

47. Joint Implementation Commission

Interim Report - *In the Spirit of the Covenant*

The Interim Report of the Joint Implementation Commission under the Covenant between the Methodist Church in Great Britain and the Church of England - *In the Spirit of the Covenant*, is to be found below. It is presented to the Methodist Conference and the General Synod of the Church of England. It consists of various materials (including two personal essays) which present a range of views on a number of topics, and which are presented in order to stimulate thought, prayer, response and action throughout the two Churches.

The Joint Implementation Commission was set up with an initial period of five years and will report again on its work to the Methodist Conference and the General Synod of the Church of England no later than the summer of 2008. To help the Commission in that work it would be helpful to receive responses to the material in the Interim Report by the 31st March 2007. One of the resolutions below encourages such timely responses.

*****RESOLUTION**

- 47/1.** The Conference receives the Report.
- 47/2.** The Conference commends the material in the Report to the Methodist people as a basis for study and action, to be undertaken wherever possible with representatives of the Church of England and other partner Churches.

47/3. The Conference encourages individuals, local churches, Circuits, Districts and other bodies and groups within the Connexion to send any considered responses to the Methodist Co-Convenor by the 31st March 2007.

IN THE SPIRIT OF THE COVENANT

**Interim Report (2005) of the
Joint Implementation Commission
under the Covenant between**

The Methodist Church of Great Britain

and

The Church of England

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CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	1
2.	The Covenant Relationship – Foundations and Values	6
3.	The Covenant Relationship – Developing a Lifestyle	18
4.	A Guide to Good Covenanting	33
5.	The Bread and Wine of Holy Communion	36
6.	Presidency at the Eucharist	50
	An Anglican Perspective – Dr Martin Davie	51
	A Methodist Perspective – The Revd Dr Martin Wellings	75
7.	Towards the Interchangeability of Ordained Ministries	90
8.	Conclusion	112
Appendix A	Applying Canon B 43 in the context of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant	113
Appendix B	The membership of the Joint Implementation Commission	117

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The role of the Joint Implementation Commission

- 1.1.1 The Methodist Conference and the General Synod of the Church of England approved the Anglican-Methodist Covenant for England in the Summer of 2003 by large majorities (76% in favour in the Conference, 91% in Synod) after debate throughout the two churches. At the same time, Conference and Synod agreed to set up a joint commission which would have the task of monitoring and promoting the implementation of the Covenant. This Joint Implementation Commission (JIC) was given an initial life of five years and was mandated to make its first report to Conference and General Synod after two years. The JIC is now pleased to present that interim report. It is intended to stimulate thought, prayer, response and action throughout the two churches
- 1.1.2 The purpose of this report is twofold: first, to make known and to commend as good practice particular developments under the Covenant, in various areas of the life of our two churches; and second, to provide some substantial resources for the process of reflection and prayer about the issues that continue to divide us at this stage that Methodists and Anglicans need to engage in, separately and together, centrally and locally. So the report is meant to help Anglicans and Methodists in England both to make the Covenant a practical reality now and to chart the direction in which we need to move, in the spirit of the Covenant, to a further phase of visible unity.
- 1.1.3 The JIC consists of six Methodists, appointed by the Conference, six Anglicans, appointed by the Appointments Committee of the Archbishops' Council on advice from the Council for Christian Unity, and a participant from the United Reformed Church. The membership of the JIC is given at the end of this report. Once the membership had been established and crowded diaries had been consulted, it was not possible to have the first meeting before December 2003. The text of this report had to be agreed by the end of March 2005. It therefore represents a working period of only fifteen months. It is very much a statement of work in progress. It has no pretensions to be complete or definitive. In particular, it has not been possible

for the JIC to bring the work that it is doing on lay ministries to the point where a section could be included in the report. Similarly, work remains to be done on how those parts of the Methodist Church in Great Britain outside England relate to the Church of England, and how that relationship affects their relationships with their other ecumenical partners, including other Anglican Churches.

- 1.1.4 At its first meeting, the JIC divided itself into four task groups, with some overlap of membership between them: (1) A group focusing on the Faith and Order issues raised by the Covenant; (2) a group working on the local and practical implementation of the Covenant; (3) a group looking at ways of commending and communicating the Covenant; and (4) a group studying the wider ecumenical implications of the Covenant. While the whole JIC has met five times (once overnight) during the past fifteen months, the task groups have each met a number of times to work on their special areas of concern. The texts that the groups have produced have then been worked over by the whole JIC. This report is, therefore, owned and endorsed by the JIC as a whole as a stimulus to study and reflection.

1.2 The structure of this report

- 1.2.1 The first major section of the report consists of some biblical and theological reflections on the meaning of Covenant. It was only at a comparatively late stage that the Formal Conversations realised that the proposals that they had arrived at, for a new relationship between our two churches, were of a covenantal nature and called for covenantal language to express them. Regrettably, it was not feasible at that stage for the Formal Conversations to begin work on the deeper theological implications of what it means for churches to be in a covenant relationship. Of course, Christians have a tacit understanding of covenant through their knowledge of Scripture and their experience of the covenant between God and his people that is sealed in baptism and celebrated and renewed in the Eucharist. A covenantal spirituality informs many hymns and prayers of the Christian tradition. Methodists, of course, have their annual Covenant Service. The Formal Conversations were therefore taking up a familiar theme in

proposing to the two churches that their relationship should be described as a covenant.

- 1.2.2 However, the material offered here is intended to deepen the spirituality of covenant, and in particular to give greater theological depth to the mutual recognition and mutual commitment that the Covenant entails, for Anglicans and Methodists who are seeking to put it into effect. The JIC is only too well aware that the biblical scholarship relating to covenant is immense and that it is a somewhat contested area of research. Although we have taken advice from distinguished biblical scholars in our two churches, we are conscious that we have only scratched the surface of this profound theological theme. Nevertheless, we believe that this section contains food for thought, for prayer and for action.
- 1.2.3 The next main section of the report begins by acknowledging the issues raised by the fact that the two partners to the Covenant are a church in one nation (the Church of England) and a church in three nations (the Methodist Church in Great Britain) and then surveys – albeit selectively – some of the ways in which the Covenant is already being put into practice: in parishes and circuits, in districts and dioceses, by church leaders, and by the central staffs of our churches. It is true that the making of the Covenant represented to some extent a recognition and consolidation of what was already happening in many places, and an incentive to Anglicans and Methodists to be more energetic, consistent and bold in what they were already able to do under the rules of their churches. Nevertheless, the material presented here is a sign of fresh developments. It contains a challenge to those among us who have barely begun to live out the Covenant and an encouragement to those who have already travelled some of the way along the path. This section also includes signposts that point towards good practice in practical Covenant implementation.
- 1.2.4 After the reflective material on covenant and the sketch of some significant local and national developments that the JIC wishes to endorse as good practice, the report concentrates on three major areas of unresolved difference between the Methodist Church and the Church of England in the field of

Faith and Order. In this work, the JIC has benefited, so far as time has allowed, from the advice of the Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England and the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church, and is grateful for the assistance of two consultants, one Methodist and one Anglican.

- 1.2.5 The three areas discussed are: (1) the eucharistic elements and the method of disposing reverently of any consecrated elements that remain after communion; (2) presidency at the Eucharist and in particular the question of non-presbyteral presidency; (3) the interchangeability of ordained ministries and the factors that would contribute to bringing about a fully interchangeable ordained ministry between our two churches in the future.
- 1.2.6 In each of these areas our aim is both descriptive and analytical. First of all, we have set out to describe and to represent the theology and practice of our churches fairly and accurately. Then we have attempted to draw out and to examine the issues at stake for Methodists and Anglicans alike and, where it seemed appropriate, to point to the steps that would help our churches to draw closer together. Our purpose is to look closely at the remaining obstacles, in theology and practice, to further and deeper visible unity and to indicate how those obstacles might be overcome.
- 1.2.7 In the section on the eucharistic elements, therefore, we commend some practices, within the rules of our churches, that we believe would bring us closer to our Lord's institution and closer to each other. Overall, however, the faith and order material in the various sections of the report is not prescriptive. Rather it is offered for an active process of study and prayer, reflection and discernment during this first phase of the Covenant. The JIC believes that it will contribute to deeper mutual understanding of our traditions: the reasons why we hold certain positions and defend certain practices.
- 1.2.8 The Commission recognises that progress in some areas, particularly with regard to the interchangeability of ministries, will depend on how certain recent and current studies in our churches (particularly on oversight [*episkope*], episcopacy and the ministry of women) are received and carried forward over

the next few years. Towards the end of its initial mandate of five years, the Commission intends to bring a further report to Conference and General Synod, which will reflect on further developments in and between our churches and (we trust) will make it possible for the JIC to offer some more far-reaching proposals for the enhancement of our Covenant relationship in the future.

- 1.2.9 Meanwhile, the JIC would welcome considered comments from Methodist and Anglican individuals and groups and from ecumenical partners and bodies on the material offered in this initial report. Any observations should be sent to the co-convenors of the JIC, whose names and addresses appear in Appendix B.

2. THE COVENANT RELATIONSHIP – FOUNDATIONS AND VALUES

2.1 When the representatives of the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain agreed their Common Statement, they made no explicit attempt to tease out why they were proposing a *covenant* relationship between their two Churches – beyond this brief but significant paragraph in the foreword.

The language of Covenant is important. As we have already suggested, it picks up the many covenantal relationships at the local and regional level between Anglicans and Methodists, and indeed with other Christians too. It is also a profoundly biblical term. In Scripture, God’s covenant with his people is made by grace. It involves forgiveness and healing. It survives the ups and downs of human nature and human experience, for it is God who calls and enables and God keeps faith.

2.2 In its first response to the Common Statement, the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church commented: ‘Whilst recognizing the understandable caution displayed by the proposals, we would not wish the value and strength of a “Covenant” entered into to be considered lightly.’

2.3 Similarly, the Enabling Group of Churches Together in England had this to say:

CTE particularly wishes to highlight the idea of Covenant, and to urge upon the two Churches that the relationship into which they enter is one which extends beyond agreement or contract. ... ‘Covenant’ implies a willingness to remain faithful even when the other partner is faithless, and this distinguishes it from a contract. Covenant is both communal and individual – each Church (corporate) and its constituent members. Covenant implies *metanoia*: reflection, repentance, a willingness to change and to be entirely open to the other.

- 2.4 CTE also noted the commitment of many local churches (of a variety of traditions) to shared mission and ministry in local covenanted partnerships. This in itself has made many people realise how significant a distinctively ‘covenantal’ relationship might be. All partners need to be clear what qualities are needed in a relationship if it is to deserve the name ‘covenant’. A consultation on the future of Local Ecumenical Partnerships in 2002 called for further study, and a conference of County and National Ecumenical Officers is due to address this theme in 2005.
- 2.5 The concept of ‘covenant’ dovetails with the more familiar ecumenical language of *koinonia*. It runs like a seam of gold through the Scriptures, as well as subsequently through virtually every Christian tradition. What follows is a preliminary contribution to a quest for understanding in which many others are sharing.

2.6 *In the Bible*

- 2.6.1 Throughout the centuries the concept of ‘covenant’ has migrated backwards and forwards between the political and religious spheres. It is widely accepted that the origins of the concept in the ancient Hebrew scriptures lie in the vassal treaties that the inhabitants of a town or village might be required to make to show their allegiance to one local war-lord rather than any other. They were a declaration of loyalty by a group of people to the one who was promising them protection.
- 2.6.2 We may never know at what point the Hebrew tribes came to realise that they were in a similar relationship with the Lord (YHWH), their God. At least three occasions of God’s covenant promise can be identified in the Old Testament (Noah, Abraham, Moses), and successive generations of prophets and writers can be seen to be re-expressing and renewing them.
- 2.6.3 The earliest, at least as presented in the biblical narrative, is God’s covenant promise to Noah. In the story God chose Noah and his family to survive the flood, but God’s subsequent covenant is ‘with every living creature’ with the promise ‘Never again ...’ (Genesis 9). On this foundation God is then

shown to be calling and covenanting with Abram - as an individual – so that he becomes Abraham, ‘ancestor of a multitude of nations’ (Genesis chapters 15 and 17).

- 2.6.4 What follows is the long saga of the Patriarchs, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph – leading to slavery in Egypt. God covenants then through Moses with the people of Israel. ‘You shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation’ (Exodus 19.6). Once again the making of the covenant is preceded by a direct confrontation that Moses has with God – at the burning bush and then again with, the whole people, at Sinai.
- 2.6.5 The appropriate response is loyalty and obedience, a relational obedience as set out in the Ten Commandments and in the laws that follow (Exodus 20-23 and Deuteronomy 5.6). The God who has made a covenant with all creation at the time of Noah (demanding no explicit response), now covenants with the particular people whom God has liberated from Egypt. So no other allegiances are possible, no images other than knowing that all human beings are in the image of God, no manipulation of God (by taking the name of God in vain). A rhythm of Sabbath permits celebration and recollection of the people’s place before God, and includes the Jubilee restoration of God’s peace, justice and integrity of creation.

Obedience involves behaving in a way which reflects the character of God who gave the covenant – a loving response to what God has done. It involves both worshipping and serving God. (In Hebrew one word is used for both ‘worship’ and ‘serve’.)¹

- 2.6.6 A fourth significant ‘covenant moment’ in the biblical narrative can be located in the choosing of David to be king of the Israelite nation (1 Samuel 16). However, the explicit encounter with God and the language of covenant is not part of the story, and it is some time before we read of David acknowledging God’s promises (2 Samuel 7). At the end of his life, King David celebrates God’s covenant with ‘one who rules over

1. See *Called to Love and Praise*, a Methodist Conference Statement on the Church, Peterborough: MPH, 1999. Section 2.2 sets out a Methodist understanding of what is meant by being ‘The Covenant People’.

people justly, ruling in the fear of God' (2 Samuel 23.2-5). David asks: 'Is not my house like this with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure.' When Solomon celebrates the building of the temple, he speaks of this as God's 'other promise' (1 Kings 8.25). Psalm 89 also explicitly affirms God's covenantal relationship with King David (vv.3-4).

- 2.6.7 The common threads throughout are God's choosing, God's promising and God's giving of gifts – and the fact that it is all for a purpose beyond those who immediately benefit. The appropriate response is loyalty expressed in obedience – loyalty, however, to God as God, not as a matter of contractual agreement.
- 2.6.8 This last point became even clearer as successive generations coped with the disloyalty of the people. God's choosing, promising and gifting are all gracious acts – with no strings attached. God is faithful, even when other partners to the covenant break faith. Underlying it all is God's constant love (Hebrew: *hesed* – e.g. 2 Samuel 7.15) and God's commitment to a saving purpose through history for the whole of creation. It was Israel's prophets who tried to work out the implications.
- 2.6.9 Hosea discovered this truth about God as he experienced his own love for his wife Gomer, despite her unfaithfulness. Hosea expresses a love-longing in the heart of God: 'I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings.' (Hosea 6.6) We also read God's response to the people's infidelity: 'How can I give you up, Ephraim? ... I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath' (Hosea 11.8, 9).
- 2.6.10 In Babylon, during the exile, Isaiah (the second 'Isaiah', Prophet of the Exile) sings passionately about the recalling of a repudiated wife (Isaiah 54) – and repeats the 'never again ...' which was the commitment of God's covenant with Noah. However, in marked contrast to the intimacy of Hosea, he also re-discovered that God's faithfulness was linked to that wider universal purpose which had always been part of God's

- covenant intent. 'I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations ...' (Isaiah 42.6).
- 2.6.11 Jeremiah's vision of a 'new covenant' (Jeremiah 31.31-34) stresses that the special relationship into which God's people are called has to be internalised in their hearts. And it is God who will do it. Similarly Ezekiel develops the imagery of the new heart (Ezekiel 36.26), as well as the image of Jerusalem (and its people) as an adulteress, again echoing Hosea. Yet God will honour God's covenant with them and renew it (Ezekiel 16).
- 2.6.12 Ezekiel also connects with God's 'other promise' to King David. 'I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them ... I will make with them a covenant of peace ...' (Ezekiel 34.23-25).
- 2.6.13 From even the most cursory look through the New Testament, it is clear that the language of covenant (constant love, choice, promise, purpose, gift, grace) can be found extensively – in both the Gospels and the Epistles, but particularly in the letter to the Hebrews and in Paul's letter to the Galatians.
- 2.6.14 The insights of the prophets, interpreting God's covenant, clearly had a profound effect on the earliest Christians as they tried to articulate their encounter with God in Jesus Christ. It makes sense to them that Jesus is 'of the line of David' (Matthew 1.1) and is 'the good shepherd' (John 10.11). Mary in 'Magnificat' (Luke 1.46-55) and Zechariah in 'Benedictus' (Luke 1.67-79) both link God's new initiative back to God's faithful love (*hesed*) and to the covenant promise made to Abraham. Simeon in the 'Nunc Dimittis' (Luke 2.29-32) echoes the Prophet of the Exile. St Paul in his letter to the Galatians stresses that the new covenant is of a piece with the old – emphasising relationships and reconciliation, not Hagar's slavery (Galatians 4.21–5.1). In the first letter of Peter, powerful reference is made to the first chapters of Hosea (1 Peter 2.10).
- 2.6.15 The writer to the Hebrews (Hebrews 8.8-13) quotes several verses from Jeremiah 31 – and then draws out in subsequent

chapters how the new covenant in the heart is made possible because of Christ's self-sacrifice on the cross (as he shows complete loyalty and obedience) – a covenant sealed with Christ's blood. It is a better covenant, argues the writer to the Hebrews, 'which has been enacted through better promises'. (Hebrews 8.6) 'Christ [has] offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins' (Hebrews 10.12). The writer even repeats part of the Jeremiah quotation to sum up what he has to say (Hebrews 10.16-17).

- 2.6.16 In the first three Gospels (and in 1 Corinthians) Jesus is quoted linking 'covenant' with 'my blood' as he gives the wine at the Last Supper (Luke and St Paul call it a 'new' covenant). Matthew and Mark, in narrating the words Jesus uses as he gives the cup to the disciples, seem to recognise echoes from the Prophet of the Exile (Isaiah 52.3–53.12). Jesus, they record, speaks of 'my blood ... poured out for many'.
- 2.6.17 The Last Supper, with its focus on 'covenant,' is the point where St Paul seems to anchor his understanding of *koinonia* (1 Corinthians 10, 16-17) – a word usually rather inadequately translated 'communion' or 'fellowship.' In 2 Corinthians (13.13) and in Philippians (2.1) St Paul then further defines it as 'the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit'.
- 2.6.18 The Anglican-Methodist Common Statement makes considerable use of the language of the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit. Paragraph 181 provides a memorable definition when it speaks of 'the vital organic life of the Church as a body infused by the power of the Holy Spirit, that is to say, ... *koinonia*.'
- 2.6.19 Paragraph 83 is also saying important things about the nature of a *covenant* relationship, when it explains the language of *koinonia* as follows:

Thus the *koinonia* that we experience in the Christian community is not only a fellowship one with another, but also a relationship of communion with God that is both personal and communal. *Koinonia* stands for a full communion with God (2 Corinthians 13.13, a sharing in the very life of God (1 John 1.3), a partaking of the divine nature (2 Peter 1.4). This means that the Church should

never be defined merely in terms of its activities as an institution, but always in terms of the character and purpose that it receives from God through grace.

2.6.20 Although the word ‘covenant’ is not used, a vivid summary of God’s covenant relationship revealed in Christ is to be found in the letter to the Ephesians where, in chapter one, the author sets out the blessings of our union with Christ – echoing in every clause the key insights we have discerned in the Hebrew scriptures:

- He *chose* us in Christ before the world was founded ... in *love* (v.4).
- He *destined* us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ ... (v.5).
- to the praise of his glorious *grace* that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved (v.6).
- Therein lies the richness of God’s free *grace* ... (v.7).
- He has made known to us the mystery of his *will* ... as a plan for the fullness of time. (v.9f.).

It is made possible in Christ “*through his blood*” (v.7 – with echoes of Hebrews 8-10).

2.6.21 And what is God’s purpose? ‘... to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth’ (v.10). The Common Statement (paragraph 80) highlights this verse – ‘The unbreakable link between unity and mission derives from [this] fact.’ Evidently it is too small a thing, within God’s purposes, that we should be seeking the full visible unity of Christ’s Church!

2.6.22 ‘The “covenant of grace” is what history is all about’, said theologian Karl Barth. It is God’s covenant through Christ with the whole of humankind – and the whole of creation! History is the arena for God’s saving and reconciling work. Our greatest disloyalty in this renewed and altogether deeper covenant relationship with God in Christ is divisiveness. ‘For he is our peace. In his flesh he has made both groups into one ...’ (Ephesians 2.14). And God’s covenant sticks despite our

unfaithfulness – ‘for he cannot deny himself’ (see 2 Timothy 2.11-13).

2.7 *In the Christian era*

2.7.1 The following can only provide a few glimpses of how Christ’s disciples across the generations have been coming to terms with their place in God’s covenant purposes. For many centuries it seems that the language of ‘communion’ rather than that of ‘covenant’ became the language of choice when people were discussing the nature and dynamics of Christ’s Body, the Church. It has been suggested that the word ‘covenant’, as translated into the Roman context,² had too many connotations with a ‘secret society’. Following the convergence of Church and State after Constantine, it seems that little was left of the language of ‘covenant’ except its use as a way of bundling the Jewish scriptures alongside the new canon of Christian texts so as to create the Old and New ‘Testaments’ of the Christian Bible. Tertullian, however, speaks of ‘the covenant of faith’ in relation to the Eucharist³ – and further Patristic research would surely recover a great deal of forgotten wisdom.

2.7.2 The term ‘Covenant’ was undoubtedly re-discovered in the midst of the politics of the Reformation. But it was re-discovered much more as an initiative by human beings. Covenants became rallying points for reform and radical obedience to the word of God. The Bible was now in print and in the hands of individual Christians. The result was a new, or at least more self-conscious, ‘horizontal’ understanding of covenant - between Christians – alongside the more ‘vertical’ covenant relationship with God as understood from the Bible.

2.7.3 Covenants were ‘bonds’ among those resisting imposed uniformity – ‘bund’ is the name of the associations of Protestants in Germany. ‘A Solemn League and Covenant’ was made in Cromwell’s time to preserve ‘reformed religion.’

2.7.4 However, the sense was not lost that a covenant relationship relies on the initiative of God’s grace. It seems rather that there was a greatly increased self-awareness among individuals and

2. cf. Potter P., ‘Covenant’ in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, (2nd Edition), Geneva: WCC, 2002.

3. Tertullian, *De Pudicitia*, IX.

groups as they entered that relationship. The Scottish covenanters in 1638 each pledged to behave ‘as beseemeth Christians who have renewed their covenant with God’.

