

## 35. The Faith and Order Committee

### Basic Information

<b>Title</b>	<b>The Work of the Faith and Order Committee 2011/12</b>
<b>Contact Name and Details</b>	The Revd Dr Peter Phillips, p.m.phillips@durham.ac.uk
<b>Status of Paper</b>	Final
<b>Resolutions</b>	As set out in the Report.

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	To provide a report on the work of the Committee
<b>Main Points</b>	Section A: General Report Section B: Report on Authorisations in relation to Eucharistic Presidency Section C: Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith

### Section A: General Report

The Faith and Order Committee offers both theological scrutiny for the work of the Connexional Team and the Conference, as well as theological consultation for work being conducted throughout the Connexion. The Committee is supported by a Connexion-wide network of Methodist people who volunteer their skills and expertise to support the work of the Committee. Assisted also by members of the Connexional Team and many other people across the Connexion, the committee drafts, scrutinises and comments on reports from its own members or from other parts of the Methodist Church, makes recommendations to the Council and the Conference, offers advice on issues related to the Faith and Order of the Methodist Church and reports directly to the Methodist Conference.

In this report, the Committee outlines the main areas in which it has been working during the present connexional year and the main items which it intends to bring to the Conference in 2012. At the end of the report, we also point to a number of items which will come to the Conference in 2013 and reasons why we are not able to bring these reports to this year's Conference.

#### 1. Ways of Working

1.1 The Committee continues to review its ways of working in order to provide a theologically rich, robust and also cost-effective way of fulfilling its remit under Standing Order 330.

1.2 The Committee normally meets three times a year (immediately after the Conference, in the autumn, and in the spring). The resource groups normally handle work electronically, although there is provision for occasional meeting of the resource groups in person where workload or specific projects require this method of working. The resource groups and the Committee normally work to the following timetable to allow appropriate time to distribute material, review, collate comments and report back:

- Work submitted to the Committee for scrutiny will normally take one calendar month to complete.
- Work developed by the resource groups will normally be completed within three months.

1.3 All reports, questions and communication to the Committee should be sent in the first instance to the Secretary to the Committee.

1.4 In September 2011, the Committee held a joint meeting with the Church of England's Faith and Order Commission at Launde Abbey in Leicestershire. The meeting shared current issues being explored in both committees which were able to comment on each other's items of business, with some opportunities for the committees to meet separately. The meeting offered an

## 35. The Faith and Order Committee

excellent example of joint decision making and was seen to be a huge success. Plans are currently in place to repeat the joint meeting at least on an annual basis.

- 1.5 The appointment of the Committee is the responsibility of the Methodist Conference through the appointments section of the agenda.
  - 1.6 Our meetings throughout the current connexional year have been ably chaired by the Revd David Deeks. We are very grateful to David for his careful steering of our business. Throughout the year, our incoming chair, Professor Judith Lieu has taken an active role in our proceedings and we were pleased to have Judith acting as Chair for our recent spring meeting. The Committee expresses its thanks to members of the Committee who will be standing down at this year's Conference.
  - 1.7 The Committee has maintained its active links with many other bodies internal and external to the Methodist Church (Church of England Liturgical Commission, Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity and Mission (MAPUM), Churches Together in England - Theology and Unity Group, European Methodist Theological Commission, Faith and Order Commission [of the Church of England], Joint Implementation Committee and the Joint Liturgical Group).
  - 1.8 Through the year, the Committee has put in place new guidelines under which people are appointed to represent Faith and Order on different bodies within Methodism and outside of Methodism.
2. **Responses requested by previous Conferences**
    - 2.1 The Committee has been working on a number of responses to specific Conference resolutions:
    - 2.2 ***Theological Issues arising from Justice for Palestine and Israel Report (Resolution 14/5, Conference 2010)***

The Committee continues to work at putting together a study resource on the theological issues arising from the *Justice for Palestine and Israel Report* received by the Conference in 2010, including reflections on Christian Zionism. It is expected that this resource will be ready for dissemination by the Conference in 2013.
    - 2.3 ***Resource on Cohabitation (Resolution 17/4, Conference 2010)***

The completion of this resource was interrupted by the untimely death of one of the key contributors. However, the Committee is now pressing ahead and conversations are ongoing with the various members of the Connexional Team as to the most appropriate way to disseminate the resource when it is ready.

## 35. The Faith and Order Committee

### 2.4 **Joint Anglican Methodist Working Party on the Ecclesiology of Emerging Expressions of Church**

This important report forms the background to other business presented to the present Conference and to the General Synod in July 2012.

### 2.5 **Eucharistic Presidency**

A report on Eucharistic Presidency, in response to Memorials from the 2009 Conference, may be found below in Section B.

### 2.6 **Equality and Diversity**

The Committee has continued to work with the Equality and Diversity officer to support the development of a Theological Statement on this area of work. The Methodist Council has received regular updates on the progress of this work.

### 2.7 **Deferred Special Resolution on Clause 4**

The Committee has affirmed its support for this Deferred Special Resolution.

