed. This arrangement, together with those arrangements which apply to members of the WDO, will be adequate for the immediate future. Further

developments would need to be carefully considered by the relevant authority in relation to contractual questions.

- 091 (e) Standing Orders make provision for a local church to employ a whole-time youth leader (SO 650 (5)); for a circuit to employ a whole-time youth leader (SO 581 (11)); and for a district to employ a whole-time youth officer (SO 462). Greater flexibility needs to be introduced into the existing SO's to make possible, among other things, part-time paid appointments of youth and community workers.
- 092 (f) It is hoped that appointments of paid youth workers will in future take place in close consultation with the district committee responsible for the district strategy for mission. There cannot be a simple absorption of youth workers (nor of other specialist workers employed by local churches whose appointments are not covered by SO 581) into the proposed order, primarily because there is no requirement for a paid youth worker to be a member of the Methodist Church. It is hoped, however, that church members who are employed by the church will want to become members of the order.
- 093 (g) The title of SO 581 (currently 'Lay Ministry') should be changed, perhaps to become 'Church members in the paid service of the church'. If our proposals for MOMM are accepted by the Conference and suitable SO's are framed, they should incorporate all SO's concerning members in paid employment in church work in a renamed Part 7 of CPD.

C.3 TEAM LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL CHURCH, CIRCUIT AND DISTRICT

- 094 Section B outlined the central place that collaborative understandings of leadership play in our theological reflection upon the church. In summary, the advantages of team leadership, involving church members as well as ordained ministers, are these:
- i) a team leadership more fully represents the diverse insights and concerns of the Christian community;
 - ii) team leadership facilitates a sharing of responsibility, pastoral support, reflection and action;
 - iii) team leadership opens up the consultative and decision-making process to professional skills available among church members and to the insights and aspirations of church members whose experience is complementary to the world-view of ordained ministers.
- 095 The purpose of team leadership, set within a collaborative view of the ministry of the whole church, is: to draw out and use well the ministerial gifts of church members and ordained ministers, and, as a by-product, to liberate ordained leaders to enjoy a more relaxed and coherent understanding of their role and of the limits of their responsibility.
- 096 In what follows we have drawn upon the insights of the report on *Team Ministries* (*Agenda*, 1967, pp.540-548) and the accumulated experience of the

Team Ministry Committee (now called the Committee for Collaborative Ministries).

097 Issues to be faced in setting up team leadership

There is a need to evolve *well-defined, flexible and self-critical leadership teams at every level of the church's life*. We recognise that models of team leadership cannot be imposed on churches, circuits and districts; many ordained ministers will feel temperamentally ill-equipped for participating in teams, or will be anxious about the significant changes of authority and methods of working which involvement in teams inevitably brings. Some of the structural and practical issues which need to be faced are the following.

- 098 (a) Circuits have become increasingly sectionalised. At this point our practice and our constitution differ. CPD includes the concept of an ordained minister having pastoral charge of a local church, but there is no constitutional place for a 'section'. However, a section is a highly significant feature of an ordained minister's self-consciousness. While appointments are technically to circuits, in practice appointments are defined in terms of a section, where it is usually assumed the ordained minister will be the person in whom alone leadership is focused. The circuit often becomes the backcloth, an administrative convenience, or even an irrelevant encumbrance drawing people's attention from their true interests, rather than the natural unit of belonging and mission – for both ordained ministers and local churches. So deeply ingrained has become the identification between an individual ordained minister and a section that considerable effort is put into estimating equivalent work loads among the different sections of a circuit. On occasions this leads to irrational deployment of an ordained minister's pastoral responsibilities – as when, to balance the number of members in each section, churches which have no geographical relationship with each other are lumped together in a section.
- 099 The alternative picture which team leadership of circuits presents is this: Methodist members have the right of fairly ready access to dependable and skilled pastoral care; they need to know to whom they may turn for help, and when and where. However, there is no necessary reason why the person appointed to lead the ministry of pastoral care in a local church should also be the one who will carry the whole range of leadership functions for that church¹¹. Rather, the circuit leadership team, incorporating all the ordained ministers appointed to the circuit, carries that wider responsibility corporately. In practice this means that a circuit, having guaranteed pastoral care for its members, will be able to assist ordained ministers to find a balance between the following: concentrated effort in a limited area of work (which will in turn be shaped by an individual's aptitude, skills and experience); and the effectiveness of the team.
- 100 (b) The ecumenical movement has encouraged close working relationships between Methodist ministers and ordained ministers of other denominations. The benefits of this co-operation have been incalculable. *Many Methodist ministers will think it much more natural and creative to enter into ecumenical leadership teams in a locality than to expend considerable effort in generating*