- 2.7.5 A covenant relationship which was both ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ became an important part of the experience of seventeenth-century puritans who knew themselves as people bound to God individually and corporately. Here are the roots of the tradition of covenant-renewal that takes place in Methodist churches and elsewhere at New Year.
- 2.7.6 Often under pressure of persecution, many early Congregationalists and Baptists were led to recognise and to imitate God’s covenant faithfulness in their relations with each other. John Smyth (1607) defines the church as a visible community of saints where ‘two, three or more saints join together by covenant with God and with themselves.’ As a result, it was traditional until quite recently for a Baptist congregation to have a written ‘covenant’ alongside its ‘confession of faith’. The practice remains current in the Congregational tradition to this day. Since the millennium, Baptists in England have been renewing their response to God’s covenant as a common call to witness and service.
- 2.7.7 Methodism today continues its practice of annual covenant-renewal, and Christians from many other traditions are discovering its value through attending Methodist Covenant Services. John Wesley insisted that the renewal of the covenant should happen in the context of the Holy Communion – an important insight deeply embedded within Church of England thinking from the seventeenth century and earlier. The concept of Covenant, however, that Wesley came to know and develop owes a considerable amount to a more specifically puritan tradition. The present Covenant prayer has its origins in the compositions of Joseph and Richard Alleine.
- 2.7.8 As Wesley was aware, the seventeenth century thinkers of the Church of England expressed their sense of the covenant relationship (with God and with the Christian community) through their understanding of Baptism and Holy Communion. Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688) writes: ‘By eating and drinking at God’s own table, and of his meat, we are taken into a sacred

covenant, and inviolable league of friendship with him.’ Herbert Thorndike (1598-1672) argues that we enter our covenant with God (or God with us) at Baptism and renew it at every Eucharist. Simon Patrick (1626-1707) invites us to take delight at each Eucharist in renewing our covenant with God and with each other.⁴

- 2.7.9 In more recent times ‘covenant’ has become something of a ‘code-word’ in inter-church dialogue. As such, it seems once again to have acquired some political overtones. ‘Covenant’ was the language used between the nations when the League of Nations was formed early in the twentieth century.
- 2.7.10 In the 1940s, given the failure of the covenant which produced the League of Nations, perhaps it was brave of the Christian Churches to reclaim the covenant concept when they founded the World Council of Churches.⁵ Statements from successive WCC Assemblies have developed ‘covenant’ as a key ecumenical concept – with clear vertical, horizontal and future orientations.
- 2.7.11 A number of denominations in England and Wales tried to follow the covenanting path in the 1970s. The first of what eventually came to be called Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs), established following the Nottingham Conference of 1964, were seen as pioneer expressions of the forthcoming covenant relationship. They were known first as Areas of Ecumenical Experiment, then as Local Ecumenical Projects – indicating their experimental nature.
- 2.7.12 The Churches’ covenanting proposals in England failed in 1982. A number of Churches in Wales, including the Methodist

4. These quotations can all be found in Stevenson, K., *Covenant of Grace Renewed: Vision of the Eucharist in the Seventeenth Century*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1994, pp.158, 163 (Cudworth), 188 and 204 (Thorndike), 205 (Patrick).

5. “Here at Amsterdam we have committed ourselves afresh to [God], and have covenanted with one another in constituting this World Council of Churches. We intend to stay together. We call upon Christian congregations everywhere to endorse and fulfil this covenant in their relations with one another. In thankfulness to God we commit the future to him”, Potter, P., op.cit., from the message of the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1948.

Church (a Church in three nations), agreed their Covenant – but after almost three decades some may be disappointed about what it has achieved. It has, however, addressed many important issues, not least in relation to episcopacy. Significantly none of the Welsh covenanting Churches wish to break off the relationship, and all formally renewed their commitment in 2004. A covenant relationship is similar to that implied by the vows made in marriage, ‘for better, for worse ...’

- 2.7.13 American Churches in the late 1980s, and in a very different context, tried to develop a vision of ‘The Church of Christ Uniting’ – claiming ‘covenanting is not an interim step ... but a valid form of unity.’ The resulting ‘Churches of Christ Uniting’ (plural) is evidence that making a covenant does not instantly solve problems. For example, they remain unable to achieve full mutual recognition of ordained ministries – a sticking point in the Welsh Covenant, and the most immediate challenge facing the Church of England and the Methodist Church in their new covenant commitment. Even so, our two Churches should not lose sight of the positive assessment in paragraph 176 of the Common Statement:

All the essential theological ingredients to bring about an integrated ministry in the future seem to be in place. Faith and vision are what are chiefly needed now. It should not be beyond the two churches, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to agree on the actual process of integration in the next steps, as they implement together the affirmations and commitments of the Covenant.

2.8 *Some conclusions*

- 2.8.1 Philip Potter’s assessment (after surveying half a century of WCC debates!) remains true: ‘Ecumenical thinking is still at an initial stage concerning the relationship between covenants given by God, the human acceptance of them and, within that context, covenants made among human beings themselves.’⁶
- 2.8.2 Anything called a ‘covenant’ has primarily to do with relationships rather than rules, although clearly in the Old

6. Potter, P., op.cit.

Testament the rules (law, statutes, ordinances, etc) are there to help the covenantal relationship to work. God's covenant 'is not a doctrinal concept ... but the characteristic description of a living process' (Eichrodt).⁷ Rules are needed as part of the self-discipline that gives effect to the relationship. Marriage is another example of a covenant relationship which also has legal form. The Methodist Covenant prayer emphasises the *cost* of discipleship.

2.8.3 A covenant represents a two-way traffic of faith and faithfulness – trust and trustworthiness. It marks a commitment to develop and sustain a distinctive relationship, which is observable through how the partners behave towards each other under God and in Christ as they engage in God's mission together, rather than because they engage in a particular range of activities.

2.8.4 The remarkably consistent witness of the Bible challenges us to recognise that when Christian communities covenant with one another, their relationship must aspire to the same characteristics expressed through God's covenant relationships down the centuries.

- Their covenant commitment will be by deliberate *choice*;
- it will aspire to be energised by the '*constant love*' that we recognise in God, and by the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit;
- it will be *purposeful* (in tune with God's ultimate purpose);
- it will be marked by a *gracious giving* (liberating, not patronising)
- and a *grateful receiving* (love-enhancing, not servile)
- which in turn will be characterised by *mutuality* and Christ-like *self-sacrifice*.

2.8.5 And, at its heart, it will be *eucharistic* (i.e. founded on gratitude) – because it will seek to be an expression of the Holy *Communion* in which Christ calls us to share – the Holy Communion of three persons in one God, the Trinity – the Holy

7. Eichrodt, W., *Theology of the Old Testament*, London: SCM Press, 1957, Preface.

Communion that we are called to experience as a holy people as well as in bread and wine.

3. THE COVENANT RELATIONSHIP – DEVELOPING A LIFESTYLE

Note: In this section of the report, various points are highlighted in bold type. Whilst not being formal recommendations, they are issues to which the Joint Implementation Commission wishes to draw the attention of the two churches.

3.1 While there are initiatives across England which have arisen directly and exclusively as a result of the covenant commitment between the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain, much else is happening which deserves to be celebrated as being in the spirit of the Covenant commitment. All this must be seen within the context of ecumenical developments in the four nations and with various ecumenical partner churches.

3.1.1 For both our churches the Covenant takes its place in a web of ecumenical relationships and agreements with a range of partner churches. For the Church of England, these include the Meissen, Reuilly, Porvoo and Bonn agreements with churches based in mainland Europe. For the Methodist Church, as a church in three nations, there are relationships in Scotland and Wales, both in relation to the Anglican churches in those countries and in wider ecumenical relationships. In Scotland, whilst the Scottish Church Initiative for Union proposals were not accepted by all four partner churches, they have led to further explorations of potential common ground between the Scottish Episcopal Church, the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church in particular. As already noted in Wales a Covenant was signed in 1975 and a subsequent review has, in the course of the last year, seen a recommitment by all the Covenanted Churches to its aims. In Britain as a whole the Methodist Church is committed to a shared pastoral strategy with the United Reformed Church.

3.2 The prime value of an Anglican-Methodist Covenant for England, lies in the climate of presumption which it has put in place whereby joint working in mission and ministry should increasingly now be the norm rather than the exception. None of this excludes covenant commitments for specific purposes

with other Christians in other traditions nor, in our dealings with other Churches, does it set aside the wider presumption set out in the Lund principle that we should at all times only do separately what we cannot in conscience do together.⁸

3.3 *An initial observation*

3.3.1 The structures and culture of our two churches are very different. One is made up of forty-four dioceses – each with considerable autonomy – across two English provinces (including the Diocese of Europe), and the other is a single integrated connexion with churches in three nations, England, Wales and Scotland. From a Methodist perspective, the Anglican-Methodist Covenant is an example (like the Covenant in Wales) of a challenge to the Connexion where an initiative in one part or nation is not directly applicable to others, but still has major implications for their ministry and mission in various ways.

3.3.2 For the Church of England the “national” emerges from a coming together of the dioceses. For Methodists, the connexional dimension is pivotal, and finds expression as District and Circuit.

3.3.3 These fundamental characteristics lead to a different set of interactions within each denominational system and to markedly different ways in which decisions are taken. Great care has to be taken in any interchange between our two Churches to ensure that ‘like talks to like’ and that we do not demand from each other what the other is unable to deliver.

3.4 *National and connexional developments and trends*

3.4.1 It will not be straightforward, therefore, at any level within our Churches to find situations where equivalent agencies can develop joint initiatives, still less merge their activities. But it is not impossible.

8. “Should not our churches ask themselves ... whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?,” from ‘A Word to the Churches,’ issued after the third World Conference on Faith and Order at Lund, Sweden, 1952.

- 3.4.2 Feedback from questionnaires circulated recently among the headquarters staff of the two Churches reveals well-established patterns of regular contact between the specialist staff and their nearest equivalent colleagues in the other Church. Usually these contacts involve other denominations as well, and the 1990 commitment to be ‘Churches Together’, as expressed in the Swanwick Declaration of 1987, has achieved a great deal. The specialist personnel across the Churches generally know what their counterparts are doing, and relationships are cordial.
- 3.4.3 Joint working has been achieved in two areas – in the appointment of a joint adviser for work in the Further Education sector, and in collaboration over statistical research. In both cases these are more than just bilateral commitments.
- 3.4.4 **We believe that our two Churches need to respond to the challenge entailed in the Covenant to find fresh ways of integrating appropriate areas of work while remaining sensitive to the wider ecumenical context.**
- 3.4.5 In that wider context, a specialist team from one Church will from time to time be able to do a particular piece of work from which others can benefit. In the Autumn of 2004, for example, the Methodist Church and the Salvation Army took the lead on behalf of the Churches in responding to the government’s proposed legislation on gambling. No system exists, however, by which work is routinely allocated to be done by one Church on behalf of all.
- 3.4.6 In the spirit of our covenant commitment, staff of the Methodist Connexional team are working closely with Anglicans to develop strategic responses to the new patterns of missionary engagement known collectively as ‘fresh expressions of church’. Their appropriate point of contact, however, is not the General Synod’s Division of Mission and Public Affairs – although staff there have done much to broker what is actually happening. The Methodist Church is developing its active partnership with the Archbishops’ Missioner, The Revd Dr Steven Croft, who is also the team leader of ‘Fresh Expressions’, a new initiative of the Archbishops funded by the Lambeth Fund with the support of the Lambeth Partners. The Archbishops’ Missioner’s first full-

time colleague will be The Revd Peter Pillinger, funded by the Methodist Church. He will take up the appointment on 1st September 2005.

- 3.4.7 Two issues emerge from this. *Firstly*, the signing of the Covenant was not the starting date for co-operation between our two Churches. Co-operation predates it. The Covenant both encourages existing co-operation and looks for a widening of it. *Secondly*, this instance illustrates the difficulty that can be caused by the dispersed nature of authority in the Church of England. It is not always clear where responsibility for a particular initiative may lie.
- 3.4.8 Both prior to and following the signing of the Covenant, joint meetings have taken place between Church of England House of Bishops and the Chairs of Methodist Districts. This has helped to increase trust between colleagues at a personal level. A meeting between the House of Bishops and the Connexional Leadership Team (including the Chairs of Districts) is planned for October 2005.
- 3.4.9 Valuable though these meetings have been, the different roles of the House of Bishops and the Connexional Leadership Team within our church polities mean that they have not been able adequately to address strategic and policy issues.
- 3.4.10 **We therefore believe that our Churches need to clarify for each other our different decision-making processes, where responsibility for particular initiatives lies, and to develop more effective ways of taking strategic and policy-forming decisions together. The Joint Implementation Commission is happy to give priority to this in the next stage of its work.**

3.5 *Districts and Dioceses*

- 3.5.1 Even before the signing of the Covenant, many dioceses and districts were exploring how they could co-operate more closely. The opportunities vary markedly in different parts of the country. It is clearly much easier to develop significant interaction where the diocese and the district serve substantial areas and populations in common – e.g. in Lincolnshire, Devon, Cornwall, Cumbria and between the York and Hull

District and York Diocese. In extreme contrast, in the south midlands, the Oxford and Leicester District overlaps with five dioceses, and Oxford Diocese overlaps with six Methodist Districts! The need to relate to the East Anglia District has been one factor which has encouraged four dioceses in the area to explore how they can work more closely together. A huge amount is happening, however, and the examples quoted in this report do not pretend to be a comprehensive listing.

- 3.5.2 Wherever geography permits, districts and dioceses are talking to each other. There have been services of reception and celebration of the Covenant in many cathedrals and other churches, e.g. Chichester, Wells and Matlock (Derbyshire), and more are being planned, e.g. Exeter. The frequent choice of the seemingly less than ‘neutral’ Cathedral as the venue probably reflects both its size and its place in the hearts of Christians of all traditions in the area. These events have helped foster wider awareness of the Covenant and increased commitment.
- 3.5.3 Letters have been circulated to ministers and clergy in various dioceses and districts encouraging shared ministry within the parameters set by the two Churches’ denominational disciplines – examples include Ripon and Leeds Diocese with the Leeds District⁹, and in Cumbria and Lancashire. The Church of England’s Council for Christian Unity has issued guidelines to all diocesan bishops confirming what is permissible in any parish under Canon B 43 to encourage similar sharing of ministry between our Churches.¹⁰
- 3.5.4 A number of dioceses and districts have produced working party reports setting out their options. As a result, in some cases, liaison committees or steering groups have been set up which are now meeting regularly. These include Derby Diocese with three Methodist Districts, and the Southampton District

9. The Chair of the Leeds Methodist District, Michael Townsend, provides a detailed account of what has been achieved between his District and Ripon and Leeds Diocese in Townsend, M. J., ‘Implementing An Anglican-Methodist Covenant: A view from the Leeds District and the Ripon and Leeds Diocese,’ in *Epworth Review*, vol.31, no.3, Peterborough: MPH, July 2004, pp.7-14.

10. See Appendix A.

with Winchester Diocese. This latter partnership now also involves the Wessex Synod of the United Reformed Church.

- 3.5.5 In Lincolnshire the Bishop's staff and the Methodist district leadership team now meet regularly and are actively exploring how the diocese and district might become in a new way 'an area of ecumenical experiment'. In the same area (as elsewhere) Rural Deans and Circuit Superintendents are also now holding regular meetings together as a group.
- 3.5.6 York Diocese with the York and Hull District and the relevant part of the Darlington District signed their own Covenant in May 2003 and are now working through their own process of implementation.¹¹ Other Covenants are being prepared, e.g. between the London South East District and Rochester Diocese, between Peterborough and Leicester Dioceses and the Oxford and Leicester District, as well between Manchester Diocese, the Manchester and Stockport District and the Bolton and Rochdale District. A Lancashire covenant has also recently been signed with a focus on mission. Many other church leaders in dioceses and districts have entered into 'personal covenants' with each other and with other Church leaders in their areas.
- 3.5.7 The Darlington District has long since learned to cope with the fact that its boundaries are out of line with almost every other Christian tradition in the area! North of the Tees it is an active partner in North East Christian Churches Together (NECCT). In this context, where so much is organised between all the Churches, the implementation of the Anglican-Methodist covenant commitment can never be an exclusively bilateral affair.
- 3.5.8 A very simple development is now proving beneficial in York and in Truro – where, in each case, the administrative office of the Methodist District is based within the Diocesan Office.
- 3.5.9 Pressure for greater co-operation is already coming from the need for the Churches, with other faith communities, to have a voice in the nine government Regions. Adjacent Methodist

11. Visit their web site on www.yorkshirecovenant.org.uk

Districts are being challenged to work more closely together, and so are adjacent Church of England dioceses. The Regions offer considerable potential for joint working between Anglicans and Methodists (along with other Churches) away from the mismatches of existing church structures.

- 3.5.10 The pressure to think and plan regionally is also increased as the proposals of the ‘Hind Report,’ “Formation for Ministry in a Learning Church,” are followed through and implemented, especially in the formation of Regional Training Partnerships. Experience is showing how difficult this can be. Nevertheless, the Church of England and the Methodist Church (with the United Reformed Church and others) remain committed to resolving the difficulties together. Our Churches need to continue to develop together our work with others so that we can more effectively play our part in the regional agenda.
- 3.5.11 In the face of the unevenness of what is possible between dioceses and districts in different parts of the country (as indeed with other Churches) the plea goes up repeatedly for a rationalising of ‘ecumenical geography’. One problem has always been the ‘domino effect’ – where a rational change in one place all too easily results in less rational boundaries further away.
- 3.5.12 In any case, inter-denominational considerations will rarely be the only or the determining factor behind any change. Methodist re-organisation planned for the districts which now cover London and the South East rightly gives priority to a coherent missionary engagement with London as a whole.
- 3.5.13 Structural change (e.g. to boundaries etc) is generally more difficult to achieve within the Church of England than in most other Churches. It is nevertheless to be regretted that there was no ecumenical representation on the working party that produced the proposals on pastoral reorganisation, etc., in the General Synod report ‘A Measure for Measures: in mission and ministry.’
- 3.5.14 **We believe that, in order to strengthen our shared mission, the Church of England and the Methodist Church at every level should not undertake reviews of boundaries and**

administrative areas unilaterally – and should, as far as possible, include Churches of other traditions.

3.6 *Deaneries and Circuits*

- 3.6.1 A similar unevenness affects covenant implementation between circuits and deaneries. At root this is because ‘deanery’ and ‘circuit’ are very different things. A deanery consists of a number of precisely-defined geographical areas (benefices/parishes) which have been grouped largely for administrative and electoral purposes. Only recently in some dioceses has there been a trend towards asking representatives of the parish churches in a deanery to make joint decisions over mission and ministerial deployment. By contrast, a circuit is the primary unit in which local churches express and experience their interconnexion in the Body of Christ, for purposes of mission, mutual encouragement and help. A circuit is an essential unit of oversight within the Connexion. Here again the ‘starting point’ is different: The Methodist Circuit is a primary unit, whereas the Anglican Deanery is not.
- 3.6.2 Both circuit and deanery, however, share an underlying purpose in mission. So where the churches of a deanery and a circuit serve broadly similar areas, and where there is a reasonable balance of Anglican and Methodist congregations, – as in many rural areas – the scope for shared ministry, mission and nurture is considerable.
- 3.6.3 One example is provided by the Brigg, Barton and Yarborough Mission Partnership in North Lincolnshire. This partnership is evolving in an area where 30 Anglican churches and 20 Methodist churches are served by eight Anglican stipendiary clergy and three Methodist ministers. Other Christian Churches – just six congregations in the entire area (Baptist, Roman Catholic, Salvation Army and two community churches) – give it their prayerful and insightful support.
- 3.6.4 In North Yorkshire a partnership between the Thirsk and Northallerton Circuit and the Mowbray Deanery (York Diocese) began by focusing on the possibility of jointly planning the provision of worship in the many rural churches in the area. A more comprehensive rhythm of worship is now

possible through careful application of Methodist Standing Orders and Canon B 43. Methodist ministers may preside at services of Holy Communion in the parish churches of the deanery, and Anglican clergy may preside at services of Holy Communion in Methodist churches. The Anglican clergy are ‘Authorised to Serve’ by the Methodist Conference.¹² Inevitable spin-offs are regular staff meetings of clergy and ministers, joint deanery synods and circuit meetings and a whole range of joint missionary and community-building enterprises.

3.6.5 **Even where schemes such as these are not possible, we encourage people to use the considerable scope for simple initiatives at deanery/circuit level.** For example, there are many ways in which ministers, deacons, clergy, Local Preachers, Licensed Readers, Lay Workers and others can be invited regularly to each other’s meetings, or brought together for special joint meetings.

3.6.6 **Group meetings of Circuit Superintendents and Rural Deans – covering all or part of a district or diocese – could also involve circuit stewards and the lay chairs of Deanery Synods.** Such meetings should identify the most appropriate pattern for Anglican-Methodist partnership locally, exploring the options available, and relating to other ecumenical partners.

3.7 *Between groupings of parishes and churches*

3.7.1 The projects just described, based on deanery and circuit, will not be appropriate everywhere – even in rural areas. In Dorset villages, for example, alongside the parish church, other churches are as likely to belong to other traditions as they are to be Methodist. Expressions of Anglican/Methodist covenant relationship cannot therefore be exclusive. In practice the best way to develop a covenant relationship here, as in more urban

12. The Thirsk and Mowbray Covenant sets out the terms of these arrangements, including the following: ‘When the service of Holy Communion is shared by members of the two Churches, the service is always that of the minister presiding. If an Anglican celebrates in a Methodist church the service is an Anglican one. Similarly if a Methodist celebrates in an Anglican Church the service is a Methodist one.’ As part of this arrangement, it is understood that those presiding use forms of service from their own denominational worship books.

settings, may well be a ‘local covenant’ between all the congregations of a much smaller area. Such a local covenant may or may not be a formally constituted Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP). A decision about this will need to be made in the light of the detailed commitments envisaged.

3.7.2 A covenant partnership is a well-recognised form of LEP which does not require the participants to move towards a single united congregation in a single building. An LEP in the form of ‘Churches in Covenanted Partnership’ can develop an integrated ministerial team with, in Church of England terms, the level of shared ministry permitted by Canon B 44. It can develop integrated programmes for mission, social engagement and nurture, including joint programmes for Christian initiation, while worship continues in each of the partner churches. Significantly these LEPs can include a very high level of Roman Catholic participation.

3.7.3 In a local covenant, whether LEP or not, the challenge is to ensure the quality of the covenant commitment, reflecting the biblical and theological insights discussed earlier in this report. Introducing a commitment expressed in terms of covenant can take the relationship between Churches to a deeper level than is usually experienced in ‘Churches Together’ groupings. Each church is challenged to discover afresh the gifts each needs from the others – and can give to the others – for the sake of effective gospel communication in their shared context. It is about learning two difficult but ultimately re-assuring lessons:

1. ‘The fundamental challenge to all the churches is ... whether they recognise that God’s mission is greater than any individual church can grasp.’¹³
2. God does not require God’s faithful disciples to engage in any task for which God does not provide the resources to do what is needed. It is just that we should not assume that we have to look for these resources only within our own tradition!

13. See *Called to be One*, Churches Together in England: London, 1996, – Appendix A: ‘Church and Mission’, paragraph 33.

- 3.7.4 The grouping of churches covered by an individual Methodist minister's pastoral charge has its own potential. It can sometimes provide a unit within which a shared Anglican/Methodist ministry team can be developed, if it can be contrived conveniently to coincide with a number of Anglican benefices.
- 3.7.5 The ecumenical experience of many years suggests that there are many different patterns of working and relating - as Anglican and Methodist churches simply seeking to make the wider Covenant real in their local context, or as Churches Together, or as an informal Local Covenant, or as a Covenanted Partnership LEP. In all of these the Anglican-Methodist Covenant relationship may be quite distinct from other local relationships, or it may be included within a wider pattern. Clear choices have to be made if mission is to be effective.
- 3.7.6 **Within a covenant commitment to God and to each other, local churches of all traditions should seek to define common purposes in mission – as well as agreeing the area in which they should be engaged.** In many cases a formal Covenant Partnership might be an appropriate expression of their commitment to work together.