### 2.8 **Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith**

The Committee has developed an appropriate liturgy for this act of worship in line with the resolutions of the 2011 Conference and agreed that this service should be sent out for trial according to SO330(9). The proposed liturgy and report can be found in Section C below.

### 2.9 **General Secretary's Report 2011 (GSR2011)** – sections 31-45, 61-64

(resolutions 2/3 and 2/5)

The two resolutions asked for pieces of work to be developed by either the Ministries Committee or the Faith and Order Committee in consultation with the other body. Conversations have been ongoing throughout the year on the appropriate way in which that consultation should be developed, especially in the light of the amount of work which the Ministries Committee is currently engaged in with the Fruitful Field project.

### 2.10 **Induction of the President and Vice-President of the Conference**

Work on a draft order has been completed. The order is being submitted to the Conference by the Methodist Council and is to be used at the 2012 Conference under the provision of SO 330(9).

### 2.11 **Memorials 13 and 16 (2010)**

Work on these memorials is ongoing. It is expected that a response to M16 will be available for the 2013 Conference.

### 2.12 **Joint Ordination**

As directed by the Conference in light of the debate on this matter at the 2011 Conference, further consultations have taken place on the matter of the appropriateness of holding a service of ordination at which both deacons and presbyters are ordained. The Committee recognised that the holding of such services had arisen out of the need to show particular sensitivity to

members of the same family who were to be ordained to separate orders of ministry on the same day. After careful consideration of the matter, and further to hearing the view expressed by the Diaconal Convocation, the Committee recommends that the Conference upholds the principle of separate services of ordination for presbyters and deacons.

### 3. Scrutiny and Consultancy Work

3.1 The Committee has engaged with the following issues/projects/Council papers, offering specific responses to paperwork, continuing involvement in the support of a working group, or commentary on the development of reports. Where appropriate, specific responses have been sent to the Senior Manager /Connexional Secretary, or directly to the author of a report, or to those providing the lead in these areas of work:

- Joint Ordination
- *Singing the Faith Online Supplement*
- Discipleship Materials
- Fruitful Field
- Ecumenical Reports
- Missing Generation
- Diaconal Conversations (JIC)
- Poverty
- Armed Drones
- Membership
- Senior Leadership
- Signalling Vocation: Possible Clause 4 Amendment
- Fresh Ways Working Group
- Faith and Work Papers

- Projects - in development or under review
- EMTC/E-Group
- URC liaison group/service of reconciliation
- World Church Partners
- Equality and Diversity
- VentureFX
- Chaplaincy
- Belonging Together
- Education Commission

### 4. Work being brought to the Conference of 2013

The Committee's reports to the Conferences of 2013 will include the following major pieces of work:

- Response to *Encountering Christ the Saviour* (Report of the International Methodist-Roman Catholic Dialogue presented to the World Methodist Council meeting in Durban, July 2011)
- Responses to the General Secretary's Report (2011) in consultation with the Ministries Committee
- Response to Memorial M13 (2011) - Communion Online
- Response to M16 (2011) - Guidance for Superintendents and Local Arrangements

### 5. President Bishop

As directed by the Conference the Committee considered aspects of the JIC report *Moving Forward in Covenant* and in particular explored the proposals for a President Bishop. The Committee concluded that it would undertake further work on

## 35. The Faith and Order Committee

questions of the Methodist understanding of episcopacy and that such work would need to be in line with previous Conference decisions.

### \*\*\*RESOLUTION

#### **35/1. The Conference receives the report of the Faith and Order Committee.**

##### **Section B: Report on Authorisations in relation to Eucharistic Presidency**

##### **FAITH AND ORDER RESPONSE TO MEMORIALS 18, 19 & 20 FROM CONFERENCE 2009 ON EUCHARISTIC PRESIDENCY**

The Wolverhampton Conference of 2009 received three memorials concerning Eucharistic Presidency. The texts of these memorials (M18, M19 and M20) is given below:

##### **M18 Authorisation to preside at Communion**

*The Erewash Valley (22/20) Circuit Meeting (Present: 28. Voting: 24 for, 0 against) in view of the declining number of Presbyters within the Connexion requests the Conference to explore the possibility of a more flexible system of local preachers being authorised to administer Holy Communion.*

##### **M19 Authorisation to preside at Communion**

*The Kent Thameside (36/21) Circuit Meeting (Present 51. Voting: unanimous) celebrates the good news that many lay-led fresh expressions of church are growing and forming Christian community together. In view of the challenging and culturally*

*complex situations of these cutting edge projects, it is desirable that the fresh expression pioneer be equipped and affirmed by the Methodist Church to offer a full sacramental life to these developing and fragile communities.*

*In light of the drive towards innovative fresh expressions of church and the necessity of pioneering leaders in the outworking of this priority (many of whom are lay people who have no explicit call to formal ordination within the Methodist Church), the Kent Thameside Circuit requests that Conference reconsiders the grounds on which a dispensation to preside at the Lord's Supper is granted. In particular, it requests that that mission as well as pastoral deprivation be considered a valid basis on which a dispensation could be granted, subject to the proper consideration of the District Policy Committee.*