¹¹ See further, para. 108 and note 14.

team leadership in a Methodist circuit at the expense of local ecumenical co-operation.

101 Close collegueship between ordained ministers of different denominations has highlighted a further complexity in the self-understanding of Methodist ministers. The latter have sometimes adopted patterns of relationship with congregations and with their colleagues which have, perhaps unconsciously imitated those characteristic of other denominations. By and large, the denominations with which closest co-operation has evolved have developed more individualistic perceptions of ordained ministry than were traditional within Methodism. In extreme cases this has led a Methodist minister, given responsibility for a considerable number of churches in a section, to attempt to repeat many times over the relationship between an ordained minister and a single congregation which has been prevalent in Anglican and Reformed traditions.

102 (c) The development of modes of behaviour and of self-understanding characteristic of the professions has been muted but evident among Methodist ministers. Team leadership calls for more thorough-going professional practice among ordained ministers in a way which incorporates critical reflection upon professionalisation in contemporary society. (See paras. 073-074).

103 Basic elements in leadership teams

It is expected that at different levels of the church's life, and in different locations, a large variety of team leadership structures will emerge and evolve. The unity of leadership patterns will be provided by there being common basic elements in most situations. By way of illustration there now follows an outline of some of these fundamental constituents in relation to circuits. It is hoped that *churches, ecumenical groupings and districts as well as circuits may envisage possibilities* appropriate to their own situations and aims.

104 (a) Leadership teams will normally comprise ordained and non-ordained ministers. The terms upon which they meet, share responsibility, make decisions and evaluate their work need to be negotiated and stated explicitly.¹²

105 (b) The appointment of ordained ministers to circuit leadership teams will need amendment, to include:

- i) A significant additional factor in judging the appropriateness of the appointment of an ordained minister to a circuit will be the ability of the prospective new team member and the remaining team members to work together in the service of the circuit as a whole, and to renegotiate the terms on which they exercise their joint responsibilities.
- ii) Circuit Stewards will be *ex officio* members of the circuit leadership team, and in this setting will exercise their role in regard to the invitation of ordained ministers.

¹² Such agreed terms would supplement SO 522 (1).

- iii) It will be less exceptional for superintendents to be appointed by the Conference upon nomination by the Circuit Meeting from among the ordained ministers already serving in the circuit. This procedure, already available within our usage, may in some instances be developed to facilitate a ‘circulating’ pattern among ordained ministers in a circuit for the important office of superintendent, always provided that any candidate for the superintendency has appropriate gifts and experience.
- 106 (c) The purpose of the circuit leadership team is to enable the Circuit Meeting to fulfil its responsibilities as set out in SO 512. To this end, a statement of purpose, closely imitating the mood of SO 623, will be a valuable asset for leadership teams. Particular functions for the circuit leadership team (under the Circuit Meeting) will be:
- to provide support, resources and training for local churches and particularly for local church leaders;
 - to provide resources for and stimulate awareness of and contributions to the mission of the church at circuit level;
 - to exercise a ministry of visitation to the local churches (para. 054),¹³ or to ensure that visitations take place.
- 107 (d) Team leadership, by its very existence, is a structural encouragement to churches to discover the advantages of collaborative ministry in the church as a whole – releasing gifts among church members, sharing skills, encouraging imaginative tasks, providing support through inter-dependence, deploying gifts and skills flexibly. It is the task of the local Church Council to identify for the local church its most important ministries at any point in time and to consult with the circuit leadership team how appropriate resources might be found in the local church itself, in neighbouring churches or in the circuit leadership team.
- 108 In each local church there must be exercised the ministries of word, sacrament and pastoral care (paras. 056-058). In particular the church needs accreditation and appropriate training for persons with an ecclesial vocation to lead the ministry of pastoral care in local churches, to work alongside ordained ministers.¹⁴

