

39. Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church and the Faith and Order Commission of the General Synod of the Church of England

Fresh Expressions in the Mission of the Church

A report of the Joint Working Party on the Ecclesiology of Emerging Expressions of the Church (JAMWPEEEC)

1. This new report on the ecclesiology of fresh expressions of Church has been produced by a joint working party established by the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Faith and Order Commission of the General Synod, as an expression of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant. The purpose of the working party was to look at the ecclesiological issues raised by the development of fresh expressions of the Church in the two Churches in the wake of the 2004 report *Mission Shaped Church*.
2. This report (which is 209 pages long) is in 7 chapters. The first chapter explains the issues addressed in the report and the way in which the report will approach them theologically. The second chapter explains the development and nature of fresh expressions of the Church and includes snapshots of fresh expressions from both Churches. The third chapter considers the Church in the Acts of the Apostles as a paradigm for subsequent ecclesiology and chapter four then looks at the ecclesiology of the Anglican and Methodist traditions and shows how this provides a basis for assessing the ecclesiological implications of fresh expressions. Chapter five explores the major theological criticisms that have been made of fresh expressions and chapter six pulls the threads of the report together by outlining a 'Mission-shaped Ecclesiology' that addresses the needs of mission in Britain today, but that is also faithful to the basic ecclesiological pattern found in Acts and in the traditions of the Church of England and the Methodist Church. Key concepts within this chapter include 'locality', 'intensity', and 'connectivity' and the key emphasis is the need for constant interaction within a mixed economy church. The final chapter summarises the conclusions of the report and sets out a series of specific recommendations, addressed to both Churches, building on these conclusions.
3. The report will be published by Church House Publishing in early June at £16.99 and copies will be made available to all members of the Methodist Conference and the General Synod as a resource for parallel debates on fresh expressions of the Church which will take place in these bodies in July.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

39/1. The Conference received the Report.

39/2. The Conference expressed gratitude to the Fresh Expressions team, pioneer ministers both lay and ordained, and the VentureFX project, for their leadership, inspiration and effectiveness as catalysts in the many expressions of fresh ways of being church that now exist within the Connexion and within the wider Church.

39/3. The Conference affirmed the mixed economy of church as an enduring model for ministry and mission and commended the report to Districts and Circuits for further study.

39/4. The Conference directed the Methodist Council, in consultation with the Connexional Leaders Forum, to explore how recommendations contained in the final chapter of the report may be appropriately incorporated into the wider work of all levels of the Connexion.