3.8 *Parishes and Local Churches*

- 3.8.1 It would be a mistake to suppose that the highest and best form of local implementation of an Anglican-Methodist Covenant involves the merger of Anglican and Methodist congregations and the creation of large numbers of single-congregation shared-building LEPs.
- 3.8.2 Clearly in some places a united congregation in a single place of worship would make sense. The location and condition of buildings will be key factors. In other places, two or more distinctive Christian communities can work together to develop a united Christian presence in a locality. This can be true even in the tiniest villages, where too often Methodists fear that the Covenant simply means that they must give up their chapel and join the congregation in the parish church.

- 3.8.3 In fact a covenant relationship honours the ‘otherness’ of the other partner(s). There are distinctive and complementary vocations for Christian communities, however tiny, meeting in church or chapel or elsewhere, in even our smallest villages, provided they covenant with each other to work together to be a single dynamic Christian presence seeking the well-being of the community in which they are all set. This principle does not apply exclusively to Anglicans and Methodists! The recent Methodist workbook *Presence – a workbook to help promote and sustain an effective Christian presence in villages* is an excellent resource from which rural churches, whatever their tradition, have much to learn.
- 3.8.4 A village in Cambridgeshire illustrates a particular situation where Anglican and Methodist churches benefit from working together within a formal covenant relationship. The Methodist minister lives in the village and the Anglican non-stipendiary priest-in-charge lives elsewhere. In the context of a regular sharing of ministry, it is pastorally appropriate that the Methodist is authorised to conduct baptisms in the parish church.
- 3.8.5 In a suburban environment, it is all too easy to adopt a ‘live and let live’ attitude to other churches except when doing a few ‘ecumenical things’ in the context of local Churches Together. Here an Anglican-Methodist Covenant challenges local churches to consider how they can come to know each other more deeply and learn to cherish each other.
- 3.8.6 In more urban areas, and perhaps most of all in the centres of our towns and cities, the differences *within* our two traditions can be more obvious than the differences between us, and can reflect a more eclectic approach to church-going. The Covenant challenges the self-preoccupation of busy congregations and the complacency which says that we are doing everything right and have no need to change.
- 3.8.7 Local Anglican and Methodist churches will achieve most together when they share a common context and are prepared to support one another and get involved in each other’s decision-making. **Church of England parish churches and neighbouring Methodist churches should welcome**

representative lay people from each other's churches as participant observers at meetings of their Church Councils.

- 3.8.8 Local churches, however, will also need to lift their sights and recognise that society today is complex and operating at many levels. Consequently they will need partnerships at many levels. A mission based on the interaction between a parish congregation and its immediate locality is not enough, just as it is not enough for a gathered congregation to relate only to its 'fringe'.

3.9 *New housing areas and non-congregational Ministry*

Housing developments

- 3.9.1 The complexity of our missionary engagement with contemporary society is well illustrated by the recent government proposals for a massive increase in new housing areas. Research by the Baptist Union has shown that there are at least 100 new settlements of more than 1000 houses being planned across the country, most being close to London.
- 3.9.2 In the past Churches have been able to work with new town development corporations to ensure community facilities and new church buildings on designated sites. Denominations have also been able to draw on their own resources more readily to finance and staff new buildings and new congregations.
- 3.9.3 The developments now being planned have none of these advantages, and the Churches nationally are already facing the challenge of finding new and sustainable ways of building community and Christian discipleship in these areas. An initial consultation in 2004 involved a range of specialist staff from member Churches of Churches Together in England. Our two Churches will gain considerably from their investment in the new CTE Co-ordinating Group for New Housing Areas.
- 3.9.4 An Anglican-Methodist Covenant can provide an environment where we can learn the partnership skills that will be needed as we work with other Churches and with others of goodwill to make a gospel response to human needs and aspirations in these new contexts.

- 3.9.5 Because of the challenges to be faced in these new contexts, Churches of all traditions, whatever their structures, need to develop more effective ways of demonstrating their gospel commitment within secular partnerships and power structures, e.g. the government regions, boroughs, unitary authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships. Pioneering work in various parts of England has shown that well-resourced and competent engagement is urgently needed and usually very much welcomed.
- 3.9.6 The Church of England's report *Mission Shaped Church* provides significant insights into the complexities of our mission task in contemporary society and the implications for how communities of Christ's disciples may be called to engage with it. Similar insights have emerged from the Methodist process *Our Calling* and *Priorities for the Methodist Church*. Could it be that a deeper understanding of our covenant relationship with one another within God's calling will give us new ways of expressing the difficult but necessary connection between emerging and very diverse 'fresh expressions of church' and our inherited traditions and structures?
- 3.9.7 We commend the fact that Anglicans and Methodists are already active in new Christian communities, and that the specialists from our two Churches who are concerned with mission and church-planting are actively collaborating together.

Sector ministries

- 3.9.8 Anglican-Methodist partnership has been in place for many years in sector ministries such as industrial mission and in chaplaincies to schools, colleges, hospitals, etc. As with much else, the partnership is rarely bilateral. In this context, the most important message may be one of caution: our Anglican-Methodist Covenant must never become the means by which our two Churches seek to consolidate power or impose their will within wider partnerships. Because the Church of England manages most of its expenditure at diocesan level, it is all too easy for it to act without considering the contribution that partner churches could make. Whatever the relative size or financial investment of an individual Church in any context, we

are called to be full partners as Churches seek to work together. If, in this wider ecumenical context, Anglicans and Methodists increasingly find themselves thinking and acting together, the same principles must apply. Ecumenical partners need to benefit from increased Methodist-Anglican partnership, rather than to feel oppressed by it.

Church schools

3.9.9 At a time when the government is encouraging the possibility of new schools being linked to ‘faith communities’, there are particular opportunities for the Church of England and the Methodist Church to develop new joint church schools, building on the experience of existing Anglican-Methodist schools. Since the capital outlay comes largely from the government, the financial demand on the Churches is not what many people fear. Both churches are committed to playing an active role in education as part of their mission. The Church of England, which, following the Dearing Report, is currently engaged in a substantial expansion of its stake in secondary schools, would welcome the partnership of the Methodist Church in this enterprise, in the spirit of the Covenant.

3.9.10 **We encourage the Church of England and the Methodist Church to explore the possibilities of working together to develop new joint Anglican-Methodist schools and academies.**

4. A GUIDE TO GOOD COVENANTING

- 4.1 In the light of the biblical and theological principles that we have sketched and in the context of the initiatives and opportunities outlined above, we offer here a brief check list of some of the spiritual qualities that effective and faithful covenanting with our partners calls for.
- 4.2 *Vows are for living.* Making a covenant is similar to taking religious vows. But vows, whether taken at a wedding or by a novice in a religious community, mark the beginning of a journey, of a life within a committed relationship. We are not called simply to ‘implement’ an Anglican-Methodist Covenant, but to learn what it means to *live* it.
- 4.3 *Covenanting is deeply rewarding – but costly!* Partners in a covenant must never allow themselves to act or to take decisions as though the other partner or partners did not exist. Too much decision-making – at all levels and in all denominations – still exhibits a blindness (in other contexts it would be called racism!), a total absence of awareness of other brothers and sisters in Christ. We are members of one Body in Christ, despite our brokenness.
- 4.3.1 All partners in a covenant will gain from it, just as they will all find it costly and full of risk. The final gain, however, will lie beyond them all. The obverse is then also true: if there is no cost involved, questions must be asked about the integrity of the covenant commitment.
- 4.4 *Covenant living involves dynamic tension.* Joy at what already is will be balanced by love-longing for what is yet to be. This ‘now but not yet’ provisionality is at the heart of what it means to be living in the ‘between times’ – between Pentecost and the consummation of all God’s purposes at the end of time. In St Paul’s language, throughout his epistles, we already are ‘*in Christ*’ (now and eternally) that which ‘*through Christ*’ we have yet to become. All our Christian life is lived within this tension.

- 4.5 *We are in it for the long term.* Clever human plans to create a ‘quick fix’ merger between our two Churches are not what our Covenant is about. The Welsh experience, where five Churches have been in covenant for thirty years, is that change is slow, but there is no going back.
- 4.6 *Patience is essential.* The more deeply we get to know each other, the more we will need to be honest both about the spiritual riches with which we have been entrusted and the faults and flaws in ourselves from which we need to be delivered. Feelings of frustration will need to be matched by penitence.
- 4.7 *Change is inevitable:* Covenants may or may not have immediate structural implications – whether with regard to buildings, finance or the way in which decisions are taken. The precise implications will depend on the specific way the partners feel called to respond to God’s purpose. But it is hard to imagine any significant mutual giving and receiving in a covenant relationship if none of the partners notices any change in the way they order their affairs. If structural change is ruled out in advance, that covenant will fail. The Methodist notion of Covenant points to an all-consuming transformation as God works through God’s people.
- 4.8 *We must cherish an appropriate diversity.* Convergence of understanding may not, and perhaps should not, always lead to a greater uniformity of practice. It may lead us instead to cherish a necessary and enriching diversity. A variety of practices may allow us to capture a range of glimpses of the same truth, when the truth itself is beyond our full knowledge or perceiving – always provided that these things are never allowed to become matters of indifference.
- 4.9 Successful covenants recognise that diversity (or significant ‘otherness’) can be God-given. This diversity may reflect cultural context, missionary vocation, inherited memory of significant stories from the past, etc, but will not include indiscipline, irresponsibility, self-indulgence or heresy. The Anglican-Methodist Common Statement defines its aim as ‘*to harvest our diversity, to share our treasures and to remedy our shortcomings ...*’ (paragraph 42).

- 4.10 *Our covenant will be shaped by a purpose beyond itself.* Only God can make a covenant with an ultimate or ‘eschatological’ purpose. Without a sense of purposefulness, rooted in God’s purpose of the unity of all creation in Christ, our relationship will just drift. Insights from scripture may yet challenge our two Churches to express more clearly how our covenant commitment serves God’s kingdom purpose beyond ourselves. Clues may lie in the language of reconciliation, of healing, of self-emptying, of hospitality.
- 4.11 Because it will always point to the purpose beyond itself, a mutual covenant commitment will be neither self-righteous nor inward-looking. If our purpose is too narrowly focused on ourselves and on the future of our two Churches, our journey will not lead to a deeper unity in Christ but only to a self-conscious defensiveness, a fractiousness which will make us less serviceable within God’s reconciling purposes in this land. Only by looking to God and beyond ourselves can we hope that our covenant commitment will bring about what God wants it to achieve.

5. THE BREAD AND WINE OF HOLY COMMUNION

5.1 *Introduction*

5.1.1 When the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England entered into a covenant relationship this inaugurated a new stage in the developing relationship between our two churches. One of the commitments made in the covenant was to realise ‘more deeply our common life and mission and to share the distinctive contributions of our traditions’ (see *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* §194, Commitment 2). This section of the Joint Implementation Commission’s report looks at some differences in practice between our two churches with regard to the sacred elements of the Holy Communion.

5.1.2 Our churches attach great importance to the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper and treasure the particular ways in which it is celebrated. This section concerns some practical matters relating to the celebration of the Eucharist. As will be seen, practical matters concerning the manner of celebration reveal a number of sensitivities. A covenant relationship requires both partners to listen sensitively to each other, and from this can flow a greater understanding of what each partner has to give and receive. Acknowledging that in both our churches there is a variety of practices, this section seeks to apply this listening and learning to the particular matters under consideration.

5.1.3 At first sight, the matters considered in this section may seem to be relatively unimportant, but, on reflection, they are seen to be related to fundamental aspects of the Eucharist, whatever particular theology of the Eucharist is espoused. The importance of these matters is well expressed in material published by Churches Together in England. In *Guidelines for Methods of Administration of Holy Communion and The Disposal of Remaining Eucharistic Elements* (see www.churches-together.org.uk/resources/ecumenicalnotes) the following reflections are offered: ‘The Eucharist is central to the lives of most Christian people: their understanding of the faith, their personal experience, their spirituality and their piety are affirmed or threatened by particular forms of the

celebration of the Eucharist. Such is the profundity of experience, that unfamiliarity is very disturbing. In the ecumenical dialogue (characterised by listening) there should be the desire to discover what lies at the heart of the other's faith, and how that insight may strengthen and inspire one's own faith.'

5.1.4 The practical differences concerning the sacred elements are set out in the Common Statement (CS) within the context of broad agreement about the Eucharist. Drawing on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM), Eucharist §§2-4, CS §132 gives a succinct but profound statement about the nature of the Eucharist. In this statement both our churches can recognise their own understanding of the Eucharist faithfully expressed. The following section of CS (§133) notes that the authorised liturgical forms in our churches are similar in structure: 'Liturgical renewal has provided the most striking example of convergence between the churches, not least in the case of the Eucharist'.

5.1.5 In this context of agreement, the differences in practice between our two churches with regard to the sacred elements can now be studied in detail. CS §135 states:

There are, however, differences of practice with regard to the sacred elements. Anglicans are required by the Canons (supported by the Lambeth quadrilateral) to use the fermented juice of the grape, whereas Methodists are required by standing order to use non-alcoholic wine. Methodists usually communicate in individual cups, while Anglicans regard the common cup as liturgically and theologically significant. The ancient practice, now common in Anglicanism, of mixing a little water with the wine, is virtually unknown in Methodism. Methodists might wish to question the symbolism of the prevalent Anglican use of individual wafers. Some Anglicans have come to appreciate the Methodist emphasis on the common dismissal of communicants. While both churches require that any surplus of the consecrated elements is to be disposed of reverently, Methodists do not insist that it is to be consumed. (CS §135)

- 5.1.6 We can now proceed to look in more detail at the differences referred to above and make some suggestions about how our two churches might learn from each as they seek to realise the commitments of the covenant.
- 5.1.7 The Methodist sources used in this paper are the Standing Orders (SO) and the Methodist Worship Book (MWB). In addition, extensive use has been made of the report *His Presence makes the Feast* (HPMF), which was prepared by a working party of the Faith and Order Committee and received by the Conference in 2003. The chief sources for Church of England practice are: *The Book of Common Prayer, 1662* (BCP), *The Canons of the Church of England, Legal Opinions Concerning the Church of England* (LO), and *Ecumenical Relations Canons B 43 and B 44: Code of Practice* (ER).

5.2 *The issues*

- 5.2.1 The issues which emerge from the relevant source material are as follows:
- A. The Bread of the Eucharist
 - The type of bread
 - The manner of distribution
 - B. The Wine of the Eucharist
 - The type of wine
 - The manner of distribution
 - C. The disposal of surplus consecrated elements
- 5.2.2 In each section of the following, both the Methodist and Anglican practices are described, followed by some reflections. *At certain points in the text, printed in bold type, changes in practice, which would affect both our churches, are commended for consideration.*

5.3 The Bread of the Eucharist

The type of bread

- 5.3.1 Methodist churches usually use ordinary bread¹⁴. Typically, it is a single roll or small loaf or slice of bread. Only in Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) might communion wafers be used. (See the four “realistic” snapshots given in HPMF, pp.12-13)
- 5.3.2 In the Church of England individual communion wafers, which are made from wheat flour, are very commonly used, although ordinary bread is sometimes used. The canonical position is given in Canon B 17: ‘The bread, whether leavened or unleavened, shall be of the best and purest wheat flour that conveniently may be gotten ...’ This does not rule out the use of wafers, but the relevant BCP rubric, printed at the end of the service, is clear: ‘... it shall suffice that the Bread be such as is usual to be eaten; but the best and purest Wheat Bread that conveniently may be gotten.’
- 5.3.3 The Methodist Church and Church of England both use bread, but usually in a form different from that used in the other church. Interestingly, the Methodist practice follows the BCP rubric more closely. Anglican texts express a concern for the quality of the bread used, although using a slice of bread is not unknown.
- 5.3.4 Many Anglicans would be sensitive to the symbolism of the one bread, which is so clearly shown in the practice of using a single roll or small loaf of bread. The use of individual communion wafers, widespread in the Church of England, however, undermines this symbolism, and also means that many communicate with bread that has not been broken. It is clear from the liturgies of our two churches that they value the symbolism of the one bread because it expresses the unity of Christians in Christ. As St Paul expressed it, ‘Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread’ (1 Corinthians 10.17). Both our churches may

14. ‘Ordinary bread’. This is the phrase used in this paper when referring to bread such as is normally eaten at meals.

find it appropriate to try, wherever possible, to use bread in the form of a single loaf.

5.3.5 In addition, the use of ordinary bread makes a link with the Last Supper at which, whatever the form of bread used, it is extremely unlikely that it was in any form resembling individual communion wafers. The ordinariness of the bread also shows the sacramental nature of the Holy Communion more clearly, for what is used in the course of daily life is blessed for sacred purposes. A loaf of ordinary bread therefore appears to be the ideal form for use in Holy Communion.

5.3.6 *Recommendation*

Both our churches value the symbolism of the one bread, expressing the unity of Christians in Christ, therefore **we commend for consideration in both our churches how the symbolism of the one bread may be most adequately expressed. One way in which the symbolism is very well demonstrated is by using a suitably sized, single loaf of ordinary bread.**

The Breaking of the Bread

5.3.7 Methodist practice varies. Sometimes the bread is already divided into pieces before the service begins. However, there is also a breaking of the bread after the thanksgiving prayer. In all the Holy Communion services in the Methodist Worship Book (MWB) the breaking of bread is part of the service. Indeed the breaking of bread is denoted as a ‘basic element of each service’ (see MWB, Orders of Service for Holy Communion, Notes p.115). HPMF concludes that ‘There would seem to be widespread use within the survey group of the symbolism of fraction (breaking the bread in the course of the service)’ (§37, p.17).

5.3.8 Since a common Church of England practice is to use individual wafers, a larger wafer is often used for the breaking of bread. In some churches very large wafers are used so that every piece distributed to the congregation is broken. The breaking of bread, or fraction, is a part of all Church of England eucharistic rites. It takes place during the prayer of

consecration in the BCP rite, or, in modern rites, after the eucharistic prayer with only the Lord's Prayer intervening.

5.3.9 Methodist and Anglican practices are very similar. Church of England rubrics require the breaking of bread during the services at the prescribed points. The practice is widespread in Methodism and is considered the normal practice in MWB.

5.3.10 Both our churches value the symbolism of breaking the bread. It makes the point that each Christian is part of the body of Christ symbolised in the one bread. In each church the symbolism is expressed with greater or lesser clarity depending on the exact method of distribution. Both bread which has been already divided and individual wafers detract from the symbolism. The symbolism would be most clearly demonstrated if a single loaf were to be broken only after the prayer of thanksgiving, and then further broken in order to communicate the congregation. It is recognised that in BCP, owing to the different structure of the rite, the bread is required to be broken during the consecration prayer.

5.3.11 *Recommendation*

Both our churches value the symbolism of the breaking of bread, for it shows that each and every Christian is part of the one body of Christ. Therefore **we commend for consideration in both our churches that when modern eucharistic rites are used, the single loaf of bread is broken and prepared for distribution only after the thanksgiving prayer has been said.**

5.4 **The Wine of the Eucharist**

The type of wine

5.4.1 The Methodist Church requires that non-alcoholic wine be used. Standing Order (SO 922(2)) reads as follows: 'In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper the wine used shall be non-alcoholic.' There is a note which explains: 'Activities forbidden on Methodist premises by this Standing Order may not take place elsewhere in the name of the Church' (SO 014(3)) which means that a service conducted in the name of the Methodist Church, even though not on Methodist premises, may not use

alcoholic wine. Clause (4) of that SO states that ‘Clauses and (2) above shall not preclude the use of alcoholic wine at communion by a non-Methodist congregation worshipping on Methodist premises, provided that such use is not contrary to any sharing agreement that may apply, is authorised by the trustees and permitted by the rules that apply to that congregation.’ MWB Note 5 (p.116) states, ‘The juice of the grape shall be used.’

- 5.4.2 HPMF §39, summarising questionnaire responses, shows that non-alcoholic wine is the most common type of wine used at communion. The full text is as follows: ‘Of the 6 respondents who reported the used of alcoholic wine, 4 were in LEPs and one outside Great Britain. 79% reported the use of non-alcoholic Communion ‘wine’ containing grape juice and 15% (63 responses) ‘other’, divided roughly equally between grape juice, raisin flavoured or blackcurrant cordial (and one mead!).’ The questionnaire that yielded this information also showed a strong commitment to non-alcoholic wine amongst respondents.
- 5.4.3 The Anglican position is very clear about the type of wine to be used for communion. Resolution 11 of the Lambeth Conference (1888), referring to the dominical sacraments says: ‘The two sacraments ordained by Christ Himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him’. ‘... the elements ordained by him’ include wine, in the commonly understood sense of the word, for the Holy Communion. This is made clear by Canon B 17 which speaks of ‘the wine the fermented juice of the grape, good and wholesome.’
- 5.4.4 Under the ecumenical canons (B 43 and 44), a Church of England minister may, with appropriate permissions, preside at a celebration of the Holy Communion in accordance with the rite of another church and it may happen that there are conscientious objections from members of other churches to the use of alcoholic wine. The liturgical guidelines, approved by the House of Bishops, given in connexion with these ecumenical canons states, ‘at least real grape juice should be used, and fermented wine from which the alcohol has been

removed is to be preferred' (ER §76). Anglicans are not insensitive to the issues of alcoholism, and the needs of alcoholics would be taken into consideration when good practice was being observed.

- 5.4.5 It is common in the Church of England for a little water to be mixed with the wine in the chalice as part of the preparation of the elements. This is known technically as 'the mixed chalice'. This practice, almost universal in the ancient Church, perhaps originating in the Jewish practice of mixing water with wine, has had a number of symbolic interpretations attached to it. The mixed chalice is mentioned in the 1549 Prayer Book but not in any subsequent Church of England prayer books. As the Reformation progressed it was judged to be unedifying but came back at the time of the Non-jurors.
- 5.4.6 There is a marked difference in practice between our two churches in the type of wine used. Indeed the two practices are mutually exclusive. The Anglican position is clear and does not allow any variation, although the ecumenical canons do envisage, and make provision for, a Church of England minister presiding at a Holy Communion service of another church, at which non-alcoholic wine is to be used. The Methodist position, expressed in the Standing Orders, requires non-alcoholic wine to be used. MWB is clear that the drink used should be derived from the grape and does not envisage the use of a drink derived from other sources (e.g. blackcurrants).
- 5.4.7 SO 922(4), enables churches, which are required to use alcoholic wine at their celebrations of Holy Communion, to use Methodist buildings. This permission, therefore, can be applied in LEPs, and allows for the use of alcoholic wine at celebrations of the Holy Communion taking place in a Methodist building, although such celebrations must not be in the name of the Methodist Church.
- 5.4.8 The Methodist Church is strongly committed to keeping the service of Holy Communion 'a safe space' both for those with alcohol problems, and for children. This commitment derives from the historic link with the temperance movement and a continuing concern for those with alcohol problems.

Nevertheless, Methodist texts consistently envisage drinks derived from the grape rather than any other source. The reason for this is that the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper all refer to “the fruit of the vine” (*genema tou ampelou*; see Mark 14.25; Matthew 26.29; Luke 22.18) and there is a concern to remain faithful to what Jesus did.