C.4 DEVELOPMENTS IN ORDAINED MINISTRY

¹³ SO 525 (1) will need modest amendment to clarify this function. The Division of Ministries will need to co-ordinate and assess developments in the ministry of visitation at several levels of the church’s life.

¹⁴ The Division of Ministries could be made responsible for the oversight of approved training for leadership in the ministry of pastoral care in a way analogous to that for Local Preachers. Encouragement of non-ordained leadership in this ministry (which might normally, though not exclusively, be exercised under the discipline of the Methodist Order for Mission and Ministry) will assist the flexible deployment of ordained ministers working in circuit leadership teams.

- 109 Among ordained ministers there is a wide diversity of understanding of the nature and functions of their ministry. In recent decades ordained ministers, attempting faithfully and imaginatively to respond to their calling and to the complexities of contemporary society, have pressed for more flexible patterns of deployment for the ordained ministry. In reviewing these processes, sufficient basic common understandings and adequate minimum, flexible structures must be provided to ensure the sense of Methodist ordained ministers belonging to one ministry (para. 024).
- 110 Appropriate structures need to be developed to enable the diverse components of the ordained ministry to enrich one another, to foster mutual awareness, support and identity. These ‘appropriate structures’ include a thorough review of the timing and declared aims of the circuit staff meeting and the ministerial sessions of District Synods and of Conference.
- 111 Structures cannot guarantee to create a sense of mutual belonging among ordained ministers. Personal qualities of trust, understanding, respect and co-operation are called for. Ordained ministers have not always found this easy, especially when perceptions about priorities have differed sharply.

112 **Varied forms of ordained ministry**

Ordained ministry is an *ecclesial ministry* (see B.3, note 1). One way of understanding the diversity of forms of ordained ministry is to identify the *primary focus* of the ecclesial ministry exercised by an individual ordained minister. For example,

- (a) The itinerant circuit minister works primarily within, for and from the churches in a circuit.
 - (b) Some ordained ministers are called to work primarily at District or Connexional level, in a variety of ways (e.g., President and Secretary of Conference, Divisional Secretaries, College Tutors, District Chairmen).
 - (c) A few ordained ministers are seconded to other denominations or ecumenical agencies in ministries whose primary focus is comparable with the range of possibilities covered by (a) and (b).
 - (d) A considerable number of ministers pursue their ministry primarily in a secular context, either in a particular institution or in a sector of contemporary secular life. (See further, C.4.1 below).
- 113 Within these broad categories there are many variations, e.g. a minister who works part time in a circuit and part time in a connexional job. We wish to develop further the diversity of ways in which ordained ministry may be exercised by commending local ordained ministry (see C.4.2 below).¹⁵

114 **Appointment, Station and Residence**

¹⁵ Throughout this report we use the shorthand descriptions Local Ordained Minister (LOM) and Sector Ordained Minister (SOM) to mean respectively ‘ordained minister in a local appointment’ and ‘ordained minister in a sector appointment’; Itinerant Ordained Minister (IOM) means an ordained minister in a circuit, district or connexional appointment. (See para. 149).