*The Kent Thameside Circuit therefore requests that a report examining this issue be brought to the Conference of 2010 for its consideration.*

##### **M20 Authorisation to preside at Communion**

*The North Lancashire Synod (R) (Present: 143. Voting: unanimous) recognising the great variety of contexts for ministry and mission into which many presbyteral*

*probationers are now rightly stationed; and noting that the Criteria for Authorising Persons other than Ministers to Preside at the Lord's Supper (CPD pp.825-826) were last reviewed more than a decade ago, when 'Probationer Appointments' were assumed to fit a relatively standard circuit appointment model, requests that the Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to review the current criteria and suggest what changes, if any, should be made in the light of the range of new situations within which our presbyteral probationers are now helping to lead our work, witness and worship.*

The Conference responded to all three memorials as follows:

"The Conference acknowledges that its guidance on this issue is now a decade old, and recognises the increasing fluidity of presbyteral roles within the Methodist Church and the mission imperative incumbent on all Circuits. It therefore directs the Faith and Order Committee to review the interpretation of Clause 4 of the Deed of Union found in SO 011 and the Guidance material found in Book VI Part 8 in the light of previous reports and memorials on this issue. Recognising the practical and ecumenical dimensions of the subject, and the anomaly of deacons receiving lay authorisations, the Conference further directs that this review should include consultation with the Authorisations Committee, the Joint Implementation Commission and the Methodist Diaconal Order.

The Conference therefore refers the Memorial to the Faith and Order Committee for report to the Conference of 2010."

In response, the Faith and Order Committee agreed to develop a threefold approach.

1. A paper outlining the background to the issues being raised (Section 1 below)
2. Consultation with the Authorisations Committee, JIC and MDO (Section 2 below)
3. An exploration of the issues surrounding Eucharistic Presidency within the context of Fresh Expressions of Church (Section 3 below)

### **Section 1: Presidency at the Lord's Supper: An Overview**

#### **A Summary and Reminder of Decisions/Principles agreed by Past Conferences.**

- 1.1 There are contradictory convictions or at least widely varied convictions and considerable diversity over the issue of presidency at the Lord's Supper in British Methodism. In 1932, the doctrine of ministry and the administration of the sacraments were a considerable part of the negotiations for union as different practices and convictions were brought together. There are some in the Methodist Church who believe there should be no authorisations given at all, with nothing allowed other than presbyteral presidency. Some believe authorisations should

be much more freely available, and possibly decided upon locally rather than by the Conference. And there are many other views in between.

1.2 Questions about eucharistic presidency have been raised many times over the years: there have been many memorials to Conference and a number of reports on the subject. **However, the Conference has consistently, since 1932, held to the 'original settlement' which established presbyteral presidency as 'general usage' with authorisations of others (members, probationers, deacons) in cases where people would otherwise be deprived of the opportunity to celebrate Holy Communion as frequently as they would wish.** Given the different convictions continuing within the Methodist Church, the Faith and Order Committee does not see any overwhelming reason to believe the Conference would radically depart from that position now.

1.3 The memorials and discussion that have called for change largely fall into three areas:

- arguments for expanding the availability of authorisations;
- the extent to which probationers should be treated as a different category;
- the definition of 'deprivation' and how the criteria for giving authorisations are worked in practice.

The three memorials on this subject to the 2009 Conference represent current versions of these arguments:

- more authorisations are needed because of shortage of presbyters (M18);
- authorisations are needed for lay-led fresh expressions pioneers (M19);
- the variety of presbyteral probationer appointments should be a factor in giving automatic authorisation to presbyteral probationers (a version of the argument that probationers should be in a different category) (M20).

1.4 Despite calls for authorisations to preside to be decided by Circuits or Districts, the Conference has consistently affirmed that the decision should be taken at the Conference, thereby being a *connexional* decision. The authority of the Conference as an expression of connexionalism is a key principle of who we are as Methodists.

1.5 The celebration of the Lord's Supper in any particular congregation or Christian community is linked to the celebration of the whole Church, which is why people who are representative of the whole Church and the Methodist Connexion are usually the ones to preside at that celebration, specifically set aside for a ministry of word and sacrament and pastoral responsibility.



1.6 The circuit context is also crucial. Provision for ministry, including the ministry of word and sacrament, is made to and by Circuits. All Christian congregations and communities that want to be identified as Methodist are linked to one another in this way. We do not privilege the local congregation to the extent that some other Churches do.

1.7 The 1996 report, *Authorisation to Preside at the Lord's Supper*, in particular tackled what were seen as popular misconceptions about:

- the priesthood of all believers;
- the link between pastoral responsibility and presiding.

1.8 In a number of reports, the views of our ecumenical partners – both those who restrict presidency entirely to presbyters and those who make much wider use of lay presidency - have been named as important, but not necessarily decisive for us.

1.9 There have been changes made over the years, but relatively minor ones: guidelines have shifted from seeing monthly communion as the basic rule of thumb to using that as minimum, with encouragement to make a case to the Authorisations Committee where congregations want more frequent celebrations (1984). In 1994, attention was drawn to the possibilities of extended communion.