5.4.9 The Anglican texts have a clear concern to maintain continuity of practice with the Lord himself. Is there any way in which our two churches, now in a covenant relationship, can reconcile this difference? There is no obvious answer to this question, at least in the short term. There is a profound point of agreement, however, in that both our churches have a concern to continue in each celebration of the Holy Communion the Lord’s practice of using the fruit of the vine. There appears, therefore, to be agreement between our two churches on the use of the juice of the grape, be it fermented or unfermented, in faithfulness to what Jesus did in the upper room.

5.4.10 As mentioned above, there is the widespread practice in the Church of England of mixing a little water with the wine. This practice is virtually unknown in Methodism (CS §135). Since the practice is not required in Church of England celebrations of Holy Communion, although it is common, it not necessary to comment further on it from an ecumenical point of view.

5.4.11 *Recommendation*

Both our churches, following the example of Jesus at the Last Supper, have a commitment to use a drink derived from “the fruit of the vine”. Therefore **we commend for consideration in both our churches that a drink derived from the juice of the grape is used. For Anglicans this would mean continuing to use the fermented juice of the grape; for Methodists this would mean consistently using either grape juice, or wine from which alcohol has been removed.**

The manner of distribution

5.4.12 Prior to about 1900 all branches of the Methodist Church used chalices or a common communion cup. Flagons were also in use. As a result of the temperance movement, non-alcoholic wine was introduced around the beginning of the 20th century.

At much the same time individual glasses for communion also appeared. Individual communion glasses are considered by some to be a healthier way of receiving the wine than sharing the common cup. HPMF (§118) observes that this is ‘a matter of great concern to many people’. It goes on to state, however, that ‘the risk is remote’, that ‘there is no evidence to suggest that there have been problems in those churches that have centuries of tradition of using a common cup’, and that the danger of infection being spread is ‘no greater than that involved in breathing in each other’s germs at any service’. Currently in the Methodist Church there is a variety of ways in which the wine is received. In some churches individual glasses are used, in others individual glasses together with a chalice, from which the administrators of communion usually drink. Occasionally, only a chalice is used, but this is relatively rare. In some services of Holy Communion in the MWB, there is an optional lifting of the cup following the breaking of the bread (e.g. Holy Communion, Ordinary Seasons (2) §19, p.208).

5.4.13 In the Church of England the use of individual glasses is unknown. A chalice or communion cup is invariably used. All the liturgical texts envisage the use of at least one cup, although it is common practice, if there are larger numbers of communicants, for more than one vessel to be used. There is discussion of the legality of using individual cups, such as are used in the Methodist Church, in LO, *Holy Communion: Administration of the Sacrament* §8. LO discusses the situation where the wine may have been consecrated in a single vessel (a chalice or a flagon) and then, for the purposes of the administration, poured into individual glasses. LO comes to the opinion that this practice is not legal. In coming to this opinion, LO sees consecration in the single chalice, or communion cup, as the norm, and this is to be the common cup, so that no distinctions are made in the way the priest or people receive communion.

5.4.14 There is a difference of practice here, sharpened by the legal opinion expressed on the Church of England side. Although the use of a communion cup in Methodist churches is quite common (two-thirds of respondents to the questionnaire used to gather information for HPMF reported having a chalice on

the table, see §41) it is not used in precisely the same way. Generally it is reserved for the presiding minister and others who assist in the administration. This distinction seems odd to Anglicans and once again a legal opinion has been expressed on this matter. Regarding Church of England practice, LO, *Holy Communion: Administration of the Sacrament* §7 propounds the argument that practices implying a distinction between the priest and the people are contrary to the practice of the Church of England. The fact that in the Methodist Church occasionally no-one drinks from the cup (HPMF, §41) seems strange to Anglicans.

- 5.4.15 In both our churches there is a concern to express symbolically the unity which Christians have in Christ through the use of a single common cup. The Gospel accounts of the Last Supper, and St Paul's account (1 Corinthians 11.25), speak of Jesus using a single cup¹⁵. In addition, Paul says of the cup (1 Corinthians 10.16), 'The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood Christ?' However, the use both of several chalices and also individual communion glasses detracts from this symbolism. Wherever practically possible, the use of a single common chalice would express the symbolism most clearly and also link more directly with Jesus' use of the single cup at the Last Supper. If more than one vessel is needed for the administration of Holy Communion, our churches might seek to find ways in which the symbolism can be kept as clear as possible. This might be achieved, for example, by consecrating wine in a single vessel (perhaps a large, lipped chalice or flagon) and only pouring the consecrated wine into other vessels when it is needed for communicating the congregation. If these vessels are chalices rather than individual glasses, the sharing in the common cup is to some extent preserved.

5.4.16 *Recommendation*

Both our churches value the use of the "one cup" which symbolises the unity Christians have in Christ. Therefore **we commend for consideration in both our churches that**

15. St Luke's version of the Last Supper is more complex than that of the other Synoptic Gospels. 22 v.20, if part of the original text, refers either to the cup previously used or another cup.

wherever practically possible, one vessel for the wine is used during the thanksgiving prayer. If, for practical purposes of administration, this needs to be poured into additional vessels, these should be chalices, so that the symbolism of the “one cup” is to some extent preserved.

5.5 The disposal of surplus consecrated elements

5.5.1 MWB states (Orders of Service for Holy Communion, Notes p.116), ‘What remains of the elements should be reverently consumed, or otherwise reverently disposed of, at the end of the service.’ The concern for reverence in this matter follows from an understanding of the sacrament expressed, for example, in the post-communion prayer in the Maundy Thursday service (MWB, p.251), ‘... we thank you for the gift of this sacrament, in which we remember Jesus Christ your Son. May we who revere this sacred mystery ...’ Methods of disposal other than consumption include pouring the surplus consecrated element back into the bottle and giving the bread to the birds (see HPMF §45).

5.5.2 The Anglican practice is to consume immediately after communion or to consume immediately after the end of the service. The BCP rubric printed before the Lord’s Prayer says: ‘When all have communicated, the Minister shall return to the Lord’s Table, and reverently place upon it what remaineth of the consecrated elements, covering the same with a fair linen cloth.’ The relevant rubric printed at the end of the rite says: ‘And if any of the Bread and Wine remain unconsecrated, the Curate shall have it to his own use: but if any remain of that which was consecrated, it shall not be carried out of the Church, but the Priest, and such other of the communicants as he shall then call unto him, shall, immediately after the Blessing, reverently eat and drink the same.’ ER §85 states, ‘It is possible for the elements to be consumed discreetly after the service and to arrange for people to help where large amounts are consecrated.’

5.5.3 There is a clear divergence of practice here although both traditions share a concern for reverent disposal. What is meant by ‘reverently’ differs within the Methodist tradition and between the traditions. For Anglicans ‘reverently’ means

consuming the surplus during or immediately after the service, and, in the light of Methodist practice, they would ask in what ways, other than by consuming the consecrated elements, they might be reverently disposed of. HPMF §46 shows that a small number in the Methodist Church desire change in the method of disposal on the grounds of greater reverence. Interestingly, it is noted there that ecumenical sensibilities were *not* a motivating factor for change. Of all the divergences this is the one likely to be most sensitive. Although in official texts, neither the Methodist Church nor the Church of England connect the method of disposal of the surplus bread and wine with a particular understanding of their status, it is naïve to suppose that church members, especially ministers, do not make such a connection. This is therefore a very sensitive ecumenical issue. As BEM, Eucharist §32 puts it:

Some churches stress that Christ's presence in the consecrated elements continues after the celebration. Others place the main emphasis on the act of celebration itself and on the consumption of the elements in the act of communion. The way in which the elements are treated requires special attention ... Given the diversity of practice among the churches ... it is worthwhile to suggest that ... it be recognised that the best way of showing respect for the elements served in the eucharistic celebration is by their consumption ...

5.5.4 Since our two churches are now in a covenant relationship, this sensitive ecumenical issue should attract the attention of our two churches. Both our churches allow for the consecrated elements to be consumed immediately after the service (and in the Church of England also immediately after the administration of communion). Our two churches therefore could unite around the practices of consuming the sacred elements either after communion or after the service. Attention should also be given to how a large surplus of consecrated elements is consumed. Reverent consumption involves consuming the elements discreetly.

5.5.5 *Recommendation*

Both our churches are concerned for the reverent disposal of any surplus consecrated elements, therefore **we commend for**

consideration in both our churches that any surplus consecrated elements are consumed discreetly either after communion, or immediately after the service, by the minister and/or by others from the congregation.

5.6 *Looking forward*

5.6.1 As noted in the introduction to this section, one of the commitments made as a result of our two churches covenanting together, is to realise ‘more deeply our common life and mission and to share the distinctive contributions of our traditions’ (*An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* §194: Commitment 2). In the above an attempt has been made both to describe in some detail the differences in practice between our two churches and also to understand what lies behind these differences. Despite these differences, common concerns have been discovered and it has become apparent that our two churches can learn from each other’s practice. The recommendations suggest ways in which we can express more clearly what we believe about the Eucharist.

6. PRESIDENCY AT THE EUCHARIST

- 6.1 This section of the interim report of the Joint Implementation Commission addresses one of the areas of difference of practice and possibly of theology between the Methodist Church and the Church of England – that concerning the presiding minister at the Eucharist and in particular non-presbyteral presidency. This issue was flagged up in the report of the Formal Conversations as one of the unresolved differences between us and the issues were spelt out in sections 163-165 of *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* (see the summary immediately below).
- 6.2 The JIC is conscious that this is a sensitive area on which many Anglicans and Methodists have strong convictions. While it seems clear that some divergence of practice need not be a barrier to further steps in visible unity, the JIC believes that Methodists and Anglicans will want to consider carefully, during the period of the implementation of the Covenant, the issues raised by the practices of both churches. The two substantial sections that follow, by Dr Martin Davie and the Revd Dr Martin Wellings, consultants to the Faith and Order task group of the JIC, are intended to resource this process of study and reflection and in particular to assist mutual understanding. The first paper looks first of all at the current position of the Church of England and the churches of the Anglican Communion on the issue of eucharistic presidency. It then looks at the theological principles that underlie this position, and explains why the Church of England sees presbyteral eucharistic presidency as an important principle. Finally it sketches out some practical implications of the Anglican position on eucharistic presidency for pastoral provision in the parishes. The second paper provides an historical perspective on how the Methodist Church reached its present position and provides some concluding reflections on the significance of that position.
- 6.3 The JIC is not at this stage making any formal recommendation about how our churches might achieve further convergence in this area, but will continue to work on these areas, especially in the light of the feedback from the churches on this report.

6.4 AN ANGLICAN PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

- 6.4.1 *An Anglican Methodist Covenant* notes (sections 163-165) that one of the ‘unresolved ministry issues’ that will need to be addressed in the future if Anglican-Methodist relations are to continue to develop is the issue of presidency at the Eucharist.
- 6.4.2 Section 163 explains that in the Methodist Church:
- ... where eucharistic deprivation would otherwise exist, named probationer ministers (who have not been ordained), lay persons (usually Local Preachers) and, on occasion, deacons (for whom this is not the ministry to which they were ordained) are authorised by the Conference, for a year at a time, to preside at the Eucharist. Decisions of Conference in 1994 and 1996 re-affirmed that lay presidency is permitted as a pastoral response in cases of deprivation.¹⁶
- 6.4.3 Section 164 then points out that, as far as the Church of England is concerned, presidency at the Eucharist is restricted to those who have been ordained presbyter (or bishop).¹⁷
- 6.4.4 Finally, section 165 comments that this difference between the policy of the two churches ‘... can cause tensions within LEPs (though Methodist Partners do not usually ask the Conference to authorise non-presbyteral presidency at the Eucharist in LEPs that involve Anglicans).’ The report of the Formal Conversations also points out that the difference of practice between the two churches in this matter ‘would present a problem if the Methodist Church and the Church of England were otherwise ready to enter into organic unity (though the need for lay or diaconal presidency would be reduced by such a relationship).¹⁸
- 6.4.5 In order to address the issues highlighted in section 165, the Methodist Church and the Church of England will need to look

16. *An Anglican Methodist Covenant*, Peterborough & London: MPH/CHP, 2001, p.50.

17. *Ibid*, p.50.

18. *Ibid*, p.51.

together at their different approaches to eucharistic presidency in order to see if they can reach an agreed position on the matter. This paper is intended to contribute to this process of joint reflection by explaining in greater detail than *An Anglican Methodist Covenant* does where the Church of England stands on this question.

The Present position in the Church of England and of the Anglican Communion

- 6.4.6 It is always dangerous to generalise about the Church of England. Whatever you say about some aspect of its life, you will nearly always find some exception somewhere. However, this having been said, it would undoubtedly be right to say that lay presidency – someone who is not an episcopally ordained priest presiding at the Eucharist – is not something which has ever been officially accepted or practised in the Church of England.
- 6.4.7 Although we cannot be absolutely certain, given the lack of specific evidence and the degree of fluidity in patristic practice, it seems probable that the British Church during the period of the Roman Empire would have followed the normal Catholic practice of having a bishop or priest preside at the Eucharist. It is certain, however, that this was the practice in the English Church during the Saxon and Medieval periods.
- 6.4.8 At the Reformation the English Reformers retained the practice of having a bishop or priest presiding. This was laid down in Canon Law and is specifically provided for in the service of Holy Communion in the *Book of Common Prayer* in which the priest presides over the entire service.
- 6.4.9 In the Church of England today the traditional practice has also been retained. Canon B 12.1 states unequivocally: ‘No person shall consecrate and administer the holy sacrament of the Lord’s Supper unless he shall have been ordained priest by Episcopal ordination.’
- 6.4.10 Similarly the ‘General Notes’ preceding the Order for the Celebration of Holy Communion in *Common Worship* lay

down very precisely who must preside and what this presidency must mean:

The unity of the liturgy is served by the ministry of the president, who in presiding over the whole service holds word and sacrament together and draws the congregation into a worshipping community.

The president at Holy Communion (who, in accordance with the provisions of Canon B 12 'Of the Ministry of the Holy Communion,' must have been episcopally ordained priest) expresses this ministry by saying the opening Greeting, the Absolution, the Collect, the Peace and the Blessing. The president must say the Eucharistic prayer, break the consecrated bread and receive the sacrament on every occasion. When appropriate, the president may, after greeting the people, delegate the leadership of all or parts of the Gathering and the Liturgy of the Word to a deacon, Reader or other authorized lay person.

6.4.11 In recent years there have been writers such as Anthony Harvey, Alan Hargrave, David Day, and Alwyn Marriage who have queried the traditional Church of England position.¹⁹

6.4.12 Expressing an Evangelical viewpoint, Day writes, for instance:

Both word and sacrament are places where God encounters us. We allow lay people, properly authorised and trained, to preach the Word. Why can they not preside at the common meal?²⁰

6.4.13 Reflecting a more Catholic tradition, Marriage declares:

Those who gather for the Eucharist are the body of Christ, and in the same way as James encourages the early Christians to confess their sins to each other rather than going to a priest; so the body of Christ has no need of an

19. Harvey, A.E., *Priest or President?*, London: SPCK, 1975; Hargrave, A., *But Who Will Preside?*, Nottingham: Grove Books, 1990; Day, D., 'The Ministry of the Laity', in Yeats, C., (ed.), *Has Keele Failed?*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995, pp.104-106; Marriage, A., *The People of God: a Royal Priesthood*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1996.

20. Day, op.cit., p. 114.

intermediary to unwrap for them the deep religious significance of life through re-enactment of the Last Supper.

This ultimate sacrament, this truth beneath all truths and this life-giving embodiment of God, is complete in itself and cannot require another sacrament (ordination) to render it effective. The Eucharist is therefore a sacrament regardless of whether it is presided over by an ordained priest; and where such an ordained priest, or anyone else, is fulfilling a priestly role at communion this has more to do with the trust invested in that person by the congregation (for whatever reason) than with the conferring of a special and permanent status on them at a formal initiation ceremony called ordination.²¹

6.4.14 The issue has also been re-opened in the context of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant. Although, as we have said, the report of the Formal Conversations restated the traditional Church of England position, there have been those who have argued that in this instance the Church of England ought to follow the Methodist example.

6.4.15 However, nothing has come of these suggestions and the position of the Church of England remains where it has always been. The most recent official Church of England statement on the subject, the House of Bishops statement, *Eucharistic Presidency* (1997) unequivocally reaffirms the tradition, seeing no place for lay or diaconal presidency at all. It declares:

... it would seem distinctly appropriate, to put it no stronger for the moment, that presidency over the community's celebration of the Eucharist belongs to those with overall pastoral oversight of the community, i.e. to those ordained as bishop or priest/presbyter. For eucharistic presidency is an intensive form of the presbyter's role in relation to the community, which, we have contended, is to 'promote, release and clarify' the many ministries of the Church 'in such a way that the other ministries can exemplify and sustain the four 'marks' of the Church – its oneness, holiness, catholicity

21. Marriage, op.cit., p.150.

and apostolicity' ... In relation to apostolicity, this may include standing over against the community as well as being part of it ... The restriction of eucharistic presidency to those ordained as bishop or priest/ presbyter, which is (as we have said) an intensive form of the presbyter's role in relation to the community, brings assurance that this ministry is being performed by one who not only is closely related to the local community of Christians, but also is a minister of the Church universal. It also brings assurance that this ministry is being performed by a presbyter who has received the sign of historic episcopal succession.

- 6.4.16 The House of Bishops' report adds: 'We note that many ecumenical statements have stressed the inseparability of presiding over the community and presiding at the Eucharist, and this is thoroughly in line with the practice, as far as it can be discerned, of the earliest Christian communities.'²²
- 6.4.16 What is true of the Church of England has also been true of the Anglican Communion world-wide. Wherever you find Anglicans, from Tierra del Fuego to Borneo, there you will also find episcopally ordained priests presiding at the Eucharist.
- 6.4.17 Moreover, recent reports on this subject across the Communion as a whole have continued to support exclusively presbyteral presidency. Thus the report of the meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in 1987, *Many Gifts, One Spirit*, declared: '... the Anglican tradition of priests presiding at the Eucharist should continue to be upheld at this time and that licensing by the bishops of a lay reader for the purpose of ministering the Communion in full should not be encouraged.'²³
- 6.4.18 Similarly, at the fifth International Anglican Liturgical Consultation (IALC-5) held in Dublin in 1995 the group report dealing with the issue stated that the authorisation of a deacon or lay person to preside at the Eucharist '... can sever the connection between pastoral and liturgical leadership'. The statement went on:

22. *Eucharistic Presidency*, London: CHP, 1997, pp.49-50.

23. *Many Gifts, One Spirit*, London: ACC, 1997, p.57.

If such persons are acting as leaders of a Christian community, they are exercising what are essentially presbyteral functions, and therefore ought to be ordained as presbyters [i.e. priests]. The authorisation by a bishop of a deacon or lay person to preside at the eucharist constitutes an appointment to office, rendering ‘lay presidency’ a contradiction in terms. Moreover, the sign of appointment to presidential office in Anglican tradition is the laying-on-of-hands and prayer.²⁴

- 6.4.19 The report of the section of the 1998 Lambeth Conference that looked at the issue ‘Called to be a faithful Church in a plural world’ also rejected the idea of lay presidency:

Such a development would challenge the tradition of the church catholic that ordained ministry serves the church by uniting word and sacrament, pastoral care and oversight of the Christian community. Presiding at the Eucharist is the most obvious expression of this unity. Lay presidency would also create major difficulties with many of our ecumenical partners as well as within the Anglican Communion. We are not able to endorse this proposal.²⁵

- 6.4.20 Most recently, at its meeting at Bose in 2002, the International Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations (IASCER) affirmed ‘most strongly’ its support for the position taken at Lambeth ’98. It expressed the view that:

... a diocese or province which endorses lay presidency of the Eucharist would be departing from the doctrine of the ministry as Anglicans have received it, and from the practice of the undivided Church. Such action would jeopardise existing ecumenical agreements and seriously call into question the relation of such a diocese or province to the Anglican Communion.

- 6.4.21 The traditional Anglican position has also been re-affirmed in the context of recent ecumenical agreements. We have already seen this in connection with *An Anglican Methodist Covenant*,

24. Text in Holeton, D., (ed.), *Renewing the Anglican Eucharist*, Nottingham: Grove Books, 1996, p.22.

25. *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998*, Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1999, p.202.

and the position taken there by the Church of England is typical of that taken by Anglicans in other agreements.

- 6.4.22 Thus the ARCIC statement on *Ministry and Ordination* produced in 1973 which the meeting of General Synod in November 1986 and the 1988 Lambeth Conference agreed to be: ‘consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans’ stated:

To proclaim reconciliation in Christ and to manifest his reconciling love belong to the continuing mission of the Church. The central act of worship, the eucharist, is the memorial of that reconciliation and nourishes the Church’s life for the fulfilment of its mission. Hence it is right that he who has oversight in the church and is the focus of its unity should preside at the celebration of the eucharist. Evidence as early as Ignatius shows that, at least in some churches, the man exercising this oversight presided at the eucharist, and no other could do so without his consent (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans 8.1*).²⁶

- 6.4.23 Thus also, the statement on Eucharistic Presidency appended to the *Reuilly Common Statement* between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and the French Lutheran and Reformed Churches recorded the fact that lay presidency is permitted within these French churches and then declared: ‘The practices in the French Lutheran and Reformed churches are not acceptable to the Anglican churches of Britain and Ireland.’²⁷

Attempts to introduce diaconal and lay presidency

- 6.4.24 Nevertheless, this having been said, in some sections of the Communion attempts have been made to introduce either diaconal or lay presidency.
- 6.4.25 The first is the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone in South America. Like the Roman Catholic Church in much of South America, the Province of the Southern Cone is faced with the problem of having to provide pastoral ministry for a vast geographical area with very few priests. In the light of this

26. ‘Ministry and Ordination,’ section 12, in Hill, C., and Yarnold, E. J., (eds.) *Anglicans and Roman Catholics: The Search for Unity*, London: SPCK/CTS, 1994, p.33.

27. *Called to Witness and Service*, London: CHP, 1999, p.112.

problem a proposal was made that the Province develop a flexible pattern of ministry which would include the possibility of bishops licensing deacons and lay people to preside at the Eucharist.²⁸

6.4.26 However in 1986 this proposal was rejected by the Province, though only by eight votes to seven. The reason it was rejected was because it was not felt to be right for the Southern Cone to act unilaterally and without the agreement of the Anglican Communion.

6.4.27 The second is the Province of New South Wales in Australia, a province which is dominated by the Diocese of Sydney, the most radically Protestant diocese in the Communion. In 1996 the Bishop of the Diocese of Armidale indicated that he had authorised diaconal presidency as a preferable alternative to extended communion (where the consecrated eucharistic elements are carried to a congregation assembled in another church and administered by a deacon or lay minister in the setting of a non-eucharistic service of the Word). Then in 1997 an ordinance to authorise lay and diaconal presidency was passed by the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney. The Armidale proposal was subsequently withdrawn and the then Archbishop of Sydney, Archbishop Harry Goodhew, refused his assent to the Sydney legislation thus preventing the ordinance becoming Church law.