Traditionally ‘appointment’ and ‘station’ were interchangeable terms for Methodist ordained ministers, and both were linked with residence. This remains the case for most circuit appointments. However, to cope with the increasing diversity of forms of the one ordained ministry, it may be helpful to distinguish appointment and station as follows.

- 115 An ordained minister’s *appointment* identifies the primary location of his or her ecclesial ordained ministry; the *station* indicates the context in which an individual ordained minister may find structured pastoral support within the church, and accountability to the church at large for his or her ministry.
- 116 In the case of ordained ministers with district or connexional appointments, appointment and station remain interchangeable terms, but are separated from residence. In the case of ministers in other appointments, appointment and station are clearly distinguished. Similarly ordained ministers without appointment nevertheless have a station linked to residence.

117 **Ministry in other appointments**

This category presently includes all ordained ministers, who, with the permission of the church or at the behest of the church, work whole-time in an institution or context outside the gift of the Methodist Church. This category replaced ‘Sector Ministry’, which itself, in 1969, had replaced ‘Permission to serve external organisations’. The present category is probably too broad and imprecise. We recommend that the Advisory Committee on Ministerial Appointments continue to be responsible for ministers without appointment and for two further categories of ordained ministers; who should be clearly distinguished: Sector Ordained Ministers; and Ordained Ministers serving other denominations or ecumenical agencies. Those in the latter category shall continue to be subject to the SO’s in Section 74 of CPD; details of their appointments shall be given in a separate list in the *Minutes of Conference*.

- 118 The phrase ‘Ministers in other appointments’ should be dropped because it is too wide in scope and because it has about it a negative ring which disguises the distinctive contribution from the people concerned to the ordained ministry and to the ministry of the whole people of God.

C4.1 Sector Ordained Ministry (SOM)

- 119 SOMs work whole-time in secular institutions, voluntary agencies or sectors of contemporary secular life where they *perceive their secular vocation as the locus of their ecclesial ordained ministry*. They may therefore work alongside men and women who own no allegiance to any Christian church. There they share in and sometimes spearhead the exploration of Christian life and Christian concerns for justice, freedom and peace.
- 120 SOMs also work *alongside Christian people of all denominations*, learning from them, enabling and stimulating them to discern the shape and form of individual and corporate Christian presence and witness in their common place of work. The ordained minister, by reason of his or her being known as an ordained person, acts as one who facilitates mutual support and encouragement among Christians in that institution or sector; and shares this task with some Christians who are not ordained. Denominational barriers are frequently

transcended. Thus a Methodist ordained minister appointed to work in a secular setting is a sign to the whole church of the urgent need to work towards the mutual acceptance of ordained ministries across denominational boundaries.

121 **SOM and Church-based Ministry.** Ordained ministers appointed to serve outside the confines of the church share a single ministry with ordained ministers in circuit appointments. All ordained ministers, at the Spring Synod, are required to participate in a service of re-dedication which incorporates the Resolutions on Pastoral Work (CPD, p.418). Resolution 6 reads: 'We resolve afresh to seek every opportunity to minister in Christ's name to those who work in industry, local government, and other sectors of the life of community' (CPD, p.573). By and large circuit ministers fulfil this obligation by pastoral conversation in domestic and local church settings with church members involved in various sectors; and by chaplaincies to local industry, etc. Ordained ministers in secular appointments exercise fundamentally the same ministry from *within* one of the distinct sectors of modern life. Ordained ministers in circuit and sector appointments complement one another so that co-operatively they may see themselves as seeking 'every opportunity' for such ministry.