1.10 All of these points have been made before and argued out in detail in

other documents:

- Reports to the Conference in 1984, 1994, 1996
- *Called to Love and Praise*
- *In the Spirit of the Covenant* – with a much more detailed explanation of the historical issues.

### **Specific question for review**

1.11 SO 011 deals with the process of applying for an authorisation. Given the decisions the Conference has made in the past to endorse reports and replies to memorials re-affirming presbyteral presidency as general usage and authorisations in cases of deprivation, the basic relation between clause 4 statements on ministry and SO 011 should be relatively uncontroversial.

1.12 Perhaps, though, the full potential of SO 011 (1) is not always appreciated.

“A Circuit which considers that any of its churches or a significant number of church members or other Christians in the local community is deprived of reasonably frequent and regular celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper through lack of ministers may apply for the authorisation of persons other than ministers to preside at that sacrament...”

- ‘A Circuit which considers....’ – the onus is on the Circuit, or the opportunity is given to the

- Circuit, to make a case.
- '...or a significant number of church members' – the pastoral needs of those who are part of a congregation but cannot attend church clearly count here: those who are housebound, those who want to be able to celebrate Holy Communion for church members in hospital.
- '..or other Christians in the local community' – that includes services in residential homes, perhaps some school situations. *This could be applicable to many fresh expressions contexts as well.*

1.13 Fresh expressions are developing in all sorts of ways. VentureFX is promoting the development of ecclesial communities. The Report of the Joint Anglican Methodist Working Party on the Ecclesiology of Emerging Expressions of Church (JAMWPEEEEC) is being considered at the 2012 Conference. It is clear from all of these developments, that whilst celebrating the Lord's Supper is not at first a huge issue for these new ecclesial communities, it soon is. It is clear that the wording of the Standing Order as it stands does not need changing in order for these contexts to be 'counted' within what the Circuit considers the need to be, although the reason for an authorisation remains only lack of ministers (presbyters).

1.14 What is not feasible under this

Standing Order and its interpretation of clause 4 of the Deed of Union is an argument that runs like this: 'the lay leader of this fresh expression needs to be the one who presides in this community'. The Conference has refused that possibility in circumstances such as lay employees appointed to have significant pastoral responsibility in a local congregation. The issue is most closely addressed in the 1996 report to the Conference. The reason for refusing the automatic link between presidency at communion and pastoral relationship to a congregation is that the Circuit and the Connexion are the context in which all congregations and Christian communities operate within Methodism, ie this is the kind of church we are. The provision of ministry in Methodism (see *The Missional Nature of the Circuit*) is made by the Conference through the Circuit – including the provision for the ministry of word and sacrament.

1.15 Book VI Part 8 – Criteria for Authorising Persons other than Ministers to Preside at the Lord's Supper

The criteria clearly privilege deprivation as *the* (only) reason for authorisations – following exactly on from SO 011. They have been criticised for being 'just a mathematical calculation', but they have one key element of flexibility: it is for the Circuit to define the number of communions that it wants, not simply at Sunday services.

“The statement of the number of services requested should be based on what the Circuit would like, not what it can currently have.” There is encouragement to think of this in conjunction with eg residential homes. There is no reason not to include fresh expressions communities or emerging ecclesial communities explicitly here.

### 1.16 The ‘missionary situations’ criterion

In 1986, the report to the Conference entitled *The granting of authorisations to preside at the Lord’s Supper to persons other than ministers* gathered together decisions made in 1984 and 1985 and reminded the Conference that there were three criteria used in judging whether an authorisation should be granted for someone other than a minister (presbyter) to preside at the Lord’s Supper. They were

- (a) basic deprivation [the criterion found then in Standing Order 011];
- (b) the desire for more frequent Holy Communion;
- (c) missionary potential

The last two of these were not then codified in Standing Orders.

1.17 The 1986 Conference noted the existence of the three criteria and the ways in which they were applied, but took no further action at that point. Memorials to the Conference in 1992 and 1993 led to a report to the Conference in 1994 which the Conference commended to

the Connexion for discussion and response. As a result a further report was brought to the 1996 Conference. It surveyed the responses and then argued that:

- (a) neither the New Testament, nor the Reformers, nor the Deed of Union support the argument that the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers requires that Methodism should abandon its usage that presidency at the Lord’s Supper should normally be by an ordained presbyter;
- (b) no-one has a right of themselves to preside, but only those who are authorised by the Church to do so: presbyters are so authorised by their ordination, and others may be authorised by the act of the Conference;
- (c) the relationship between a lay person undertaking pastoral work with a congregation and the members of that congregation does not require or make it appropriate that that person presides at the Lord’s Supper in that congregation;
- (d) ecumenical considerations are not of themselves indicating that the Methodist Church should change its policy in any particular direction on these matters.

1.18 The culmination of the work was (together with a discussion of the role of probationer ministers in these matters) brought to the 1997 Conference. The 1997 report sought to find a way of meshing

## 35. The Faith and Order Committee

the second and third criteria set out above with that of 'deprivation'. It did so by proposing a way of discerning whether the criterion of "deprivation" was met which took account of evidence of a desire for more frequent Holy Communion and of missionary potential. This led to the amendment of SO 011 into its current form and the introduction of the criteria in Book VI Part 8 of CPD.