6.4.28 However, following the election of Peter Jensen as Archbishop of Sydney, the issue has been re-opened. A motion was put forward to the meeting of the Sydney Diocesan Synod in October 2004 by the Diocesan Standing Committee that declared that:

This Synod believes and urges that, until such time as any necessary change in the law can be effected by an appropriate process (or it can be determined by an appropriate process that no change in the law is needed), no disciplinary or other action should be taken against any person merely because the person, in accordance with this Declaration –

28. For details of this proposal see Hargrave, *op.cit.*

- a) authorizes or permits, or purports to authorize or permit, a deacon or lay person to administer the Lord's Supper, or
- b) being a deacon or lay person, administers or purports to administer, the Lord's Supper, or
- c) is involved in the administration, or purported administration, of the Lord's Supper by a deacon or lay person.

6.4.29 If this motion had been passed, it would have given tacit authorisation to lay and diaconal presidency at the Eucharist. In the event, the Diocesan Synod voted to defer discussion of the motion and referred it to the Synod Standing Committee for further consideration. However, if the proposal were to return to the Synod and Synod were to pass it, the Sydney position would still be the exception that proved the rule in the sense that it would remain the case that the rest of the Anglican Communion has not moved in this direction. There is no sign of any groundswell of opinion within the Communion that would lead other provinces to follow Sydney's lead.

6.4.30 What is true of the Anglican Communion as a whole is also true of the Church of England. Given the growing influence of the Diocese of Sydney among certain sections of the Evangelical wing of the Church of England any change in Sydney's position along the lines suggested by the Standing Committee is likely to lead to calls for the Church of England to follow suit. However, it seems unlikely that these calls will attract widespread support. For the foreseeable future, the Church of England's stance on this matter will remain what it has always been.

The theological principles underlying the traditional Anglican position

6.4.31 In this section of the paper we shall look at the basic principles that underlie the traditional Anglican view of eucharistic presidency.

- 6.4.32 First, the traditional Anglican viewpoint does not call into question the authenticity of the Eucharists celebrated in those churches that permit lay and diaconal presidency.
- 6.4.33 That is to say, it does not entail the belief that in such Eucharists those who receive the elements receive only bread and wine and do not truly feed upon Christ's body and blood.
- 6.4.34 Thus although the Methodist Church authorises lay and diaconal presidency at the Eucharist, the mutual affirmations contained in *An Anglican Methodist Covenant* include the following affirmation: 'We acknowledge that in both our churches the word of God is authentically preached, and the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist are duly administered and celebrated.'²⁹
- 6.4.35 There is no suggestion either in this affirmation or elsewhere in the Covenant that this acknowledgement of Eucharists celebrated by the Methodist Church only applies to those Eucharists that are presided over by Methodist presbyters. This means that the acknowledgement could not have been made if the Church of England believed that some Methodist Eucharists were simply not Eucharists because of the person presiding over them.
- 6.4.36 That the position adopted in *An Anglican Methodist Covenant* is not a Church of England idiosyncrasy is shown by the fact that in the *Reuilly Joint Declaration* there is a similar unqualified acknowledgement by the British and Irish Anglican churches of the Eucharists celebrated by the French Lutheran and Reformed Churches in spite of the fact that lay presidency is permitted by the latter.³⁰
- 6.4.37 Second, the traditional Anglican position is rooted in the link to be found in the New Testament between the gospel message and the outward ordering of the Church.
- 6.4.38 It is universally accepted that there is no explicit New Testament teaching about who should preside at the Eucharist.

29. *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant*, p.60.

30. *Called to Witness and Service*, p.36.

For example, the House of Bishops' report *Eucharistic Presidency* states:

... as far as eucharistic presidency is concerned, there is no indication anywhere in the New Testament of an explicit link between the Church's office and presiding at the Eucharist. There is certainly no attempt to link theologically the discernment of charismatic gifts and the developing notions of office with particular powers, functions or responsibilities with respect to the Eucharist. There is no suggestion that anyone was ordained or appointed to an office which consisted primarily of saying the blessing over the bread and wine.³¹

6.4.39 However, the fact that there is no explicit New Testament teaching about who should preside at the Eucharist does not mean that there is no New Testament support for the traditional Anglican position on the matter.

6.4.40 This position can be seen to be based on the very clear emphasis in the New Testament about the link between the gospel message and the way that the life of the Church is ordered. This is a point that is very clearly made by Michael Ramsey in his book *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (1936).

6.4.41 Building on St. Paul's teaching in 2 Corinthians 5.14-15, Ramsey notes that according to the witness of the New Testament the existence of the Christian Church is rooted in the death and resurrection of Christ:

He died to self, morally by the will to die throughout his life, actually by the crucifixion. He died with men, as man, coming by the water and the blood. God raised Him, and in the death and resurrection the fact of the Church is present. For, as He is baptized into man's death, so men shall be baptized into His; and, as He loses His life to find it in the Father, so men may by a veritable death find a life whose centre is in Christ and in the brethren. *One died for*

31. *Eucharistic Presidency*, p.41.

all, therefore all have died. To say this is to describe the Church of God.³²

- 6.4.42 As Ramsey goes on to explain, what follows from the fact that the Church's existence is rooted in the death and resurrection of Christ is that 'the outward order of the Church ... is no indifferent matter; it is, on the contrary, of supreme importance since it is found to be related to the Church's inner meaning and to the Gospel of God itself.' Ramsey develops his argument in this way:

For the good news that God has visited and redeemed His people includes the redeemed man's knowledge of death and resurrection through his place in the one visible society and through the death to self which every member and group has died. And in telling of this one visible society the Church's outward order tells indeed of the Gospel. For every part of the Church's true order will bear witness to the one universal family of God and will point to the historic events of the Word-made-flesh. Thus Baptism is into the death and resurrection of Christ, and into the one Body (Romans 6.3, 1 Corinthians 12.13); the Eucharist is likewise a sharing in Christ's death and a merging of the individual into the one body (1 Corinthians 11.26, 1 Corinthians 10.17); and the Apostles are both a link with the historical Jesus and also the officers of the one ecclesia whereon every local community depends. Hence the whole structure of the Church tells of the Gospel; not only by its graces and its virtues, but also by its mere organic shape it proclaims the truth. A Baptism, a Eucharistic service, an Apostle, in themselves tell us of our death and resurrection and of the Body which is one.³³

- 6.4.43 We shall see below that the Anglican tradition of priestly presidency at the Eucharist fits into the pattern of the Church's outward order bearing witness to the gospel. This is because priestly presidency symbolizes the fact that when we take part in the Eucharist we do so as members of the Catholic Church, the one body of Christ into which we entered at our baptism.

32. Ramsey, M., *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, London: SPCK, 1990, p.27.

33. *Ibid*, p.50.

6.4.44 Before moving on to explore this issue in more detail it is worth noting that one argument from the New Testament that is sometimes put forward in favour of lay and diaconal presidency is that in the New Testament the oversight of the local church was vested in a corporate eldership rather than in one individual.

6.4.45 Day argues, for instance, that if we look at the New Testament account of the life of Early Church,

Common sense would lead us to suppose that an elder would preside but if we throw in the fact that eldership within a local congregation appears to have been plural then it is very difficult by that route to get to the characteristic Anglican practice of one priest always presiding.³⁴

6.4.46 While what is said about the evidence of the New Testament in this argument is correct, what this argument fails to note is that the principle of corporate eldership is already accepted in the Anglican tradition. A priest who presides at the Eucharist does so as part of the corporate eldership (presbyterate) of the local diocese under the leadership of the diocesan bishop. Moreover, in the context of this corporate eldership it is possible, and frequently happens, that more than one priest will be responsible for presiding over the Eucharists of a particular congregation. The idea that the Anglican tradition of priestly presidency means that presidency at the Eucharist is restricted to one individual is therefore mistaken.

6.4.47 Third, the traditional Anglican position symbolizes the fact that when we take part in the Eucharist we do so as members of the Catholic Church.

6.4.48 What we have seen thus far is that according to the New Testament the outward shape of the Church points to the gospel message that in Christ we die to self and are resurrected to a new life as members of the one body of Christ. The Eucharist fits into this pattern because it is the rite in which the Lord's people meet to recall the new covenant instituted through Christ's body and blood (1 Corinthians 11.23-26) and share

34. Day, *op.cit.*, p.108.

communion with God and with one another as they receive the elements of bread and wine (1 Corinthians 10.17). As *Eucharistic Presidency* puts it:

When the Church gathers to celebrate the Lord's Supper it shares in Christ's body, both in the sense that it partakes of his saving reality and in the sense that it shares in the life of Christ's new community. Indeed, the saving reality which Christ brings includes the communion he makes possible between members of his body. The Eucharist is thus not simply expressive of our *koinonia* with one another but formative of it. It is a means through which we are given to participate in the relationships and responsibilities of the Church in a particularly intense way. Extending the same point, we can say that the Eucharist makes the Church visible.³⁵

6.4.49 If the Eucharist is the service at which the identity of the Church is most clearly revealed in this way, and if a central part of what is revealed is the communion between the members of the body of Christ, it follows that the person who presides at the Eucharist should be a person who symbolizes the existence of that communion. In the Anglican tradition this means a bishop or priest presiding since it is the bishop together with the priests who share his or her ministry of oversight who together preside in the local church and symbolize its connectedness with the whole of the Church Catholic.

6.4.50 To understand why this is the case it is necessary first of all to consider the role of the Apostles as this is described in the New Testament. The term *apostolos* is never precisely defined in the New Testament itself and in fact it seems to be used with a range of meanings. However, as Ramsey says, despite this apparent linguistic confusion, the use of the term Apostle in the New Testament does point to the existence of a very specific ministerial office in the earliest days of the Church:

About the title *apostolos* we cannot always dogmatize. Its use no doubt has varied, and may possibly have been at first broad and wide, and later restricted, S. Luke showing

35. *Eucharistic Presidency*, p.37.

this tendency to restriction. Yet apart from names and terms, we can be certain of this; that there was a ministry, restricted in numbers and of definite authority, not attached to local churches but controlling local churches on behalf of the general Church. This ministry included at least the Twelve with S. James, S. Paul, and S. Barnabas in addition, and its functions were (i) to link the Christians with the historical events of Jesus from whom this Apostolate has received a solemn and special commission; (ii) to represent the one society, for only in the context of the one society can a local church grow up into the fullness of Christ. Amid all the uncertainties of the Apostolic age it is clear that there is no Church mentioned in the New Testament which does not own the authority of an Apostle or apostolic man who represents the wider Church.³⁶

- 6.4.51 What we find in the New Testament, therefore, is a form of Church government in which presbyters and deacons exercise leadership in the local churches under the general oversight of the Apostles.
- 6.4.52 In time the Apostles began to die out and the structure of the Church's government changed. What happened, with specific apostolic sanction according to the patristic evidence, is that while the structure of presbyters and deacons remained in place, the role of oversight that had been exercised by the Apostles came to be exercised instead by bishops.
- 6.4.53 The letters of St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in the early second century, are among the earliest evidence we possess for this development and what we find in these letters is an emphasis on the importance of bishops in maintaining and expressing the unity of the Church. Thus in his letter to the church at Ephesus he writes:

For we can have no life apart from Jesus Christ; and as he represents the mind of the Father, so our bishops, even those who are stationed in the remotest parts of the world, represent the mind of Christ.

36. Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, p.73.

That is why it is proper for your conduct and your practices to correspond closely with the mind of the bishop. And this, indeed, they are doing; your justly respected clergy, who are a credit to God, are attuned to their bishop like the strings of a harp, and the result is a hymn of praise to Jesus Christ from minds that are in unison, and affections that are in harmony. Pray, then, come and join this choir, every one of you; let there be a whole symphony of minds in concert; take the tone all together from God, and sing aloud to the Father with one voice through Jesus Christ, so that He may hear you and know by your good works that you are indeed members of His Son's body. A completely united front will help keep you in constant communion with God.³⁷

- 6.4.54 As part of his stress on the importance of the unity of the Church St. Ignatius also emphasises the importance of having one Eucharist celebrated either by the bishop or by someone appointed by him. We can see this in his letters to the churches in Philadelphia and Smyrna.

He writes to the church in Philadelphia:

Make certain, therefore, that you all observe one common Eucharist; for there is but one Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and but one cup of union with His Blood, and one single altar of sacrifice – even as there is but one bishop, with his clergy and my own fellow-servitors the deacons. This will ensure that all your doings are in full accord with the will of God.³⁸

Likewise he writes to the church in Smyrna:

Make sure that no step affecting the church is ever taken by anyone without the bishop's sanction. The sole Eucharist you should consider valid is one that is celebrated by the bishop himself, or by some person authorized by him. Where the bishop is to be seen, there

37. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 3-4, in Staniforth, M., *Early Christian Writings*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968, p.76.

38. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Philadelphians*, 4, in *ibid*, p.112.

let all the people be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is present, we have the world-wide Church.³⁹

6.4.55 As Ramsey explains, the significance of the emphasis we find in the letters of St. Ignatius on the role of the bishop and the importance of only having Eucharists celebrated or authorized by him is that this gives expression to the gospel in the same way as did the emphasis on the authority of the Apostles that we find in the New Testament:

For the Bishop does not have a greatness of his own, he is the organ of the one Body who represents to the Christians their dependence within the Body, and to the local Church its dependence within the historic family, whose worship is one act. Just as the apostles had represented these truths, so now do St. Ignatius and the other Bishops. The structure is now more definite, it is specially related to the Eucharist; and whereas the Apostle had charge of a wide range of communities, the Bishop is 'localized' in one. But the structure still expresses the Gospel.⁴⁰

6.4.56 In the Ignatian model there is one celebration of the Eucharist attended by the whole of the local Church at which the bishop is present. As the Church grew it became impossible for all the Christians in a local area to assemble together with their bishop to celebrate the Eucharist.

6.4.57 One solution to this problem would have been to create more bishops so that each local gathering of Christians could have been a local church in its own right. To a certain extent this is what happened, but it seems to have been felt that to continue this process indefinitely would lead to the fragmentation of the Church and so the option that was also pursued was to follow the lines suggested in the letter of St. Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans and to allow Eucharists at which the bishop was not present, but which were presided over by someone authorized by the bishop and acting on the bishop's behalf.

6.4.58 From the patristic evidence it is clear that there was a certain degree of fluidity about who could be authorized to preside in

39. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 8, in *ibid*, p.121.

40. Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, p.80.

this way. Thus there is evidence that on occasion confessors and deacons were permitted to preside. However the normal practice and the one that became universal later on in the patristic period was for presbyters to be authorized to preside on the bishop's behalf. The reason for this was twofold. On the one hand from New Testament times onwards presbyters exercised a ministry of oversight in the local church and therefore their authorization was in line with the principle that the person who presided at the Eucharist should be the person who presided over the life of the local church. On the other hand, having received episcopal ordination they acted with the authority of the bishop and on his behalf and as such they represented the link between the local church and the Church universal.

- 6.4.59 As we noted at the beginning of this paper, at the Reformation the Church of England retained the pattern of Eucharistic presidency that developed during the patristic period. That it was the intention of the English reformers to retain the traditional patristic pattern is clear from the 1662 Ordinal in which their thinking is reflected.
- 6.4.60 The *Preface to the Ordinal* makes it clear that the intention of the Ordinal was to maintain the Catholic orders of ministry going back to the time of the Apostles, and we know from the works of Anglican writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that the fact that the Church of England had retained these orders of ministry was seen as a symbol of its being part of the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. In John Jewel's *Apology for the Church of England*, for example, the fact that the Church of England believes '... that there be divers degrees of ministers in the church; whereof some be deacons, some priests, some bishops; to whom is committed the office to instruct the people, and the whole charge and setting forth of religion'⁴¹ is one of the facts that Jewel appeals to in order to show that the Church of England is part of the Catholic Church rather than, as its Roman critics claimed, a schismatic sect.

41. Ayre, J., (ed.) *The Works of John Jewel, The Third Portion*, Cambridge: Parker Society/ CUP, 1843, p.59.

- 6.4.61 In the rite for the ordination of priests, the import of the words accompanying the laying on of hands by the bishop is unmistakable. What the bishop says is:

Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain are retained. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of his holy Sacraments; in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen

- 6.4.62 The clear implication of these words is that the reason that priests in the Church of England have the authority to remit and to retain sins, to preach the word and celebrate the sacraments is that they are priests, not just of the Church of England, but of the whole Catholic Church ('the Church of God'). Furthermore the reason this is the case is that they have received episcopal ordination.⁴²

- 6.4.63 Within this pattern, as *Eucharistic Presidency* makes clear, the fact that a Church of England congregation is presided over by a presbyter/priest who is episcopally ordained and shares oversight with the diocesan bishop is one of the things that means that it is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and the priest's presidency at the Eucharist is a natural extension of this aspect of their priestly role. It marks out the fact that what is taking place is a Catholic Eucharist being celebrated by a congregation that is part of the universal Church, and it thereby bears witness to the truth that there is one body of Christ of which all baptised Christians are members because of their participation in His death and resurrection. Furthermore, as we have also seen, this is not only still the Church of England's position, but it has also remained the position of the Anglican tradition as a whole.

42. This does not of course rule out the possibility that people may also be admitted to the ministry of word and sacrament in the Church of God by other means in other Christian traditions. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of the ecclesial authenticity of the ministries of non-episcopal churches in a number of the ecumenical agreements that the Church of England has entered into indicates that the Church of England believes that this is in fact the case.

- 6.4.64 Fourth, within the traditional Anglican framework it would be inappropriate for lay people or deacons to preside at the Eucharist.
- 6.4.65 Given that the Anglican position on eucharistic presidency is thus that the person who presides at the Eucharist needs to be someone who presides over the local Christian community and represents the universal Church by virtue of episcopal authorization, the question that those arguing for lay and diaconal presidency raise is why these two conditions cannot be met by lay people or deacons. As they see it, if a lay person or deacon has day to day pastoral responsibility for a local Christian community, they should be allowed to preside at the Eucharist with appropriate episcopal authorization. There are two responses to this argument.
- 6.4.66 The first response is that the argument about pastoral responsibility will never in fact be true. The person with pastoral oversight for the local Anglican community will always be the bishop and a priest or priests acting on his or her behalf. This is true even in a vacancy where the bishop still retains pastoral responsibility for the community involved and priestly ministry will be arranged for that community until such time as it once more has a priest of its own.
- 6.4.67 The second response is that, if what is proposed is that a deacon or lay person should exercise a ministry of pastoral oversight involving preaching and the celebration of the sacraments, then clearly they are being asked to exercise a priestly ministry. They should therefore be ordained as priests in order to do it.
- 6.4.68 From biblical times onwards the recognised way of authorising someone to exercise pastoral oversight has been that of appointing them as an elder/presbyter by means of prayer and the laying on of hands. In Anglican terms this means ordaining someone as a priest. What is not clear is why it is proposed by certain Anglicans that there should be a departure from this received pattern.
- 6.4.69 In his 1983 report *A Strategy for the Church's Ministry*, John Tiller, for example, notes that what is being proposed by

advocates of lay presidency is a strategy in which lay presidents form a regular part of the future pattern of Anglican ministry. He then observes:

Even if the Bishop might authorise lay presidency where temporary difficulties made it necessary for the Church's welfare; even if, in extreme situations the local Church, lacking contact with its Bishop, could appoint one of its own number to this ministry, it does not follow that there exists a theological case for making lay presidency part of this strategy. For that purpose, it would be necessary to establish that lay leaders in the local Church should in principle have authority to preside at the Eucharist. But how could one distinguish theologically between the recognition of that authority and ordination? We are arguing in this report that the harmful clergy-laity divide in the Church will not be overcome by abolishing distinctions between the two, but by regarding the clergy as members of the laity, who are authorised to represent the whole laity, both in their public ministry, and in their representative function within the Christian community. Presidency at the Eucharist is undeniably a representative function: it should accordingly be entrusted to those who represent the priestly ministry of the whole Body.⁴³

6.4.70 An argument that is sometimes still made for allowing lay people and deacons to preside at the Eucharist is that this would be in accordance with the biblical teaching about what is sometimes referred to as the 'priesthood of all believers.' Once again there are two points to be made here.

6.4.71 The first is that in New Testament terms (see 1 Peter 2.9, Revelation 1.6, 5.10, 20.6) what we are talking about is the corporate priesthood of the whole people of God rather than the priesthood of each individual Christian. As the Methodist report *Called to Love and Praise* puts it:

It will be seen that the New Testament directs us to the priesthood of the body of believers, rather than the priesthood of every believer. This latter emphasis is not necessarily wrong, but it is much more individual-centred

43. Tiller, J., *A Strategy for the Church's Ministry*, London: CIO, 1983, p.120.

than the language of Scripture, which stresses the interdependence of believers.⁴⁴

- 6.4.72 Secondly, the appeal to the corporate priesthood of the people of God in connection with the issue of Eucharistic presidency is based on a confusion between this corporate priesthood and the specific priestly ministry of ordained ministers. As Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry explains, the two are related but are nevertheless distinct:

Jesus Christ is the unique priest of the new covenant. Christ's life was given as a sacrifice for all. Derivatively, the Church as a whole can be described as a priesthood. All members are called to offer their being 'as a living sacrifice' and to intercede for the Church and the salvation of the world. Ordained ministers are related, as are all Christians, both to the priesthood of Christ, and to the priesthood of the Church. But they may appropriately be called priests because they fulfil a particular priestly service by strengthening and building up the royal and prophetic priesthood of the faithful through word and sacraments, through their prayers of intercession, and through their pastoral guidance of the community.⁴⁵

- 6.4.73 As we have seen, according to the Anglican understanding, presidency at the Eucharist is a particular form of the specific priestly calling of the ordained ministry and therefore the existence of the corporate priesthood of the people of God as a whole does not mean that every Christian, whether ordained or not, may rightly preside at the Eucharist.
- 6.4.74 Even if the arguments that it is inappropriate for lay people and deacons to preside at the Eucharist are accepted, the challenge remains of how to ensure that there is adequate eucharistic provision for Christians in the Anglican tradition. The points made by Day in the following quotation may be phrased in a rather rhetorical fashion, but they still need to be taken seriously:

44. *Called to Love and Praise*, Peterborough: MPH, 1999, p.44.

45. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Geneva: WCC, 1982, p.23.

What is so glorious about the harassed incumbent who is compelled to drive furiously around the district in order to get communion to eight different churches and confesses himself 'massed out' at the end of the day? What system of pastoral care denies a rural congregation their weekly communion because there is no priest to deliver it? Worse still, what theory of nature and follow-up insists that congregations of new Christians in South America and Africa have to do with communion once a year for want of a priest?⁴⁶

6.4.75 Unless issues such as these are tackled in an adequate fashion the pressure for lay and diaconal presidency will inevitably continue to grow. If people see the choice that they have as one between maintaining the traditional Anglican position and the adequate provision of the Eucharist then the temptation to move towards dispensing with the traditional Anglican discipline will be a very strong one. It therefore follows that there is an urgent need to ensure that this is not a choice that people feel that they have to make.

6.4.76 In a Church of England context, the question of adequate provision of the Eucharist has been raised in a fresh way by the recent report *Mission-Shaped Church*. This report argues that there is a need to develop 'fresh expressions of church' in order to engage in effective mission in contemporary British society. It also argues that these fresh expressions of church must be communities in which there is a celebration of the Eucharist:

Churches are eucharistic communities, irrespective of their church tradition, or the frequency of eucharistic worship. The Eucharist lies at the heart of Christian life. It is the act of worship (including the ministry of the Word) in which the central core of the biblical gospel is retold and re-enacted. New expressions of church may raise practical difficulties about authorized ministry, but, if they are to endure, they must celebrate the Eucharist.⁴⁷

6.4.77 The question that the Church of England will need to face is how it will make it possible for these new Christian

46. Day, *op.cit.*, p.114.

47. *Mission-Shaped Church*, London: CHP, 2004, p.101.

communities that do not fit easily within traditional diocesan structures to have a regular celebration of the Eucharist.