122 **Transfer.** The present SO's (Section 74) address the situation where an ordained minister takes the initiative in applying for a non-Methodist appointment. Because such appointments are integral to the mission of the church and potentially supportive of church members exercising their secular vocations in various sectors of life, the Advisory Committee should continue to invite or urge appropriately qualified ordained ministers to apply for appointments in non-Methodist and secular institutions and contexts. This task should be performed with a sensitivity to the issue of widespread unemployment. In particular SO 743 (5) needs rephrasing to suggest that in any given year, or over a given period of years, the Stationing Committee will recommend a balance in the deployment of ordained ministers to meet the competing needs of ordained ministry in the circuits and in non-Methodist appointments. Such a policy of 'affirmative action' with respect to ordained ministry in the sectors would lead also to the revision of SO 745, to remove any suggestion that an ordained minister might not as easily be transferred from a non-Methodist appointment to a Methodist appointment as *vice versa*.¹⁶

123 **Accountability and Support**

(a) In each appointment an SOM is responsible to his or her employer and colleagues in the usual way for the proper performance of his or her duties.

124 (b) Each SOM needs also a station. This needs special attention: it is necessary to establish a clear link between work in a sector and the church as a whole so that the ministry of an SOM may be seen and affirmed by everyone as *ecclesial* ministry. In practice SOMs have not always found a circuit station satisfactory. We recommend that in future SOMs be given the choice between

¹⁶ The title of SO 745 is 'Return'. A more appropriate title might be 'Transfer to Methodist Church appointment'.

a *circuit station* (as at present) or a *station on a district list*. The reasons behind this latter recommendation are:

Some SOMs exercise their ministry over an area much wider than the circuit in which they reside; they would find value in consulting other ordained ministers and church members who have wide-ranging ministries.

Often only one SOM resides in a circuit; a district, however, can provide sufficient SOMs to create a supportive group with common or overlapping experiences and concerns.

- 125 In the case of a circuit station for an SOM, there must be a clear understanding between the SOM and the circuit staff that appropriate structures for mutual support and accountability will be constructed.
- 126 SOMs on a district list of stations will be listed as follows: 'AB, who resides in the —— Circuit (brief indication of the sector of work)'. The Chairman of the District will be responsible, with the SOMs concerned, for constructing appropriate structures of support and accountability.
- 127 In both cases care should be taken to incorporate both appropriate church members and ordained ministers in circuit work into the supportive structures; and we suggest that consideration be given to the establishment of a representative group of District Chairmen and SOMs to draw up guidelines, the group to be convened by the Secretary of the Advisory Committee on Ministerial Appointments.

C4.2 Local Ordained Ministry (LOM)

- 128 The concept of a local (that is, a non-stipendiary and a non-itinerant) ordained ministry has been discussed by the Conference on a number of occasions, most notably in 1977 and 1978. The *formal definition* provided in the 1978 report was:

Ministers in local appointments, like all ministers, believe themselves called of God to the ordained ministry. This call the Church tests and recognizes. They are trained for that ministry so that they are competent to exercise it. Like all ordinands, upon the recommendation of their District Synod they are received into Full Connexion by the Conference and ordained. They are leaders of worship, preachers of the Gospel, pastors within and outside the life of the Church, enablers and administrators. They are accountable to the Conference, and stationed in circuits by its authority. Their conditions of service and their relationship to the Conference are different from those of stipendiary ministers in that they are not entitled to a manse, stipend or pension, but only to agreed expenses incurred in the course of their circuit duties, and they are not subject to itinerancy.

129 It is unclear to what degree, if any, the Conference can be said to have accepted this concept in principle.¹⁷ Conference is invited to look freshly at the concept in the light of Section B of this report. The discussion of ministry, vocation and leadership in Section B provides a framework of thought which makes possible the notion of a local ordained ministry, alongside and working co-operatively with the stipendiary, itinerant ordained ministry.

130 **The arguments in favour** of a local ordained ministry are two-fold.