- 1.19 Despite the fact that the Church's missional context in 2012 is fundamentally different to that of 1986, the criterion of "missionary potential" might however bear revisiting. The 1986 report stated the following:

*"The Report of the Faith and Order committee to the Conference of 1985 recommended the following criteria to be applied in relation to 'missionary situations'.*

1. *The situation should have missionary potential. There is no case for an authorisation simply to maintain an existing, static society. Missionary potential can be identified by such features as: large numbers of unchurched people, absence of denominational rivalry, a Methodist community which is outward looking and organised for mission with progressive leadership, evidence of circuit and district support for such a mission, and signs of growth.*
2. *The area to be served should be isolated, not necessarily by distance, but by planning, traffic, economic, cultural or other factors which prevent that free-flow of ministries which is one of the traditional marks of circuit life.*
3. *The lay person to whom the authorisation is granted should be a person representative of the church, identified with the 'isolated area', living with it, and having a position of leadership in worship and mission as envisaged under S.O. 581.*
4. *It should be clearly reflected in the policy of the circuit that no permanence can be given to what is, in our usage, a short term arrangement."*

- 1.20 It is not difficult to see that these criteria could be slightly re-written to emphasise the cultural specificity issues which are often raised around fresh expressions (rather than the 'isolated' geographical community model which is the basic paradigm of these criteria, even though cultural 'isolation' is recognised as possible. Indeed, a new 'missional criteria' section to the guidance could also explore linguistic and cultural community isolation within other contexts), and to name something like fresh expressions/VentureFX pioneers in point 3. This could be closest to an argument that the relationship of the leader to the

community is taken into account. Point 4 is positively helpful in the present context, because it could recognise the interim nature of arrangements for a new Christian community which is expected to move on and change further. It is certainly needed if the potential of point 3 could be allowed without being abused.

- 1.21 It could be argued that all this is possible already, simply by a Circuit making a clear case that these situations are part of what it 'would like' in terms the number of services. But there is also a case for adding criteria such as these 'back into' Book VI Part 3 to make the connection to mission much clearer.

### **Section 2: Consultation with others**

#### **2.1 General Consultation**

- 2.1.1 A draft version of this paper was submitted to the 2010 Conference. Members of the Conference as well as anyone in the wider Connexion were invited to send in their responses to the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee. Many of the responses received reflected issues which we have already explored in Section 1 above. There was clear support for the use of missional criteria to assess deprivation, especially to address issues related to fresh expressions and missional communities, but also for the need to maintain the general principle of presbyteral presidency.

#### **2.2 Methodist Diaconal Order**

- 2.2.1 Over the last three years, the Warden of the Diaconal Order and the Faith and Order Committee have enabled an extensive process of consultation with the Methodist Diaconal Order concerning Eucharistic Presidency. Throughout that period, the Committee and the Order have explored different aspects of the conversations outlined above. In both 2010 and 2011, the Convocation discussed the issues in the context of Bible study, reflection and prayer. The submission of this report to the 2011 Conference was delayed in order to allow for a proper process of consultation for the whole Order in Convocation in the spring of 2011.

- 2.2.2 As part of this process, the Warden of the Order sought endorsement for the following statement:

*"The Methodist Church understands the Methodist Diaconal Order as an order of ministry as well as a religious order. Deacons are ordained to a ministry of service and pastoral care and seek to equip God's people for service in the world. It is very difficult for a deacon to refuse to accept an authorisation because in doing so, it could be said that this in itself is a denial of the ministry of loving service that deacons seek to offer the church if this is what the church is asking of a deacon in a particular context. That said, if the ministry of a deacon*

## 35. The Faith and Order Committee

*is also to equip and enable God's people for service in the world, then surely this must include supporting and enabling appropriate lay people in the local context to take such an authorisation if needed.*

*Therefore, it could be argued that the Conference is unwise to ask a deacon to take an authorisation because it creates a conflict between a commitment to serve the church where ever it asks and the enabling of lay ministry. It also makes it harder to maintain the distinctiveness of diaconal ministry if the deacon is asked to take what many perceive to be a presbyteral role, especially when linked to a ministry of pastoral care.*

*The Warden generally resists requests for deacons to take an authorisation unless there are very exceptional circumstances because of the wish of the Order to honour its commitment to enabling lay ministry as well as honour the office of a presbyter."*

2.2.3 In 2011, the Convocation welcomed the Revd Neil Stubbens to share with them about the historic nature of the issue; the recent history within the Methodist Church; and the role of deacons within the liturgy of the Church. This last aspect of the conversation was also an important facet of other conversations within the Methodist Diaconal Order arising in the Diaconal Ministry Practice research project based at Wesley Study Centre, Durham.