- 6.4.78 Anglicans do not believe that they are at liberty to change the fundamental shape of the Catholic ministry to which their position on the issue of eucharistic presidency gives expression. As the Preface to the Ordinal makes clear, from the traditional Anglican viewpoint the threefold Catholic order of ministry is a gift from God that has been handed down the generations from apostolic and post-apostolic times, just like the Scriptures, the two dominical sacraments and the rule of faith which finds expression in the Catholic creeds. As such, it is not something that the Church of today is free to modify.
- 6.4.79 Moreover, because it is the form of ministry that has been accepted by the vast majority of Christians throughout most of the history of the Church and is still the one that is accepted by the vast majority of Christians today, it manifests the unity of the Church across time and space in a way that no other form of Church polity can.
- 6.4.80 From an Anglican viewpoint, therefore, the solution to the issue of eucharistic deprivation will have to found within the boundaries of their existing polity through the fostering of a greater number of vocations to the stipendiary priesthood and through greater use of different forms of non-stipendiary priesthood. The issue of the frequency with which the Eucharist is celebrated may also need to be addressed. The influence of the Parish Communion movement has led to the canonical requirement that the Eucharist should be celebrated in every cathedral and parish church every Sunday,⁴⁸ but it is at least arguable that a return to the previous pattern of less frequent celebration might lead to a greater reverence for the Eucharist when it is celebrated, and provide the opportunity for holding other kinds of service that would be more accessible to those outside, or on the fringes of, the Church.

48. Canons B 13 & 14 – Canon B 14a allows exceptions to be made to the requirement that there should be a celebration in every parish church provided that the Eucharist is celebrated somewhere in a benefice every Sunday.

6.5 A METHODIST PERSPECTIVE

- 6.5.1 The Wesleys' Methodism was unusual in the context of the broader eighteenth century evangelical revival in that its origins combined a concern for spiritual renewal, a deeply sacramental piety and an instinctive loyalty to the forms and order of the Church of England. This combination of commitments set up tensions within the movement, some of which remain visible to the present day.
- 6.5.2 The Wesley brothers prized Holy Communion as a divinely appointed means of grace.⁴⁹ This was reflected in their sermons, hymns and personal practice: it has been estimated that John Wesley received Communion on average every 4-5 days. Wesley's *Journal* records large numbers of communicants at lengthy services in major Methodist centres from the 1740s. Methodists were urged to avail themselves of the Lord's Supper in the 1787 sermon 'The Duty of Constant Communion' (an abridgment of a work of 1732, illustrating Wesley's much-vaunted continuity of thought through his long life).
- 6.5.3 The Wesleys encouraged members of their societies to take Communion in their local parish church. In addition, Holy Communion was provided for Methodists in other places where ordained clergy sympathetic to the movement were available to officiate. J.C. Bowmer suggests that the first 'congregational Methodist Communion' took place in 1743, when the Wesleys acquired the West Street Chapel in London and celebrated Holy Communion there.⁵⁰
- 6.5.4 Although there do not seem to have been any scruples about the use of non-consecrated buildings, the Wesleys were very

49. Thus, for example, the first paragraph of the report "'His Presence makes the Feast": Holy Communion in the Methodist Church', received by the Methodist Conference of 2003: *Agenda of Conference* (Peterborough, 2003), pp.180-242, at p.180.

50. Bowmer, J.C., *The Lord's Supper in Methodism 1791-1960* (London, 1961), 12. West Street was a consecrated building – presumably a proprietary chapel – built for a Huguenot congregation in the late seventeenth century: see Vickers, J.A., 'West Street Chapel', in Vickers, J.A., *A Dictionary of Methodism in Great Britain and Ireland*, Peterborough: Epworth, 2000, pp.388-9.

reluctant to permit preachers who were not episcopally ordained to preside at the Lord's Supper. On occasion, Methodist preachers did administer Communion: Charles Perronet and Thomas Walsh did so in London and Reading in 1754, and Charles Wesley noted anxiously that his brother 'was inclined to lay on hands; and to let the preachers administer.' Six years later it was discovered that three itinerants in Norwich had been celebrating Communion on the strength of their licence as Dissenting preachers. The 1760 Conference put a stop to this, and Howell Harris recorded that John Wesley told Conference that he would rather commit murder than administer without ordination.⁵¹

- 6.5.5 It should be noted that the eighteenth century debate turned on whether Methodist travelling preachers (the forerunners of Methodist ministers/presbyters) could administer Holy Communion and, if so, under what conditions. The debate was not conducted in terms of 'lay presidency' versus 'presbyteral presidency', although clearly the great majority of the travelling preachers were not ordained.
- 6.5.6 Issues of church order, orders of ministry and their validity, pastoral and evangelistic effectiveness and the relationship between the Wesleys' Methodism and the Church of England were interwoven in this controversy. The Wesley brothers wished to encourage the Methodists to take Communion regularly, but provision in many parishes was infrequent. Some of the preachers and some of the Methodist people pressed for the opportunity to celebrate Holy Communion as part of the life of the Methodist societies, but the Wesleys instinctively resisted this as a breach of church order and were conscious of the implications for Methodism's position within the Church of England. John Wesley eventually came to believe that, as a presbyter, he had authority to ordain others to presbyteral ministry. Faced with the need to provide oversight for Methodist work in North America, Wesley ordained preachers to meet this situation in 1784. Later Wesley took the further step of ordaining travelling preachers for work in Great Britain. Wesley resolved the conflict between sacramental deprivation

51. Baker, F., *John Wesley and the Church of England* (London, 1970 [2000]), pp.162-3, 175-9, 257.

and church order by taking authority to ordain, and some of his preachers believed that Wesley's intention was to establish a three-fold order of ministry within Methodism to secure sacramental provision for the future.⁵²

- 6.5.7 Charles Wesley rejected this solution and denied his brother's claim to ordain. For Charles, if Methodist preachers, whether ordained by John or not, started to preside at Holy Communion, an irreparable breach would be created between the Methodist movement and the Church of England. If preachers wished to exercise a ministry of Word and sacraments, they should seek episcopal ordination.
- 6.5.8 The position after John Wesley's death in 1791 was thoroughly confused. The body of travelling preachers included some ordained clergy who had become part of the Wesleys' 'connexion', some people ordained by John Wesley and many preachers 'in full connexion' with the Conference who were not ordained at all. Some Methodists were determined to maintain close ties with the Church of England and to resist all steps which might precipitate a breach; others were indifferent or even hostile to the Church; many wished to receive Holy Communion from their own preachers.
- 6.5.9 The Conference, heir to Wesley's autocracy in his Connexion, took a series of steps in the early 1790s to reduce the confusion. In 1792 it decided to cease ordinations. The following year Conference decreed that there should be no distinction between ordained and unordained preachers, and clerical dress and the title 'Reverend' were proscribed. Henceforth there would be a single order of ministry in Methodism, admission to which was marked by reception into full connexion with the Conference. In 1795 the 'Plan of Pacification' was adopted, ruling that Holy Communion could be celebrated in Methodist chapels, provided that a majority of the chapel trustees, society stewards and class leaders agreed, and that the permission of the Conference had been obtained. In 1799 more than forty societies were listed as having 'petitioned for the Lord's Supper this year, according to the

52. Bowmer, *Lord's Supper in Methodism*, pp.15-17, citing Henry Moore and William Myles.

rules of pacification’; but at Great Queen Street, London, by contrast, the trustees, staunch ‘Church Methodists’, refused to allow even preachers ordained by Wesley to administer Holy Communion, relying instead on the ministrations of a friendly Anglican, or, on occasion, a clergyman bailed out of the Fleet prison.

- 6.5.10 While local practice varied, especially during the long-drawn-out process of separation between the Methodist societies and the Church of England, Wesleyan Methodism settled its official position in the 1790s. It is interesting to note how the Plan of Pacification defined those who might administer the Lord’s Supper in Methodist chapels. The only definition offered was ‘those *only* who are authorized by the Conference’. Ministerial validity in the 1790s, therefore, was determined by an individual’s standing with the Conference, regardless of possession or lack of ordination.⁵³ Perhaps it was simply assumed that those so authorised would be travelling preachers in full connexion, for when the 1811 Conference reiterated the provisions of 1795, it ruled that ‘No person be permitted to administer the Lord’s Supper but a travelling preacher in full connexion.’ From 1836, these preachers were also ordained by the imposition of hands.⁵⁴
- 6.5.11 There was an exception to this Wesleyan rule. In 1892 the Conference made provision for probationers (those in training for ordained ministry and stationed in circuits, but not yet ordained or received into full connexion) to be granted a ‘dispensation’ to administer the sacraments. ‘Preachers on trial’ had been permitted to officiate at private baptisms in cases of emergency since 1829, but the 1892 regulation seems to have been the first such ruling with regard to the Lord’s Supper. The Conference of 1902 expanded the brief wording of 1892 and 1893 to explain that this was being done ‘in view of the difficulty of providing a proper administration of the Lord’s Supper in some Circuits’.

53. *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences*, i [1795 Conference], p.323 (italics in original).

54. Bowmer, *Lord’s Supper in Methodism*, p.25.

- 6.5.12 Three significant points arise here. First, even in Wesleyan Methodism, where concerns about church order and ministerial status might be expected to be most prominent, it proved possible to permit what was in effect lay presidency. Second, the ecclesiastical justification for lay presidency was the absolute authority of the Conference, an argument which could claim Methodist precedent stretching back nearly a century to the Plan of Pacification. Third, the reason given for lay presidency was pastoral necessity in the circuits. Arguably the Wesleyans had conceded (if indeed they had ever denied) that presbyteral presidency was a matter of good order only, not of sacramental validity.
- 6.5.13 Wesleyan Methodism was only part of the picture after 1791. The period between John Wesley's death and the mid-nineteenth century witnessed many divisions and secessions in the Methodist movement, giving rise to numerous rival connexions. These ranged from vigorous but comparatively small bodies like the Bible Christians to the much larger connexions of the Primitive Methodists and the United Methodist Free Churches (UMFC). A cocktail of causes contributed to these divisions. At one level there were personality conflicts and struggles for power within the ministerial body. At another, the programme espoused by an urban and metropolitan elite of ministers and wealthy laity anxious to manage (or control) a burgeoning movement at a time of political and social unrest alienated local leaders with different priorities and a different vision of Methodism's mission and identity. It was all too easy for particular local disagreements to become manifestations of a general conflict between connexional authority and local autonomy, between itinerant preachers conscious of their new-found ministerial status and loyal to the Conference and lay leaders rooted in their community and its life. Within the little world of Wesleyan Methodism, the exclusively ministerial Conference was both king and pope, so disputes were settled in a manner which often left local interests bruised, disgruntled or departing from the Connexion. In many cases, then, the status, role and authority of ministers, the rights and responsibilities of the laity and the relationship between local circuit or congregation and connexion were at the heart of bitter debates. It is not

surprising that this background influenced the ecclesiology and practice of the various non-Wesleyan connexions.

- 6.5.14 It should be noted that, with one or two minor exceptions, none of the connexions abandoned the institution of a separated ministry altogether. Some began with the support and involvement of a few Wesleyan travelling preachers (ministers), but others did not; all created an itinerant and stipendiary ministry of their own. Practice varied with regard to ordination. Imposition of hands was viewed with some suspicion, particularly in the UMFC, and the general pattern was to treat reception into full connexion as ‘virtual ordination’. What ‘made’ a minister was not the rite of ordination but reception into full connexion with the Conference. Reflection on the nature of presbyteral ministry was quite limited, with an emphasis on ‘entire separation to the ministry’ rather than ontological or functional definitions of ‘what is a presbyter’.
- 6.5.15 Although there were differences between what Bowmer calls ‘the smaller Methodist bodies of the nineteenth century’,⁵⁵ all declined to restrict presidency at the Lord’s Supper to the travelling preachers. In the Methodist New Connexion, a minister usually presided, but it was not uncommon for a lay person to do so. The same was true of the Bible Christians. Among the Primitive Methodists, it was determined that ‘the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper must be administered to our societies by such persons as the Quarterly Boards shall appoint’, the board being the meeting of preachers and office-holders in the ‘station’ (or circuit). In the UMFC, where local autonomy was particularly significant, the sacraments were administered by itinerant or local preachers; Bowmer observes that the Society Steward might ask any preacher or exhorter to preside.⁵⁶
- 6.5.16 Non-Wesleyan or ‘free’ Methodist practice reflected a combination of pragmatism and principle. With a limited number of travelling preachers and a large number of chapels

55. Bowmer, *Lord’s Supper in Methodism*, p.34. Wesleyan commentators were less complimentary!

56. Bowmer, *Lord’s Supper in Methodism*, pp.34-42.

and services, it made sense to permit lay presidency. Moreover, the 'free' Methodist connexions understood their practice as an expression of a fundamental belief 'that those who are called by Christ to preach the Gospel, and who render their services gratuitously, are not thereby less qualified to exercise any of the offices of the Christian Ministry than those who are maintained by the contributions of the Church.'⁵⁷ In response to Wesleyan sneers that Primitive Methodists regarded their ministers as mere 'paid agents' of the Church, A.S. Peake responded with a robust defence of his connexion's ecclesiology:

Be it ours to have a high doctrine of the ministry just because we have a high doctrine of the Church, to regard the ministry not as possessed of any priesthood which it does not share with the laity, but to recognise that that priesthood finds its fittest organ and most intense expression in the activities of those who are wholly dedicated to its service.

In the various functions of her ministry the Church does but specialise and concentrate in particular organs the powers which exist diffused through the whole membership. Christ's people are a spiritual people, filled with the Holy Ghost; and every one of them has spiritual qualities and spiritual duties. Preaching, teaching, public prayer, the care of souls – in all these the ministry has a principal and directing part, but not an exclusive property. Even in establishing the sacraments and committing them to His apostles our Lord Jesus does not prescribe their administration by a definite order of men.⁵⁸

- 6.5.17 From the second decade of the twentieth century the main strands of the Methodist movement were engaged in a tortuous process of negotiation for reunion. This scheme eventually bore fruit in the union of 1932, which formed the present Methodist Church in Great Britain. Given a century and more of division, and a recurring tendency to caricature the position of other

57. Beckerlegge, O.A., *The United Methodist Free Churches*, London: Epworth, 1957, p.70.

58. Wilkinson, J.T., *Arthur Samuel Peake: a biography*, London: Epworth, 1971, p.168.

groups, it is not surprising that a good deal of debate focussed on the doctrine and place of the ministry and on the administration of the sacraments.

6.5.18 Three issues were raised in the debate about lay presidency. The first was whether it was permissible under any circumstances whatsoever; the second was what circumstances might justify it; the third was how it should be authorised or regulated. Even the ‘highest’ Wesleyans fairly rapidly conceded that lay presidency might be permitted in ‘exceptional’ circumstances – in other words, where otherwise congregations would be deprived of access to the Lord’s Supper. They then pressed for authorisation by Conference, against the Primitive and United Methodist preference for control by Quarterly Meetings. The Wesleyan position was in line with the 1892 and 1902 decisions that Conference might authorise probationers to administer the Lord’s Supper in cases of pastoral necessity: presbyteral presidency was the ‘general usage’ of the Church, but exceptions might be permitted if Conference so decreed. For the Primitive and United Methodists, presbyteral presidency might also be *de facto* general practice, but it was important to retain lay presidency as more than an expedient for emergencies.

6.5.19 The compromise reached was set out in clause 34 of the Deed of Union, which stated:

The general usage of the Churches or denominations whereby the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is administered by Ministers shall continue to be observed.

There will necessarily be a transitional period during which the Circuits are being gradually amalgamated. During this period in areas in which local unions have not been consummated it will be natural on account of variations from the general usage for each Circuit to continue the practice of the Church denomination or Connexion to which it originally belonged.

When local unions take place the general usage of administration by Ministers as stated above will continue. Where however it can be shown that any Church is

deprived of a reasonably frequent and regular administration through lack of ministers the Circuit concerned may apply to the Conference for the authorisation of persons other than Ministers to administer the Sacrament. All nominations of such persons shall be made annually by the June Circuit Quarterly Meeting. The authorisation shall be made from year to year by the Conference in its Representative Session and shall be duly certified by the President and the Secretary on behalf of the Conference.⁵⁹

- 6.5.20 With this statement might be coupled affirmations in the doctrinal clause of the Deed that ministers ‘hold no priesthood differing in kind from that which is common to the Lord’s people’ and that ‘[f]or the sake of Church Order and not because of any priestly virtue inherent in the office the Ministers of The Methodist Church are set apart by ordination to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments.’⁶⁰
- 6.5.21 The 1932 union therefore established ‘general usage’ for the united Church in terms of presbyteral presidency with an option for authorised lay administration in cases of sacramental deprivation. As noted above, however, the Deed also permitted the persistence of ‘variations from the general usage’ during an unspecified ‘transitional period’.
- 6.5.22 In 1946 the Conference returned to this subject and adopted a report on ‘Lay Administration of the Sacraments’. The report made its ‘first consideration’ ‘the orderly and regular administration of the Lord’s Supper’. It reaffirmed the ‘general usage’ ‘whereby the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is administered by Ministers’, but also recorded that ‘The Committee accepts the principle of duly authorised lay administration of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper throughout Methodism.’ Noting the persistence of variations across the Connexion, with damaging consequences for local circuit life and for amalgamations fourteen years after union, the committee commended ‘the general usage of administration by Ministers but with provision for lay administration where it

59. *Minutes of Conference*, 1932, p.303.

60. *Ibid.*, pp.302-3.

is needed or required.’ A procedure was then set out for ‘suitable persons’ to be nominated by the Quarterly Meeting, approved by the District Synod and accepted and authorised by the Conference to administer the sacraments for a renewable period of three years. Authorisation depended on the case being made that a church was ‘deprived of reasonably frequent and regular administration through lack of Ministers.’ This regulation was encapsulated in Standing Orders and the original clause (34) of the 1932 Deed was removed by Conference in 1948.⁶¹

- 6.5.23 Students of the *Agenda* of the Methodist Conference will know that authorisations to preside at the Lord’s Supper form one of the hardy perennials of Conference business. In fifty-six of the seventy-four years following Methodist union, Conference addressed some aspect or other of the issue. These discussions included (or prompted) reports from the Faith and Order committee in 1960, 1966, 1968, 1975, 1976, 1979, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1994 and 1996. To rehearse the business in detail would be tedious, and also unproductive, because much of the material falls into a small number of well-worn categories: requests to expand the availability of authorisations (for instance, to deaconesses or to lay people with particular pastoral or missionary responsibilities in a given congregation); concern about the standing of probationers (are they lay people or quasi-presbyters?); and questions about the definition of ‘deprivation’ or the application of the rules in particular situations.⁶²

61. *Minutes of Conference*, 1946, pp.203-04. Following consultation with the Synods, this procedure was confirmed by the 1947 Conference (*Minutes*, 1947, pp.41-2) and embodied in Spencer, H., and Finch, E., *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*, London: MPH, 1951, pp.120-21. CPD was also an initiative of the 1946 Conference. (See also *Minutes*, 1948, p.213). If the policy with regard to the Lord’s Supper seems confusing, we may take heart from the committee’s frank admission that the position with regard to the other dominical sacrament was ‘chaotic’.

62. See Beck, B. E., *An Index to the Agendas of the Methodist Conference 1932-1996*, n.p., 2002, pp.79-80, and the three volumes of *Statements of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order: 1933-1983*, London, MPH, 1984 and *Statements of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order: 1984-2000*, Peterborough: MPH, 2000.

6.5.24 Although some details have changed since the decisions of 1932 and 1946, the broad principles set down in the Deed of Union, modified by the post-war revisions, have remained in place. The Conference has held to the statement that the ‘general usage’ of Methodism is that the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is administered by ministers (presbyters), with provision for the authorisation of lay presidency under certain circumstances. Those circumstances have wavered only slightly in three quarters of a century. For most of the period since union, ‘deprivation’ (however defined) has been the only criterion to be admitted. By the early 1980s the Committee on Authorisations was accepting that ‘desire for more frequent Holy Communion’ might be used to define ‘deprivation’ (i.e., desire for Holy Communion more frequently than the monthly celebration long deemed ‘reasonably frequent and regular’ in Methodist churches).⁶³ In 1984, however, the Conference directed the Faith and Order committee and the Committee on Authorisations to review the criteria and to work on ways of recognising ‘missionary situations’. Responding to this direction, the Faith and Order committee recommended, and the Conference of 1986 accepted, that a lay person representing the Church in an isolated area which formed a ‘missionary situation’ might be a suitable candidate for authorisation. Thus two additional criteria were used to guide the interpretation of the Standing Order (011) governing authorisations.⁶⁴ The text of the Standing Order, however, was not revised to make this explicit.⁶⁵ Later reports continued to affirm the importance of ‘missionary situations’, but when the Conference of 1997, following Faith and Order reports in 1994 and 1996, and responding to questions about automatic authorisations for probationers (practice since 1988, but rendered more controversial by the creation of a new category of non-itinerant ‘Ministers in Local Appointment’), adopted revised guidelines and directed that the Authorisation Committee’s detailed criteria should be printed in *CPD*, no mention was made of ‘missionary situations’ and the guidance notes offered a strict

63. This was the ‘rule of thumb’ in 1975: *Statements on Faith and Order, 1933-1983*, p.102.

64. *Statements on Faith and Order, 1984-2000*, i, pp.130-32; *Minutes of Conference, 1986*, p.23.

65. *CPD* (1990), p.271; Spencer and Finch, p.120.

mathematical formula to calculate ‘deprivation’.⁶⁶ The 1996 Faith and Order report, while carefully tabulating views received from around the Connexion, also took the opportunity to demolish some of the cherished arguments of advocates of a more open policy (appeal to the priesthood of all believers, complaints about presbyteral exclusivity, request for a closer link between presidency and pastoral responsibility).⁶⁷

- 6.5.25 To complete the picture, four recent documents should be mentioned. In 1999 the Conference adopted ‘Called to Love and Praise’, a statement on the nature of the Christian Church in Methodist experience and practice. This included a brief section on ordained ministry and eucharistic presidency, emphasising that ‘when lay persons or deacons preside at the Lord’s Table, through pastoral deprivation or missionary emergency, they do so with the full authority of the Conference’, thus indicating that ‘the Eucharist is ... a celebration of the whole Church’ and that ‘authorization is ... an expression of connexionalism, and, also as a response to a pressing local need, an expression of the Methodist view that Gospel imperatives determine church order.’⁶⁸
- 6.5.26 Three years later the Conference adopted the report ‘What is a Presbyter?’ which, while emphasising the collaborative nature of ministry, noted that ‘[w]here people other than ordained ministers (presbyters) are authorised to preside at celebrations of Holy Communion this is treated as a departure from the norm in order to ensure that the people of God can share in

66. *CPD* (1997), pp.730-31. *Agenda* 1997, 396, states (citing SO 011(1)) that “there is only one basis on which an application for a dispensation may be made, namely deprivation of reasonably frequent and regular celebration through lack of ministers”. The conflict between this interpretation and the practice of giving dispensations to probationer ministers was resolved by insisting the deprivation must be demonstrated in all cases. It is not clear from the texts whether deprivation should constitute the ‘only’ ground, or the ‘principal’ ground – both terms are used – but this perhaps reflects the difference of opinion in the Conference and the Connexion on this matter.