(a) What section B permits in our conception of ordained ministry:

Paras 038, 039 imply that ordained ministry is not essentially whole-time or stipendiary.¹⁸

131 Para 079 refers to the balance of ecclesial and secular vocations in the total discipleship of a stipendiary, itinerant ordained minister. That theme may be developed by noting that the relative weight given to ecclesial and secular vocations varies from ordained person to ordained person, and from one phase of life to another in each ordained person – as is also the case in respect of all church members. We therefore naturally conclude that there will be some who, throughout their ordained ministry or for a portion of their ordained ministry, will experience a call to work in paid, full-time (or part-time) secular employment and exercise their ecclesial ministry as ordained persons on a non-stipendiary and part-time basis in a circuit.¹⁹ Thus the difference between a local ordained minister and a circuit minister of the traditional type is not a difference in kind, but a difference of *balance* in the outworking of their faith and obedience *between ecclesial and secular vocations*.

132 (b) Emphases in Section B which can be given clear institutional expression through local ordained ministry.

Two emphases are noteworthy here: the stress on collaborative styles of ministry; and the encouragement to all Christians to discern their secular vocation as a significant focus of their discipleship.

133 i) Traditionally the Methodist minister in rural and many urban areas was available to any particular church in his circuit or section only for limited periods on specific days. Frequently he acted almost as a chaplain, who visited some of the churches from time to time and worked intensively in the period available in areas of ministry considered to be of greatest importance, leaving to local leaders the effective oversight of the churches between his

¹⁷ The Representative Session of the 1977 Conference adopted Notice of Motion 15 (*Daily Record*, p.47) which included the clause ‘Conference . . . adopts the general principle of “auxiliary ministry”.’ Previously the Ministerial Session had declined to adopt the report presented by the Division of Ministries on Auxiliary Ministries, while the Representative Session had adopted it by a narrow majority. The 1978 Report, ‘Ministers in Local Appointments’ was not adopted by the Conference.

¹⁸ These points have already been accepted by the Conference in adopting the 1960 and 1974 reports on Ordination. (*Ordination in the Methodist Church* (1960), p.8; *Ordination* (1974), para. 25).

¹⁹ In occasional circumstances some stipend appropriate to part-time work might be paid in addition to expenses.

visits. During the twentieth century, the rapid improvement in communications and in ease of travel have dramatically affected the relationships between ordained ministers and congregations in all social settings. Sometimes this has led to undue dependence upon and unrealistic expectations of ordained ministers, and to excessive stress in the life-style of ordained persons. A local ordained minister will be available only within restricted periods of time for the duties of ordained ministry. This fact will help church members and ordained ministers to discern the importance of working together and sharing responsibility for the church's well-being. It is not envisaged that a circuit will be staffed wholly by local ordained ministers, so there is no danger of normal expectations about pastoral support in emergencies being undermined. However, a local church, assessing in consultation with the circuit its resources of ministry and its needs and priorities, will have to ask: How can we best use this local ordained minister?

134 ii) A local ordained ministry will also enrich the ministry of the whole people of God by the ordained minister displaying in his or her own life serious Christian obedience in a secular and an ecclesiastical setting. This will facilitate church members identifying more readily with their ordained minister, and in turn will help ordained ministers to empathise more deeply with the needs and diverse claims upon time and energy experienced by Christian people endeavouring to live their lives well in both church and society.

135 **LOM builds upon the experience of some circuits.**

In practice the advent of a local ordained ministry will not cause undue disruption in the ministry of leadership offered to circuits and churches. There is already in Methodism experience of ordained ministers being available to churches only part-time, within restricted periods of time. We instance: supernumerary ministers doing part-time work in circuits; some part-time circuit appointments (the other part of the ordained minister's time being devoted to, say, a connexional job); and the limited voluntary ecclesial ministry sometimes offered by Ministers without appointment and by Ministers in other appointments.

136 **Earlier unease about LOM.** When the issue of a local ordained ministry has been discussed previously by the Conference, many have expressed unease at any deviation from the notion of an ordained minister being available whole time for his or her work. We suspect the springs of this unease are fourfold: the importance of whole-timeness as a sign of profound commitment to Christ; the unity of the ordained ministry; the effects on congregation and ordained minister of a near-permanent relationship; and the future of itinerancy. Our comments on these themes are the following.