2.2.4 At the end of the 2011 Convocation,

the Warden of the Order noted the following points:

- a. The Order had found the input concerning the historical background to be of considerable value.
- b. The Order was content to endorse the above statement as a working statement on the role of deacons with this area while raising a number of issues which needed addressing – especially further work on the liturgical role of the diaconate.
- c. A number of questions remained including some residual anxiety about the link between pastoral charge/responsibility and Eucharistic presidency (see above 1.7 and 1.14).
- d. There was a call for some wider consultation about the nature of collaborative ministry and further exploration throughout of the Connexion of the interaction between diaconal and presbyteral ministries. The development of this piece of work is currently being explored within the Faith and Order Committee and the Ministries Committee as a joint piece of work.
- e. Further work was requested to explore the liturgical role of the deacon within worship. There were some strong feelings around (which would also speak into the consultation we had recently with the Church of England deacons) about how that might be developed and

therefore would give a certain visible clarity to the differences of the roles of presbyter and deacon in a helpful way and demonstrate collaboration rather than separation. A recommendation about this piece of work will be made below.

2.2.5 It may be that the current pressure for authorisations for deacons is linked to both shortages of appointments for deacons and shortages of presbyters to fill appointments. The solution to this issue may well be a more radical approach to the deployment of our ministers (as hinted at in the General Secretary's Report in 2011 and Stationing Review Group Report of 2008) so that neither order of ministry is compromised by pragmatic short term solutions.

### 2.3 Authorisations Committee

2.3.1 The Chair and Secretary of the Authorisations Committee have been notified of the progress of the Consultation process throughout. Initial responses suggested that the Authorisations Committee would welcome the conclusions set out above in Section 1, especially since the Committee has already been attempting to develop a more flexible strategy. However, there is some concern about how the changes proposed would be implemented.

2.3.2 Drafts of the paper were circulated to members of the Committee for comment and reflection. It is hoped that a formal response will be forthcoming from the Authorisations Committee before this current report comes to the Conference.

### 2.4 Joint Implementation Commission

2.4.1 The JIC have explored the issues relating to Presidency at the Eucharist in a number of documents, especially in:

- *In the Spirit of the Covenant* (2005), Presidency at the Eucharist: a Methodist Perspective
- *Living God's Covenant* (2007), Two Theologies or One?

The conclusion of the latter document noted that the different emphases within our common Eucharist theology (for example over presidency) were differences within the two traditions rather than between them. As such, the Commission concluded: "But we believe that we can go further on the basis of the material that we have looked at in this chapter and say that there is no discernible difference in the teaching of our churches on the Eucharist. With regard to this central sacrament of the Christian Church we share a common faith."

2.4.2 The proposals contained in this response to the Memorials to the Conference do not fundamentally alter the Methodist position

on Authorisations relating the Eucharistic Presidency and as such, it is suggested, do not change the findings of the Joint Implementation Commission in the various reports related to this issue. The Faith and Order Committee expect to be able to confirm this as the view of the JIC prior to, or during, the debate at the Conference.

### **Section 3: Presidency at The Lord's Supper and Fresh Expressions**

- 3.1 The Faith and Order Committee were aware, not least through its engagement with the Fresh Ways Working Group and the Joint Anglican Methodist Working Party on the Ecclesiology of Emerging Expressions of Church (JAMWPEEEC), that issues of Eucharistic Presidency were particularly acute within fresh expressions of Church. Issues here relate to the importance of lay leadership within many fresh expressions, the potential for disengagement with traditional structures and practices, and a resistance to those traditional structures 'taking over/colonising' such a central aspect of the emerging worship life of the fresh expression.
- 3.2 The Committee engaged in a reflective listening process whereby one of the Committee members asked leaders of various fresh expressions how they responded to the issues being explored. This created a healthy dialogue between
- different points of view rather than a finished statement of an official Methodist position. It was clear that there were considerable issues which seemed to focus around Eucharistic Presidency.
- 3.3 Some of these issues related to power dynamics within the Church. It was feared by some that the existing policy of the Church involved importing presbyters into fresh expressions to celebrate the Lord's Supper. This was difficult to explain to the members of the fresh expression from a biblical point of view and often the traditional doctrine arguments are seen to be a part of the problem rather than the answer to them. If this is a fresh expression, then why not do fresh things. Moreover, the fresh expressions/new ecclesial community could see our practice as something imposed rather than something positively explored. The new community needs to be actively engaged in the discernment process about the development of a Eucharistic ministry and how that relates to the ongoing life of the wider Church. The JAMWPEEEC report explores the need for a listening process between centre and local – between the Conference and fresh expressions. This listening process has to start in the local context with presbyters engaging with fresh expressions and fresh expressions engaging with local authorised ministries so that the implications of Eucharistic ministry



can be explored and the problems associated with 'parachuting in' can be minimised.

- 3.4 However, it is also clear that the development of new ecclesial communities need to be allowed to develop in fresh ways which both interlace with our current practice and theology and also offer a challenge to that practice and theology. This is part of the connectivity between centre and local, between the Conference and the local expression of Church which would allow for the kind of conversation between historic practice and contemporary usage to be developed.