67. *Statements on Faith and Order, 1984-2000*, i, pp.151-62. The vocabulary of ‘pastoral responsibility’ and ‘pastoral charge’ was used rather loosely in the 1990s; more recent work has clarified that both are prerogatives of ordained presbyters.

68. *Ibid.*, pp.48-49.

communion in situations where they would otherwise be deprived of it.’⁶⁹

- 6.5.27 ‘Non-presbyteral presidency at the Eucharist’ was noted as an issue for further discussion and work in *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* (2001).⁷⁰
- 6.5.28 The Conference of 2003 received a report on Holy Communion in the Methodist Church, entitled ‘His Presence makes the Feast’. This document, descriptive rather than prescriptive in approach, set out current Methodist practice in all its glorious diversity and reviewed Conference statements and developments since 1932.

Concluding Reflections

- 6.5.29 Lay presidency, in one form or another, has been part of Methodist practice since the days of the Wesleys. Most of the early Methodist preachers were not in holy orders, and, whether ordained by John Wesley or in receipt of ‘virtual ordination’ through reception into full connexion with the Conference, from the standpoint of a strict Churchman they were all lay people. Methodists who were troubled by questions of validity were usually able to justify their orders to their own satisfaction, although it may be doubted whether most Methodists were greatly concerned about such matters.
- 6.5.30 Setting aside the standing of those who served in the ‘separated ministry’, all the branches of divided Methodism used lay people to some extent to administer the Lord’s Supper. The Wesleyans comprised a partial exception, but their policy (at least from 1892) with regard to probationers tended in the same direction.
- 6.5.31 It is not clear how far the different Methodist groups argued a case for lay presidency, as distinct from accepting it as traditional practice in their particular community. Perhaps only when the tradition was challenged – by an external opponent or

69. ‘What is a Presbyter?’, in *Over to You 2002*, Peterborough: MPH, 2002, p.79, n. 17.

70. *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* (Peterborough: MPH and London: CHP, 2001), pp.50-51.

by the prospect of union with a body professing different principles – was there a spur to articulate the reasons behind ‘what we have always done’.

- 6.5.32 It is easy to identify unedifying reasons for the use of lay presidency in the non-Wesleyan branches of Methodism and to detect similar motives behind some more modern advocates of the practice. Those who were resentful or impatient of ministerial pretensions or alienated by the overweening claims made for the ‘pastoral office’ might well espouse a polity where anyone could apparently do anything; a misunderstanding of the priesthood of all believers could offer an ill-informed but apparently persuasive justification for this approach. Earnest debate about competing theologies of church and ministry could mask battles for power and influence within or between Christian communities.
- 6.5.33 It is also easy to focus on the criterion of deprivation and to see lay presidency largely as a typically pragmatic Methodist response to a crisis – a bright idea in search of a theological rationale.
- 6.5.34 Neither personality conflicts, nor grubby power politics, nor lay anti-clericalism, nor unthinking expediency nor sheer ignorance should be dismissed as partial explanations for ecclesiastical developments, whether in Methodism or elsewhere. However, lay presidency in the Methodist tradition (or traditions) has rather more to be said for it than this.
- 6.5.35 Debates in Conference show that lay presidency has a symbolic value to some sections of the Methodist Church. Methodists who have never received Communion from an authorised lay person (unless perhaps a probationer presbyter), and who might not really wish to do so, would nonetheless be disturbed and offended if the *possibility* of authorisation was withdrawn. This reaction is worth keeping in mind. It is a boundary marker, a landmark, an aspect of community memory, and should be treated with respect.
- 6.5.36 More significant, perhaps, is the witness of lay presidency to two fundamentals of Methodist ecclesiology: the authority of the Conference and the principle of connexionalism. The

framers of the Plan of Pacification asked, in effect: ‘Who may administer the Lord’s Supper?’ The reply was: ‘those *only* who are authorised by the Conference’. Methodist presbyters administer the Lord’s Supper in our Connexion by virtue of their ordination *and because they are in full connexion with the Conference*: a presbyter no longer in full connexion is deemed suspended from her/his functions within the Methodist Church. A lay person, duly authorised according to rule, may administer the Lord’s Supper as permitted by the Conference. In both cases, presidency affirms and illustrates the episcopate exercised by the Conference. Moreover, in both cases the president at the Lord’s Table acts as a representative of the Connexion, and therefore of the Universal Church.

- 6.5.37 The most important point, however, reflects the latest Methodist statement on the nature of the Church. *Called to Love and Praise* takes lay presidency as an example of ‘the Methodist view that Gospel imperatives determine church order’.⁷¹ This is pure Wesley:

What is the end of all ecclesiastical order? Is it not to bring souls from the power of Satan to God; and to build them up in His fear and love? Order, then, is so far valuable, as it answers these ends; and if it answers them not, it is nothing worth.⁷²

- 6.5.38 Fidelity to the Gospel and to mission, and discerning the leadings of Providence, may take the faithful into courses outside ‘the norm’. From this perspective, lay presidency might be justified as a sign of missionary flexibility and a witness to the priority of Gospel over order.

71. ‘Called to Love and Praise’, in *Statements on Faith and Order, 1984-2000*, i, p.49.

72. Letter to ‘John Smith’, 25 June 1746, in Telford, J., (ed.), *The Letters of John Wesley* (London, 1931), ii, pp.77-78.

7. TOWARDS THE INTERCHANGEABILITY OF ORDAINED MINISTRIES

7.1 The question of whether the ordained ministries of our two churches might become fully interchangeable, and if so how, is firmly on the agenda of the Joint Implementation Commission. The JIC is aware of expectations among many Methodists and Anglicans that further progress will be made on this crucial issue at a comparatively early stage of the implementation of the Covenant. This section aims to describe the positions of our two churches and to set out some of the issues that will need to be faced as we continue to work together on this vital area of visible unity.

7.2 The Common Statement (CS) of the Formal Conversations examined the question of the interchangeability of ministries and moved the discussion forward. In line with the consensus of the Faith and Order tradition of the ecumenical movement, the CS saw a common, interchangeable ministry as one of the essential components of the full visible unity of Christ's Church. It recommended that this matter should have priority in the implementation phase of the Covenant. The issue was raised within our two churches in the synodical consultation processes that led up to the debates on the Covenant in the Methodist Conference and the General Synod and was aired again in those debates. A Following Motion passed by the General Synod urged the JIC to give priority to achieving the interchangeability of presbyters. We comment on all this material below.

7.3 What is meant by the interchangeability of ministries?

7.3.1 The expression 'interchangeability of ministries' usually refers to a situation in relations between churches whereby the ordained ministers of one church are eligible to be appointed to ministerial offices in the other without undergoing re-ordination. The ministerial orders or ordinations of each of the churches concerned are mutually recognised as meeting all the requirements of the other for its own ministry.

7.3.2 Such interchangeability obtains in principle between most of the non-episcopal churches in Great Britain – for example, between the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church. Applications for transfer from individual ministers are considered against a set of criteria, but the question of re-ordination does not normally arise. Interchangeability, as an aspect of ‘table and pulpit fellowship’, is a feature of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (Leuenberg Church Fellowship), even though some of the churches of the CPCE (such as the Lutheran churches of Norway and Denmark) are episcopally ordered churches. A minister is able to transfer temporarily or permanently between churches without being re-ordained, though of course he or she would be subject to various procedures according to the rules of the churches concerned. (Lutheran churches, such as those of the Nordic and Baltic regions, that have the threefold ministry and practise ordination in the historic succession, do not require episcopal ordination for an interchangeable ministry with certain churches with whom they have an agreement.) Interchangeability certainly does not mean a free market in ministers so that they move at whim from one church to another.

7.4 *What is the difference between ‘shared’ and ‘interchangeable’ ministry?*

7.4.1 There is a fundamental relationship of communion (*koinonia*) between all who have been baptised into the Church, the body of Christ. But because the Church currently subsists in various churches which are to some extent separated from each other, there are degrees to which this communion in Christ is visibly realised and expressed. The phrases ‘impaired communion’ and ‘broken communion’ testify to the truth that the realisation or expression of communion between Christians is not all or nothing, but is a progressive reality. The phrase of Vatican II ‘a real though imperfect communion’ (Decree On Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* 2) points to the same truth.

7.4.2 Reflecting this situation of variable degrees of visible communion between the churches, there are corresponding degrees of mutuality in ministry. These differences reflect the

various ways that the churches order their life, especially their oversight, and the rules under which they operate.

- 7.4.3 Therefore on the spectrum of possibilities between the many informal kinds of local collaboration in mission, on the one hand, and a fully interchangeable ministry, on the other, there is the concept of shared ministry. Shared ministry falls short of interchangeable ministry. It does not involve an interchangeable ministry of oversight (i.e. an ordained minister of one church exercising oversight over people on behalf of another church, or being under the oversight of another church). It does not entail interchangeable eucharistic presidency (i.e. a minister of one church presiding at the Eucharist of another church). And it does not include interchangeable ordinations (i.e. the possibility of joint ordinations or of the ordaining ministers of one church being asked to ordain on behalf of another).
- 7.4.4 So far as the Church of England is concerned, shared ministry embraces the following: full reciprocity between ministers in officiating at services of the word; the offering of eucharistic hospitality to non-Anglicans (subject to the conditions laid down in Canon B 15A, that they should be baptized communicants in good standing in their own church); and the possibility of eucharistic sharing in the sense of ministers of one church taking a role in a Eucharist at which the ordained minister of a partner church presides. On this view, shared, not interchangeable, ministry is what takes place in Local Ecumenical Partnerships.
- 7.4.5 So far as the Methodist Church of Great Britain is concerned, as noted earlier, not just shared ministry but also interchangeability is possible in Local Ecumenical Partnerships and elsewhere.
- 7.4.6 Clearly, the Covenant encourages our two churches to seek to maximise the possibilities for shared ministry that are already available under the rules of our churches.

7.5 *What is the Methodist Church's discipline in these matters?*

7.5.1 There are two aspects to the making of a minister (presbyter) or deacon in the British Methodist Church. On the one hand the Methodist Conference ordains people to exercise the appropriate form of ministry in and on behalf of the Church catholic. On the other hand it 'receives into full connexion' with itself those who are called to exercise their presbyteral or diaconal ministry through the Methodist Church and who enter a covenant relationship with the Conference. In this mutual relationship, they are accountable to the Conference for the exercise of their ministry and for their execution of the Conference's vision and will; whilst the Conference is committed to deploying them all appropriately and to providing them with the resources and support necessary for them to fulfil their ministry (and in that way is accountable for them). These two aspects are closely tied together. The Conference will only ordain those whom it also receives into full connexion, the only exception being when a sister Conference has received people into full Connexion but has asked the British Conference to ordain them on its behalf. The Conference therefore receives people into full connexion, authorises their ordination, effects their ordination, and then stations them to exercise their ministry on behalf of the Conference in a particular appointment.

7.5.2 In turn both 'ordination' and 'full connexion' have a part to play in the way the British Methodist Church deals with those ordained in other churches, and therefore in its attitudes to the interchangeability or sharing of ministries. For such people to transfer to the jurisdiction of the Methodist Church and to be appointed to ministerial office in it they have to commit themselves to enter the covenant relationship and be received into full connexion with the Conference, with as much formal consent and commendation from their own church authorities as can be gained. But for this to happen without requiring them to offer as candidates for ordination, they must have been already ordained to the appropriate order of ministry in the Church of God by a Christian church with which the Methodist Church is in some measure of communion. To qualify, their ordination must satisfy the criteria established in the report

Criteria for the Transfer of Ministers adopted by the 1993 Conference. It must have been effected with the intention to ordain to the appropriate order of ministry in the Church of God; carry an expectation of life-long commitment and, therefore, according to the discipline of the church concerned, be unrepeatable; be an act, normally the laying on of hands, which is accompanied by prayer in the setting of an act of worship; be an act which carries the full authority of the church concerned; be an act which is recognised and transferable within the churches of the denomination as a whole, and not be confined in its effect to a single congregation.

7.5.3 The Methodist Church, however, generally prefers there to be a period of probation before it receives someone into full connexion with the Conference. This applies not only to its own candidates for ordained ministry who come through a process of discernment, training and testing which leads from their candidature to their reception into full connexion and ordination, but also to those who are seeking to enter the covenant relationship with the Conference and to exercise their ministry under its jurisdiction by transfer. So far as the latter are concerned, this period of probation is effected by their being 'recognised and regarded as minister (presbyters) or deacons admitted into full connexion with the Conference' (under Clauses 43, 44, 45, 45A of the Deed of Union and Standing Order 732), on successful completion of which they are actually received into full connexion. The important part of this phrase is not 'recognised' but *regarded as ... admitted into full connexion with the Conference*. In this status they exercise their ministry under the direction and oversight of the Methodist Conference, and exercise accountability both for their practice in a particular appointment and for their general vocation and development as presbyters or deacons to the British Conference in the first instance and through it to their own church.

7.5.4 This status of recognised and regarded as ministers (presbyters) or deacons admitted into full connexion with the Conference' is also used for those who do not intend to transfer permanently to the jurisdiction of the Conference of the British Methodist Church, but who are in effect seconded by their own church to serve in the British Methodist Church for a period of time.

Again, they work at the behest of the British Conference and make themselves available to be stationed by it in particular appointments, and their accountability is through it to their own Church. The criteria for judging who qualifies for this status are the same as those used in dealing with those seeking a permanent transfer.

7.5.5 The British Methodist Church also has ways of affirming and owning the ministry of people ordained by another church who are still serving that church, working at its behest and exercising their accountability directly to it (so that it would not be appropriate for them to be in full connexion or recognised and regarded as admitted into full connexion). The need for two basic forms of this has become apparent, and proposals to clarify the first and to establish the second are being brought in a report to the 2005 Methodist Conference. In some cases the person is serving in an appointment in his or her own church under the appropriate authorities of that church, but there is an agreement between those authorities and the authorities of the Methodist Church that she or he will simultaneously be stationed in an appointment by the Methodist Church to exercise all the duties of presbyteral or diaconal ministry there on its behalf. (An example here would be a United Reformed Church minister acting as a Methodist Superintendent in a United Area). Such people can be thought of as 'Authorised to serve the Methodist Church as Ministers (Presbyters) or Deacons' or 'Authorised Ministers or Deacons'. In other cases the person concerned is not formally stationed by the Methodist Church, but there is an agreement between that person's church and the Methodist Church that the person may undertake particular functions (e.g. leading worship, preaching, offering pastoral care) on behalf of the Methodist Church. Such people can be thought of as 'Associate Ministers (Presbyters) or Deacons'. (An example here would be an Anglican Priest working in a Local Ecumenical Partnership with the Methodist Church, or in a more informal collaboration under the Anglican-Methodist Covenant).

7.5.6 All of the above categories potentially involve aspects of affirming, sharing or interchanging ministries between the Methodist Church and other Conferences or Churches, in terms of exercising pastoral charge, presiding at the Eucharist and

assisting (but not presiding) at ordinations, except that the situations of those described as ‘Associate Ministers or Deacons’ would not entail the exercise of pastoral charge.

7.5.7 So far as the Methodist Church of Great Britain is concerned, as noted above, not just shared ministry but also interchangeability of ministries is possible in Local Ecumenical Partnerships and elsewhere.

7.5.8 Fundamentally, in the Methodist Church, it is the appointed representatives of the Conference who perform ordinations and the President (or the President’s designated deputy) who presides, while the congregation gives its assent. As the Conference stated in 1962:

Making a man or woman a minister is performed by the Methodist Conference, by standing vote in the reception into full connexion, and through its appointed representatives in the ordination service: it is not performed by individuals, or a group of individuals, acting in their own capacity.⁷³

7.6 *What is the Church of England’s discipline in these matters?*

7.6.1 In the Church of England, as in all other provinces of the Anglican Communion, only episcopally ordained ministers may hold the office of bishop, priest or deacon. This discipline is laid down in both canon law and statute law. Canon C 1 adapts and elaborates the Preface to the 1662 revision of the Ordinal, which was enforced, in conjunction with the Book of Common Prayer, 1662, by the Uniformity Act of the same year:

The Church of England holds and teaches that from the Apostles’ time there have been these orders in Christ’s Church: bishops, priests and deacons; and no man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful bishop, priest, or deacon in the Church of England, or suffered to execute any of the said offices, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereunto according to the Ordinal or any form of service alternative thereto approved by the General Synod

73. Cited in *Called to Love and Praise* (1999), 4.5.12.

under Canon B 2, authorised by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York under Canon C 4A or has had formerly episcopal consecration or ordination in some Church whose orders are recognised and accepted by the Church of England.

- 7.6.2 Canon B 12.1 makes the same point with regard to eucharistic presidency in the Church of England (the gendered language reflects the situation before the ordination of women in the Church of England): ‘No person shall consecrate and administer the holy sacrament of the Lord’s Supper unless he shall have been ordained priest by episcopal ordination in accordance with Canon C 1.’ Several points in the statement of Canon C 1 are worth underlining.
- 7.6.3 First, it is clear that the Church of England believes that, in maintaining the threefold ministry, with episcopal oversight and episcopal ordination, it is being faithful to the pattern of the early Church. It holds that this pattern comes down to us from apostolic and early post-apostolic times and carries the authority of primitive tradition.
- 7.6.4 Second, the canon states the terms under which the Church of England orders its own ministry. The phrase ‘in the Church of England’ seems to be significant. The canon is not intended to pass judgement on the ministries of other churches. It is simply saying what the Church of England believes to be right and true and what it requires for itself and for churches with whom it is ‘in communion’ and with whom it accordingly practises interchangeability of ministries.
- 7.6.5 Third, episcopal ordination is implicitly understood in this canon as ordination by a bishop who has been consecrated in intended continuity with the bishops of the Church through the ages and ultimately in intended continuity with the Apostles themselves. A commonly used shorthand formula for this intended continuity is ‘the historic episcopate’. The Church of England accepts without re-ordination ministers of churches whose orders are ‘recognised and accepted’. These are without exception churches whose ministries are ordered in the historic episcopal succession. For example, under the Porvoo Agreement, which established a relationship of ‘communion’

between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches (except those of Denmark and Latvia who have not yet signed the Agreement), episcopally ordained Lutheran pastors of those churches, even though some of the churches may not have preserved an unbroken episcopal succession in the past, are in principle eligible for appointment to a ministerial post in the Church of England. In principle they may serve as Assistant Curates, Vicars or Rectors, Residentiary Canons of Cathedrals, Archdeacons, Deans, Bishops and Archbishops.

7.6.6 Fourth, however, the churches whose ordained ministries are ‘recognised and accepted’ are not necessarily churches with whom the Church of England is in a relationship of ‘communion’. The orders of the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, with whom the Church of England is not at present ‘in communion’, are also ‘recognised and accepted’. This means that any clergy from those churches who may wish to exercise an ordained ministry in the Church of England are not re-ordained – though they are required to undergo a process of discernment of vocation and of further training, to equip them to minister in a Church of England context.

7.6.7 Therefore so far as the Church of England is concerned, where there is not episcopal ordination the most that could be achieved (whatever the degree of communion in other respects between the churches involved) would be ‘shared’ ministry. The ecumenical canons (B 43, governing general ecumenical relations, and B 44, dealing solely with Local Ecumenical Partnerships of various kinds) make it possible for Church of England clergy to enter into shared ministry with ministers of other churches to whom the canon applies (those gazetted under the Ecumenical Relations Measure 1988), provided that the requisite permissions have been obtained.

7.6.8 In summary, the Church of England believes that the threefold ministry of deacon, priest/presbyter and bishop, together with an episcopal ministry of oversight and ordination, comprises the authentic pattern of the early Church and without exception it orders its own ordained ministry according to this pattern. Fundamentally, for Anglicans, the bishop presides at

ordinations and ordains on behalf of the Church and with the consent of the congregation.

7.7 *Why is interchangeable ministry important?*

7.7.1 Interchangeability is a crucial issue in ecumenical relations. It represents an incremental step in making visible the unity of the Church in Christ. For many Christians, who long for greater visible unity between the separate churches, the unrestricted interchangeability of ministry is the litmus test of whether the ordinations performed by their church are fully accepted by a partner church. Even when (as in the case of the Covenant) a formal agreement concerning mutual ecclesial acknowledgement and commitment has been made, but where interchangeability has not been achieved, doubts can remain among both Methodists and Anglicans that, in spite of all assurances to the contrary, the ordinations of one church are not unreservedly accepted by the other. People in both churches ask, ‘Why is not mutual recognition of the ecclesial authenticity of one another’s ministries enough to bring about interchangeability?’ This question may arise because some of the distinctions made by our churches are neither always as clear as they might be nor fully understood. As noted earlier, interchangeability of ministries depends on the mutual recognition of the ministerial orders or ordinations of another church as meeting **all** the requirements of the other for its own ministry.

7.7.2 Thus when the Methodist Church acknowledges that someone has been ordained to the diaconate or the presbyterate in the Church of Christ, it is open to receiving them into the appropriate order of its ministry without further ordination. That possibility would only be realised, however, if the deacon or presbyter could be received into full connexion with the Conference. In short, they would need to be willing to accept the doctrines and discipline of the Methodist Church.

7.7.3 When the Church of England acknowledges that someone has been ordained to the diaconate, presbyterate or episcopate in the Church of Christ, other questions have to be asked about that ordination before that person would be eligible to serve as a deacon, priest or bishop in the Church of England. Not only

must that ordination have been carried out by a bishop, it must also have been carried out by a bishop who could serve as a bishop in the Church of England, that is to say, one who has been ordained in intended historical continuity with the episcopate through the ages (the historic episcopal succession). This is why, for example, Methodist ministers cannot serve as priests in the Church of England and why, currently, women bishops of other Anglican churches and those ordained by them are not eligible for appointment in that church.

- 7.7.4 These distinctions relate to wider issues which need to be taken into account. The question of the interchangeability of ministries does not stand alone, as an isolated issue that can be dealt with in a discrete way. It is bound up with questions of authority and church discipline (expressed in the different structures of our churches) – questions about who has the authority to ordain and about the oversight of ministries as they are exercised, that is to say, how they are accountable to higher authority. These matters in turn find their context in our vision of the ‘full visible unity’ of the Church of Christ that informs all our ecumenical endeavours. These issues are like concentric circles: within the circle of the full visible unity of Christ’s Church lies the circle of authority and oversight; within this circle lies another: the circle of ordination and interchangeable ministry. That is not to imply that there are no other matters at stake, but simply to highlight the inter-relationship of the issues and to emphasise that ‘interchangeability of ministries’ cannot be considered in isolation.
- 7.7.5 The report of the Formal Conversations found sufficient agreement on the goal of full visible unity to propose the Covenant, but it also pointed to the need for further work. During the Formal Conversations, the Methodist Church and the Church of England considered the doctrine and liturgies of each other’s churches with regard to what they expressed about the Church, the sacraments and the ministry and this process has continued in the work of the JIC. There is ample common ground to support the Covenant, but there are also certain differences. One area of difference concerns the location of oversight, *episkope*.