137 (i) It is true that part of the witness of ordained ministers is to be a sign to the church of the depth and of the unconditional character of commitment to Christ that baptism lays upon every Christian. That testimony is shared with many others in the church who are not ordained. However, the quality of such witness in an ordained person is expressed in a life lived 'in every part' in Christ-like love and service, and is not confined to an ordained person's ecclesial ministry. It therefore becomes of less significance whether an ordained ministry is whole-time or part-time in the service of the church.

138 (ii) Ordained ministry in the Methodist Church has already experience of diverse structures (varied forms of initial training; Ministers in other appointments; Ministers without appointment). The advent of a local ordained ministry need not threaten the unity of the ordained ministry. Until Methodism has experience of incorporating local ordained ministers into its polity, we suggest that it is essential that the conditions and process of candidature for local ordained ministry shall be identical to those for itinerant ordained ministry; and that the initial training for local ordained ministry shall take place within one of the patterns recognised for the training of itinerant ordained ministry. This will ensure interchangeability between local and itinerant ordained ministries, a flexibility which will be to the advantage of the church and of ordained ministers themselves. Such interchangeability emphasises what is in any case true, that the validity of the ordination of a local ordained minister is not confined to a limited geographical area; a local ordained minister shares with all other ordained persons ordination into the Church of God.

139 From the point of view of the ordained minister, his or her sense of participating in the one body of ordained ministers will be enhanced by a developing self-understanding as a professional person. An ordained minister's identity, confidence and competence can be secured through appropriate training, probation and acceptance within the discipline and ethos of the corporate body of ordained ministers. Continued recognition and 'status' are compatible, as in other professions, with time off from the practice of the profession and with part-time or unpaid, voluntary practice of the profession.

140 (iii) Many congregations will fear that if they are served by a local ordained minister who is not subject to stationing, problems may arise: if relationships between ordained minister and a congregation become difficult, or if an ordained minister becomes so settled in a church that he or she loses the capacity to challenge a congregation to new understandings of the gospel or new ways of exercising its ministry, how can the relationship be significantly changed or concluded? A number of factors may help in such situations:

no congregation or local ordained minister will exist in isolation from other churches or other ordained ministers in the circuit, and this wider context may help towards reconciliation, mutual understanding, or redeployment of pastoral oversight;

we believe that a job description for a local ordained minister will provide a useful contribution to agreed expectations and responsibilities for both the local ordained minister and for the church; the job description may include an initial term of service prior to a thorough review of the working arrangements;

an increasing confidence in a ministry of visitation, a periodic critical evaluation of the relationship between a church and a local ordained minister, and a careful programme of further training appropriate for local ordained ministers will enhance the capacity for personal growth and sensitivity.

- 141 There may be a number of situations where it will be necessary to withdraw the appointment of a local ordained minister, who might then become supernumerary. However, long before such action would become necessary, congregations and ordained ministers will be called upon to deepen those qualities of trust, patience, honesty and generosity which underlie all attempts to build community. It is essential that such qualities underlie the whole development of LOM.
- 142 (iv) We expect that in the immediate future, local ordained ministers will constitute a small proportion of the whole. Problems relating to the itinerant principle need to be considered by Conference upon advice tendered by the Stationing Committee.

C4.3 Some Consequences of SOM and LOM

- 143 (a) **SOM, LOM and Candidature.** Up to the present, Methodist practice has been to assume that candidates for ordained ministry will exercise their ministry first in circuit appointments, after which some may apply to be appointed to a sector ordained ministry. The logic of the proposals in section C.4 of this report is that men and women may offer as candidates for SOM and LOM as well as for the itinerant ordained ministry. Procedures of candidature will need to be reviewed accordingly.
- 144 (b) **Relationship between SOM and LOM.** In describing SOM and LOM no attempt is made to *confine* the arena within which a particular ordained minister exercises his or her vocation – any more than a circuit minister is confined to a circuit for the exercise of his or her ministry. Thus an SOM may assist in a circuit on Sundays as an ordained minister; and an LOM will not stop being an ordained minister, and being known as such, in his or her place of work. The distinction between an SOM and an LOM is their *appointment*, and therefore in the description of the area where their formal responsibilities as an ordained minister are centred.