### Conclusion

- 4.1 It is the conviction of the Faith and Order Committee that the various issues arising from existing experience, from the general consultation throughout the Connexion, and the specific consultations with the Methodist Diaconal Order and fresh expressions movement, suggest that the current practice of Authorisations should remain the same but that a new section should be introduced to the Guidance material outlining 'missional criteria' for authorisations. The latter would need to be worded appropriately to provide for a latitude of cultural experiences of deprivation – whether to do with the ethos of the fresh expression, or the use of language,

or some other cultural distinctive – which would thereby suggest that an authorisation would meet the deprivation.

- 4.2 Alongside this, further work must be done in different places to affirm and inform other aspects of our current practice and doctrine. These include a re-appraisal of collaborative forms of ministry where deacons and presbyters see their complementary roles within the worship life of the Church; where Circuits actively embrace the potential of fresh expressions in their midst and where presbyters, especially superintendents, go out of their way to ensure an attitude of hospitality and welcome to the opportunities afforded by new congregations and ecclesial communities; where presbyters are engaged with those fresh expressions from the start in ways which minimise the feeling that their involvement in a Eucharistic ministry is invasive or 'parachuting in'. Somehow, Methodism must embrace hospitality and avoid the development of a congregational attitude whereby the Local Church and the local congregation is the only horizon within which we see a celebration of the Lord's Supper. At that celebration we are called to recognise the body of Christ, which is the whole Church – local congregation, Circuit, District, Conference, denominations, worldwide expression! The Lord's Supper is a universal celebration as much as a local rite. In the

## 35. The Faith and Order Committee

same way, new congregations and ecclesial communities should be encouraged to cultivate an openness to the traditions and practices of

the Church of which they are a part. Such a dialogue is essential both for the inherited Church to hear the challenge of the new, and for the new

### \*\*\*RESOLUTIONS

**35/3. The Conference adopts section B of the report as its response to Memorials 18, 19 and 20 (2009).**

**35/4. The Conference directs that the following addition be made to the *Criteria for Authorising Persons other than Ministers to Preside at the Lord's Supper*:**

Between existing sections 2 and 3, add;

**3. *Missional Criteria for Assessment of Deprivation***

**3a) *The situation should have recognisable missionary potential and have the support of the Circuit Meeting and District Policy Committee. Missionary potential is evidenced in the presence of:***

- ***a new congregation or Christian community developed by an initiative or project which falls under the category of Fresh Expressions, VentureFX or similar***
- ***a congregation which would otherwise experience cultural isolation, eg in terms of language usage.***

**3b) *There should be compelling logistical, economic, cultural or other reasons for authorising a person other than a presbyter to preside at the Lord's Supper in such situations.***

**3c) *The lay person to whom authorisation is granted should be able to identify with the situation, preferably as a pioneer minister or some other community leader.***

And re-number existing sections 3-5 accordingly.

**35/5. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to explore with the Methodist Diaconal Order and the Ministries Committee the liturgical role of deacons within the Methodist Church and, if appropriate, find ways of affirming that.**

- 35/6. The Conference directs the Faith and order Committee in consultation with the Ministries Committee, Fresh Ways Working Group Practitioners Forum and VentureFX Pioneers to explore:**
- a. ways in which the Methodist Church can promote further hospitality, collaboration and mutuality between our orders of ministry,**
  - b. ways in which the Methodist Church can promote further hospitality, collaboration and mutuality between new and established forms of church, giving especial attention to the role of the superintendent in ensuring and facilitating the welcome of new congregations in the working of the Circuit.**

### **Section C: Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith**

- 1.1 The 2011 Conference directed the Committee to create a liturgy for the Renewal of Baptismal Vows, including the use of water.
- 1.2. In its continued exploration of the theological and practical questions raised by this liturgy, the Committee decided that the title should be altered to *Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith*. Initially the Committee

suggested the use of 'Promises' in line with the Methodist Worship Book's service for adult Baptism and Confirmation. However, it was then argued that the promises are not actually being reaffirmed through the service but rather the faith which underlies those promises. As such, the Committee agreed that the service title reflects that change.

- 1.3 The proposed liturgy is now available for distribution to Circuits for trial and experimentation.

The Liturgy:

#### THE REAFFIRMATION OF BAPTISMAL FAITH INCLUDING THE USE OF WATER

#### INTRODUCTION

Baptism is an unrepeatable sacrament of entry into the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of which the Methodist Church is part. In Confirmation, those who have been baptized declare their faith in Christ and are strengthened by the Holy Spirit for continuing discipleship.

The Methodist Church recognises that some who have been baptized have grown away from the Christian faith but have discovered afresh the claim of Christ on their lives and

## 35. The Faith and Order Committee

have felt the call to repentance. They long to rededicate themselves to Christ by renewing the expression of faith associated with Baptism and Confirmation.

The Methodist Church also recognises the deep pastoral needs of those who wish the reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith to include the sign and gift of water associated with the sacrament of Baptism.

Such of the above who were baptized as young children but have not been confirmed should be confirmed, to affirm their faith, make their promises to God and receive the strengthening grace of the Holy Spirit. They may wish at their Confirmation to express particular thanks for their Baptism by signing themselves with water, as guided by section 10 of the following service.