7.7.6 In the Methodist Church, both the authority to ordain and the ongoing oversight of ordained ministries is vested in the Conference: it exercises corporate *episkope*. The various forms of personal, collegial and communal expressions of oversight that are exercised throughout the Connexion are located within the overall authority of the Conference. If the Methodist Church of Great Britain were to become an episcopally ordered church, the same principle would apply: bishops would be appointed and stationed by the Conference; they would focus its overall authority in particular contexts and would be accountable to it. This form of personal *episkope* would be in keeping with the Methodist Church's vision of the full visible unity of Christ's Church.

7.7.7 In the Church of England, a similar authority lies with the bishop in synod: bishops exercise their oversight in personal, collegial and communal ways. There is an essential synodical expression of oversight, but never without the bishop. Bishop and synod are inter-related, but for Anglicans the bishop's ministry of personal *episkope* is irreplaceable. Because the Church of England's vision of the full visible unity of the Church includes ordination and oversight by bishops (as an expression and a means of historical and contemporary communion), it believes that there should be agreement on the theology and practice of episcopal oversight and episcopal ordination with a church with whom it is in dialogue, before the interchangeability of ministries can be achieved. If that agreement on theology and practice can be achieved, to the satisfaction of both parties, the way would lie open to bringing about an interchangeable ministry.

7.8 ***What did the Common Statement say about interchangeability?***

7.8.1 The Common Statement (CS, references below by paragraph), *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant*, makes numerous references to the question of the interchangeability of ministries. It clearly distinguishes between the covenantal stage of mutual affirmation of the ecclesial authenticity of the ministries of one another's churches and the further step of interchangeability.

- 7.8.2 The CS notes that the vision of the ‘full visible unity’ of Christ’s Church, as developed in the Faith and Order tradition during the twentieth century includes a common, reconciled ministry. Such a ministry is also described as a ‘united, single, integrated’ ministry (139). This expression points to a stage beyond simple interchangeability of ministries between two churches who retain their separate structures of oversight to a significantly more integrated situation that would be appropriate where the churches concerned share the same territory. The CS notes that parallel structures of oversight (*episkope*) between churches with an interchangeable ministry would be unacceptable, except as a temporary anomaly that could be tolerated on the way to fully united structures of oversight.
- 7.8.3 While the Formal Conversations were not mandated to ‘solve’ the question of the interchangeability of ministries between the two churches (166), they were able to put in place a number of ‘building blocks’ of agreed theological principle on which further work could be built in the future.
- 7.8.4 When it looks at the understanding of presbyteral ministry in our two churches, the CS affirms that ‘a priest in the Church of England is a person called and ordained to the same ministry of word and sacrament as is exercised by ministers in Methodism’ (156). The intention of the Methodist Church and of the Church of England, in ordaining to presbyteral ministry is identical. The CS goes on to suggest that the common understanding of the nature of the presbyterate in Methodism and Anglicanism provides a sound basis for the future interchangeability of presbyteral ministries (157) – and we might add - beyond that to closer integration.
- 7.8.5 Meanwhile, the CS suggests, the Covenant would justify ‘formal arrangements for shared oversight, as a stage on the way to a single, unified *episkope*’ (180). This suggestion seems to point to local commitments, perhaps formalised into practical ways of working together, between Methodists and Anglicans who exercise oversight in their own churches (there are some examples in section 3 of this report).

- 7.8.6 After describing the various ways in which pastoral oversight is exercised in the two churches and the structures that support this, the CS concludes that although ‘the distribution of authority is different ... the principles are common.’ In particular, the CS notes (taking up the language of the Lima statement *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*) that ‘personal *episkope* in both churches is exercised in a collegial and communal context’ (193). Quoting from the Methodist report *Episkope and Episcopacy*, Guideline 4, which was adopted by the Methodist Conference in 2000, the CS identifies ‘a significant convergence in both theology and practice’ between the two churches on *episkope* (158).
- 7.8.7 On the other hand, the CS flagged up several unresolved questions between our two churches about particular areas of ministry.
- 7.8.8 First, it noted important differences of understanding and practice with regard to the diaconate and the relation between it and the presbyterate (146-7). However, the CS observed that both churches were seeking to develop the ministry of deacons and that they were drawing on ecumenical resources to do this. The diaconate is discussed below.
- 7.8.9 Second, the CS highlighted the sensitive issue of whether all positions of ministerial responsibility were open to women as well as to men in our churches (161-2). In view of the convergence between our churches on the principles of *episkope*, and in the light of the Methodist Conference resolutions on episcopacy over the years, this matter was described in the CS as ‘the only issue of principle that divides the Methodist Church and the Church of England over the historic episcopate’ (174). The position of the Methodist Church was that the equal ministry of women and men was seen as a gift that it had received from God and wished to share with the wider Church. It was noted that the Church of England did not provide for women to be ordained as bishops. But the Church of England had not said that women could not be bishops and a commission was currently examining the theological and pastoral issues that would need to be taken into account when the General Synod came to consider the issue of women bishops (see below).

7.8.10 Third, there was the issue of non-presbyteral presidency at the Eucharist (163-6) which is considered elsewhere in this report of the JIC (section 6).

7.9 *What conclusions did the Formal Conversations reach?*

7.9.1 The CS suggested that sufficient convergence on the theological principles of ordained ministry and pastoral oversight had been established by the Formal Conversations, not only to enable the two churches to enter into a Covenant, but also to provide some essential elements that would make it possible, in due course, for them to move beyond the present phase of the Covenant. In spite of the important differences, that we have noted above, which it did not attempt to minimise, the CS went as far as to claim that ‘all the essential theological ingredients to bring about an integrated ministry in the future seem to be in place. Faith and vision are what are chiefly needed now’ (176).

7.9.2 Among the Affirmations in the text of the Covenant itself (194) we read: ‘We affirm that there already exists a basis for agreement on the principles of episcopal oversight as a visible sign and instrument of the communion of the Church in time and space.’ In the Commitments of the Covenant the two churches have also stated that they ‘look forward to the time when the fuller visible unity of our churches makes possible a united, interchangeable ministry’. They have committed themselves ‘to continue to develop structures of joint or shared communal, collegial and personal oversight, including shared consultation and decision-making, on the way to a fully united ministry of oversight’.

7.9.3 Finally, the Formal Conversations recommended that the JIC should ‘give priority in the next phase of our relationship to the question of the interchangeability of diaconal, presbyteral and episcopal ministries, on the basis of the theological agreement set out in the report’ (195).

7.9.4 Three Motions came before the Methodist Conference of 2003 expressing concerns about the mutual recognition of both lay and ordained ministries and calling for greater clarity as to how interchangeability could be realised (Motions 20, 42, 45). They

received between 29% and 37% of the votes and were therefore declined. The Conference thereby chose to leave the handling of these issues to the JIC.

- 7.9.5 A Following Motion from the Southwark Diocesan Synod, passed by the General Synod, called on the Joint Implementation Commission to work towards the interchangeability of presbyteral ministries. In its advice to the General Synod, the Council for Christian Unity supported the thrust of the motion, while taking issue with some of the supporting arguments put forward by the then Bishop of Woolwich who moved the motion on behalf of the Diocese of Southwark. The CCU noted that agreement on the nature of presbyteral ministry (which had been affirmed by the CS) was not all that was required to make interchangeability of presbyteral ministries possible. It believed that the logic of the CS did not support this approach. The CCU argued that the extent of the agreement on ministry in the CS – when set in the context of what is said also about the confession of the apostolic faith, the theology of the sacraments and pastoral oversight, and the uniquely overlapping histories of Anglicans and Methodists in England – called for an act of mutual recognition of the ecclesial authenticity of the ordained ministries in the two churches, as provided by the Covenant. The CCU also pointed out that the CS made it clear that certain questions of authority and oversight within both churches came into play in relation to interchangeability and that on those wider matters there was not yet full agreement.

7.10 What current developments in the two churches affect this issue?

- 7.10.1 It seems clear that progress towards the interchangeability of ordained ministries between our two churches will be affected very substantially by the outcome of work that is currently going on within the two churches. In this connection we comment in turn on three of the unresolved ministry issues highlighted by the Formal Conversations. These are at rather different stages of development.

The diaconate

- 7.10.2 As the CS notes, there are both common features and significant differences between the theology and practice of the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain respectively with regard to the diaconate. The CS points out that there is a need for further theological convergence between our two churches on the diaconate (145-7). While both churches have an ordained diaconate, based on a clear theological understanding, there are two major differences of emphasis.
- 7.10.3 First, there is a difference of emphasis between our churches in the nature of the ministry for which deacons are ordained. Methodist deacons are ordained primarily to a ministry of ‘witness through service’. The ordination service does not explicitly refer to the ministry of the word and of the sacraments, though it does highlight the task of ‘assist[ing] God’s people in worship and prayer’. Moreover, deacons are located in a eucharistic community, the local church, and may administer the elements in church, and, *ex officio*, in homes and hospitals. Many Methodist deacons exercise a ministry of the word as Local Preachers.
- 7.10.4 Anglican deacons, on the other hand, are ordained explicitly to a triple ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care, though this is carried out in an assisting capacity to bishops and presbyters and does not involve either eucharistic presidency or formal oversight.
- 7.10.5 Second, there is a difference between our churches in the relation between diaconal ordination and ordination to other orders of ministry. Methodist deacons are all ‘distinctive’ deacons. The diaconate is constituted as a dispersed religious order with a corporate rule of life and involving lifelong commitment; it ‘sends’ its members into situations where their ministry is needed. The Methodist Church practises direct ordination to the presbyterate and it is not common for a deacon to seek presbyteral ordination. When, as happens very occasionally, a presbyter discovers a call to be a deacon, he or she must then receive ordination to the diaconate. Such a person remains a presbyter in the Church of Christ, but would

no longer be ‘in full connexion’ as a presbyter, exercising a presbyteral ministry of oversight and of eucharistic presidency.

- 7.10.6 In Anglicanism, on the other hand, all those called to ordained ministry are ordained to the diaconate which is seen as a foundation for any subsequent expression of ordained ministry as priest or bishop. Anglicans, therefore, practise sequential or cumulative ordination. Thus deacons are ordained to one order, priests to two and bishops to three. In Anglicanism (as in Methodism) the character of an order, once bestowed, cannot be taken away (Canon C 1.2). Most deacons in the Church of England are ordained priest (or presbyter) after a year, but some are called to the distinctive diaconate and there is a significant number of distinctive deacons in the Church of England. There is always the possibility of their vocation being re-discerned. So it is better to speak of a distinctive diaconate than of a permanent diaconate in an Anglican context – for all Anglican clergy remain deacons.
- 7.10.7 In both churches there is further reflection going on with regard to the diaconate and this reflects the current world-wide ecumenical review of diaconal ministry.
- 7.10.8 Many Anglicans are uncomfortable that the diaconate is often seen in practice as merely a transitional period, a staging post to priesthood. They do not believe that this does justice to the full and equal nature of the diaconate among the three forms of ordained ministry. Several factors have prompted the Church of England to look at ways in which the diaconate might be renewed: first, the successful revival of distinctive deacons in other churches, including some provinces of the Anglican Communion; second, the demands of mission and evangelism and the need for a flexible response to changing social and cultural patterns; and third, fresh research into classical and New Testament Greek usage (notably by J. N. Collins) which brings out the meaning of *diakonia* as responsible agency on behalf of one in authority and of the *diakonos* as the one entrusted with a responsible task and commissioned with the authority to fulfil it. This research, therefore, calls into question the modern emphasis on servanthood in relation to the community as the key attribute of diaconal ministry. Instead, it links the diaconate in a constitutive way to the fundamental

commissioning of the Church to carry out a ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care (cf. Matthew 28.16-end).

- 7.10.9 The report of a working party of the House of Bishops into the possibility of a renewed diaconate (*For Such a Time as This*, Church House Publishing, 2001), saw ordination to the diaconate in precisely this sense as an ecclesial sign of the fundamental commissioning that calls the Church into being and gives it its core tasks. It advocated a policy of active encouragement of the distinctive diaconate in the Church of England and urged that the diaconal period be taken more seriously by those hoping to be ordained priest. When the report was debated in the General Synod it was referred back, by a narrow majority, for further work that would attempt to clarify the relationship between the diaconate and recognised lay ministries such as that of Reader. The Faith and Order Advisory Group is currently doing this work.
- 7.10.10 Meanwhile, the rite for the ordination of deacons in the Church of England's revised Ordinal, without abandoning the language of the servant, gives new prominence to the deacon as a herald of the gospel, a person with a mission from Christ and the Church which is expressed in a triple ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care, albeit in an assisting and non-presidential role.
- 7.10.11 In a wider ecumenical context, it is worth noting that the Lutheran practice of direct ordination to the presbyterate has not prevented the British and Irish Anglican Churches from practising interchangeability of Anglican and Lutheran presbyters and bishops under the Porvoo Agreement. However, the significant differences of theology and practice with regard to the diaconate have inhibited interchangeability of deacons between the Lutheran and Anglican churches. The Anglican-Methodist CS, on the other hand, explicitly looks forward to achieving interchangeability of diaconal, presbyteral and episcopal ministries in the future.
- 7.10.12 The Methodist Conference has recently adopted the report 'What is a Deacon?' (in *Over to You 2004: Reports from the Methodist Conference*, Methodist Publishing House, 2004). The report notes the fresh biblical interpretation of *diakon-* type

words and at one point states that ‘Deacons are primarily heralds of the Gospel’ (p.20). It affirms the public, representative ministry of deacons: ‘They are authorised by Conference to be public people representing God-in-Christ to the World and representing the World and Church before God’ (p.18). It quotes approvingly what *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* said about the preaching and teaching roles of deacons (p.19). On the other hand, this report retains the metaphor of servanthood as defining the ministry of deacons while restating the purpose of deacons in the received terms as ‘a ministry of witness through service’.

- 7.10.13 While both the Church of England and the Methodist Church have an ordained diaconate, there are significant differences in understanding between them and elements of ambiguity in each. On the other hand, there are fresh theological, missiological and ecumenical considerations that both churches need to take on board with regard to the diaconate. **The Commission believes that our churches should work together on the continuing discernment of the ministry of deacons.**

Women and the episcopate

- 7.10.14 The report of the working party of the House of Bishops referred to above was published in November 2004 (*Women Bishops in the Church of England?*, Church House Publishing) and was debated in general terms in the General Synod in February 2005. The commission included participating observers from the Methodist Church and the Roman Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales. Ecumenical partner churches, including the Methodist Church, were invited to make a response and the Methodist Church was the first to do so.
- 7.10.15 The commission’s mandate from the General Synod was to study the theology of the episcopate, focusing on the issues that needed to be addressed in preparation for the debate on women in the episcopate. Accordingly, the report provides substantial resources from Scripture, the tradition of the Church and contemporary developments that will inform the General Synod when it comes to debate whether to initiate legislation

that will open episcopal ministry to women. As far as the Methodist Church is concerned, this development would transform the prospects for closer visible unity with the Church of England. There is, however, opposition to such a step among a significant minority within the Church of England on biblical, traditional and ecumenical grounds. The General Synod will have the opportunity in July 2005 to decide whether to initiate a legislative process which will take several years. A period of study and discernment throughout the Church of England will take place before any legislative proposals are finally decided on in the General Synod.

Episcopacy and the Methodist Church

- 7.10.16 As noted above, the report *Episkope and Episcopacy* came to Conference in 2000 and the Guidelines attached to the report were adopted. Subsequently, a group has been working on various aspects of oversight and on practical models of episcopacy for British Methodism and is due to report to Conference in 2005.
- 7.10.17 If the Methodist Church were to implement what it has approved in principle several times over many years – to embrace episcopacy – a new situation within the Covenant relationship would arise. From an Anglican point of view, the prospects for achieving an interchangeable ordained ministry would be transformed. At that point, several sensitive practical questions would arise for the Church of England and for the Methodist Church.
- 7.10.18 A crucial question that would face the Church of England, once it was clear that future Methodist ordinations would involve Methodist bishops in the historic episcopal succession, would be whether the Church of England would be able to offer some kind of *de facto* interchangeability of existing Methodist ministries (perhaps seeing this as an example of the transitional ‘bearable anomalies’, on the way to fuller visible unity, to which the 1998 Lambeth Conference referred).
- 7.10.19 Among the practical issues that would face the Methodist Church would be the question of which partner churches would be invited to share the sign of the historic episcopate with the

Methodist Church? The Methodist Church is in communion with several churches that are ordered in the historic episcopate (notably the United Churches of South Asia, that are also in communion with the Church of England). **The JIC believes that it would be appropriate for the Methodist Church's Covenant partner also to be invited to participate in this important development.**

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The Joint Implementation Commission offers these brief studies of some of the faith and order issues (sections 3-7) that arise under the Covenant as resources for study, prayer and shared reflection within and between our two churches. They should be considered in the context of the encouraging developments and good practice that have been highlighted earlier in this report (section 3). Our reflections on what it means, theologically and spiritually, to be in a covenant relationship (sections 2 and 4) are intended to underpin both theological dialogue and practical collaboration.
- 8.2 In this interim report we have tried to provide an analysis of the issues that are at stake for both our churches as far as the interchangeability of ordained ministries is concerned (section 7). We have also set out to explain some Methodist and Anglican sensitivities in eucharistic practice, with regard both to the eucharistic elements (section 5) and to the presidency at the liturgy (section 6).
- 8.3 We are acutely aware however that much depends on the decisions that will eventually be taken in the General Synod and in the Methodist Conference, as the Church of England debates women in the episcopate and the Methodist Church considers appropriate models of episcopal ministry for itself.
- 8.4 What we are able to propose in our next report, probably in 2008, will partly depend on how those two issues have fared in our churches over the next few years. It will also depend, of course, on how enthusiastically and energetically all that is possible already under the Covenant is taken up and pursued in every area of the life of our two churches.

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APPENDIX A

Applying Canon B 43 in the context of the Anglican~Methodist Covenant

Advice for Diocesan Bishops from the Council for Christian Unity –
April 2004

This advice for Diocesan Bishops is offered by the Local Unity Panel of the Council for Christian Unity, with the approval of the Chairman and General Secretary of the CCU, in the hope that it will prove helpful and ensure a measure of consistency in the way dioceses respond to the opportunities now available in the context of the Anglican/Methodist Covenant.

A. Introduction

The Covenant between the Church of England and the Methodist Church includes these among its six commitments:

3. We commit ourselves to continue to welcome each other's baptised members to participate in the fellowship, worship and mission of our churches.
4. We commit ourselves to encourage forms of eucharistic sharing, including eucharistic hospitality, in accordance with the rules of our respective churches.

This provides a new context within which a diocesan bishop may wish to grant approvals to parishes when they request it as part of Canon B 43. The bishop may also wish to encourage such requests as part of an overall diocesan response to the Covenant.

B. General Considerations

1. Requests from parishes should come from both the incumbent and the PCC as a result of ongoing consultation between the parish (or grouping of neighbouring parishes) and the related churches in the local Methodist circuit. This will include exploring wider possibilities for shared ministry and mission.
2. The arrangements detailed below will normally relate to Methodist presbyters, deacons and Local Preachers of the Circuit within which the parish is situated.
3. National representatives of the Methodist Church have indicated that, as part of the discipline of the Methodist Church under Standing Order 733(7), it would be appropriate for the Circuit to ask the Methodist Conference via the District to grant 'Authorised to Minister' status to ordained members of the Church of England participating in these arrangements.
4. It is appropriate for the diocesan bishop to keep a record of the names and addresses of all Methodists leading worship regularly or presiding at Methodist services of Holy Communion under these arrangements. The bishop may also wish to specify a set period for these arrangements with renewal subject to review.
5. Services of ordination and confirmation are not included in these arrangements – and the law of the land prevents a Methodist minister conducting the Solemnisation of Matrimony in accordance with Church of England regulations.

C. Invitations to take part in Church of England worship:

The diocesan bishop may decide in the context of the Anglican/Methodist Covenant that he will normally grant approval when incumbents (with PCC approval where necessary) wish to invite Methodist ministers and suitably authorised lay people to lead or take part in Church of England services *on a regular basis* including

- a) Assisting in the distribution of the holy sacrament – B43 clause 1 (f)
- b) Leading Morning or Evening Prayer or the Litany – clause 1 (a)
- c) Preaching – clause 1 (c)
- d) Assisting at a Baptism or a Wedding – or conducting a funeral service – clause 1(e) (NB: only at the request of the participating families)

D. Invitations to share in joint worship or to use a Church of England church for services in the Methodist tradition – including Holy Communion and Holy Baptism

The diocesan bishop may decide in the context of the Anglican/Methodist Covenant that he will normally grant approval to allow joint worship or to enable Methodist services to take place in specific Church of England churches when requested by the incumbent(s) (subject to PCC approval) “on such occasions as may be specified in the approval given by the bishop” – B43 clause 9.

However a service of Holy Communion presided over by a Methodist minister is understood by the Church of England to be a ‘Methodist’ service and should be advertised and announced as such.

Similarly a service of Holy Baptism conducted by a Methodist minister will also be a ‘Methodist’ service. The record of such baptisms will therefore be made in the appropriate Methodist Baptism Register rather than in the Register of the Church of England church where the service has taken place.

Further opportunities for shared sacramental ministry are available through Canon B 44 in the context of a Local Ecumenical Partnership.

Note:

The declared understanding of the Church of England is that the denomination of the presbyter presiding at a service of Holy Communion or conducting Holy Baptism defines the denominational identity of the service.

A Church of England communion service – in other words ‘a service according to the use of the Church of England’ – takes place when the person presiding uses a rite which is authorised or allowed by canon and when that person is an episcopally-ordained priest of

- a) the Church of England,
- b) a Church in communion with the Church of England or
- c) a church with whom we are not in communion but whose orders are recognised by the Church of England (and who in the case of b) and c) has received permission to officiate under the Overseas and Other Clergy Measure 1967.

- E. Invitations to Church of England priests, deacons, deaconesses, readers and lay workers to lead or take part in services in Methodist churches*
1. The diocesan bishop may decide in the context of the Anglican/Methodist Covenant that he will normally grant approval for a priest of the Church of England to preside at Holy Communion in a Methodist church or to take part in services on a regular basis (clause 3) – and similarly for deaconesses, readers and lay workers to fulfil their normal roles on a regular basis (clause 6). These arrangements also need the prior approval of the PCC.
 2. The basis on which the bishop may wish to grant approval for a priest to preside at Holy Communion in a Methodist Church – as required by B 43 clause 4 – could be:
 - a) that the Covenant commitments provide the “special circumstances which justify acceptance of the invitation”
 - b) that “the rites and elements to be used are not contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter”.
 3. The services for which this provision is made will be those taking place in Methodist churches either
 - a) within the parish(es) to which those invited are licensed, or
 - b) where the incumbent of the relevant parish has given approval – B 43 clause 3 (b)(i).

APPENDIX B

The membership of the Joint Implementation Commission

The Methodist Church

Professor Peter Howdle (*Co-Chair*)
Miss Margaret Faulkner (*Secretary*)
Deacon Hilary Smith
The Revd Neil Stubbens
The Revd Peter Sulston (*Co-Convenor*)
The Revd Alison Tomlin

The Church of England

The Right Revd Ian Cundy, Bishop of Peterborough (*Co-Chairman*)
The Revd Prebendary Dr Paul Avis (*Co-Convenor*)
The Revd John Cole
The Revd Canon William Croft
The Revd Prebendary David Houlding
Miss Janice Price

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