C4.4 Ordained Ministers Without Appointment (OMWA)

- 145 SO 762 (i) provides exemption from stationing for an ordained minister ‘on compassionate or compelling domestic grounds’. Earlier sections of this report (e.g. paras. 038, 139) justify this concept and suggest that the terms upon which ordained ministers might be so classified need to be broadened. It may then be appropriate to locate here some ordained ministers at present in ‘other appointments’.

C4.5 Episcopacy

- 146 The Methodist Church has been enriched by many forms of ‘episcopate’ (oversight). ‘This oversight is exercised both corporately and individually. It is exercised corporately, for example, by Conference, Synods, Circuit Meetings, Pastoral Committees and individually by the President, Chairmen, Superintendents, Ministers, Class Leaders’ (*Episcopacy in the Methodist Church*, Section C.3). This report summarises and comments on this

Methodist practice in paras. 050-064, and provides its theological basis in paras. 041-048.

147 We judge that the time is not right for Methodism to introduce the historic episcopate into its system, for the following reasons:

(a) Sections C.2-4 of this report propose far-reaching changes in the structures of the Methodist Church. Their detailed implementation will absorb energy and imagination, if Conference approves them in principle. Concentrated application of resources to secure these changes in such a way as to win general approval throughout the church is a high priority for the Methodist Church as it pursues its mission in contemporary society.

(b) Any move unilaterally to take the historic episcopate into our system would at present be damagingly divisive within Methodism.

(c) We perceive the ecumenical situation to be uncertain and changing, so that the ecumenical implications of any such step would be unclear.

148 We recommend that if and when the church judges it right to incorporate the historic episcopate into its polity, it will espouse an understanding of episcopacy which coheres with the theology of leadership in section B of this report, the recommendations of the report *Episcopacy in the Methodist Church*, and the guidance given in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* ('Ministry', paras. 20-25).

C4.6 Nomenclature

149 People in the church will continue to refer to ordained ministers as 'ministers'. The word 'minister' will also be used by the world at large. Within the church, however, we must always be concerned to teach and to show that every Christian is called by God to be a minister. At district and connexional levels it will be convenient at times to distinguish the varied forms of ordained ministry. When this is done, the terminology will need to be appropriate and consistent, i.e. itinerant ordained minister (IOM), sector ordained minister (SOM), local ordained minister (LOM) and ordained minister without appointment (OMWA). However, to use these phrases as common language in the life of the church will confuse and divide the church and needlessly mystify the world.

RESOLUTION TO CONFERENCE

- (i) The Conference commends this report to the districts and circuits for discussion and comment.
- (ii) The Conference appoints a Commission to prepare detailed proposals for the implementation of this report, and to report to Conference in 1987.
- (iii) The Conference encourages the autumn Synods, District Committees, and Circuit Meetings and other appropriate groups to send comments to the Convenor of the Commission no later than February 28, 1987; and directs the Commission to present the report with any necessary modification for adoption by the Conference of 1987.

The Conference adopted resolution (ii), amended as follows:

‘The Conference appoints a Commission to prepare detailed proposals for implementation of the report, with separate resolutions for such proposals, and to report to the Conference of 1988.’

In place of resolutions (i) and (iii), the Conference adopted the following:

‘The Conference encourages the Synods, District Committees, Circuit Meetings and other appropriate groups to send comments to the Convener of the Commission no later than 30th September 1987; and directs the Commission to present the report with any necessary modification for adoption by the Conference of 1988.’