The service which follows is in its entirety for those who have previously been baptized and confirmed and who now seek to reaffirm their faith with the use of water.

In such services as the Easter Vigil (MWB p265) it has long been the practice of the church universal to associate the Reaffirmation of Baptism with the water of Baptism and each year many Easter congregations receive the Asperges or sprinkling with the Baptismal water.

### NOTES

Appropriate parts of this service may be used on the same occasion as A Celebration of Christian Renewal (MWB p404) or during a service in which others have been baptized or confirmed.

It is encouraged that this service should be within the context of celebration of Holy Communion.

The use of the order for Holy Communion for The Day of Pentecost and Times of Renewal in the Life of the Church (MWB p174) is especially suitable.

### THE PREFACE

1. Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
Blessed be his kingdom, now and forever.  
There is one Body and one Spirit;  
There is one hope in God's call to us;  
One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;  
One God and Father of all.

### THE DECLARATION

2. In Baptism God calls us into his covenant of grace in Christ.  
God is ever loving, and always faithful, even when we are faithless.  
In our Baptism God claimed us for his own.  
In our confirmation God strengthened us for discipleship  
and continues to give us the gift of the Holy Spirit.  
In our lives we continue to hear God's call to us  
to love and serve him at all times and in all places.  
We here confess what God has done for us,  
and re-affirm our response to his call.

### THE PRESENTATION OF THOSE REAFFIRMING THEIR BAPTISMAL FAITH

Items marked \* must be said in all circumstances of use of this liturgy.

3. The minister says:

The Lord has done great things for us and holy is his name.

N and N are here to give thanks for what the Lord has done for them and to declare their commitment to the one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
in whose name they were baptized.

4. The congregation stands

Those people who are reaffirming their Baptismal Faith are presented to the congregation and the minister asks them:

\* Have you been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit?

**I have.**

\* Do you earnestly desire, with all your heart and mind, to reaffirm your place in this covenant faith and declare again your commitment to Christ?

**I do.**

### THE DECISION AND PROFESSION OF FAITH

5. The congregation remains standing.

## 35. The Faith and Order Committee

The minister says to those reaffirming their Baptismal Faith:

In Baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light.  
To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him.  
Therefore, I ask:  
Do you turn away from evil and all that denies God?

**By the grace of God, I do.**

Do you turn to God,  
trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour,  
and in the Holy Spirit as helper and guide?

**By the grace of God, I do.**

6. The minister says to everyone present:

Do you believe and trust in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son?

**I believe in Jesus Christ,  
God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again,  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

Do you believe and trust in the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,**

**the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

7. Those reaffirming their Baptismal Faith may give their testimony to God's renewing grace and declare their commitment to Christ.

### THE DECLARATION AND REAFFIRMATION OF BAPTISMAL FAITH

8. Those reaffirming their Baptismal Faith move to the front of the church.

The minister says:

May God who brought you to new birth  
through water and the Spirit,  
keep you faithful to Christ.

9. The Congregation responds:

**Remember that you are baptized and be thankful.**

10. In silence, those reaffirming their Baptismal Faith sign themselves with water.
11. The minister says:

Let us pray:

Gracious God,  
Grant that *these* your *servants*  
may grow into the fullness of the stature of Christ.  
Equip *them* with the gifts of the Holy Spirit,  
fill *them* with all faith in believing  
that *they* may increase in love for your people  
and in the service of your kingdom of justice and peace.

**Amen**

### THE PROMISES

12. The minister says:

*N* and *N (N)*, I ask you now to respond to God's love and grace by making these promises:

## 35. The Faith and Order Committee

Will you commit yourself to the Christian life of worship and service, and be open to the renewing power of God?

**With God's help I will.**

Will you seek the strength of God's Spirit as you accept the cost of following Jesus Christ in your daily life?

**With God's help I will.**

Will you witness, by word and deed, to the good news of God in Christ, and so give glory to God?

**With God's help I will.**

We rejoice with you in your experience of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; and we pray for God's continued blessing on you.

13. The minister says to the congregation:

Members of the Body of Christ, we rejoice that *these*, our *sisters and brothers*, have reaffirmed *their* Baptismal Faith and declared *their* commitment to Jesus Christ.

Will you so maintain the Church's life of worship and service that *they* may continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord?

**With God's help we will.**

14. The minister says:

Let us pray:

**Generous God,  
touch us again  
with the fire of your Spirit  
and renew in us all  
the grace of our Baptism;  
that we may profess the one true faith  
and live in love and unity**



**with all who are baptized into Christ. Amen.**

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine on you  
and be gracious to you;  
the Lord look on you with kindness  
and give you peace. **Amen.**

15. Hymn

16. The service continues from the prayers of Intercession in any appropriate order for Holy Communion. That for The Day of Pentecost and Times of Renewal in the life of the Church (MWB p174) is especially suitable.

**\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

**35/7. The Conference receives the liturgy for the *Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith including the use of Water* and commends it to Local Churches and Circuits for experimental use.**

